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Apprenticeships in Power and Critique: How Classroom and Youth Organizing Spaces Provide
Latino Youth with Opportunities for Critical Civic Development.

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

By Jesse Christopher Moya

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Apprenticeships in Power and Critique: How Classroom and Youth Organizing Spaces Provide
Latino Youth with Opportunities for Critical Civic Development

By

Jesse Christopher Moya

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles

Professor Ernest D. Morrell, Chair

Latinos are much less likely to experience the quality learning opportunities that promote academic and civic engagement to foster critical civic development. Inferior opportunities and outcomes perpetuate an oppressive cycle for Latinos. Without higher education opportunities, many Latino youth will struggle economically and continue to be marginalized civically. Moreover, the dearth of civic opportunities fails to prepare youth for the political struggle necessary to ensure quality educational and civic opportunities for marginalized communities. Although educators have attempted to promote critical civic development in various educational spaces (public education classrooms, adult education programs, youth organizing groups, etc.), not enough is known about the influences of learning contexts on these goals.

This study explores the ways that two learning environments, located in structurally different spaces, provide Latino youth with opportunities for critical civic development. Through two case studies, I explore the relationships between the characteristics and youth development

outcomes of two critical learning sites. One of the sites is a community-based youth organizing group that addresses issues of educational injustice and the other is a high school social studies classroom with a social justice focused teacher. Through exploring a school-based learning setting (classroom) and an out-of-school one (youth organizing group), I highlight the characteristics of critical learning sites that promote engagement, which in turn fosters critical civic development. Critical civic development refers to students' increasing *engagement* in critical civic activities, a growing *identity* as critical civic agents, and a rising *competence* to effectively contribute as a critical civic participant.

In this dissertation, I examine critical civic development from an individual, site based and structural analysis. I provide a model for understanding and categorizing individual critical civic development. I also examine the site-based characteristics that influence youth development and the structural features that provided affordances and challenges to educator efforts to promote critical civic development in each site.

I found that the ways that educators positioned youth in the two spaces influenced identity trajectories. Both sites promoted a critical awareness of injustice and a motivation for change. The classroom teacher's focus on learning critical content to contribute to change in the future, positioned students as critical thinkers in development and only theoretical agents of change. UFJ's focus on addressing social injustices in the present, positioned youth as agents of change now and leaders in development. In addition, access to relationships and the authentic tasks of each site influenced youth development.

The dissertation of Jesse Christopher Moya is approved.

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DEDICATION PAGE

For the youth and educators at “UFJ” and “Pierce”
For inspiring me with their dedication to social justice

For my family
For being my foundation

For Eréndira
For loving and believing in me

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1968, thousands of Latino¹ students walked out of their schools to protest the unjust conditions of their educational experiences in the eastside communities of Los Angeles (Delgado Bernal, 1999). The student leaders of this civic action were motivated by a critique of social conditions and a motivation for justice. Moreover, these students maintained a commitment to their academic success despite their awareness of structural injustices against them, countering theories that suggest a social critique leads to academic disengagement (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). These extraordinary leaders were not ‘born’; rather, they credited their families, teachers and educators from out of school programs for raising their consciousness and fostering their critical civic development² (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1998).

In this dissertation, critical civic development³ refers to students’ increasing *engagement* in critical civic activities, a growing sense of themselves as critical civic agents (*identity*), and a rising *competency* to effectively contribute as a critical civic participant. The types of educational environments, in and out of school, that promote this type of development where marginalized

¹ At this time, the student protestors were predominantly of Mexican origin, but I will use the

² Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) use the term “transformative resistance” while I choose the term “critical civic development” to highlight how these actions signify a way of seeing oneself and acting in one’s community.

³ These constructs will be addressed extensively in chapters two and four.

youth are committed and prepared to address structural injustices in their communities must be further explored.

Statement of the Problem

More than forty years after the “walkouts,” Latinos continue to be marginalized in American schools and civic institutions. Currently the largest minority group in the United States, Latinos comprise 16 percent of the entire population (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert, 2011) and about 23 percent of youth seventeen or younger (Passel, Cohn, & Hugo Lopez, 2011) with the number expected to rise considerably over the next few decades (Yen, 2009; Valencia, 2004). The communities where Latinos live are more likely to have fewer opportunities for youth civic engagement (Hart & Atkins, 2002) and the schools that most Latinos attend are far more likely to be over crowded, under resourced and racially segregated (Orfield & Lee, 2007; Fry, 2005; 2007).

Consequently, Latinos are much less likely to experience the quality learning opportunities that promote academic and civic engagement to foster critical civic development (Conchas, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfeld, 2007). These inequitable inputs lead to inferior outcomes. For instance, while estimates vary by calculation methods, Latino educational attainment rates are consistently among the lowest in the United States (Yosso & Solórzano, 2006, U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Moreover, Latinos have lower rates of civic participation than Whites and African Americans as measured by both electoral and non-electoral civic activities (De la Garza, 2004, Telles & Ortiz, 2008).

Inferior opportunities and outcomes perpetuate an oppressive cycle for Latinos. Without higher education opportunities, many Latino youth will struggle economically and continue to be

marginalized civically. Moreover, the dearth of civic opportunities fails to prepare youth for the political struggle necessary to ensure quality educational and civic opportunities for marginalized communities (Oakes & Rogers, 2006).

Schooling largely functions to oppress marginalized communities; however, a critical education can be used as a tool to foster critical civic identities that empower individuals to challenge the unjust conditions of their lives (Freire, 2000; Shor, 1992). Through offering inequitable educational opportunities to marginalized youth, yet promoting the mythology of meritocracy, the institution of schooling supports the reproduction and legitimizing of social inequalities. Educators who practice critical pedagogy seek to transform society through engaging historically marginalized individuals in unmasking and addressing these social injustices that affect them. In particular, Freire (1970/2000; Freire & Macedo, 1998) argues that education should facilitate learners' critical understanding of their world, while also teaching them the necessary skills to motivate and empower them to take critical civic action to improve the conditions of their lives. Thus, education is intended to prepare learners to be effective critical civic participants with the capacities to positively change their communities.

Although critical pedagogues (Freire & Macedo, 1998; Tejada et al., 2003; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008) argue for a two-tiered approach that prepares learners for academic advancement as well as social critique and civic participation, many have argued that the field has failed to provide practice-based research that pragmatically informs these aims. For instance, Knight and Pearl (2000) argue that critical pedagogues provide little insight into promoting the specific skills that foster critical civic participation. In addition, Lisa Delpit (1988) chastises liberal and progressive educators who fail to provide marginalized youth with academic capacities that afford them access to the "culture of power." However, researcher educators have

begun to document how critical pedagogy can be effective at promoting academic, critical and civic development within school classrooms (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Morrell, 2004; Shor, 1992).

Employing critical pedagogy and sociocultural learning theory, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) argue that urban learning spaces should be organized as critical communities of practice. Rather than conceiving of “learning” as the acquisition of content, sociocultural theorists conceptualize it as the ability to more effectively participate within a particular setting or “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). A community of practice is any environment where people have sustained engagement in on-going, interdependent activities (Lave, 1996). This approach emphasizes that learning and identity formation occur when novices have “legitimate peripheral participation” in a community of practice (CoP). Legitimate peripheral participation is characterized by quality access to the content, authentic tasks and experts of a learning site (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the *critical* community of practice designed by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008), learners engaged with the educators in problem posing, action planning and reflection around community issues that were relevant to their lives. Using this approach based on Freire’s concept of critical praxis (1970/2000), Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) implemented several successful iterations of critical pedagogy with urban students that underscored the importance of providing youth with opportunities to co-participate in critical civic practices with more experienced adult educators.

In out-of-school spaces, youth organizing groups are potentially powerful critical communities of practice for cultivating the learner outcomes proposed by critical pedagogy (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Kirshner, 2007). The characteristics of youth organizing groups are by no means uniform. However, they are often typified by the collaborative efforts of youth

and adults who are actively engaged in projects whose aim is to understand and address issues of concern in their communities (Ginwright, Noguera & Cammarota, 2006; Kirshner, 2008). Youth organizing is set apart from community service or service learning activities by its engagement with issues of power imbalances and attempts to change policy or structural elements that reinforce these imbalances (Kirshner, 2007).⁴ Youth organizing groups that engage low-income youth of color in these types of activities can cultivate critical civic identities, marked by a critical consciousness of social inequalities and an inclination to take action to address them. These youth organizing groups can provide novices with access to critical communities of practice where they engage with critical content, expert adult organizers and socially relevant activities in their communities (Kirshner, 2008).

Youth organizing groups have been associated with several positive outcomes for low-income students of color. For example, they have been identified as sites for learning strategic thinking skills and collaborative problem solving (Larson, 2005; Kirshner, 2007). Moreover, youth organizing groups have been effective at engaging low-income youth of color and promoting critical civic development. For instance, these organizations are often more effective than traditional civic engagement opportunities at promoting civic participation amongst low-income youth of color (Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe & Lacoé, 2004). Through collaboratively engaging with caring adults around *critical issues* in their communities youth form strong attachments with the individuals and the social justice values of the organizations (Gambone et al., 2004). Nevertheless, the relationship between the practices of these sites and

⁴ For more information concerning the distinctions between youth organizing and community service/service learning see also (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Lewis-Charp, Yu & Soukamneuth, 2006; Hosang, 2006; Hart, 2006).

the critical civic development that occurs within them requires further documentation (Gambone et al., 2004; Kirshner, 2008).

The links between a critical consciousness and a motivation for civic action need further exploration. Both critical classrooms and youth organizing groups promote critical consciousness and civic action, but the effects on students' critical civic development has rarely been explored in these contexts. Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) have theorized about how students' social critique and motivation for social justice interact to influence their identities as students and community members. They build off of the work of Henry Giroux (1983), to develop a model that proposes four types of resistance behaviors, characterized by the presence or lack of both a social critique and a motivation for social justice. According to the model, students described as transformative resistant have both a social critique (or critical consciousness) and a motivation for social justice. This motivation for social justice serves as a driving force behind their pursuit of both personal successes through education and societal improvement through challenging unjust conditions in their communities. This model of resistance typologies provides a framework for understanding the different types of orientations that marginalized youth express towards dominant society but more research is needed to understand the types of environments that promote these identities, particularly ones marked by a social critique and a motivation for civic action.

Although educators have attempted to promote critical civic development in various educational spaces (public education classrooms, adult education programs, youth organizing groups, etc.), not enough is known about the influences of learning contexts on these goals. Ideally, critical classrooms and youth civic organizing groups both represent learning spaces where an adult educator attempts to promote the development of critical civic and academic

identities for the participating youth learners. However, the priorities of the educators may vary across the two contexts. For instance, compelled to prepare students for higher education and constrained to cover standardized content, a classroom teacher may emphasize the academic literacy of his⁵ students more than the community educator. Conversely, the community educator, in his attempt to facilitate successful organizing campaigns to address social injustices, will likely focus more on preparing youth to effectively participate in civic events. In sum, each learning site has shared goals for students, but unique organizational goals, priorities and circumstances. Nevertheless, the practices of each site could inform our understanding of how educators promote critical civic development across learning spaces.

Explanation of Study

Through two case studies I explore the relationships between the practices and youth development outcomes of two critical learning sites. One of the sites is a community-based youth organizing group that addresses issues of educational injustice and the other is a high school social studies classroom with a social justice focused teacher. Through exploring a school-based learning setting (classroom) and an out-of-school one (youth organizing group), I highlight the characteristics of critical learning sites that promote engagement, which in turn fosters critical civic development.

My conceptions of development, engagement and identity are grounded in the sociocultural theoretical framework, which argues that these processes are socially negotiated during co-participation in cultural practices within a situated context (Davis, 2003; Lee, 2001). Our actions, who we interact with and the context in which these interactions occur all influence

⁵ I use male pronouns because the classroom teacher and the lead organizer-educator in the youth organizing site are both male.

what we learn and who we become. Most importantly, access to quality engagement (legitimate peripheral participation) within learning settings fosters the opportunity to learn and develop particular types of identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In other words, individuals will learn the skills and develop the identities of the communities within which they have meaningful engagement. In this study, I will explore how the characteristics of critical learning sites affect engagement within the site and how different levels of engagement influence critical civic development.

Over the course of fifteen months, I interviewed youth and educators in each site and participated in the practices of the organizing group and two social studies classrooms.⁶ The data presented in this dissertation come from interviews, observations and artifacts collected in the sites. Through these qualitative methods, I was able to analyze the relationship between characteristics of the two critical learning spaces, as well as their effects on youth engagement and critical civic development.

By examining a community based youth organizing group and a high school social studies classroom, two structurally unique learning sites, this dissertation highlights how different learning settings, with similar goals, influence engagement and developmental processes (Yin, 2006). Distinct learning sites provide different affordances and challenges for promoting engagement that leads to critical civic development. These processes can occur both in and out of school – but the characteristics of the learning settings do provide different affordances and challenges to growing critical civic development. In this study, I provide a description of the opportunities and challenges that two critical learning sites encounter in the

⁶ While two teachers were observed for this study, this dissertation focuses only on the practices of the teacher in the first year of the study to represent the classroom space. The reasons for this will be discussed in the methods chapter.

pursuit of fostering critical civic development of youth in the aim of improving both youths' individual outcomes as well as the communities they live in.

Significance and Rationale for the Study

I undertook this study with the goal of documenting the types of educational practices and youth experiences that support critical civic development for marginalized youth. In this dissertation, I highlight the characteristics of learning spaces that supported and challenged youths developing the motivation, skills and agency to address issues of injustice in their lives. This work informs critical educators attempts to foster critical civic development both in school and community spaces. Moreover, it informs our understanding of individual development within communities of practice. Lastly, the ways that these two critical learning sites supported youth engagement and development provides a case for the increased use of critical and civic approaches in schools and communities.

Policy makers, researchers and educational practitioners are struggling to provide opportunities that promote academic or critical civic development, while failing to realize that teaching strategies that integrate academic and civic content can be most effective. In dichotomizing approaches to academic and civic development, the education community fails to understand how the goals can be mutually enriching. For instance, national policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), promote “academic” development at the expense of civic development (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Moreover, NCLB is associated with practices that lead to disengagement and higher dropout rates, especially amongst low-income students of color (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Wood, 2004). Although I provide a critique of NCLB, I recognize the need to improve academic outcomes for low-income youth of color. I do not seek to

romanticize civic participation and the politicization of youth as the panacea to all injustice. Rather, I argue that we need to understand the multiple ways that learning sites affect holistic youth development, as well as the way that multiple sites of learning affect youth development.

There remains insufficient empirical work documenting the practices that promote critical civic development, both within classrooms and community-based youth organizing groups. For instance, while there is considerable theoretical justification for the need for critical pedagogy in classrooms, there is limited research documenting practice-based examples of it in action (Morrell, 2004; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Specifically, more information is needed to identify the characteristics of critical classrooms that have positive impacts on youth. Likewise, research on community-based youth organizing groups has begun to document some of the positive outcomes associated with youth participation in these groups. However, much remains to be discovered about the learning and developmental processes that occur within these organizations (Kirshner, 2007).

While traditional schools should continue to be a site of study for understanding these processes, out of school sites, such as community-based youth organizing groups, can also inform our knowledge of the practices that promote critical civic development. Over the past three decades, sociocultural theorists have shown how out-of-school sites can be studied to improve our understandings of learning and identity development (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lave, 1998; Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff et al., 2003; Nasir & Hand, 2008; Nasir & Cook, 2009). In fact, many sociocultural learning theorists argue that the participatory and multi-generational characteristics of many out-of-school sites make them better structured for quality learning than traditional classroom settings (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Wenger 1998). In particular, community-based youth organizing groups represent potentially powerful critical communities

of practice for promoting critical civic development because they typically provide opportunities for applied learning around critical endeavors alongside more experienced adults (Kirshner, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Moreover, research is beginning to suggest that these sites can foster the development of problem solving (Larson, 2005) as well as academic identities (Strobel, Osberg & McLaughlin, 2006). Therefore, these community-based youth organizing groups can provide youth with vital opportunities for critical civic youth development. As policies such as NCLB continue to constrain schools' freedom to provide critical civic opportunities, these out-of-school experiences become even more important for youth development and can serve as models that demonstrate how critical civic development can support academic development.

Examining the practices within a critical classroom as well as within a critical community organization allow us to imagine new possibilities for promoting learning and development across the two sites. Schooling has changed very little over the last hundred years (Tyack, 1974; Cuban, 1993). Drastic pedagogical reform is difficult for many to imagine, let alone implement given our ingrained understandings of what schooling "looks like." Documenting the practices of a critical community organization has allowed me to pinpoint structures of traditional schooling that make critical civic education difficult in this context. For instance, the structures and ideologies of traditional schooling make it difficult for many social justice teachers to engage in systematic critiques of injustice and sustained efforts to address them (Solorzano, 1997). On the other hand, the classroom site also provides insights for the community educator about issues of content learning. In general, we know little about the workings of youth organizing groups. Likely, they vary considerably. However, as discussed in Chapter Six, some of the educational

practices in the community group studied in this dissertation actually resemble some of the techniques used in the classroom space.

Our knowledge of the practices that promote critical civic development is incomplete – both in classrooms and in youth organizing groups. By looking at the practices and impacts of each site, their contrasts and inter-relationships, this study highlights the affordances and challenges of each site and underscores the importance of understanding the multiple influences on youth development. Each site is fundamentally concerned with youth development. However, they have different challenges and affordances to promoting youth critical civic development. I believe that highlighting the strengths and challenges of each site has the potential to inform the workings of both learning sites.

Research Questions

Through this study I will address the following questions:

1. How does each site attempt to promote critical civic development? What are the affordances and constraints faced by each site for promoting critical civic development?
2. How do the characteristics of the learning site (relationships, content and positioning) influence participation?
3. How does the nature of participation vary between novices and intermediates in the learning site?
4. How is each learning site shaping students' critical civic development?

Outline of the Dissertation

This study is informed by critical pedagogy, sociocultural learning theory and the literature on youth civic development (particularly concerning youth organizing). This multi-disciplinary theoretical framework is outlined in Chapter Two. I employ this framework in order to understand the practices and outcomes that occur within and across youth organizing groups and critical classrooms. As described above, sociocultural learning theory provides a useful lens

for understanding the learning process as youth develop through participation in relevant activities within meaningful communities. Critical pedagogy provides an outline for the purpose and goals of a liberatory education, as well as initial attempts to empirically document the practices that promote them. The literature in youth civic development provides empirical evidence into the outcomes of participation in various types of civic activities. In chapter two I further describe my theoretical framework and review the literature around critical pedagogy, sociocultural learning theory and civic participation. In chapter three, I provide an overview of the methodological approach employed for this study. The remainder of the dissertation consists of four empirical chapters and a conclusion. The fourth chapter presents a working model for critical civic development and introduces the youth in the study. The fifth chapter addresses findings from the case study of the classroom site. The sixth chapter presents findings from the community organization case study. The seventh chapter looks at issues of learning and development across the two critical learning sites, while also comparing structural affordances and challenges across the sites. The conclusion will offer a summary of findings and implications for practitioners and policy makers concerned with fostering critical civic identities amongst youth.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation is informed by sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy, two perspectives that emphasize the co-constitutive relationship between the individual and society. Sociocultural theorists situate learning and development within a social and historical context. Critical pedagogues highlight the role of structural injustices based on power imbalances in shaping the inequitable educational experiences of marginalized youth. In addition to articulating the ways in which social forces affect individuals, theorists from these fields also highlight the ways in which individuals can transform their social context. Sociocultural theorists argue that individuals play a part in shaping the practices, norms and outcomes of the communities in which they participate. Critical pedagogues pay particular focus to fostering individuals' consciousness and agency in addressing the social injustices of their lives. This dissertation explores the ways that two learning environments, located in structurally different spaces, provide opportunities for critical civic development for Latino youth.

This chapter examines how youth developmental outcomes are shaped by their social context. This "context" includes: 1) the "global" environment or the characteristics of the society youth live in and the relationships of power within that society, and 2) the "local"⁷ learning environments in which they participate, which include classrooms, community organizations, families, etc. Drawing upon critical pedagogy, I describe the relationship between critical civic

⁷ While I invoke terms like "global" and "local" context, I do not intend this to convey that they are separate factors in development. Rather, local and global factors interact to influence each other. Moreover, the use of sociocultural theory to describe "local" development should not imply a lack of a "global" perspective. In fact, from the sociocultural perspective, all activity, including development must be examined within its situated complexity (Wells, 2002).

development and socio historical contexts. For marginalized youth, this entails examining the ways that social structures, ideologies and practices work to stifle critical civic development. Then, I demonstrate how sociocultural theory can help us understand the processes of identity development through participation in local learning environments. Specifically, I show how engagement and identities are fostered when learners are provided quality access to the content, relationships and authentic tasks of a community of practice. Finally, I use these lenses, as well as empirical research to examine how the characteristics of communities of practice influence youth engagement and development, with a focus on critical civic development. However, before further describing my theoretical lenses for examining critical civic development, it is necessary to begin by reviewing what is meant by several constructs, including critical, civic and development.

Operationalizing Terms

What is “Civics” and How Do We Account for Its Development?

Researchers who study civics and youth have various terms to describe the different components of the work, including civic engagement, civic competence, civic identity and civic development. Let’s begin with the term *civics* itself. A more traditional definition of civics would refer to issues directly related to governmental institutions and processes such as voting and political campaigns. However, I take a broader approach by including a wider range of issues pertaining to the health of one’s community (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Rogers, Mediratta & Shah, 2012). Rogers et al. (2012) provide an excellent summary of the activities that fall under the category of *civic engagement*:

Civic engagement then refers to a spectrum of activities, including the following: (a) learning about the political system and the issues of the day; (b) addressing collective problems through voluntary service, joint action, and collaborative decision making; (c) mobilizing political pressure (through means such as lobbying elected officials, writing persuasive letters, attending public meetings, or protesting); (d) participating in electoral campaigns; and (e) voting (Macedo et al., 2005). (p. 44)

From a sociocultural perspective, I define *civic development* through the interrelationship between engagement, competence and identity within communities of practice. Namely, as an individual participates in civic actions or learning with others, he or she acquires the skills and knowledge (competence) to more effectively participate within the realm of civics. In turn, the individual is likely to take on a more expert identity as a civic participant. A *civic identity* refers to an individual's sense of attachment to his or her community, the extent to which s/he does or plans to be civically engaged and his or her sense of agency in affecting the social well-being of the community (Flanagan & Faison, 2001, Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). And *civic competence* refers to the degree to which youth have the knowledge and skills to effectively participate in civic actions. Youniss et al., (2002) provide a broad definition of the construct:

[W]e use the term civic competence to refer to an understanding of how government functions, and the acquisition of behaviors that allow citizens to participate in government and permit individuals to meet, discuss, and collaborate to promote their interests within a framework of democratic principles. (p. 124)

These competencies may differ depending on the specific type of civic action, but examples of skills are public speaking, facilitating, organizing, researching, and analyzing an issue from multiple perspectives. In turn, civic knowledge can refer to an understanding of formal politics

and/or the political and historical roots of current societal issues (Rogers et al., 2012; Youniss et al., 2002). Table 2.1 summarizes the components that I use in this dissertation to categorize and assess civic development.

Table 2.1. Components of Civic Development

Civic Engagement	Civic Identity		Civic Competence	
<u>Participation</u> in organizing, political campaigns, voting, community service, civic learning and discussions.	<u>Attachments</u> connected to the community and its well-being	<u>Agency</u> Feeling capable of affecting community issues	<u>Skills</u> Facilitate, speak, research, organize, mobilize.	<u>Knowledge</u> Understand community & political processes & structures

What is “Critical” and How Do We Account for Its Development?

Paulo Freire’s (2000; 1973) work provides a starting place for understanding how one develops a critical consciousness.⁸ Through his work with marginalized adult communities in Brazil, he advanced a theory for the development of critical consciousness. He articulates three stages of consciousness, which he calls magical, naïve and critical. Each stage is marked by a particular lens of understanding inequality and the presence of action or no action to address it. In the *magical stage*, one justifies the conditions of his or her life as a result of fate and therefore unalterable. *Naïve consciousness* is marked by the individual who blames personal or group shortcomings for inequalities and tries to adapt to the dominant ways of society. By contrast, the *critically conscious* person recognizes that inequalities are largely the result of structural

⁸ Critical pedagogists such as Freire draw from the work of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory whose own ideas can be traced back to philosophers like Immanuel Kant (Morrell, 2004; deMarras & LeCompte, 1999). However, Freire provides a good starting place for the purposes of this discussion.

oppression. This person works to transform society so that these oppressive conditions no longer exist (Freire, 1973).

Watts, Williams and Jagers (2003) build on Freire's work to broaden and describe the range of stages for the development of critical consciousness, or what they call sociopolitical development. Their work accounts for more gradations, particularly between Freire's Naïve and Critical stages, to better capture the process of consciousness development. For instance, some individuals may have a critical awakening that quickly changes their orientation from a Naïve and complacent individual to a Critical and active one. However, it is more likely that critical development happens over time, with changes in levels of consciousness sometimes decoupled from action. In the Watts model, the development of critical consciousness also involves becoming increasingly aware and critical of social inequalities while also seeking to address them. They present five stages of development. The first, the *Acritical Stage*, is characterized by individuals who see inequalities as a natural and just component of society, similar to Paulo Friere's depiction of magical consciousness (Friere, 1973). Then, in the *Adaptive Stage*, individuals begin to recognize the existence of inequalities, but see them as intractable. Consequently, individuals in this stage seek to adapt themselves to the unjust social system. The *Precritical Stage* is marked by expressed concerns over inequality, questioning the value of adaptation and initial efforts to "do something" to improve the conditions of their communities. In the *Critical Stage*, individuals articulate an interest in learning more about inequality and its sociohistorical roots and seeking to address it through critical civic action. In the final *Liberation Stage*, individuals regularly interpret situations through a critical lens and act to address injustice wherever they see it (Watts et al., 2003).

As with civic development, I use the constructs of engagement, identity and competence to operationalize critical development. However, there are important distinctions in how they are defined. Similar to civic development, I conceptualize critical development occurring through engagement in critical communities of practice to develop the competence to more effectively participate in the communities. As the individual develops these competences, he or she likely also takes on a critical identity as the type of person who looks to understand and address the causes of injustices. Table 2.2 summarizes the components that I use to assess and categorize critical development, which mirror those for civic development. For instance, engagement in learning about issues of injustice and participation in action to address them are key to critical development. And a critical identity is characterized by attachments to the community and feelings of agency. However, it differs from a civic identity in that the attachments are not necessarily to one's proximal community but there exists solidarity with those who are oppressed by injustice, regardless of the location (Rogers et al., 2012). Moreover, critical agency not only involves feeling effective in one's community it entails feeling capable of addressing local and structural injustices. Likewise, critical competence is comprised of skills and knowledge but the types of abilities and content are different than with civic competence. Namely, critical skills include the ability to "recognize power in social relations" and "analyze root causes of problems" (Rogers et al., 2012, p. 13; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002).

Table 2.2. Components of Critical Development

Critical Engagement	Critical Identity		Critical Competence	
<u>Participation</u> Interest in learning about inequality and/or involvement in addressing it through civic action	<u>Attachments</u> Solidarity with those oppressed & feel part of movement	<u>Agency</u> Feeling capable of addressing injustice	<u>Skills</u> Ability to recognize power in everyday situations	<u>Knowledge</u> Understand root causes of inequality

To review, in this dissertation, critical civic development is indexed by engagement, identity and competence. Now that I have operationalized these constructs, I will review how development is influenced by “global” and “local” contexts.

Critical Civic Development Within A “Global” Context

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a theory and practice of education that seeks to transform society through engaging historically marginalized learners in unmasking and addressing the social injustices that affect them. Critical pedagogy has no single “originator”, but the field has been greatly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Nevertheless, many theorists have influenced critical pedagogy who have established a handful of common principles (McLaren, 2003; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003). Some of these principles are: 1) education is a political act; 2) educators must work in solidarity with learners to expose and act against all forms of oppression; 3) the knowledge and agency of learners and “everyday people” must be recognized as valid, equal to and/or primary over sanctioned forms of knowledge; 4) the form of “instruction” should be democratic (dialogical and cooperative) and; 5) theory and

practice (or knowledge and action) should inform each other through a critical praxis to enact change.

Freire (1970/2000) argues that the way marginalized individuals perceive themselves in the world influences their actions and their ability to liberate themselves from oppressive conditions. In particular, Freire (1970/2000; 1973) asserts that the perception of the self and actions are influenced by the individual's consciousness of the causes of their inequitable life conditions. Those who see inequality as a result of destiny or unalterable social conditions will submit or adapt to this reality (Freire, 1973; 1970/2000). On the other hand, a critical understanding of marginalized conditions as imposed by oppressors and a belief in an individual's ability to transform the world will make it more likely that the oppressed will act to change them: "they must perceive the reality of oppression, not a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (2000, p. 49). In short, Freire argues that consciousness drives action and critical consciousness will promote increased agency and transformative civic action. Therefore, it is imperative that the oppressed develop a critical consciousness of their oppression through praxis, "the action and reflection of men [sic] upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p. 51).

The work of the critical educator, awakening consciousness and promoting action against injustice, would not be necessary if it were not for the oppressive conditions imposed by the oppressors within a society. Therefore, we must understand the critical civic development of low-income youth of color vis-à-vis the context of their cultural and historical location as marginalized people. A *critical* understanding of the structural conditions that affect the critical civic development of marginalized youth is the starting point. For instance, Freire argues that consciousness is significantly influenced, or more appropriately it is restrained, by the

“oppressive reality [which] absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings’ consciousness” (Freire, 2000, p. 51). Similarly, it can be argued that the civic and academic outcomes of marginalized youth have been shaped by historical and contemporary conditions of oppression (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002).

Marginalized Within and Through Schooling

As a result of racism and economic exploitation, students of color have historically suffered from perpetual opportunity gaps that have accumulated to create an educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The current state of inferior education for Latinos in the United States cannot be separated from a 500-year history of systematic dehumanization and oppression that developed both institutional and ideological mechanisms to justify the exploitation of Latinos. While the traditional structures of colonialism in the form of official laws and governing administrations no longer exist, there still remains a “colonial situation” where marginalized groups continue to be oppressed by dominant ones (Grosfoguel, 2004). Education is one specific structure by which many Latino youth continue to be marginalized (Tejeda et al., 2003).

In order to maintain power, the oppressors within a society use institutional structures, such as schools, to perpetuate ideologies that normalize inequality and injustice. McLaren (2007) describes ideologies as the common sense that is the “result of the intersection of meaning and power in the social world” (p. 205). In a historical analysis, Spring (2001) shows how U.S. schooling practices have consistently and systematically marginalized Latinos (specifically Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans), while also stripping them of their cultural heritage. However, educators have consistently engaged in rhetoric that assumes equal opportunity and often ignores or refuses to critically address issues of historical oppression (Spring, 2001). By

failing to educate around these issues, mainstream pedagogies normalize inequality and cultural deficits of Latinos (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). For instance, current mainstream discussions of academic achievement gaps often highlight the results of injustice but fail to examine the root causes for them. Rather than understand them as the result of historical injustice, many proclaim or silently believe they are the result of biological or cultural inferiorities of marginalized groups (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). By not addressing these issues, educators limit opportunities for the development of critical consciousness amongst students and leave Latino youth subject to these deficit notions without the ability to deconstruct them.

Many current schooling practices continue to perpetuate cultural deficit notions of Latinos that can lead to internalized oppression. For example, policies and teaching strategies that mandate English Only convey the message that students' knowledge of another language is a condition to be fixed rather than an asset they bring. These policies can lead Latino youth to internalize these messages and devalue their home culture and language (Valenzuela, 1999). Similarly, Freire (1970/2000) asserts:

Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and incapable of learning anything – that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive – that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness . (p. 63)

If Latinos accept these messages they are left to “adapt” to a “superior” White culture or submit to their “inevitable” lower status in society. While adapting to White schools may lead to academic advancement, it will not lead to transformative civic action if Latino youth never have the opportunity to critically reflect on the causes of their oppression.

Most schools are not structured to promote critical civic identity development. While the purposes of education have always been politically contested, the academic and civic development of youth have been two widely supported aims of public education. However, the organizational structure of many educational institutions conveys ideological beliefs about the purpose of schooling that prove to be challenges to fostering critical civic development. For example, many schools, especially urban schools, provide ‘professional’ and bureaucratic environments that have a myopic focus on test performance with little regard for students’ lived experiences (Osterman, 2000). They also emphasize competition, individualism and pedagogical approaches to teaching that focus on technocratic and scripted forms of curriculum that fail to model or promote critical or civic orientations. Schools for low-income students of color too often resemble factories and operate with a hidden curriculum of preparing working class youth to be compliant workers in low-skilled jobs (Anyon, 1980; Rogoff et al., 2003). In addition, most classes in high school and even college occur over a brief amount of time and are often limited to in-class activities, which makes it difficult to reflect and act upon structural issues of injustice in the students’ lives (Sweet, 1998). While all of these practices are proposed as neutral, they are not because they limit alternative approaches that might challenge the status quo.

The practice of “banking” education is one particular practice by which the colonizing aims of traditional schooling are accomplished (Freire, 1970/2000). Banking education is the term that Freire uses to refer to pedagogies based primarily on lectures that assume students are empty containers waiting to be filled by the knowledge of the teacher. Freire (1970/2000) argues that this approach teaches students that they do not bring any valuable knowledge to the classroom and directs them to unquestionably accept the knowledge of the teacher, which typically represents the values of the dominant and oppressive society. Thus, the banking method

of education conditions Latino youth to conform and accept the dominant ideologies perpetuated by schools. Delgado-Bernal (2002) argues that although Latinos “are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (p. 106). Consequently, this leads to the domestication of students, a process that leads students to see themselves as objects in the world rather than creators of culture with the agency to transform society.

Youth Development as a Marginalizing Context

Similar to schooling, the field of youth development also has a tradition of perpetuating deficit ideologies of youth of color. Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) make this point by documenting the theoretical influences on the field of youth development over the past thirty years. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the field was dominated by theories focusing on linear, progressive stages of development that youth pass through in their ascent to adulthood. Much of the research was concerned with departures from these stages, framing them as delinquent behavior on the part of youth while rarely situating individual actions within social contexts. Specifically, the focus was often on preventing negative behaviors, such as violence, drug use, school disengagement, by "at-risk" youth of color. For instance, Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) highlight how "in the decade between 1985 and 1995, nearly 70% of all the articles in the leading youth and adolescent research journals focused on youth problems, pathology, or prevention primarily for African American and Latino youth" (p. 84).

In the 1990s, the youth development field began to take an assets-based approach, which aimed to foster the characteristics that correlate with healthy youth development. This marked a conceptual shift in thinking of youth as problems to be fixed to agents in their own development,

which is shaped by the environmental assets available to them. However, this positive youth development model focuses on expanding individual youth's access to developmental assets without addressing the structural issues that limit access to these opportunities to marginalized youth in the first place (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002).

In line with the apolitical approach of most youth development organizations, those programs that aim to promote civic participation amongst youth have rarely engaged with the critical issues of marginalized communities. In his review of the youth civic participation literature, Sherrod (2006) reports that much of the research in this field has been conducted with Anglo populations, largely focusing on how youth civic participation positively correlates with future civic engagement, primarily defined by participation in electoral politics or community service. These approaches have often been effective at increasing students' future participation in these types of activities as well as their self-esteem and connections to their communities; however, they rarely challenge structural inequities nor correlate with future activism for social justice (Sherrod, 2006; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). In addition, these opportunities have typically been far less available to low-income students of color (Sherrod, 2006; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) argue for a social justice approach to youth development that takes into account the multiple forms of oppression that marginalized youth encounter in their lives and works with youth to address them. They reiterate the perspective of critical pedagogues, arguing that commonplace efforts to criminalize and perpetuate deficit ideologies of youth of color can lead to feelings of powerlessness (Anyon, 2005; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; King, 2005; Valencia & Solórzano, 2001; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2006). Reflecting this new social justice youth development approach, a new wave of youth civic organizing groups are

attempting to facilitate students' understanding of the root causes of the social injustices in their lives while participating in actively addressing them (Ginwright, Noguera & Cammarota, 2006).

A Legacy of Resistance and a Need to Document New Efforts

Long before the term critical pedagogy existed, educators sought to achieve its goals, utilizing education as a tool for promoting democratic action and transforming unjust societies (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003). African Americans in the United States have a long history of teaching literacy in the pursuit of liberation (Perry, 2003). Under threat of death, African Americans used literacy as a tool for liberation from the oppression from slavery. In the 1960s, Chicano/Latino educators helped to raise consciousness amongst Latino youth, giving rise to civil actions to improve educational opportunities, such as the 1968 walkouts in the East Los Angeles community (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1998). These educational efforts occurred outside of the context of schooling; however, progressive educators, like John Dewey have long advocated for schooling that fosters students to become active and intelligent members of their communities (Dewey, 1916). Over the last three decades, researchers and educators have begun to document classroom teachers' efforts towards these transformative goals (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; McLaren, 2007; Shor, 1987; 1992; Sweet, 1998). The attempts to document these efforts within community based youth organizing groups are more recent (Ginwright, Noguera & Cammarota, 2006). However, countless organizers, activists, and educators have pursued these goals without being aware of critical pedagogy or being included in its canon (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Nygreen, 2005).

Summary – Critical Civic Development in the Global Context

When we look at critical civic development in its global context, we can see that there are historical, ideological and cultural factors that inhibit this development for marginalized youth. First of all, the dominant ideologies of U.S. society, schooling and youth development have perpetuated deficit notions of marginalized youth. If taken unquestioned, these conditions will inhibit a youth's feelings of agency to transform his or her society. Moreover, marginalized youth often perceive the deficit notions of educators, leading many youth to disengage from schooling and disassociate from an academic identity. Lastly, few in-school or out-of-school learning spaces offer youth the opportunities to develop a critical consciousness because they rarely engage with issues of injustice (Levine & Lopez, 2004; Sherrod, 2006). Teaching social studies and civics in an acritical fashion and promoting historical heroes is unlikely to support youths' inclinations towards addressing issues of injustice in their communities (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Levine & Lopez, 2004). This dissertation seeks to document and give voice to educators' attempts (in and out of school) to promote critical civic development.

Development at The “Local” Context

I have used critical pedagogy to highlight the global factors that influence critical civic development, particularly the structures which serve to marginalize low-income students of color. In this section, I will use sociocultural theory to focus on how local learning sites influence an individual's development.

Sociocultural Theory

While there are differing perspectives among sociocultural theorists, they generally agree

that sociocultural theory⁹ builds on the insights of the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, and moves towards understanding learning and development as social and cultural processes rather than as phenomena primarily understood through the study of an individual's mind, as in cognitive science, or as a reaction to outside stimuli in the environment, as in behavioral studies (Bruer, 1993; Greeno, 1997; John-Steiner, 1996; Skinner, 1968). Sociocultural theorists understand individual and cultural development as intertwined, or as Rogoff (2003) asserts: "individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context" (p. 50). From this perspective, culture is not an innate or static characteristic of any particular group, ethnicity or race, but a dynamic and lived set of practices that vary across individuals and contexts (Cole & Engström, 1993; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). For the individual, development is a process of appropriating (as well as possibly transforming) the cultural resources available to them from past and present generations in the effort to become more proficient in the cultural practices of their communities today (Cole, 1996).

Therefore, sociocultural theorists conceptualize learning as the ability to more effectively participate within a particular setting or "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Rogoff, 2003; 1995). A relatively simple articulation of a community of practice is any setting where people have sustained engagement in on-going, interdependent activities (Lave, 1996). For instance, a family is a community of practice, in which communication is a central practice by which a child develops mastery over language in her pursuit to more fully participate within the family. Likewise, track teams (Nasir & Cooks, 2009), sellers of Girl Scout cookies (Rogoff, 1995), tailors (Lave & Wenger, 1991), mathematics classrooms (Nasir & Hand,

⁹ Sociocultural theory will be used to refer to the broad category of approaches that have grown from the work of Vygotsky. While there are some important distinctions, this section is intended to provide an overview of the central themes of the field.

2008) and youth organizing groups (Kirshner, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007) have all been identified as communities of practice. As the examples suggest, a community of practice¹⁰ is characterized by a group of individuals with shared skills, identities, and “tools” with members who mutually participate in a common enterprise or cultural practice (Wenger, 1998).

Lave & Wenger (1991) argue that learning and identity formation occur through “legitimate peripheral participation” within communities of practice. Individuals develop the skills of the community by interacting with experts and other novices who model and scaffold the appropriate discourse, tool use and practices. As an individual demonstrates the ability to participate competently in the authentic tasks of a community of practice, she is given more responsibilities, and she begins to move from the periphery to full participation. Thus, as practices change, so does the social positioning of the individual within the community.

Development understood as shifts in participation is inseparable from shifts in identity. Rather than being a unidirectional relationship, identity is negotiated within a community of practice. An individual’s self-perception (how they see themselves) interacts with their positioning within the community (how they are seen by others and the opportunities they have to engage) to support different types of identity trajectories (Wenger, 1998). When a learning site offers an individual meaningful engagement in the resources of the community, she has the opportunity to develop mastery in the cultural practice. As individuals become more effective participants, transitioning from novices to experts within a setting, they are likely to take up the identities associated with those environments.

¹⁰ In this dissertation, a “practice” will refer to the common endeavor of a group of individuals (i.e. learning or organizing) and activities will refer to actions that occur within that community.

Learning Site Resources, Participation and Critical Civic Development

Thus far, I used critical pedagogy to articulate how a socio historical context of marginalization affects the critical civic development of youth. Then, I presented sociocultural learning theory and highlighted how opportunities within communities of practice shape learning, engagement and identity development. I now apply a sociocultural and critical pedagogy lens, as well as empirical studies, to describe how the characteristics of critical communities of practice serve as resources that foster engagement towards critical civic development.

It should be made clear that one's physical presence within a community of practice does not imply engagement that will promote learning and development. Rather, learning and development require that experts within the community allow novices engagement with the central resources of a learning community. These include but are not limited to: 1) the extent of access to the content or the tools of the community, 2) the nature of relationships with others in the learning site and; 3) opportunities to participate in the authentic tasks of the community.

Resource 1 – Quality Access to the Content or “Tools” of a Community of Practice

According to sociocultural theory, our activity and thinking are mediated through culturally shaped tools and artifacts. Cole (1996) describes an artifact¹¹ as “an aspect of the material world that has been modified over the history of its incorporation into goal-directed human action” (p. 117). These artifacts or tools can be conceptual, such as language and numerical systems, or material such as a table or a chair (Cole, 1996). It is through engagement

¹¹ Michael Cole (1996) argues that tools are a subset of artifacts, but the term “tools” is more commonly used in the literature.

with these tools in goal-directed activity with others that humans internalize the knowledge of the past and become more proficient at participating in the cultural practices of the present. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted language as the most important tool. He argued that language not only allows for the internalization of meaning or new ideas but it serves as the very means by which we structure our thinking (Vygotsky, 1962). In this way, as we master tools, we shape our actions and thoughts in culturally influenced ways (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000).

Theoretically, humans have potential access to all of the historically accumulated cultural tools of their time; however, individuals can only master the tools with which they come into contact in their local environments (Cole & Engström, 1993). Too often, the tools (texts, ideas, discourses, etc.) that are available to marginalized youth fail to be critical of injustice. Worse, many of these culturally shaped tools reinforce deficit notions of marginalized youth. For example, the construct of race is an ideational tool that has been employed in ways that limit the opportunities and practices of people of color (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Therefore, it is essential for critical learning sites to provide youth with critical tools that allow them to “internalize” a counter discourse that recognizes them as fully human, yet subjected to oppression (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

According to critical pedagogues, exposing learners to content that challenges injustice is an essential step in developing a critical identity. Freire (2000; 1973) proposes a problem posing approach as a method to awaken critical consciousness. Through dialogue, students identify a social problem in their lives, explore its root causes and look for solutions to it. The learners analyze their reality so they can realize the constraints on their lives and then act to change those oppressive conditions. By involving youth in the process of examining and

challenging the oppressive conditions *of their own lives*, educators can provide a relevant and situated context for the development of a critical identity (Freire, 2000).

In an analysis of two high school classrooms designed to promote democratic “citizenship” Westheimer and Kahne (2004) found that the ideologies of each learning site influenced the participants’ conceptions of justice and their corresponding civic commitments. The site that exposed students to critical content and analysis fostered a critical consciousness of injustices while the other did not. One classroom focused on citizenship as participation in community affairs but did not engage in reflections on the root causes of social problems. The students in this learning site increased their feelings of efficacy in leadership and interest in continued civic participation with the goal of helping others through the existing organizations in their communities. However, this program failed to increase students’ social critique or motivation for large-scale social justice efforts. On the other hand, the program that spent a considerable amount of time on social analysis and critique fostered these skills amongst students. Moreover, the students in this program were more likely to seek out structural solutions to social problems. However, they were also less likely to have developed technocratic skills associated with participation in governmental organizations.

Resource 2 –Relationships

Given the social nature of learning and development, relationships and positioning to others in a community of practice are instrumental to identity development. Quality relationships with others in the community of practice facilitate a connection to the community and serve as the instruments to pass on appropriate knowledge, tool use and practices to new participants. It is through co-participation with more-qualified others that new comers are able to successfully

participate in the cultural practices of the community (Vygotsky, 1978)¹². In addition, a key to learning or developing expertise within a community is identifying with and participating in the practices of that community. Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that participation, as belonging is “not only a crucial condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content” (p. 35). In other words, belonging not only sets the stage for learning but participation or belonging in the community is the very way learning is assessed. If students feel like they don’t belong in the classroom community, it is likely that they will not participate, or learn, in an effective manner.

