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I Do Activist Things Even Though I'm Nothing: A Critical Ethnography of Immigrant Youth Identity Formation in an Urban Community-School

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

“I DO ACTIVIST THINGS EVEN THOUGH I’M NOTHING”: A CRITICAL
ETHNOGRAPHY OF IMMIGRANT YOUTH IDENTITY FORMATION IN AN
URBAN COMMUNITY-SCHOOL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

SOPHIA RODRIGUEZ

CHICAGO, IL

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how Latino immigrant youth make sense out of their educational experience, identity, and sense of belonging in an urban, public high school. This critical ethnography examines their social interactions. The youth live in a segregated neighborhood that is largely abandoned by policy-makers and recently impacted by massive school closures by the district. The youth, within the context of a community-school partnership, advocate for immigrant rights, march in solidarity with their teachers, and engage in organizing to transcend their immigration status and/or achievement status. The central question is: How do Latino immigrant youth in a community-school experience identity formation in relation to community belonging? Across a traveling field, I interviewed youth to deepen the understanding of their identity formation as they encounter the community-school partnership. The chapters of this dissertation reveal the multiple ways in which youth identity forms. The analysis here builds upon previous sociological studies of racial/ethnic identity and its interaction with student achievement and moves away from cultural-deficit models as explanations of racial/ethnic minority under-achievement. In addition, the analysis here highlights the positive social identities that emerge for students involved in the community-school programs. This is a key contribution as it emphasizes the role of community-school partnerships on social identity production. In this study youth position themselves as

agents of social change. Youth interpret community as a set of social relations across spaces, e.g. a protest at the Board of Education headquarters and an act of civil disobedience in an intersection. This study asserts that youth from low-income communities can transcend the labels from their immigration or racial/ethnic status, or their perceived propensity for failure. By highlighting moments of youth organizing and their articulations of justice, it is evident they engage in critical thinking beyond what their achievement data reveals. The data lead us to consider how schools often fail to reward social identities and alternative pedagogic spaces—provided through community-school partnerships—such as a protest or a service trip, but there exists cultural and symbolic value when asserting a particular social identity. The research offers insight into the disconnection between how institutional forces and policies situate youth and then abandon or intervene through false assumptions. I suggest we build on youth’s knowledge and assets.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Good morning, my name is 39407957. Obviously that is not my real name. I addressed myself using my Chicago Public Schools' identification number, because, unfortunately, that is how students, just like me, are recognized by this here Department of Education...we are merely a number. Student voices have been persistently shut out, and we will not stand for this! We are here to change this.

The opening statement was made by a youth participant in the study in April, 2013. He had just delivered this statement outside of an elementary school on Chicago's south side. Alongside him stood other youth organizers from around the city. Images of youth crowd my mind. Images of youth holding up poster sized papers that say, "Dear Mayor, don't close our schools." Images of youth with their mouths open as they attempt to speak out against school closures in their city. These images in my mind coupled with the words of youth introduce the reader to the words and worlds of youth in this study. One of the youth in study was with me when I received this screen shot, and said to me, "It's important for youth to have power because the youth are effected by the decisions adults make. It just seems like the youth are oppressed." Moments like these led me to constantly think about the ways in which youth from low-income, marginalized communities and marginalized racial and ethnic groups are in fact oppressed. What local policy-makers touted as an opportunity to provide students with "better" schools and

“improve education” was in conflict with what local communities and youth wanted.

This project attempted to document, in part, how youth “are here to change this,” and assert power to do so.

In this study, I am interested in how, where and when Latino¹ immigrant youth create, discuss and negotiate identity upon their encounter with a partnership between their public, urban high school and a community organization. I am also interested in the ways that youth understand their identity formation in the context of a community-school partnership. To understand the identity formation process, I consider how identities are constituted in the context of a community-school partnership through larger institutional practices of the school and through social interactions that emerge in the community organization’s programming at the school. The distinction between how youth make sense of their identity and how identities are constituted in this particular context suggests that these students may have a sense of identity but that the community-school partnership may be constituting identities for them or both producing and sanctioning particularly identities.

¹A challenge I face is to honor and separate the Latino immigrant youth experience in ways that previous scholarship in education research has not while not essentializing or labeling them as Latino immigrant youth. Scholarship has confounded the Latino experience with other immigrant groups, resulting in inaccurate comparisons of the ability of Latinos without accounting for variation within immigrant groups and across immigrant groups. Just as some scholars (Lee, 2005; Ngo, 2010; Staiger, 2006) have sought to account for variation in Asian immigrant groups’ schooling experiences, this dissertation attempts to inquire about Latino immigrants and contribute to scholarly research without essentializing the Latino immigrant experience. Youth did at times identify as immigrants, but they did not always name themselves as Latino/a. This dissertation only references racial and ethnic background if and when it emerged through the voices of participants. Thus, anytime I use the term youth, I am referring to the Latino immigrant youth in this study.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers in education have taken interest in the use of identity as an analytic for understanding school success of students particularly those of racial and ethnic minority groups (Carter, 2005, 2006, 2010; Chikkatur, 2012; Ek, 2009; Gee, 2000; Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Villenas, 2007, 2009, 2012). While there exists sociological and anthropological empirical research on the topic of schooling and the construction of racial and ethnic minority identity formation, there exists less research specific to the unique positioning of Latino immigrants and undocumented immigrants² and their experience of positive, social identity formation despite a recent surge of research on the “Latino crisis in education” (Villenas, 2012). Instead, research focuses on identity and its connection to academic achievement and identity is really referring to racial and ethnic identity. Moreover, the identity formation process of Latino immigrant and undocumented students, or what some scholars label “unauthorized status” students (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011) is often considered from a “developmental,” or psychological perspective that seeks to uncover trauma and deficits of Latino immigrant students’ and undocumented immigrant students’ personhood (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). These previous sociological models assume that immigrants seek to assimilate into American culture without much attention to the social processes and perspectives of youth. The assimilationist model applied broadly to immigrants’ schooling experience is inadequate even when it is explained as

²I separate undocumented immigrants here because the school that I conducted my research at contained a high presence of undocumented immigrants. Their experience is wrapped up in my argument that we need to move away from only seeing students as their racial or ethnic identity marker and only as their immigration status. I refer throughout the study to both Latino immigrants and undocumented youth, but my concern is: who are these youth beyond such labels?

“segmented” (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). The implication of this model is that it does not account for cultural differences and variation in social processes of identity formation, and instead places cultural groups against each other. These previous approaches to studying identity have universalistic, essentialist tendencies that limit our understanding of the multiple layers of identity formation for Latino immigrant youth.

It is an assumption of this study that identity is not a singular, linear experience as historical accounts of Americanization (Olneck, 2007, 2009) and/or assimilation of immigrants suggest (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Previous scholarship refers to immigrants broadly. Instead this study considers the institutional and social processes that aim to reproduce inequality in addition to the ways that Latino immigrant youth disrupt such processes of social reproduction. In order to consider identity in a new way, a way that grew out of frustration and disappointment with previous scholarship, I review the research literature next. After the review of the research literature I offer the conceptual framework that seeks to break away from deficit-models and assimilationist models that attempt to explain the educational trajectories of Latino immigrant youth. Such models presume that either youth (immigrants and youth of color) have the social and cultural capital to be successful in school, which translates to they know how to suppress their so-called “street culture” and perform according to the “school culture,” or they don’t (Flores-Gonzalez, 2002). And, if they don’t know how to align their identity with the preferred identity of schools, they are not successful.

Coming to Research on Identity

My initial understanding of identity came from extensive reading sociology of education literature on racial and ethnic identity formation in schools. Trying to understand the identity formation process as it relates to schooling and academic achievement from a sociological perspective led me to a visceral dissatisfaction with the essentializing, semi-racist ways in which racial and ethnic differential achievement are explained through theories of reproduction of class inequality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and through the emergence of cultural-ecological models that explained underachievement and identity formation of racial and ethnic minorities by pointing to cultural deficits of minorities (Ogbu, 1978). I realized that I understand identity to contain several dimensions rather than the static theoretical models that the sociology of education literature offered. These theoretical considerations relate to multiple dimensions of identity in education research. These considerations include: philosophical dimensions (Taylor, 1989, 1994), an institutional relationship/place-based dimension (Anyon, 1997; Lipman, 2002; Nesper, 1997), perhaps, a multiple, non-essentialist theory of identity connected to school spaces (Yon, 2000), and most importantly, I think for me, an identity that is formed and articulated through social relations (Clifford, 1999).

In addition to theoretical considerations of identity, I have examined various disciplinary approaches to immigrant student identity formation. Here, I use the term immigrant broadly because the scholarship I drew from looks at multiple immigrant groups. For instance, various scholars in Rumbaut and Portes' (2001) volume examine

the experiences of “Mexican Americans,” “Cubans in Miami,” “Filipino children,” “Nicaraguans,” “Vietnamese refugee children,” “Haitians in Miami,” and “West Indian immigrants.” The point is that previous scholarship sometimes uses the term immigrant to cover a broad range of racial and ethnic groups, and the participants in this dissertation were mostly from Latino immigrant groups. However, the entry point into the literature was in the area of immigrants and education. Theories of identity for immigrant students in particular are even less desirable, essentialist and inadequately account for variation across minority groups. The main model that has been used to explain the identity formation of immigrant students and how their identity impacts their academic achievement is segmented assimilation (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Despite conversations around identity formation and school experiences of immigrants (Lee, 2009; Zhou & Kim, 2006), my concern here is there are not understandings Latino communities generally beyond those that have well-assimilated (Cubans in Portes & Rumbaut’s study, 2001). The variation across immigrant groups and within Latino immigrant groups still needs to be addressed. While I drew from literature that broadly addressed issues of Latino immigrants, I found a lack of attention to the variation within and across Latino immigrant youth. I hypothesized, for my study, that identity for Latino immigrant youth is constructed, contested, interpreted through space, specifically spaces created out of a community-school partnership. I sought to challenge the deficit model and the essentializing that previous sociological literature employs and move us beyond another study that confirms or denies the presence or absence of “oppositional identity” or the “acting white thesis” posited by Ogbu (1978) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986). I focus my

attention on the need for a way to understand identity as fluid, non-essentialist and contingent, from the perspective of youth—that also happen to at times identify as Latinos and immigrants—involved in a community-school partnership and within the spaces made possible through this partnership.

Research Question

The original question of the study was: How does the interaction between a specific set of immigrant students, a community organization, and its partnership with a high school impact students' understanding of their academic and social identity(ies) in relation to community belonging? As I pursued answers to this question, I learned more about the large number of Latino immigrant youth in the community-school that I studied. The purpose of the study, thus, is to explore the identity formation of Latino immigrant youth in an urban, community-school.

Significance of the Research

The research contributes to previous scholarship in a few ways. This study departs from previous research by examining the multiple dimensions of identity beyond racial/ethnic identity markers and cultural-deficit models as explanations of racial/ethnic minority under-achievement. Within this, it is argued that the lived experiences of youth in this study as they encounter organizing for social change is a contribution given that much of social science research focuses on the under-achievement of Latino immigrant youth without privileging youth voice. We know Latino youth are not performing well on tests and are overrepresented in dropout statistics in large urban districts, and various scholarships suggests that this “failure” is persistent because institutions such as schools

play a role in setting up conditions for Latino immigrant youth to be unsuccessful. Thus, this project, in part, explores the ways a school sets up conditions, creating differential educational experiences for Latino immigrant youth and how these youth in the study seek to transcend the limitations of the school conditions. This is wrapped up in their identity formation that is explored in the study.

Second, a major contribution of this study is the examination of a community-school partnership as a factor in shaping identities of Latino immigrant youth. The role of community organizations in relation to schools is a recent—underdeveloped—area of social science research in education. And, thus far, this area of research addresses how community organizing more broadly is a strategy of current school reform models in urban cities across the U.S. (Warren & Mapp, 2011). I contribute to this burgeoning body of scholarship by considering the ways community-school partnerships offer a space for otherwise marginalized youth, particularly Latino immigrant youth, to explore and renegotiate identity. Community organization-school partnerships provide youth in the study with the knowledge, skills and other tools to assist in their advancement through the K-12 educational system and provide them with spaces to explore and take risks in their learning in alternative educational settings. The after-school programs are spaces of social identity formation and can alter educational trajectories in positive ways for youth.

Third, the last contribution of this study is a theoretical one. Much of the literature on notions of identity and community is limited to abstract theorizing, the intention here is to test and open up our understanding of identity so that we can generate

a fluid, nonessentialist model of identity, a model that understands social processes. In this process of theorizing identity formation in relation to community, I propose that we see Latino immigrant youth identity and the process of cultural organizing through the notion of event. This notion of event is explained as I move from the data to theorize identity in relation to the process of cultural organizing in later chapters.

This study asserts that youth from low-income communities can transcend the labels from their immigration or racial/ethnic status and their perceived propensity for failure. Again, the youth in this study are Latino immigrants, but to honor their perspectives, I refer here to them as youth without essentializing them or attaching a label such as Latino because they did not always identify as Latino. I explain this throughout the literature review. By highlighting moments of youth organizing and their articulations of justice, it is evident they engage in critical thinking beyond what their achievement level reveals. The data in this dissertation lead us to consider how schools often fail to reward social identities and alternative pedagogic spaces—provided through community-school partnerships—such as a protest or a service trip, but there exists cultural and symbolic value when asserting a particular social identity. The research offers insight into the disconnection between how institutional forces and policies situate youth and then abandon or intervene through false assumptions. I suggest that research and policy-makers consider and build on youth's knowledge and assets.

Review of Literature

Studies of identity of immigrant students are underdeveloped and are often couched in larger topics of research such as racial and ethnic identity formation

(Davidson, 1996). In such research, the relationship between identity and academic achievement is explored. In these studies members of racial and ethnic groups have experienced differential academic achievement levels and group cultural differences have been a predictor of academic success or failure for minorities (Ogbu, 1987; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993). That said, studies of identity and theories of identity formation in relation to schooling have taken, most commonly, three theoretical directions: reproduction theory (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), cultural ecological theory (Ogbu, 1987), and segmented assimilation theory and its iterations (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008, p. 13; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001).