From a critical pedagogy perspective, teaching should be based in a mutual sense of solidarity with and revolutionary care for the learner. Freire (2000) argues that the critical educator must not be driven by false generosity but motivated by a common struggle for social transformation towards the restoration of a common humanity. Thus, the critical community of practice should be based on co-participation in struggle against oppression. Darder (2002) describes Freire as a model for “teaching as an act of love” that is political and radicalized in its commitment to humanity. Critical pedagogues also underscore the importance of care in the critical classrooms. For example, bell hooks (1994)¹³ implores others to “teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students” (p. 13).

While there is limited empirical research on the impacts of relationships within critical classrooms, there is significant work in this area on classrooms in general. Studies of teacher support have identified it as a protective factor for urban school youth that promotes a sense of school engagement and positive academic outcomes (Rosenfeld, 2000, Coninger & Lee, 2001).

¹² This is a reference to Vygotsky’s idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) describes the ZPD as the distance between actual developmental level and the level that can be achieved through participation with more qualified others in goal-directed activity

¹³ hooks (1994) refers to her practice as “engaged pedagogy” rather than critical pedagogy but credits Freire with influencing her ideas.

Students who perceive their teachers to be supportive are almost half as likely to drop out of school (Croninger & Lee, 2001) and more likely to show more motivation, effort and interest in school (Brewster & Bowen, 2004) which is associated with improved achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004). In particular, a sense of belonging (a product of supportive relationships) in the school community significantly predicts positive academic outcomes for Latino adolescents (Sánchez, Cólón & Esparza, 2005; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Ibanez et al., 2003). These quantitative studies have made this connection between teacher support, school engagement and positive academic outcomes; however, qualitative research is needed to give a clearer picture of the practices of teachers and students that promote these successful relationships, especially within critical learning sites.

Research also indicates that relationship resources are key to positive youth development in organizing groups. Gambone et al. (2004) argued that the small size, non-hierarchical, and cooperative nature of participation between staff and youth helped to foster supportive relationships in these sites. In fact, students in these sites reported better relationships with program staff than youth in traditional youth development programs. Additional qualitative research within these youth activism sites should further explore the interactions between relationships and participation in these sites. For instance, the nature of “non-hierarchical” and “cooperative” relationships between adults needs further documentation. In addition, how do youth report being affected by their participation in these types of activities?

Resource 3 – Access to Participation in the Authentic Tasks of the Community of Practice

Access to participate in the authentic tasks of a learning community provides important opportunities for development. As touched upon above, this is a key factor in relationship

building. In addition, it is fundamental to learning and identity development. From the sociocultural perspective, the purpose of “education” should be to facilitate students’ ability to accomplish the important activities within relevant communities of practice. In order to develop these capacities, learners must have access to the authentic tasks of a learning community. However, access does not imply full responsibility over a task. Novices often learn best through co-participation and intent observation of these authentic tasks (Rogoff et al., 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

An individual’s ability to apply knowledge depends on the context in which they learn it (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Bruer, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Even the ability to problem solve *within* a field, such as mathematics, is influenced by the context in which the skills were learned and applied. For example, Carraher, Carraher & Schliemann (1987) found that Brazilian youth displayed remarkable computational skills in their roles as street vendors but struggled to apply these cognitive skills in the context of school-based mathematical problem solving where procedures were taught apart from a relevant context. This and other research on the situated nature of learning (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Cole, 1996; Lave, 1988) has led many educators to argue that the most effective way to promote in-depth learning is by engaging students in the authentic tasks of each discipline so that knowledge can be applied in those contexts (Bransford et al., 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Positioning youth as valued (but not necessarily expert) members within a community of practice will foster identities associated with that community. Learning sites should allow youth to participate collaboratively with more experienced members in the full breadth of authentic tasks of the community. However, participation should be appropriate to the youths’ zone of proximal development. That is, youth should participate in “leading activities” that are directed

towards their potential and that foster the ability to participate more effectively in the future practices of the community. In the case of community based organizing groups, participation for a novice in a media campaign will look different than that of a more experienced member. Expert members could model engagement with the media and provide activities that simulate these activities before youth are placed in these roles. In the case of the classroom, problem posing and dialogue serve as strategies to include youth in the practice of understanding and challenging the conditions of oppression. However, this does not mean that youth should be relegated to non-relevant tasks of the community or that “teaching” should involve the direct instruction of skills or knowledge decontextualized from its practice. However, through legitimate peripheral participation in the mature activity, youth can grow and develop the skills, knowledge, values and identity of a critical civic community.

Research on youth organizing is beginning to highlight how youths’ access to the authentic tasks of the community and their positioning in respect to the “experts” in an organization influence development. Adults in youth organizing groups sometimes experience tensions between emphasizing their campaign or youth development objectives. The choices they make can shape the type of outcomes youth experience in these sites. In a qualitative analysis of three youth organizing groups, Kirshner (2008) found that adults responded to these tensions in three different ways, which he calls facilitation, apprenticeship and joint work.¹⁴ The approaches differ along two dimensions 1) the level of adults participation in the campaigns and 2) the amount to which activities were organized around youth interest and skill level.

¹⁴ Kirshner builds off of Barbara Rogoff’s (2003) concept of guided participation which is congruent with many of the principles of Lave & Wenger’s (1991) legitimate peripheral participation.

The strategies adults employed combined with the activities of the organization lead to different youth outcomes (Kirshner, 2008). In facilitation, adults' foregrounded youth leadership, providing youth primary roles in planning projects and meetings. At the end of the process, youth reported feeling more effective at conducting meetings. The apprenticeship model focused on a campaign to lobby the local school board. Adults participated with youth but also encouraged youth leadership. In particular, they modeled and scaffolded the use of persuasive speech for youth as a relevant skill in this campaign. The youth in this program described "learning how to make an impact on social issues that they cared about" (Ibid, p. 92). In the joint work program, adults worked with youth as colleagues to plan a youth conference. While youth did not participate as leaders, they were able to observe the full range of activities involved in the project and still reported feeling like they could plan a conference. Together, these examples illustrate how positioning youth in particular ways within different learning sites can lead to distinct outcomes for youth. Additional research examining the distribution of access to authentic tasks between youth and adults in critical learning sites can provide further insights into how this social positioning affects engagement and identity development.

In sum, we have theoretical and practice based evidence that have identified characteristics that promote engagement within learning sites. Namely, when individuals have access to the content, relationships and authentic tasks of a learning community, they tend to take on the more expert-like identities of those communities. There are three points I would like to highlight. First, as Westheimer and Kahne (2004) showed, the nature of the content of learning sites influences individuals' development of consciousness and notions of civic commitments. Second, quality relationships foster belonging and engagement in learning sites. Gambone et al., (2004) argue that collaborative and non-hierarchical interactions with adults are particularly

effective at fostering quality adult-youth relationships. Third, the way we position youth in respect to adults and the access we provide them to the authentic tasks of the community will influence their development (Kirshner, 2008). In the next section, I review a few programs that attempt to provide youth with access to critical content, mentors and tasks to foster their critical civic development.

Towards an Understanding of Critical Civic Development

Empirical research on the characteristics of critical learning sites is sparse, and studies that explore the connections between learning site conditions and youth outcomes are even more rare.

One point that has been reiterated is that when opportunities for social criticism are coupled with efforts to imagine and enact solutions, youth experience several positive developmental outcomes (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; 2007; Strobel, Osberg & McLaughlin, 2006). Strobel, Osberg and McLaughlin (2006) documented increased commitment and agency towards both academic success and community change for students participating in a youth activism program. The youth in the study showed dramatic shifts in their commitment to social change as well as their own academic success. Strobel et al., (2006) argue that the youth identities shifted from "at-risk youth" to "valuable civic actors" through their participation in the organization. The authors assert the importance of developmental spaces "dedicated to repositioning youth as active agents in their own lives and in their surrounding contexts" (p. 211). They propose that the developmental shifts occurred "when social criticism was connected to active and constructive problem solving" (p. 212). This study

provides reason to further explore the characteristics of sites that attempt to provide youth with these opportunities.

Ernest Morrell's research (2004) highlights how helping youth realize themselves as creators of culture (knowledge) and individuals with agency led them to develop critical civic identities. The research documents the efforts of a theoretically informed social design project specifically aimed to promote the development of academic and critical literacy amongst urban youth. One component of the project, a summer program at a local university, engaged youth in critical research on educational inequities in their schools. The second component of the project placed youth in critical English classrooms at their high school during the school year. The study documents the process of four students developing a strong critical analysis, increasingly participating in social justice efforts and experiencing positive academic outcomes over the period of two years as members of these learning sites. Morrell shows how as freshman the students began with no research experience and basic literacy skills (legitimate peripheral participants) and became more expert researchers (full participants) over time through examining, researching and acting to change the oppressive conditions of their lives within these critical research communities:

Students began to see themselves as intellectuals and as researchers. They also saw that...research could have both a social origin and a social impact.

Throughout the remainder of their high school careers, these students...would also use their knowledge and their new identities to challenge social injustice in their schools and their communities. (p. 85)

Morrell (2004) argues that the students developed confidence in themselves as they came to believe that they were creators of knowledge and could have an impact on the world.

Subsequently, this led them to participate in transformational civic action. In fact, in following up with student graduates of the program, he found that several of them had either created or joined organizations that worked for educational justice in their schools and communities.

Through the study, Morrell (2004) provides a model for understanding the development of critical consciousness and motivation for social action as a process of identity formation nurtured by reflection and action within a critical community of practice. The quote below by Jaime shows the identity changes he went through during his participation in the program:

Personally, it's been a rough, hard, and short journey from being an incoming high school freshman with a lack of a critical perspective to a Chicano rights and justice, revolutionary/activist senior, on the road to the next level of education. (p. 122)

Clearly, the opportunity to participate in critical research and action had profound effects on his identity. He, and the other participants, developed sophisticated research skills, a critique of social inequality and an agency for social change. In addition, the participants developed academic skills and saw themselves as college bound – outcomes that can also promote critical consciousness and transformational civic participation.

Critical Civic Development and Academic Development

A successful critical community of practice will have to promote educational success as a component of the model. While performing well in a colonizing institution like school might seem like a contradiction, it can be a transformational act for students who see it as an opportunity to later improve their community (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). For instance, the youth in Morrell's study came to see their research and education as a means for promoting

social change and were subsequently motivated to further pursue schooling. Similarly, Delgado Bernal (1999) found that for Chicanas the desire to give back to their communities served as a motivating factor for enduring despite educational challenges. One student declared, “I’m going to study to teach others, be the best that I could be in my community. Be a community leader, basically support my community, where I come from” (p. 632). However, to be “decolonizing”, this pursuit of education and desire to give back to the community must be embedded within a critical consciousness that aims to confront social inequalities at all levels.

Educational success can also be important to critical civic development because studies indicate that higher education is a site where many Chicanos/Latinos develop their consciousness through participation in ethnic studies courses, student organizations and contact with other Chicanos/Latinos (Urrieta, 2004). Villalpando (2003) found that when Chicanos participated in Chicano peer groups their “socially conscious (or altruistic) values are reinforced”, and they are more likely to pursue careers serving their communities. It appears that through collective actions and reflective dialogues, these students develop a more critical consciousness (Urrieta, 2004). However, other collections of Latino sub groups may not have the same outcomes if their political orientations are different than Chicanos. Moreover, higher education will not guarantee the development of critical consciousness because these institutions also primarily serve to pass on the ideologies of the dominant system. Nonetheless, the social environments promoting reflection and action amongst Chicanos in higher education clearly hold the possibility of generating critical consciousness and social action and this could be the case for other Latino sub-groups.

Studies have identified conditions that promote critical civic identities; however, additional research is needed to understand how these conditions are produced across different

contexts, such as school and community based learning sites. Specifically, we need to know more about the associations between practices and youth outcomes within these learning sites. For instance, the role of adults in these sites in providing opportunities to “enact change” and participate in social criticism needs to be explored.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Through two case studies, I explore the relationships between the characteristics of two critical learning sites and youth development outcomes. By exploring a school-based learning setting (a high school social studies classroom) and an out-of-school one (youth organizing group), I highlight the characteristics of critical learning sites that promote engagement, which in turn fosters critical civic development. My conception of learning, engagement and development are grounded in the sociocultural theoretical framework, which argues that these processes are socially negotiated during co-participation in cultural practices within a situated context (Davis, 2003; Lee, 2001). Our actions, who we interact with and the context in which these interactions occur all influence what we learn and who we become. Most importantly, access to quality engagement within learning settings fosters the opportunity to learn and develop into particular types of individuals.

The goal of this study is to examine and better understand the relationships between characteristics of critical learning sites, youth engagement and critical civic development. In particular, I seek to document the different opportunities that structurally unique learning sites provide youth to develop. In this study, I initially defined a “critical learning site” as one that aims to promote critical civic identities consisting of a consciousness of social injustices and a motivation to address them through civic action. However, the dissertation explores more than just identity, and looks at how the sites promote critical civic development, which is comprised

of critical and civic engagement, identity and competence as components to mark development.¹⁵ Lastly, I conceptualize “engagement” as a process of legitimate peripheral participation where novices have quality access to the content, relationships and authentic tasks of a community of practice. In a critical community of practice, this entails access to critical content, quality relationships with adult mentors who model critical civic identity and participation within the authentic tasks of the community.

Critical Case Studies

Given my interest in *how* characteristics of learning sites interact with engagement and development, a qualitative methodology is best suited for this study (Merriam, 1998). In particular, I have chosen a case study approach because it is well suited to examine in-depth, a case within its “real-life” context” (Yin, 2006, p. 111). The case study approach is effective for answering the types of descriptive and explanatory questions addressed by this study. While case studies can utilize mixed methods, this study relies on interviews, participant observation and artifact analysis to better understand the ways that the two learning sites influence critical civic development.

I refer to my specific approach as *critical* case studies because of the perspective I bring to the work. As the main instrument in a qualitative and critical study, the researcher’s paradigm or epistemology influences the way that social and cultural life is documented and interpreted (Wolcott, 1988; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). As a researcher and educator, I bring a critical perspective that situates human cultural practices within an oppressive capitalist structure that marginalizes individuals based on race, class, gender and sexuality. While I situate knowledge

¹⁵ In Chapter Four, I will present my model for indexing critical civic development and explain the process of assessing youth development more in depth.

and experience within this historical power structure, I also recognize that postmodern insights that question the existence of a standard “truth” are important (Carspecken, 1996). I agree with Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), who take postmodern insights (questioning traditional truths and reality) to shape a "resistance" postmodernism that recognizes how perceptions are mediated through power relations.

In the tradition of critical research, I undertook this study with the goals of exposing and confronting power imbalances and social injustices (Carspecken, 1996; Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). I believe that low-income students of color are marginalized through direct and indirect racism and class oppression that challenge their development and help to reproduce patterns of inequities. Through this study I sought to understand the local practices of two critical learning sites to improve our understanding of the types of environments that promote empowered and critically conscious youth. I also situate this development within its socio-historical context, and explore how oppression based on race, class, age, and immigration status affect youths’ opportunities to develop. In this way, I examine the structural and proximal constraints and affordances that promote or inhibit critical civic development within each learning site.

In line with critical research, I approached this study with the aim of not only documenting but also promoting social transformation and empowerment of the study participants. I acknowledge that research should be beneficial to the researcher but also be organized to benefit marginalized people in society (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). During this study, I was actively engaged in the work of the community youth organization and committed to helping youth confront the injustices in the Riverton¹⁶ community while also fostering critical civic development. While participating with the organization, I assisted in the development of

¹⁶ The names of the community, school, organization and participants are all pseudonyms.

curriculum, gathering research for the organization and providing support for the many mundane to complex tasks of organizing and youth development (including picking up youth, developing and implementing workshops, homework assistance, survey development, etc.). Likewise, I assisted the classroom teacher with the academic and critical development of the students within his classroom.

Explanation of Study

I employed qualitative case study methods (observation, field notes, interviews and artifact analysis) to document and analyze the practices and outcomes of two learning sites, a classroom and a community-based youth organizing group. The structures of these two learning sites vary along several dimensions. For instance, classrooms within traditional schools tend to be compulsory, have a fixed time frame allotted to them and have a particular content prescribed by state or national standards, while community-based youth organizing groups typically are not bound by these constraints. On the other hand, adults in youth organizing are constrained by the goal of winning civic campaigns and have limited time and training to convey critical content to youth.

Nevertheless, these two sites also have similarities. For instance, each case site for this study represents a learning space where an adult “educator” attempts to promote both critical and civic development for the participating learners. By examining a community-based youth organizing group and a high school social studies classroom, two structurally different sites with similar youth development goals, this dissertation highlights how the characteristics of learning settings influence engagement and critical civic development processes (Yin, 2006). In addition,

I highlight how these two locations provide different affordances and challenges for promoting engagement that leads to critical civic development.

Over the course of fifteen months, I interviewed youth and educators in each site while also participating with them in the practices of the organizing group and the two social studies classrooms. The data presented in this dissertation comes from the 71 interviews conducted during the study. However, observational and artifact data were also collected, analyzed and included in this work. By participating in the range of activities in which the community organization and social justice educators engaged youth, I was able to observe the relationship between the practices of the two critical learning spaces, as well as their effects on youth engagement and critical civic development. Collectively, the interview, observational and artifact resources informed my conclusions around the local educational site characteristics and global structural features that influenced critical civic development for the youth in the study.

The study included observation of two classroom teachers, however, this dissertation focuses on the practices of the teacher in the first year. During year one, I observed Mr. Sanchez's Sophomore World History class and his Senior Government and Economics class. In year two, I followed the tenth graders into their junior year U.S. History classes with a different teacher to observe their engagement and critical civic development over time. The intention was to define the school-based learning "site" as the social studies department at Pierce High School, with these two teachers representing two-thirds of the department. However, this dissertation focuses on the practices of the teacher during the first year of the study for several reasons. Most importantly, the two teachers had significantly different teaching practices. Including both teachers' classrooms would have essentially added another "site" with different relationships, content and student positioning. This would have provided an additional layer of complexity

without necessarily providing important insights into the questions of the study. A comparison between the two teachers' classrooms is something I plan to document for future research and publication.

Description of the Community, School and Sites

The Community – Riverton.

The study took place at two learning sites located five blocks away from each other in Riverton, a predominantly Latino (92%), low-income neighborhood within a large urban city in southern California. In the first half of the 20th century, Riverton was one of the most diverse communities within the larger city. However, by the 1950s Riverton grew increasingly segregated and in 1969 Mexican Americans comprised 80% of the Riverton community (Romo, 1983; Sides, 2003).

As segregation grew, so did social and economic marginalization. In the 1960s and early 1970s, several reports highlighted the marginalization of individuals with Spanish surnames in California and the Southwest. One report in 1963 showed how Mexican Americans were disproportionately subjected to unfair housing conditions (Salazar, 1963). Another highlighted high rates of unemployment, lower rates of pay and unequal access to the best employment opportunities (Californians of Spanish Surname, 1964). The deindustrialization of the 1970s and 1980s only served to exacerbate the economic conditions of working class Latinos throughout the city, many of whom lived in the Riverton community (Pastor, 2001).

Latino youth also experienced educational marginalization in the community's schools. The teachers and schools often operated from deficit notions of Latino students, holding very low-expectations for their achievement. Five out of ten schools in the Riverton community did

not allow students to speak Spanish, sometime physically disciplining them if they did (Inda, 1990). Some teachers were blatantly racist. In a 1968 open meeting to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, a Riverton teacher reported hearing his colleagues say, “I have never had a Mexican who could think for himself” and “These Mexican kids, why do they have to be here?” (p. 7). These caustic conditions resulted in inferior outcomes for students in the community. Two of the high schools in the Riverton community had the highest dropout rates in the district, with one only graduating about 46% of its students and Pierce High School only 53% (CA State Advisory Committee, 1968).

While many residents in the community have been historically excluded from the electoral process, there is a long record of politically involved groups and individuals who have fought for educational and social justice on behalf of the Latino community (Acuña, 1984; Romo, 1983). Up until the 1990s, political gerrymandering resulted in limited voting power of the Latino voting block and resulted in very few Latino politicians being elected (García-Bedolla, 2005). By the late 1960s the combined results of marginalization and the inspirations of the Civil Rights movement led many Latinos to develop grassroots organizations to confront the marginalization of their people and education became the central issue around which to organize (Inda, 1990). For instance, in the late 1960s, thousands of youth protested the deplorable conditions of their schools. This student strike is a historic moment in Latino organizing, that spurred many individuals in the community and nation to organize around issues of educational injustice (Muñoz, 1994). The organizations that followed and their victories helped to build a culture of Latino solidarity and organizing within the community (García-Bedolla, 2005).

Despite these valiant efforts, the residents in the community today continue to be subjected to inferior economic and educational opportunities that consistently foster the

reproduction of social inequalities.¹⁷ Approximately twenty-three percent of families in the community earn wages that put them under the poverty line (Census, 2008). By comparison, the national percentage of families earning wages under the poverty line is nine percent. Even more striking, only forty-four percent of adults over twenty-five have a high school diploma compared to eighty percent of adults over twenty-five nationwide (Ibid, 2008). Given the correlation between income, education levels and electoral participation, it would be expected that registration and voting are low within the community (de la Garza, 2004). Moreover, forty-four percent of the residents in the community are foreign-born, indicating the likelihood of many individuals who are excluded from the electoral process.

The School

The school district serving Riverton is one of the largest in the country, with almost seven hundred thousand students. Close to three quarters of the students are Latino, with the next two largest groups being African Americans at about eleven percent and Whites at eight percent. There are 768 schools in the district with 635 of those schools designated as Title I schools.¹⁸ Due to the expansive nature of the district, it is sub-divided into eight local districts. Considering this large and diverse context, it is most informative to know the particular demographics of an individual high school, which often largely reflects the nature of its local district.

Pierce Senior High School. Originally a spacious school for mostly middle class Jewish students, Pierce is now a severely overcrowded institution serving a predominantly low-income

¹⁷ These inequalities include school overcrowding, low teacher quality, etc.

¹⁸ District and school data reflect the 2007-2008 school year and are available on the district website and a statewide data resource at <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>).

Latino population. Pierce Senior High School opened for instruction in 1923 and had fewer than a thousand students for most of its first decade of operation. Pierce now enrolls over 4,600 students, of which 99% are Latino. The ten Asian American students at the school represent the second “largest” demographic group. Almost 85% of the students are designated for free or reduced lunch and slightly over a third are classified as “English language learners” whose native language is Spanish. The published test scores for Pierce are low. The Academic Performance Index (API) is 551 out of a possible 1000, while 800 is the state target and 720 the statewide average (<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>). The overall percent of 9th grade students at or above proficiency in English is 20% and 9% for Algebra I (these percentages are consistent across grade levels). The educational attainment rates of the high school show little improvement from the results that spurred mass protests in the 1960s. In 2006-2007, the school’s pushout¹⁹ rate was reported by the state at 25.6% (<http://dq.cde.ca.gov/>) but other accounts estimate that up to 57% of the students who begin Pierce in the 9th grade do not graduate from the school.²⁰ Moreover, only nine out of every one hundred freshman graduate four years later having fulfilled the requirements that would make them eligible for admission into California’s four-year colleges (Rogers, Valladares, Medina, Oakes, Del Razo, Renee & Ali, 2007).

¹⁹ Borrowing from Michelle Fine (1991), I use the term “pushout” in place of dropout to underscore the role that school environments play in a student’s decision to discontinue their education.

²⁰ The processes to determine pushout rates vary considerably. However, published reports consistently find that many more students within the Riverton community are not graduating from high school, particularly when compared to their White, suburban, middle class counterparts.

The Youth Organizing Group - United For Justice (UFJ)

The youth organizing group highlighted in this study is called United For Justice (UFJ). The organization works with youth and families from the Riverton community to fight for educational justice. The organization has successfully tackled many issues, including campaigning to build new schools in the community, championing equitable funding and fighting to establish graduation requirements that would ensure all students eligibility to California's four-year colleges and universities. UFJ is comprised of approximately ten adult staff members with previous experience organizing, either professionally or voluntarily. All staff members are Latino and most grew up and still live in the community. The organizers supporting the youth component are between the ages of twenty and twenty-seven. The staff and organization are committed to addressing community issues and fostering youth and adult capacity to address these issues. UFJ sponsors youth clubs at four of the local high schools as well as junior high school clubs and a parent organization. The different components of UFJ often contribute to common campaigns but also focus on issues specific to each subgroup. At each high school, there are General Members who meet weekly with an adult staff member of UFJ at lunchtime to learn about and discuss the group's campaigns and other relevant community issues. Each school has a subset of students who also participate in the Coordinating Committee, which meets weekly at the UFJ office to plan organizational activities and participate in trainings to develop as leaders.

Summary of Sample Description

The historical snapshot of the community, the state of educational outcomes in the neighborhood and the work of UFJ in the community indicate that schools and society are failing

many of the youth of Riverton. It is imperative to uncover the systems that oppress students and design schools and classrooms that allow them to achieve their potential in the face of these obstacles. While the statistics at schools like Pierce are dire, it is critical not to essentialize the youth in the community and recognize that many are succeeding academically and many are challenging the forces that marginalize individuals within the community.

Selection of Sites

UFJ: The Youth Organizing Group

Two main factors influenced the purposeful selection of United For Justice (UFJ) as the youth activism site for this study: 1) the organization's reputation as an effective youth organizing group and 2) my previous experience volunteering with them as part of an initial pilot study. My introduction to UFJ came when one of my graduate school advisors (a supporter of the organization) invited me to their yearly fundraising dinner in the fall of 2007. There I observed students and adult organizers working collaboratively to put on the event while speaking passionately about educational justice and the work they had done to improve their neighborhood schools. I subsequently found the organization highlighted in scholarly publications where they were described as a site where power was developed (Oakes & Rogers, 2006) and positive resistance was fostered amongst youth and community members (Hosang, 2006). From an academic standpoint and my interests in critical pedagogy, sociocultural learning theory and youth development, I wanted to know more about how these processes occurred over time for the youth involved. From a personal perspective, I was eager to return to working with youth and community organizations after having spent two years focused on graduate course work.

In the spring of 2008, one of my graduate school advisors introduced me to the executive director of UFJ and I signed on to do a pilot study with the organization. During the summer of 2008, I received a fellowship through the UCLA graduate division, which allowed me to “intern” with UFJ approximately 20 hours a week. During that time, I conducted participant observation, developed relationships with the staff and student members of the organization, and shared in the work and celebrations of the group. In the fall of 2008, I volunteered intermittently with the organization. In the winter of 2009, I approached the executive director of UFJ with a preliminary proposal for my dissertation study. In an initial meeting, we both conceptualized the research relationship as a collaboration, one where I would actively contribute to the organization through the study while minimizing the intrusions to the normal practice of the site. The director also made a point to say that she had had multiple requests by researchers to study the site but had consistently denied their requests. The difference, in this case, was that I had already spent considerable time working with the organization and she acknowledged my efforts and contributions to the group. To me, this signaled that I had become a valued member of the group, with a certain amount of “insider status.” However, I also had maintained a degree of “outsider” status given that I had not been a full time member of the organization. In addition, the fact that I was a researcher from UCLA, and not an organizer from the community, prevented me from being a complete “insider.”

My participation, observations and interviews of students within UFJ allowed me to identify UFJ as a site that promotes both the critical and civic development of its youth members. A key characteristic of this site is the manner in which the adult organizers interact with the youth participants. While adult organizers are not teachers, they do see themselves as educators committed to the critical and civic development of students. During the summer of 2009, I

interviewed eight graduating seniors from UFJ, who all reported that the organization and these particular individuals helped them to develop a critical perspective on community issues that they did not have before. Moreover, several of the students discussed how their participation in UFJ led them to have a greater motivation for academic success. These interviews led me to want to explore the characteristics of the organization that fosters these outcomes. Moreover, I wanted to explore the connections between students' out-of-school and in-school experiences.

Social Studies Classroom

Several factors went into the purposeful selection of the classroom under study (Merriam, 1998). The inclusion of a classroom and not another youth organizing group was intended to highlight the affordances and challenges of different learning contexts for promoting critical and civic development. The choice of social studies was appropriate because it is a subject that typically includes a civics component and provides opportunities for students to examine and critique social conditions and their origins. In order to include a population of students similar to those who participate in UFJ, I wanted to identify a teacher at one of the four high schools where UFJ supports student clubs. Subsequently, it was essential that the teacher express a commitment to promoting critical and civic engagement for all students because I wanted to compare sites where educators had similar youth development goals. I considered a teacher with a prior relationship to UFJ ideal because I wanted to explore possible connections between the two sites (i.e. mutual students and campaigns). Moreover, a relationship with UFJ would be helpful in facilitating my access to the teacher.

The selected teacher, Saul Sanchez, was recommended by two adult organizers within UFJ as an ideal candidate for the study because of his reputation as a critical educator and his

collaboration with UFJ as a teacher sponsor of one of the four high school clubs. I have categorized Saul as a “critical” educator because of his commitment to promoting critical and civic development amongst his students. I contacted Saul by email in the summer of 2009. In a subsequent phone conversation with him, I learned more about his teaching philosophies and I answered his questions about the study. He quickly shared his excitement for the study and expounded on his efforts to promote the development of social consciousness amongst his students. As a teacher sponsor, Saul had familiarity with UFJ but had not participated in the club events beyond making his classroom space available for a weekly lunchtime meeting at the school. However, many of his students had become members within UFJ and I was interested in exploring how participation in his class might affect students’ motivation to participate in activities like community organizing. Lastly, I wanted to identify additional ways that critical teachers and youth organizing groups might support each other’s work to promote youth development.

In addition to being “critical,” Saul has several other qualities that made his classroom a compelling site for this study. Having grown up and gone to school in Riverton, Saul has a shared culture and history with his students as well as many of the adult organizers at UFJ. This allowed me to explore the extent to which these educator background characteristics influenced interactions within the sites. Also, with ten years of experience, Saul was not faced with the challenges of transitioning to teaching, a condition that many young social justice educators encounter. Moreover, he had demonstrated a sustained commitment to promoting critical development and was aware of the challenges that accompany these efforts. Lastly, Saul has a master’s degree in education and is supportive of research aimed to improve the educational opportunities of low-income students of color.

Selection of the Participants

Purposeful Selection of Focal Group

In the selection of students for the study I identified “novices” and “intermediates” in relationships to schooling and community activism. I was interested in the two learning sites and their effects on all students. However, this tiered focal group of students allowed me to look for differences in engagement by “expertise” in the site. Moreover, it allowed me to compare students’ self-reflections on their experiences in the sites.

In the youth organizing group, I selected six youth who were just beginning to participate (novices)²¹ in the leadership component (Coordinating Committee) of the group (less than three months) and six youth who had been in the leadership of the organization for a year or more (intermediates). All of the students I asked to participate in the study agreed. Distinct differences between new and more experienced members were explored to make connections between identity trajectories and the effects of differences in length and/or nature of participation within the organization.

In the classroom site, I selected six students from the social studies teacher’s 10th grade World History class (novices) and six students from his 12th grade Government & Economics class (intermediates).²² Again, the students I approached to be a part of the study all agreed. I

²¹ One of the novices in UFJ stopped participating in the group early in the study and could not be reached for a follow up interview. Her initial interview was reviewed but her case was not included in analysis of focal students because it was not comparable to the amount of data obtained for the rest of the UFJ focal group.

²² One of the 12th graders in the classroom group stopped coming to school midway through the first year of study and could not be reached for a follow up interview. His initial interview was reviewed but his case was not included in analysis of focal students because it was not comparable to the amount of data obtained for the rest of the classroom focal group.

purposely selected students with a range grade point averages to see if students' incoming level of success with school was associated with engagement in the classroom. While the academic engagement levels and the students' levels of social critique vary within each classroom, the 10th graders had less experience in high school and high school level social studies classes. This allowed me to compare students who were "newer" to high school and social studies to those who have had more experience in these spaces. While disengagement in school is a longitudinal process (Valenzuela, 1999; Alexander, Erstwile & Horsey, 1997), the first few years of high school can be a critical period for students (Neild, Stoner-Eby & Furstenberg, 2008; Roderick & Camburn, 1999). In particular, many students of color attending large urban high schools leave school during these first two years. On the other hand, 12th graders have already navigated through the majority of high school and are more likely to have developed an academic identity or sense of belonging within the school environment. It was expected that the students in the two classes likely also differed in the level of exposure to teachers that encourage critical analysis of historical and contemporary issues. This turned out to be the case. For instance, the 10th graders were taking their first high school social studies class and were not accustomed to the type of critical content presented by Sanchez. On the other hand, three of the 12th graders had already taken a class with the focal teacher. By selecting students from these two classes, I was able to explore the effects of grade level, time in high school, and previous experience with critical teachers as factors in critical civic development.

In order to give me a deeper understand of the classroom, I conducted additional interviews with students outside of the focal group. Because of the structure of the classroom, I found that I had much less time to speak with focal students in the classroom than with the youth in the organizing group. Moreover, I had conducted a pilot study in the youth organizing group

and had interviewed several other members. These factors led me to feel that I had a stronger grasp of students' perceptions of their experiences in the organizing group. Therefore, I decided to conduct focus group interviews with additional students from both classes to provide additional insights into students' experiences in the classroom. There were six focus group interviews: Three with a total of ten sophomores and three with a total of twelve seniors.

Characteristics and “Comparability” of Students Across Sites

I attempted to select a comparable group of students across the two sites, but differences do exist. The youth all come from the same low-income community and attend the same under resourced schools. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide background information on the focal students from the classroom and UFJ, respectively. Unless otherwise noted, the information describes them as they were at the beginning of the study. As can be seen from the tables, the youth from both learning spaces had experienced varying degrees of academic success as measured by grades. However, the majority of students in both sites had grades indicative of relative success in high school (with the exceptions of Alfonzo and Alejandra in the classroom and Victor in UFJ). It is important to note that three UFJ youth, Nilda, Carla and Arlene all reported receiving much lower grades before their involvement with UFJ. Each site also had similar numbers of students who described themselves as shy and outgoing respectively. This distribution of students allowed me to explore how youth with different incoming levels of comfort with social interactions participated in the two sites.

Altogether, the UFJ focal group youth were more involved with civic activities but the classroom students were not far behind. In the tables, I have indicated if students were involved in any civic activities at the beginning of the study. In the classroom site, five students were

involved as members of UFJ. Three of these five, the seniors, also participated in other civic clubs or organizations. In the UFJ focal group, two of the five novices (David and Cristina) were just beginning to be involved in civic activities and Mercedes had been involved in tutoring and other community service activities for some time. Four of the six intermediates in UFJ were civically engaged at the beginning of the study, but had not been when they started with UFJ. Lastly, the classroom focal group sample has a few more sophomores because being a novice in UFJ was defined by time in the space and not year in school.

There were differences in the amount of time the youth spent in each learning site and the level of choice in participating in them. The UFJ intermediates all had one to three years of previous experience in the leadership component of UFJ. On the other hand, only three of the classroom intermediates had previous experience (one year) with the classroom teacher. In addition, the youth in UFJ voluntarily chose to participate in the organizing group, while participation in the classroom was mandatory. However, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, youth primarily did not start UFJ with strong identities as critical civic agents. Rather, they often started attending General Member meetings to get free snacks, college credit or because of a friend's or organizer's encouragement. Nevertheless, the UFJ 'novices' were not complete beginners in UFJ. They were new to the leadership component of the group, but they already had experience with General Member Meetings - the introductory component of UFJ - and decided to take on a larger role in the organization by attending the leadership meetings.

The purposeful selection of reasonably comparable group of focal youth allows me to examine critical civic development amongst low-income Latino youth in two different learning sites. Although there are important differences between the groups it is important to point out that this study was not set up to be an experimental comparison of the two sites. The point is not

to say that one site is better than the other. The key is to highlight how each site can contribute to critical civic development and identify the characteristics and structural features that support and challenge those goals in each site.

Table 3.1. Incoming Characteristics of Classroom Focal Students

Students	Grade in Sanchez	GPA	Social ID	Civic Engagement
<i>Sophomores</i>				
Alfonzo	F	0.54	Shy	None
Valerie	C	2.22	Shy	None
Perla	B	3.05	Shy	None
Luci	A	2.82	Outspoken	None
Pedro	B	2.41	Outspoken	UFJ member meetings
Cesar	B	3.5	Outspoken	UFJ member meetings
<i>Seniors</i>				
Alejandra*	B	1.3	Outspoken	None
Armando	A	2.71	Shy	None
Selena	B	3.14	Shy	UFJ member meetings, Police Cadet Program
Marc*	A	3.29	Outspoken	UFJ member meetings, Young Senators, tutor
Mercedes*	A	4.0	Shy	UFJ Leadership, tutor, community service

* Indicates this student has taken one of Sanchez's classes before.

Table 3.2. Incoming Characteristics of UFJ Focal Youth

Youth	Year in School/ Start in UFJ	Grades	Social ID	Civic Engagement
<i>Novices</i>				
David	Sophomore/ Sophomore	B's, C's & D's	Outgoing	Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)
Arlene	Sophomore/ Sophomore	A's & B's (one C)*	Outgoing	None
Cristina	Junior/ Junior	A's & B's	Shy	Key Club, GSA
Vero	Junior/ Junior	A's & B's	Outgoing	None
Mercedes*	Senior/ Senior	A's	Shy	Tutor
<i>Intermediates</i>				
Maria	Sophomore/ Freshman	A's & B's (one C)	Shy	School Leadership
Elvira	Junior/ Sophomore	A's & B's	Shy	School Leadership
Nilda	Senior/ Freshman	A's, B's & C's*	Shy	Student Action Council
Carla	Senior/ Freshman	A's, B's & C's*	Outgoing	Student Action Council
Victor	Senior/ Freshman	D's & F's	Outgoing	None
Paul	Senior/ Junior	A's & B's	Shy	None

*These are their grades at the beginning of the study. However, they indicated much lower grades (F's) before starting with UFJ

Data Collection

This dissertation explores the ways that critical learning spaces provide opportunities for engagement that support critical civic development. In my data collection, I documented features of the learning sites as well as indicators of students' critical civic development. The following data sources were used in this study to provide evidence of engagement and critical civic development in the sites.

Interviews

I conducted a total of 71 interviews with 44 students and eight educators across the two sites. In the 34 UFJ interviews, there were fewer youth and more educators interviewed than in the classroom site. However, the youth interviews were longer. Each of the 11 UFJ focal youth were interviewed twice, with an average length of 65 minutes. In addition, I have 11 interviews with seven UFJ adult organizer educators, averaging 68 minutes. I also conducted a focus group with focal students after their participation in a series of UFJ workshops. For the school-based setting, I have 37 total interviews, with 33 students and two educators. Each of the 11 focal youth was interviewed two to four times (with the exception of Selena, who was interviewed once). The first interviews were the longest, averaging 42 minutes long while follow-up interviews averaged 18 minutes. There were also six focus group interviews with 22 students (12 seniors and 10 sophomores) that averaged 37 minutes. Lastly, I interviewed each of the two teachers in the study twice. Those interviews averaged just over two hours long.

The first interviews with focal students differed from subsequent ones. The first interview (See Appendix A) was semi-structured to provide some consistency across the two case studies (Yin, 2006) but also flexible to allow for follow-up questions and the exploration and identifications of new domains needed to understand the experiences of students (Schensul, Schensul Le Compte, 1999). The subsequent interviews were shorter, for the purpose of following-up on themes from the first interview and member checking. However, the UFJ follow-up interviews tended to be longer, partly because time was less of a constraint and student responses were typically more involved. The interviews with the youth from UFJ were conducted first because I had established a rapport with these students that I hoped would

facilitate the interview process. First round interviews with classroom participants occurred after several months of participant observation to allow me time to develop an initial relationship with students and a preliminary understanding of the learning site. The second round and focus group interviews with classroom students were conducted in the spring of the first year of the study, at the end of the school year (See Appendix B). This allowed me to interview seniors before they graduated and follow up with all students regarding their perceptions of and experiences within the classroom. I interviewed the school “novices” a third time at the end of the fall semester of their junior year in school (See Appendix C). In addition, I conducted brief interviews with these classroom students at the end of their junior year. The UFJ second round interviews occurred in the fall of the second year of the study (See Appendix C).

The interviews with youth were used to obtain the students’ perspectives on their participation in each learning site and their attitudes towards injustice and civic participation. The semi-structured interview is divided into two main parts.

The first part of the interview aimed to generate information about the students’ identities, particularly their academic, civic and critical identities. This section began by asking the student interviewee to “tell me about yourself?” to provide an open-ended question for the interviewee to describe him or herself. This section of the interview continued with questions about the student’s relationship to schooling: “describe yourself as a student?” and “do you like school?” These and other questions sought to document the student’s interest, motivation, effort and aspirations in regards to schooling. Following this were questions that provide information about the students’ critical and civic identities. Examples include: a) “How often do you talk about politics or issues affecting your community?” b) “Do you feel like all students in the United

States have equal educational opportunities? Why or why not?" c) "Right now, do you feel like you can make a change in your community? Why or why not?"

The second part of the interview aimed to document the students' perspectives on their participation within the learning site. The first two questions asked the students about the goals of the learning site and their own goals within this community. The students' responses to these questions provided insights into the extent to which they had internalized the goals and values of the community of practice, a component of identity formation. Moreover, the student responses represent their perspective on the goals and practices of the community, which can be entirely different than the educator's perspectives. A second subset of questions asked the students about the content of the learning site. The questions sought to reveal what the students thought they learned, their level of interest and comprehension of the material, and the relevance of the content to their lives. The aim of these questions was to provide information about the relationship between access to critical content and engagement within the learning site. A third subset of questions sought to obtain the students' perspectives on the nature of the relationships within the learning sites. Questions included: a) "How do you feel about coming to class/the organization? b) "What are the relationships like between the teacher and students or organizer and students? c) Do you feel like the adult(s) here care about you? The students' answers were used to explore the importance of quality relationships to engagement and identity formation within a learning site. A fourth subset of questions focuses on the student's participation and access to the authentic tasks of the learning community. Example of questions in this section are: a) "What is your role in this classroom/organization?" b) "Do you see yourself as an important contributor to this class/organization? Why or why not?" These questions allowed students to share perspectives on the nature of their participation, which were less observable in field notes.

A final subset of questions provided the students with an opportunity to report on the impacts, if any, the learning site had on them. I asked the students: “Has being in this class/organization changed you in any way?” Then I asked follow up questions about impacts on students views on school, their community, their culture and their identity. These student self-reflections, along with the educators’ perspectives and my field observations were key to documenting the nature of students’ critical civic development.

Interviews with adult educators provided their perspectives on their practice and the educational site’s impact on youth critical and civic development. Similar to the student interview, the educator interview protocols (See Appendices D & E) contain two sections, one about the educator’s background and one about the learning site. The first section sought to obtain information about the educator’s schooling and professional background, reasons for entering education/organizing and his or her perspective on inequality and community change. The second part of the interview centers on the nature of goals, relationships, content and student positioning in the community of practice. In addition, the educator was asked to give his/her insights about the focal students in the study.

Participant Observation

Participant observations took place one to two times weekly at each learning site over the course of fifteen months. Participant observations allowed me to become familiar with the details and interactions taking place within the youth organizing group and classroom, in order to highlight what might be obscured by more statistical accounts. This data collection method allowed me to build relationships with students and adult educators and help me begin to understand the context and local culture, leading to the documentation of patterns and the

development of effective strategies for facilitating youth development (Schensul, Schensul Le Compte, 1999). Traditional observation took place when the adult organizers and classroom teachers were facilitating meetings and lessons for the youth participants. However, when engaging in a meeting or working with students in a classroom, the activity took precedence over notes until a moment arrived when note taking did not disrupt the activity. At that point, jotting down notes was useful to help document observations. In general, notes were taken as quickly as possible following an event.

For each learning site, the nature of engagement and changes in participation within the learning community were of interest. I aimed to document how the nature of students' participation in the community related to their self-reported statements about their identities and changes in behavior over time. For instance, I looked for changes in the frequency and kind of student comments during classroom/organization activities. Correlations between student comments and the values and language of the learning site were also documented. In addition, the kind of students' responsibilities in the organizing group was an object of observation. For instance, the frequency to which students volunteer or are given more responsibilities were noted. Also, the quality of interactions with educators in the two sites was noted.

The nature of the participation and quantity of visits differed between the two sites. For instance, the primary activity in the classroom site was in-school lessons, occurring on a consistent schedule. On the other hand, activities in UFJ included consistent weekly meetings, but also periodic events and campaign activities in which I attempted to participate and document. Prior to this study, I had already spent nine months working with UFJ, in which time I had become familiar with the routines, values and practice of the organization. On the other hand, I was a new participant within the classroom environment at the beginning of this study.

While I had familiarity with the “general” classroom environment, having been a student and a teacher for most of my life, this newcomer status in this local context influenced the nature of my participation within the classroom. For instance, I needed to make efforts to understand the workings of the local environment and build trust with the students and the educator within it.

While conducting these case studies, I needed to be aware of, balance and utilize my “insider” and “outsider” status to understand the cultural practices of each site (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Insider status, and the trust associated with it, made it more likely that participants provided me with unfiltered access to their opinions and practices. Moreover, insider status allowed me to understand how participants made sense of their environments and actions. On the other hand, an outsider perspective was useful for noticing patterns and phenomena that insiders may not notice (i.e. making the invisible visible) (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). While I had previous experience with the specific community organization for this study, the space was still relatively novel enough to allow me to make the familiar “strange” within this setting. On the other hand, the specific classroom context was new to me, but the practices of school classrooms were more familiar to me through my own schooling and teaching experiences. In this space, I had to be quite purposeful in being aware of the biases I brought in and how they influenced my perception of the environment.

Learning Site Artifacts

When possible, examples of student work and other artifacts of each learning site were collected to provide insights into the nature of the learning context as well as the youths’ development. In particular, artifacts that elucidated the goals and the important practices of each learning site were analyzed. Examples of artifacts from the youth organizing group that provided

background information include literature detailing the group's mission and campaigns, meeting agendas, and materials shared at meetings. Examples of artifacts that were used for analysis are materials developed by students, such as iMovie videos, speeches, college essays, etc. In the classroom site, the teacher's syllabus, classroom handouts and the school website provided background information on the site while student work in the classroom, such as their portfolios, served as a source of data to understand their development through the course of the school year. These learning artifacts served as products within the critical learning sites, and provided insights into the important values and practices of the site. The students' relationships to these products served as an indicator of their participation and possible change within the learning site.

Data Analysis and Management

As appropriate for case study research, data analysis occurred during and after the completion of this study (Yin, 2006). Following each visit to each learning site, I typed up field notes and documented my own observer commentaries. When I conducted audiotaped interviews they were catalogued, transcribed and commented on. When I collected primary documents, they were also catalogued. Periodically, I wrote analytic memos to summarize and inform the direction of my observations to answer my study questions and begin identifying codes and analyzing the data. Once the data was collected in full, I began using a text-based data management system (Atlas.ti software) to organize and code the qualitative data to facilitate the comparison and the development of associations in the data at the factor and sub-factor level (Schensul, Schensul Le Compte, 1999).

After reading through my data, grounded codes were developed and used to identify patterns and associations between characteristics of the learning site, student engagement and

critical civic development. The generation of codes emerged from the data and was informed by my theoretical framework. An example of a code that was informed by my theoretical framework is “authentic task,” which accounted for instances when youth participated in a valued activity of the learning site. An example of a code that was more grounded but informed by my framework is “cycle of leadership,” which emerged from both interview and observational data in UFJ but also aligned with the concept of apprenticeship. Throughout the analysis process additional codes were generated. Subsequently, categories were created and associations between codes were identified. This process of analyzing the data, creating additional codes and categories was repeated until patterns emerge.

I also created individual profiles for each focal youth and learning site based on analysis of interviews, observations and artifact data. Through the individual profiles, I synthesized the data and highlighted the salient themes for each focal youth. Subsequently, I analyzed their profiles to identify common patterns amongst youth within and across sites. Similarly, profiles of each site were created and analyzed to explore emerging themes.

Documenting Engagement

At the site level, I focused on student factors that influenced legitimate peripheral participation within the critical community of practice. I paid particular attention to how opportunities to participate were made available to different members of the community. This allowed me to examine how the nature of access to these opportunities affects critical civic development within the site.

In this study, legitimate peripheral participation was characterized by the extent of student access to critical content, quality relationships with critical mentors and the authentic

tasks of each learning site. Content was identified as “critical” when it exposes issues of injustice and the structural inequities that perpetuate them. Quality relationships were characterized by students who feel validated by others in the learning site, they feel like they can get the attention and guidance of educators when they need it, and they feel their presence in the community is valued, etc. Access to the authentic tasks of a learning community is measured by the degree to which youth are allowed to participate in the important tasks of the community. This entailed opportunities to participate in discussions with comments, questions and/or critiques. It also entailed opportunities to participate in campaign activities, from member outreach to speaking at a school board meeting.

Documenting Student Critical Civic Development

This study seeks to explore changes in critical civic development, which consists of engagement, identity and competence. In short, several factors were used to identify three advancing levels of critical and civic engagement, identity and competence. The data for each focal youth was analyzed to see if youth demonstrated particular characteristics of each level and assessed accordingly. The next chapter is devoted to describing how I operationalize and assess critical civic development.

Limitations

This study is not free from limitations. As is customary to qualitative research, the limited number of sites and participants will prevent any broad generalizations to larger contexts (Merriam, 1998; Anderson-Levitt, 2006). However, this type of research is well suited for providing insights into processes within particular contexts that cannot be obtained from more

quantitative analyses. Another limitation is that the amount of time spent in these learning sites is likely too short to document changes over time. The project of identity formation is a long process that is influenced by various factors (Wenger, 1998). However, this study does capture characteristics of learning sites that support engagement, while also providing time to document some changes in participation and identity through interviews and observations. Another limitation is that the comparison between in-school and out-of-school learning sites may seem unfair to some. Students choose to participate in out-of-school activities but are required to go to school, thereby building in a certain level of engagement to out of school contexts. However, the intent is not to evaluate the sites vis-à-vis each other but to identify the affordances and challenges that each site entails in promoting critical civic development.

An interesting area to explore in the future would be observing the same sample of students across two learning sites. This would remove the bias of student choice and allow one to explore how the same youth may participate differently depending on the learning context. However, upon exploring this option with youth participating in the organizing group, I discovered that few of them shared the same social studies classes. This design may have required observing between five to ten different classes (given the same sample size). The quality and nature of the classrooms would have likely varied considerably. A central goal of this study is to richly describe the characteristics of *critical* learning sites and their interactions with youth development. Studying students across sites would not have been ideal for rich description, and may not have focused on critical learning sites.

Positionality of the Researcher

In the tradition of critical ethnography, it is important for the researcher to analyze his or her own position with respect to the community with which they are engaging in research. These self-reflections are important to remind ourselves how our lived experiences shape our interpretations of phenomena in the course of our research and how our positionality might influence others interactions with us in the field (Orellana, 2009).

Throughout my life I have seen how schooling can be a process that fails to capitalize on many Latino students' strengths and I am committed to changing schooling structures so they do not continue to do this. I grew up in a suburb just outside of the Los Angeles city limits and I am a Latino first generation college graduate from a working class family. While I share many characteristics with the students in the study, I was not subjected to the same level of under resourced schools as most of the students in this study face. Nevertheless, I attended a high school that was internally segregated, with White and Asian students (often middle class) experiencing much better educational opportunities and outcomes than most of the Latino youth at the school. For instance, in a school comprised of approximately 40% Latino youth, I was typically one of two or three Latino students in my advanced level courses. Although I made it to a four-year college, I have many siblings, cousins and friends who have been significantly failed by our educational system and many of these individuals I find to be more eloquent, intelligent and capable than myself.

Becoming a Critical Educator

I attended Stanford University as an undergraduate and in my freshman year I became involved with a college student-led educational tutoring and mentoring program for low-income

Latino youth in the local community and became increasingly consumed by this work. During this time, I also enrolled in courses that challenged inequities and interacted with critical peers. It is through this combination of factors that I began to develop a critical consciousness around the inequitable structures that exist in our society and serve to oppress marginalized people. I have worked as an educator ever since. I have long felt that my experience as a coordinator of the youth tutoring and mentoring program at Stanford was the most transformative experience of my four years there because it provided me with an opportunity to lead and a context to apply my learning. In addition, the leadership of the organization was comprised of budding social justice educators who have had profound impacts on my thinking and practice as a person and educator to this day. This experience, and subsequent work with youth programs and my graduate work at UCLA have all informed how I understand youth development and the importance of developing skills and attitudes in the context of participating within powerful communities of practice.

How Others See Me – The Latino PhD

Students from both sites experienced me as a Latino PhD first and a researcher second. For instance in my initial introductions to students in the classroom, I feel like I positioned myself as a student, explaining the PhD process to the youth more than my specific research interests. While I did inform them about my project, I spent more time talking to them about the differences between undergraduate and graduate education and the requirements to complete my PhD. I wanted to take the time to pass on this information and make graduate school seem more attainable. In the UFJ site, it was common for everyone in the room to introduce themselves by sharing their school and grade level. On these occasions, I would tell the group that I went to UCLA and that I was in the PhD program or in grade “twenty.” There were at least two

occasions where one of the organizers used this as an opportunity to remind students how rare it was for a Latino to be in a PhD program. At which point the students would give me a round of applause.

I imagine that my social positioning and physical appearance could have influenced the way that individuals in the field interacted with me. My identity as a male adult in my mid-thirties may have influenced how others saw me. However, my status as a student and my casual dress likely made me appear closer in age to the adult organizers (in their twenties) and the students. Also, I am unsure of students' initial impressions of my ethnic background. Although I identify as a Latino, my mother is White, and she undoubtedly influenced my cultural ways of thinking and living. My primary identification as being a Latino is largely a result of my experiences growing up within my father's large extended Mexican family and never having had the opportunity to meet or even see pictures of my mother's family. Even my mother learned Spanish and adopted many of the cultural practices of my extended family. Nonetheless, I imagine that my light skin tone leads some to be unsure of my race and ethnic status and some to experience me as White. For instance, I was driving a student from her school to the UFJ office one day and I saw my father driving in the lane next to us. I pointed him out to her and she paused, looked at me and asked, 'are you Mexican?' I answered yes and for the rest of the car ride her speech was peppered with Spanish words. On the other hand, my affiliation with UFJ may lead many students to assume that I am Latino. One day, I asked two girls the meaning of a Spanish phrase they had written on their computer screen and they incredulously asked me, 'you don't know Spanish Jesse?' I explained that I did, but my Spanish skills were not great. All this is to say that I feel like students likely had different perceptions of my ethnicity that could influence their interactions with me.

Introduction to Findings Chapters

As outlined in Chapter Two, I utilize critical and sociocultural lenses in this dissertation. These approaches highlight the roles of local environments and larger cultural and historical contexts in shaping individual and social conditions. Sociocultural theorists assert that the quality of social interactions between an individual and their local environment (or community of practice) shapes development. However, these local interactions are also nested within the context of larger systems, such as society, culture, history, etc. and while not entirely tied to them, certainly are influenced by them. This larger context can support or suppress development within local learning environments.

This dissertation examines individual critical civic development as it is nested within learning environments, which are situated within larger sociocultural contexts. In each chapter, I focus on a particular unit of analysis to highlight different aspects of the developmental process. In Chapter Four, I focus on the individual youth outcomes and provide evidence to show that many youth experienced significant critical civic development in each site. I present a working model for looking at critical civic development and present the focal students cases in the context of this model. The next two chapters document how practices within the sites influenced the critical civic development of the youth, with Chapter Five looking at the classroom and Chapter Six examining the community organization. Chapter Five documents how the classroom practices position students as critical thinkers and future agents of change by engaging them with critical content, promoting a critical awareness and inspiring a motivation for addressing social injustices in the future. The chapter also discusses differences in outcomes by grade (seniors v. sophomores) and participation in civic actions outside of the classroom. Chapter Six shows how

the youth organizing group positions youth as leaders in development and agents of change in the present by engaging them in authentic roles in important campaigns to address issues in their community. Youth engage in purposeful learning and action that promote the development of critical civic agency and identities. Chapter Seven explores how structural features of each site (i.e. sociocultural contexts) serve as affordances and challenges to educators' efforts to promote critical civic development. Finally, in Chapter Eight I discuss implications for educators in classrooms and youth organizing groups, while touching upon limitations of the study and areas of future research.

CHAPTER 4

A MODEL FOR CRITICAL CIVIC DEVELOPMENT AND AN INTRODUCTION TO FOCAL STUDENTS

In the first section of this chapter, I present my working model for indexing critical civic development. The model assesses an individual's critical and civic development independently while also examining the interactions between the two. The second section describes the critical civic development of each focal youth in the context of this model. This section provides evidence of the growth experienced by the youth in this study and previews some of the factors of the learning sites that influenced that development.

A Working Model For Critical Civic Development²³

Documenting a Range of Stages for Critical and Civic Development

Civic and critical development are complex processes. The world is not evenly divided between critical individuals and non-critical individuals or civic leaders and civic non-participants. People fall along a spectrum of critical and civic development. In order to highlight this range and provide points for analysis, I have identified three stages across each spectrum, which I call Latent, Nascent and Emerged. Latent refers to individuals whose critical and civic development is at an underdeveloped level, often because of a lack of opportunities to participate. Nascent is used to describe individuals who are in development; possibly just beyond Latent or

²³ For a review of how I operationalize constructs such as critical, civic, and development, please refer to the beginning of Chapter Two.

approaching a more advanced Emerged level. The Emerged designation is used to describe individuals who have a high level of competence, engagement and identity in a given field. By incorporating a range of developmental stages (Latent, Nascent and Emerged) for both critical and civic development, this approach underscores that there is a spectrum of development, with all individuals possessing the latent potential to reach an emerged identity if given the support and opportunity to authentically participate in critical civic learning and action.

The mobility of stages and difficulty in categorizing. While many traditional psychologists have seen development as an absolute and linear process, sociocultural theorists see development as far more context specific. In particular, critical and civic development amongst youth is not necessarily linear. For instance, Ginwright and Cammarota's (2002) Social Justice Youth Development model presents stages for the advancement of critical civic praxis, but they acknowledge that these stages need not occur in order, or that one stage needs to be finished for another to begin. In addition, Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) presents a typology of resistance to education that categorizes individuals according to their level of motivation for social justice and their awareness of oppression. Similarly, they acknowledge that identities can be fluid, with youth appearing to be transformative in one instance and possibly self-defeating in another. Moreover, sociocultural theorists would argue that particular identities and capacities are largely based within the context of a particular community of practice and that transfer of these identities and capacities to other fields can be quite limited (Greeno, 1997). So, while categorizing can be useful to explain development within a given context and provide points for comparison amongst the youth, it should be understood to represent a moment in time within a given set of contextual factors. Over the course of the study, or even within the context of an interview, youth behavior and reasoning could place them at different levels of critique or

civic engagement. As will be discussed below, several of the focal students experienced “forward” critical civic development, but a few experienced what might be called regressions in development or at least significant plateaus over time.

In addition, any effort to “categorize” is a highly subjective one, based on a researcher’s assessments of students’ statements and behaviors and influenced by their biases. Below, I will describe how I evaluated student development to provide insights into these subjective categorizations.

Critical and civic development independently. In Table 4.1, I outline each developmental stage for critical and civic development independently, using the components (engagement, identity and competence) described above. For critical development, the latent stage is a combination of Watts’ Acritical and Adaptive stages. Individuals in this stage exhibit a low level of critical competence, expressing that inequalities are neutral and just or acknowledged but unavoidable. These individuals are also characterized by minimal engagement in critical actions and/or learning and have an underdeveloped critical identity. In the Nascent critical stage individuals demonstrate a growing interest or engagement in critical learning and action. They recognize inequality and injustices, but their agency to overcome them is limited (Watts’ Precritical stage). In the Emerged critical stage, individuals exhibit a keen awareness to address injustice and a belief in their agency to address it. They have a solidarity with oppressed groups and are actively involved in critical actions. In the civic development model, individuals in the latent stage have minimal interest or participation in civic learning and actions. Consequently, they typically have very little civic competence or sense of agency or interest in contributing to the well being of their community. The Nascent Civic stage consists of individuals with some involvement and interest in civic activities and learning. As a result, they

also have a growing sense of agency and attachment, while honing their civic competence. The Emerged Civic stage is marked by individuals with high civic competence who begin to take on leadership in civic actions. These individuals have strong attachments to their communities and a sense of agency to contribute to civic life.

Table 4.1. Stages of Critical and Civic Development (Independent)

Critical Development		
Latent	Nascent	Emerged
Inequalities are natural and just or acknowledged but unavoidable. Low ID, engagement and competence.	Inequalities seen and questioned but possibility of liberation doubted. Growing ID, engagement and competence	Keen awareness of oppression and belief in agency to address it. Strong ID, engagement and competence
Civic Development		
Latent	Nascent	Emerged
No involvement or interest in civic actions. Little civic competence and agency.	Some involvement and interest in civic actions. Growing civic competence and agency	Substantial engagement and/or leadership in civic actions. High competence and agency

What is Critical Civic Development and How Can We Account for it?

Much of the literature on civic engagement looks only at participation in civic action, primarily indexed by involvement in traditional political institutions (voting, political groups, etc.), without also accounting for the extent to which the action is motivated by a social critique of injustice and an attempt to address it (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). On the other hand, the model proposed by Watts, Williams and Jagers (2003), couples the development of social critique and participation in critical action to identify stages of critical development. While this approach is

very useful, and I built upon it, it is less helpful in accounting for instances when social critique and critical civic action are not paired. For instance, to fully understand critical civic development, we must explore situations when individuals exemplify a growing critique of injustice and no civic action. Or, when an individual is civically engaged but lacks a social critique of injustice.

The model I propose (see Figure 4.1) provides for assessing an individual's critical and civic development separately while also examining the interactions between the two. I build off the Watts model above to assess critical development and the components outlined above to assess civic development. The model I present categorizes critical civic development across two axes, with each axis representing a continuum from latent to nascent to emerged. The vertical axis is the level of critical development of the individual and the horizontal axis is the level of civic development.

When taken together, the two axes create nine categories of critical civic development. For instance, field one²⁴ below (Figure 4.1) represents Latent civic and Latent critical development. I call this stage the "Naïve Non-Participant stage." Field two represents Latent civic and Nascent critical, which is labeled as "The Awakening Non-participant" to signify that the individual is developing a critical identity but is not active in civic pursuits. Field three, the "Naïve Civic Participant" refers to individuals who are becoming engaged in civic learning and action. However, these activities preserve the status quo and lack a critical perspective on inequality and do not contribute to addressing injustice. Field four, the "Critical non-participant," is marked by a high level of critical development but a low level of civic involvement. This

²⁴ I have numbered the fields to make it easier to reference the different stages in this effort to explain them. While stage "1" represents less critical civic development and stage "9" represents more advanced development, the numbers should not be interpreted to mean that individuals pass through these stages in any particular order.

person has a high competence for critical analysis and may even believe that he or she can be effective in civic actions, but is not actively participating in efforts to address civic issues. This stage is one of the least common since a heightened critical identity is associated with critical civic action. In fact, according to the models by Watts et al., (2003) and Freire (1973), the advanced critical stages are defined by action.

Fields five through nine represent more advanced stages in critical civic development. The fifth field, the “Awakening Civic Participant,” signifies a developing state for both critical and civic development. As a person engages in critical and civic learning and action, they begin to develop an identity as a critical civic agent in their community and acquire skills and knowledge for more effective participation in the future. The sixth field, “the Naïve Civic Leader,” is defined by an emerging identity as a civic leader, with the competence and agency to contribute to the well being of one’s community. However, the Naïve Civic Leader is not critical of inequality and his or her actions do little to challenge the status quo. Field seven, the “Critical Civic Participant” describes an individual with an advanced critique of injustice and the agency to address it as a participant of efforts organized by others. The Critical Civic Participant expresses solidarity with oppressed people and is motivated to engage in efforts to challenge the status quo, however, he or she likely does not have the civic competence to lead efforts for this aim. The eighth field, the “Awakening Civic Leader” refers to an individual who has taken on leadership roles within critical civic actions but has not yet developed an advanced critical identity and competence. Finally, field nine or the “Critical Civic Leader” describes individuals with a strong identity and competence for critical civic engagement. These individuals take on leadership roles in critical civic campaigns, mentor others and have a long-term attachment to a movement for social justice.



Figure 4.1. Stages of Critical Civic Development

In the following chapter, I will categorize my focal students into the various stages of critical civic development that they exemplified at the end of my study. I do this for two reasons. First, this allows me to draw comparisons and highlight some differences between sets of students. For instance, in subsequent chapters in this dissertation, I will describe factors that influenced differences between the two observed classrooms (seniors and sophomores) and between the classroom students and the UFJ youth. The second reason I put youth into categories is to provide real life examples to elucidate the model for critical civic development.

I have used data from observations and student and educator interviews to assess the focal students' development using the various components of development (Figures 4.1 & 4.2) as factors. Figure 4.3 is a segment of the chart I used to categorize students' civic development.²⁵ As discussed above, I index civic development through a combination of factors, including civic engagement, civic identity and civic competence. For each one of these factors, I assessed youth as being latent, nascent or emerged. For example, the chart below shows that I categorized Perla as having a nascent civic engagement, nascent civic identity and latent civic competence. In the assessment of Perla's civic engagement, I took several aspects into account, such as her interest in learning about civic issues and her level of participation in civic related activities. Similarly, assessments on identity and civic competence included several factors.

The overall civic development level was determined by results of the three combined levels. If a youth was the same level for all three factors, they would be that level overall. For instance, latent on engagement, identity, and competence would mean being categorized as latent in their civic development. If an individual was assessed differently across the factors, their civic development level would be the level that appears twice. For example, if an individual was nascent on two factors and emerged on another, that person would be categorized as nascent overall. If an individual was given a unique assessment for all three factors – latent for engagement, nascent for identity and emerged for competence – then they would be categorized as nascent overall.

²⁵ The same process was used to determine critical development for each focal youth.

Table 4.2. Assessing Civic Development

Civic Development				
	Civic Engagement	Civic Identity	Civic Competence	
	Interest in learning about civic issues Engaged in addressing Public Problems	Agency to contribute to community Attachment and social responsibility for well being of community	Proficiency in Civic & Campaign tasks (speak, recruit, facilitate, etc.) Understands formal politics	Civic Development Level
Valerie	<i>Latent Engagement</i>	<i>Latent Identity</i>	<i>Latent Competence</i>	LATENT
Armando	<i>Latent Engagement</i>	<i>Nascent Identity</i>	<i>Latent Competence</i>	LATENT
Perla	<i>Nascent Engagement</i>	<i>Nascent Identity</i>	<i>Latent Competence</i>	NASCENT
Cristina	<i>Nascent Engagement</i>	<i>Nascent Identity</i>	<i>Nascent Competence</i>	NASCENT
Vero	<i>Emerged Engagement</i>	<i>Emerged Identity</i>	<i>Emerged Competence</i>	EMERGED
Elvira	<i>Emerged Engagement</i>	<i>Emerged Identity</i>	<i>Emerged Competence</i>	EMERGED

While I feel these are good estimates, they are just that. They are my subjective evaluations of students’ statements and behaviors. It is unrealistic to suggest that interviews and observations can fully capture the students’ complex sociocultural contexts and ideologies around their lived conditions (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). For instance, the interview questions and interviewer may not have been able to accurately assess the presence of a critique of social oppression and the students’ motivations for civic and/or critical actions. Given these important limitations, the following section will categorize and highlight the students’ critical civic development.

Focal Students' Stages and Profiles

In this section, I place each focal youth into a category in the model described above. For each focal student, I outline the critical civic development they experienced through the course of this study and touch upon the factors associated with that development. The cases provide evidence of youth critical civic development for most students in the sites. Moreover, the individual stories preview factors of the learning sites that influenced development.

Key findings presented in this section:

- Most students experienced some critical civic development
- The classroom students tended to experience critical development, such as awareness of injustice, an inclination to look for the root causes of inequality and a motivation to address these issues in the future.
- The UFJ youth were more likely to articulate a stronger sense of agency to address community issues, and identify themselves as growing leaders and critical civic activists.

Below, I will introduce each student according to his or her stage on the critical civic development model and report on their development within the course of the study. For each stage²⁶, I will touch upon salient features of the learning sites that may have affected their development to be discussed more in the remaining chapters. Below, I have charted the students along the Critical Civic Development model to give a preview of where they stand. The names in

²⁶ There were two stages, “Critical Non-Participant” and “Naïve Civic Leader,” that none of the focal students fell into. These stages will not be discussed in more depth at this time.

regular font correspond to focal students from Sanchez’s²⁷ classroom and names in bold font indicate youth from UFJ²⁸. It is evident from Figure 4.2 that youth in UFJ were far more likely to be categorized as emerged than students from the classroom space. These differences will be examined further in chapter 7, which compares the two sites.

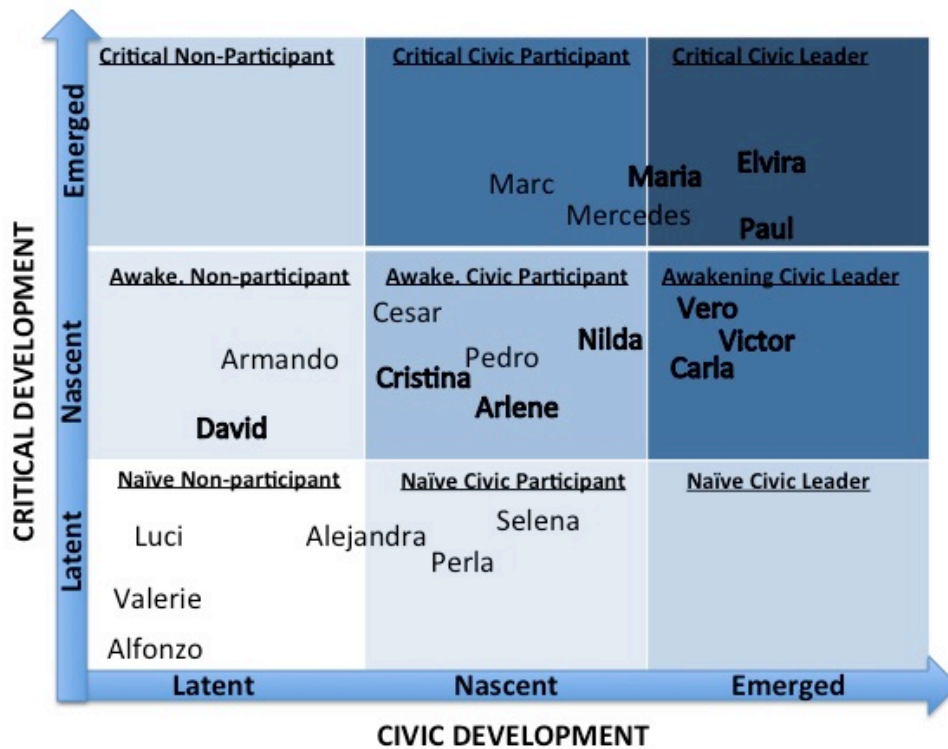


Figure 4.2. Critical Civic Development of Focal Youth.

²⁷ Sanchez is the teacher whose classes I observed. An introduction to him can be found in the methods section and Chapter 5 describes his teaching in depth.

²⁸ The youth organizing group I observed for this study. An introduction to the group can be found in the methods section and Chapter 6 provides an in-depth description of the organization’s practices.

Naïve Non Participants (Alfonzo, Luci & Valerie)

These three classroom sophomores fit into the category of Naïve Non-Participant and exhibited limited critical civic development over the course of the study. They were generally acritical in terms of their perspective on inequality and inactive in civic participation throughout. However, they did articulate an interest in learning about the civic issues discussed in Mr. Sanchez's World History class, which I use as an indicator of civic engagement. Luci and Valerie also expressed a motivation to improve their community (a civic identity factor) but a lack of agency to make an impact on social issues. In all, these students were latent in their critical and civic development, even though Luci and Valerie showed some signs of growth.

Alfonzo (Classroom, Sophomore): The Naïve Non-Participant. Alfonzo²⁹ was not involved in any civic activities and seemed to view inequalities as natural and just. Alfonzo did not feel like he knew much about his community, had never participated in community change efforts and said he never even really thought about it as a possibility. However, he did say that he might participate in change efforts in the future, if his community 'needed him to.' Alfonzo said that graffiti and litter were problems where he lived but did not indicate an awareness or concern for systemic injustices that perpetuate community level problems. When asked why he thought some people succeeded and others didn't he answered that mental disabilities and drugs as reasons for failure and maintained that "everyone has equal rights here in America. And everybody has the right to go to school and to learn." While these are valid points of view, they indicate an aritical meritocratic view to explain inequality that does not consider the role of structural factors in shaping individual outcomes.

²⁹ Alfonzo is the focal student who I have the least amount of data to draw conclusions about his development. A painfully shy student, he rarely spoke in class, provided very brief answers to interview questions and rarely turned in homework assignments. However, these factors also point to his limited engagement within the class.

Valerie (Classroom, Sophomore): Intellectual engagement but no change in consciousness. Valerie expressed an interest in the issues discussed in Sanchez's class but it seemed to have a limited influence on her critical competence. For instance, she found Sanchez's class interesting because of the content and enjoyed learning about "the things that are going on now, like the Arizona law, the things that are happening right around here in Riverton, the gangs and all. How we can be a better community." However, when asked what she would change about her community, she said she wanted to address the gang problem and focused solely on the roles individuals play in perpetuating violence, saying gang members "just don't care what they do. They're affecting the community...Making themselves and the community look bad." Valerie also expressed an individual meritocratic focused explanation for school success, saying that all students had the same educational opportunities and those that don't succeed, 'just don't try.'

Luci (Classroom, Sophomore): A motivation for change but limited agency. Luci and Valerie expressed that learning about the world's problems through Sanchez's class increased their motivation to address them, but they lacked the confidence or civic agency to do anything about it. Luci indicated that the content in Sanchez's class made her more aware of the extent of injustice in the world. She said, "He would like talk to us about how we could better our community" and showed documentaries highlighting social problems. She said the content made her think, "It's not fair, the world." When I asked her if learning about these things made her want to do something about it, she said, "I would want to but just the whole process of doing it, I wouldn't know how to deal with it. It would be too much." Valerie also communicated that she theoretically wanted to improve conditions in her community but her low-sense of civic agency and competence kept her from participating in civic actions.

Summary and factors influencing development. These students were categorized as Naïve non-participants because of their acritical perspective, lack of civic participation and low sense of civic agency and competence. However, we still see that Valerie and Luci are developing a sense of responsibility for their community and a theoretical motivation to address community problems. These cases suggest that intellectual engagement within a classroom that provides culturally relevant and critical content may promote a motivation for civic action but not necessarily the agency and tendency to participate in it. This will be discussed further in subsequent findings chapters.

Naïve Civic-Participants (Perla, Alejandra & Selena)

These three students were categorized as Naïve Civic Participants because of their nascent civic participation and identity coupled with a mixed perspective on the roots of inequality. These three classroom students wanted to contribute to improving their communities and the world at large, but their solutions did not always address systemic causes of inequality.

Perla (Classroom, Sophomore): Outside civic action and civic identity development. Perla's involvement in Amnesty International her junior year supported the development of a nascent civic identity and the seeds of a critical identity. Judging from only her sophomore year in Mr. Sanchez's class, I would have put Perla in the Naïve Non-Participant stage. Perla thought Sanchez's class was interesting, liked the way he grabbed students' attention and enjoyed learning about "what's happening" at her school and community but didn't participate in discussions or civic activities outside of the classroom. When asked about efforts to make a difference in the community, she said, "It's not my thing." However, after joining Amnesty International, she talked about how she 'fought for people's rights', indicating a new sense of a

civic identity. In Chapter Five, I further discuss Perla's case to highlight a recurring theme in this dissertation – the importance of civic action (and not just civic studies) in supporting the development of a civic identity and agency.

Alejandra (Classroom, Sophomore): Acritical and adaptive stances towards injustices. Alejandra has the energetic disposition to make a good organizer but she had limited civic participation in high school and did not articulate a systemic critique of injustice. Alejandra didn't get civically involved until spring of her senior year when she started going to UFJ general membership meetings at lunchtime at her school. Nevertheless, Alejandra felt like she has the agency to address civic issues in her community and hopes to be involved in the future, which indicates a nascent civic identity. Through Sanchez's class she became more aware of issues of injustice but she still had a tendency to explain inequality as a function of individual merit. For example, she said "I think it depends on the person's motivation and trying," rather than point to structural issues. Moreover, Alejandra had limited hope in the ability to address large-scale injustice. One of the units in Sanchez's Economics class was on outsourcing and worker exploitation. A question on a handout asked students to give their thoughts on what the U.S. "government should do to "encourage" U.S. companies NOT to move their companies offshore?" Alejandra answered, "I don't think there's a way cause the companies want to make a profit but don't want to invest a lot so they're gonna go for people who will work for a very low amount." Her answer indicates an "adaptive stage" of critical development where individuals consider injustices unavoidable and unalterable (Watts et al., 2003).

Selena (Classroom, Senior): Addressing the symptoms but not the root causes. Although she's an undocumented student, Selena can be considered a model "citizen" by most subjective standards. Selena has a strong sense of social responsibility to contribute to the

improvement of her community. She has been involved in community service and attends UFJ general membership meetings because she wants to know what's going on in her community. Selena articulated a growing sense of herself as a contributor to the well being of her community. For instance, I asked her if she felt like a leader and she said, "I think I'm a leader. I actually try to make changes. Try to speak up." These are all characteristics of someone with a nascent civic identity. Selena dreams of becoming a police officer and participates in a youth cadet training program which she describes as "her life." She believes that as a police officer, she will be able to contribute to her community by making it a safer place to live.

Selena had some mixed views on inequality, injustice and the solutions to address them. She is critical of injustice and exploitation, yet primarily accounts for inequality as a result of individuals who make poor choices, even when they have limited opportunities. For instance, in her responses to Sanchez's questions on outsourcing, she chastises the companies that exploit workers abroad, forcing them to work for starvation wages while also taking jobs away from workers in the United States. However, when asked in a separate question if she thought all people had equal opportunities in society she said they did, as long as they tried. Selena is acquiring some critical knowledge about injustice through Sanchez class but her filter for looking at the world is still Naïve.

Summary and factors influencing development. Being Naïve doesn't equate to being unaware of inequality or that one doesn't want to do something about it. It just means that one is not conscious of the root causes of inequality and/or one's solutions don't address them. Students like Selena, Perla and Alejandra want to make their community better and address inequality but their articulated explanations and solutions for it are often individual based. Nevertheless, all three students demonstrated seeds of critical development. Both Alejandra and Selena were

members of UFJ and Perla was a member of Amnesty International, all clubs with a social justice focus. However, the students had not taken on a critical view of social injustices. In sum, their participation in civic clubs and developing civic identities puts them in the nascent stage of civic development but their acritical and adaptive stances towards inequalities places them in the latent stage of critical development. Take together, they are in the Naïve Civic Participant stage. These cases suggest that an awareness of injustice and introductory participation in organizations focused on addressing social problems does not necessarily lead students to develop a critical analysis of the structures that perpetuate inequalities.

Awakening Non-Participants (Armando, David)

This stage represents latent civic and nascent critical development. Armando and David are categorized as Awakening Non-participants because they have a growing critique of injustice and sense of critical identity but limited civic participation.

Armando (Classroom, Senior): A growing critique but only a theoretical agency. At the end of his senior year, Armando articulated a nascent critique of injustice, an interest in promoting the well being of his community and addressing issues of exploitation in the future. In particular, as a part of the economics class with Mr. Sanchez, he developed a growing critique of capitalism and the way it exploits workers saying that the class has “really opened my eyes.” Armando felt that corporations want individuals “to be ignorant” but “there’s horrible stuff going on.” In regards to outsourcing and worker exploitation he said that Mr. Sanchez “shows us the other side of the things. And how things are made and how things are developed.” When asked if he felt he could address these issues, Armando put himself on a trajectory towards becoming a critical civic actor, “I feel that I could be a leader as well. *I would want to be* a leader to pretty

much help the people that I see that struggle. ... that's more than enough for me, just to see that these people have rights [emphasis added].”

David (UFJ, Sophomore, Novice): Back & forth critical civic development. As a novice leader in UFJ’s coordinating committee, David was developing an interest in critical community issues and a critical civic identity. What he was learning in UFJ “shocked” him and made him think about how it’s “screwed up all over the place.” While David was unable to articulate connections between inequitable outcomes and structural injustices, he was developing an awareness of injustice and how it affected his community. He also talked about wanting to increase his civic involvement, understand the issues better and hoped to affect change in some way: “I really hope I can try and get into more groups, and try and understand more of what’s going on around. And would really like to try and impact the school in *some* way.” These comments indicate that David saw himself as a beginner to critical civic participation, who needed to develop more to be effective, but he at least *wanted* to be an agent of change and someone who addressed injustice.

In the spring of his first year in UFJ, it appeared as though David was poised to continue his critical civic development and become a leader within UFJ. That spring, he went to Sacramento to represent UFJ at an action at the California State Capitol to lobby the legislature to improve educational conditions for students of color in under resourced communities. The opportunity to “meet with people that are on [his] side” was a new and engaging experience for him that connected him to a movement. After the trip, David said that he was starting to feel like he could be a part, even if a small part, of the effort to improve the schools, indicating that he was starting to develop a collective civic agency.

However, David never developed a robust critical or civic identity that would keep him involved in organizing throughout the study. After about a year, David got distracted by life events and took a break from UFJ and all civic engagement. As a result, my categorization of David's critical civic development went from Naïve Non-participant (before UFJ) to and Awakening Civic Participant (during participation) and ended up as an Awakening Non-participant. While David's participation was on pause by the end of my study, his year in UFJ had a significant impact on how he saw the world and may have planted seeds for future critical civic development. In my final interview with David, he said he planned to return to UFJ 'one day', indicating that he identified himself as a future critical civic participant.

Summary and factors influencing development. Both David and Armando saw themselves as people who recognized system level injustice in the world, wanted to learn more about its causes and saw themselves as future participants in addressing them. However, Armando's lack of civic participation and David's hiatus from it make them Awakening Non-participants. Armando's case again shows how exposure to critical content through Mr. Sanchez's class made youth want to do something about injustice. However, the motivation was future oriented and Armando was not engaged in civic activities during the study, which is why he is categorized as Awakening Non-participant. David's story shows how critical civic development is non-linear and that conditions in students' lives can influence their participation in sites that seek to promote development.

Awakening Civic Participants (Pedro, Cesar, Cristina, Arlene & Nilda)

This stage entails nascent critical and nascent civic development. What sets these youth apart from the Awakening Non-participants described above is their participation in critical civic

efforts to address issues in their community. The five youth in this stage experienced critical civic development as a part of learning about injustice and participating in civic actions. For these students, their actions were typically more than community service, where they tried to change policies and work for justice. These students experienced significant changes in how they saw themselves and how they interpreted the world (critical identity). However, they had not yet taken on civic leadership roles or articulated an advanced critical filter for understanding injustice.

Pedro (Classroom, Sophomore): Critique in the classroom; action and identity development outside of it. Participation in Mr. Sanchez’s World History class helped Pedro³⁰ develop an interest in civic issues and a critical perspective on inequality. He admitted, “If I wasn’t in this class, I wouldn’t know to start paying attention about what’s going on around the world.” And he shared that he now tries to stay informed, “Now I use the computer for more than just MySpace, to find out what is going on here.” Pedro also started to develop a critical understanding of the world through Sanchez’s class. For example, learning about the exploitation of textile workers abroad through Sanchez’s class made him reflect on how his own mother is exploited as a garment worker in Riverton. And learning about capitalism led him to make critical connections between poverty, worker exploitation and crime.

However, Pedro did not take on the identity of someone who is committed to critical civic action until he participated in the Amnesty International Club at his school during his junior year. Although he was a general member of UFJ his sophomore year, he did not participate in any of the leadership components or civic actions of the group. Also, when asked if he would participate in a protest around an issue he felt strongly about, he said, “maybe” but added, “It’s

³⁰ Pedro’s story will be discussed extensively in Chapter 5, and will be summarized here.

not my thing to march and all that stuff.” It wasn’t until after participation in an Amnesty campaign that Pedro articulated a critical civic identity and a stronger commitment to improving his community. He told me, that before Amnesty, “I wanted to be a lawyer, just to get out of here. Now, I want to be an activist and be here helping out.”

Altogether, Pedro developed an interest in civic and critical issues through Sanchez’s class and an inclination to seek out the root causes of inequalities. However, likely the most important catalyst for his critical civic development came from his active involvement in Amnesty International during his 11th grade year.

Cesar (Classroom, Sophomore): Reconsidering community deficits & an undecided critical civic identity. Cesar’s critical competence was approaching an emerged stage but his critical civic identity and engagement were in the nascent stage. The combined experiences of Sanchez’s World History class and participation in UFJ General Membership meetings were important for Cesar’s critical civic development.

Cesar’s participation in Sanchez’s class and UFJ helped him develop an awareness of injustice, an inclination to seek out its root causes and the ability to start applying a critical filter to the world. In particular it led him to begin to reconsider his deficit notions of his community, and think about how social forces structure inequality. He shared:

I used to think that this is a bad community, it’s just cholos. And then I kind of realized why it's like that. It is kind of like our fault too, of being cholos. But it's not like all our faults, like the way society has placed itself or something.

While still holding on to individual responsibility, Cesar begins to see how “society has placed itself” in a way that structures poor choices. Cesar also expressed a perspective on inequality that integrated the impacts of both structure and individual agency when he talked about the

relationship between poverty and school failure. If he could, he would change the “the poor conditions people live in” because he felt that poverty influenced youth to drop out to get jobs to help their families.

Cesar feels that the content in Sanchez’s class and UFJ coupled to help him think differently about the world and his place in it. Cesar said, the class “makes you aware of things. It makes you want to grow up and change things" suggesting a growing critical awareness and motivation to address injustice. However, Cesar still had a nascent critical civic agency and identity. For instance, when asked if he felt he could make a difference in his community, he said, “Yes, [pause] and then no [laughs]. It's both...We have to try to do something about it.” His answer indicates his uncertain agency and nascent civic development. He was also undecided and conflicted over his future role (identity) in addressing these issues, saying he was unsure if he wanted to be a doctor or lawyer or “try to help this community.”

In sum, Cesar was developing a critical awareness and understanding of the root causes of injustice. However, his critical civic identity and agency were still nascent. Also, while Cesar participated in UFJ and other service clubs, he was not significantly involved in civic actions to place him in the emerged stage of development.

Cristina (UFJ, Junior, Novice): Becoming a proud Latina, but not yet a leader.

Because of UFJ, Cristina has a newfound interest in contributing to her community (nascent civic identity) and she thinks about her culture, herself and her community in a radically different way (nascent critical identity). However, she still does not see herself as a critical civic leader, preferring to contribute to campaigns in modest ways.

Interacting with and learning from critical Latino mentors in UFJ made Cristina question her deficit notions of Latinos and develop a pride in her culture. Cristina came into UFJ with

deficit notions about her ethnic culture and community. In fact, one of her college application essays focused on this very issue. The essay begins by describing her perspective before UFJ: “Two years ago, I was a girl who hated her culture. I had rejected everything in me that was Mexican.” In the essay, she also describes how she was drawn to and impressed by the positivity and self-confidence of the UFJ organizers. The next step in her critical development was learning about Latino history through a series of critical workshops in UFJ called Strike School.³¹ Cristina talked about the impact Strike School had on her:

After every day [of Strike School], I would go home and then I tell my mom what we learned and she was like, ‘awe, I’m so happy you’re finally Mexican!’... ‘You’re finally proud.’ And I was like, ‘I am, I am!’

Cristina’s experiences in UFJ lead her to critically analyze deficit notions of Latinos and begin to develop a sense of pride in her culture. This gave her a new sense of empowerment as an individual and led her to think differently about her community.

Cristina also developed a new solidarity with and interest in helping her community while in UFJ. She explained that prior to UFJ, she felt detached from the fate of her community and even lamented her involvement in it, “[b]efore [UFJ] I was like, ‘my house is my community’, but now it’s like, ‘no, I’m part of the community’... now I actually pay attention to it and I care about it.”

While Cristina’s civic involvement has increased during her time at UFJ, she has yet to take on the identity as a critical civic leader in UFJ and is content being a contributor to the actions undertaken by the group. Cristina said that UFJ helped her “build who I am” but she still didn’t see herself sharing the same passion for educational justice that the other youth leaders in

³¹ Strike School will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 6.

UFJ articulated: “But it’s just the fact that like other kids are, ‘I want to fight for educational justice. This is what I want to do.’ For me, it was just like, ‘okay, I agree with this. Yeah. Okay, now let’s move on.’”

In sum, Cristina displayed a nascent critical civic identity and participation but not the leadership and lifelong commitment to fighting for social justice characterized by more emerged critical civic activists.

Arlene (UFJ, Sophomore): Collective civic agency now, leadership in development.

UFJ was the catalyst for Arlene’s awakening critical civic identity. Arlene credits United For Change with fostering her motivation to participate in civic action by teaching her about the issues in her community and giving her the opportunity to address them. Arlene admitted her total lack of interest or engagement in community issues prior to her involvement in UFJ, “[b]efore, I didn’t care about the community, honestly, I could care less about what was going on in the community.” However, through participating in civic actions with UFJ, she developed a strong sense of collective civic agency, reflected in her statement below:

Whatever the campaigns that are going on, I want to be able to say that I was in that campaign. And if we do make it, I’ll be like, ‘I’m proud, because we did it. It was not just them, it was me also. We did it, together.’ Even when we don’t win, I’ll be like, ‘you know what we tried.’

Arlene’s consistent use of the collective “we” highlights that she feels she has been an authentic contributor to the civic action campaigns at UFJ. Moreover, her pledge to continue civic efforts in the face of possible losing campaigns indicates a resiliency indicative of a strong civic identity.

While Arlene experienced significant growth in her critical civic development through UFJ, her sense of herself as a civic leader are still in a nascent stage. I asked Arlene if she felt ready to be a leader within United For Change and she said:

I think if I *had to* I would have been like ‘yeah’ you know, yeah. But I think if there was a chance to say you could either learn more or be a leader right now, I would probably choose to learn more...I think that I could be a leader but I would prefer learning even more and then being a leader.

Arlene’s comments indicate that she sees herself on a trajectory moving from her nascent stage towards becoming a more effective critical civic leader, even if she shies away from the responsibility right now. However, Arlene doesn’t shy away from civic action and believes herself to be an agent of change. So, she sees a space for her to be an important contributor to her community, even though she’s not ‘leading’ the efforts. This is an important theme that will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Nilda (UFJ, Senior, Intermediate): The nascent leader in development. UFJ had a significant impact on Nilda. UFJ helped Nilda translate her concern for her community into action. She said, before UFJ:

I wasn’t much of a big community [person]. Like I still cared about my community even though I wasn’t in it. But the problem with me was that I don’t know how to do it. Like, I didn’t know the process, I didn’t know where to join, or nothing like that. So, I would have stayed being caring, but in my head, not on duties. I wouldn’t be involved.

Nilda’s statement highlights an important theme that will be discussed in subsequent chapters: Individuals often have a motivation to improve their communities but lack the support or agency

to put it into action. UFJ provided youth with these opportunities to apply their care for their community into action and thus supported critical civic development.