Further this review of literature reveals that empirical studies investigate identities in four ways. Within these four themes we locate immigrant groups under broader literature on schooling and construction of racial and ethnic minority identity largely because of the dominance of Ogbu's (1978) theoretical model that explained differential achievement and identity of racial and ethnic minorities. That said, scholarship in the last twenty years roughly has engaged with, refuted (Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005), and distanced itself from Ogbu (1978) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986) by focusing on identity formation and its interaction with students' academic achievement and qualitative research on identity formation of immigrants. Foley (2004) outlined a key limitation in Ogbu's cultural ecological model by pointing to the ways in which Ogbu conceptualized ethnicity or ethnic culture without attention to social stratification. Ogbu attributes minority underachievement to an oppositional, nonconforming attitude toward school, which leaves minority youth unable to achieve social mobility. A key problem in this

scholarship is the ways in which Ogbu sets up minorities as voluntary (racially oppressed African-Americans, Mexican Americans and Native Americans) and involuntary (immigrants who choose to come to America), noting that the involuntary minorities need to be more like the involuntary minorities (read as successful Asian American groups in particular).

Within this body of scholarship, however, there exists very little research on the experiences of Latino immigrant youth.³ Specifically, Latino immigrant youth are often lumped in with larger immigrant studies, or labeled as Ogbu's involuntary group since it is assumed that all Latino or Hispanic groups are the same. In these few studies, undocumented students are not labeled as such, but in several studies the label "unauthorized status students" has been advanced. I do not prefer to use this term because for me it is a term imposed upon undocumented students by both legal and political discourse, and academic discourse and the youth in this study reject such labeling with negative connotations. In addition, few studies investigate the identity formation process of Latino immigrant youth broadly and none involved in a community-school partnership. Such previous studies that examine the advocacy of community organizations for Latino immigrant youth and the ways in which youth engage in the advocacy work of these organizations (Noguera, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2006) do not explicitly investigate identity formation in relation to notions of community. However,

³The scholarship in this section discusses the experiences of Latino immigrant youth. Some scholars use the term Latino immigrant youth, which is similar to the youth in this dissertation study while other scholars refer to Latino immigrants, or Latino immigrant students. The scholarship does not specify the reasons for these different terms. In my review of the literature, I refer to the language in the scholarship, but in my larger study, I have labeled the participants as Latino immigrant youth, see footnote numbers two and four for elaboration on this issue of labeling.

this work examines the agendas of these community organizations and the way youth engage in bettering their communities. These studies are important for the study of education because they shed light on the important work of community organizing and youth cultural organizing.

Therefore, this literature review covers four interrelated bodies of scholarship as an entry point into my project:

Section One considers studies of identity from sociological and anthropological perspectives, specifically how schooling is theorized to interact with identity formation of racial and ethnic minorities. In this section, it is argued and illustrated that early studies on this topic lump immigrants' schooling experiences in with other racial minorities. This occurred because of the foundational work of John Ogbu in the late 1970s that was taken up by assimilation theories (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). In Ogbu's early work, he explains the achievement trajectories of various immigrant groups as well as other minorities.

Section Two considers foundational scholarship, theoretical and empirical, on Latino immigrants and their schooling experiences characterized through psychological development, the need for and role of relations both between teachers and students and other potential mentors and how these relationships' impact achievement (Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Gaytan, Bang, Pakes, O'Connor, & Rhodes, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Sattin-Bajaj, 2010), the role of care in the formation of teacher-student relations (Valenzuela, 1999) and their experience of social exclusion from the "normative

rituals” of school, the “negative social mirrors” of society that portray them as illegitimate and the impact on their identity development (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011) and the way social exclusion is counteracted by identity negotiations (Villenas, 2009);

Section Three considers recent empirical work on the anthropology of Latino immigrants’ experiences (Villenas, 2012) that pays attention to identity from the perspective of the immigrant students through ethnographic or case study methods and that uses new theoretical formations to consider the multidimensional nature of identity that I argue is present (Ek, 2009). This work in section three specifically relates to the type of approach to identity of Latino immigrant youth that I hope to build upon. Here, the studies frame identity through the concept of resistance and hybridity. This means, instead of considering identity formation as a linear process of adaptation, assimilation or Americanization, these studies of identity begin with the assumption that identity is multidimensional, enabling us to view identity(ies) in a new light. While this research has been critical for moving beyond dualistic, normalizing, essentializing notions of identity of immigrant students, it stands that these studies still lack the theoretical positioning that moves beyond dualism in order to consider identity as multiplicitious and impacted by spatial dynamics as they relate to the identity formation process. Here, in these studies, the concept of “diaspora” and hybrid identity is considered. In addition, this section acknowledges the important role of qualitative research in taking into account the perspectives of youth. Thus this section reviews four key areas for the topic of identity formation for Latino immigrants, and their forms of identity through conceptions of hybridity (Villenas, 2007, 2009), diaspora (Lukose, 2007) and resistance (Fine, Jaffee-

Walter, Pedrazy, Futch, & Stoudt, 2007), resistance as self-making identities of youth (Cammarota, 2004; DeJaeghere & McClearly, 2010), performance identity as a brand of resistance (Chikkatur, 2012) or “translation” as a form of resistance (Orellana, 2001).

The common aspect of these studies is their attention to the students’ perspective. These studies investigate how identity is resisted in and through students’ self-making processes rather than viewing resistance as simply oppositional (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Section Four considers scholarship on community school partnerships. This is a very limited, under-researched area, but this section will outline the role or mention of community, community organizations, and community organizing as a strategy of school reform. This study is not interested in using community organizations as its unit of analysis, but it is important to mention that the few studies that even consider community organizations and the concept of community. These studies, however, have narrowly focused on either advocacy of these organizations or how immigrants navigate agendas, and engage in the practical social justice work of organizations. This is important, but this study argues that identity formation occurs through multiple spaces for undocumented students, and these spaces are both created by students, made for students, and stretch across boundaries of community organization and school. This dissertation study considers how identity forms and is formed in, through, and across the spaces of a community-school partnership. This section covers the few studies about identity of immigrant students in relation to community (Fine, Weis, Centrie & Roberts, 2000; Fine, Jaffee-Walter, Pedrazy, Futch & Stoudt, 2007). While this underdeveloped area of research is limited to a few studies, these studies discuss the relation between identity

formation and community on a practical level. I argue in this proposal that there remains a need to theorize identity in relation to community. Thus, this project contributes to this underdeveloped line of inquiry and offers a nuanced conceptual framework for identity formation in relation to community.

Theoretical and Empirical Approaches to Racial and Ethnic Minorities' Identity Formation

This study argues that identity formation processes occur across multiple spaces. In order to engage in a project about the identity formation of Latino immigrant youth in a community-school partnership, I first acknowledge the ways in which identity formation of immigrants has been studied broadly because early studies of identity have actually understood immigrants' identity as similar to other racial minorities such as African Americans. This section focuses on the dominant theoretical model that linked immigrant identity formation to achievement in school.

Segmented assimilation. A theoretical model that seeks to understand the interaction between schooling and identity formation and its impact on the academic achievement of ethnic groups is segmented assimilation. Much of the research on native, involuntary minorities' school success is that it differs from immigrant, voluntary minorities because it is claimed that the latter tend to want to assimilate and accept identities that are consistent with academic success; thus, this theory explains differential trajectories. Segmented assimilation theory accepts the basic premises of Ogbu (1978) and Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) cultural-ecological theory, including the premise that native, involuntary minorities have an oppositional identity and that proximity these

native, involuntary minorities threatens academic achievement for immigrant youth (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Portes and Zhou argue that segmented assimilation explains how immigrant students of color have several trajectories of cultural adaptation. They offer three possible modes of identification: (1) identify with the dominant group in host society; (2) identify with the native minority underclass; or (3) identify with their own ethnic communities. The first identity results in positive achievement trajectories, the second mode results in a negative achievement trajectory and the third results in likely positive achievement for ethnic minorities.

Much in the same fashion as Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Portes and Zhou (1993) incorporate cultural and structural factors that impact the youth such as racial class, parental education, and labor opportunities as potential influences on the adaptation process of newly arriving and second-generation immigrants (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). According to Rumbaut and Portes, even if immigrants, here the authors refer to immigrants broadly in American society, grow up in a disadvantaged ethnic community and identify strongly with their ethnic identity, they can still experience academic success if they have social networks. This posits a different achievement outcome than growing up poor for African Americans. In addition, the theory claims that if immigrant youth adapt to the native minorities' cultural behaviors they will experience downward mobility while a strong connection to an ethnic community could support upward mobility.

Segmented assimilation is largely critiqued for being an outdated model that does not account for variation within ethnic minority groups. For example, Zhou and Kim (2006) problematize segmented assimilation theory as offered by Rumbaut and Portes

(2001) and emphasize the importance of retaining ethnic and cultural values for various ethnic groups. Similar to Ogbu's (1978) point that community forces play a role in the upward mobility of immigrant groups, Zhou and Kim (2006) emphasize the central role of ethnic institutions and social networks that serve to support the values, interpretations and beliefs of immigrants in their new setting. If these ethnic communities are cohesive, the theory of Ogbu (1978) suggests, then, these communities of immigrants can overcome societal discrimination (Zhou & Kim, 2006, p. 6). The problem with empirical studies on the identity formation of immigrants in this literature is that it does not account for variation across and within minority groups. It also does not take care to consider the unique positioning of Latino immigrants. Carter (2006) and Warikoo and Carter (2009) argue that when researchers apply binary concepts to identity formation such as oppositional identity or model minority identity, acting white or acting black, the variation among/within racial and ethnic groups is obscured. This means, there are more aspects to the identity formation process these dominant theories explain. Identity formation of racial and ethnic minorities has been investigated across four themes.

Four themes emerge in what the various empirical research efforts have found regarding the identity formation process of racial and ethnic minorities across four themes: (1) presence and absence of oppositional identities in schools; (2) resistance (to) and expansion of resistance identities; (3) identity formation through social relations, discourses and multi-layered contexts; and (4) gender identities, schooling and achievement.

The themes identified speak to the ways students try to identify with the dominant host society, act white, risk losing their racial peer group solidarity, and articulate masculinity (Ferguson, 2001); identify with the native minority class and risk low achievement because they feel uncared for in school (Valenzuela, 1999); and identify with their own racial or ethnic communities or identify through certain social and interracial relations and experience positive or negative achievement (Lee, 2009; Staiger, 2006). As the research shows, identity formation is neither always one-dimensional nor is it always related to simply choosing or resisting an academic or social identity. Rather, we will see that identity formation is produced out of multiple factors and often produced out of the cultural aspects of these students' lives, teachers' perceptions of students, and/or larger institutional structures that shape and reinforce low-achieving academic identities for racial and ethnic minorities.

The first theme is identity formation as part of an oppositional identity culture, where culture is understood as a collective identity among racial and ethnic peer groups (Carter, 2005; Ferguson, 2001; Morris, 2006; Tyson, Darity & Castellino, 2005). The second theme that captures much of the identity formation of racial and ethnic minorities across the literature relates to the phenomenon of resistance, or resistance identities (Valenzuela, 1999). Resistance takes on many forms (Nasir, 2004). This variation in resistance identities is the nuance that distinguishes it from the oppositional identity of Ogbu (1978) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986), and other research is discussed to show how the phenomenon of resistance has been expanded. The third theme recognizes that identity formation is produced out of social relations and discourses about race as well as

interracial relations among students (Lee, 2009, p. 116; Nasir, McLaughlin & Jones, 2008, p. 79; Staiger, 2006). The fourth theme takes into account that identity formation occurs through various constructions of gender, race, and ethnicity (Morris, 2007, 2008; Pascoe, 2007). All of these various studies approach identity formation of racial and ethnic minorities, but of these studies only few consider the experience of immigrant students as distinct from racial minorities (Lee, 2009) and even fewer consider Latino students (Valenzuela, 1999).

A few gaps have been identified in this first body of scholarship. First, much of the sociological research on identity formation and achievement really focuses much on racial and ethnic identities and achievement trajectories, often obscuring school processes, school contexts, and teachers' impact on identity formation processes and students' achievement levels. The research here indicates the degrees to which school structures support various cultural identities and reinforce hierarchies through discourses and educational programs and how this influences differential achievement outcomes. Despite attempts to bring forth how students make meaning out of their social and academic identities, it is unavoidable to see how schools are also cultural actors that contain deep ideologies that impact and shape identity-options and achievement trajectories. Yet, the focus here is on structural and institutional factors that impact identity formation.

Second, it is argued here that much of the research reveals variation in the academic achievement and identity formation processes of students, rendering cultural behaviors and preferences complex and not always explanatory of achievement. More

work is needed to better understand of identity and its interpretations from students, specifically Latino immigrant youth as this is a very under-researched minority. Schools may be putting forth and reproducing dominant cultural beliefs or codes, but it remains to be seen how researchers can transform this un-neutral aspect of schooling through critical ethnographic work that privileges youth voice and experience in a way that this dissertation study does. Instead of asking if students' cultural backgrounds are aligned with behaviors required of success in schools, it would be promising to inquire what schools can do to better meet the needs of such various students and nurture positive identities.

A final point relates back to the difficulty in theorizing schooling in relation to identity formation. As the research here suggests, cultural-ecological and segmented assimilation theories were inadequate in capturing the multiple meanings of identities and the process of social and academic identity formation. Theorizing beyond these previous models is needed to account for multiple-meanings and multiple identities in multiple contexts. This dissertation aims to offer a new way of approaching identity formation in order to account for multiple identities across multiple spaces.

Latino Immigrants' Schooling Experiences and Identity Formation

The area of Latino education is actually a more recent area of inquiry. While the study of identity formation of racial and ethnic minorities in relation to schooling can be traced back to the late 1970s, the study of immigrants especially of Latino heritage is more recent. The field of educational sociology and anthropology not only began to consider the immigrant experience as varied and distinct across and within ethnic groups

(Lee, 2009; Staiger, 2006), but it also considered the experience of Latino immigrants as in need of more research, particularly because scholarship is not even certain about the question, “Does a Latino identity even exist” (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001, p. 2). That said, this section highlights key scholarship that investigates the schooling and identity formation experience of Latino immigrants through psychological development lenses that examine how teacher-student relationships impact achievement (Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, Sattin-Bajaj, 2010), the role of care in the formation of teacher-student relations (Valenzuela, 1999) and their experience of social exclusion from the “normative rituals” of school and the “negative social mirrors” of society that portray them as illegitimate (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011), and the way social exclusion is counteracted by identity negotiations (Villenas, 2009) and globalization (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). These studies provide the foundational ways in which inquiry about Latino students was brought into the research conversation.