Through UFJ, Nilda developed a nascent self-confidence in herself as a civic leader in the making, but did not quite reach a high level of civic competence and leadership. Nilda articulated a self-awareness of being on a trajectory towards becoming a civic leader. When I asked if she felt like a leader in UFJ, she described how she is both a leader and follower in the group:

I feel like a great leader. Yes, I'm sometimes a follower. It's actually a good thing. From following a leader, you become a leader, cause you learn from their mistakes or learn from their steps and that's how you, little by little, you come up to here [puts her hand level to the top of her head], to this level and you become the leader. People that are down here, you'll come back down to come and bring them up to become them a leader.

Nilda's comment touches upon another important theme that will be discussed further. UFJ positioned students as both learners and leaders at the same time, where they envisioned themselves learning from the adult organizers in order to contribute to change in the present and become more effective leaders. I call this a "Cycle of Leadership" and argue that it positions youth as leaders in development. Nilda's quote shows how she envisions herself participating within this cycle.

Summary and factors influencing development. Cristina and Cesar's cases suggest that learning about the ways that low-income people of color have been oppressed helps individuals see their communities, cultures and selves differently. In particular, by recognizing the structural features that perpetuate inequalities youth reconsider deficit notions of low-income people of color that frame inequalities as the result of their "inferiorities." In turn, youth began to internalize a counter discourse and develop pride in themselves and their communities while

acknowledging that they are subjected to oppression (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Arlene's case highlights how authentic participation in civic campaigns can foster a collective sense of agency to address community issues even when she is not in a leadership position.

Pedro's story underscores the importance of civic action to critical civic development. Nilda's case highlights the role that organizations can play in providing youth with opportunities for civic action that positions them as leaders in development.

Critical Civic Participants (Mercedes & Marc)

Similar to the Awakening Civic Participants above, these students are engaged in civic actions but have not yet taken on roles or identities as critical civic leaders. What sets these students apart is a more emerged critique of social injustices.

Mercedes (Classroom, Senior; UFJ, Novice): A critical perspective. Over the course of high school, Mercedes developed a more critical stance on inequality and her role in addressing it. For instance, she changed her views on why some students succeed and others don't, taking into account the role of inequitable educational opportunities in shaping students' educational trajectories. She said:

At first, I just thought, it's kind of your own fault, kind of thing. Like, if you wanted it, you should try for it. If you don't want it, that's how you end up dropping out. But, throughout my high school, I learned a lot of things that change my mind about it.

Some of the factors that influenced her evolving thinking on the issue were her involvement in UFJ and conversations she had with peers and teachers. For instance, she shared that her participation in the Tardy Policy campaign led her to reflect on the impacts policies have on dropout rates. Since these policies were more prevalent at low-income schools it made her

question the role of structures in influencing students' outcomes. As Mercedes developed a critical perspective, she went from focusing on community service type activities to trying to address larger policy and structural issues through UFJ. During her junior year, she discontinued volunteering at a hospital and a youth group, so she could focus on organizing work. She shared her reasoning, "I thought what they [UFJ] were doing was more helpful than what I was doing at the time." She added that if she could change anything about her community, she would start by addressing "policies that are implemented throughout and how disproportional they are towards [our] communities." Mercedes' views are indicative of someone with an emerged critical competence who critically examines the role of structural factors in perpetuating inequalities.

Mercedes didn't feel like a civic leader yet but she felt like an important contributor to the work of UFJ. She felt successful through UFJ, but also felt like she "could be doing more." However, she was committed to working towards fixing community injustices in the future. She shared, "I'm not sure how yet, but I know that I really do want to do something like that... Like actually fixing things." In sum, Mercedes emerged critical competence, nascent critical civic identity and nascent participation result in her categorization as a Critical Civic Participant.

Marc (Classroom, Senior): An emerged critique, future leadership. Through Mr. Sanchez's class, Marc developed a critique of injustice and he applies that lens to new information. In the quote below, Marc shares how being exposed to critical content in Sanchez's class opened his eyes to the extent of exploitation in the world and now he sees it everywhere.

And I kind of realized that everything that we have right now in this world, it's all corrupt. McDonald's, you think its so innocent cause they have a clown. It's just a disguise. Pepsi, everything, I mean everything exploits people, that's what a capitalistic society is. And I

didn't understand that before. I really never really thought about it. Now, everything I look at, I realize it.

And this new lens has motivated Marc to want to do something about injustice. While he understands that there are powerful interests invested in maintaining the status quo, Marc still feels a sense of agency to "fix" the world.

I've learned a lot of things [in Sanchez's class] and I've realized the world is a really bad place and we need to fix it though. It's not impossible to fix it, it's just we need to have people that are dedicated. And there are other people that are trying to counter and keep the world the way it is but we need to be able to do more.

While Marc expresses a sophisticated critical lens, his current civic actions, with the exception of his peripheral involvement in UFJ, tended to be more individual focused. As a member of UFJ, he did not take on any leadership tasks, inconsistently attending General Member meetings at lunchtime. His other civic engagement consisted of working with youth in after school programs. However, Marc did have a commitment to work towards addressing larger social injustices in the future.

Summary and factors influencing critical civic development. These students developed a critical filter for understanding inequality, however, they were not yet at the leadership level of civic participation. Marc's case also shows consciousness of systemic injustices in the classroom was associated with a motivation to learn more and address issues in the future rather than acting as an agent of change in the present.

Awakening Civic Leaders (Carla, Victor & Vero)

What differentiates these students from the Critical Civic Participants above is that they have taken on civic leadership roles and identities. Through participation and training, they have developed competence as civic leaders. However, they also articulated more nascent critiques of injustice than the group above. Carla and Vero fall into the Awakening Civic Leader category because of their strong identity and competence as community leaders coupled with their nascent critique of social injustice.

Carla (UFJ, Senior, Intermediate): Taking on high profile tasks. Carla has always had personal agency and confidence to control aspects in her life but she “probably wouldn’t even have been involved in the community” if it wasn’t for UFJ. Carla shared how she developed an interest in improving conditions in her community through UFJ: “I changed a lot...[now] I’m doing something good for myself and for the community; I’m out there public speaking or doing something productive.”

Carla took on many leadership tasks within UFJ, particularly public speaking roles, which made her feel like a leader. For instance, she made presentations to the board of education, students at her school and audiences at rallies. She talked about being “really, really, nervous” about public speaking before but with the training and experience she’s had in UFJ she’s learned to “love it.” She used to worry about messing up, but now she realizes that mistakes might happen but as long as the campaign message gets heard, “that’s all that matters.” Thus, through training and experience, Carla has developed an emerged level of civic competence and agency as a civic participant. Carla also felt that she has grown as a leader through her experiences in UFJ. She said:

Before, I felt like a follower. I felt like, ‘okay, what do you need, let me follow you.’ But now, yeah, I feel like a leader. And some people see me as a leader and that makes me feel really good. I feel like a leader.

Carla’s comment reveals how being recognized as a leader in UFJ led her to take on that identity. This underscores the role of others’ perceptions in supporting particular identities. Now, Carla envisions herself on a long-term trajectory as a critical civic activist. For instance, she hopes to return to UFJ one day and serve as an adult organizer with one of the high school clubs.

Victor (UFJ, Senior, Intermediate): The outsider becomes an organizer. Victor experienced significant critical civic development through his four year off and on participation in UFJ. In that time, Victor took on many roles, as speaker, mentor and facilitator in the group. Victor came to UFJ as an opinionated and outspoken youth, but for much of his life, these characteristics would manifest themselves in self-defeating ways. For instance, he would question teachers’ authority and get himself into trouble in school. Victor shared that “UFJ taught me how to channel my challenging energy” into the struggle for educational justice. In UFJ, his critiques became more sophisticated and his efforts more productive. In particular, he credits workshops and retreats such as ‘Advance’ and ‘Strike School’ as influencing his thinking. He also credits UFJ for convincing him to care about his community and feel that he had the ability to improve it for those around him.

Victor took an extended break from UFJ (about six months) to focus on his academics. He transferred from his large high school to an adult school to make up credits so that he could graduate from high school. However, he returned to UFJ as a college student and now interns with the organization, where he tries to serve as a mentor for younger students.

Vero (UFJ, Junior, Novice): Developing leadership skills, applying them broadly.

It's through UFJ that Vero further developed both her critique and leadership skills. Vero was eight when her mom asked her, 'why are there four liquor stores on this block?' Vero shared that her mom often asked her these 'rhetorical questions... just to get me thinking.' While her mom encouraged her to question the world around her, it was UFJ that she said helped her explore these questions deeper and find some answers. In particular, it was her experience in Strike School that served as a catalyst to her developing critical consciousness and development as an awakening civic leader.

Vero's participation in UFJ made her more than a consumer of "political" information from her mother, but allowed her to also be a provider of critical content. When Vero first started UFJ, her mother was unaware of the focus of the organization. Vero explained that it was not long until her mother experienced the impact UFJ had on her: "And after a while she started noticing, 'oh, she's really getting educated.' Cause before, she was always the one telling me about political things. And now, she tells me, and I tell her as well. So now she says, 'oh, UFJ.' [laughs]" So, both Vero and her mother, attribute Vero's growing political awareness to her participation in UFJ. In addition, to offering political information to her mother, Vero felt it was her role in UFJ to inform her peers at school about issues affecting their school and local community.

Moreover, Vero said that UFJ helped her develop as a leader, with the public speaking and organizing skills to effectively take on leadership roles in community and school-based clubs, such as MEChA and UFJ. She shared:

I talk more with confident sometimes, when I'm in front of crowd. I'm not like, 'um, I don't know what to say.' Sometimes I just say something that I know. I don't know how

to explain it. Facilitating something. Taking the lead on something. Being a leader.

Organizing more, not just doing something at the last minute.

Through the training and opportunity to participate in the authentic tasks of UFJ, Vero developed into a confident civic leader. Lastly, she developed a long-term commitment to her community. In her first interview, Vero said she wanted to go out of state for college and by the second interview she decided she wanted to stay local so she could continue working on her community projects.

Summary and factors influencing critical civic development. These three students all took on civic leadership roles and long-term civic identities while developing a nascent critique of inequalities. These cases highlight the importance of scaffolding civic skills through training and providing opportunities to participate in authentic civic tasks like speaking, organizing and mentoring other youth. Carla's and Vero's cases also highlight how putting youth in roles where others see them as civic leaders can help them internalize that identity.

Critical Civic Leaders (Paul, Maria & Elvira)

Finally, the "Critical Civic Leader" stage describes individuals with a strong critical civic identity and competence for critical civic engagement. These individuals take on leadership roles in critical civic campaigns, mentor others and have a long-term attachment to a movement for social justice.

Paul (UFJ, Senior, Intermediate): Stepping up and stepping back. Paul is a Critical Civic Leader because he took on leadership roles, has developed a life-long commitment to promoting social justice and he serves as a mentor for others' development. When Paul began with UFJ, he was a shy, acritical youth whose singular career goal was to become a lead guitarist

for a heavy metal band. Through UFJ, he learned about the “different types of oppressions that exist in society” and it “just opened [his] eyes” and it made him think, “you know what, we should change that.” After three years in UFJ, Paul is now talking about community activism as a possible career field and feels that he will always be involved with community work. He says that it is something he ‘has to do.’ Paul also showed his civic leadership by stepping up to take on important roles in UFJ and consciously stepping back to allow less experienced youth to have the chance to grow from leadership in the group.

Maria (UFJ, Sophomore, Intermediate): Discovering your power. Maria has transformed from a shy youth who couldn’t wait to leave her community to a vocal leader for community improvement who realizes her power as a civic agent. Maria admitted that before UFJ, she used to think, “I’m going to move and I’m going to live in the rich side...But like now it’s like, ‘no it’s about giving back to your community and coming back and helping others.’” She added that the work she has done with UFJ has made her feel like she has the power to make an impact on her community: “It’s just really powerful how we could do all that stuff [with UFJ]. And how we have so much power but we don’t realize it. As students, we have power.” Maria pointed to her starting up a club at her school as a sign of her new leadership and confidence, saying it was something she “couldn’t have done without United For Justice.” In all Maria became a critical civic leader through her experiences with UFJ.

Elvira (UFJ, Junior, Intermediate): Meta-awareness of transformations. For Elvira, the opportunity to learn critical content and to have a voice as a student, led to her transformation from a naïve shy young person to a more confident and civically active youth. In her interview, she described being captivated by the content of the first meeting, particularly a YouTube video documenting the struggles of youth in rural Africa to obtain an education. However, she still

wasn't sure if she would continue participating in the leadership component of UFJ. I asked her why she eventually kept coming and Elvira talked about how the space was changing her as a person, in a way that she really liked:

Because, I liked what we were talking about! I liked that whole student involvement. I started to become that energetic person that I didn't think I was going to be. So, I started noticing that transformation... I thought, 'hey, this isn't so bad and we're learning a bunch of cool stuff that we're not learning in school. And we're getting involved. And so I just started to like that, even though I was like, 'that's weird, cause I wouldn't, that wasn't the person I was' like, 'oh, that getting involved person.' I was like that shy person, you know, not talking to anyone. Like no, I was talking to people and getting to meet new people. I started liking that.

Her comment shows a meta-awareness of her own transformation into a civic leader. Elvira describes how her participation in UFJ changed the way she engages in other clubs.

[In AVID] I would always be just quiet. Like quiet, nod my head, 'no' and always quiet. But here [in UFJ] it was different, it was just different, but United for Justice helped me grow from that. And now who would have thought, I'm AVID president. It's weird coming from that ninth grader who was really, really shy, and wouldn't speak up at the meetings. Now, I'm like [the facilitator calling out] 'freshman [claps her hands], what do you think?'... United for Justice was like the first club where I actually spoke up and stuff. But, it helped me grow in AVID too.

Another marker of Elvira as a Critical Civic Leader is that she has a strong solidarity with oppressed people and has committed her life's work to addressing issues of injustice. In Elvira's college application, she articulated her future interests in fighting for "positive change [in] our

schools” and addressing injustices “that stand on the way of people like my family to have a better life.” This long term commitment and passion for social justice is what makes Elvira a Critical Civic Leader.

Summary and factors influencing critical civic development. These three students all took on civic leadership roles. Moreover, they envisioned themselves as powerful civic agents with a life-long commitment to addressing issues of injustice in their communities. They also saw themselves as mentors and role models for others and tried to support their development to promote the long term goal of social justice. All three of these youth transformed from shy acritical youth to confident, skilled and committed civic leaders. Their cases suggest that opportunities for critical learning and participating in civic actions can foster strong critical civic development.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented my working model for critical civic development, and discussed the focal students’ development in context of that model. I have also touched upon factors that influenced their development that will be discussed more in subsequent chapters. The classroom students often articulated an interest in civic learning and a growing awareness of injustices that increased their motivation to address these issues. However, this motivation tended to be future oriented and they were less likely to express feeling like agents of change in the present. In UFJ, youths’ developing awareness of injustices coupled with participation in civic actions to address issues of injustice in their community influenced an increased sense of agency and critical civic identity. The next two chapters will discuss the practices of each site and how they influenced youth participation and development.

CHAPTER 5

THE CLASSROOM AND CRITICAL CIVIC DEVELOPMENT: PLANTING SEEDS THROUGH ENGAGEMENT WITH CRITICAL LECTURES

In Chapter Four, the unit of analysis was the individual focal youth and his or her development. In this chapter and the next (Chapter Six), I analyze how the characteristics of each learning space interact to influence students' development. In Chapter Seven, I will focus on how the structural features of each site influence critical civic development.³²

This chapter has five sections. It begins with a theory section outlining the critical and sociocultural models of education used to understand the practices within the observed classrooms. In the second section, I introduce the teacher and describe the practices of the classroom. In the third section, I argue that participation in these classes plants the seeds for critical civic development for students in the classroom by intellectually engaging them with critical material, making them aware of local and global injustices, helping them see connections between the content and their lives, encouraging them to question and seek out root explanations for social conditions, and encouraging them to participate as civic agents to address issues in the community. The fourth and fifth section will show how greater critical civic development was associated with students with more opportunities to participate in the space (seniors and outspoken sophomores) and with civic engagement outside of the classroom. Overall, this chapter argues that the classroom space was effective at planting seeds for critical civic development, with extended quality opportunities to participate in the space and outside participation in civic activities associated with the most robust development.

³² The focus on different levels of analysis is not meant to separate individual, local and global contexts but merely intended to provide a different perspective to approaching the interplay of the three.

Section I: Theoretical Models

In this section, I present two theoretical models for understanding teaching and learning that I used to understand and analyze the practices of the classroom under study. Specifically, I draw upon Paulo Freire's (1970/2000; 1998) and Ira Shor's (1992) work around critical dialogues and Barbara Rogoff's concept of Assembly-line instruction to describe the culture of practice of the classroom.

What is Critical Dialogue?

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire clarifies his position on critical dialogue versus the banking method of education. He outlines that all teaching fundamentally involves an educator presenting content or information to learners. However, "banking" is when a teacher supplies content in a manner that sees her or himself as singular expert, the learner as empty and the content to be without question (Freire, 1998). Providing a broad description of an educator practicing critical dialogue, Shor (1992) explains that "[a]n empowering teacher does not talk knowledge *at* students but talks *with* them" (p. 85). This process of critical dialogue involves the teacher presenting information to mutually engage around with students, rather than a "banking" approach that attempts to fill students with information.

Critical dialogue involves an educator providing his or her critical perspective while honoring and building off students' own knowledge and encouraging learners to consistently question and consider multiple perspectives to seek an understanding of the root causes of social conditions. This includes: 1) integrating students' input into the content of the course; 2) encouraging students to speak from experience; 3) building upon the knowledge they bring, and;

4) urging students to question, seek out knowledge and apply it to their own realities (Shor, 1992). In particular, Freire (1998) underscores the importance of questioning, asserting that the way to consciousness is to become “agents of curiosity, become investigators, become subjects in an ongoing process of quest for the revelation of the “why” of things and facts” (p. 238). Lastly, with critical dialogue the educator should not impose his or her own views on learners (authoritarianism), nor should they adapt to the grounded knowledge of the learners (permissiveness). Instead, they should provide their own perspective, while pointing out that there are others. Freire explains: “The role of the progressive educator, which neither can nor ought to be omitted, in offering her or his ‘reading of the world,’ is to bring out the fact that there are other “readings of the world,’ different from the one being offered as the educator’s own, and at times antagonistic to it” (1998, p. 244).

Assembly-line Instruction

As previously discussed in chapter two, sociocultural theorists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995; 2003) have argued that human development should be reconceptualized as “a process of people’s changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 52). These scholars highlight the importance of authentic activities that lead to participation in more meaningful activities within one’s “communities of practice.”

While participation is often indexed by observable activities, Rogoff et al. (2003) point out that observation itself can be a valued form of participation that can lead to development. However, they specify a particular type of active observation (which they call “Intent Participation”) where the observers envision themselves as future participants in a practice. They

argue that actively observing and listening in to the authentic activities of experts in a community can lead to development over time.

The counter model to intent participation is “Assembly-line instruction” which characterizes much of western classroom practice (Rogoff et al., 2003). Assembly-line instruction has a “hierarchical structure, organized with fixed roles in which someone manages others’ participation, acting as a boss.” (Rogoff et al., p. 184). They further describe schooling as “specialized child-focused activities...designed to instruct them in skills to be employed in adulthood once they are allowed to be involved in mature activities” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 179). Others have asserted that schools and classrooms do not function as communities of practice because learning is often decontextualized from meaningful practice, and teachers and learners have fixed and distinct roles, while not mutually participating in a shared practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003).

In sum, the assembly-line approach in classrooms is characterized by a participation structure that positions the teacher as boss and the students as recipients of information, completing tasks with little understanding of their connection to an important adult activity (See Table 5.1 for a comparison of Critical Dialogue with Assembly-line Instruction). Nasir and Hand (2008) argue that individuals need opportunities to take on integral roles within a community of practice in order to take on a more advanced identity within that activity. For instance, they show that participation in a high school basketball team offered more opportunities for young people to take on important roles and be held accountable to them than a mathematics course. They argue that traditional classroom approaches involve predominantly passive participation by students that provide few opportunities for them to take up integral roles in daily practices. Consequently,

students are less likely to take up identities associated with the practices of the classroom (Nasir & Hand, 2008).

Table 5.1. Components of Critical Dialogue and Assembly-line Instruction

	Critical Dialogue	Assembly-line Instruction
Participation Structure	Collaborative roles in simultaneously teaching and learning	Fixed roles, hierarchical
Roles	Experienced educators guide while also participating with learners in reflection and action	Experts are the bosses, closely managing learners activities (no co-participation)
Learning	Through observation and participation in examining one's lived conditions and acting to address injustices.	Through lessons and assignments detached from an authentic 'real-life' activity
Motivation	Learners seek knowledge to understand and improve their lived conditions	Extrinsic rewards. Learners do not see the connections between tasks and purpose

Section II: The Classrooms, Teacher and Practices

Overview of Selection Process

As discussed in the methods section of this dissertation, several factors went into the purposeful selection of the classroom under study (Merriam, 1998). The choice of social studies was appropriate because it is a subject that typically includes a civics component and provides opportunities for students to examine and critique social conditions and their origins. The teacher for this study, Saul Sanchez, was selected because of his reputation as a critical educator and his collaboration with UFJ as a teacher sponsor of one of their four high school clubs. I have categorized Saul as “critical” because of his commitment to promoting critical and civic development amongst his students. In addition, Saul has several other qualities that made his classroom a compelling site for this study. Having grown up and gone to school in the same

community as the Pierce students, Saul has a shared culture and history with his students as well as many of the adult organizers at UFJ. Moreover, he is a confident, veteran teacher (over ten years), who continuously looks to improve his pedagogy. For this chapter I draw upon data collected from observations of and interviews³³ with students from Sanchez's third period 10th grade World History class and his fourth period 12th grade Government and Economics class.

Classroom Content

When choosing content for his course, Sanchez does not go "by the book" in a literal or figurative way. Students picked up their textbooks at the beginning of the year and I rarely observed them being used after that. Instead, Sanchez used supplemental materials, such as articles, images, videos and oral lectures for the majority of the content for his course. The units he chose for the course were in line with state standards, however, he had no intention of covering all of them, preferring to cover fewer issues in depth. The three Social Studies teachers in the small school agreed upon the selected standards and tried to make sure they covered all the material over the three required history courses (World History, U.S. History, and American Government and Economics).

The units covered in Sanchez's courses were standard history topics, however, he provided additional resources to offer multiple perspectives and tie the content to issues and themes that are relevant for students today. The five major units for the sophomore year World History course were: The Rise of Democratic Ideas; The Rise of Imperialism and Colonialism; World War I and Its Consequences; Totalitarianism in the Modern World; and Nationalism in the Contemporary World. Some video resources include: The Human Cost of Bargain Shopping and

³³ This includes individual interviews with the 11 focal students and six focus group interviews: Three with a total of ten sophomores and three with a total of twelve seniors.

Zoned for Slavery (globalization and worker exploitation); Farmingville and De Nadie (immigration and racism), Juvies (juvenile crime), How the World Became Divided Between “Rich” and “Poor” Countries (article). The units for the first semester senior year Government course include: The Constitution and the Bill of Rights; The Courts and the Governmental Process; Federalism; Comparative Governments; Contemporary Issues in the World Today. The units for the second semester Economics course were: Fundamental Economic Concepts; Comparative Economics Systems, Microeconomics; Macroeconomics; International Economic Concepts. Some supplemental resources include: Roger and Me (Documentary about unions), Zoned for Slavery (Globalism), Advertising and the End of the World, Sneakers, “Cool Capitalism” and Black America (article on advertising and Capitalism); Hunger Myths (article), Food Inc. (documentary on the food industry). In addition, Sanchez would spend a significant amount of time talking about current events. More important than the topics covered was the way Sanchez provided multiple perspectives on them, making connections to students’ lives, and encouraging them to critically seek out explanations for social phenomenon.

The Classroom Teacher and Critical Lectures

I argue that Sanchez’s classrooms have elements of both critical dialogues and assembly-line instruction. I am calling Sanchez’s pedagogical approach “critical lectures.” The common practice that the students and teacher participate in is discussion around critical content. While Sanchez is the primary provider and presenter of information (characteristic of assembly-line instruction), he also encourages student questioning and critiques (characteristic of critical dialogue). His students recognize him as an authority figure and are motivated to complete assignments to get good grades (assembly-line), but many also assert an intrinsic motivation to

learn more about the content he presents because they feel it is relevant to their lives (critical dialogue). His students feel that his class is more than learning history for the sake of knowledge alone. The purpose of Sanchez's class is to better understand the world they live in and apply the information to their own lives. Most students participate by listening in on and some also participate in the critical discussions. However, like an assembly-line approach, Sanchez classes also have fairly fixed roles, with the teacher as manager and boss and the students not envisioning themselves on a trajectory to take over the responsibilities of the teacher.

Vignette – Excerpt from a Critical Lecture on Healthcare Reform

Through presenting and commenting on an extended passage from a field note, I will show how Sanchez explained concepts to students, incorporated their questions and comments and provided multiple perspectives for students to consider, while also offering his own thoughts and ideas. These are all characteristics of critical dialogues. The excerpt comes from a discussion on healthcare with his 10th grade class during the fall of 2009 when President Obama was attempting to reform the nation's healthcare system. Sanchez began by setting the historical and contemporary context for the healthcare debate while also questioning the idea of a solely profits driven society:

He told the students to think about the idea of not thinking about profit all of the time, 'Is that an idea we should consider?' he asked. Then Sanchez said, 'Obama wants to implement free healthcare and it's never been done in this country before and some people are uncomfortable with that. They think that things should always cost something.'

Then a student questioned the stance against universal healthcare and Sanchez responds:

A student asked ‘why is that bad?’ referring to free healthcare. Sanchez said he gets asked that all the time and that he would give the students an example that he has used before. He said, ‘insurance companies don't want free healthcare because they don't want to lose money. But there's more than that, let me give you an example.’ He told a story about Disneyland. He said, ‘when you go to Disneyland you pay your price for a ticket to get in, right?’ He asked the students, ‘are you by yourself when you go to Disneyland?’ and they said no. One student said ‘there are lines.’ Sanchez said, ‘yes you can put up with it but this is part of the argument against healthcare. If Disneyland was free for all, my experience might be worse. It would be really crowded and you would get there then you wouldn't be able to go on very many rides you would just stand in line.’

Rather than just tell students that people worry that providing free universal healthcare would decrease the quality of services for all, Sanchez provided an analogy to drive his point home. The Disneyland example helped students to think about how providing a service for free (access to an amusement park) might make the experience less enjoyable (spending all your time waiting). The next exchange highlighted Sanchez’s attempts to encourage students to look at multiple perspectives of an issue. First, a student made a comment signaling his understanding of and agreement with Sanchez’s analogy above, which led Sanchez to clarify that he was just expressing *one* argument against healthcare reform. That’s followed by an additional student comment that adds a new perspective to the dialogue, prompting Sanchez to point out that the student’s comment was yet another view on the whole debate.

Then a student says ‘yeah it would be like going to Disneyland and it would just be standing in line.’ Then Sanchez reiterated that is one argument versus free healthcare and

some people think like this. A student said ‘but if you think about it, it would make more jobs for doctors and other people.’ Sanchez agreed and said that's another idea.

In the last segment of this passage Sanchez used the example of schooling to illustrate the long-term gains for short-term investments in healthcare, while also acknowledging his own opinion.

Then Sanchez gives the students another example and said, ‘think about how much your parents pay for education. They pay for school with the taxes that they pay. But they also need to buy you clothes to be able to look good to go to school. Think about if your parents decided to save money and not send you to school so they didn't have to buy you clothes. They might save money in the short-term but in the long run they will lose money because you can't take care of yourself or get a job and they will have to take care of you.’ Then he said that this is one of the best arguments for healthcare, and talked about the long-term money we will save preventing illnesses.

This excerpt of a common type of exchange in Sanchez’s classroom highlights some important characteristics of his approach. First, he incorporates current issues into history class and provides students multiple perspectives to understand them. Sanchez is responsive to student questions and comments, often taking the time to provide detailed answers to students’ questions using examples and analogies that draw upon students lived experiences. And we also see that Sanchez does the majority of talking in this excerpt (characteristic of an assembly-line approach), with a few students offering questions and comments that he responds to. In section four, I will expand on how this participation structure seems to influence student engagement in Sanchez’s classes.

Section III: Planting Seeds for Development

As discussed in Chapter Four, the focal students in this study exemplified a range of critical civic development stages. In the school-based site, I found differences in students' critical civic development within and across classes. Figure 5.1 charts the classroom focal students' stages. The names in bold are seniors, those that are underlined have participated in civic actions outside of the classroom and the italicized names are students who identify themselves as shy. These three factors are associated with different levels of critical civic development for students, with being outgoing, a senior and a participant in civic engagement all linked to more advanced development.

In this section, I argue that participation in Sanchez's class planted important seeds for critical civic development that could be built upon with extended classroom participation, and civic engagement outside of the classroom. Sanchez takes a long-term approach to fostering critical civic development for his students. Below, I will discuss five ways that Sanchez planted seeds for critical civic development with his students. They include: 1) engaging students in learning social studies; 2) helping them see connections between the content and their lives; 3) encouraging them to question and seek out root explanations for social conditions; 4) making them aware of local and global injustices; and 5) encouraging them to get involved with civic action to address issues in the community. Overall, Sanchez's class was an important introduction to critical content and questioning that put students on a trajectory to further critical civic development, particularly when coupled with participation in civic action.

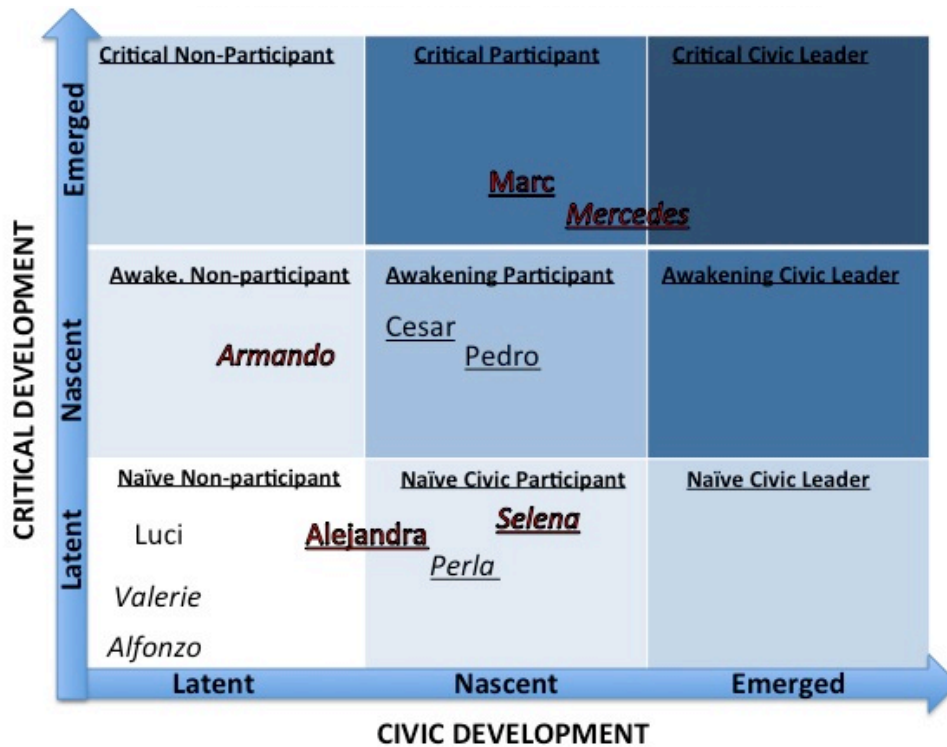


Figure 5.1. Critical Civic Development and Classroom Focal Students.

Engagement with Social Studies and Making Applied Connections

“I think everybody’s listening on it. Even that one guy who bugs the class...he’s an ass, but then he’ll listen, because even though it’s history, the way Mr. Sanchez says it, it makes it sound interesting.” – Pedro.

Sanchez’s first goal for students, especially the sophomores, is for students to discover that social studies can be interesting and it has relevance and application to their lives. He said he wanted them to start to “see that social studies has answers to stuff that goes on, that it’s not just boring subjects...[they’re] just beginning to see how social studies has real world applications.” Below I will show how he was fairly successful at planting these seeds with all of his students, even those categorized as latent in their critical development.

Most students indicated that they found the content and dialogues in the course to be engaging. For instance, Pedro's statement above indicates that he feels all students, even the behaviorally disengaged ones, were at least intellectually engaged in listening in on class discussions. According to Pedro, Sanchez has a way of making a previously boring subject interesting. Several students talked about how they never liked history classes before taking Sanchez's class. And Selena, a senior, said, "[Sanchez's class was] the first class that I actually enjoyed. ...From all the four years I've been here [at Pierce]." The students reported that Sanchez was particularly effective at explaining content that helped them connect to and understand the material. Lana, a senior, admitted that before Sanchez's class she was disengaged in history classes:

I didn't pay attention at all in [other] history classes at all. Like, I would get bored... just answering the questions without nothing explained, it was difficult for me. And then with [Sanchez] it was different, he explains, he goes into detail. In a way, he grabs your attention.

The quote highlights how Lana's disengagement wasn't a result of an inherent distaste for history but a product of previous teachers' failure to explain the material in a way that she could connect to it.

Sanchez's shared background with students and his ability to draw upon cultural knowledge to explain concepts helped to engage students with the material he presented. One characteristic of Sanchez's approach was utilizing personal stories to clarify content. During observations of his class, I often heard him draw upon stories from his family, schooling and childhood experiences in Riverton to help explain concepts to students. Armando and other students believed that Sanchez's shared background with the students (ethnicity, class,

community) allowed him to understand the students better and consequently explain the content to them more effectively. Armando said:

You could say, like your cousin or your older brother, he's teaching you these things and he knows what you go through. So, he knows how to explain it the way that you can understand. And I think it's good because he knows what problems we go through.

As Armando's comment suggests, Sanchez's grasp of his students' cultural contexts allows him to understand them better and create bridges to new knowledge.

In addition to explaining concepts in culturally responsive ways, Sanchez provides content that students felt could be applied to their own lives. Even students I categorized as latent in their critical development, like Perla shared that Sanchez teaches them how history "affects us." And Valerie asserted that Sanchez's goals were "to open our eyes to see how we can make [the world] different to how it was back then, to change how it is now." Several students also pointed out that Sanchez often involved students in discussions around current events, which they found engaging.

Sanchez's Economics unit on unions provides an example of how he structured the course so that students can apply learning to their lives and better understand their own worlds. For this unit, the seniors interviewed a family member about their working conditions and the impacts of being unionized or not. On a general level, Armando talked about how he learned that "unions are a really great resource for workers to have because that's who could protect them. Because how some workers are exploited." Before the project, Armando knew that his mother was "part of a union but I didn't know what that meant." By interviewing her, he found out that his mother had distinctly different experiences as a union worker as opposed to a non-union one. He shared:

Before, [my mother] was part of a union and she said she got her vacations paid and when she was sick, she got paid. And now she works and she's not part of her union and she sees a difference because she really doesn't have a voice. And then she can't really be demanding, like, her vacations, if she ever takes vacations, I don't think she would get paid, maybe once in a while.

Through this project, Armando developed a better understanding of the general exploitation of workers and how his own mother is left without “a voice” in determining the conditions of her work place. By presenting critical information and encouraging youth to reflect upon it and apply it to their own lives, Sanchez provided the opportunity for youth to understand how social and economic relationships in society affect them and their families.

Fostering a Questioning Nature

Fostering a hunger to understand the root causes and consistently ask questions to seek these out is fundamental to critical development. This tendency to both verbally and mentally ask questions during classroom discussions was an indicator of critical development and a characteristic of nascent and emerged critical development.

One of Sanchez's primary goals as an educator is developing students' capacities to be critical questioners of the information they are exposed to in his classroom and in their lives. He feels that by sharing information with students and encouraging them to examine it with a critical lens, they will develop the tendency to consistently look for root causes and explanations. He shared:

I guess my goal is that they become critical consumers of information. Critical. That they develop critical filters for what they are told, what they see on TV, for any type of

information that they receive...that with my probing, with my sharing of information, that they always just naturally think, there has to be more to this...and they try to seek that. That's my ultimate goal.

As the quote indicates, Sanchez is intentional about providing information and questions that will encourage his students to develop a tendency to question, a key component of critical dialogues.

In order to foster a questioning mentality, Sanchez modeled the types of questions students should be asking of new information. Marc described the kinds of questions Sanchez encouraged them to ask:

He just doesn't teach us something and he's like, 'oh yeah, there.' He questions us, like, 'how does it impact you, what do you think about it? How would you fix it? Would you like to be treated that way? How will you be in the future? What will you do to change that?

Moreover, Sanchez encourages students to listen to each other's questions and comments to learn from each other. He also urges them to ask questions of the material and of him to try to uncover the truth. When I asked Cesar to describe a typical day in Sanchez's class he said:

He usually has something on the computer or something on display like an article or something that's really controversial. ...And then we just go off, like we have a conversation, we have a deep conversation of why, what is the cause of this, what does that mean, and what factors affect it, and what it might mean to us in the future.

Cesar's comment underscores that classroom sessions regularly involve students exploring critical ('controversial') topics and seeking to understand their root causes and applications to students' lives.

Developing a Critical Awareness of Injustice and a Social Justice Perspective

In addition to having a questioning nature, Sanchez aimed to foster a social justice mentality amongst his students. In Sanchez's view a social justice perspective means that a person has solidarity with oppressed people, can recognize injustice when it occurs and point out the institutional factors that perpetuate inequitable social conditions. Not all students articulated this perspective, with seniors more likely to than sophomores. Sanchez fostered this perspective by exposing students to issues of local and global injustice while continuing to encourage them to question and connect the material to their own lives.

The students I categorized as Latent expressed an interest in the material but did not articulate the extent of the injustice. Or if they did, they saw little possibility for liberation. When asked what she found interesting in the World History course, Luci identified a documentary that Sanchez showed about juvenile offenders titled *Juvies*. She said, "It was interesting to see a different perspective like of other teens and why they do stuff and how they are brought up." However, when asked if the information changed her perspective on how to deal with juvenile offenders she said it didn't. Nor did she express an interest in learning more. Overall, she said that the content she learned in the course made her think, "It's not fair, the world" and that "there's good people and we all want to help but that's not enough." This comment reflects a growing awareness of injustice and desire to theoretically do something about it but little hope for any kind of transformational action.

The students that I categorized as Nascent talked about how the information "shocked" them, produced emotions of anger, and fostered an interest to learn more and possibly address the issues. These students indicated that something needs to be done, but they may not feel that they are the ones who can do anything about it. Cesar said that the unit on imperialism made him

angry to learn about the way “they went into places, just killed everybody and took the stuff.” Armando talked about being largely ignorant of the extent of injustice in society before Mr. Sanchez exposed him to more critical perspectives. He said, ‘there's horrible things going on. Mr. Sanchez shows us the other side of the things...Because for my case, I never, I would know about things but I wouldn't know them in details like I do now.’ Nascent students tended to talk about how the content that Sanchez exposed them to brought them a deeper awareness of injustice and *started* to change the way they saw the world. For instance, when talking about advertising and capitalism, Armando said, “It's really opened my eyes, pretty much everything. How everything connects and how everything flows, moneywise.”

For Pedro, the exposure to critical material also affected the way he saw the world. For instance, learning about exploitation through capitalism influenced his views on crime and poverty. During my first field visit, Sanchez gave a lesson on the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and was introducing the concepts of socialism and capitalism. He explained capitalism by saying:

[R]emember how I brought in a box of flaming hot Cheetos on the first day of class. If I had said I was selling them for five dollars you might say that I was on crack. But that's the fundamental idea of capitalism; it's to make money.

Months later, when I interviewed Pedro, he referenced this simple example as one that helped him understand capitalism and exploitation. In the excerpt below, Pedro articulated a connection between crime in his neighborhood, poverty and the exploitative nature of capitalism. When asked, he attributed this new perspective to his learning through Mr. Sanchez's class.

Pedro: [...] if people had regular jobs that paid enough money, they wouldn't have to be out in the streets doing illegal stuff [selling in the Black Market]. So, if you had more

jobs, that paid them well enough so they could have homes and feed their family, I don't think there's going to be people trying to sell drugs or weapons or stuff like that.

Jesse: Why do you think there's not better jobs?

Pedro: Well, because it's a capitalist country. You have to try to make money by getting cheap labor.

Jesse: That perspective, when did you think about that?

Pedro: Capitalism? With Mr.

Jesse: With Mr. Sanchez?

Pedro: Yeah, he was telling us capitalism was this, was like having a bag of chips made for a nickel and selling it for a dollar. I was like, 'whoa!'

In this passage, Pedro demonstrates a change in consciousness associated with both the content he encountered in Sanchez's class and the manner in which Sanchez explained the material. It is important to note that the "Cheetos" example was not the extent of the course content on capitalism. For instance, additional material included a documentary on exploitation of factory workers in Bangladesh. Pedro noted that that video made him think about his mother's exploitation as a worker: "And I was like, 'damn, it's crazy.' Cause my mom works like making the shirts for Forever 21 and they don't really pay her a lot." Through critical and relevant material, Sanchez helped Pedro develop a critical awareness of injustice and how it affects his own life. In section 5, I will show how it took participation in civic action to translate this awareness into a critical civic identity and a commitment to taking action against injustice.

The students I classified as Emerged articulated that the content in Sanchez's class influenced them to change the way they interpreted social conditions, where they recognized how social injustices and institutions have a major role in perpetuating inequality. After talking

about capitalism, food justice, and the effects of advertising in perpetuating sexism and consumerism, Marc shared that, “Now, after this class, I kind of look at everything differently.” Mercedes talked about how the content from the economics course helped her to think differently about the effects of advertising, capitalism and economic exploitation. The following is an excerpt from one of Mercedes’ essays for the course, which exhibits her ability to look for and analyze the root causes of injustice:

Racism, materialism and militarism. These seemingly unconnected ideas contribute, or rather are the products of the huge gap between the rich and the poor in the United States. This gap is a result of having profit as the motivation for all our investments. One may not believe that what occurs on Wall St. affects us, but businessmen use advertisement and their influence in the government to influence our lives and ways of thinking.

In addition, these students felt that unjust conditions were alterable and that they could play a part in addressing injustices. When asked how learning about all this injustice affects him, Marc answered, “The way it affects me, it kind of drives me to succeed. My role is to try to go into politics and make a change. And start off in my community and maybe go to the world.” By exposing students to critical content, encouraging them to question inequalities and make connections to their lives, Sanchez was helping students develop an awareness of injustice and a critical filter to understand injustice. For some, like Marc, he was helping to inspire him to action.

Encouraging Civic Development

Sanchez’s has several ways that he plants seeds for civic development. These efforts fall into three categories: 1) building students’ civic knowledge and intellectual engagement by discussing issues in their communities; 2) encouraging student involvement in civic actions

outside of the classroom now and in the future; 3) assigning seniors in his American Government course a Community Action Project (CAP), which requires them to develop a proposal for addressing a social issue in the community. This section will address the latter two approaches, given that the first approach was addressed in the section above.

While Mr. Sanchez focuses more on developing consciousness of injustice rather than pushing direct action against it, he does encourage his students to consider ways they can give back to their communities. I asked Mr. Sanchez, “Once [your students] have this social justice perspective, how do you want them to act?” He answered by saying he tells his students, “You have to pay it forward. None of us here got here on our own. I stand here on the shoulders of giants ...Please think about the needs of your community and keep those in mind.” In this way, Mr. Sanchez encourages students to develop social responsibility and give back to their communities. Many of the students articulated an awareness of this goal (as Marc did above), saying that Sanchez pushed them to get involved and think about how they could address the problems in the world.

In addition to this verbal encouragement, Sanchez also provides information on current opportunities to participate in community organizations such as UFJ, Young Senators and other civic actions as they arise. Luci said she knew that Sanchez wanted his students to be involved in the community because he would bring in groups like United For Change to talk about issues in the community. She admitted that this information gave her an *interest* in participating in community change efforts but she just didn’t have the time in her busy academic schedule to get involved. However, many of the focal students did participate in United for Change general

membership meetings, which were held in Sanchez's classroom³⁴ once a week at lunchtime. In addition, two of the sophomores (Pedro and Perla) went on to participate in Amnesty International (another school based club) during their junior year. As will be discussed in section five, the combination of Sanchez's class and outside civic participation was associated with these students' critical civic development.

Lastly, the Civic Action Project (CAP) in Sanchez's senior American Government class encouraged students to actively address a community issue through devising a policy reform and then seeking to implement it. All of the students expressed interest and engagement in the project. Mercedes especially enjoyed it and felt that it was the sort of activity the class should have done more of. When asked what she learned through the project, Mercedes indicated that it helped her build civic competence: "Just like going out and doing research and being more independent, like looking for laws and things that affect the way the community looks like. It just gives more a broader sense of how that works." Ernie said the project "made us aware of the issues in our community and we came up with solutions, well *possible* solutions. So that made us aware, 'this is going on, we need to do this, this and that.' Ernie's distinction that they came up with 'possible' solutions highlights that the projects were more intellectual than action oriented. Similarly, Mercedes pointed out, 'I think we did more learning than action. It was cool. It was still something that I liked.'" While this project was largely academic, it did help to build students' knowledge of community issues and the types of processes one would have to go through to make a change in the community. Rafael (focus group) talked about how it showed him the type of long-term commitment and funding it would take to make the kind of changes he wanted. In

³⁴ Sanchez was the official teacher sponsor but was not directly involved in the implementation of the club.

these ways, the Civic Action Project builds civic knowledge, planting seeds for students' civic development, even if it was mostly an academic endeavor.