Considering the identity formation of Latino immigrants is a newly researched area that approaches identity from a psychological perspective and examines the ways in which the status of “unauthorized” or undocumented negatively impacts their sense of self, making them feel socially excluded from school to such an extent that their identity and pathway toward school success is comprised. For instance, Suarez-Orozco et al. (2011) argue, “Unauthorized youth are unable to fully partake in these normative rituals; moreover, their identity formation is complicated when they come to face a negative social mirror that portrays them as illegitimate or unwanted” (p. 453). The experience of

Latino “unauthorized” students in this study are depicted as abnormal because they do not fit in the model of identity that these authors conjure. The authors found that because unauthorized youth cannot fully take part in normal rituals and feel excluded. Therefore, they fail to form identity and it impacts their development. The implications of the finding that unauthorized status harms development indicates that more work needs to be done in the field studying this population, particularly in terms of improving the lives of the Latino youth who constantly live in fear and hiding and other Latino youth that seek to help their undocumented friends as this study discovered. In this study students are characterized as vulnerable and potentially hidden from the “normal” scene of school. Youth are characterized as not “normal” and unable to understand the normative rituals of schooling.

Additionally, other studies argue that relationships with peers and other adult mentors are critical for the successful identity development of “unauthorized” students (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Sattin-Bajaj, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009). Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Sattin-Bajaj (2010) argue specifically, “Bicultural mentors can serve as role models in the challenging process of developing a bicultural identity, exemplifying ways in which elements of the ethnic identity can be preserved and celebrated” (p. 547). These scholars identified social interactions and peer groups as helping children of immigrant-origin to understand their shifting sense of self, their bicultural identity, and preservation of their ethnic identity. Specifically, the scholars noted mentoring relationships (nonparent adults) and networks of relationships as making significant impacts on developing healthy identities.

However, the term “healthy” is not explicated. The term “healthy” is neither defined nor is it explained who or what determines what is a “healthy” identity, or experience. Yet this term is a value-laden term that seeks to normalize these students and/or prescribe certain actions and behaviors as “healthy” over others.

In a similar way, Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, and Martin (2009) argue, “Bilingual and bicultural mentors can be role models to bridge old and new cultures; some mentors can act as founts of information about the new cultural rules of engagement” (p. 337). In addition to bicultural mentors as an important asset for a healthy, psychological identity experience, other authors argue for the significant role that relationships play in academic engagement and academic achievement of undocumented and newcomer immigrant youth. Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, and Martin (2009) argue, “These youth undergo profound shifts in their sense of self and are struggling to negotiate changing circumstances in their relationships with their parents and peers” (p. 718). With a goal of examining newcomer immigrant student experiences and adjustment, particularly paying attention to academics, these three authors found that, supportive relationships are important in order to help with transition, belonging and academic adjustments. These supportive relationships can come from nonparent adults who will serve as caring role models. In terms of identity, these authors also identified isolation as a negative impact on immigrant children. Using a comparison of case studies, the authors found that better academic engagement was reflective of a student who participated in programs and found connection to her cultural heritage, had nurturing peer and nonparent relationships. This study shows that schools should have programs that provide more relational and

academic engagement of immigrant youth, for example: school-based supportive relationships, safe environments, advisory groups and students placed in smaller multiyear cohorts. Their findings suggest that two overlapping types of relational support emerged: tangible school-based support such as help with homework, sharing of resources, and offering of advice and emotional school-based support such as having feelings of connectedness and closeness that students had with people around them. This dissertation study contributes to this conversation by studying the role of community-school programs in nurturing potential positive relationships from youth perspectives.

To corroborate the significant role of relationships, Suarez-Orozco et al. (2010) argue, “In nearly every case of a significant upward shift in performance, an advocate or mentor entered the youth’s life, helping to change the course of his or her academic trajectory” (p. 612). Using a multiple case study approach, these authors sought out to identify academic trajectories of immigrant students. The findings showed five such academic trajectories as well as family, school, and individual factors associated with these trajectories. Similar to findings from other authors, identity development was associated with having a mentor for advice and social guidance. Isolation, particularly affecting unauthorized students, was detrimental to their adaptation and put them in a low academic trajectory. The findings indicate that schools should provide a better place for immigrant children, instead of providing them with more obstacles and hardships, decreasing their ability to adapt and form identities.

Anthropological Studies of Latino Immigrants' Identity Formation Process and Schooling

The previous sections consider the body of scholarship from two perspectives. First, I discussed the scholarship that confounds the experience of Latino immigrants with other racial and ethnic groups. Second, I discussed literature that focuses in on the experience of Latino immigrants specifically, but only by focusing on the need for positive relationships with adults to avoid low academic achievement without attention to actual experiences in after-school programs. Now I turn to a body of scholarship that this dissertation contributes to by pursuing a line of inquiry that considers the experience of Latino immigrant identity formation from their perspective and by offering a unique ways of theorizing identity and its relation to community. This section considers scholarship from three perspectives: (1) Identity from the perspective of immigrants students themselves; (2) Multidimensional nature of identity formation as opposed to the dualistic nature of identity development in foundational students: a response to the foundation work outlined in section two that considered identity as a linear, process of psychological development; (3) Recent, new ways of conceiving identity through concepts of hybridity, diaspora, and resistance. Resistance, in this scholarship is specific to Latino immigrants and undocumented immigrants and distinct from previous studies of “resistance” in the sociology literature on schooling and the construction of resistance identities (Carter, 2005, 2006; Nasir, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999).

Other than the work of sociologists and educational psychologists who at worst essentialize the identity of immigrants and at best simply confound the Latino immigrant

experiences, there are broadly three areas that these students' experiences have been examined. It is through the incorporation of anthropological methods to understand the cultural, lived, material experience of Latino students that this dissertation builds on. Currently, Villenas (2012) identifies that Latino education addresses three areas of inquiry, and I note this because my study considers this anthropological work and its attention to Latino immigrants critical for understanding the identity formation process from their perspective. Her work argues the following three areas: (1) ethnographies of Latino education attempt to challenge deficit models of theorizing language and cultural beliefs as I argued previously; (2) Ethnographies of classroom experiences display the value of linguistic diversity, e.g., through culturally relevant pedagogy; and (3) Participatory action research of Latino immigrant youth and parents sheds light on cultural practices, and the ways that civic awareness can provide foundations for educational mobility (Camarota, 2008; Villenas, 2012). This participatory research is deeply political and often aligned with national research agendas of Latino groups and other political debates about immigration (Villenas, 2012).

While this research is important and powerful for bringing attention to these marginalized and sometimes abandoned groups, the focus on large-scale political agendas obscures the micro-level, daily lived experiences and process of identity formation that contribute to undocumented students' experiences. Thus, this dissertation study contributes to these areas of research on Latino immigrant youth by bringing attention to their daily experiences, social interactions that interact with their identity formation and their experiences in a community-school partnership. This study intentionally steers

away from characterizing their experience as a struggle, or as Villenas (2012) labels it *la Lucha*. Instead, I propose and aim to theorize identity formation in relation to community in hopes of reveal multiple forms of identity that emerge through social processes (the focus of Chapter Four and Chapter Five). This attempt to theorize identity in relation to community reframes identity as fluid and emergent instead of seeing identity as only a struggle against the ways institutions attempt to determine the types of acceptable identities for youth.

Villenas (2012) studies identity from the perspective of Latino immigrants, through ethnographic or case study methods and, and uses new theoretical formations to consider the multidimensional nature of identity that I also hope to contribute to in this study (Ek, 2009). For instance, new theoretical approaches to identity formation of Latino immigrants have been through the concepts of hybridity (Villenas, 2007, 2009) and diaspora (Lukose, 2007). In two important studies, Villenas (2007, 2009) utilizes the concept of diaspora to explore aspects of Latino education, revealing an understanding of identity as a hybrid amidst national, political discourses on Latino immigrants, and quantitative research on Latino underachievement. She argues, “We interrogate nation and reread Latinas/os’ agency and identities as acts of cultural survival, of weaving through power and of always re-creating oneself in and through diasporic communities” (pp. 423-424). In response to Lukose’s (2007) argument for the use of a diaspora framework, Villenas writes on the intersections of diaspora studies and the anthropology of Latino immigrant education. Particularly, Villenas describes Latino communities as contesting the label of “immigrants” and instead focusing on “diaspora” for studies. In

terms of transnationalism, Villenas discusses a hybrid culture, which Latinos have despite different geographies and generations. Villenas argues that Latino immigrant youth construct identities through the medium of popular culture, understanding family history, experience of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the U.S. and the homeland. Similarly, Villenas argues that diaspora studies need to pay attention to the difference and diversity across Latino groups and hybrid communities. Villenas concludes that recognizing the tensions and challenges is only the beginning of merging the concerns of Latino educational anthropology and diaspora studies.⁴

The new literature on anthropology of immigrants (Villenas, 2012) critiques Ogbu's (1978) cultural-ecological model for explaining the underachievement of voluntary and involuntary minorities because it relies on a "static" model of identity and culture, and it dehistoricizes what constitutes a dominant society (Lee, 2009; Lukose, 2007). I agree with Villenas' (2009) attention to the "multiple realities and multiple ways of being in communication with the world" (p. 132) for Latino immigrants. The main critique of this work is its theoretical commitment to still understanding immigrants through a "binational" approach couched in the discourse of transnationalism. This means, Villenas' conception of identity, while seemingly not universalistic or essentializing like previous sociological studies of the psychological deficits is still

⁴Given all of these issues with the sociology and anthropology of immigrant scholarship both at the theoretical and empirical level, diaspora studies enters the process of inquiry for scholars more recently (Lukose, 2007). Diaspora refers to the cultural productions and identity formations of migrant communities that have become important for larger political, economic and cultural transformations that mark globalization (p. 409). Diaspora refers to relations and transformations focused on identity formations of migrant communities. Lukose (2007) argues, "Notions of hybridity and antiessentialism are used to demonstrate that diasporic identities are produced through difference, a difference situated between the 'here' of the host country and there of the origin between the 'us' of a dominant community and the multiple forms of racialized identification" (Bhabba, 1994; Lukose, 2007).

dualistic. Villenas use of a “binational” approach positions the identity formation process as dualistic, potentially limiting the “multiple realities” that she sets out to investigate and identities that could potentially emerge across spaces. My concern with this interesting study is with the fact that Villenas limits herself to “two spaces,” namely home/family and school. My study contributes to this type of work that at the very least engages the possibility of the emergence of multiple identities but with more attention to multiple spaces, across communities and schools.

Recent identity studies (DeJaeghere & McClearly, 2010; Ek, 2009; Lukose, 2007; Ngo, 2010; Villenas, 2007, 2009) are posited as anti-essentialist, positive, and imaginative. The point in these studies is to highlight that identity formation is not explained through nationalistic, dualistic, or assimilationist models. Expressions of identity occur across several spaces, times and histories. Thus, anthropology of education studies calls attention to the alternative or multiple trajectories and imaginaries of culture and community, and identity of immigrants. My study conceptualizes identity through ontologically and epistemologically different perspectives than the literature of sociologists (Suarez and various colleagues, 2009, 2009, 2010), educational social psychologists (Fine and colleagues, 2007) and from the diaspora framework (Lukose, 2007) in order to not take the category of immigrant for granted, assume its unproblematic position in discourse.⁵ Instead, my study considers identity and the

⁵Other studies that have sought to problematize the positioning of immigrant students in the discourse on identity have engaged with the concept of resistance (Cammarota, 2004; Chikkatur, 2012; DeJaeghere & McClearly, 2010; Fine, Jaffee-Walter, Perazy, Futch & Stoudt, 2007; Orellana, 2001). These attempts to expand what resistance means have illustrated how youth participate in their identity-making process as well through “performance” (Chikkatur, 2012) and “translation” (Orellana, 2001). What these studies have in common is that they investigate the ways in which identity is resisted in and through their

category of immigrant not as the starting point for a teleological narrative progress or linear assimilation, but rather this study engages with new ways of approaching the study of identity formation, a promising yet underdeveloped area of research in areas of sociology and anthropology of Latino immigrant studies (Ek, 2009). To initiate a critique of the ways in which Latino immigrant youth are labeled and identified by such labels as Latino immigrant, I mentioned in footnote two and four earlier in the chapter that the participants in the study did not always associate themselves with being Latino, but more frequently they did self-identify as immigrant and most frequently identified as youth. To be aware of the ways in which scholars categorize participants, I bring this up in the study and attempt to privilege youth voice and the ways in which they self-identify. This project considers identity formation as a complex site for the production of multiple identities across multiple spaces that emerge through a community-school partnership.

Identity in Relation to Community and Community-School Partnerships

This section tries to understand the role or mention of community, community organizations, and community organizing as a strategy of school reform in relation to youth identity formation. This study is not interested in using community organizations as its unit of analysis because the youth experience within the context of the community-school partnership is the focus. However, it is important to mention that the few studies that even considered community organizations, and or the concept of community in its study have narrowly focused on either advocacy of these organizations, or how

own self-making process rather than viewing identity as simply oppositional (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). The studies, however, still theorize identity from a dualistic perspective despite their branching out from universalistic, essentializing tendencies.

immigrants navigate agendas, or engage in the practical social justice work of organizations. This is important, but this study argues that identity formation occurs through multiple spaces for students, and these spaces are both created by students, made for students, and stretch across boundaries of community organization and school. This section covers the few studies about identity of immigrant students in relation to community.

While thinking about community organizing and development can be valuable, particularly with regard to providing parent programs and outreach to parents about the schooling process, these agendas are politicized and have not been examined in social science research. Or, the sole way of examining the impact of community development as a strategy of school reform is done (Warren & Mapp, 2011). In this work, the word community is broadly deployed, and assumed to be “for” the community, but these research agendas do not clarify what “community” means. Instead, it is presumed to be inclusive and democratic (Fine et al., 2007). For instance, Fine and colleagues argue that “community and community organizing are central to the praxis of democratic schooling” (p. 83).