Section IV: Accounting For Differences Within and Between Classes

This section will discuss how the nature of the participation structure, relationships and content in the classroom influenced different levels of engagement and development within and across the classrooms. Within the sophomore classroom, the level of active participation as a questioner during classroom discussions was associated with greater critical development. And being a questioner was linked to identifying oneself as an outspoken student (See Table 5.2). I will show how the participation structure in the classroom provided limited opportunities for shy students to take on identities as questioners in the learning space. Across classes, participation in the senior class was related to more development. I argue that this is a function of differences in the content and relationships between students and the teacher in the two courses.

Table 5.2. Classroom Focal Student Characteristics

Students	Role in Class	Social ID	GPA	Grade in Sanchez	Civic Engagement	Critical Civic Development
<i>Sophomores</i>						
Valerie	Listener	Shy	2.22	C	None	Naïve Non-participant
Alfonzo	Listener	Shy	0.54	F	None	Naïve Non-participant
Luci	Questioner	Outspoken	2.82	A	None	Naïve Non-participant
Perla	Listener	Shy	3.05	B	Amnesty, recycling club	Naïve Civic Participant
Pedro	Questioner	Outspoken	2.41	B	Amnesty, UFJ member meetings,	Awakening Civic Participant
Cesar	Questioner	Outspoken	3.5	B	UFJ member meetings, tutoring.	Awakening Civic Participant
<i>Seniors</i>						
Alejandra*	Questioner	Outspoken	1.3	B	UFJ member meetings (only a few late in the year)	Naïve Civic Participant
Selena	Listener	Shy	3.14	B	UFJ member meetings, Police Cadet Program	Naïve Civic Participant
Armando	Listener	Shy	2.71	A	Church club, counsels peers informally	Awakening Non-participant
Marc*	Questioner	Outspoken	3.29	A	UFJ member meetings, Young Senators Program, tutoring	Critical Civic Participant
Mercedes*	Listener	Shy	4.0	A	UFJ Leadership, tutoring	Critical Civic Participant

* Indicates this student has taken one of Sanchez's classes before.

Participation Structure and Within Class Differences in the Sophomore Classroom

Within the sophomore classroom, the level of active participation as a questioner during classroom discussions was associated with greater critical development. And being a questioner was linked to identifying oneself as an outspoken student (and not shy). I will show how the participation structure in the classroom provided limited opportunities for shy students to take on practice-based identities as questioners in the learning space.

Classroom roles. While most of the students in Sanchez's classes are intellectually engaged with the content many do not actively participate in critical lectures by asking questions or making comments to further the discussion. I have identified three roles that individuals in the classroom take on: 1) listener; 2) questioner; and 3) provider of information. The listeners

primarily listen and rarely, if ever, offer their questions or comments to classroom dialogue. The questioners ask Sanchez to clarify or provide additional information, express disagreement; and occasionally offer their own perspectives or new information to the discussion. While Sanchez welcomes student input, he serves as the primary provider of information for the class.

The type of engagement in the class varies, with a significant number of students primarily participating by listening to the content provided by Sanchez and a smaller group actively involved in classroom dialogues. A focus group student's (Raul, 12th grader) comment indicates his high intellectual engagement with the content, but highlights the passive nature of his participation as a recipient of knowledge in the classroom when he said, “[Sanchez] does catch your attention though. I would rather him speak for the whole period and give me a worksheet, than just open the book and just do it out of there.” Nevertheless, some students did actively participate by questioning and making comments during class sessions. When asked how he wants students to participate in his class, Sanchez identified Pedro and Cesar as quality participants because of their tendency to question him and add information to class discussions. Sanchez used this as an indicator that students were learning:

[Pedro] asked questions and he challenged, ‘but why this’ and ‘I heard this.’ Him and Cesar were always kind of like the ones who are like that, and I like that. As soon as they start challenging things, and in an outspoken way in class, to me I feel like ‘well they're already at a point where they’re understanding.’ In comparing other students to Cesar and Pedro, Sanchez admitted “a lot of the other kids still don't do it as much [actively question and comment during discussions].

The type of student participation for focal youth correlated to their identified level of comfort in social situations and roles as students. In other words, self-described shy students

were less likely to be questioners than students who described themselves as more socially outgoing. As Table 5.2 shows, Valerie, Perla, Alfonzo, Selena, Armando and Mercedes all identified as shy and primarily participated as listeners in the classroom spaces. On the other hand, Cesar, Pedro, Luci, Alejandra and Marc all identified as more socially outgoing and took on roles as questioners in the classroom.

Classroom participation structure and engagement. The participation structure within the classroom made it hard for shy students to participate or rather it made it easy for them *not* to participate in class discussions. In other words, they were not held accountable to take an integral role in the classroom practice of active critical questioning. Both listeners and questioners understood that Sanchez *wanted* students to be actively involved in discussions but listeners did not perceive it as *necessary* to success in the class overall. Cesar, an outgoing youth, knew that Sanchez's expectations of students were to "ask questions, always question what people tell you, don't just sit there randomly accept things. Ask, and ask, 'why is this this way? Why is it that way?'" Cesar did this because he was comfortable doing so and he enjoyed it. And in Valerie's description of Sanchez's teaching, she articulated a similar understanding as Cesar; however, she admitted rarely talking in the class because she is shy: "I don't really talk in this class...I just listen to everything that everyone is saying. I keep mines to myself." Valerie's goals for the class were to pass and to use the knowledge in her own life. However, she articulated that compliance with the rules of the space, attendance, listening and completion of assignments were enough for her to do well. When asked if she felt successful in the class, she replied, "Yes. Cause I'm in here. I do the work and I pay attention to what's going on." Armando also noted that Sanchez "begs for people to ask questions" but admitted that he didn't. In addition, listeners understood what advanced student participation looked like in classroom practice and appreciated the

contributions of these individuals. When asked to describe an important contributor to the class besides the teacher, Perla said, “I think Cesar and Pedro. They’re always talking and giving ideas and all that stuff. When you think about the ideas they say it's like, ‘okay, they are like interesting too.’” Nevertheless, Perla did not actively participate because she was “too shy” and didn’t feel she had to, to pass the course. Thus, success in the course (getting a passing grade), is separate from success in the predominant practice of the classroom space, questioning and critical dialogue. This meant that shy students did not have to engage in this practice.

In addition to students’ recognizing that questioning was not required for successful participation in the class, Sanchez did not focus on creating opportunities for shy students to more actively participate. Through analysis of field observations, Sanchez rarely called upon students, waiting for individuals to voluntarily offer up questions. This often resulted in the same handful of students offering questions and comments. When asked why they did not participate more, the shy students often said they would just wait for someone else to ask the questions or make comments.

Challenges to providing opportunities to participate. Teachers face difficult challenges when managing classroom participation. As a teacher trying to guide a critical dialogue, one would want to present information and structure discussions so that students are intrinsically motivated to participate because of the relevance and interest in a topic. For the outspoken students in Sanchez’s class, this was the case. Forcing shy students to actively question could result in the motivation for participation changing from interest in the activity to compliance to appease a ‘manager.’ Nevertheless, strategies to provide more opportunities for shy students to participate in questioning should be explored.

Summary. Being a questioner signifies that the student is participating in wanting to know more about the root causes of social policies and inequalities. However, one does not *have* to be a verbal questioner in the classroom to have this mentality. For instance, several seniors, Selena, Mercedes, and Armando talked about not always asking questions in class but thinking about them afterwards and seeking out information in other ways (asking Sanchez after class, reading, reflecting, etc.). While they weren't active in classroom dialogue, they still sought out knowledge, an indicator of critical development. On the other hand, the sophomore 'listeners,' Perla, Valerie, and Alfonzo, did not articulate this same level of intellectual questioning. For sophomores, being an active questioner was associated with more advanced critical development, whereas for seniors, it was not as necessary. Below, I will discuss how the content and the relationships in the course played a role in these differences.

Content, Relationship and Development Differences Across Classes

There were differences in critical development across the sophomore and senior classes. In particular, the students from the senior class exhibited more advanced critical development. I attribute some of this to differences in the nature of the content and relationships in the two classes. In the sophomore class, two of the six focal students (Pedro and Cesar) reported that learning the material in Sanchez's class influenced them to think differently about social issues while three out of the five in the senior group did (Mercedes, Marc and Armando). This alone is not a significant difference but focus group interviews³⁵ with other students in the two classes provide further evidence of disparities between them. These additional interviews suggested that

Pedro and Cesar were part of a minority in the sophomore class, while Mercedes, Marc and Armando were part of a majority in the senior classes.

Content. As discussed above, Sanchez consciously took a long-term approach to fostering students' critical civic development. Moreover, he felt that the World History subject matter lent itself to "building the foundation for the senior stuff, and for the 11th grade stuff" while the 12th grade second semester with "the union of economics and globalization lends itself more to that shock stuff." He also admitted that he focuses more on material that addressed alarming inequalities and exposed oppression during that semester because it's his "last chance" to "switch" his students' thinking.

The seniors were more likely to report that the information Sanchez presented was "shocking" and made them think and act differently. They talked about how Sanchez's class made them see the world in a new way, indicating a critical lens, rather than just an awareness of certain issues. In a group interview, Lana asserted, "Like he shocks you, with the information that he gives you. And not only does he leave you thinking in class but just like, the things he says stick with you, or at least with me." Another senior, Filiberto, learned through the unit on unions how ignorant he was about power relations between workers and employers:

I couldn't believe I was like so ignorant, like in the work area, like about how much power you can have. And it makes me think what else I am ignorant about. Like the schools system, I don't know my rights. I would want to know.

Because this information was shocking, it left an imprint on these students, helping them develop a critical awareness and an interest in seeking out information about their positions of power or marginalization in relation to the institutions in their lives.

In addition to exhibiting a greater awareness of unjust social conditions, the seniors were more likely to point to structural factors perpetuating these issues. Rafael shared that he never thought about capitalism before Sanchez's class and said, "I learned that I don't like capitalism at all. Like, it's designed to keep people down. And I think that's unfair. Like a lot of the things he says influence on how I think." Rafael is articulating an awareness of how structures influence inequality and attributes that new way of thinking to Sanchez. Rafael also said that watching the movie, 'Capitalism: A love story' and talking about it in Sanchez's class made him want to do something about the exploitation of workers. He said that he hoped to start up a cooperative business one day, like the one he saw in the movie. Marc also talked about how he developed a more complex way of viewing the world through Sanchez's class. He said:

A lot of the projects that we did for Sanchez, I seen the parents that are working for hardly anything, getting hurt, and their bosses are just covering up and they don't care. And it's just sad. I never viewed the world the way I do now. It's just very shocking. It's disappointing, I guess from before I kind of thought the world was like really really simple. Now I'm learning how complex the world is, and what great role the government plays. Well, not only the government, I realize that companies, billionaires, play a big role, bigger than the government. They can persuade the government, lobbying, lobbyists can persuade a thing to go a certain way if they want. That's one of the sad things that I realized about the world, money does talk. And that changes a lot of things, and it's not always just being a good person will get you by.

The critical texts (movies, articles, discussions) that Sanchez provides for students have deeply affected the way Marc thinks about the world. Marc's experience was more common in the senior year class, indicating that the choice of content may have been a factor in this

development. Several of the seniors, including three of the focal students, had taken a class with Sanchez before, suggesting that more time in his classes was a factor influencing critical civic development. In addition to more access to critical material, extended time in Sanchez's classes also allowed him to build quality relationships with students.

Relationships. Another factor influencing his long-term approach is the nature of his relationships with his sophomore and senior classes. In particular, it takes time to build trusting relationships with students where they will be willing to listen to the new perspectives that Sanchez offers. He pointed out that students do not enter his classroom thinking he is a social justice teacher who wants to support their critical understanding of the world and their academic success. Rather, many of them have likely had negative experiences with schooling:

When they arrive to my classroom, when they first meet me, they don't look at me and say, 'ooh, here's a social justice educator that's gonna like show me the way.' They see me as an authority figure.

Sanchez tries to build positive relationships with students, but this often takes time and struggle. This was the case with the sophomore class that I observed, which started the year with 39 students enrolled, many of whom were officially freshmen because they were missing credits.

Sanchez admitted that he interacted differently with his sophomore and senior classes, taking on more of a disciplinary role with the 10th graders and being less transparent with them about his goals. For example, he admitted, "I would say that my energy level is a lot higher with those kids [seniors]. I feel like I'm more, the disciplinarian part of me takes a little bit more of a back seat." Moreover, with the seniors, he felt like he could engage them more freely and have metacognitive discussions about his intentions. Sanchez shared that he aimed to help students develop the cultural capital to navigate society while also acquiring the skills to critique it.

However, with his sophomores he recognized that he was sometimes less transparent with them about these goals. Although it troubled him and he aimed to work out of it, he felt that he had to manage the class more tightly, directing students through small tasks and spending less time informing them on the purpose of the activities. He talked about how students were conditioned by most of their schooling to interact in this way, and he sometimes had to work with them in this way for fear of losing them:

I almost have to be the manager, be the foreman. And tell them, ‘you’re doing this, you’re doing this, you’re doing this, and when you guys start doing it, you’ll see what we’re building. Don’t ask me right now what we’re building, you’ll see it once you all do your job. Just do your job.’ And they start it and I’m hoping that once we’re building it they start saying, ‘oh, now I see what we’re building Mr. Sanchez. I get it now.’

Sanchez worries that he will have to act like the foreman all year long and that his students will never understand “what we’re building.” However, his “hopes are that three years down the road, or hopefully in their college life, or maybe even in their married life...that they’re like, ‘OH, now I get it.’” From a sociocultural perspective, this approach removes students from authentic activities and resembles an assembly-line model. This may be one of the reasons that some of the sophomores experienced less critical development. Nevertheless, the students interviewed for the most part approved of Sanchez’s disciplinary approach and talked about how they felt he really cared about students.

Section V: Civic Engagement and Critical Civic Development

Regardless of the class (senior or sophomore) or participation style, involvement in civic engagement outside of the classroom fostered critical civic development. Given that participation

in civic engagement is an indicator of critical civic development, this factor is not surprising. However, I will highlight how participation in Sanchez's classroom and civic participation work in tandem to foster critical civic development, with Sanchez planting the seeds for consciousness and civic participation activating students' nascent civic identities. In addition, I will describe how limited opportunities for civic action through the classroom correlated to low levels of agency for students who were not involved in civics outside of the classroom.

Limited civic engagement and low agency. Students with no outside civic participation tended to express limited agency, particularly the sophomores (Luci, Valerie, Alfonzo, and Perla in the 1st year). As discussed in Chapter Four, these students had little confidence in their abilities to make a difference or address issues in their communities. The students felt that as high school students, they had limited knowledge and skills to effectively carry out civic actions, particularly apart from any group or organization. Luci and Valerie expressed a theoretical interest in improving conditions in the community (not necessarily addressing injustice), but lacked the confidence and passion to turn these interests into action. These students had few opportunities for civic engagement through Sanchez's class. As has been discussed, the sophomores were informed about issues and opportunities to get involved outside of the class but there weren't any civic actions built into the World History course. Again, this left participation in an important activity up to the individual student, with no accountability that they engage if they choose not to. Sanchez and his small school had plans to develop the Civic Action Project so that sophomores would eventually experience a mini version of it to build up to a more advanced project; however, that idea had not yet been implemented.

Even some seniors with a growing sense of critical awareness and interest in addressing injustices expressed low levels of civic agency if they were not involved in civic actions outside

of the classroom (even after participating in the Civic Action Project). Below I present an excerpt from a focus group interview where four seniors - Filiberto, Noel, Raul, Diana – are discussing their motivation to address injustices in the world but their apprehension to get involved out of a fear that few people would support their efforts. The excerpt begins with Filiberto claiming that many of the students are ‘inspired’ by the documentaries they watch, but that never translates into civic action:

Filiberto: That’s one thing that I think about. Like all of us are inspired at the end of the video, then why are we so afraid of saying, ‘oh, lets do something about it.’ We just talk about it, we never do anything.

Noel: That’s true.

Raul: Oh yeah, it is true. [pause] we should revolt or something? [chuckles]

Then I ask the students if they think they can impact the issues they learn about and Filiberto articulates a ‘philosophy’ of personal agency but Diana and Filiberto both admit that they are afraid to actually engage in civic actions.

Jesse: So, do you feel like you all can make a change?

Filiberto: Yeah, that’s my kind of philosophy. Like, I feel like I am the one that I can change the world. I think if everyone had that state of mind then we can all really change the world. But even then, I still think, if I do it, everyone else still...

Jesse: How do the rest of you feel about that? You talk about being inspired and you learn all this stuff but what do you do?

Diana: I think it’s true what Filiberto says, I think we are just afraid to take the step forward and just.

Filiberto: We're afraid that no one else thinks the same. Like, we're all inspired, but we're all like, 'awe, what if I'm the only one who thinks this way.'

The students' comments suggest that they lack an individual agency to impact critical civic issues in their lives. Perhaps if they were a part of a larger effort or organization attempting to address community issues, they could develop a collective agency. Nevertheless, while they remain motivated to do something about injustice, they have not acted upon this desire and gotten involved in civic actions to be a part of change.

Outside civic engagement and robust critical civic development. Engagement with outside civic participation was associated with positive critical civic development, including increased critical competence and civic agency. As indicated in Table 5.2 above, several of the focal students had some form of civic engagement outside of the classroom. For instance, Mercedes, Marc, Alejandra, Selena, Pedro and Cesar all were at least minimally involved in United For Change. Mercedes was the only participant in the leadership component and Alejandra only attended a few general membership meetings at the end of her senior year. Pedro and Perla were active participants in Amnesty International during their junior year. Selena was involved in a police cadet program that she saw as a component of her efforts to improve the community. And several students (Mercedes, Marc, Cesar, Perla) were in other forms of community service, such as tutoring or environmental actions.

Participation in Amnesty International ('Amnesty') seems to have been a catalyst for Pedro and Perla's critical civic development. Amnesty is an international organization that fights against human rights violations around the world. They sponsor several school-based clubs where a teacher works with students to support the campaigns of the organization. During 2010-11, the Amnesty Club at Pierce was working on a campaign to address high rates of maternal

mortality and to free political prisoners. Perla's involvement with the group during her junior year led to her feeling a growing sense of awareness and agency (although minor). During her sophomore year, I asked Perla if she thought she could make a difference in her community, she doubted her ability to and did not identify as the type of person who does that kind of thing, "No. I guess it's hard. You got to put a lot of time in it. It's not my thing." In describing her involvement with Amnesty her junior year, she said, "In Amnesty we fight for people's rights...Right now, we are doing mostly maternal mortality. We are fighting for women to have insurance or health care when they're pregnant or giving birth." In this statement, she is taking on the identity of someone who can make a difference or at least "fight" to make it happen. She also admitted that her participation in the group made her more aware of injustices in the world:

I changed like a bit [through Amnesty]... I realized that I was in like my own little world but then when I went to Amnesty, I learned about the prisoners and the maternal mortality. And I was like, 'oh that's something new to me.' So, it opened my mind up.

For Perla, her participation in civic action was key to developing her critical civic identity and awareness in a way that Sanchez's class was not. Perla shared that her initial motivation to join the group was to have extracurricular activities to put on her college applications, but it could be that her experiences in Sanchez's classroom influenced her interest in both local and community issues of justice.

For Pedro, his participation in Amnesty his junior year also significantly influenced his critical civic identity. After his involvement in a petition drive for an initiative to address maternal mortality, Pedro decided that he had the skills to be a good organizer and started to think about it as a career trajectory. The following exchange highlights the impact civic engagement had on Pedro.

Pedro: I'm part of Amnesty and during college I want to work with Amnesty. I want to be a student activist.

Jesse: Why?

Pedro: To help out, to bring awareness about the issues going around us...So, I joined Amnesty and I started doing this project.

Jesse: You didn't always want to be a student activist?

Pedro: No, I actually wanted to do something that was going to get me out of LA, because LA is not that good of a place. And then, through Amnesty, it was like, 'oh, you should help other people and all that too.' I wanted to be a lawyer, just to get out of here. Now, I want to be an activist and be here helping out.

For Pedro, active participation in civic campaigns was associated with his critical civic development. He had significant critical development in Sanchez's class and also even participated in UFJ general meetings (but not actively in any of UFJ's campaigns). Nevertheless, up until his authentic participation in civic activities did he develop an identity as a person committed to a lifetime of civic activism.

For Mercedes and Cesar, it was the combination of their experiences in Sanchez's class and UFJ that worked together to support their critical civic development. Both of them expressed how Sanchez's class helped them to understand the origins of unjust social conditions and United For Change helped them to find a way to address them. For instance Cesar talked about learning about how imperialism influenced the development of rich and poor nations and peoples. Learning about the oppression of native peoples in the Americas particularly "disgusted him" and made him want to do something. In UFJ, Cesar learned about the current dropout rates for Latinos in schools like his. When asked to compare the two sites, Cesar said: "Sanchez's class

showed us how it got to that point, and United For Change is trying to find a way out, trying to fix it. I think that's most of what their relationship is.” In the interview excerpt below, Cesar talks about being interested in working to “try to fix” the issues in his communities, but that before he used to be ignorant of how the system has marginalized low-income students of color and set them up to fail. Now that he has this knowledge, obtained from Sanchez and UFJ, he wants to do something about it:

Cesar: Yeah, I want to try to fix this.

Jesse: Have you always thought that way?

Cesar: No, I used to be one of those little ignorant kids back then. It's funny.

Jesse: What's the difference now?

Cesar: I've become aware of things. They are expecting you to fail and then it's like, ‘I’m not going to let you dictate what I do with my life.’

Jesse: Learning about how people expected you to fail, how did that make you feel?

Cesar: It pisses you off. It's like, ‘you set me up for this? Well, you set me up for this, then now its just back in your face what I'm going to do, I'm going get an education and show you I'm not what you wanted me to be...

For Cesar, an understanding of historical and current injustice makes him angry but also propels him to want to address it through civic actions and through serving as a counter example of success through education.

For Mercedes, her involvement in Sanchez’s class and United For Change also helped develop her critical competence and agency. I asked her to compare the two spaces and she shared that there were similarities in the content covered but that the main difference was in the

expectations for action. In the classroom, the onus was on the student to take initiative to address injustices outside of the classroom. With UFJ, it was a shared responsibility:

There is a lot of overlap. Like in the kinds of things you learn. The main difference lies in what you do about it. Because Sanchez kind of puts it up to you and he kind of tells you what's going on and it's up to you to make a decision. Whereas, in United For Change, they're like, 'okay, now you know what's going on, what are we going to do together to kind of change it.'

Mercedes points out that Sanchez's class provides information but not guidance to act on civic injustices. Her comments suggest that critical classroom study can provide a foundation for critical civic development, but civic engagement is necessary for further development. In the next chapter, I will explore how co-participation in collective civic actions with adult UFJ organizers to address community issues influences young people's critical civic development.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Sanchez's classrooms provide a foundation for students' evolving critical civic development through exposure to critical lectures that encourage them to question and apply knowledge to their lives. For some, especially seniors, outspoken students and those involved in outside civic actions, participation in Sanchez's classrooms has been an important factor in their critical civic development. I have also highlighted some challenges to promoting critical civic development within the classroom. For instance, providing opportunities for shy students to engage in questioning during classroom lectures is a challenge. However, these opportunities are important for developing practice-linked identities as a critical questioner. Classroom management can also be a challenge. With his large sophomore class with many

struggling students, Sanchez admitted to taking on a role as a manager. Consequently, he was less prone to explain to students the larger goals of his classroom, namely helping students develop a social justice perspective while being able to navigate an unjust society. In addition, Sanchez was more likely to present seniors with material that exposed injustice and offered critiques of institutions that perpetuate it. These challenges and how Sanchez addressed them influenced the critical civic development of the students in his classroom. Lastly, the limited opportunities to engage in action through the classroom may have also affected students' sense of agency.

CHAPTER 6

AGENTS OF CHANGE, EVEN WHEN THEY'RE NOT 'IN CHARGE': APPRENTICING YOUTH IN COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZING

The UFJ focal youth who participated in the study for this dissertation reported feeling like leaders with the agency to make positive changes in their communities. They attributed this civic agency to their experiences within UFJ. In addition, the youth elaborated on the importance of the adult organizers modeling and guiding them through their efforts in community activism. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight how UFJ, operating within an apprenticeship model of youth development, provides youth with the conditions necessary for robust critical civic development. Specifically, the chapter will examine the following questions:

1. How does participation in the organization influence youths' evolving critical civic development?
2. How do the adult organizers in a youth organizing group foster youth critical civic development?

Throughout this chapter I utilize sociocultural theory to understand the development of the youth within UFJ while also highlighting instances where the experiences of the UFJ focal youth highlight areas for possible growth in theorizing around legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice.

This chapter argues that by positioning youth as legitimate peripheral participants within UFJ, the learning space provided opportunities for robust critical civic development amongst the focal youth (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As leaders in development, the process of learning was presented by adults and understood by youth as a means to becoming more effective participants in civic actions for social change. In sociocultural terms, youth sought to acquire the skills of the experts within the CoP in order to more effectively participate in the practices of the community, while the experts aimed to reproduce the CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Providing youth with a

range of political education opportunities, UFJ supported students' critical development and acquisition of the values of the CoP, which fostered a motivation to address issues of injustice. Then, positioning youth as valuable contributors provided them with authentic opportunities to participate in significant civic action and build up their sense of civic agency and identity. Thus, the experiences of these UFJ students highlight the importance of providing youth with authentic participation within a community of practice while also providing them support (training, scaffolding, modeling, etc.) to prepare them for more effective participation within a learning space. As Lave & Wenger (1991) argue, one's changing identity, learning and actions are part of a social process of becoming a certain type of person that occurs through authentic participation and interaction with the tools and people who make up a community of practice. For the UFJ youth, they were in the process of becoming critical civic leaders.

While Lave and Wenger's (1991) theoretical perspective provides significant explanatory power for understanding my focal students' development, there are a few areas where their viewpoints need further elaboration. As discussed above, youth developed through participation in the UFJ community of practice, which involved engagement in authentic activities and observation of experts modeling advanced practice and ways of being in the community. However, I argue that direct instruction, which sociocultural theorists typically find problematic (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003), was also an important component of youths' development. In addition, I provide additional insights into understanding how belonging in a CoP helps facilitate engagement towards development. Building off the work of Nasir and Hand (1997), I also discuss how novices' incoming identities may influence their engagement within a learning space.

The chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical insights used in this chapter, namely the importance of positioning youth as valued members of community and providing them with opportunities to take on increasing responsibility within a community of practice. Then, the chapter re-introduces the youth organizing group and presents findings.

Theoretical Framework

An important aspect of learning and development within communities of practice is the way novices are positioned in relationship to the experts of a community. Development occurs when novices have access to the important tasks of a community. While co-participating with experts, novices pick up skills and aptitudes in the process of engaging in a valued activity. It is important that a novice see himself or herself on a trajectory towards full participation in the activity. Rogoff et al., (2003) argue that even observation can be a valued form of participation as long as the novices intend to take on the full practice at some point. Other sociocultural theorists stress the importance of taking on more important responsibilities within a community of practice as a motivation for continued participation and development (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These theoretical perspectives suggest that novices should be positioned as learners in the process of becoming experts.

Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008) apply the two theories to create learning spaces that foster critical communities of practice (CCoP) for youth. In the critical community of practice designed by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008), learners engaged with the educators in problem posing, action planning and reflection around community issues that were relevant to their lives.

Youth activism groups may not be *designed* with critical pedagogy and sociocultural theory in mind but often do have qualities of a critical community of practice. Youth activism

groups are a hybrid space, with elements of traditional schools as well as characteristics of less hierarchical environments. Like schools, adults in these organizations are trying to convey skills and knowledge to youth. However, the approach is usually much more collaborative, with youth and adults working together to address community issues (Kirshner, 2008).

While there are typical elements of community-based youth activism organizations, there also is considerable variation. Drawing from sociocultural theorists, Kirshner (2008) identifies three types of youth activism groups. They are facilitation, joint-work, and apprenticeship. Kirshner differentiates these approaches by the level of adult participation and the degree to which adults adjust campaigns to youth interests and skills. In the facilitation model, adults have minimal participation. They encourage youth to lead and set the organization's agenda. In the joint work model, adults co-participate with youth but provide minimal training, much like colleagues on a project. In the apprenticeship model, adults co-participate with youth, and provide support and training for youth to participate in authentic but skill-level appropriate tasks. Kirshner (2008) found positive but distinct youth developmental outcomes across the three sites.

Appropriately, there are concerns that adults participating in organizing with youth may prevent youth from having access to leadership and important roles within the practice. Some scholars have raised concerns that 'adultism' or the belief that youth are inferior to adults and have little to offer, may cause unequal power imbalances when youth participate with adults in organizing and other civic efforts (Checkoway, 2011; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Some argue that while adults can play a supportive role in organizing, youth must be 'in charge' in these groups in order to support development and prevent adultism from narrowing the scope of participation of youth (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

Additional research is required to understand how the positioning of youth in youth organizing groups influences development. For instance, does adult leadership limit authentic participation for youth, position them as unimportant and impede opportunities for critical civic development? Or can positioning youth as novices in the process of becoming experts provide them with valuable opportunities for critical civic development?

The Organization

UFJ works with youth and families from an urban community in southern California, called Riverton in this dissertation, to fight for educational justice. The organization has successfully tackled many issues, including campaigning to build new schools in the community, championing equitable funding and fighting to establish graduation requirements that would ensure all students eligibility to California's four-year colleges. The staff and organization are committed to addressing community issues while fostering youth and adult capacity to address these issues. UFJ sponsors youth clubs at four of the local high schools as well as junior high school clubs and a parent organization

UFJ offers a ladder of opportunities for high school youth to participate in the organization. At each high school, there are anywhere from fifteen to fifty "general members" (GM) who meet weekly with an adult staff member of UFJ at lunchtime (about 30 minutes) to learn about and discuss the group's campaigns and other relevant community issues. These are called general membership or GM meetings. Each school has a subset of students (usually five to fifteen) who also participate in the Coordinating Committee (CC), which meets weekly at the UFJ office to plan organizational activities and participate in leadership development trainings. Youth are typically asked if they want to join CC meetings after attending at least three GM meetings at their schools. Thus, the CC members consist of students from four schools that have

chosen to have more in-depth participation within the organization. In addition to these coordinating meetings, CC members also have the opportunity to participate in additional voluntary workshops to develop their media literacy, organizing skills and awareness of historical injustices.

UFJ resembles an apprenticeship approach to youth development, where members learn through co-participation in authentic organizational tasks and through direct training. UFJ provides opportunities for youth from the community to participate in and grow through engaging in structured change efforts to promote educational justice. There's always at least two goals at hand, building up youth members to be community leaders and winning particular campaigns that promote improvements in school conditions and outcomes. Sometimes, the goals of youth development and community change are reinforcing. However, make no mistake about it, UFJ is in the business of winning campaigns and making change and these goals can take priority over youth development. When asked about balancing these goals, the leader organizer explained:

We don't use the word balance we use the word priorities. ...So, the goal of a campaign is to win a campaign. So, that supersedes a lot of the other work. So, you do leadership development. You do all kinds of other goals that come along with what we want to do – build a powerful base of youth and parent members. But it has to be much more exacerbated at a much faster level. It's really about priorities more than it is about balance. Hopefully, we want to get to the point where it is about balance. But, It's hard to have balance in an unbalanced world.

This doesn't mean that UFJ ignores youth development; it just means that their primary goal is not youth development above all else. For instance, there are some youth organizations that

engage in campaigns to provide youth with opportunities to build organizing and leadership skills, with less concern over the outcome of the campaigns. Not UFJ, their campaigns are serious business, and the students know it. That's part of what makes UFJ so engaging to youth. The youth have access to important roles in the campaign and receive training and support for those roles. Much like a community of practice, the primary goal per se is not that novices learn, the goal is that the community achieves particular outcomes. In this case, it is working towards addressing injustices in 'an unbalanced world.' It is in the process of participating in this community, with authentic and age-appropriate tasks, that the novices develop in UFJ.

Why do Youth Decide to Participate in UFJ?

While youth did choose to attend UFJ, it is important to note that they did not typically begin because they had a well-established sense of themselves as critical civic activists. In fact, most of the students started attending UFJ general meetings for external reasons. For instance, Arlene admitted, "Well. The first time I went was because they were giving chips [chuckles]." Two other youth gave similar responses. Cristina came to bolster her college resume. She recounted her reasoning for attending her first meeting, "I just heard it on the intercom, I was like, 'well, I need something on my college thing.' So I was like, 'I'll do that.'" Elvira started in UFJ because she wanted to please her teacher and get extra credit for going to the meeting: "I was trying to get on my teacher's good side so like, 'okay, I'll go to the meeting.'" Nilda and Carla both started because the UFJ site organizer kept "buggin" them to go and they finally acquiesced. Nilda added, "I was a pretty lonely girl in high school. So I'm like, 'well, I have nowhere else to go.'" Similarly, Paul happened to be walking by the room where the UFJ lunch meeting was being held and the site organizer convinced him to check it out. Finally, several

students attended their first meeting because their friends or siblings encouraged them to go. ‘Contributing to the community’ or ‘learning about issues in the school or community’ were not stated as the initial driving reasons for attending these meetings. These reasons for initially attending the meetings suggest that UFJ GM members were not necessarily self-selected by a strong interest in critical civic action.

In addition, almost all students were novices to civic action and analysis of critical content before UFJ. With the exception of Mercedes, all the focal youth began attending General Member meetings during their Freshmen or Sophomore years. Several youth were involved with AVID before or at the same time as UFJ. However, previous participation in clubs or groups focused on civic action was very rare. Moreover, most youth indicated that the critical topics explored in UFJ, especially in CC meetings, were new to them. Thus they did not enter as critical civic agents who were actively seeking out opportunities to transform their worlds and understand it more critically. When they started with UFJ, they were high school freshmen or sophomores looking for something to do, making them both novices to UFJ and as critical civic participants.

Findings

Authentic participation in UFJ, a critical community of practice, was associated with the youths’ evolving critical and civic identities. In particular, the focal students articulated an increased commitment to addressing issues of injustice in their communities. For instance, many students increased their civic involvement through UFJ, other community efforts to address injustice, and/or expressed a desire to do so in the future. In addition to this increased civic

participation, students also expressed a growing sense of civic agency due to their increased civic competence as agents of change and their feelings of collective civic agency as part of UFJ.

This chapter argues that positioning youth as ‘leaders in development’ or both learners and valued contributors within youth organizing fosters robust critical civic development. In other words, legitimate peripheral participation in UFJ led youth to take on critical civic identities and competencies of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The findings will be organized into four sections. First, I will argue that fostering quality relationships with and between youth positions them as valued and cared for members within the site, establishing them as legitimate peripheral participants within the CoP. I show how these affective factors were important motivators for youth participation in the site and touch upon how this informs our understanding of why novices engage in communities of practice. Next, I will describe how the organization positions youth as leaders in development and how youth take on the identity of a critical civic participant through their involvement in the learning space. As sociocultural theorists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003) argue, this section contends that youth development occurs when novices have the opportunity to learn from observation and participation in the practices of a community. Third, I will show how providing youth with opportunities to engage with critical culturally relevant material - even when done through a ‘teacher-centered’ approach - builds a motivation to act. In this section, I push back on sociocultural theorists’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003) pessimism about direct instruction and argue that it can be quite effective, especially when embedded within a community of practice that also provides practice-based learning. Lastly, I will show how positioning youth as valued contributors to campaigns and providing authentic opportunities to participate in civic actions builds critical agency.

Positioning Youth as Valued and Cared for Members of a Community

“...there’s a lot of respect *and* a lot of friendship between both the organizers and the students” - David, Youth Member

Before youth could develop identities as powerful civic agents through UFJ, they needed to develop a connection to the group. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that a sense of belonging in a particular community of practice sets the stage for learning and if individuals feel like they don’t belong in a community, it is likely that they will not participate, or learn, in an effective manner. However, they provide little insight into the types of factors that support a sense of belonging in a community of practice. While these factors are likely to vary across learning spaces, I highlight some characteristics that supported a sense of belonging for the UFJ focal youth in this study.

A key to fostering a sense of belonging is promoting supportive, quality relationships in a community of practice. The organizers at UFJ worked hard to foster a safe, youth-friendly environment where members could develop strong connections to organizers, each other and community work. To foster a sense of belonging and quality relationships in the space, organizers at UFJ treated youth with respect, valued their contribution to the group and also made space for socializing and fun.

The role of identity in motivating participation within a community of practice is also discussed in this section. Lave and Wenger (1991) point out that individuals bring their own experiences and identities to a CoP but under theorize how the incoming identities influence feelings of belonging for newcomers. In this section, I argue that shared cultural backgrounds facilitate newcomers’ development of solidarity with the organization and their engagement in participation towards becoming more like the experts within UFJ.

Fostering positive relationships through interpersonal interactions. The nature of organizing depends on quality relationships and the UFJ staff members are intentional about building relationships with youth and amongst them. From the beginning, the practices of the organizers convey to students that they are welcome in the organization and valued as individuals, even beyond what they bring to the work. When asked to describe her site organizer, Arlene said, “If you need to talk to her, I know she will be there. It doesn’t necessarily have to be about the organization but if you’re like having problems with school or something and you need help from them.” Another youth, Vero, felt that the organizers’ manner of engaging with students conveyed genuine interest in their lives, which helped to build a trusting relationship. I asked her what the relationships were like in UFJ and she said they were good, and gave the following supporting evidence:

I’ve noticed when they call, they don’t say, ‘oh hi, we’re having a meeting today, are you going to go, yes or no?’ They say, ‘oh hi, how was your day? How are your classes going?’ And then I respond, ‘how was your day?’ ‘Oh, my day was, I was stuck in traffic.’ So, it’s not boring, ‘are you gonna go, yes or no? Yeah. OK bye.’

I asked Vero if these friendly discussions made a difference and she answered, “Yes. It does. It just gives like a sense of trust and communication with them.” As this quote indicates, a lot can be conveyed through everyday interactions. Even ‘small’ talk over the phone can make a student feel cared or not. The adult organizers at UFJ are conscious of how their actions and attitudes affect relationships and they are intentional about fostering positive interactions with students in the organization.

Quality relationships are also intentionally fostered through group activities. These activities include icebreakers, group discussions and field trips (e.g. a college tour, an overnight retreat, etc.). For instance, Maria shared how icebreakers were key to her overcoming her shyness when she first started coming to UFJ leadership meetings:

The icebreakers, they help us a lot. Like I said, the first day I went there I was like, ‘oh my gosh, I don’t even know anyone.’ But then by the second day, I already knew everyone and everyone was talking to me.

Other students talked about the importance of retreats and outings in strengthening the relationships at UFJ. For instance, yearly overnight retreats and college trips were often mentioned as events that helped youth build friendships and community within the group.

By modeling and promoting principles of respect, care and unity, the UFJ staff conveyed the importance of each member of the community. The lead organizer shared that UFJ’s organizational philosophy “is around treating people justly, not putting people down, like Zapatista principles about respect, unity and collaboration.” Judging from students’ positive accounts of the relationships in UFJ, the organizational philosophy was accompanied by practices that made students feel a mutual sense of respect and solidarity with the organizers. Elvira said “I’ve never really experienced where a student was talking back, like in a really bad way to a coordinator, or when a coordinator disrespects a student, there’s always that respect. I think the relationship there is equal.” Through these caring interactions with students the organizers convey the importance of youth in the group.

Positioning youth as valued members of the community through co-participation. In addition to promoting positive interpersonal interactions, the collaborative participation structure of UFJ facilitated students’ development of feelings of solidarity within the organization.

Specifically, the process of co-participating in community action while also having fun built a connection to the group. Several youth talked about UFJ as a space for socializing *and* for social action. David articulated how UFJ was a comfortable space for fun and being productive; a combination he felt was unavailable at school:

We can all in the end hang out everyone together and still get serious as well, at the same time because there's a lot of respect *and* a lot of friendship between both the organizers and the students. And that's something you can't really find in the classroom.

Through showing respect, caring for students as individuals and engaging in serious community work with students, the organizers were able to build quality relationships with students and also amongst them. When I asked Paul what the relationships between students were like, he said that they had both social and collegial bonds: "Strong bonds of friendship. We collaborate with each other to get something done. As well as we just hang out with each other." Again, the process of working together for a shared purpose helped to foster an environment of solidarity, where youth feel they are valued members of the group.

The youth comments reflect the hybridity of the UFJ space and its ability to integrate youth and adults in serious social justice work and fun. This provides a powerful recipe for engagement and identity development within the community. Wenger's (1998) concept of *negotiability* –the possibility of influencing meaning within a CoP - underscores the importance of an individual's ability to "reposition" oneself in a community in a way that fits in with his or her identity (Nasir & Hand, 2008). In explaining the characteristics of a high school basketball team that promoted meaningful engagement for the youth in their study, Nasir and Hand (2008) urge theorists not to overlook the importance of learning spaces providing opportunities for self-expression within the cultural practices of the communities. They argue, "individual quirks,

characteristics, and sense of humor are not tangential to the practice but rather a central part of it, representing the details of how individuals make the practice their own” (p. 176). The UFJ youth statements about being able to “hang out” as friends suggests that they had opportunities to express themselves through the practices of UFJ, which likely fostered their engagement within the organization.

Characteristics of the organizers and solidarity with UFJ. Several students indicated that a shared background with their organizers was a key to forming quality relationships with them and solidarity with the UFJ community. Victor shared:

It’s cool because the organizers know exactly what we’ve been through, or what we are going through. Because they were students themselves, in the same high schools, most of them. And they are all pretty young and a lot of them were part of the organization when it barely started. So, that helps.

In fact, all the youth organizers were under thirty and from the community that UFJ worked with or a neighboring one. Two of the organizers and two other UFJ staff were also former youth members of the organization. As Victor points out, these shared experiences promote the development of solidarity within UFJ. Consequently, some students began to see themselves on similar identity trajectories as the organizers. Maria, a youth who is undocumented, shared how talking with an adult organizer made her realize that she could go on to organize around issues affecting undocumented students, much like the organizer had. She shared the inner dialogue she had with herself after a conversation with Nick, one of the adult organizer’s in UFJ, “‘oh I could be like Nick.’ Like how he left to go further and go on with the AB 540 students and stuff.” The students see the organizers as one of them, and vice versa. Ruben, the lead organizer at UFJ, feels that his background allows him to understand and connect with the people he organizes

with: “I grew up as a poor Chicano youth and I grew up in a poor Chicano neighborhood...And that allows me to really gage my people. I’m their people and they’re my people. I’m able to really hone in.”

In this community of practice, where youth and adults identify with each other on many levels, including class, ethnicity, and culture, it sets the stage for youth to also identify as empowered and confident members of the community. This is consistent with prior research that shows that shared backgrounds, experiences and interests play a role in supporting quality relationships amongst youth and adults in youth organizing groups (Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe & LaCoe, 2004).

In terms of sociocultural theory, the experiences of these youth suggest that racial, ethnic and class identities may play a role in promoting engagement within a particular community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) point out that individuals come in with varied sets of experiences and identities, but they do not discuss how these incoming identities might influence individuals’ motivations for engagement in a community of practice. Offering some insight into the connections between culture and motivation for participation in a CoP, Nasir and Hand (2006; 2008) argue that learners are less likely to engage in practices that are “misaligned with, or indeed inhibit, the trajectory of personhood that they hope to construct” (2006, p. 468). Conversely, alignment between an activity and who you see yourself to be facilitates engagement.

Similarly, I argue that engagement in UFJ was facilitated because students’ incoming identities overlapped with those of the adults within the UFJ community. I am not claiming that it is *necessary* for novices and experts in a CoP to share an ethnic or even cultural background. However, novices do need to feel like they belong and identifying with the existing members of a community of practice likely facilitates this sense of belonging and solidarity with a new group.

Shared ethnic, racial and class backgrounds are a few of many factors that could increase the novices' attachments to a new community. It is important to note that race and ethnicity do not correspond to an unchanging, universal set of shared practices that all individuals in these categories participate (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Nasir & Hand, 2006). However, in UFJ, the overlapping backgrounds did correspond to shared lived cultural practices and understandings. The fact that the experts in UFJ were Latinos from the same neighborhood as the youth did matter. It facilitated youth connections with the adult organizers and helped them imagine themselves on trajectories to be more like these experts within UFJ.

Summary. In youth organizing, as in many endeavors, relationships can be fundamental to success or failure. In UFJ, the staff members' intentional practices, the organization's participation structure and the characteristics of the adults in the site promoted the development of quality relationships with and amongst youth that established youth as legitimate peripheral participants within the organization. Given that quality ties with adult community members aimed to address injustice can be a catalyst for critical civic development (Ginwright & Cammarotta, 2007), the establishment of this solidarity is quite important. In sum, the characteristics of the site made students feel a sense of belonging, facilitated engagement in the learning space and put the youth on identity trajectories towards becoming more like the experts within the CoP. In regards to sociocultural theory, these findings suggest the types of characteristics that foster a sense of belonging and provide an example of how incoming identities influence engagement for novices in a CoP. The relationships and sense of belonging are essential but not sufficient factors for their success in UFJ. Youth also need opportunities to develop identities as civic leaders.

Positioning Youth as Leaders (in Development)

“And when people say that ‘students need to lead,’ if students have never been developed, how are they going to lead?” – Ruben, UFJ Organizer

Through their participation in UFJ, youth came to see themselves as leaders in development. Or as Lave and Wenger (1991) put it, they were coming to identify as certain “kinds of people” in relation to the UFJ CoP. UFJ intentionally aimed to position students as leaders, with the ability to contribute to community change right now, in important ways, regardless of their previous experience with campaigns. Concurrently, they also encouraged youth to see themselves on a trajectory towards being more effective leaders if provided the training to build their capacities to do so. In this way, UFJ fostered the principle that all participants, youth and adults, were part of a cycle of leadership where there may be differences in expertise but all had the capacity to contribute and develop. This served to provide the youth with possible “futures” as well as reproducing the community of UFJ and critical civic leaders (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The youth recognized the guidance and mentoring of the adult organizers as essential to their own development as leaders and the success of campaigns. They also aspired to be mentors to others in the future to continue the cycle of leadership and take on more responsibility within the community of practice. This approach to ‘leadership’ was fundamental to the youth participants’ development as agents of change in UFJ even though they were not technically ‘in charge.’

UFJ leadership model. Rather than see individuals as innately ordained to lead or not lead, UFJ philosophy holds that the capacities of individuals are a function of their context and opportunity to learn. The lead organizer at UFJ talked about his perspective on the cycle of leadership and the importance of preparing young people to be leaders before allowing them to

set the agenda for change and then encouraging them to subsequently pass their knowledge on to others:

And when people say that, ‘students need to lead,’ if students have never been developed, how are they going to lead? And that they are just going to magically identify this and this and that. No. It’s got to be a process. You got to show them. The same way, that’s the whole indigenous pipeline belief system, that you have to train people. You have to build them up...And then once you get to a certain level, then your job is to teach others...There’s not this, ‘youth automatically, you know, are going to do it.’

Ruben’s statement reflects the important role that adults or ‘old-timers” played in training novices to be leaders and subsequently aspire to train others in order to reproduce the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The staff members at UFJ conveyed this message of a cycle of development to youth explicitly through conversation and implicitly through the extensive opportunities they provided to train youth to more effectively participate in organizing. For instance, UFJ provided multiple sets of voluntary workshops around media training, principles of community organizing and critically analyzing issues of historical and contemporary oppression. Organizers explicitly described these trainings as opportunities to grow as leaders and become better prepared to effectively organize and contribute to the group. Participation in some leadership opportunities was contingent on completion of particular trainings. For instance, students who had completed the media training were the ones chosen to speak to reporters. This practice further deepened the connection between training and one’s development as a leader. As discussed below, these trainings often provided knowledge to youth through teacher-centered approaches. Nonetheless,

participation in them was perceived as an important part of the practice of the community and becoming a leader within the organization.

Leadership principles. The organizers conveyed the importance of a cycle of leadership through the promotion of UFJ's leadership principles. For instance, "step up, step back" was a principle often invoked when talking about leadership. The principle helped youth to reflect on themselves and their actions as leaders within a collective community. First, "stepping up" encouraged members to actively participate and push themselves to extend their comfort zones to contribute to the community and its efforts. This could be as little as offering a comment at a meeting or as big as volunteering to speak to the media. The intention of the "stepping back" component was to allow space for all members to participate. For instance, it was meant to encourage a typically talkative youth to refrain from sharing in order to give another shier student the opportunity to contribute.

Moreover, the act of "stepping back" was seen as a marker of leadership for more experienced members. For example, I asked Paul, a veteran youth member of the group, whether he had ever stepped up or stepped back in UFJ and he said:

I was both, because during my junior year, people were urging me to step up. So I was, I was like presenting, I was taking over for facilitating the general meeting. And then in my senior year I was stepping back because I wanted the juniors, who are not seniors, to step up. So, I was like a leader, yet I was like training those others to become the leaders because I was about to leave.

The comment above reflects Paul's meta-awareness of his evolving role in the "cycle of leadership" in UFJ as he takes on fuller participation in the CoP. First, he is encouraged to and does step up to take on more important roles and then he intentionally steps back as an act of

leadership to promote the development of others. This reflects his internalization of the values of the UFJ community and his movement from novice to more experienced member of the group.

By consistently reinforcing the idea of “step up, step down’, UFJ was reminding students like Paul to think about their own trajectory in the cycle of leadership as well as those of their peers. Namely, it encouraged students to think about how their actions demonstrate their own development and influence other members’ trajectories towards leadership. In this way, UFJ positioned students’ actions and personal development within the context of the entire community’s goal to build many leaders to address issues in their community.

The cycle of leadership. Figure 6.1 below depicts how the cycle of leadership entails two main components: capitalizing on opportunities to grow as a critical civic leader and seeking to develop others as leaders. As a leader in development (novice and intermediate), an individual should contribute to the group through participating in civic action; observing more experienced members in practice; taking advantage of learning opportunities aimed to build leadership capacity, and; pushing oneself or stepping up to take on more challenging tasks whenever possible. These ways of participating have elements of intent participation or learning by observing (Rogoff et al., 2003), legitimate peripheral participation or learning by participating (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and traditional school-like approaches or learning by receiving knowledge. As an individual participates in these endeavors, he or she will experience personal growth as a leader (represented by the right-pointing arrows in Figure 6.1). On the other hand, more experienced leaders (expert and intermediate), should also look for opportunities to develop new leaders by modeling best practice; mentoring and training less experienced members, and; stepping back to allow others the opportunity to take on important leadership roles to develop as leaders (represented by the left-pointing arrows in Figure 6.1). The novices

are encouraged to think about their actions in relation to the entire community of practice, something that was not representative of the classroom space.

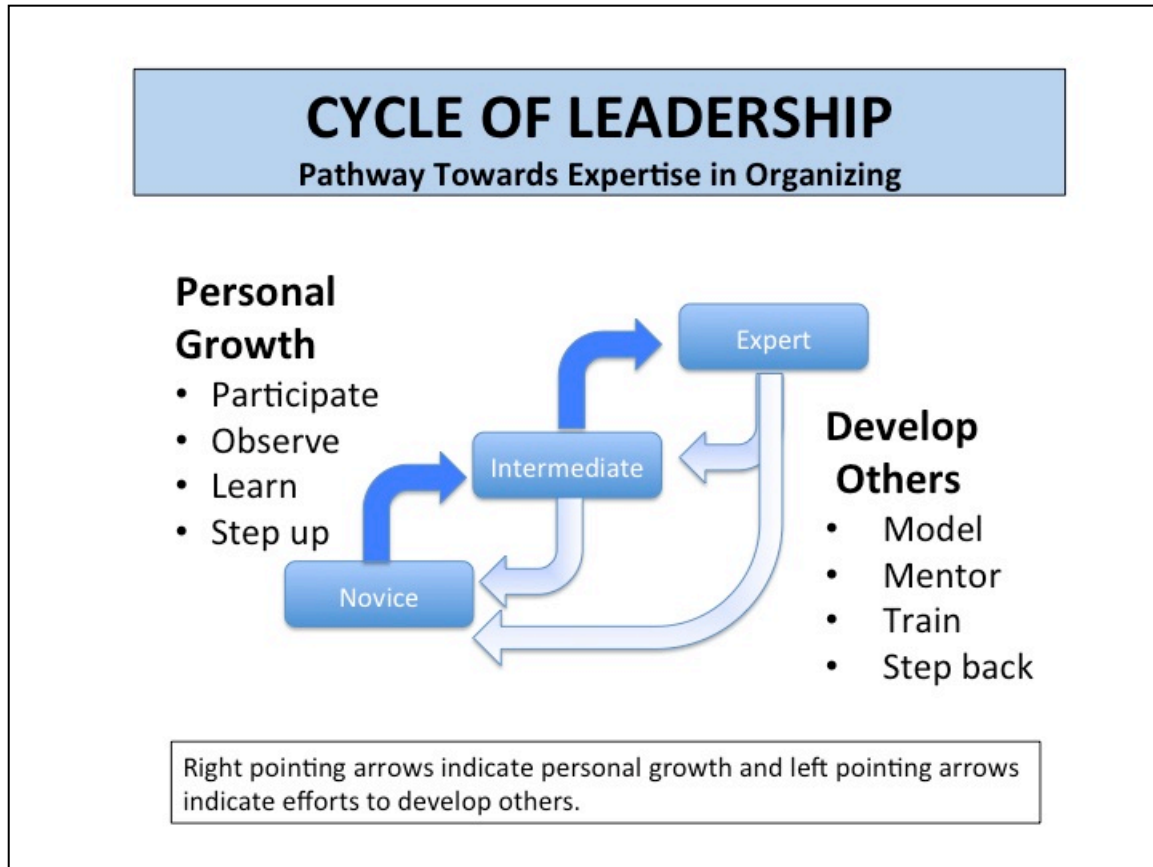


Figure 6.1. Cycle of Leadership: Pathways Towards Expertise in Organizing

The organizers in UFJ are intentional about encouraging youth members to take part in the cycle of leadership at all levels. Youth are also encouraged to recognize the importance of mentorship in their leadership development. When asked if she thought it made a difference to have adults and students working together in UFJ, Cristina highlighted the role of adult modeling and mentorship:

Uh huh...So, if you're a young adult, going to be an adult, how do you know what you want to be unless you can't see what you're gonna be. You have to have somebody

guiding you. Like Sara [her site organizer] said, ‘you’re gonna have somebody guiding you so that you can become that person, then you’ll help other people.’

In this example, a new member is being encouraged to envision herself on a trajectory of being a mentor to others. On the other end of the spectrum, more experienced youth members are encouraged to serve as role models for novice members in the present. Victor shared how the organizers shaped his vision of his role in UFJ:

My role, as Yvette and Nick [adult organizers] have told me over and over again...My role here would be setting an example, teaching the new folks what I was taught when I barely got here. Being here four years makes you closer to a staff member than an actual student.

Other youth members also expressed being part of this cycle. Nilda talked about trying to foster the development of new members after having evolved into a leader herself. When asked if she has been a leader in UFJ, she said:

Well, before I used to be the follower. Cause like, ‘it’s my new thing,’ like, ‘what am I supposed to do?’ Now, I’m mostly the leader because I have more experience already. And I already know what’s going on, what we have to do. In case of an emergency or anything like that. Now I play a role as a leader, and I want to make someone else a leader come up already.

In the quote, Nilda expresses an awareness of her development from a novice (‘follower’) to an emerging expert (‘mostly the leader’) in UFJ. Through experience, she has acquired an understanding of the practices of the site, taken on the identity of a full participant and she now has the conscious goal of helping others move along in the cycle of leadership.

Summary. Through their legitimate peripheral participation in UFJ, youth members envisioned themselves as leaders in development, taking on roles and identities as more effective participants within the youth organizing group. As sociocultural theorists point out, the interest in taking on more responsibility within a community of practice can be a motivation for development and an indicator of it (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Litowitz, 1997). Moreover, authentic engagement within a community is associated with individuals identifying with that group (Wenger, 1998). The youth discussed in this section, Paul, Victor, Cristina and Nilda, all expressed taking on or being in the process of taking on more important responsibilities within UFJ and associated that with advancing leadership. By offering these opportunities to take on more important roles in the community, UFJ is supporting students' development as critical civic participants. Even the process of learning, which will be discussed next, was couched as a component of becoming a more effective leader.

Developing Critical Identities through Engagement with Critical Culturally Relevant Content

“Like, for science club, ‘this is a hobby. This is for you guys to experiment and stuff.’ For here [UFJ], it’s like, ‘this is changing your life, this is changing who you are.’” – Cristina

Cristina’s quote above characterizes the way that participation in UFJ was an identity and consciousness changing experience for many of the focal youth. Providing youth with a range of political education opportunities, UFJ supported students’ critical development, which fostered a critical consciousness and a motivation to address issues of injustice. Similar to Sanchez’s classroom, UFJ engaged youth with critical content, encouraged them to question, and develop a critical awareness and filter for new information. However, these opportunities to learn were framed as opportunities to step-up to become more effective leaders. Thus, even when acting as

learners, the site positioned students as leaders in development and legitimate peripheral participants. In other words, learning in UFJ, even when it looked like classroom instruction, was more closely tied to changes in identity, action and a social justice purpose than it was in the classroom. I argue that this purposeful learning contributed to the youth's strong motivation for civic action and sense of identity change as a result of this learning.

This section begins by describing the content youth were exposed to, the manner in which it was presented and its connection to civic actions and development as a leader. Next, the section details how the content, particularly the in-depth workshops offered by UFJ, influenced students' critical consciousness. While these workshops were sometimes teacher-centered they were still valuable to the youths' critical civic development and seen as an important part of their legitimate peripheral participation in the group. Pushing back on the pessimism of didactic instruction (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003), I argue that it can be an important component of development, particularly when presented within a community of practice that also provides opportunities to learn through observation and participation in authentic practices. The section ends by discussing how participation in these learning opportunities influenced students' civic identities and motivation to participate in social action.

Applied critical content. The content youth learned in UFJ was tied to action and developing youth as more effective participants within those efforts. UFJ exposed youth to three basic types of critical learning opportunities: 1) campaign content; 2) current events; and 3) capacity building workshops.

Campaign content prepared youth to better understand campaign issues so they could more effectively participate in civic actions, particularly by informing others about the issues, in an effort to promote positive social change. For instance, UFJ engaged students with learning

about school reform approaches as part of a campaign to push for structural changes in high school implementation. In addition, they engaged students with information on juvenile justice so they could participate in community walks to inform the public about statewide propositions. The tie between youth learning, action and contributions to change are evident in an exchange I had with Arlene. I asked her what UFJ was trying to accomplish and she said: “A better community. They want to get more people to know what is going on in the community. Their goal is to let people know, to inform you, to let you know that you have a voice and you could be heard.” Then I asked her what she thought about those goals and she replied:

I think they're cool. I think they are bomb [slang for great]. Like, yeah, I want to do that too. I want to make people know what's going on. I want people to get in and help the community, make a change.

Arlene's comments reflect how the youth share the goals of the site and feel that learning is purposeful. In this case, Arlene learns so that she can later inform others. This cycle of learning and teaching highlights how the UFJ youth are positioned as leaders in development and legitimate peripheral participants.

When talking about current events, organizers stressed the importance of leaders being aware of injustice and having solidarity with oppressed peoples. Ruben would often invoke the Martin Luther King quote, 'Injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere.' For instance, UFJ members learned about the marginalization of queer youth and were encouraged to participate in the National 'Day of Silence' to show support for LGBTQ youth at their schools. Moreover, a discussion on immigrant rights and Arizona's Senate Bill (SB) 1070³⁶ included

³⁶ Arizona's Senate Bill (SB) 1070 was the state's 'anti-illegal immigration' bill, which was nationally debated and broadly maligned by progressives for encouraging racial profiling and its harsh stance towards undocumented individuals.

students' writing their protests to the policy on a queen sized bed sheet that was being sent to Arizona. In these ways, learning in UFJ was often tied to promoting a critical reading of the world to understand the world around them and taking action to affect those conditions or at least take a stand on them (Freire & Macedo, 1998).

In addition to campaign content and current events topics, UFJ offered periodic critical workshops intended to build students' capacity to participate more effectively as organizers. There were three primary workshops series offered to Coordinating Committee members during my study: Organizing 101, Strike School and Media Collective.³⁷ These workshop series were voluntary and typically consisted of six to ten sessions (two to four hours each) with anywhere from five to twenty-five participants. The Organizing 101 workshops introduced youth to basic principles of organizing and building power, such as strategies for recruitment and campaign planning. Strike School was kind of a "political education 101" that aimed to build youths' consciousness of historical injustice to help them understand struggles for justice today. Finally, Media Collective covered issues of media literacy and production. Students learned skills to critically analyze the media, interact with reporters and produce a video documentary to highlight components of UFJ. In order for students to serve as spokespeople to the media, they were required to take part in this workshop, underscoring its connection to applied learning and the process of taking on more responsibility in the organization. Carla recounted learning about a strategy called the "three-legged dog" in Media Collective that she eventually used in a TV interview. The strategy entails staying on message when reporters are trying to work a different angle. Carla shared:

³⁷ There was also a summer academy that included components of all three workshop series.

We were [on TV], they were interviewing me about [UFJ's school reform campaign].

Like, 'why do I think it's good?' And I was explaining to them and they kind of wanted to get it off topic. I guess about a lot of the chisme [gossip] that had happened at [the high school] with the parents, but I brought it back like, 'I think it's really good the students.'

Yeah, I used it.

For Carla, completing Media Collective came with the additional responsibility of talking with the media as well as the skills to do it well. Carla's role as a spokesperson for UFJ was also one that she valued and made her feel like a leader.

Strike School, critical awareness and a motivation for action. The in-depth workshops, particularly the Strike School series, were catalysts for many of the focal youths' critical development. All of the focal youth in the study participated in at least one if not multiple workshops series. Seven of the youth attended the Strike School series and all of them indicated that it was a consciousness changing experience. Similar to Sanchez's class, UFJ exposed youth to critical material explaining the origins of inequalities and the extent of historical injustices while encouraging youth to question the material and apply learning to their own lives. And like Sanchez's class, the form of instruction often involved an adult organizer providing information to students in didactic ways.

Exposure to critical content in Strike School fostered a new critical awareness of injustice for the UFJ focal youth. For most, this content was novel and unavailable through their schools.³⁸

In Strike School, the workshops explored the history of oppression and struggle over the last

³⁸ Most of the UFJ focal group youth expressed a significant difference between the content they learned in school and in UFJ, expressing that UFJ exposed them to historical injustices and community issues often unaddressed through classroom learning. A major exception to this view was Mercedes, who was the only focal youth to participate in both the UFJ leadership and Mr. Sanchez's history class. Comparisons between UFJ and the classroom content will be explored further in Chapter 7.

several hundred years, with specific topics such as the Conquest of the New World, slavery's middle passage and the oppressive patterns of immigration policies over the last 100 plus years in the U.S. The youth expressed shock in regards to learning of the devastating oppression experienced by the indigenous peoples of America at the hands of Europeans. For instance, many were unaware that Columbus' killed and enslaved thousands of native inhabitants of the lands he colonized for Spain. The students were angered that their history books and the government (through a national holiday) present Columbus as a hero to be celebrated. Elvira said, [learning this history] got me mad. Every time I would come out of [Strike School] I'd be mad but I feel that that madness made it more positive for me. ...It helped me change in a way... the way I saw things." What stood out most for David was, "how the Indians were being forced to Americanize" and "thrown into a world that they never assumed would be their way of living." Cristina added a critique of internalized racism when she responded to David's comment: "And what's worse is that you go back and you think you're better than everyone else and you don't fit in. It ruined their whole life." In addition, learning about the long established tendency to scapegoat immigrants helped the students better understand contemporary efforts marginalize undocumented individuals through policies such as Arizona's SB 1070.

Below I provide an extended excerpt from a focus group interview with Strike School participants to highlight the ways that exposure to critical content affected the youths' critical civic development. To summarize, the workshops prompted a critical awareness, a responsibility to inform others, the inclination to ask questions and a critique of traditional schooling practices. The following exchange is prompted by my question about the usefulness of Strike School in preparing youth to be leaders in UFJ. Elvira shares how it has changed the way she sees her role in relation to society:

Elvira: I think we can use this knowledge to change ourselves, cause there's many things that happened and I can't believe it happened. I can't believe that people let it happen. We can just reflect back on ourselves, we don't want to make the same mistakes. Now that we know about it, since we don't get it, they don't teach it to us at school, then we can reflect and we're not going to do [the same mistakes].

After Strike School, Elvira now understands that many individuals have been complicit to oppression by not speaking out against it, and she doesn't want to make the same mistake. For her, awareness drives her motivation to change her actions to prevent future injustices. Then, Maria and Elvira simultaneously conclude that one of their roles is to teach this knowledge to others, particularly because it is not taught in school:

Maria: But not just ourselves, but we can [Maria & Elvira simultaneously say] 'we can teach it to other people.' [Maria continues] If they don't teach us in school, then we're not going to learn. Not everyone is going to come to United For Justice. Not everyone is going to come to UFJ, so we have to give them [information] some times too. We have to give them some knowledge, share our knowledge.

Cristina: Yeah, it feels like it's your responsibility. Since you know the stuff, you should let other people know.

Elvira: Spread it.

Cristina: Yeah.

The exchange shows how learning in UFJ motivated the youth to action and take on the values and responsibilities of the CoP. In this case, they wanted to share their critical understanding of the world with others, especially since they felt it is largely unavailable through schooling. For example, later in the interview, Cristina shared that she would also Tweet what she learned to her

100 followers after every Strike School session. She felt that by doing so, she was contributing to change in a small way. In the next segment of the excerpt, Vero adds that this knowledge can aid them in questioning the neutral and uncritical stances perpetuated by some teachers.

Vero: And not just spreading it but now that when somebody tries to teach you something, or teachers in general, now you can question them.

Elvira: Yeah.

Vero: Now you can, ask about it. Just know more and ask questions more than what they are trying to teach you. Probably they don't even know themselves. Now you can just be like, 'this is what really happened.' Probably on your own time as well.

Vero's statement shows how Strike School has motivated her to develop a tendency to ask questions to seek a deeper understanding of the root causes of issues. In addition, the statement suggests a change in her perception of her role in the classroom from a passive consumer of information to someone who can bring information into the classroom and challenge the teacher. Vero now recognizes herself as a holder of important knowledge, who can act as a subject in the world around her (Freire & Macedo, 1998). The students then discuss how important it is to always ask questions, a practice that Ruben implored them to do.

Elvira: It's just like Ruben always says, 'ask more questions than answers.' So, I guess, just ask all the time. In the teaching you ask.

Maria: Cause he said, 'at the end, you're going to get more questions than answers.' So, you are going to question more and then you'll have questions.

Finally, the students discussed how their teachers rarely respond to their questioning with in-depth answers, often deflecting completely or postponing a conversation to a different part in the curriculum.

Elvira: I still wondered some things. I always ask why? And then when I ask my teachers ‘why?’ they’re like, ‘you’ll learn that later.’ Like, they don’t tell you. I want to know why now [students laugh].

Arlene: And if they do, they don’t even give you a broad explanation.

Elvira: Uh-huh.

Arlene: They just tell you, ‘oh, this and that’ and you’re like [pauses]

Maria: You’re still confused [students laugh].

Arlene: Yeah. What else?

By not addressing students’ questions their teachers may be discouraging them from asking and seeking out root causes. Rather than attend to students’ desire to understand issues in depth, the teachers are likely motivated by the need to cover content in a surface and sequenced order. This highlights how unique sites provide different opportunities for developing critical identities. Even if a student has developed a questioning mentality through UFJ, that identity may not be fostered in a classroom learning space, possibly leading students to have site-specific identities.

By contrast, UFJ organizers typically engage the youth learners in their questioning or encourage them to explore the concepts on their own. The tendency to welcome students’ questions was also a characteristic of Mr. Sanchez’s classroom. In fact, many features of Strike School mirrored the characteristics of Sanchez’s class. However, this extended excerpt has highlighted how UFJ youth were more likely to connect their new awareness to a motivation for action, and greater participation in the CoP, unlike in the classroom.

Strike School was intentionally presented as an identity forming experience, and the youths’ reflections on the workshops indicated that it was. For instance, the flier promoting the Strike School workshops featured two quotes in 48-point font highlighting the connection

between participation in Strike School and a critical identity. The first quote by Salvador Allende³⁹ drew the connection between learning and critical action, “To be a student and not a revolutionary is a contradiction.” The quote suggests that Strike School was a part of becoming a revolutionary actor. The second quote, by Carlos Zerquera,⁴⁰ positions Strike School as an opportunity to understand ones identity better through the study of history, ‘To know who you are, you must know who you were.’ The statements above demonstrate the connection between participation in Strike School and the youths’ evolving identities as critical civic participants. The youth articulated that the workshops influenced them to think critically, ask more questions and act on their knowledge to influence others’ consciousness and the conditions of their communities.

I argue that the experiences of the UFJ youth show that direct instruction of information can be an important component of development when these didactic learning opportunities are presented as and understood to be a means to taking on fuller participation within a CoP. Lave and Wenger’s work is pessimistic of the role of direct instruction in promoting learning. In UFJ, which is more of a hybrid learning space than a true apprenticeship, direct instruction through workshops provided important opportunities for youth to develop skills and take on responsibilities and identities as more expert participants within the organization. These

³⁹ Salvador Allende, the President of Chile from 1970-1973, is known as the first democratically elected Marxist president in Latin America (Collier and Sater, 2004)

⁴⁰ Carlos Zerquera is the city historian of Trinidad, one of the oldest cities in Cuba. The Washington Post (Sullivan, 2001) wrote an article about his 56 year effort to preserve the city’s history. Because of a lack of funds and modern tools, his efforts consisted of re-writing the city’s most important documents by hand. The quote used in the Strike School flier is a segment of a quote that appeared in the Post article. The entire quote is as follows “To know who you are, you must know who you were. It is the seed of who you will become.” Interestingly, the last part of the quote, omitted from the flier, captures how learning about historical knowledge through Strike School influenced who the students became.

workshops had characteristics of school-like learning, yet the youth interpreted them as important opportunities for them to become critical civic leaders. Thus, I argue that the form of ‘instruction’ is less important than the learners’ interpretation of its value in helping them become the type of people they are seeking to become.

Taking on a critical identity. For many youth in UFJ, their new critical awareness led them to take on a critical identity. This change in identity was characterized by seeing themselves differently and interacting with friends, sources of knowledge and the world in new ways. For instance, Victor boasted that amongst his friends, he’s “the only one that knows what’s out there” and that he’s consistently sharing information with them or challenging them on their perspectives. Maria now sees herself as the type of person who understands historical and community issues and that her new consciousness changes the way she exists in the world. She shared:

I wouldn’t like to be one of those people that didn’t know. It helps me to know what’s happening to our schools, and what’s happening in our history and how people have been treated and how people are treated now. It helps me go around this world knowing things. I don’t have to be that person who is just there wondering, ‘what’s going on?’

Similarly Paul now engages with historical information more critically after his learning through UFJ. He said, “whenever I learn something, like on history, I would think, ‘is that really what happened or is it meant for us to think what happened?’” After UFJ, Paul’s way of reading the world incorporates a critical understanding of biases embedded within texts that perpetuate misinformation to maintain the status quo.

A fundamental component of developing a “critical” identity is becoming the type of person who sees and acts upon oppression. Oppression is often perpetuated in everyday practices

and institutions that go unaddressed by many who see them as common sense or neutral. The students' experiences in UFJ, and particularly their exposure to content examining injustice and oppression, led many UFJ youth to become the type of people who see and act on injustices often unexamined by others.

Some UFJ youth talked about several ways that they acted upon injustice and oppression in their daily lives. For instance, I asked Maria if her experiences in UFJ had changed the way she thought about the world. She answered by sharing how UFJ affected the way she responds to language that she now feels perpetuates gender inequality.

Like when people say, 'oh you guys.' And then I feel like it's all wrong, like, 'don't say guys because we're not all guys,' you know. And it's just like, now every little word I catch it, like, 'oh no that's not what you're supposed to say.' And then sometimes I tend to correct people and I'm like, 'oh my gosh, what if they don't think the same as I do.' But I'm like, I have to do it.

Her response shows how she now filters "every little word" through her developing critical consciousness to examine how it might perpetuate oppression. Moreover, her new critical consciousness drives her to address these issues even if it requires confronting individuals who don't agree with her. She later added that she was happy about her change in consciousness and action.

The students developed a motivation to address injustice and the identity of individuals who did something about injustice now and in the future. For Vero, involvement in UFJ has made her the type of person that takes part in organized efforts to address issues in the community both within UFJ and separate from it.

I think UFJ just makes me get more involved. Like it might not be specifically more like, 'I'm going to get more involved with UFJ, UFJ, UFJ.' But just like knowing, since they inform us about community problems. Then it just makes us find like other clubs that do the same, and we just get involved with them.

In the quote, Vero expresses a current commitment to civic action. In Elvira's college essay, she expressed a long-term commitment to working for social justice, exhibiting her development as a critical civic leader

I am interested in studying education and political science in college so that one day I may become a school board member, Secretary of Education, or any other type of politician. I want to represent low-income communities and be a decision maker who will bring positive change into our schools. I am also interested in becoming a politician to change injustices and barriers that stand on the way of people like my family to have a better life.

For Elvira, her exposure to critical content led to a motivation to address injustices and a long-term identity trajectory where she envisioned herself on a lifetime mission to address these issues. In addition, both Carla and Paul talked about an interest in returning to UFJ to work as a staff organizer. Paul's answer to why he wanted to come back to UFJ indicates an internalized identity as a critical civic participant. He said that contributing to the improvement of his community was something he just had to do: "because I just want to and I have to, it's something that we just, we have to do. And if it doesn't get done then we have to try and get it done." Paul has taken on the mission and identity of a critical civic leader through his participation in UFJ.

Summary. This section highlighted the ways that legitimate peripheral participation in UFJ supported opportunities for youth to take on critical identities and the ways they were

connected to civic action and the Cycle of Leadership. Youth were exposed to critical content that was presented in didactic ways, but understood as a means to improve their leadership in social change efforts. This critical content fostered a critical awareness and motivated students to want to participate in consciousness raising and civic action. As youths' ways of seeing the world changed, they also saw themselves and acted in different ways. They took up identities as critical civic participants and leaders in their schools and communities in the present and also saw themselves on trajectories towards more advanced critical civic leadership. This section argued that youth developed critical civic identities through legitimate peripheral participation, intent participation and traditional teacher-centered learning.

Developing Civic Agency through Positioning Youth as Valued Contributors to Important Civic Action

“It was not just them, it was me also. We did it, together.”
-Arlene, Youth Member

It is important for youth to feel like they have a voice and are valued participants in a youth development space. But doing this, especially with youth who have varying levels of experience in organizing while trying to win high-profile social justice campaigns, can be very difficult. One of the strengths of UFJ is that it consistently manages to make an impact through campaigns that youth feel are important and they have a voice in deciding on direction and have a role in implementation. These strengths led all of the focal students in this study to articulate a growing sense of individual and/or collective civic agency. For some, their experiences participating in UFJ made them feel like they could *contribute* to important collective action while others felt they had the agency to *lead* efforts to address injustice. There are two key factors that led students to develop a sense of civic agency. First, the youth identified the

campaigns as important to the well-being and improvement of their schools and community. Second, UFJ provided youth with opportunities to authentically engage in these critical civic campaigns.

Collective and individual civic agency. Many students developed a sense of agency that was tied to their participation in UFJ. Kirshner (2009) found that youth involved in organizing developed a perspective and discourse around having a collective civic agency. Similarly, in this study, many youth articulated a fundamental change in their perspective on and relationship to their communities. As previously noted, Arlene began UFJ with a lack of interest or engagement in community issues. However, through participating in civic actions with UFJ, she developed a strong sense of collective civic agency. When asked if she felt like she could make a difference in her community, she said:

I think, alone, I can't, maybe a little one [chuckles]. But if I gather the people that feel the same way that I do I think that we could all be able to make a change. I think if we all step up and we all try and we all put some effort on it, I think that we would be able to. Yeah we would.

Arlene's understanding of the importance of a large base in successful organizing efforts reflects her developing knowledge of organizing and her sense of agency as linked to collective efforts.

Some youth members also expressed a strong sense of individual civic agency. Elvira, a veteran member, talked about how her experiences with UFJ inspired her to believe she could tackle other issues of injustice facing her family and community. She said, "So, it's like being involved and being able to just influence decisions at the school board level made me realize, 'yeah, I could go to school and make a difference in the national level.'" For Elvira, her involvement and contributions to important campaigns at the school board level gave her the

individual civic agency to envision herself pursuing national level change in the future. Elvira's experiences suggest that agency develops through opportunities to act and contribute to change, not just an interest of motivation to do something.

Important campaigns. The youth participants in UFJ identified the campaigns as important to them, their schools and their communities. Victor initially committed to UFJ because "they actually did something... they were actually changing things." And he stayed connected to the organization because he saw the need to improve his school for the benefit of his own family and community members and believed that working with UFJ was the way to do it. Victor said:

Yeah, it's kept me here, simply for the fact that I have three younger siblings. I look around my community, my neighbors are younger than me and they're going to be going to the same school. Hopefully, it better not screw them up as much as it screwed me up, because it's not a very good school. Just to know that you're helping change something for the better, for people that are going to be after you, and not for yourself, that actually puts me at ease.

Being a part of visible change was a powerful experience for Victor, one that gave him a sense of accomplishment and fostered his collective civic agency. When I asked Victor if he thought UFJ was successful, he referenced the opening of the new high school that "we got" as evidence and he felt it would "make things easier for students," once again suggesting his feelings of contributing to the success of the group.

The importance of the work influenced youths' perceptions of themselves as leaders and agents of change. Elvira argued that all the students in UFJ were leaders because they had a role

in collectively organizing around issues that were fundamental to their own success and the vitality of the community. When asked if she felt like a leader in UFJ, she said:

Yeah. Because I get a role, I get to say what I feel. I guess that's what it is. We fight for what we need and deserve and what we should have. I think everyone there, we're all leaders. We are all there for a purpose. And that is to make sure that our schools are getting the proper funding, the proper education, the equality to make sure that we all pursue our dream of going to college.

From her comment and Victor's above, we see that students feel like leaders because they contribute to organizing work that is essential to their communities. By contrast, Elvira admitted that leadership opportunities in school did not make her feel like a leader because she saw them as insignificant to the well being of her community. She said, "in school, when I'm in leadership, I don't consider myself a leader. Like, I don't think I'm a leader in there because to me, making posters is not being a leader." In particular, making posters for school dances and social events did not seem significant to Elvira. As I will document below, youth acknowledge the value of a range of tasks, from speaking to the school board to even making t-shirts, if it is part of fulfilling the larger purpose of an essential campaign in their communities. Thus, it is both the perceived value of the task *and* the importance of the campaign that influenced whether the youth members saw the task as an opportunity to be a leader and an agent of change.

Contributions at different levels. The youth members have articulated a spectrum of activities from passive participation in meetings to active engagement in essential campaign activities. When asked how he feels he has contributed to the campaigns, Victor articulated a range of tasks, from routine to high profile:

All the organizing and them calling and picking me up very early on a Saturday...

Depending on what the issue is, maybe precinct walking...surveys, handing out surveys to students...helping out organizing of some sort of event, attending rallies, even speaking in front of the school board.

Given that Victor was with UFJ for four years, he had the opportunity to engage in a spectrum of authentic campaign tasks.

However, regardless of the level of the task and the experience of the member, youth felt integrated as valued contributors to important civic efforts. All the focal youth, from novice to more experienced, had a sense of solidarity with the important work of the organization that made them feel successful. David, a novice member, admitted that his contribution to the group was modest, but still felt like a valuable participant with a voice in the organization's decision-making. When asked if he felt successful in UFJ, he said:

Yes, I feel very successful in UFJ, even if it's just to help another member out. It's very cool and fun to actually be of use and to help decide what goes on in a group and to help and decide what should be done whenever there's a difficult time.

Maria, a UFJ youth leader, saw her role in informing others about campaigns and critical issues in her community as an essential component to the work, and a part of making change a reality. She said, "My role is to inform other people and *to be part of the change* [Emphasis added]." These statements continue to make the connections between authentic youth involvement in important campaigns and the development of civic agency through legitimate peripheral participation in UFJ.

Summary. The youth members in UFJ articulated developing a sense of civic agency through their legitimate peripheral participation in civic efforts they saw as important. While the tasks varied from routine to high profile, the youth perceived their contributions as both valued

and significant to the work of the organization. By offering a range of ways to contribute and positioning all youth as leaders in development, UFJ helped to foster the civic agency of its youth.

Conclusion

As discussed above, UFJ takes an apprenticeship approach to youth organizing where adult organizers work alongside youth in efforts to address issues of injustice in their communities while also providing youth guidance and mentorship to become more effective critical civic leaders. The organizers modeled and promoted principles of shared respect, collaboration and unity while also fostering the idea of a cycle of leadership where all could contribute. These factors helped youth to develop solidarity with the UFJ community and see themselves as leaders in development within the organization. Through participation in political education youth developed both the capacity and motivation to act as effective critical civic participants. Then, as they participated in important campaigns, youth began to develop a growing sense of civic agency. The youth leaders may not have been in charge at UFJ, but they were legitimate peripheral participants who felt like agents of change because they were valued, trained and provided with opportunities to engage in important civic actions in their communities. In sum, through participation, observation and direct instruction within the CoP of UFJ, the youth began to take on the skills, values and identities of full participants of the group.

This chapter highlights some factors that contribute to positive youth development within organizing groups. As prior research points out, quality relationships are a fundamental starting point for youth development. I have argued that the nature of interpersonal interactions and characteristics of the adult organizers helped to foster quality relationships and a sense of

belonging that promoted engagement within the learning space. For instance, shared cultural backgrounds with the adults in UFJ helped newcomers develop a sense of solidarity with the group that promoted engagement towards becoming particular types of people within the CoP. This provides an example of how a sense of belonging is fostered and incoming identities influence novices' engagement within communities of practice.

Moreover, collaborative participation structures and valuing youth input were also essential establishing youth as legitimate peripheral participants within UFJ. However, collaboration in the apprenticeship model at UFJ does not mean everyone participates in exactly the same ways. UFJ philosophy holds that leaders need to be trained and youth can benefit from observing and learning from adult organizers. A key to UFJ's success seems to be their ability to convince youth to adopt this philosophy while also providing them with important opportunities to contribute.

In addition to participation and observation, direct instruction was also associated with youths' critical civic development. Youth perceived the teacher-centered workshops to be a component of legitimate peripheral participation in UFJ and a means to becoming a more effective participant within the group. Thus, I have argued that the form of "instruction" is less important than members perceptions of the practice as relevant to their becoming certain types of people.

UFJ is a place where youth and adults come to learn about and participate in organizing to improve the educational opportunities of all students in their communities. The ethos is about everyone being a leader and everyone contributing; however, students do not expect to lead everything. They value the work of the adult organizers and cherish the opportunities to learn from them and contribute together to a common cause. In turn, the adult organizers value youth

and provide them with scaffolding and authentic opportunities to co-participate in addressing injustices in their community. While the nature of participation varied amongst youth, all students had opportunities to participate that lead to the development of civic agency.

There are different approaches to youth organizing. Some approaches foreground youth leadership with adults limiting themselves to a supportive role. Others position adults and youth as equal co-participants. And others still, take apprenticeship approaches where youth and adults co-participate in common activities while adults intentionally mentor and scaffold youth development. Some worry that adults, devaluing the capacity of youth to contribute, will not provide youth with access to important roles in organizing. Consequently, this adultism (Watts & Flanagan, 2007) will prevent youth from developing the necessary skills and identities to become effective civic leaders. However, the case of UFJ suggests that youth can experience significant critical civic development even when they understand that adults are in charge.’

A meta-awareness of oneself on a trajectory towards leadership in an effort to address social injustices allows youth to be learners and leaders at the same time. In turn, the adults are mentors and co-participants at the same time. Students develop and major change efforts are made. In UFJ, this is how their ‘apprenticeship’ approach plays out. However, adult organizers who take this approach must remain ever mindful of the consequences of not providing youth with access to authentic tasks and participation within organizing (as did the organizers in UFJ). If apprenticeship is merely understood as adults being in charge without recognizing the vital contributions of youth, organizing experiences will likely not be transformative for youth. There is also likely a balance between the importance of a campaign and the level of youth leadership that is necessary to engage youth. If the importance of the campaign is high (and youth feel solidarity with it), then they may not need to be in charge to feel valued and experience critical

civic development. However, they do need access to important tasks as participants and observers and see themselves of a trajectory of more responsibility

CHAPTER 7

APPRENTICESHIPS IN POWER AND CRITIQUE: COMPARING CRITICAL CIVIC DEVELOPMENT ACROSS CLASSROOM AND YOUTH ORGANIZING

“There is a lot of overlap, like in the kinds of things you learn. The main difference lies in what you do about it. Because Sanchez kind of puts it up to you and he kind of tells you what's going on and it's up to you to make a decision. Whereas, in UFJ, they're like, ‘okay, now you know what's going on, what are *we* going to do together to kind of change it?’” - Mercedes

In the last two chapters, I described the characteristics of the two learning sites and argued that they influenced youth engagement and were associated with critical civic development. I highlighted how the educator practices in both learning spaces created opportunities for critical development. However, the community organization offered more opportunities to develop a robust critical civic identity marked by both applied civic motivation and critical agency. Mercedes was the one focal youth who participated in UFJ leadership and Mr. Sanchez’s class. Her statement above provides a succinct but powerful comparison of the two spaces. As she points out, the content is similar but the expectations for action are very different. In the classroom, Sanchez puts the onus on students to act individually to address injustice outside of the classroom and/or in the future. However, in UFJ, adult educators provide opportunities for youth to contribute to collective actions to address unjust social conditions.

It’s not terribly surprising that a public school classroom focuses more on developing understanding and a youth organizing group focuses more on civic action. The study for this dissertation purposely included two unique critical learning sites in order to examine how structural affordances and challenges influence educators’ attempts to promote critical civic development. Understanding how these structural features support or challenge efforts to promote critical civic development can inform future efforts to promote development. Moreover,

it can provide insights on theoretical understandings of learning through legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice.

This chapter has two main sections. The first part compares the goals, practices and outcomes of the two sites in order to highlight previous findings and discuss their theoretical implications. This section shows how students in both sites developed an awareness of injustice and a motivation to do something about it, but the UFJ youth were more likely to put their motivations to action and feel a sense of agency in their ability to make a change in the world. I argue that the goals and practices of the learning spaces influenced these developmental trajectories. The classroom educator's orientation to prepare individuals for the future and few opportunities for civic action in the space was associated with students taking on *aspirational identities* as critical civic leaders in the future. On the other hand, UFJ focal youth were provided opportunities to take on practice-linked identities⁴¹ (Nasir & Hand, 2009) as critical civic participants in the present that put them on a trajectory towards becoming critical civic leaders in the future. I call this a practice-linked identity trajectory as a critical civic leader. The second section will show how structural features situated the classroom to be a site well suited for the in-depth study of content to become critical thinkers and UFJ's structures situated it to be a site well suited for participating in civic action to become agents of change. Particularly, I will discuss how both structural challenges and affordances, influenced access to content, relationships and authentic tasks within the two sites.

⁴¹ Nasir and Hand (2008) define practice-linked identities as “the sense that there is a connection between self and the activity. More specifically, practice-linked identities are the identities that people come to take on, construct, and embrace that are linked to participation in particular social and cultural practices” (p. 147).

Goals, Practices and Outcomes Across the Sites

This section reviews the youth outcomes, educator goals and practices across the two learning spaces. I will describe how the educator goals and practices in the site positioned students on different identity trajectories and influenced students' critical civic development outcomes.

Educator Goals

Educators in both sites shared the overall goal of contributing to social justice, but they had different ways to promote it.

In the classroom, the teacher saw his efforts to educate and politicize his students as a means to promoting a long-term effort for social justice in the future. In spite of pressure Sanchez felt for being 'political,' he refused to stop because he believed his type of teaching is essential for the future improvement of marginalized communities. He asserted, "I'm going to try to push [my agenda] with my students because I think that our community's improvement depends on being able to see the world from this point of view or from these spectacles." This focus on "point of view" and ways of thinking underscores how Sanchez's goals set the space up to be an apprenticeship in critique.

In UFJ, the educators saw their efforts to develop youth (and adults) as part of a struggle to promote social justice in the present. Ruben shared that UFJ sought to build youth and adult power in order to leverage power in the community: "we have to build enough power, student power, parent power, people power to make decision makers respond to the needs of the people we work with...to be a power player, so we can decide the destiny of our communities, is really the ultimate [goal]." Ruben's focus on issues of power highlights how the educator goals in UFJ conditioned the site to be an apprenticeship in power with youth as legitimate peripheral

participants in community change efforts.

The educators' goals in the sites correlated to different types of critical civic identity trajectories. In short, Sanchez developed students' thinking to promote social justice in the future while UFJ promoted social change in the present and developed power within that process. The classroom teacher's focus on learning critical content to contribute to change in the future positioned students as critical thinkers in development and only theoretical agents of change. I argue that this was associated with students taking on aspirational identities as future critical civic leaders. UFJ's focus on addressing current social injustices positioned youth as agents of change in the present and leaders in development. Both of these spaces positioned youth on trajectories towards becoming critical civic leaders. In the classroom the teacher encouraged students to aspire to this identity. In UFJ educators encouraged youth to take on a practice-linked identity as a critical civic leader in development by engaging them in civic action and critical learning in the present in preparation towards becoming critical civic leaders in the future.

In sociocultural terms, educators in both sites wanted to prepare youth to be effective participants in critical communities of practice. In a community of practice, a goal of experts or "old timers" is to prepare newcomers to effectively participate in the space and reproduce the CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). I argue that the classroom teacher in this study was seeking to reproduce the community of adults with an understanding of critical civic issues and the tendency to address them. The UFJ organizers were seeking to reproduce the community of expert participants within the organization in the present as well as critical civic leaders to carry the movement for social justice in the future.

Consciousness, more consciousness, then change. Sanchez's goals focused on developing consciousness and encouraging students to pursue additional education so they could

work for social change as individuals in the future. Sanchez encouraged youth to have a commitment to improving conditions in their communities by telling students they “have to pay it forward.” Many of his seniors indicated being aware of Sanchez’s goal. Marc said, “He wants us to be those students that are out there, the leaders of *tomorrow*” and Diana shared, “he’s one of the teachers that gets you thinking, ‘what can you do to change the *future*’” [emphases added]. Sabrina added, ‘He tells us that we’re the ones, that *we’re the ones* that have to solve the problems.’ Rafael recounted how learning about social injustices “outraged” him and impelled him to ask Sanchez for his opinion on addressing these issues. Sanchez’s answer underscores his belief that education and consciousness are keys to social justice. Rafael shared:

We’ll be outraged by things we learn and we’ll be like, ‘what can we do?’ And he’ll just tell us, ‘like education, keep going in school, and you’ll learn so much more and then you’ll know what to do.’ So basically, just go to college and that’s all, ‘well you’ll figure out what you need to do to improve society or this country.’