More recent scholarship (Zavala, 2013) considers how community organizing efforts can serve pedagogical purposes, and this line of inquiry still does not examine the social processes that underlay the formation of identity and community. Community is undefined and assumed to something that just appears. There is neither a critical analysis nor investigation of how, when, and who forms or defines community. In addition, there is no analysis of the process of inclusive and exclusive practices that are embedded

within the formation of community. Community is assumed to always be good, and inclusive, so if schools say they have a strong community the analysis stops there. My study examines, from youth perspectives, how the notion of community gets deployed, made, defined, and the processes that accompany it.

Where identity formation is considered in relation to youth communities, the concept of resistance in the form of civic activism is the way identity in relation to community is examined (Noguera & Cannella, 2006; Tuck & Yang, 2014). The concept of resistance is popular in the scholarly discourse on both racial and ethnic identity formation, and in the anthropology of Latino education, but it always posits identity as “resistant” to-something, likely institutions and discourses. Further, in these studies identity formation in relation to a community-school partnership is not considered. One study, however, engages the ways youth exercise agency through their participation in a community-based youth organization (O’Donoghue, 2006). At the very least this study considers the role of community-organizations, but not specifically in partnership with local community schools. My study contributes to this body of scholarship that considers the practice of organizing for youth as they participate in community-organization programs at a high school.

Community-school partnerships are an underdeveloped area of research. While a new area for research, scholars Warren and Mapp (2011) have examined the work of community organizations in low-income communities. These scholars argue that community development and community organizing can be a fruitful strategy of school reform. This is a type of applied research that looks at the impact of community

development programming on low-income communities that serve minorities including various immigrant groups. That said, however, this type of study neglects socio-cultural aspects of immigrant students' educational experience. In addition, the identity formation process is unexamined as well as the process of identity formation of low income minorities involved in community school partnerships. Scholarly discussion of community are generally limited to explicit political agendas of community development plans, or more basic research that argues for the role of "community" as a space of learning (Fine et al., 2000). For instance, Fine and colleagues make the case for deepening theoretical lenses to assess "spaces of community-based educational sites" (p. 131). In this study "space" are places for recuperation, resistance, communal and personal identity work" (p. 132). This seems to be the most explicit attempt to consider educational spaces as something beyond just the classroom or the school. This dissertation project, then, enters the conversation here by considering the identity formation of Latino immigrant youth in relation to a community-school partnership.

Summary of Review of Literature

I examined four areas of scholarship in order to enter the conversation on Latino immigrant youth identity formation in a community-school partnership. Section one considered studies of identity from sociological and anthropological perspectives, specifically how schooling is theorized to interact with identity formation of racial and ethnic minorities. Section two considered foundational scholarship, theoretical and empirical, on Latino immigrants and their schooling experiences characterized through psychological development, the need for and role of relations both between teachers and

students and other potential mentors and how these relationships' impact achievement. Section three considered recent empirical work on the anthropology of Latino immigrants' experiences. Section four considers scholarship on identity in relation to community and community-school partnerships. My study contributes to this scholarship that considers the practice of activism for youth as they participate in community-based organizations. Next, I turn to the conceptual framework for identity and specific the ways I conceptualize other key terms in the study.

Conceptual Framework

This section contains the ways in which I am approaching identity as an analytic for the study, how I approach identity in the student, and the limits of this model of identity. In addition to mapping my considerations of identity, I also consider key terms such as the use of youth and student in this dissertation, community and space. In the following section, I use the term youth to refer to the Latino immigrant youth in the study and the ways in which the model of identity applied to their experiences. These became terms that were imbued with meaning to me and so to let the reader know how I think of these terms I offer my approaches to these terms. As this is uncharted theoretical and empirical territory, I suggest that my conceptions of identity and community are open to contestation as identity formation processes in the study are momentary and episodic when experienced through the voices of the youth.

Identity as an Analytic in Education Research

To engage in a discussion of the importance of identity as a useful analytic for understanding schools and society, James Paul Gee (2000) argues that identity as a term

contains multiple meanings. He considers the term identity to be related to subjectivity and subject formation, which this study considers useful for understanding identity as multidimensional. Gee's conception of identity provides a multi-dimensional lens that moves beyond dichotomous and essentialist paradigms set forth in the majority of scholarship on racial and ethnic identity formation that I mentioned in the opening paragraphs. This study considers identity to be multidimensional and I argue that Gee's model is a useful entry point into considering the identity formation processes of undocumented students in a community-school partnership as an under-researched area in education. Specifically, I argue Gee's consideration of *Institutional identity* (the focus of Chapter Three) and *Discourse identity* (the focus of Chapters Four and Five) as relevant for my study.⁶ Before highlighting the relevant dimensions of Gee's model of identity, this section outlines the whole model.

To guide the reader, I provide an adapted version of Gee's (2000) that includes a relevant example for readers to understand the various dimensions of identity I explored. I will also and note how the model was applied to the study of youth identity formation at O'Donnell high school (research site) after I describe the whole model.

⁶Each of the dimensions of identity is italicized here because Gee (2000) italicizes them in his piece. They are italicized throughout the dissertation.

Gee's (2000) model of identity

	Process	Power	Source of power	Relevant Example
1. Nature-identity: a state	Developed from	Forces	In nature	Biological make-up (race)
2. Institution-identity: a position	Authorized by	Authorities	Within institutions	Unauthorized; At-risk; High/Low-Achiever; Motivated
3. Discourse-identity: an individual trait	Recognized in	discourse/ dialogue	Of/with rational individuals	Social identities
4. Affinity-identity: experiences	Shared in	The practice	Of "affinity groups"	Dreamers; youth activists

Source: From Gee, 2000, p. 100 (adapted).

Figure 1. Gee's (2000) Model of Identity

Gee (2000) argues there are four—interrelated—ways to view of identity, each with their own power and sources of power. The first identity is the *Nature identity* (N-identity), which is a state of being developed from forces in nature. The second identity is the *Institution identity* (I-identity), which is a position authorized by experts or institutional authorities. The third identity is *Discourse identity* (D-identity), or the discursive identity, which is an individual trait recognized in the discourse and dialogue of/with rational individuals. The fourth identity is the *Affinity identity* (A-identity), which is a set of experiences shared in the practice of affinity groups. Each of these dimensions contributes to our understanding of different aspects of how identities are formed and sustained across and within social and cultural practices and across spaces.

Gee's model opens up our understanding of the multiple dimensions of identity, pushing us to think of "identities" rather than a static, fixed, singular identity that we are given or ascribed through a natural or biological makeup (race), a political category (unauthorized status/undocumented), or an institutional label (International Baccalaureate, AP/Honors/AVID, Regular⁷, at-risk, English-language learner). This model instead gives us an entry point into the socio-cultural, relational and potentially spatial dynamics of identity formation processes. This dissertation is interested in such a multidimensional consideration of identity(ies), or at least the ontological and epistemological possibility that multiple identities can and do emerge. In particular, Gee's conception of *Discourse identity* is of interest in this study since identity formation is conceived here as a process of subjectification, or a process of how subjects are socially, relationally, spatially produced. Next, I consider the relevance of Gee's *Discourse identity* for my approach to identity in this study and the limits of Gee's model.

Pointing to the limits of each of the first two identities, N-identity and I-identity, Gee (2000) argues that natural and institutional identities only gain currency with *recognition* because others and ourselves make meaning when we/they recognize (emphasis is his, p. 102). Similarly, institutions have the power to ascribe identity, but also sustain power by convincing or utilizing a common sense logic that disallows subjects' questioning of what is deemed normal and normative. This common sense

⁷The term Regular became important in the study as I learned what it meant to teachers and youth in the school. Given that the term Regular means particular things at the school in the study, I capitalize it throughout the chapters in the dissertation. I also explain the specific meanings imbued in the term Regular as it applies to the youth in the study. In certain sections of the dissertation I do not capitalize regular if I am referring to the track or academic program at the school. For example, the students in the regular track is used when referring to the academic program while, the Regulars is used when referring to the actual students produced in and through this track.

logic embedded in institutions and internalized in subjects ensures that certain behaviors and attributes are recognized in a certain way, and not others (Foucault, 1973, 1977; Gee, 2000, p. 103). It is argued in this study that O'Donnell high school ascribes *Institutional identities* that set up the conditions for academic success or failure for youth through academic tracking practices in this school. In Chapter Three, readers will begin to see the limits and problems of an institutional identity and the ways in which such *Institutional identities* fail to provide students with a positive sense of self, particularly the less coveted institutional, academic identities that are ascribed to students.

If we consider that identity is shaped in and through discourse, defined by Gee (2000) as dialogue and social interaction, then we see the ways in which individuals make meaning through the social interactions, yielding what Gee calls a *Discourse identity*. For youth in the study, *Institutional identity* are rooted in academic hierarchies and the desires of the school to maintain differential academic trajectories for students, and so the prospect to capture *Discourse identities*, or identities that emerge out of social interactions sheds light on the ways youth develop both a positive sense of self and a critical consciousness about their social worlds. Accordingly, *Discourse identity* is central for understanding social identities, and Gee argues, "The source of power is not nature or an institution, but rational individuals. By rational, I mean only that these individuals treat, talk about and interact and count as reasons for identifying certain attributes of people and not others" (p. 103). This rational recognition of certain identities over others is powerful and pervasive because it is not imposed by institutions.

This is the “Discourse,” or the discursive dimension that emerges from of social relations and interactions.

For Gee (2000), this *Discourse identity* is the key dimension to consider. The key point in this third dimension of identity is that a *Discourse identity* emerges through a rational process of recognition in a social interaction. It is neither positive nor negative, but rather it is a process that is negotiated and thus unstable from moment to moment.

What is useful here from Gee’s model is the conception of identity, particularly the third dimension of identity that he calls, *Discourse identity*, as discursive, fluid and emergent instead of static, fixed or authorized through institutional labeling and positioning. While there are certainly limits to this model, namely that Gee argues identity is made visible only through recognition of rational individuals without explaining the process of recognition nor does he account for the role of self-surveillance (Foucault, 1977, 1978), his conception of identity as formed out of social practices and fluid is critical for this study and serves as a starting point to break away from cultural deficit models and other dualistic, binary models of identity that limit our understanding of youth experience in schools. Instead, this model, particularly through the lens of *Discourse identity* enables us to re-conceptualize identity as “unresolved” and as in process (Ngo, 2010). While the data in this study tests even this fluid model, it is an entry point for considering the “multiplicity” of youth identity (Ngo, 2010, p. 7).

The *Affinity identity* focuses on distinct social practices that create and sustain group affiliations, rather than an institution or discourse (social interactions and dialogue) directly. To put this in the context of this dissertation, for instance, the students in this

study are immigrants, but that identity marker is not sufficient for Gee's affinity group because the status of immigrant is assigned through the institutions of law. However, if students assemble in after school programs that focus on their interest in voter rights of immigrants, or their advocacy of policies like the Dream Act, this could constitute an affinity because it is their shared allegiance to the cause that brings them together, forging an affinity identity. Of course, their participation in such a group does not exclude relations to institutions (community-school partnership) and discourse, or discursive formation (being recognized and labeled as youth activists), but this is acceptable in Gee's (2000) model because he acknowledges the interrelatedness of the four dimensions of identity. Again, Gee's model, particularly the *Discourse identity* opens up our conception of identity by considering it as a discursive process embedded in social relations.

Limits of Gee's (2000) Model of Identity

Gee's (2000) model of identity is an important contribution to our understanding of identity formation process in relation to sources of power in educational settings. That is, the model allows us to look beyond faults of institutions (though, there are plenty), or some other untouchable source of power at a macro-level. I find it particularly useful that Gee's model is one of the few attempts to consider identity as multidimensional and contradictory at times, enabling the possibility that subjects may occupy multiple identity(ies) within the *Discourse identity* specifically. That said, the limits of Gee's model that I address are threefold, and thus the uses of other concepts are necessary in order to fully conceptualize identity formation in relation to community. This means, the

process of youth identity formation in this study challenged the model of identity offered by Gee. While I capture and apply *Institutional identity*, specifically the academic identities that are ascribed within the school, and *Discourse identity*, specifically the social identities that emerge for youth as they participate in after-school programs, the self-articulated social identities that emerged out of the youth cultural organizing discussed in Chapter Five cannot be explained through the notion of *Discourse identity*; thus, I propose we theorize identity through Deleuze's notion of event in order to expand and access the types of social identities that can and did emerge in the process of social identity formation for youth. This is taken up in Chapter Four and Five.

I argue a limit to Gee's (2000) model that persists is that "recognition by others" is the necessary condition for a *Discourse identity* to emerge. The data in this study challenges this necessary condition of "recognition" particularly in the youth experiences in Chapter Five. Instead, I argue that both recognition of and ascription by others occurs within the school as part of the *Institutional identity*, social identities emerge as part of the *Discourse identity*, and then youth self-make certain identities in order to transform themselves and their social context. Gee's model fails to account for the role of the self in the *Discourse identity* and instead limits our understanding of identity by claiming that *Discourse identity* is only ascribed and sustained through recognition of others. Youth in this study, particularly in Chapter Five, disrupt the attempts to order and condition their social identity. Drawing inspiration from both Gee's work and Michel Foucault's consideration of identity, this study intentionally locates moments of disruption to the

social reproduction process and as a critical ethnographer, I work to expand and stretch social space to capture positive, self-articulated identities. Foucault argues:

The crucial thing for modernity [and the study of the subject in it] is to replace Descartes' question (Who am I as a unique, universal and unhistorical subject?) with Kant's more historically specific query 'What are we at this precise moment of history?' The problem is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are' in order to get rid of this 'simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures, to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state and to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 216)

To consider what youth become in moments in the study challenges us to see the contradictory and fragmented moments of identity formation as they refuse identities that are ascribed to them through institutional labeling of academic identities and even to some extent those social identities sanctioned by the community-organization through youth participation in after-school programs.