Fostering this motivation to seek knowledge through education and to be change agents is quite an accomplishment. However, the language of the quotes indicates that the orientation is to being agents of change in the future and as individuals, implying that the classroom is not a space for present civic action. Thus the classroom offers few opportunities for students to take on practice-linked identities as critical civic participants but the teacher does encourage students to aspire to this identity in the future.

Lead, make change, inspire others. On the other hand, UFJ educators aim to prepare youth to be agents of change and leaders in development as part of collective efforts in the present. For instance, Ruben, the UFJ lead organizer, wants youth to proactively address

injustice whenever they see it, work for the collective good and begin to see themselves as leaders in the community:

I want people to be well organized and take initiative on their own when they see injustice and not wait for someone else to tell them to do something... for students to become, feel like they're leaders and organizers and influential... I want them to gain knowledge so they can give knowledge – not for self but for others.

When I asked Elvira what was expected of students in UFJ, her response echoed Ruben's goals for students.

I think their expectations is for us to turn us into leaders and then be able to turn others into leaders. Fall like dominoes, you know, keep it going. I think our job is definitely to come back. Maybe not the same community, but go back to a community that is struggling like ours is.... They expect us to be leaders and influence other people and make sure that our voice is heard and that people listen to us and that we can inspire other people to do the same.

Elvira's comments indicate that she saw UFJ youth as part of a cycle of leadership where they become leaders and help others become leaders for the improvement of marginalized communities everywhere. From these comments, we see that UFJ aims to position youth to take on practice-linked identities as proactive leaders in their communities in the present *and* in the future.

Modeling Practice and Identity Trajectories

The educators serve as models for particular types of engagement with the community and that influences youth identity trajectories.

Critical thinkers in development in the classroom. The classroom teacher modeled a critical perspective and a motivation to raise consciousness that some of his students began to identify with. As previously discussed, Sanchez provided critical lectures where he modeled and encouraged critical questioning to understand the multiple and root causes of social conditions. In a focus group interview, five seniors were discussing an assignment around the documentary Food Inc., which takes a critical look at the ways corporations exploit workers, deplete the environment and put consumers at risk in order to make profits. One of the film's segments presented the story of a young child, Kevin, who dies from eating a hamburger contaminated with E. Coli. The students were asked to write a page long response to explain who was responsible for Kevin's death. The students talked about how they were adopting the kind of critical analysis that Sanchez modeled in his teaching. The excerpt begins with Sabrina asserting that they were becoming "little hims" to indicate their taking on the identity of a critical thinker, like Sanchez.

Sabrina: Like, we become little hims. We'll start off like, 'okay why did Kevin die?' and we'll end up with totally different questions. It's what he does with his teaching.

Then the students discuss how they would answer the question, exploring multiple perspectives. First they state the immediate cause of the child's death and then seek out root causes, like Sanchez encourages them to do.

Rafael: It's like, 'he died because he ate the hamburger'

Sabrina: and 'that hamburger was eaten by the boy and it's the farmer's fault.'

Rafael: But then, 'it's not the farmer's fault because they are sort of forced to raise the animal in that way' [Sabrina: echoes "in that way" as Rafael says it].

Sabrina: It's a chain reaction.

Ernie: Because there's laws, and you blame the government.

Rafael: Not really the government, it's the companies.

Then multiple students reiterate that they feel like they are becoming more like their teacher, indicating an identity trajectory as a critical thinker and analyzer of the world.

Sabrina: Yeah, we're little Sanchezes

Yolanda: Little Sanchezes.

Ernie: Sanchezes.

Finally, Rafael concludes the discussion by connecting corporate greed to the exploitation of farmers and nature.

Rafael: It just leads up to CEOs wanting to make more money. Because of that, cause that's why they [the farmers] treat the animals that way, and they have the contracts and the farmers don't want to lose their contracts. And it's all just very complicated.

This discussion provides an example of how the students are taking on the identity of the expert within their learning space. Not all students were as self aware of this identity transformation, but many acknowledged taking a new stance towards examining the world.

In addition to taking on the way Sanchez thought, some students also wanted to take on the way he interacted with the community to promote social justice. For instance, Sanchez feels that he contributes to the community by 'being an educator,' and he modeled teaching and consciousness-raising as a means to promote justice. When asked if he could make a difference in his community Rafael felt he could, by raising people's consciousness about injustices in the world. He noted that this method of addressing issues mirrored the approach that Sanchez was taking.

It's going to take a long time to inform everyone. It's very complicated like explaining

what [Sanchez] explains and making things happen. I just don't know what you're supposed to do. Like what he said, that's why he became a teacher, because he doesn't know any other way to do it, to explain to students and hope those students do the same and just spread the word.

For Rafael, his critical identity trajectory mirrors that of the expert in learning space, Mr. Sanchez. He seeks to raise consciousness, like Sanchez does.

Exposure to critical content and observing critical dialogues can influence a young person to want to become a certain type of person (i.e. a critical civic participant) but access to a fuller range of tasks may be needed for further critical civic development. In the quote above, Rafael acknowledges a lack of confidence in his own ability to explain complicated concepts the way his teacher does. As primarily recipients or critical consumers of information, the students in Sanchez's classes did not have significant experience in explaining injustices to others. This suggests that narrow participation in the full range of tasks in the classroom community may have limited critical civic development. For instance, novices likely need opportunities to participate in consciousness-raising and civic actions in order to fully take on an identity as a critical civic leader. Nevertheless, access to critical content through the classroom space still motivated students to aspire to become critical civic members of society.

Civic leaders in development in UFJ. Through legitimate peripheral participation in a community of critical civic leaders (UFJ), the focal youth were motivated to take on the identity of the experts in the learning space (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For instance, the UFJ educators modeled civic leadership, which encouraged youth to take on identities as civic leaders. Maria talked about a time when she was listening in on a conference call with a national organizing group that Elvira participated in with Ruben. Maria shared how Ruben's behavior in the

conference call modeled exceptional leadership by taking on the responsibility to inform the public about an initiative.

Ruben was saying things and they were asking him if he could spread the word around California and he said, 'of course, that's what I'm here for.' And that's part of being a leader. What kind of leader would he be if he said, 'oh, I'm sorry, I can't.' That's not part of being a leader.

Several students talked about being inspired by the example that the adult organizers set. For Arlene, she was awed by the important contribution of the organizers but she also felt that she could do the same. She said, 'they inspire me. Sometimes, I see them doing all this stuff. 'Whoa, if they're doing it, why can't I?'" Cristina envisioned the role of organizers as consciousness raisers in the community to make the world a better place. She said, "They just shake it up, be like 'hey, you know, come to your senses. This is happening, you can't just sit there.' They just want a better community, a better world, where everybody has a good education." Cristina pinpointed one of the organizers, Sara, as a leader who she wanted to emulate, "you see her and you're like, 'I want to be like her. I want to be a leader like her.'"

In addition to being models of civic leadership, UFJ educators also provided youth with opportunities to engage in civic action towards becoming a leader. Interestingly, a considerable amount of the action in organizing was also around consciousness-raising. In UFJ educators both modeled the practice of informing others and provided opportunities for youth to do the same, reflecting the youths' status as legitimate peripheral participants within the community of practice. David felt the role of the adult organizers was to provide the students with information about community issues and campaigns so that they could turn around and pass on the information to their peers at school. He said: "The role of the organizers would be, in my opinion,

to teach us, to help us understand what they are talking about. And then to allow us to try and do our best to pass that on as well.” While this is a hierarchical relationship, the students did not perceive it as positioning them in a less important role in the group. Vero felt that everyone in UFJ was a leader, contributing his or her part in the organization. Vero asserted:

I think all of us [are leaders]. They [the organizers] had to get it from somewhere too; they had to get the information from someone. So, we’re like them. Because they got it from someone, we got it from them, and then we all become leaders.

From the quote, one can see that Vero feels like she is becoming a leader, like the adult organizers in UFJ. By participating in the cycle of leadership, learning from organizers and then passing the knowledge on to others, Vero and other UFJ focal youth took on identities as leaders in the community of practice.

In UFJ, learning was tied to the purpose of improving the community, which motivated students to action. Paul compared his high school government class⁴² with UFJ. Similar to studies on high school civics curriculum, Paul pointed out that school learning was primarily about governmental processes (Rogers et al., 2012) while UFJ learning provided him insights about current political conditions that affected his community. He concluded by arguing that unlike in school, learning through UFJ motivated and prepared him to contribute to making an impact on his community. He said:

In government you learn the basics of how the government runs and how the economic system works. With UFJ, you see what the government does and is doing. So, there’s a difference between how it works and what they are working on. So, in government and economics, ‘this is how this works.’ I just tried to get a good grade. But in UFJ, I learned,

⁴² Paul was not in Mr. Sanchez’s class

‘oh, they are doing this so we need to change this because it's affecting our community.’

So, for the class I learned how it works so I could get a good grade. And in UFJ, I learned what they actually do so we could fix it and we could change it and better it.

In the quote, Paul clearly lays out the way UFJ engages youth in purposeful learning to encourage them to contribute to collective (“we”) efforts to improve the community. Given that many low-income youth experience disconnects between their civics classroom learning and their everyday lives (Rubin, 2007), this type of experience in UFJ is quite important. As discussed in Chapter Six, the UFJ workshops often incorporated didactic instructional methods similar to traditional schooling. Given Paul’s and other students comments about the impact of these workshops on their motivation to act, this suggests that the nature of instruction is less important than the learners’ perceptions of the experience as relevant to their lives and the people they want to become.

Youth Outcomes

I revisit my model of critical civic development to discuss differences in developmental trajectories across the two sites. Figure 7.1 below presents my model and how I categorized focal youths’ development. The names in bold are the youth from UFJ and the other names are the students from Sanchez’s classroom. Looking at the model, one can see that youth in UFJ tended to be more advanced in their critical and civic development than focal youth in Sanchez’s classroom. However, additional interviews with non-focal students in Sanchez’s classes indicated that many of his seniors were taking on critical identities. Sophomores with no civic engagement outside of the classroom (Alfonzo, Valerie, Luci) were latent in both critical and civic development. In addition, seniors with little civic engagement (Armando, Alejandra and

focus group students) were likely to express only a theoretical future motivation and agency to address social injustices. On the other hand, UFJ focal youth were more likely to be in the nascent and emerged stages of critical civic development. And they attributed their growing awareness of injustice, critical identity and agency to their experiences in the youth organizing group.

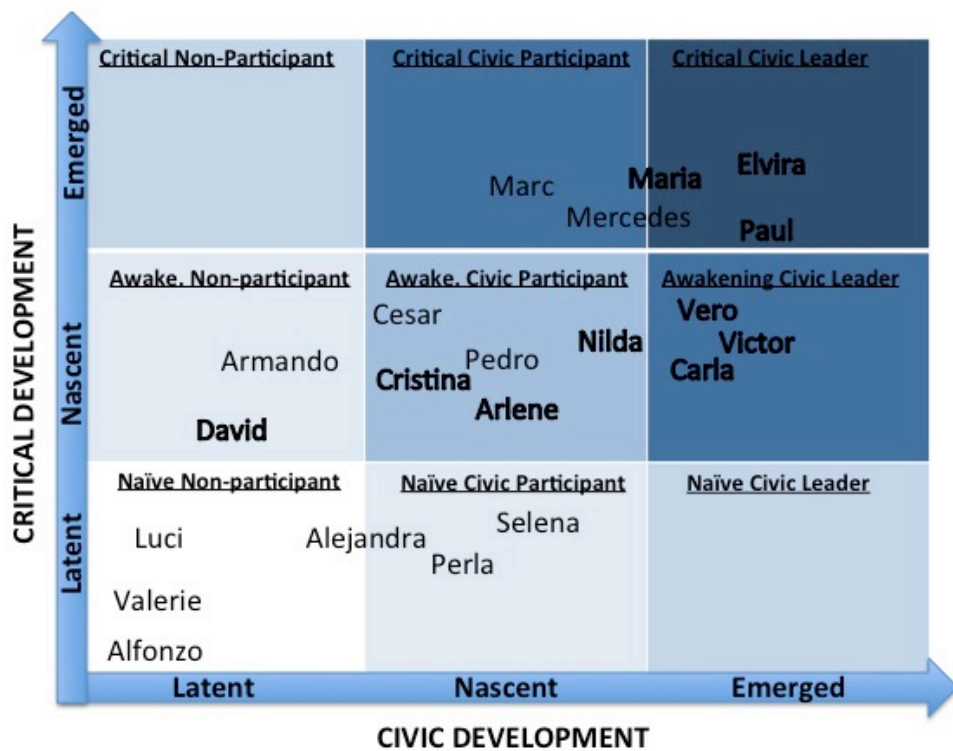


Figure 7.1. Focal Youth and Critical Civic Development Across Sites.

Critical development across the sites. Exposure to critical content in UFJ was more likely to be associated with participation in critical civic action and shifts in critical civic identity than in the classroom. In Table 7.1, I present lengthy student quotes that I will reference in the narrative to highlight differences across the sites. Youth in UFJ articulated how the critical content they learned in that space prepared and motivated them to participate in civic action and begin to see the world and themselves from a critical perspective. For instance, in Table 7.1,

Vero and Maria both share how learning about unjust social conditions made them want to do something about them. For example, in regards to learning about budget cuts to education and UFJ’s efforts to stop them, Maria connected her learning to action with UFJ, “if this is going on, then we have to fight for it.” Moreover, the quotes indicate that this consciousness and action changed the way youth thought about themselves. Maria shows a growing sense of her power and agency as a civic actor when she says, “it’s just really powerful how we could do all that stuff.” Vero shares that participation in UFJ changed her “brain” or the way she thinks about the world. As an example, she says that UFJ has taught her to question the unjust treatment of undocumented students, indicating a critical perspective on the treatment of marginalized groups within society. Particularly, Vero’s participation in UFJ has made her the type of person that questions the status quo (“not go with the norm”) in order to “make a change.”

Table 7.1. Consciousness Across the Sites

UFJ – Critical Content, Action & Identity	Classroom – Critical Content and Understanding
<p><i>Vero:</i> "But like, ‘why is it that undocumented students have to do this, and they’ve been living here for so many years?’ Like <i>that’s what UFJ does, to my brain</i> [laughs]. <i>Not go with the norm, cause if you go with the norm, you’re not going to make a change...</i></p>	<p><i>Filiberto*</i>: ...I couldn’t believe I was like so ignorant, like in the work area, like about how much power you can have [discussing unit on unions]. And <i>it makes me think what else I am ignorant about</i>. Like the schools system, I don’t know my rights. <i>I would want to know.</i>"</p>
<p><i>Maria:</i> For example, the budget cuts. ...For me it was like, ‘oh, <i>if this is going on, then we have to fight for it.</i>’ ...<i>it’s just really powerful how we could do all that stuff</i>. And how we have so much power but we don’t realize it.”</p>	<p><i>Sabrina:</i> "<i>when we talked about the exploitation. It gets me mad when Sanchez talks about it. I don’t get how they could go on, knowing what’s happening. And us not being able to do nothing. Like I want to do something about it.</i>"</p>

* Filiberto was not a focal student but he participated in a focus group interview and in Mr. Sanchez’s senior class.

In the classroom space, exposure to critical content was associated with students’ increased understanding of history and awareness of current injustice, but with less focus on

immediate civic action. Within the context of a discussion on unions and worker exploitation through capitalism, Filiberto discusses his ignorance about the potential power of labor in the workplace. His quote suggests that participation in Mr. Sanchez's class has fostered his awareness of injustice and it drives him to want "to know more" but not necessarily to participate in civic action. For Sabrina, becoming aware of the domestic and international exploitation of workers makes her mad, and she wants to do something about it, but she questions the ability of individuals to do anything about it. Unlike Maria, Sabrina's motivation for justice is not tied to action through the site, so it remains more theoretical than applied. The absence of opportunities to address issues of injustice through this classroom limits possibilities for supporting student agency to believe that they can do something about oppression. As argued elsewhere, youth must be supported with opportunities for civic action in order to foster civic participation (Watts and Guessous, 2006), which can foster civic agency.

The lack of experience in critical civic action coupled with the lack of support for those endeavors was associated with lower feelings of civic agency amongst the students in the classroom. The student quotes in Table 7.2 are responses to the question: "Do you feel you can make a change in your community?" I will reference these quotes to compare civic agency across the two sites. The classroom students' answers are characterized by feelings of fear ("why are we so afraid"), powerlessness ("I don't think they would listen to me, a teenager telling them what to do") and being unprepared ("I wouldn't know how to deal with it"). In addition, the classroom students' motivation for civic action tended to be more theoretical, and not coupled with concrete critical civic action or feelings of civic agency. For instance, Luci says she 'would want to' make a change in her community and Filiberto says "[we] are inspired" but "we never do anything."

On the other hand, students in the community organization felt a stronger sense of civic agency and civic identity, which was associated with direct participation in critical civic action within a community of organizers. For instance, Vero indicated that her strong sense of civic agency is tied to collective efforts to address injustice (“everybody has to come together”). Other youth talked about the importance of opportunities to participate in relevant civic action as vital to their feelings of civic agency. Maria and Elvira, both very shy students upon entering UFJ, talked about how authentic participation in important campaigns helped them develop a sense of power and agency. Like Valerie (classroom sophomore), Maria initially felt intimidated and powerless as a young person trying to address issues in her community. She shared her thoughts before addressing the school board with UFJ, “it’s going to be so intimidating, a tenth grader going up there and telling them, this is how I feel.” However, after speaking to the board, she realized “it’s not that bad” and she was no longer afraid to engage in these high-profile civic tasks suggesting a shift in civic identity. For Elvira, contributing to important campaigns also gave her a sense of agency. Specifically, her experiences “influenc[ing] decisions” at the local school board level made her realize she had the agency to contribute to national campaigns. These quotes suggest that support from a community of activists and the opportunity to take on practice-linked identities as contributors in important civic campaigns were key components of developing civic agency.

Table 7.2. Responses to: “Do you feel you can make a change in your community?”

Civic Agency in UFJ	Civic Agency in Classroom
<p><i>Vero</i>: "Yes, but everything has to be done with the whole entire community. Cause <i>everybody has to come together</i>, organize and prepare and all that stuff."</p>	<p><i>Luci</i>: "I would want to but just the whole process of doing it, <i>I wouldn't know how to deal with it</i>. It would be too much".</p>
<p><i>Maria</i>: " I had never talked to people with that type of power, like the school board. I was just like, 'oh my gosh, <i>it's going to be so intimidating, a tenth grader going up there and telling them, this is how I feel.</i>' ...But then I'm like, 'it's not that bad.' <i>Once you actually do it, it's like, 'okay, well you can do it again.'</i> It's just that thing, 'okay do it over and over,' and you get used to it and it's like, 'oh whatever, I'll do it next time.'</p>	<p><i>Valerie</i>: "<i>I don't think they would listen to me, a teenager telling them what to do.</i>"</p>
<p><i>Elvira</i>: "So, it's like <i>being involved and being able to just influence decisions</i> at the school board level made me realize, 'yeah, I could go to school and make a difference in the national level.'"</p>	<p><i>Filiberto</i>: "That's one thing that I think about. Like all of us are inspired at the end of the video, then why are we so afraid of saying, 'oh, lets do something about it.' We just talk about it, <i>we never do anything.</i>"</p>

Goals, practices, outcomes and the process of critical civic development.

Comparing these two cases highlights how individuals will take up the identities of the experts within the communities of practice that they participate in. As discussed in previous chapters, not all youth participated equally or fully in the sites (particularly the classroom). Nevertheless, many youth across both spaces took up the identities of the experts within the sites that they participated in. The educators in the two sites modeled and supported different kinds of identity trajectories through their practices. In UFJ, adult organizers modeled civic leadership and provided opportunities for students to take on important roles in the organization and subsequently take on practice-linked identities as critical civic leaders in development. In the classroom, the teacher modeled critique and promoted consciousness as a means for fostering social justice, while encouraging students to be agents of change in the future. The students in

the classroom were more likely to see themselves on a trajectory of becoming a critical thinker to promote social justice in the future (aspirational identity). In UFJ, youth learned so they could teach others or contribute to action in the present. By comparison, the classroom students did not have the same opportunities to take on practice-linked identities as critical civic participants.

The positioning of youth and their corresponding identity trajectories provide insights into the process of learning through legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that positioning newcomers as active contributors to important community practices is fundamental to supporting development. They assert, “[...] engaging in practice, rather than being its object, may be a *condition* for the effectiveness of learning.”⁴³ Conversely, they claim that didactic educator-centered instruction often limits development by controlling access to a full range of tasks in a CoP and treating the novice as a “person-to-be-change” (p. 112). I argue that these claims are mostly valid but also obscure the potential of didactic instruction as a tool to support development. In this study, UFJ engaged youth “in practice” and as agents of change and that was associated with robust critical civic development. On the other hand, the classroom space positioned students as “objects” of instruction and individuals to be changed. In particular, the teacher sought to change their ways of thinking through exposure to critical content. While this learning space was associated with less critical civic development than UFJ, the classroom still promoted changes in students’ identities and ways of seeing the world. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Six, didactic instruction such as Strike School fostered critical civic development for UFJ youth. Thus, I argue that the form of instruction is less important than learners’ perceptions that the content is relevant

⁴³ In terms of critical development, Freire and Macedo (1998) also highlight this distinction between subject and object in the world. Namely, they argue that the educators role is to foster marginalized individuals understanding of themselves as subjects rather than objects in determining the conditions of their lives.

to their lives and who they want to become. Moreover, content learning can be particularly powerful when coupled with participation in a community of practice that offers opportunities to learn through engagement in authentic tasks and observation of experts in action. This was the case for UFJ youth as well as classroom students who participated in civic actions outside of the classroom.

As Lave and Wenger (1991) and others argue, the site comparisons highlight the importance of engaging individuals in authentic civic practice to foster action in developing youths' critical civic identities (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; 2007; Strobel et al., 2006). Encouraging students to become agents of change may plant a seed or motivation for future change. However, modeling civic action and providing scaffolded opportunities to engage in civic action was associated with a stronger sense of agency and likelihood to address issues in the community. This also speaks to the importance of positioning students as subjects or contributors to important community practices rather than the object of change.

The outcomes, goals and practices of a given site do not exist in isolation of larger structural features. In fact, structural features had significant effects on the educators' efforts to promote critical civic development. These will be discussed in the following section.

Structural Influences on Critical Civic Development

The structures of these two learning sites vary on several dimensions but each site has structural challenges and affordances that complicate and support efforts to promote critical civic development. For instance, the classroom within a traditional public school was compulsory, had a fixed time frame, a high student to adult ratio and had pressures to abide by particular state

content standards. On the other hand, the youth organizing group was voluntary, had smaller student to adult ratios and was not subjected to specific constraints on content or time. I refer to these features as ‘organizing structures’ within the sites. These organizing features tended to afford quality access to experts and authentic organizing tasks within UFJ to support critical civic development. The classroom, being compulsory and consistent, provided more time and focus for in depth engagement with critical content for more students, especially seniors. However, organizational features of schooling offered challenges to fostering quality relationships and access to authentic tasks within the space. In addition to differences in organizing structures, these two sites were set up for very different purposes. Organizing groups are set up to empower community members to take action in their communities and win campaigns. This structural purpose positioned students as active agents of change within the organization. However, the pressure to win high profile campaigns sometimes led to limits in youths’ opportunities to participate in the full range of authentic tasks of the group. Capacity issues also challenged organizers’ abilities to provide access to in-depth content in the midst of multiple responsibilities. Ideas about the purposes of schools provided challenges and affordances to efforts to promote development within the classroom. Ideas that positioned students as passive objects to be improved for participation in future endeavors provided challenges to promoting authentic participation in the classroom and in present civic actions. Nevertheless, the classroom space still fostered identity changes for students, particularly in regards to reflections on their changing consciousness and aspirations to address civic issues in the future. Moreover, ideas about the space as a site for intellectual study set it up as a site well suited for critical development. In this section, I discuss how these structural features

(organizational and purpose related), influenced access to content, relationships and authentic tasks within the two sites.

Organizational structures

Organizational structures refer to issues of size, ways of grouping students and time allotted for particular activities. For instance, the size, or the number of youth per adult within the learning spaces, influenced access to relationships and authentic tasks within the sites. Segregating students by grade level and perceived ability levels in compulsory classes tended to challenge efforts at critical civic development in the classroom. And bringing together youth from different ages and critical civic competency levels to participate in volunteer organizing in UFJ tended to support critical civic development.

UFJ affordance – lower youth to adult ratios afforded more access to tasks and relationships. Having lower youth to adult ratios in UFJ (especially the leadership component) afforded more opportunities to develop quality relationships and take part in the authentic tasks of the community compared to the classroom. The youth leadership group or the Coordinating Committee (CC) of UFJ consisted of approximately forty to sixty youth with weekly CC meetings averaging between twenty-five to thirty-five youth. There were four to six UFJ staff members who regularly interacted with the youth during meetings, campaigns and academic programming. Thus, the youth to adult ratio was at about 6:1⁴⁴, whereas Sanchez had twenty-five to thirty-nine students in his classes. Lower youth to adult ratios in UFJ facilitated the development of quality relationships and provided more access to expert modeling (both more

⁴⁴ There were also 30 to 50 General Members (GM) at each of the four schools. Including these numbers would make the ratios similar to those for Sanchez. However, the students in my UFJ focal group all participated in the leadership component of UFJ, affording them more opportunities to engage with the staff and authentic activities.

experts and more time with them). Moreover, Strike School, Media Collective and Organizing 101 tended to be even smaller. For instance, the Strike School session I observed had six to ten participants with one staff organizer facilitating. In these sessions, it was common for all students to ask questions and provide comments about the critical historical content they were learning. In addition, UFJ CC meetings often consisted of a large group political education session, followed by breakout sessions where youth interacting in small groups with organizers. These breakout sessions typically included opportunities for youth to plan meetings and contribute to campaign efforts, which represent authentic tasks of the community.

It is important to note that the General Members (GM) in UFJ did not have the same level of access to develop relationships with organizers and participate in authentic tasks. The extent of some GM members participation was attending a weekly 30 minute meeting during their school lunch period. These meetings would typically consist of an icebreaker, announcements about campaigns and/or a short political education workshop. Nevertheless, focal students from the classroom who participated in UFJ's General Member meetings still indicated it as an important resource for information about their community and a place that they associated with student voice and agency. However, the identity impacts of participating in these general meetings were not as significant as those for the focal youth. Moreover, it is unclear how participation in GM influenced the critical civic development of students not in Sanchez's classes.

Classroom challenge – size, segregated youth groupings and access to relationships and tasks. In contrast to UFJ, students in the classroom, especially the sophomores, had fewer opportunities to develop quality relationships with Sanchez or participate in critical lectures during classes. Sanchez's sophomore class, with thirty-nine students, was particularly large at the

beginning of the year. The senior class was much smaller, as most senior classes are at the school, because of the high rate of students that never make it to senior year. Sanchez admittedly struggled with his sophomore class, pointing to the large size as a primary factor in the challenge to connect with this class. While all the interviewed youth believed that Sanchez cared about students, some rarely if ever spoke with him. More importantly, the shy students almost entirely refrained from asking questions and making comments during class discussions. With large classes and a minority of students willing to ask questions, many students primarily listened in during Sanchez's classes. Nevertheless, these students still reported an intellectual engagement with the content, but less of a tendency to ask critical questions of the material.

Even when efforts to reduce school overcrowding are made, institutional efforts to implement them can result in challenges for classroom teachers and students. Specifically, it was the mismanagement of a progressive school reform effort that contributed to the extremely large size of the sophomore class. I observed this class during the first year of a transition from a year round three-track school to a traditional calendar school.⁴⁵ A new high school in the neighborhood was supposed to relieve the need for year round schooling. However, even with students sent to the new school, accommodating three tracks of students into one at Pierce resulted in classes with high enrollment. In addition, Sanchez suggested that school administrators might have overestimated the number of sophomores who would drop out of school between the freshmen and sophomore summer. If correct, this highlights the role of low expectations of low-income students of color in structurally placing them in overcrowded classes.

In traditional high schools, and in the classrooms under study, organizational protocols

⁴⁵ Year round calendar schools are disproportionately instituted in communities serving low-income students of color and result in less overall instructional time and tracks that make it difficult for some students to have access to college level courses, activities and timely counseling (Oakes, 2002).

typically result in grouping students in ways that limit learning from peers with different levels of expertise within a subject. Specifically, students are grouped by grade and often tracked by perceived ability levels, segregating them from students with more experience whom they might be able to learn from. This further entrenches the teacher as the lone expert within the learning space. As noted in Chapter 5, Sanchez's sophomores were 'tracked' students, many of whom had previously underachieved at the school.⁴⁶

While Sanchez and many of the teachers in his small school were philosophically opposed to tracking, the terms of a recently acquired grant from the state of California required the school to group the students in this way. As an underfunded school with a high need for additional resources, the educators felt they had to accept the funds. The small school received the grant to bolster their Law and Government theme with a Constitutional Law course for sophomores. The rules of the grant stipulated that students only be allowed to take that course if they were "true tenth graders" with all of their credits. For this small school, this structural factor essentially tracked the students into two classes of college track students and two mixed classes. The latter classes consisted of many students who had failed several classes, indicating disengagement with schooling. At the end of the year, Sanchez said the teachers were exploring ways to get around this structural requirement to track students, which lead to significant challenges in the classroom. This example shows how educator efforts to promote critical civic development are situated within and influenced by larger structural features of the school site and schools in general.

UFJ Affordance – choice, groupings and access to tasks and relationships. The organizational structure of UFJ afforded access to individuals with a range of experiences in

⁴⁶ However, there was a considerable range of academic achievement within both the class and the focal students.

organizing and critique to provide models of practice and identity trajectories. In contrast to school, UFJ did not segregate youth by grade or perceived ability level. Rather, freshmen interacted with seniors and adult organizers. Thus, novices in the organization co-participated with intermediate and expert members of the group, providing newcomers with models for a range of authentic ways to participate. For instance, Vero recounted her first General Membership meeting. She admitted that she came for the food, but she stayed because she was impressed by a presentation given by a student leader of UFJ. She said:

I was hungry one day and they had pizza so I went. And I kept going because of what they would say...There was some girl who said she went to Sacramento and I was like, 'whoa! This is a club. It's really doing something.' So I just kept on going.

While Vero did not enter the space to become an agent of change, seeing that the group was 'really doing something' and that youth had advanced roles in the organization made her come back. In this way, grouping youth with different levels of expertise in UFJ was an organizing structure that provided novices with roles to aspire to.

The organizational structure of UFJ also offered opportunities for youth to voluntarily take on more advanced roles within the group. First of all, youth *choose* to be in UFJ, whereas school is compulsory. Choosing membership in a group can be an important identity shaping opportunity for adolescents, setting them up to take on the values and practices within the space (Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). In addition, youth can choose the level of participation they want to take on in UFJ. For example, youth begin as General Members (GM) and then can choose to participate in the Coordinating Committee (CC), where they have additional chances to step-up to learning and leadership opportunities, such as Strike School, public speaking and facilitating meetings. As discussed in Chapter 6, these opportunities to step-up can also have

important identity shaping effects and foster students' critical civic development. The initial choice to join UFJ may not be because of a strong sense of purpose and agreement in the mission (i.e. Vero came for free food), but youth are continuously making the choice to remain in the group. As their involvement grows in UFJ, their solidarity with the group also builds and their connection to the issues as well. By comparison, students are required to be in school and have few opportunities to step-up to more important roles.

Comparing different ways to enter the sites. The structural way in which youth enter each site also influences the ease to which norms, values and quality relationships are established and maintained within the space. In UFJ's Coordinating Committee, new members typically enter the space throughout the school year, a few at a time. Bringing in students gradually helps sustain a culture with consistent norms, values and quality relationships. In particular, the CC youth leaders serve as mentors to novices and model leadership behaviors and values. In the classroom, a large cohort of students typically begins participation in the classroom at the same time (the beginning of the school year). As discussed in Chapter Five, Sanchez felt that the students come in to his class with previous assumptions about teachers that too often have been preconditioned by negative experiences in schooling. In schools each fall, the teacher is tasked with establishing norms, expectations and relationships with a new set of students. For Sanchez, it proved especially difficult to develop rapport and establish values with his large class of sophomores, many of who had underachieved in school. UFJ experienced a similar challenge when they established a club at a new high school during the last few months of my study. A large group of academically underachieving students all started at the same time and it was difficult to establish norms for their participation and there were some initial tensions around behavior. However, having fewer students per adult allowed staff members to deal with behavior

issues in small groups to work to integrate the students into the existing norms and expectations of the group. This example highlights how the structural features of bringing students in gradually and a lower student to adult ratio help to foster a consistent culture and quality relationships within the space.

Organizational structures and critical civic development. As presented above, the organizational structures of the sites influenced educators' attempts to promote critical civic development. From a sociocultural perspective, these case studies highlight how structural features influence access to the relationships and authentic tasks within a community of practice. As discussed in Chapter 5, insufficient opportunities to participate in classroom critical dialogues and participation in the larger tracked sophomore class were associated with less critical development. In the classroom, large classes, tracking and limited choice provided challenges to establishing quality relationships with students and providing them with opportunities to learn from each other and authentically participate in the classroom. As discussed in Chapter 6, the shared idea of a 'cycle of leadership' was key to organizers efforts to promoting critical civic development in UFJ. Structurally, more adults and youth at different levels of expertise in the group provided learners with multiple models of authentic participation, quality relationships with experts in the site and allowed novices to see trajectories of leadership within the organization. Moreover, choice and the gradual entrance of youth into UFJ helped to establish solidarity within the group and perpetuate norms and leadership principles.

Purpose and Positioning Structures

Purpose structures refer to ways that beliefs about the aims of the sites influenced efforts to promote critical civic development. For instance, beliefs about the roles of students in schools

positions them as passive objects to be developed for a future purpose. On the other hand, beliefs about the roles of youth in organizing positions them as pro-active agents of change in the present. In addition, students are motivated by grades in the classroom, while UFJ youth are motivated by social change. Lastly, an organizer is trained to organize and positioned to prioritize campaign victories. And a teacher is trained to be an expert in content and encouraged to emphasize that.

Classroom challenge – purpose of schooling positions students as passive and future oriented. Pervasive social ideas about the purpose of schools and roles of students position youth as passive objects being prepared for future endeavors. There are varying opinions regarding the purposes of schooling. However, most would agree that it functions to sort individuals in society, some believing it to be more by merit and others more by privilege (Oakes, 2005). In addition, schooling is seen as a way to prepare youth for future participation in society (Rogoff, 2003). Thus, schooling is believed to be a means for social mobility and attaining general knowledge and skills to be applied at a later time. In turn, doing well in a class is often equated with passing or getting a good grade and not necessarily being able to participate in a meaningful endeavor. Thus, when students enter Sanchez’s classrooms, many are pre-conditioned to listen and motivated to comply for positive teacher evaluations (grades) to support future individual social mobility. In fact, teachers are often also pre-conditioned to direct the majority of classroom talk as well as be future oriented. As discussed in Chapter 5, many students were content with passively listening, and not actively questioning, because it was all they had to do to achieve their primary goal of passing the class. For instance, I asked Armando what he needed to be successful in the class and he said, “myself, I just follow whatever he says to do, and I'm doing good, so I feel that as long as you pay attention and you put in an effort

you'll do good.” The primacy of evaluation as the goal also impeded students’ attempts to make an impact on their community through Sanchez’s class. For instance, the interviewed seniors admitted discontinuing their Civic Action Projects once they received grades even though the projects had not yet been implemented. This focus on grades provides a challenge for teachers’ efforts to promote critical civic development. And the focus on passive participation limits critical questioning in the classroom and the kind of pro-active and empowered mentality necessary to be an agent of change in society.

UFJ affordance – the purpose of UFJ positions youth as agents of change. Ideas about the purpose of organizing and UFJ positioned students as powerful agents of change in important collective civic action. Organizing groups as a genre of organizations work with individuals to develop power. Angel, a veteran staff member of UFJ, articulated UFJ’s purpose to develop student power to contribute to addressing inequities in the students’ schools and communities. She said, “the purpose of [UFJ] is to really build a base of student-power on campus to advocate for education reforms that are ultimately going to address the inequities within the school but also the community.” Thus, the structural goal of UFJ is to prepare youth to be powerful contributors to civic actions. Focal youth typically shared this idea about the purpose of UFJ and the important role of youth within that mission, making them feel like agents of change. As noted in Chapter Six, Elvira articulated that all the youth in UFJ are leaders because they are there “for a purpose” and collectively “fight for what we need.” Sharing a common social justice purpose and co-participating in efforts to achieve it positions youth as active and important members of the UFJ community. By contrast, the purpose of schooling positions students as the passive objects of improvement, rather than actors in contributing to a common social justice purpose (Iave & Wenger, 1991).

Moreover, there is likely to be more congruence of goals between youth and adults in organizing than in schools, where students seek to pass courses and teachers seek to impart content. For instance, Cristina initially attended a UFJ GM meeting because she wanted to add an extracurricular activity to her college applications. But after joining CC, she has taken on the shared purpose of the organization and would continue coming even if it didn't improve her resume for college. She said, "If they were to tell me, 'you're not getting college credit.' Or not credit, just it won't look good, I'll be, 'okay, that's fine, I'll still be here. I'll still come.' For Cristina, the purpose of contributing to social change became more important to her than an external reward. When I asked her what her role in UFJ was, she said, "like any other student. Come, learn, and then make change, make a change." Youth in UFJ believe in the purpose of the organization and see themselves as an important part of it, positioning them as active agents of change as legitimate peripheral participants within the CoP.

Given that a primary purpose of UFJ is to fight for social change through civic action, the site was filled with experts at organizing. All of them had significant experience in past campaigns, with advanced organizing skills, that they continued to use in their work with UFJ. This structural feature of UFJ provides youth with access to adults who can model and scaffold civic action for youth. Victor talked about often hearing people spout rhetoric about hope and change, but not action. For Victor, the pro-active nature of UFJ drove him to the organization. I asked him why he joined UFJ and he said:

They actually did something. Which was, I was so used to being around people that would just sit back and wait, and like hope, hope, hope. But hope doesn't even get you half way there. ...These folks they weren't preaching hope. They weren't preaching at all. They were actually changing things. They were actually going out there and doing

something about it. They wouldn't just sit back and hope. That's one of the things that got me really into it.

The opportunity to engage with pro-active adults around important civic actions inspired Victor to want to be a part of UFJ. Thus the structural goal of the group and the organizers within it positioned UFJ as a place for action and for youth to be a part of it.

UFJ challenge – the primacy of winning campaigns and access to authentic tasks and content. Providing youth with authentic roles within important campaigns is an affordance to promoting critical civic development. However, balancing campaign and youth development goals was a consistent challenge for organizers in UFJ. For instance, when campaigns were their most intense, developing youth had to be exacerbated to promote winning the campaign. In addition, organizers' capacity to support youth development could be constrained when they were juggling their own organizing duties.

UFJ's commitment to promoting social change and winning campaigns put some limitations to youth access to the full range of authentic tasks within the organization. Ruben described UFJ as a youth-driven and not a youth led organization, explaining that the adult organizers set the agendas for the campaigns, but that the youth drive the campaigns. When asked why they weren't youth led, Ruben highlighted the importance of developing power and winning campaigns:

Cause one of the goals of UFJ beyond transformative organizing is to be able to be a power player. To be a power player you have to be able to, you have to be able to show power. Yes, that comes from your base but it really comes down to your ability to move the political landscape towards your direction. And that comes through winning campaigns.

This meant that youth were not the ones deciding the civic actions to pursue. However, as previously discussed, the youth still felt they had a valued voice and role. Ruben explained that he would like to have youth development be the driving goal of the organization but the reality of an unjust world necessitates that the organizers lead in order to address injustice. Moreover, the demands of organizing the multiple facets of large campaigns would be a substantial burden to place on unpaid youth, who are otherwise occupied with schooling for a considerable amount of the week.

During intense campaigns, youth development still happens but it can be hastened to accommodate the needs of the campaign. Ruben articulated that winning campaigns takes priority over other organizational goals, including youth development:

When there are deadlines, when we are in a campaign and when we've decided to go full forward on a campaign...the goal of a campaign is to win the campaign. So, that supersedes a lot of the other work. So, you do leadership development. You do all kinds of other goals that come along with what we want to do – build a powerful base of youth and parent members. But it has to be much more exacerbated at a much faster level.

Exacerbated youth development sometimes meant less in-depth exploration of the campaign issues, or that the same veteran youth members were called upon to speak for the organization instead of taking the time to prepare a youth who was less ready for the task. There was also a moderate turnover rate amongst the CC members, with new members consistently arriving and veteran ones leaving for a variety of reasons (graduation, taking a break, pursue other interests, etc.). This meant UFJ had to be continuously training new leaders to take on important roles within the organization. Given that UFJ educators did not want to set students up to be unsuccessful in campaign roles, this also limited some students access to authentic roles.

Balancing all of their organizational responsibilities was also a challenge for organizers efforts to provide in-depth access to critical content. Staff members were expected to be organizers, youth developers and even fundraisers for UFJ. Juggling these roles could make it difficult to find time to promote youth development. For instance, at times, organizers had limited time to plan training workshops for youth or prepare them for campaign roles. For example, there were occasions when the same activities and content were repeated for meetings and workshops. Sometimes this occurred because there was limited time to plan new material and because of turnover of student leaders. However, this limits the extent of content and training that youth can receive as a part of the organization. A handful of UFJ focal youth talked about this repeating content, with some sentiments being that it reinforced their learning and others thinking it was repetitive.

Classroom affordance – time and training for in depth content. In the classroom, Mr. Sanchez had the time and capacity, if not the administrator support, to focus on providing students with in depth access to critical content. Unlike organizers, classroom teachers are trained and expected to impart knowledge on students as their primary goal. In his five classes, Sanchez worked with about 150 students five days a week over the course of the school year. Sanchez's critical lectures and the content he chose exposed students to injustices and encouraged them to seek out explanations for their root causes. In terms of breadth and depth, Sanchez had more capacity to cover more content than UFJ. For example, in one CC meeting the topic of political education was juvenile justice and the organizers decided to show a brief clip (a few minutes) from the movie *Juvis* to introduce youth to the complexities around the issue. By contrast, Sanchez showed and discussed the entire film with his classes in his effort to explore the issue of juvenile justice. While teachers are not necessarily encouraged to provide *critical*

content, Sanchez did so because he believed that helping students develop a critical awareness was his way to promote social justice. Sanchez revealed that some teachers labeled him as ‘biased’ because of his approach to teaching history and that administrators lamented his selective but in depth presentation of subject matter and would rather he cover more content to bolster test scores. Nevertheless, Sanchez had the resolve to resist these pressures and continue to expose youth to critical perspectives through his classes.

Given that so few teachers talk about issues of injustice in their classrooms, and its role in promoting critical civic development, Sanchez’s role is a vital one. A survey conducted by the Council for Excellence in Education and CIRCLE, found that the themes of history and social studies classes were far more traditionalist than many expected with only about 10% of youth reporting that their classes emphasized themes of “racism and other forms of injustice” or “problems facing the country” (Levine & Lopez, 2004). On the other hand, 30% of youth reported that their classes emphasized “Great American heroes and the virtues of the American system of government” and 45% emphasize how the government works (Ibid). Importantly, the students who engaged in themes around problems in the community content were most likely to feel like they could make a difference in their communities. And those students in classes that emphasized injustice were most likely to be involved in community problem solving.

UFJ and classroom challenge – balancing multiple goals for students in an unjust society. In both sites, the educators articulate that they want to prepare youth to navigate the system while also encouraging them to transform it. In UFJ, they aim to prepare marginalized youth with the ability to be critical agents of change in their communities now and in the future. To do this, they position students as valued contributors to important education reform efforts. However, the UFJ organizers also want youth to be successful as students so they can go to

college and experience social mobility. Thus, the organizers are mindful not to put too many responsibilities on any student. In fact, UFJ instituted an academic services program years ago after they saw some of their best youth leaders failing to graduate from high school. Thus, organizers struggle to attend to the multiple developmental needs of youth who experience multiple forms of marginalization within an unjust society.

In the classroom, Sanchez encounters struggles in his attempts to prepare youth with the ability to ‘do school’ and the motivation to transform society. In teaching them to do school, Sanchez advises students on how to present, to keep their notebooks a certain way, and how to be good attentive students in the classroom. At the same time, he spends time on exposing students to critical content, encouraging them to take on a questioning mentality and a nonconformist identity that will help them push against the status quo for change. Sanchez struggled with his approach to working with a handful of students in his sophomore class who were particularly disruptive. He shared how these students actually had the ‘nonconformist’ attitude that he was encouraging youth to take on. However, in the classroom, their behavior often impeded the learning of the entire class and his ability to teach everyone. While it pained him, Sanchez eventually had some of these students placed in other classes in the school to improve the overall quality of the class. Below, he discusses the situation:

It's like we want to say, ‘I want to make these kids nonconformists but take that nonconformist kid out of here so I can make these other kids nonconformists, dammit!’ It's weird. It's like the weirdest thing because these kids are always challenging us in ways for us educators is not conducive to the classroom. We're like, ‘okay, I can't do the magic that I can do with that kid that is constantly misbehaving.’

While the decision to move a student is local one, I argue that it was conditioned by structural features. The youth entered his classroom with structurally shaped resistance to schooling. In Sanchez's hopes to prepare most of his students to navigate an unjust social system, he felt that he had to move the disruptive students for the benefit of the others.

Purpose structures and critical civic development. Beliefs about the purpose of schooling and organizing influenced educators' efforts to promote critical civic development. In the classroom, beliefs about the roles of students contributed to positioning them as passive members of the classroom. Moreover, ideas about the purpose of preparing students for future endeavors and providing them access to social mobility influenced some students to be motivated by grades rather than the practice of actively engaging with critical content. Similarly, this external motivation for individual future success makes efforts to promote civic action through the classroom more difficult. However, the established purpose of imparting knowledge on to students afforded the classroom with considerable capacity to cover critical content more in depth than in UFJ. Beliefs about the purpose of UFJ helped to situate youth as active agents of change with access to opportunities to co-participate with expert organizers in important critical civic action. However, the driving purpose of winning campaigns led organizers to limit youths' access to the full range of activities of the organization (deciding campaigns, etc.).

Conclusion

The classroom was a space that supported students' development as critical thinkers while UFJ helped youth become agents of change in their communities. As I have outlined above, there were educator practices that fostered these different identity trajectories. However, there

were also important structural features that influenced educators' efforts to promote critical civic development.

Both spaces put youth on trajectories towards critical civic participation. However, the youth had different relationships to those identities. In the classroom, the youth began to see themselves as critically conscious individuals and aspired to become critical civic participants. In UFJ, the youth took on practice-linked identities as critical civic participants in the process of becoming critical civic leaders. The efforts of both spaces are informative for understanding critical civic development across learning spaces. It is unlikely that classroom spaces will ever be structured in a way that affords the kind of access to civic action and access to critical civic experts as UFJ. Nevertheless, this study shows that despite all of the challenges to critical civic development within schooling, a teacher committed to engaging youth around culturally relevant and critical content can promote a critical awareness and aspirations to take part in future critical civic actions. Given that essentially all youth participate in schooling, it is necessary to understand how educators in classrooms can support critical civic development. On the other hand, the example of UFJ indicate the importance of providing youth with more opportunities to take on practice-linked identities as critical civic participants within a community of critical civic experts. However, the challenges faced by UFJ also suggest that youth organizing groups may not have the capacity to cover critical content as in depth as a classroom teacher. The next chapter, the conclusion to this dissertation, will discuss the implications of these findings.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CRITICAL CIVIC DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS AND YOUTH ORGANIZING GROUPS

Low-income youth of color have often played a vital role in the struggle to counter oppression and work towards social justice. Researchers have documented the types of responses that marginalized youth take to injustice in the world (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). However, knowledge about the types of educational environments, in and out of school, that promote orientations where marginalized youth are committed to critiquing and addressing structural injustices in their communities has been limited. Through the analysis of two case studies, this dissertation explores the relationships between the structural characteristics, educator practices and youth critical civic development outcomes of two learning sites: a community based youth activism organization and a high school social studies classroom. Thus, in this dissertation, I set out to document how characteristics of each site influence youth participation, how participation influences critical civic development and how structural features shaped both educator efforts and youth outcomes. Below, I discuss my findings in relationship to the relevant literature.

Findings and Contributions to Literature

The goals, practices and structures of each site positioned youth for particular identity trajectories. The classroom positioned students as critical thinkers in development and UFJ positioned youth as agents of change in development. These findings support theoretical viewpoints that argue that identities are shaped by how one sees oneself, how they are seen by others and their opportunities to participate in relevant activities within a community of practice

(Wenger, 1998). In particular, the opportunity to take on practice-linked identities (Nasir & Hand, 2008) within a critical community of practice fostered UFJ youths' development of critical civic identities. In the classroom, engagement with culturally relevant critical content promoted an interest in learning more about critical issues and aspirations to be the type of person who addresses them in the future.

Authentic engagement with critical content, even through didactic instruction, promoted critical awareness and a theoretical motivation to do something. Consistent with theorizing around critical pedagogy (Freire & Macedo, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008), exposing students to critical content, explaining concepts in culturally relevant ways and encouraging students to take on a questioning mentality engaged students with the content, promoted critical awareness and a desire to address injustice in both sites. As Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue, the ideologies of educational spaces influenced learners' conceptions of justice and their corresponding civic commitments. Also, the access to critical tools (texts, articles, films, language, etc.) helped some students reconsider their internalized deficit notions of people of color and develop a counter discourse that recognizes themselves as potentially transformative actors in the world but also subjected to oppression (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Drawing upon examples from both sites, I argued that sociocultural theorists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003) are overly pessimistic of the role of didactic instruction in supporting development. Lave and Wenger's book (1991) was in response to an overemphasis on teaching and direct instruction as the means to promote meaningful learning and development. As the abstract for the book asserts, Lave and Wenger's theorizing is an "opportunity to escape from the tyranny of the assumption that learning is the reception of factual knowledge or

information” (p 1). They justifiably assert that classroom-based teaching practices are often decontextualized and promote learning decoupled from expert practice (learn how to do school or be an educated adult). However, I argue that when a learner sees the teaching as a part of becoming a particular type of person, the instruction can be quite powerful. In the cases of these two learning spaces, engagement with critical content was associated with students’ changing ways of seeing themselves and the world. In particular, In UFJ, the youth saw Strike School as a part of their becoming critical civic leaders and full members of the group. Moreover, these didactic workshops were one component of learning through participation and observation within the community of practice of UFJ. Thus, I argue that the form of instruction is less important than learners’ perceptions of its relevance to their identity trajectories.

Opportunities to participate in and observe civic action were important to agency.

Consistent with practice-based research, youth came to see themselves as agents of change when critical learning was coupled with opportunities to envision and enact solutions to civic injustices (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Morrell, 2004; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; 2007; Strobel, Osberg & McLaughlin, 2006). Modeling and supplying youth with opportunities for civic action in UFJ was associated with students acting upon their motivation for social justice and increased feelings of civic agency. In contrast, the classroom space did not provide opportunities for collective civic action, and was associated with a lower sense of agency amongst students. However, classroom students who sought out civic action apart from the classroom were more likely to feel a sense of agency.

Being in charge or not in charge, was not the essential component for critical civic development within this apprenticeship-based youth organizing group. In line with Kirshner's (2008) findings, I argue that the ways that organizing groups position youth influences their development. While UFJ youth were not 'in-charge' of the organization, they felt valued as significant contributors to important campaigns. Consequently, they envisioned themselves as agents of change and leaders in development. While I acknowledge the concern that adult leadership might limit youth access to authentic tasks within organizing (Watts & Flanagan, 2007), I argue that youth do not need to be in charge to foster critical civic development.

Interpersonal interactions, participation structures and shared identities between youth and adults influenced relationships and engagement within UFJ. Consistent with research in schools, youth organizing and learning theory, relationships are key to fostering engagement and development within learning spaces (Valenzuela, 1999; Gambone et al., 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Just because a learner has access to the experts and authentic tasks of a community doesn't mean they will choose to participate in the practices or take on the identity of member of that group. Some interpretations of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development take for granted that learners will be motivated to participate when provided access to more experienced others who choose to model and scaffold expert practice (Litowitz, 1997). In fact, learners can and often do resist learning. Learners partly derive motivation to engage in tasks from identifying with others that participate in that task and wanting to be like them (and to be the person the adult wants them to be) (Litowitz, 1997). In UFJ, positive relationships, and thus motivation to participate, were fostered through icebreakers, organizers' intentional attempts to make youth

feel cared for, and co-participation in shared activities. In addition, I argue that sharing cultural background characteristics with organizers helped to build a sense of belonging and solidarity with the learning space. I build off of Nasir and Hand (2006; 2008), who assert that engagement in a learning space is facilitated when novices see the practices as aligned with the person they are and who they want to become. Similarly, newcomers are more likely to participate in a site when they see characteristics of themselves in the old-timers in a community of practice. This is not to say that learners must share cultural backgrounds with the experts of a site, I merely argue that they must connect with them and shared backgrounds are one way to foster this sense of belonging. In regards to sociocultural theory, these findings suggest the types of characteristics that foster a sense of belonging and provide an example of how incoming identities influence engagement for novices in a CoP.

Structural organizational features limited access to relationships and authentic tasks in the classroom and afforded access to relationships and tasks in the youth organizing group.

There were several ways that structural organizing features of the sites influenced relationships and access to authentic tasks in the learning spaces. Consistent with arguments by sociocultural theorists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003), schooling structures separated learners from a community of practitioners at different levels of expertise to learn from. Segregating youth by age and perceived ability level in schools (i.e. tracking) limited opportunities to learn from peers. Grouping students in large compulsory classrooms made developing quality relationships more difficult and limited opportunities to participate in authentic tasks in Mr. Sanchez's classes. In UFJ, a smaller student to adult ratio (especially in the leadership component) facilitated the development of quality relationships and afforded youth with significant access to participate in

the authentic tasks of the organization. Moreover, having youth at different competency levels in the group and providing opportunities for youth to voluntarily step up to more significant roles provided identity trajectories to aspire to. This structural analysis shows how site-based practices are influenced by institutional and organizational factors.

Ideas about the structural purposes of a space influenced educator practices, student

behavior and critical civic development outcomes. Nasir and Hand (2006) submit that *ideational* tools within society help to shape how individuals engage in communities and institutions. For instance, they suggest that the ideational tool of race works to limit the opportunities of people of color. In turn, I argue that schools for low-income students of color too often position them as passive recipients of knowledge, influencing their limited participation in questioning and critiquing in critical lectures. Seen as a space for social mobility of the individual, some students were motivated more by teacher evaluations (grades) than the authentic practice of the class or the possibility of impacting their communities. However, as a space designed for the study of information, the classroom afforded more time to engage with critical content with an educator trained to convey content and concepts to youth. Youth organizing groups position youth as active agents of change in collective efforts to improve their communities. The choice to participate in itself is an identity influencing decision. However, those who chose not to engage in the leadership component had fewer opportunities for authentic participation. Also, the central purpose of winning campaigns in the community limited youths' opportunities to participate in the full range of authentic tasks of the organization.

The next section of this chapter will focus on the implications of this work for schools, youth organizing groups and those concerned with promoting the process of critical civic development.

Implications

Implications for Teachers and Schools

Teachers. Teachers face a myriad of challenges in fostering critical civic development for youth. The organizational design and structural purposes of schooling make it difficult for all teachers to promote these developmental aims. In particular, teachers in low-income communities of color are often situated in under resourced, under prepared and overcrowded institutions that make these aims even more difficult. Countless educators work tirelessly to promote the success of their students. Those educators concerned with critical civic development should consider the following implications.

Despite administrator and state pressures to focus on standards, textbooks and tests, critical teachers must have the resolve to emphasize content that exposes injustice and engages youth in discussions around contemporary social problems. This type of content motivated the marginalized youth in this study to want to do something about injustice. Other qualitative studies have drawn similar connections between critical content in social studies classrooms and students' civic commitments (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Rubin, 2007). Moreover, a quantitative report has associated discussions of social injustices in social studies courses with an increased orientation towards addressing community problems as young adults, for students of all backgrounds (Levine & Lopez, 2004).

Knowing your content and your students is essential. Sanchez's strong grasp of historical and contemporary issues coupled with his ability to convey that knowledge in culturally effective ways engaged students with the classroom content. Critical educators will need to continue to be learners and seek information to understand the root causes of social conditions in their world. Moreover, as many pedagogues urge, critical educators should work to understand marginalized students lived experiences, value them and connect them to the classroom (Freire & Macedo, 1998, Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, 1992).

Teachers should create opportunities for students to take up increasingly authentic roles in the (critical) practices of the classroom, especially for shy students. Critical teachers should explore strategies to position youth as questioners and providers of information and not just receivers of content in the classroom. In addition, teachers should try to provide students with opportunities to step-up to these roles and be transparent about the importance of taking them on to provide identity trajectories for students to aspire to.

Critical teachers should also explore ways to integrate civic action into the work of the classroom. Providing opportunities for students to carry out their own civic action projects can be beneficial. While finding the time will be a challenge, it will be important to allot enough time for students to plan *and implement* their civic action projects. As noted previously, Mr. Sanchez's students did not have the opportunity to carry out their projects. Given that civic agency in UFJ was associated with being apart of efforts to address civic issues, it is important to provide students with the opportunity to make an impact in their community. Also, a long-term approach to engaging students with civic issues would likely be more powerful than one project in the senior year. Mr. Sanchez and the other history teachers in their small school had plans to introduce students to civic action projects starting in the sophomore year, but these efforts had

not started during my study. Engaging in civic projects over multiple years could allow students to more deeply understand and address issues in their communities.

Openly advocating for students to think about how they can solve social issues can plant a seed and a motivation to be an agent of change in the future but actively connecting youth to civic action would be more transformative. As we have seen with Mr. Sanchez's class, *telling* students to be leaders is not always enough. Modeling civic action for students and providing opportunities for students to co-participate in efforts to address community issues would support greater critical civic development. At the least, teachers should look for ways to collaborate with action-oriented groups to connect youth to opportunities to address civic issues. Sanchez did this and many of his students participated in UFJ and Amnesty international. In fact, the majority of students in UFJ came from a few teachers' classes who supported UFJ's social justice work. When asked why they joined civic action organizations, Sanchez's students did not directly site his influence as their reason for joining the organization, but they may not have joined if they hadn't heard about it in his class.

Teachers seeking to involve their students in sustained civic actions will need to reframe the goals of schooling to include the promotion of social justice. Particularly, a myopic focus on evaluation limits students' propensity to follow through on civic action through the classroom once a grade has been received. To counter act this, educators will need to focus on the importance of being an agent of change and engage youth in civic actions that youth feel are important. These efforts may benefit from critically analyzing the role of schooling in social reproduction and de-emphasizing the role of empowered community members. Of course, critical educators working with marginalized students must continue to encourage youth to pursue success through schooling; however, teachers can position students' educational success

as a means to promote collective improvement of the community rather than just individual social mobility.

Schools and the education system. Public schools in the U.S. need to find better ways to evaluate more comprehensive goals for students and schools. Namely, schools need to de-emphasize standardized tests and find ways to promote and assess critical civic development as goals for students.

Schools should de-emphasize standardized content and test scores in order to support teachers' efforts to engage students with in-depth study of current social conditions and their root causes. Providing teachers with the professional autonomy to focus on content that emphasizes issues of injustice and problems in society would give them the flexibility and time to explore local issues with their students. However, in the era of test-based accountability, schools, especially those serving low-income students of color, have become increasingly focused on the goal of improving students' scores (Sunderman, Kim & Orfield, 2008). Not only is this an incomplete goal, but also the method of assessment is ineffective (Koretz, 2008) and can disrupt other goals. While standardized tests were developed to be an indicator of quality teaching and learning at a school, test scores have become the end goal, resulting in educational practices that have undermined the quality of teaching and learning at schools (McNeil, 2000; Tracey, 2005; Valli and Buese, 2007; Hursh, 2008). For instance, the myopic focus on test scores has narrowed the scope of education. Subjects like Science and Social Studies have been de-emphasized in some schools because performance in these subjects is not tied to sanctions and rewards for schools (Wood, 2004; Jennings & Rentner, 2006; Dorph, Shields, Tiffany-Morales, Hartry & McCaffrey, 2011). Moreover, high stakes standardized tests have led many teachers to aim for

content coverage rather than in-depth engagement with concepts (Au, 2007). These practices undermine efforts to promote critical civic development through social studies classes.

Even if standardized tests are not de-emphasized, critical approaches to teaching social studies may prove more effective at promoting academic development. As I have noted in this dissertation, several students asserted that they had never been so engaged in social studies before Mr. Sanchez's class. This suggests that presenting culturally relevant critical content to students engages them in classroom learning in ways that traditional "by the book" methods never did. This connection between critical approaches to teaching and improved academic performance has been documented elsewhere (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2011; Strobel et al., 2006). For instance, youth in Tuscon Unified School District who participated in a critical Ethnic Studies program had higher standardized test scores and college going rates than their peers not in the program (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2011). Thus, connecting students to critical and culturally relevant issues that they find important to their lives may also lead to improvements on standardized measures of academic achievement.

Schools should highlight critical civic development goals and utilize authentic assessments to measure and integrate them into classroom learning. Asa Hilliard (2003) wrote, "Although testing may introduce a measure of accountability, 'weighing the elephant' will not make it grow" (p.60). Altering Hilliard's metaphor a bit, I believe that the weight of an elephant does not give us a comprehensive assessment of its health. In order to adequately assess a student's learning, we will need to find ways to evaluate the multiple outcomes that a quality education should provide, including the abilities to question material, provide counterpoints, explain the root causes of social conditions to others and participate in civic action to improve the health of one's community. These abilities would be better benchmarks for critical civic

learning than recalling testable bits of knowledge, which are currently used to assess the vitality of civics education (Rubin, 2007). In order to test these capacities, the nature of the assessment needs to be altered. Namely, schools should utilize authentic performance-based assessments that evaluate and promote student learning through their demonstrated application of skills in authentic tasks. These authentic tasks can include science projects, social science investigations (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Darling Hammond, Aness & Ort, 2002) and engagement with civic actions. Newmann (1997) defines authenticity as: “[T]he extent to which a lesson, assessment task, or sample of student performance represents construction of knowledge through the use of disciplined inquiry that has some value of meaning beyond success in school” (p. 361). As suggested by Newmann’s quote, authentic assessments should not be disconnected from instruction, but an integral part of a holistic “authentic pedagogy” (Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1996).

Schools need to look to structures and authentic pedagogies that seek to connect learning to relevant applications, particularly civic action. For instance, engaging students as critical researchers of community issues has been shown to promote critical civic development (Morrell, 2004). However, as designed, schools typically do not support learning tied to action outside of the classroom. An exception is vocational education, but that has been historically associated with low-track classes to prepare non-college bound students for working class jobs (Oakes & Saunders, 2008). New school reform efforts, such as Linked Learning, aim to bridge the divide between preparations for abstract thinking in college and applied training for a relevant career field (Oakes & Saunders, 2008). School-wide reforms should be explored as opportunities to engage the entire school community in thinking about ways to apply learning to real-world applications. These efforts will likely require schools to reorganize priorities and schedules to

allow for learning in the field, internships and other projects. Schools with community themes would be well positioned to incorporate participation in civic action and critical research into the overall school agenda.

While it is unlikely that schools and classrooms will ever be structured as critical communities of practice like UFJ, there are still important ways that they can support critical civic development. As discussed above, classrooms can provide engagement with relevant critical content and opportunities to apply learning in communities. In addition, schools can offer extra-curricular programs and internships that engage youth with critical communities of practice. For instance, the fact that Pierce High School administrators allowed UFJ organizers to operate a club on campus was essential to opening up that critical civic development opportunity for youth. In addition, schools can look to establish hybrid learning spaces on campus, during lunch or after school, where a school educator works with teachers to develop a coordinated plan of learning and critical civic engagement. This would resemble a widely used civic engagement approach called Service Learning, but would encourage youth to explore critical understandings and solutions to civic issues. To implement these efforts, schools would benefit from building partnerships with community-based youth organizing groups to provide real world experiences in civic action. In the implications section for youth organizing below, I further discuss the advantages of collaborations for both schools and youth organizing groups to promote critical civic development and community change.

Schools and lawmakers should look to support teachers with the time and student groupings that foster the development of quality relationships and access to authentic tasks that support critical civic development. State and federal lawmakers need to provide sufficient funding to schools that will lower class sizes to promote quality relationships and access to

authentic tasks in classrooms. As previously discussed, Mr. Sanchez's classes had far more youth per adult than UFJ. This made it more challenging for Mr. Sanchez to develop quality relationships with his students. Also, his classroom did not incorporate icebreakers and social activities that facilitated relationship building in UFJ. If provided the time to do such activities, teachers might be able to help students develop a stronger sense of belonging in the classroom space. I argued in Chapter Six, that this sense of belonging and solidarity with the adult organizers in UFJ was a key to promoting youth engagement in the practices of the site, which fostered their critical civic development. Moreover, as noted in Chapter Seven, the educators at Pierce High School felt compelled to accept grant monies even though they disagreed with the grant's conditions that led to tracking and made building relationships with students more difficult. Providing adequate funding might address these situations.

Schools should consider ways of grouping students that improve relationships and provide more opportunities to learn from peers with different levels of expertise in a subject. For instance, schools should look into the practice of 'looping' where students continue with the same teacher for multiple years. This method of grouping has been shown to foster positive student-teacher relationships in the classroom and provides for more effective learning during the second year because less time is spent on establishing norms and expectations (Burke, 1997). In addition, the practice of academic tracking should be discontinued. Tracking in low-level classes stifles both achievement and attainment for students (Oakes, 2000). Moreover, schools should consider grouping students across grade levels. Placing students in mixed classes would allow them to learn from each other, with more experienced peers being able to model more advanced participation for others. However, teachers will need to be mindful to provide opportunities for all students to participate in the classroom activities.

I will offer a possible scenario for promoting quality relationships, peer-to-peer learning and purposeful civic action in social studies classes. For instance, the above approaches could be combined to create a sequence of mixed-grade social studies courses. In this scenario, instead of taking World History, U.S. History and American Government/Economics in a particular order by grade level with different teachers each year, students would be placed in a mixed-grade classroom with a particular teacher for three years. For example, a World History class would be comprised of 10 sophomores, 10 juniors and 10 seniors. The next year, the same group of students - minus the graduating seniors and adding a new group of 10 sophomores – would all take U.S. History together with the same teacher. In this approach, all students would take three years of history but not in a specific order. Students would get to build quality relationships with each other and the teacher, while learning from peers with different levels of expertise, thus better approximating a community of practice. In this scenario, if a teacher were to focus on engaging youth with civic actions as part of the class, s/he would not be limited by one school year to address a particular issue. Students could build expertise in a topic over time and pass that on to new students entering the class. For instance, sophomores could learn about an issue and previous attempts to address it through participation with juniors and seniors. This approach could provide different levels of responsibility for students to work up to for participation in civic action projects and learn from observing others while novices. Also, as students built up understanding on a civic topic, the purpose for civic action might transition from evaluation to genuine concern over an issue. Of course, this approach would have its own challenges, including organizational and ideological impediments, but it could allow a critical teacher to foster a community of practice that is better positioned to address issues in the community and promote critical civic development.

Implications for Youth Organizing Groups

Youth can benefit from being involved in youth organizing groups with different organizational models and purposes. However, each model has its own challenges and drawbacks. Thus, some of my implications may apply more to youth organizations attempting to work from an apprenticeship approach to youth development. Nevertheless, I also believe there are implications for youth organizing groups in general.

Youth organizing groups need to find or train adults who can connect with youth and build quality relationships with them. As discussed by prior research and in this dissertation, shared backgrounds and interests help to form solidarity and trust amongst adults and youth in organizing (Gambone et al., 2004). While shared experiences help, treating youth with respect, enthusiasm and care through interpersonal interactions and structured activities will also support the development of quality relationships. Moreover, adults and youth co-participating in collaborative efforts can build feelings of solidarity within the group. It is essential not to overlook the vital importance of relationships to identity development. As Litowitz (1997) points out, children often derive motivation to master particular tasks (e.g. speaking) because they aspire to be like the adults in their lives. Moreover, they want to be who the valued adults in their lives want them to be. In the case of youth organizing groups, if youth have quality relationships with the adults in the site, youth are more likely to take on the critical and civic identities that the adults want them to take on.

Adults in youth organizing need to make time to offer opportunities for in-depth study of the root causes of social conditions (preferably in small groups). For instance, UFJ's Strike School was a catalyst to the development of critical consciousness and a motivation to address

issues of social injustice. In the midst of organizing for community change, it may be hard to find the time to retreat for study not directly related to campaign work. However, these sessions are important to building youth consciousness and identities as critical civic actors who are part of a historic struggle.

All youth organizing groups need to position youth as leaders and important contributors to social change. However, this does not necessarily mean that youth have to be in charge. When youth are valued as individuals and authentic contributors in campaigns they feel are important, they will develop the skills, values and identities of agents of change. In UFJ's apprenticeship model, they successfully positioned youth as agents of change and leaders in development. Moreover, perpetuating the idea and practice of a cycle of leadership, with opportunities to take on increasingly important roles and contribute to others' development helps youth to envision themselves as leaders in development. Other approaches that center youth leadership may also be effective at building youth civic leadership, but expecting youth to solve *all* the injustices of their communities is unrealistic and ineffective.

More than leadership, valued membership in a transformative space is key. The concept of leadership for social justice should include membership in collective efforts for change. Social change requires collective movements. So, preparing youth to be a part of these collective spaces as well as leaders within them is an important component of promoting social movements. The task of addressing injustice is monumental and can strike fear into an individual disconnected from a collective movement. Becoming an agent of change requires training and opportunities to

be a part of important change making. Thus, we should look to establish more cross-age⁴⁷ partnerships for promoting social change.

We need to stop thinking in dichotomies about youth. Youth are not either leaders or followers, children or adults, learners or teachers. They are developing adults and leaders in the making. Youth can be leaders and followers, learners and teachers. In the process of learning, they can also teach (Freire & Macedo, 1998). In the process of following, they can also lead. It's a process of both being and becoming a particular type of person at the same time. Particularly in apprenticeship models, it is important to create opportunities for leadership and learning and develop youth awareness that they can do both at the same time. Youth must be able to see themselves on a trajectory towards being an 'expert' in a space and the adults need to see themselves and youth as part of that same cycle.

Adults, especially in apprenticeship models of youth organizing, still need to be ever vigilant about not allowing deficit notions of youth to significantly limit the extent of access youth have to the full range of authentic activities within an organizing group (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Winning noteworthy campaigns is important to both adult and youth organizers. However, if adult organizers fail to provide sufficient opportunities for youth to be valued contributors to those campaigns, youth will likely disengage and be cut off from opportunities for critical civic development.

Youth organizing groups should explore ways to collaborate with critical teachers that work with shared youth. Both sides can benefit from these partnerships, particularly given capacity issues. For instance, it can be difficult for organizers to teach in depth content to provide a contemporary and historical context of injustice. In the course of my study, there were several

⁴⁷ I choose the term cross-age instead of "youth-adult" partnerships to connote multiple levels of expertise and experience, which may not always correlate to age.

times when the two learning spaces presented similar material to the youth, and Mr. Sanchez consistently presented topics in more depth. Working with critical teachers would improve UFJ youths' access to the critical tools to understand their worlds.

In turn, youth organizing groups would offer critical teachers opportunities to connect their students to critical civic action. As discussed in Chapter Six, feeling like a valuable contributor to important campaigns was associated with youth engagement and critical civic development within UFJ. Being a part of collective efforts that they saw as making a difference in their community fostered a sense of civic agency amongst the youth. This is not to say that teachers and youth are incapable of organizing important campaigns for social justice on their own. In fact, critical educators have worked with youth to address significant issues in the community (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Shor, 1992). However, given that many teachers are not trained organizers and have a limited amount of time to devote to civic action through their classroom, students and teachers may benefit from collaborating with youth organizing groups in the community. This would provide students with access to a community of practice of critical civic organizers who could integrate them into long-term efforts to address community issues while offering training in organizing skills.

Beyond being beneficial to youth critical civic development, collaborations between teachers and community-based youth organizing groups hold other important potential benefits. First of all, efforts at promoting community change are more effective when diverse groups of community members collaborate (Renée & McAlister, 2011; Renée, Welner & Oakes, 2010). In particular, collaborations between students, parents, teachers and community organizers are essential to education organizing (Center for Education Organizing, 2012). For instance, relationships with teachers provide access to students to drive campaigns. Moreover, education

organizers need to understand the cultures and conditions of schools to mobilize community members (students, parents, teachers, etc.) to push particular reforms (Center for Education Organizing, 2012). In turn, organizers can also help educators build relationships with parents and community members by creating spaces for them to congregate around shared issues. This can be particularly helpful for teachers not from the community by facilitating their understanding of students and families. In Chapter Five, I described how important this cultural understanding was to Mr. Sanchez. For educators not from the same neighborhoods as students, these types of opportunities can be invaluable to developing an understanding of and solidarity with students and parents.

There needs to be more spaces for youth to develop critical civic identities. While choice afforded opportunities for youth to voluntarily take on critical civic identities through UFJ, it also meant that many young people had no access or very limited access to critical content and authentic civic actions through UFJ. For instance, GM members did not have access to in-depth workshops such as Strike School and Media Collective. They also had less access to interact with adult organizers informally and through civic actions. Also, there are many students who never come to a UFJ meeting and thus have no access to the resources it has to offer. While students have the choice to attend, most youth only have a surface understanding of what UFJ has to offer and others are likely unaware of it altogether. As has been discussed, most of the focal youth did not attend their first UFJ meeting because they wanted to develop a critical understanding of the social conditions in their communities so they could participate in actions to address them. Actually, many came because of free snacks or a friend or teacher's recommendation. It wasn't until they were there, that focal youth articulated how the content and actions of UFJ registered as important to them. However, if they had never attended a meeting, they may have never had

the transformative experience they had through the organization. So, it is important to encourage students to explore opportunities like UFJ. Social justice teachers in schools are essential to steering youth to these programs (as they were for UFJ). More importantly, it is essential to find additional opportunities for all students to be exposed to spaces that promote critical civic development. Namely, classroom spaces, because they are compulsory and wide reaching must incorporate critical content and civic action to provide more young people with opportunities for critical civic development that could spark an interest to participate in civic actions.

While choice can be a powerful component of the individual identity formation process, it is important to recognize that “choices” are made within structurally shaped conditions. For instance, many youth never have the opportunity to be exposed to critical content and civic action in order to make an informed decision to pursue these opportunities further. The compulsory nature of classroom learning can lead to initial student resistance but it ensures that more youth get exposure to the content. Participation in critical classrooms can also serve as a catalyst to students joining civic action outside of schooling. As argued in this dissertation, for many students, Sanchez’s classroom fostered an interest to learn more about critical civic issues and a motivation to be the type of person who makes the world a more just place. While this was a theoretical interest for many students, it put them on a trajectory towards becoming a critical civic participant in the future.

Future Research Directions and Limitations

Examining Critical Civic Development Across Sites with the Same Youth

In the future, looking at the same students across sites would provide further insights into how learning spaces support engagement for critical civic development. For instance, Mercedes’

reflections on the goals and practices of the two sites provided insights into how they influences critical civic development. Moreover, comparing participation across sites with the same students would reduce the role of sample differences in accounting for different levels of engagement and civic development across sites. For instance, in this study, I attempted to make the samples similar across the two sites. Both sites had low-income Latino high school students from the same community, representing a range of academic engagement levels. The UFJ group is still represented somewhat of a self-selected group because they chose to participate in the site.

Broaden the Sample and Explore Variation within the Sites More

Unlike school, the choice to join UFJ is one that young people consciously make. Many students had external reasons for attending their first UFJ GM meeting and didn't necessarily include wanting to change the world. However, they stay because they develop a connection to the issues and relationships with the organizers. Thus, by the time they begin attending the leadership meetings, they are a self-selected group. By contrast, the students in Mr. Sanchez's classroom have very little choice in deciding to be a part of his class. In UFJ, if students don't like the content or the organizers, they can stop coming, without any ramifications to their lives. If Sanchez's students stop coming to social studies class (which some students did) that can have serious effects on their academic success.

We need to know more about the experiences of students on the periphery of these learning spaces. The young people interviewed for this study (the focal group and additional students in Sanchez's class) represent a sample of students with extended participation in the learning spaces. In UFJ, I purposefully selected youth from the leadership component, in order to explore the influences of participation in the more in-depth component of the group. In both sites,

it is important to explore the reasons why some students stop participating in the learning spaces; or in the case of UFJ, why some GM members never decide to attend the leadership meetings. For the classroom students who were involved in UFJ's GM, their reasons for not participating in CC meetings typically involved scheduling issues. Nevertheless, I did not include any GM members (not in Sanchez's class) or have any students who stopped coming to Sanchez's class in my sample. However, future research should explore the experiences of these students in critical learning spaces. For instance, it is unclear how participation in GM influenced the critical civic development of students not in Sanchez's classes.

Longitudinal Questions

Another area of further research is examining the long-term outcomes of participation in critical learning sites. For instance, does "seed-planting" in critical classrooms that promote motivation for change lead to participation in civic action in the future? Also, do youth in organizing groups continue to participate in civic action when they are no longer a part of youth organizations that support them holistically? This would give us insights into the role relationships and scaffolding in promoting participation in civic actions. A longitudinal study would allow researchers to explore how students' developing critical awareness and motivation for change facilitate future critical civic development. For instance, some of Sanchez's students had lofty aspirations to contribute to social justice in their lives. It could be that these experiences set a stronger foundation for more transformative forms of civic engagement than early experiences in a critical community of practice such as UFJ. More research is needed to address these questions.

Further Operationalize The Model For Critical Civic Development

The model for critical civic development presented in Chapter Four needs further development. There is a need to better delineate between stages and account for a continuum of development. The process of socio-political or critical consciousness development needs further articulation as well. The model provided me with a means to graphically represent differences in development and begin to theorize about the process of critical civic development. It will also provide me with a starting point for further research on this topic.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have described the characteristics of two learning spaces and how they are related to youth engagement and critical civic development. I proposed a working model for understanding and categorizing the critical civic development of youth and documented how my focal youth were influenced by their participation in the two learning spaces. To begin with, youth perceptions as valued cared for members of a learning space are fundamental to building their sense of belonging and motivation to engage in the practices of a community. In both sites, youth were engaged with culturally relevant critical content that fostered a critical awareness and motivation to address injustices for many of the youth. While this critical education was essential to their development and identity trajectories, civic action was also fundamental. Classroom students who did not participate in civic action were more likely to take on aspirational identities as future critical civic participants. On the other hand, involvement in civic action fostered practice-linked identities as critical civic participants. In particular, legitimate peripheral participation in the UFJ community of practice was associated with focal students identification as critical leaders in development.

This study underscores the importance of providing youth with opportunities for both critique and participation in civic actions with more experienced individuals who can model those practices. While structural challenges make it difficult for either the classroom or UFJ to fully offer these opportunities to youth, both learning spaces can still provide experiences that support critical civic development. Moreover, the collaborations between critical teachers and youth organizing groups have the potential to offer youth transformative learning experiences to promote critical civic development.

Educators in both of these spaces had transformation as their goal, transformation of the individual and transformation of society. They saw the two as interconnected. They worked tirelessly and skillfully to overcome many challenges that made their efforts to promote critical civic development more difficult. Like anyone else, they are not perfect. They have their strengths and their weaknesses, but they employed all the skills they had to provide youth with opportunities to develop into the type of individuals that sought to improve society for all. Moreover, they were successful at promoting profound transformations amongst many of the students they worked with. The educators in these sites bring me inspiration and hope. I am inspired to be a better educator and agent of change and hope that I can one day be as good as they are at their crafts.

Appendix A: Protocol for Student Interview – 1st Round⁴⁸

PART I

Background Questions

1. Tell me about yourself? How would you describe yourself to someone who didn't know you?
2. How would you describe yourself as a student? Do you feel like you are a successful student? Why or why not? Have you always been this way?
3. What do you think of the quality of your school and the education you are getting? Has being in UFJ/class affected the way you think about your school? Explain.
4. How far do you want to get in school? Why?

PART II – Questions about participation in the learning site

OPENERS, CONTENT & GOALS

1. Tell me about UFJ/class? How would you describe the program to me if I didn't know what it was?
2. Tell me about your experiences in UFJ/class? What kinds of things do you do in the class/club? Tell me about a memorable experience you had in the organization/class?
3. What do you learn about in UFJ/Class? Can you tell me about something you learned?
4. (UFJ) Can you tell me about a campaign or activity that you have taken part in over the last year? What did you do and what did you learn? For example, the principals meetings, the Building a Better Riverton campaign, Educational Justice Week, The Pledge Cards, Get Out The Vote walking, etc.
5. (Classroom) In the last few weeks you have been discussing (immigration for 10th and food and capitalism for 12th). Can you tell me about what you learned in the last few weeks? Have your thoughts on these subjects changed at all?
6. (Classroom) Take a minute to look at your notebook. Can you share with me a few things that you learned that stood out? What did you learn about these topics? Why did it stand out?
7. What do you think about the stuff you learn here? Has the stuff you've learned about affected the way you think about the world? How?
8. Has being in UFJ/class affected the way you see your community? How?
9. How does the stuff you learn about compare to what you learn in your other classes at your school? Are there other teachers who encourage you to think about similar issues?
10. (UFJ) Tell me more about your social studies class in high school.
11. (UFJ) Why (and when) did you first join United For Change? GM and then CC. Why do you keep coming now?

OUTCOMES/IDENTITY TRANSFORMATIONS

1. Has being in UFJ/classroom changed the way you see yourself in any way? Has it changed the way you act?

⁴⁸ Questions prefaced by “(Classroom)” or “(UFJ)” are only for that site.

2. Right now, do you feel like you can make a change in your community? Why or why not? Have you always felt this way? What about in the future? (Has your participation in UFJ/classroom affected how you feel about this?)
3. Do you feel like you are a leader? Why? Have you always felt this way? (Has your participation in UFJ/Classroom affected how you feel about this? How?).
4. Do you feel like you have developed any skills through your participation in UFJ/classroom? Explain

POSITIONING (Access to authentic tasks) & RELATIONSHIPS

1. Tell me about the adults at UFJ/Class? What are they like? How do you interact with them? Do you feel like the adult(s) here care about you? Why?
2. What do you see as the goals of UFJ/teacher? What do you think about these goals?
3. Do you have any goals for yourself in UFJ/Class?
4. What do you see as the teacher's/organizers' role in the organization/class?
5. What do you see as the role of the students in UFJ/class? What is expected of you here?
6. What do you DO when you come to UFJ/Class? (Are you quiet? Do you ask questions or make comments? Do you feel like you can share your opinions in this organization?)
7. (UFJ) Tell me about the GM meetings too.
8. Do you see yourself as an important contributor to this class/organization? Why or why not?
9. (UFJ) Was there a time when you stepped-up to do something in UFJ? Were you asked to do it or did you do it on your own?
10. Do you feel successful in this organization/class? Why or why not?
11. Do you feel like you have a say in what happens in the class/organization? Can you tell me about a time when you had input or a say on something?
12. What is the best thing about the organization? What could be improved to make the organization better?
13. (UFJ) What do your parents think about your participation in UFJ?

**Appendix B: Protocol for Student Focus Group and Follow-up Interviews –
Spring/Summer⁴⁹**

1. (Classroom) Tell me about Pierce High School and design team one. What do you think of the quality of your school and the education you are getting?
2. (Classroom) What are your teachers like here?
3. Tell me about UFJ/class? How would you describe the program to me if I didn't know what it was?
4. Tell me about a memorable experience you had or something you learned in the organization/class (since the last time I interviewed you)?
5. (Classroom) In the last few weeks you have been discussing (immigration for 10th and food and capitalism for 12th). Can you tell me about what you learned in the last few weeks? Have your thoughts on these subjects changed at all?
6. (Classroom) Take a minute to look at your notebook. Can you share with me a few things that you learned that stood out? What did you learn about these topics? Why did it stand out?
7. (UFJ) What have you learned in this summer program?
8. What do you think about the stuff you learn here? Has the stuff you've learned about affected the way you think about the world? Are there any things that you are like, "I think differently about that now."
9. Has being in UFJ/class affected you in any other ways? How? For instance, the way you think about school or your community?
10. Right now, do you feel like you can make a change in your community/society? Why or why not? Have you always felt this way? What about in the future? (Has your participation in UFJ/classroom affected how you feel about this?)
11. Do you feel like you have developed any skills through your participation in this summer program/class? Explain.
12. (Classroom) How does the stuff you learn about compare to what you learn in your other classes at Pierce? Are there other teachers who encourage you to think about similar issues? Are there other classes that have had an impact on you at PHS? (Seniors) How does it compare to your other social studies classes at PHS?
13. (UFJ) How does the stuff you learn about compare to what you learn at your school? Are there teachers who encourage you to think about similar issues?
14. Tell me about how teacher/organizers teach? How does it compare to school or other classes you have taken?
15. What do you have to do to be successful in this class/program? Do you all feel successful?

⁴⁹ Questions prefaced by "(Classroom)" or "(UFJ)" are only for that site.

Appendix C: Protocol for Fall Student Interviews⁵⁰

1. Tell me about your experiences in UFJ/class this fall. Tell me about a memorable experience you had or something you learned in the organization/class this fall?
2. What do you think about the stuff you learn here? Has the stuff you've learned about affected the way you think about the world? How?
3. How does the stuff you learn about compare to what you learn in your other classes at your school? Are there other teachers who encourage you to think about similar issues?
4. (Classroom) How does this class compare to your social studies class last year?
5. (Classroom) Think about your social studies classes at PHS. Have you acted the same in both classes? Did you participate in one more than the other? Why?
6. How has being in UFJ/class affected you?
7. Has being in UFJ/class affected the way you think about or act in school? Explain.
8. Has being in UFJ/class affected the way you think about or act in your community? Explain.
9. Do you feel like you have developed any skills through your participation in UFJ/classroom? Explain.
10. Right now, do you feel like you can make a change in your community/society? Why or why not? Have you always felt this way? What about in the future? (Has your participation in UFJ/classroom affected how you feel about this?)
11. (UFJ) Tell me more about your social studies class in high school.
12. (UFJ) Why (and when) did you first join United For Change? GM and then CC. Why have you kept coming over the years?
13. (UFJ) Can you tell me about a campaign or activity that you have taken part in over the last year? What did you do and what did you learn? For example, the principals meetings, the Building a Better Riverton campaign, Educational Justice Week, The Pledge Cards, Get Out The Vote walking, etc.
14. (UFJ) Was there a time when you stepped-up to do something in UFJ? Were you asked to do it or did you do it on your own?
15. (UFJ) What were you like when you first started UFJ? What was your role in the group? Has your role changed over the years?
16. Can you tell me about a time when you had input or a say on something?
17. Tell me about the organizers/teacher at UFJ/class? What are they like? How do you interact with them? Do you feel like the adult(s) here care about you? Why?
18. (Classroom) What do you see as the goals of the teacher? What do you think about these goals?
19. Do you have any goals for yourself in UFJ/this Class? What are they?
20. Do you see yourself as an important contributor to this class/organization? Why or why not?
21. (UFJ) What do your parents think about your participation in UFJ?

⁵⁰ Questions prefaced by “(Classroom)” or “(UFJ)” are only for that site.

Appendix D: Protocol for Teacher Interview

Background Questions

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. What is your educational background? High school attended? Where did you grow up?
3. What do you feel are the strengths and challenges of the community that you work in? Why do you feel these challenges exist?
4. Do you feel like all students in the United States have equal educational opportunities? Explain.
5. Right now, do you feel like you can make a change in your community? Why or why not?
6. Why did you decide to become a teacher?

Questions about the Learning Site

7. How long have you been working at Pierce High School (PHS)?
8. What did you do prior to this position? Why did you decide to work at PHS?
9. Tell me about your school? What are the strengths and challenges at your school? Do you feel like students are receiving a quality education at your school? Why or why not?
10. Do you feel like the teachers at this school care about the students? Why or why not?
11. What are your goals for the students in your social studies classes? (Ask about academic and civic goals for students).
12. Have you been successful at achieving those goals? How do you know?
13. How do you prioritize and balance these different goals?
14. What are the challenges that make achieving these goals more difficult? (school level and larger policy level as well).
15. Are there ways that your school/design team is organized that facilitates achieving these goals?
16. How would you describe the students in your classes?
17. Please tell me a little bit about each focal student in my study. Are they academically engaged within the classroom? Are they interested in national and local political and social issues?
18. What do you see as your role as teacher? For instance, do you see yourself as the source of important information for students or do you see yourself as someone who helps them discover information for themselves?
19. What does a typical day or week look like in your classroom? How does your role vary throughout the day or week?
20. What do you see as the role of students in the class?
21. Do you encourage students to think critically about issues affecting them and to give their opinions in your classes? Explain.
22. How often do you talk about politics/issues affecting your community in your classes?
23. Do some students participate more than others? Why do you think that is?
24. What do you feel students learn from participating in your classes?
25. How does participation in your classroom affect students? Does it change the way they think about their schools? About being a student? About their community? About being a community member?

Appendix E: Protocol for UFJ Staff Interview

Background Questions

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. What is your educational background? High school attended? Where did you grow up?
3. What do you feel are the strengths and challenges of the community that UFJ works in? Why do you feel these challenges exist?
4. Do you feel like all students in the U.S. have equal educational opportunities? Explain.
5. Right now, do you feel like you can make a change in your community? Why or why not?

Questions about the Learning Site

6. What is your position at UFJ and how did you end up here? Why here?
7. What do you see as the purpose of United For Justice?
8. UFJ works towards educational justice. What does that mean? What would educational justice look like?
9. What are your goals in your position here? (Campaign goals and youth development goals, are there ever tensions between the two?)
10. How do you prioritize and balance these different goals? Are there challenges to balancing these different goals? Do you consider yourself and activist, organizer, educator? All?
11. Do you have a philosophy or pedagogy for how you approach the students' learning in this organization? What is it?
12. What do you hope that students get out of (learn from) their experience participating in UFJ? Are there certain skills/content that you hope they get (Leadership, critical analysis, communication, inquiry, agency, education)?
13. Have you been successful at achieving those goals? How do you know?
14. What are the challenges that make achieving these goals more difficult? (program level and larger policy level as well). Are there ways that UFJ is organized that facilitates achieving these goals?
15. How do you recruit students? How would you describe the students in United For Justice? Is there a typical kind of student that participates in UFJ?
16. Please tell me a little bit about each focal student in my study. Are they academically engaged within school? Are they leaders within UFJ? Are they critical of injustice?
17. What is the role of youth in this organization? Explain? What do you expect from the youth in this organization?
18. How does it compare to your role as organizer? How is power distributed in this organization? Why is it distributed that way?
19. What are the relationship like between organizers/students and students/students?
20. What does a typical week in UFJ look like for students?
21. How often do you talk about politics/issues affecting the community with students in UFJ?
22. How do students become leaders in the organization? How is a beginner different than a veteran in the organization?
23. Do you feel that the students make connections between what they do in United For Justice and school?

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