Thinking through the concept of identity as a form of disruptable subjectivity enables me to ask questions about identity formation that may not be visible if I were to only consider institutional identities or impositions of identity or if I consider identity as a linear process of psychological development or cultural assimilation as scholarship has done. Rather, through this conception of identity, I can ask questions about the ways institutions such as schools position students with various academic labels and actually interrogate the ways schools position students. The ways schools position students does not have to determine their value or worth, or their ability to learn and critically think in other settings. I also attempt to move beyond institutional labels to inquire about other social identities that emerge. In this way, identity formation is not merely a relationship

between people, groups or between people and institutions, but rather identity formation is a process. It is a process that encounters limits particularly as youth pursue social identities beyond the after-school programs.

Applying an Adapted Version of Gee's (2000) to O'Donnell

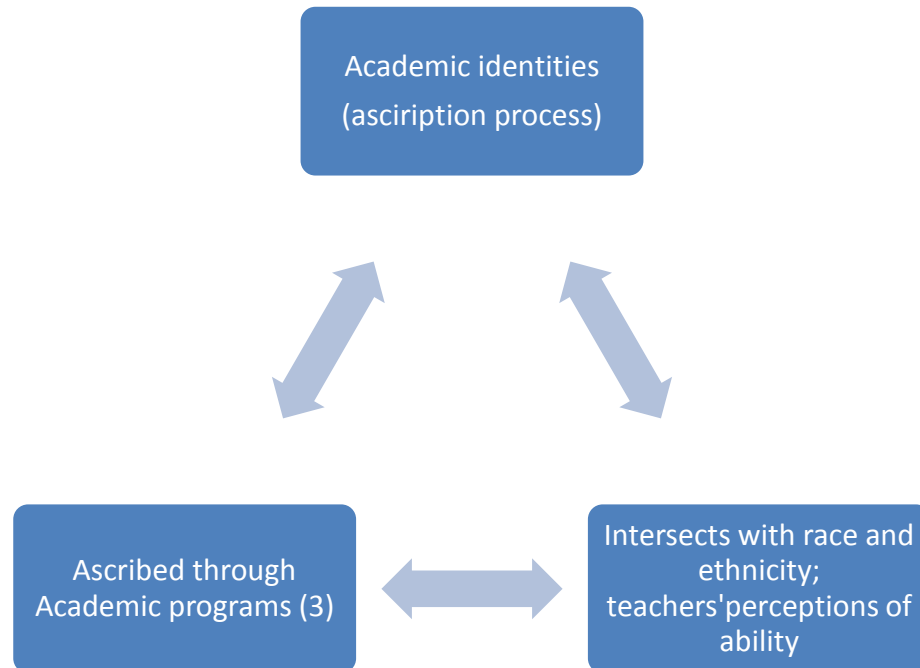


Figure 2. Gee's (2000) Adapted to O'Donnell: Institutional Identity

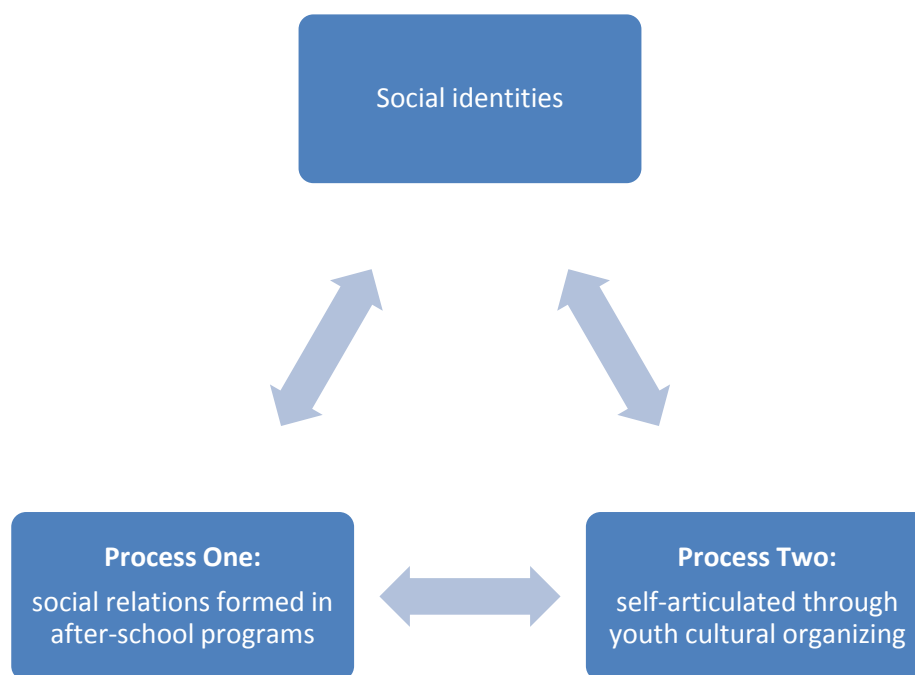


Figure 3. Gee's (2000) Adapted to O'Donnell: Discourse Identity

Using and adapting Gee's (2000) model I was able to make meaning around identity formation at O'Donnell. In Chapter Three I discuss *Institutional identities*, and I adapted this concept to be understood as academic identities. In fact, *Institutional identities*, what I labeled academic identities, were formed by school leadership and teachers' perceptions of student's ability, and then ascribed to students through their assignment in a specific academic program at the school. These ascribed academic identities were also connected to teacher and other staff perceptions of race/class. For instance, one teacher said, "Yea, we have IB (highest achieving label) students, but it doesn't matter if they're IB here; they are still just Latino immigrants who go to a ghetto schools on the south side of Chicago."

With regard to *Discourse identities*, I argue that these are social identities that emerged in the study. I argue that social identities emerge through two processes. The

first process is detailed in Chapter Four and I argue that social identities emerge for youth as they encounter the various after-school programs sponsored by the community-school partnership. The second process is detailed in Chapter Five, and it stretches beyond what Gee's (2000) model of *Discourse identity*, social identities emerging in social relations, offers. The second process of social identity formation occurs as youth self-articulate identities beyond the spaces of the school and community-school programs, and create in their own brand of cultural organizing. I call these self-articulated because these were identities that revealed themselves on the terms of the youth through the process of cultural organizing. In the model these self-articulated identities are still connected to social relations and youth participation in community-school programs because in both process one and process two youth experienced a positive sense of self and increased their sense of belonging; ultimately, youth organized on their own and explored unforeseen dimensions of social identity production.

A Note on Key Terms

This section explains this study's approach to certain terms. For instance, in the study I refer to "students" and to "youth. I refer to students because in one sense they are in fact identified and labeled as students because they attend school. Most of the time participants referred to themselves as students when referring to their experience in school and referred to themselves as youth in the context of their activities outside of the classroom and school. Typically, I use student if I am discussing literature on student identity in schools because that is how literature phrases it (Davidson, 1996; Eckert, 1989; Ngo, 2010). To be labeled a student, considered a student, or identified as a

student, means a person has (always) already been identified and a certain set of behaviors and expectations prescribed for them or built into the label of student—authorized by the institution of the school. I account for this in Chapter Three’s discussion of institutional, academic identity (Gee, 2000). Some scholars use both student and youth in their studies of identity in schools without attention to why in some instances they use student and in others they use youth (Ferguson, 2001; Lee, 2005; Staiger, 2006). As I moved toward literature on youth agency and sought to incorporate the voices of youth in the latter chapters, the literature refers to youth to index a particular youth culture that is defined by youth (Cammarota, 2008, 2011). So, the reader should note that when I refer to youth, I refer to a new formation (a possibility) of identity and a remaking of youth culture that transcends institutional labels. Some scholars problematize the term youth and suggest it is a complex category that carries sets of assumptions (Sobe, 2011), but I do not explore this in the dissertation.

Community: Because I studied identity formation in a community-school partnership, I wanted to consider the definitions, interpretations and forms of community from the perspective of youth as they experienced identity formation. Community in this dissertation is used to connote the “intimate cultures” that youth form across social relations in after-school programs (Levinson, 2001). While I did ask students what community meant to them throughout the study, I found that for the youth community meant a variety of different things that ranged from their school, their block, their neighborhood in Chicago to specific sets of relationships. The most frequent

understanding of community, however, was participants' relationships in particular after-school programs.

To set up the reader for how this dissertation plays with the notion of community, I draw on the notion of governmentality from Foucault (1994).⁸ I understand governmentality as a system of thought or ways we come to think about what “community” means in education research (Pettersson, Popkewitz, Olsson & Krejsler, 2013, p. 5). This study considers identity dynamics that occur in a community-school, warranting a discussion of what a “community” actually means at particular moments in particularly contexts.

Community is often something that is assumed to be positive, but what I found across the study and youth experience of identity was that community meant different things at different moments; it was contingent. As this dissertation considers experiences of identity in relation to community, I propose that community is a strategy of governance. Linking the notion of community to a strategy of governance asks readers to problematize the taken for granted assumptions about any “community” being inclusive, democratic, and attached to an individual's freedom. Little attention to the ways community functions as a strategy of governance exists. Fendler (2006) argues, “In U.S. educational literature community means shared values, unified purposes, and/or common beliefs; community is intertwined with notions of identity, entails moral regulation and emotional management, and normalizes forms of participation and relations among

⁸In his original essay on the notion of governmentality, Foucault (1994) outlines a logic that focuses on the ways in which government ceased being a single sovereign and instead became activities of government, often executed by individuals focused on optimizing the well-being of the population. This means, governing mentalities are formed in institutions such as schools and manifest in social relations among subjects.

people (p. 303-305). As will be discussed, the “community” (whatever it may mean or not mean to youth) was not always accessible to youth. In some moments, particularly in Chapter Four, “community” is problematized because it entails “exclusionary practices” and youth are rejected from some forms of “community” even when they appear to be participating in social activities and solving social problems as they connect issues in the Model UN context to their own community issues in Chicago.⁹

To problematize community, Fendler (2006) suggests discussions of community in educational research have discursive strands that perpetuate assumptions about normalization. This first strand considers community as an alternative to state control (welfare state/communitarianism) and free-market individualism (liberalism). In this conception of community, community is a balance or “third way” between collectivism and individualism.¹⁰ The second strand infuses community with a sense of solidarity and a discourse of “empowerment” (Fendler, 2006, p. 310; Cruikshank, 1999). The assumption here is that community is theorized as a strategic weapon to empower people to effect change. In this theorization of community-as-solidarity the concern is that each

⁹Rose (1999) and others suggest that the process of leading individuals toward “autonomy” and encouraging individuals to participate in solving the problems of society is a form of governance and subjectification. Using the notion of governmentality to think through community shifts the object of inquiry to “an emergent pattern or order of a social system, arising out of complex negotiations and exchanges between intermediate social actors, groups, forces, organizations, public and semi-public institutions in which state organization are only one amongst many others seeking to steer or manage these relations” (Rose, 1999, p. 21; Kooiman, 1993). The point is that individuals freely participate in their own subjectification.

¹⁰Here, membership and participation in the normative framework of community includes and excludes, and scholars do not account for its forms of exclusion. Rose (1999) argues, “Individuals are made responsible for their destiny and for the destiny of society as a whole. Politics is returned to society itself, but no longer in social form: in the form of individual morality, organization of responsibility and ethical community (Rose, 1999, p. 174-175). It is this moral dimension that becomes engendered in the normative framework of community that justifies community while it becomes a site of governance. What this means for youth in the study is that if their behaviors are not aligned with normative frameworks of community, they are excluded. I unravel this in my discussion of institutional identity ascription. The institutional identities determine a student’s relationship to the school community to some extent.

individual is part of a “democratic, homogenized” community, rendering identities and politics of difference less central at best and reinscribing power hierarchies at worst. Some scholars have problematized the ways “community” as a mobilizing tactic imbues those participating with a sense of social responsibility and moral obligation to better themselves (Rose & Miller, 1992; Rose, 1996). This is problematic because individuals become guided by a rationality that appears to advance their free will to participate in democratic processes (community organizing or having your voice heard), but really this process of forming a “community,” is made possible by exclusionary practices. I refer to this in Chapter Four and in the conclusion.

The tension between identity formation and community complicates the assumptions of notions of community as inclusive and collaborative because underlying the logic of community is a process of exclusion that posits some identities and behaviors as more acceptable than others. Instead of focusing merely on how institutions impose identities, then, the notion of community gives people a sense of agency as if they enact their agency by being a part of a particular community. Then, the identity formation process becomes more about what Gee (2000) calls “a particularly modern problem of working out our identities” (p. 112). This “modern” problem that results from Enlightenment tenets such as individuality, freedom, and progress asks individuals to “make sense of their identity,” and to “interpret” the meaning of his or her identity. Once again, on the surface this logic yields identity as wrapped up in notions of individuality, progress, and the choice to be a part of greater social projects of inclusion. We do not question potential exclusionary practices involved in the formation of communities

because we assume we are choosing to be a part of a community. This dissertation, instead calls into question this logic by asking how Latino immigrant youth interpret their identities in multiple and potentially contradictory ways in relation to various communities. I reveal the tensions around what community means in Chapter Five in particular as youth in the study move beyond the sanctioned spaces of the community-school. This study thinks of community in such a way to create openings for research and to also examine spaces of regulation and spaces of meaning.

Identity, constituted through community membership, results in multiple identities and a combination of memberships across spaces of community. Identity, then, points to the various memberships or categories that a subject might – become. For instance, in educational literature, subjects become member-ed or categorized by race, class, gender. Modern identity is theorized through ascriptions like race, class, gender, sociological categories like these are used by educational researchers to help understand “difference” instead of investigating the actual processes of exclusion occurring through this categorization.

Space: Because I propose an approach to identity as emerging out social relations, spaces where identity forms are imbued with meaning. Scholars emphasize that space is not neutral (Helfenbein & Taylor, 2009; Lefebvre, 1991, p. 68; Massey, 2005). Critical Geography scholarship maps the socio-spatial relations of power, identity and ruptures in totalizing narratives about minority groups.¹¹ Critical Geographers, seeing

¹¹Many other scholars contributed to the way in which I came to understand space and the ways identity formation occurs (Massey, 2005; Nesor, 1997). Sobe and Fischer (2009) argue, “Space as a domain of cultural practice has become a consideration in social science research in education because of

space as relational, must take seriously the injustices that have occurred and are occurring historically, socially, and spatially (Soja, 2010). The point here is that space is not neutral; spaces are sites of marginalization and they are also potentially usable by youth as they traverse them and renegotiate identity across them.

In the next chapter I detail the methodology for the study, and at the end of the chapter I provide a map of the three findings chapters. However, here I mention that each of the findings chapters relate back to the conceptual framework. Chapter Three, for instance, draws on the conceptual framework and Gee's (2000) model of identity, specifically *Institutional identity* that I outlined above. Specifically, I discuss the ways in which institutional identities are ascribed to students. Chapter Four draws on the conceptual framework and Gee's (2000) model of identity, specifically *Discourse identity* as well as other scholarship on social identity formation to explore how social identity emerges through participation in after-school programs. I also consider the identity formation process in relation to community by accounting for the ways community(ies) includes and excludes youth. Chapter Five maintains that a brand of social identity emerges, drawing on Gee's (2000) *Discourse identity* as identities that emerge from social relations. But, I complicate social identity formation processes in Chapter Five and turn to other theoretical tools to elucidate social identity formation.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology for this study that is framed as a critical ethnography. I wish to consider the identity formation process from a unique and different ontological and epistemological perspective than previous literature on the topic of identity formation of Latino immigrant youth.¹ In order to accomplish this, I have developed an emergent qualitative research design that is framed through the lens of critical ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Foley, Levinson, & Hurtig, 2000; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996; Madison, 2012; Noblit, 1999; Quantz, 1992; Villenas & Foley, 2011). The chapter provides a description and rationale for the critical ethnography as the lens for the study, including key features of this mode of inquiry such as my in-depth attention to researcher positionality and representation of participants. Then, I move onto a discussion of the data gathering and collection processes and data analysis procedures. I end the chapter with a rich description of the social context because it is argued here that attention to the social context in critical ethnography is imperative for interpreting the data and discussions in subsequent chapters.

The rationale for the critical ethnography is that this method enables me to consider the interpretations and perceptions of identity and community of immigrant

¹ To remind the reader, I refer to youth in this chapter primarily as youth because they identify as such. All of the youth in this dissertation are part of the larger Latino immigrant youth category that I discussed in Chapter One, but I focus less on their racial/ethnic markers and rather on their experiences as youth.

youth within a broader socio-political context. It also enables me as the researcher to reflect on my own positionality in the research (Madison, 2012; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). In addition, the critical ethnographic method allows the researcher to bring her awareness of how subjective interpretations are wrapped up in and impacted by the socio-political context. Madison (2012) argues, “We often rely on theory to interpret or illuminate a social phenomenon. However, though, theory may guide and inspire us in composing a lay summary, designing interview questions, or coding data, it is not theory but a methodological process that directs the completion of the task” (p. 12).

With this in mind, this methodology tends to the socio-political context of historically and presently marginalized groups such as the Latino immigrant youth in this study and the ways in which power from that context circulates in the daily realities of youth (Carspecken, 1996). Another point is that critical ethnography aligns with researchers that are interested in advocating for the liberation of marginalized groups (Creswell, 2004). In this study, critical ethnography provides the data to describe and critique the role of education policy and schools and their impact on the development—or lack of development—of positive youth identities.

This study asks how a specific set of Latino immigrant youth make sense of their identity in relation to notions of community given that they engage in programs before, during, and after school as part of attending a comprehensive, urban public high school in Chicago that is partnered with a community organization that focuses on educational issues in the Latino community. The primary subjects in this study are youth who participate in programs that are organized through a public school-community

organization partnership and other activities that emerged throughout the course of the study. The students at the research site are largely Latino, but that is an assumption based on school data that notes that 86% of the school's population is Latino. Rather than assuming that these students will be Mexican, Central American or another form of Latino, this study investigates the identity formation process from the perspective of the youth. This means, I did not make assumptions about their racial or ethnic, cultural background, but instead I let it emerge in the data. The tension in this project and in the dissertation is that I do refer to the youth as Latino immigrant youth in order to contribute to the body of scholarship while also being attentive to the fact that youth did not first and foremost identify as Latino. This study considers identity as a process, "a process that is on-going," yielding multi-layered understandings of identity(ies) as they emerge through the interaction of the students, the community organization and the school (Yon, 2000, p. 13). In this process, guided by the assumption from the critical ethnographic stance that I want to understand identity formation from their perspective, the study focuses on the ways that these particular students identify and make sense of that process of identifying as well as the ways their identity forms through both institutional and social processes.

In order to answer the research questions, address the gaps identified in the research literature and contribute to the scholarship on Latino immigrant youth experiences of identity and students and the literature on community-school partnerships, this critical ethnography uses educational narratives of youth to express the ways in which they interpret their social worlds. These "rich cases" yield an understanding of the

process of identity formation as it is produced out of the various institutional and social processes that I argue occur in Chapter Four and Five (Spindler & Spindler, 1987). I sought to understand particular peoples' beliefs, practices, and behaviors from their perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Dimitriadis, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). From an ethnographic perspective, I am interested in "what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use" (Spradley, 1980, p. 5) and the "layered connections that knot them together" (Nespor, 1997, p. xiv). The next sections distinguish between traditional ethnographic inquiry and critical ethnographic inquiry. Such an understanding of the difference is critical for interpreting the social context that was saturated with politics and inequity that impacted youth identity dynamics throughout the study.

Why Ethnography?

A study that revolves around the experiences of identity and perceptions of community is necessarily qualitative. Further, to investigate identity formation, one needs to go to the places and spaces where identity forms, these places are the natural settings for these students, e.g., schools and community organization activities and spaces. Part and parcel of identity formation is the social interaction that occurs in such spaces. These interactions take on meaning in places and spaces because people there invest in webs of significance (Geertz, 1973). Identity, in places and spaces of significance, is constantly in negotiation as individuals are up against other structural and material factors that simultaneously place limits and help expand identity as it forms. This said, it is necessary to pursue an understanding of Latino immigrant youth identity formation in these potential places and spaces. The choice of an ethnographic

method lends itself to understanding the ways in which spaces are constructed, manipulated, contested, and navigated by Latino immigrant youth in Chicago. These spaces include, but are not limited to, school-based spaces, community-school program spaces, and policy spaces as they relate to Latino immigrant youth identity formation. While quantitative data assisted in describing the schools' contexts, test performance attendance, and disciplinary concerns of participants, this study is most interested in capturing students' perceptions of how, why, and if at all, a community-school partnership shapes their identity, assists their transformation from the institutional labeling and limits of the school and positively influences their educational mobility in the K-12 schooling system.

The choice of ethnographic methods guided by a conceptual lens that theorizes identity, subject-making, community, and space as material lived realities enables the researcher to link the conceptual with the material, lived realities (Soja, 2010). The purpose of linking the conceptual and the material, lived experiences is to offer an alternative perspective to the dominant conversations in policy and research on the academic achievement of racial and ethnic minorities, specifically here Latino students by actually seeing their experience through their eyes in their natural settings.

Ethnography

Broadly, ethnographic research methods are used to get an in-depth understanding of how individuals make sense of their lived reality (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The researcher goes into the settings where individuals go about their daily lives and records field notes and analyzes the range of social structures within the settings. Researchers

can use participant observation as a research tool that enables researchers to make extensive visits to the setting under study. While the traditional ethnography method was used by anthropologists, sociologists and social scientists have used this method and its practices of field observations and in depth interviewing. This study's research question determines the use of ethnographic method given that the research question seeks an understanding of the identity formation processes for Latino immigrant youth. The aim is to understand the social context from students' perspectives, the processes that contribute to their identity formation, and the ways in which they remake culture, writing against dominant discourses that surround youth from racial and ethnic minority groups.

Classical or traditional ethnography was rooted in a positivist tradition that understood social reality as something that is "out there" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 47). In addition, classical ethnographers construct a story from the field that is considered an "objective" account of events as they occur in a discrete time and place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This classical, traditional approach to ethnography is challenged by different paradigmatic approaches in qualitative research, such as the "critical" approach next.

Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnography adds a political or transformative angle to classical ethnography, a consideration of the researcher's positionality, and a consideration of representation of research subjects (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Madison, 2012; Noblit, 1999; Quantz, 1992). While my use of ethnographic methods remain the same as traditional ethnographies as far as I did field work, participant observations and semi-

structured interviewing, I also sought to understand social life in order to consider the voices and power dynamics for marginalized groups (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The critical dimension of ethnography is particular to researchers who are interested in investigating the positions and voices of marginalized groups with the hope of effecting change through research. While the study is exploratory and descriptive, the findings tell us something about how students perceive and interpret their identity formation processes in relation to community and community-school partnerships. The findings suggest that school limits identity and student identity formation in ways that initiate student desire to enact social change through other pathways.

Moreover, Quantz (1992) argues, “Critical ethnography’s contribution to this dialogue lies principally in its ability to make concrete the particular manifestations of marginalized cultures located in a broader sociopolitical framework” (p. 462). Students are uniquely positioned in larger, national discourse on immigration and educational reforms that are impacting their local community. While I am studying their perspective, I was highly aware of the national, political discourses regarding their status as well as the ways in which academic discourse has previously and poorly studied them. This position I offer is further supported by Quantz’ argument that critical ethnography arises out of dissatisfaction with the ways in which the sociology of education studies identity formation by only focusing on education achievement or by only focusing on a deficit model of identity (p. 453). The point here is that the work of critical ethnographer introduces the ability of researchers to critique the social world as experienced by

marginalized groups, and the power relations that underlay institutions and social practices.

A final note on the work of critical ethnography is that within this approach, researchers acknowledge that representations of reality are *also* embedded in power relations and thus ethnographic methods are warranted to go to the places and spaces where meaning is made. For me, the “critical” aspect of ethnography here allows me to ask questions of my participants while also considering larger social, cultural and political discourses and contexts that may also influence the ways in which they do their interpreting and perceiving. My intention is to be aware of the power dynamics that are a part of their context, including the dynamic of my role as researcher.

To take a “critical” stance, researchers must be held accountable for that which they observe and the ways in which they analyze and interpret data. Researchers in the “critical” schema must not only position themselves in the larger social context and tend to inequalities that marginalized groups endure, but they must bring readers into that context and into the social worlds of participants. I utilize critical ethnography with rich cases in order to achieve the answers to the questions I have in the study and to account for my researcher positionality. This type of reflexivity and self-awareness of the researcher is imperative for qualitative projects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) and for researchers interested in working the “hyphens” and the “ruins” or contested spaces of research (Dimitriadis, 2001; Pillow & St. Pierre, 2000; Weis & Fine, 2000).

As a critical ethnographer, I am also attentive to issues of power, control, and the ways in which identities are shaped by membership in the community-school partnership, specifically the institutional labeling of youth from racial and ethnic minority groups. Labels such as “Regular,” “highly motivated,” and “at risk” were subjectively ascribed to youth in the study based on teacher perceptions of abilities of youth from low-income, minority groups. The institutional, ascription process of academic identity sets up hierarchies in the school and sets the conditions for positive and negative academic trajectories for youth. Thus, the critical approach is necessary for me to consider the power dynamics involved in identity formation. I suggest in subsequent chapters that youth transcend the institutional positioning of identity to remake youth culture, and produce positive social identities.

Two key components of critical ethnography need addressing here: researcher positionality and dialogue with human subjects. I have selected these two components to address because these are the two components of critical ethnography that distinguish it from traditional ethnography and are relevant for the assumptions I have in this study with my approach to identity and power dynamics. The second component is also referred to as “Dialogue with the Other” (Madison, 2012, p. 8). I am uncomfortable referring to my potential research subjects as “Other,” but for the purpose of delineating the ways in which scholars discuss tenets of critical ethnography the word “Other” is used to describe research subjects in this section. I define each of the components and then provide my own description of my positionality and the ways I addressed each of these components during the study.

Researcher Positionality

The first component that distinguishes critical ethnography from traditional ethnography is the issue of researcher positionality. I bring a belief in social justice and an interest in hearing the voices of individuals that experience marginalization. In this study, I am interested in a marginalized population through segregation in the city and through unjust educational policies. I consider my own position here and the power dynamic that I create as the researcher. The relationships that I built impact the study, particularly in the way I pursued questions in the study and in the way I represented the stories of participants. Madison (2012) argues:

Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain. By ethical responsibility, I mean a compelling sense of duty and commitment based on moral principles and hence a compassion for living beings; as a result, the researcher feels a moral obligation to make a contribution toward changing those conditions toward greater freedom and equity. (p. 5)

I take this ethical responsibility very seriously because I believe that previous scholarship on immigrants made inaccurate arguments and assumptions about the cultural deficits of immigrants and other racial and ethnic minorities. In order to explore the social worlds of these students, I often pursued the things that they perceive as relevant for their understanding of identity in relation to community. Moreover, I am guided by the critical ethnographic perspective that “takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control” (p. 5).

To elaborate, the critical ethnographer needs to explicitly discuss how their own acts of studying and representing people and situations are acts of domination even as

critical ethnographers reveal the same in what they study” (p. 3). Positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004).

Positionality and Negotiating Researcher Identity

My positionality as a critical ethnographer involved moments that I did not foresee. I walked into a web of power relations that included relationships between the community organization and the school. These power dynamics were present within the community organization and across the community-school partnership. As I gained entry to O’Donnell through the guidance and advice of the executive director of Redwood Park Council, Quinn, I felt an allegiance to him. But, then, I learned the ways in which his staff of youth organizers struggled with him as their boss because he was a “white male who doesn’t always get the needs of the community,” as one staff member said.

My long conversations with Quinn while he was driving home after many 15 hour days revealed his awareness about his cultural difference from his staff. I asked him how he manages his relationship with his staff of all Latinos from the community, most of whom attended O’Donnell. He told me, “You have to listen, Sophia. You or I can’t be the only ones speaking.” It was in these conversations that I learned that Quinn saw me as part of what Villenas (2012) called the “we” (nosotros) of qualitative inquiry that often excluded the perspectives of participants. By this Villenas calls attention to the importance of how we as researchers position ourselves and in turn how that positioning as researchers impacts our data collection and analysis. As a researcher, I was positioned

as part of the “You/I” with Quinn, which was different from the “they” that made up his staff. Quinn’s You/I was different from what Villenas (2012) and other scholars (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004) urge researchers to consider, though, as they rethink who counts as the “we” (nosotros) of qualitative inquiry. While Quinn saw us as a “we,” that “we” was not on the same side as the community organization staff. The staff, mostly Latino females, did not trust me initially in part due to my positioning alongside their “jefe” as they referred to Quinn sarcastically. I had to maintain my relationship with Quinn by engaging in questions about program improvement particularly because he saw me as an asset to developing their youth programming. But, at the same time, I had to establish positive, productive relationships with the staff.

Initially, I worked hard to develop relationships with the community organization staff members because they were a direct link to youth. Certainly I could attend youth programs, but the experience of youth sizing me up as the community organization staff did was a time of frustration. Community organization staff referred to my “not being from the neighborhood,” and said that their “jefe” liked me because I was smart. I endured silences that revealed the tension my presence created at after-school programs. The community organization staff felt as though I was there to evaluate them and made me feel as though I had to fight to prove my Latina-ness and my commitment to the community.

These tensions and the web of power relations in the terrain of research demand that critical ethnographers consider their position with the multiple stakeholders. Even though this was a study of youth identity formation in a community-school, I still faced

moments when I had to figure out with whom to align myself and why. Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer and Weis (2012) discuss the need for examining researcher dilemmas in urban schools particularly in the contested terrain in marginalized communities. Their work asks critical questions that I pondered as I undertook my critical ethnography and reflected on positionality. Moreover, their work provided a window for a novice (and overly invested and emotional) researcher such as myself in the early stages of my research. They argue:

Qualitative research, ethnography in particular, is deeply personal. Herein lies a fundamental tension: researching that which interests us or is close to us, subsequently prompts a number of personal and/or ethical questions regarding who we are, how we present ourselves in the field, how we enact our relationships with participants, how we represent our findings, how and when we intervene with regard to what we see and experience in the field, and how, and under what circumstances we disconnect (or not) from long-term field research sites. In essence, the questions of concern become: (a) how do we perform our identity(ies) as researchers in the field and to what extent do such identities meld with and/or conflict with our other, multiple, non-researcher identities? (b) how do we engage in research while simultaneously working with and across varied groups of stakeholders that increasingly envision themselves as sharing little common ground and managing the contingent ethical and personal dilemmas that arise. (Stich et al., 2012, p. 463)

I consider their point of negotiating identity in the field—specifically who one is and how one is perceived in the moments in my research. While navigating my researcher positionality among adults consumed much of my energy throughout the study, my interest and concern remained with youth experiences.

I reflect next on my positionality with the youth and the initial struggles I faced in building relationships with the youth and earning their trust. Critical to this process was negotiating my own racial and ethnic identity and others' perceptions of my racial and ethnic alliances.

“You’re White, Right?”: Becoming “Sophia, our Older Friend”

Having been a middle school and high school teacher, I felt very comfortable working with and building relationships with youth. I walked into O’Donnell knowing that even though my researcher skills may have been still developing, my ability to connect with youth has always been something I am more than capable of achieving. This stems from my commitment to being on the side of kids, and learning to be on the side of kids from my first principal in New York City Public Schools. However, I was in a new school and a new terrain, and I still had to earn my way into their lives. To illustrate the transition from an outsider to becoming, “Sophia, our older friend,” I turn to field notes and then reflect upon this experience.

V: “Are you white? Wait, are you Polish? You’re white, right?”

SR: Why do you think I am white? [I sit down with my veggie chili]

V and D: “Is that white people food?”

SR: Laughs, well it’s supposed to be chili, but I didn’t add enough chili pepper to it so it’s more like tomato soup with veggies and beans. So, why do you think I’m white?

V: I don’t know. Wait, are you polish?

SR: Haha, no I am not polish. I am half white, from my mom, and half Cuban. My dad was Cuban.

V: Does your mom have red hair? See, I told you she was white.

SR: No, she has darker brown with some red in her hair, so you can see [point to my hair] there’s tints of lighter brown and auburn/red in it. In the summer it gets lighter like my mom’s hair. Well, not she has gray hair, but it used to be darker.

SR: What are you? You even have green eyes.

V: [Smiles], yes, well my dad is El Salvadorian and my mom is Mexican.

D: I'm just straight Mexican.

V: Soooo [stapling and folding papers], why do you come here every day?

SR: Well, I am doing my PhD so I am here to do my research.

V: What is your research? That [PhD] is like the last degree, right?

D: Can we do the interview during our class?

V: We don't mean to be rude. You seem white. I don't know; most Latina girls are [looks at D and smiles] they are ratchet [which is gross or slutty I learn] or they are nasty and defend their gang-banger boyfriends. You have like, I don't know, the way you carry yourself. It's just different. You don't seem like a Latina. You're not like us

D: Dumbass her name is Ms. Rodriguez.

SR: Does it bother you that I seem different?

V: No no, I'm not being disrespectful.

They seem curious and guarded in our conversation. They ask me if I will be in their class that day. After they left, Ms. F. and a parent from the community organization said to me that they were fascinated by the girls' openness in asking me if I am white. T and Ms. F said that females in the Latina community tend to be more casual or free with the things they say, and that I speak more "like a white person." They think that the girls perceived me as white because of the way I carry myself and my hair. In this moment, I feel a distance or maybe an awareness. They recognized that I make have a name that is supposed to connote sameness, or similarity, but they sense that I am not like them. Do I tell them? I told them my dad was Cuban, but I don't sound like I have accent. Do they care? What do I reveal? I feel like a fraud. I am not from this community (Field notes, December, 2012).

I reflected on this exchange as a moment in the research when I felt that what I said to the youth mattered or would/could determine the level of trust I built with them. These moments when youth stared at me, touched my hair, or tried on my scarves occurred in the early months of the study. I knew they were just trying to figure out why I was there to "study" them. I would always leave my computer or notes visible and say to them they

were always welcome to read what I wrote down. This helped me build my relationships with them, and many of the youth throughout the course of the study did stand over my shoulder as I typed field notes, to their teacher's dismay at times.

Figuring out if I was white became something I had to deal with as I have always kept my own struggles with my identity to myself. But, to access the social worlds of the youth I had to be willing to reveal pieces of myself as well. A key piece of this transition from outsider to becoming "Sophia, our older friend" involved me revealing that I had similar class positioning to the youth and similar desires for "more" than the life my mother had lived; but, I also grew up in a wealthy, white community. Despite my own family's struggle, I was surrounded by resources and wealth unlike the youth in the study. I had access to resources and the various forms of capital that often are aligned with school success. I had a different educational trajectory because I "fit in" as white in my community and was with the smart kids in my high school. I did not face the same educational inequities that are present in large, urban districts like Chicago Public Schools. As I told youth these things, they came to appreciate our similarities and our differences, and most importantly, they seemed to not care if I was white or Latina. They began to see me as, "Sophia, our older friend," knowing I was on their side and wanted to tell their stories.

Dialogue and Representation of the "Other"

The second component of a critical ethnography is dialogue with the "Other" (Madison, 2012). Madison argues that researchers need to consider the ways in which they represent the narratives, interpretations and stories of their research subjects.

Madison urges, “As we recognize the vital importance of illuminating the researcher’s positionality, we also understand that critical ethnography requires a deep and abiding dialogue with the Other. This means that our attention requires we remain grounded in the empirical world of the Other” (p. 8). To clarify, I now consider the ways in which my researcher positionality informs my representation and understanding of my research subjects. Critical ethnography is a “meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among the Other(s),” in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward viable meanings of the social world of the phenomena (p. 9). To ensure that I consider this component of critical ethnography, I use youth voice and their interpretations of social reality throughout the chapters in this dissertation. I also address this issue of representing their experience in the methods section below.

Relevance and Challenges of Critical Ethnography for this Study

Denzin (1997) argues, “The ethnographer discovers the multiple ‘truths’ that operate in the social world, the stories people tell one another about the things that matter to them. These stories move people to action; they rest on a distinction between facts and truth. Truth and facts are socially constructed, and build stories around the meanings of the facts” (Denzin, 1997, p. 355). Moreover, the critical ethnographer understands the meaning for participants of the study. She understands the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions often identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences (Maxwell, 1996). In this study, I am concerned with the perspectives Latino immigrant youth, including the process, procedures, and apparatuses of their meaning-making, and “where truth is produced” for,

about, and from them. In each of the chapters of the dissertation I address the “multiple truths” that circulate and the ways in which youth navigate their positioning and also the ways in which they renegotiate their identities.

This type of ethnography is challenging for education researchers, and it has been characterized and/or criticized for refusing to commit to a model of scientific practice which is defined by the development and the testing of theories since it rejects positivist traditions and classical ethnography. To pursue research that resists universal truths, or the essentializing of identity that I mention in the review of the literature section, critical ethnography as a method is necessary in order to consider the developing, divergent and potentially contradictory accounts of the real. As such, scholars such as Tamboukou and Ball (2003) argue that ethnography combined with assumptions of post-structuralist approaches to identity and power, subject-formation and “truth-telling”—are “disruptive” and they account for the power-knowledge relations that operate in local and specific settings, enabling the researcher to “focus upon events, spaces which divide those in struggle” (p. 4). Later chapters in the dissertation hone in on spaces of struggle. These spaces of struggle reveal the shedding of identities that are thrust upon youth by assumptions about their academic ability based on stereotypes. These spaces of struggle reject the institutional labeling that sets up hierarchies in the school and attempts to reproduce inequality beyond school.

As mentioned in the conceptual framework section, my consideration of the meaning-making processes of youth is guided by assumptions consistent with a post-positivist paradigm, and thus a methodology that includes a critical ethnographic method

is necessary and consistent with the way I approach identity as process that includes both intuitional ascription of identity and as a process of social identity emergence. With a post-positivist conception of identity and community—a conception that destabilizes these concepts—it is my assumption in this study that the theoretical principles that I derive from analysis of the ethnographic data are not inscribed in any system of universal norms or principles. In this rejection of universalistic notions, categories, and principles, this brand of ethnography considers identity formation as the process of creating, emerging, and negotiating subjectivities across multiple spaces. Again, it is an assumption here that identity is not one singular thing or moment. Rather, identity is theorized as having multiple dimensions and forms. The identity is rather identity(ies), and it is socially and culturally constructed. The subject whose identity is conceived this way is socially constructed in discursive practices but simultaneously able to reflect upon these relations and practices that constitutes it. This means, I approach youth as having the ability to interpret their identity and to reveal the multiple dimensions of identity.

In the details below, I describe the site selection for the study, participants and sampling, and the specifics of other data collection methods and data analysis procedures. I end the chapter with a rich description of the social context to set the reader up for the subsequent chapters.

Site Selection

Redwood Park is a pseudonym for the neighborhood that I traveled to almost daily during the 2012-2013 school year. I also name the community organization, Redwood Park Council and its high school partner is referred to as O'Donnell High

School. The Redwood Park community is a low-income working class neighborhood in Chicago. The ethnic history of the community has changed considerably in the last 20 years. I learned that the school's current principal grew up in the neighborhood when it was largely a community of Irish, Polish, and German immigrants. The principal told me he grew up just down the street from O'Donnell and had attended the school 20 some years prior. He took pride in being in the Redwood Park community, witnessing its shift in demographics over the years. At the time of the study (2012-2013), the demographics were far different from the days that the principal attended O'Donnell. The community contains just under 50,000 residents. Many of these residents are also undocumented immigrant families, allowing for many opportunities for the youth to learn about and critique various immigration reform efforts at national and local levels through after-school programs as well as other organizing opportunities. I discuss this later in the chapter under the description of participant observations. The community is approximately 85% Hispanic according to Census data from 2010.² O'Donnell students are 96% low income.

Redwood Park Council is a community-based, nonprofit organization serving a low-income working class neighborhood in Chicago's southwest side. Their mission is to create safer communities, improve the learning environment at public schools, preserve affordable housing, provide a voice for youth, protect immigrants' rights, promote gender equity, and fight all forms of violence. The organization was founded in

²In order to protect the identity of the youth and other participants in the study, I am not providing the citation to the census data because the community name would also implicate the high school name, and both have pseudonyms per the requirements of the Institutional Review Board that approved this research. I used information from Redwood Park Council's and O'Donnell's website to also compile demographic information about the community.

the late 1990s under the leadership of the same executive director. The organization provides resources and programs to students and families in the Redwood Park neighborhood in order to address issues of poverty and inequality.

O'Donnell high school is a large, urban high school in Chicago Public Schools. As of 2012-2013, there were 2,575 students enrolled at O'Donnell. I learned that approximately 50-53% of students drop out of O'Donnell. To give more context, the year of the study the school had approximately 750 incoming freshman and approximately 250 graduating seniors. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the school sets up academic hierarchies, or what one youth referred to as "tiers of education," in the school. Students tend to leave school during the sophomore year. I was interested in the various identity formation processes that contributed to students' perception of community belonging. This was critical for me because large urban schools such as O'Donnell contain high numbers of students from racial and ethnic minority groups. These students are overrepresented in the dropout rates. Students are feeling disconnected from school so these dropout rates and differential education experiences were part of the qualitative exploration of youth identity and belonging.

The community-school partnership between Redwood Park Council and O'Donnell is a formal partnership that is funded through an Illinois state grant. This grant funding provides resources such as before school programs for academic remediation and after-school programs for youth leadership development. One unique

feature of what is known as the Full-Service Community Schools Initiative³ is that the staff of the community organization has a strong presence in the school. Quinn the executive director tells his staff, “We need to hug O’Donnell,” referring to the strong presence he wants to maintain at the school to encourage youth participation in programming. To achieve this constant “hugging,” Redwood Park Council positions two staff members inside the school. I became very connected with one person because she was the liaison between Redwood Park Council and the school leadership at O’Donnell, and she oversaw all programming at O’Donnell. I call her Fiona. Fiona introduced me to the various youth organizers and teachers that she thought could be helpful to me during the research. I discuss the specific programs that I observed under the participant observation section below.

Knowing that a community-school partnership could factor into identity formation of the Latino immigrant youth in the study, I anticipated that the youth in after-school programs could experience positive social identities and thus selected a particular community-school partnership that also could offer insight into a marginalized population such as Latino immigrants in a low-income community.

To connect the site selection to the research design and its frame of critical ethnography, I also considered the current educational policy context that includes the proliferation of charter schools across large, urban districts and mayoral policies of

³In 1996, the Polk Bros. Foundation launched the Full Service Schools Initiative (FSSI) to tackle barriers to student success in Chicago public schools and increase the involvement of parents in their children’s education. Grants were made over several years enabling each school to partner with a nonprofit organization and offer programs including academic enrichment activities, adult education, English as a Second Language classes, technology training, art activities, recreation and health services. I learned this information from the community organization’s executive director.

privatization here in Chicago. In the face of policies of privatization, few scholars (Warren & Mapp, 2011) have turned to studying the positive impact that community-schools do have on families in local communities. Even the scholars in Warren and Mapp's research look more broadly at community-organization models as larger strategies of education reform. I found it necessary to investigate youth experiences at the micro-levels in a community-school model.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is defined in social science research as the who or the what of ethnographic study. When I looked at data from participant observations and from interviews, the level at which data was analyzed was the level of the individual. While individuals were located in classrooms, after-school programs, and spaces outside of the school building, individuals were still studied across activities and episodes. As I analyzed data to answer the research question, I made meaning of these interactions through youth interactions across the community-school partnership. What counts as cultural meaning of the youth, or the stuff of ethnography, comes from the mouths and experiences of youth. The stories reported in the study are from Latino immigrant youth involved in the community-school.

Participants and Sampling

The focus of this ethnographic study is on student experiences, stories, and interactions in naturalistic settings where it is hypothesized that identity formation occurs. This study's phenomenon refers to how identities of youth are constituted, negotiated, and contested as these students encounter/navigate a community organization and its

partnership with their high school. In each of the analysis chapters, I introduce the reader to the youth, so this section describes the broad process of participant recruitment. The initial sample criteria for the study included: age 14-18, male and female, immigrant participants in the community-school programs. I knew going into the study that the high school had a high population of Latino immigrant and undocumented students, but I did not use race or ethnicity as a specific piece of criteria. I initially proposed multiple sampling phrases for the reason that in ethnography the researcher needs to learn the field and develop relationships. I did, however, build a relationship with the community organization, the executive director and his liaison, Fiona, at O'Donnell to assist me with my initial sampling.

The first phase of sampling for semi-structured interviews occurred after two months in the field during formal data collection. At that point I did not know what or who mattered. Drawing on Creswell's (1998) notion of sampling phrases, I determined the sample strategy in this initial round would be random purposeful. The characteristics of this random purposeful strategy were from a list of 300+ that the liaison at Redwood Park Council handed me, I had an initial group of names of students that were participating in community-school programs and were between ages 14-18. I selected five students from this list to recruit for interviews. These students were involved in after-school programs that I also intended to observe, so I went to those after-school programs and discussed my research and explained that I had randomly chosen their names from a list that was provided to me by Redwood Park Council. Of these five students only two agreed and returned the consent form to me for a later interview.

These students were involved in the after-school program the Dream Act Club. This initial sampling phase occurred after a few months in the field, and interviews occurred from December, 2012-January, 2013, though I also interviewed these students multiple times during the study.

The second phase of sampling included the sample strategy stratified purposeful sampling. In this type of strategy, the researcher hones in on specific criteria by focusing on traits and subgroups. As I learned the academic hierarchies of students at O'Donnell (discussed in Chapter Three) and the different academic trajectories of students in after-school programs, I decided to pursue interviews with students from different sub-groups in order to fully answer the research question about the identity formation processes of Latino immigrant youth in a community school. In this sample strategy, the researcher determines the specific traits of subgroups after being in the field. The subgroups were aligned with the academic programs that discovered at O'Donnell: The International Baccalaureate (IB) cohort, AP/Honors eligible or AVID students, and the Regulars. Students in each of these academic subgroups also received other labels such as "the smartest in the school" (IB), "highly motivated, but low-achieving" (AVID), and "low-achieving and not interested in school" (the Regulars). Given my interest in the ways youth experience identity in relation to community at the school, I sampled across these subgroups in phase two, which roughly occurred between March-May, 2013. This strategy enabled me to explore questions related to academic identity and social identity formation for the youth across programs.

The third sampling phase included the sampling strategy convenience sampling. The characteristics of this group of students were general education students, or the Regulars, that were suggested to me based on recommendations of teachers and other community organization staff. The participants in this phase were also ones that I pursued after many hours of observations as well, and ultimately spoke to between April-June, 2013. In this phase, I also include students that approached me and expressed a desire to share their experiences. At times, these were not formal, semi-structured interviews, but rather, these students were a part of either an after-school program or an organizing activity that occurred. I include them here because in my mind I asked some of the same questions as I did in the semi-structured interviews.

Data Sources

The primary sources of data in this critical ethnography included: interviews (youth, teachers, principal, and community organization staff), field notes from participant observations (classroom observations, after-school program observations, and the traveling field), analytic memos, and artifacts. I describe in detail each of these data sources and how they were analyzed in relation to the conceptual framework and research question.

Interviews

Spradley (1979) distinguishes between ethnographic interviewing and ethnographic observation. I discuss the interview as a method in my data collection process and then discuss the specifics of participant observations. Spradley and many others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2005) emphasize that ethnographic

interviewing establishes a “human-to-human relationship between interviewer and interviewee and a desire to understand rather than to explain” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 706). Since this study asks about the experiences of Latino immigrant youth identity in relation to community, I was interested in understanding the social worlds and perspectives of youth being studied (Willis, 2007, p. 107). Pinar (1995) argues, “Human understanding, then, occurs in actual, lived situations” (p. 424). The key point for my study is a concern and intentional focus upon the lived reality or what Pinar calls the “lived meaning” of subjects. Pinar, citing another scholar, helps us understanding the lived experience of subjects in this research study:

First, lived experience is characterized by immediacy, vividness, or presentness in which there is no separation into subject and object. Next, lived experience has a sense of lasting importance and significance. Lived meaning is what can be remembered vividly, even in the future, with its impact and import, even though the precise interpretation of the original experience may change through time. It is the voiceless voice, unheard cry, speechless words, shapeless expressions that is growing in the experience of a person. Dialogue is the soil of lived meaning. (p. 431)

Dialogue in ethnographic studies is not limited to a conversation between two people during the research. Rather, dialogue is about the multiple and contradictory voices (Angrosino, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 731). I am interested throughout this dissertation in ensuring that youth voice is privileged and that “lived meaning” from their perspective is presented. The data from a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews provides insight into the social worlds where meaning is lived. Last, I interviewed youth to develop deep descriptions of their social worlds, descriptions of social processes, and to learn how episodes were interpreted.

I conducted 27 formal, semi-structured interviews with youth and used open ended interviewing drawing on specific domains of inquiry that I discuss below. In these additional open ended interviews, the number of youth overall increased to 40. In an effort to cover as much ground as I could, I interacted with and observed these 40 youth during school hours and outside of school hours. In the second and third phases of sampling, I was able to acquire rich information about the interworkings of the students' experience and participation in the community-school partnership programs. It was in the second and third phases of sampling of students that I discovered the key "informants," the key "brokers" of youth cultural knowledge, and my "rich cases" as part of the ethnography (Foley, Levinson, & Hurtig, 2000, p. 40; Spindler & Spindler, 1987). I recorded each interview with the permission and consent of participants. Initial interviews with youth ranged from 45-60 minutes and then two-three follow up interviews occurred and lasted between 15-45 minutes. I stored all of these audio-recorded interviews on my personal laptop and a password-protected dropbox account. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, resulting in lengthy 15-20 page documents.

I used an interview protocol in each of the semi-structured interviews, but I also allowed for flexibility in each of the interviews and additional questions emerged as necessary. I have included an interview protocol in the appendices section. Following the suggestion of Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), I created this flexible interview protocol. These authors suggest "domains of inquiry" or topic areas to assist in answering research questions (p. 126). My domains of inquiry included five topic areas

that were interrelated and were guided by my approaches to identity and community that I outlined in my conceptual framework.

The five domains of inquiry located in my interview protocol include: background information and family dynamics, views of education, peer groups and school context, layers of and spaces of community, and academic and social identity markers. Each of these domains helped me pursue answers to my research question. The second and third domains draw on scholarship that has investigated how Latino communities and immigrant communities come to articulate cultural understandings of what it means to be educated (Levinson, 1996; Levinson, Foley & Holland, 1996; Villenas, 2012). The domains of inquiry draw on scholarship to ascertain how students think of and negotiate their identity(ies). Specifically, this scholarship initiates discussions of identity for minorities, which I find relevant for consideration in my study that seeks to understand all levels of identity formation and the processes that shape the identity formation of students (Carter, 2005, 2010; Ferguson, 2001; Lee, 2009; Staiger, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999).

Participant Observations

Participant observations are a key method to employ in critical ethnography. As a participant observer, I wrote daily field notes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) and weekly or biweekly analytic memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of daily school life (e.g. before school programs, academic classes, lunchtime, and after school programming), and I regularly collected artifacts that constituted information about students throughout the duration of the study. These artifacts included classwork and homework that students

completed or were given. Teachers would often provide me a copy of these things to support my understanding of what youth were learning about. The reason this information was helpful was that sometimes students engaged in learning activities that helped me understand their sense of self or their identity in relation to community. These participant observations along with field notes and artifacts serve to reconstruct the lived experiences and perceptions of students specifically in relation to their understanding of community and their identity formation within the community-school partnership.

I engaged in multiple types of participant observations. I detail each of the types of participant observations here because they are a crucial component of ethnographic research. Each type of observation yielded different important information about youth identity. First, I learned about the different experiences of students depending on the “track” or label of the course in classroom observations. I learned about the academic identities of students. Second, I learned about the social identities, and more positive experiences of lower-tracked students, in observations outside of the classroom—the spaces of possibility and the different ways that “spaces speak” (Helfenbein, 2010).

In the initial months of the study, I was attentive to everything at O’Donnell. I recorded notes of my experiences in the overwhelmingly crowded hallways, lined with forest green lockers, of things like adults saying to me, “You look like a high school student except for the fact that you are carrying a giant Starbucks cup. We don’t have Starbucks down here.” I recall moments such as when one of the security guards would yell at me to wear my Chicago Public Schools O’Donnell identification card, saying, “Lady! Lady! Maestra, you necesita your card I gave you.” She would stop me in the

hall to tell me about the other security guards in the hallways and how they would always “be yellin’ at students n’ hustlin’ them to class.” She also told me how her son attended O’Donnell and was off at a college, but that “most students at O’Donnell don’t do that,” referring to her perception of students as not college bound. The interactions in the hallways were equally as important as in other spaces of the school, particularly the hallways where students often enacted their “street culture” and engaged in power struggles that interacted with issues of race, class and gender (Dickar, 2008).

Room 116: The first stop on any visit to O’Donnell was to Room 116. It was on the first floor of the school across from the office of the principal, assistant principals, and counselors. Room 116 has a special place in my memory because it was there that I learned about the interworkings of O’Donnell, perceptions of teachers, school leaders, and students. In Room 116, three desks faced each other from various corners of the rectangular room and a circular table was in the center of the room with little walking space. In Room 116, a total of 60+ years of teaching experience was housed. The three teachers in Room 116 shared that space with the liaison for Redwood Park Council, Fiona. Fiona became my lifeline very early in the study, providing me with insights on each person in the school, telling me how to engage various people, and teaching me how to navigate the contested terrain of O’Donnell. She was soft-spoken and sweet, and would whisper or make faces at me if she was indicating a “shh” or a “don’t tell someone I said this face.” The three teachers, Ms. F., the stoic math teacher, Ms. B., the quirky zoology teacher who often had her ferret in tow, and Ms. A., with her purple silk suits and stylish red rimmed glasses, told me stories from their respective 20+ years at

O'Donnell. They told me of the ways the students and school leadership had changed over the years.

In Room 116, I typed field notes furiously, asked questions about specific kids, acquired schedules, and interacted with youth. Room 116 was home to many youth because of their connection to Redwood Park Council, Fiona, and the three teachers they could always find in there. Youth often associated me with Fiona because of my daily presence in Room 116. Room 116 was always open to me and I felt safe in it with Fiona and the others. I often sought refuge there.

Classroom observations: The bulk of my participant observations initially occurred in classrooms. In Room 116, I learned which teachers would be “open to having an observer.” Based on recommendations from Fiona and the three teachers in Room 116, I started my classroom observations in mostly the social studies department and the English department. Initially, I was unaware of the different academic programs, so I visited all levels of students and all grades across the social studies and the English department. I witnessed Fiona working tirelessly to deliver announcements and fliers to all teachers to spread the word about after-school programs. She told me that the social studies department had several teachers that were very supportive of the after-school programs at O'Donnell, too.

My first classroom observations included: freshman advanced placement human geography, sophomore U.S. history, junior advanced placement U.S. history, junior International Baccalaureate European history, English and Theory of Knowledge, and senior civics and senior Model United Nations. The civics and Model United Nations

classes were for general education students. These were the courses that I developed close relationships with students and teachers. I also visited regular freshman English, English as a second language, and freshman general science course. In most of these classes I was silent and would sit in the back and type field notes. Some of the teachers engaged me at various times, but they really saw my role as a silent observer. While most of my interactions in these courses were positive, some teachers saw my presence as a threat. I did not wish to engage in power struggles with teachers and so when I felt tension or was directly told to leave, I did. This became more difficult as I got to know the youth because they would wave to me, or ask me questions about course assignments. The civics class became a class that I had a more active role. The teacher, Mr. Shepherd, involved me almost immediately. He would defer questions related to education to me, and even ask my interpretation of some of the issues students were studying in the civics course. This course became very important as I studied and learned more about youth in the course.

After-school program observations: In order to observe the ways in which youth experience identity in relation to community, I observed after-school programs sponsored by Redwood Park Council. I initially observed as many of the after-school programs as I could to understand the work of the community organization through after-school programs. The programs that I observed included: Chicago Youth Speaking, The Dream Act Club, Model United Nations Club and The Social Justice Club. Each of these programs had a particular focus to it and drew youth to the program for a variety of reasons. Each program formally met once a week while the academic remediation

programs met daily. Because I was largely interested in social identity and spaces in which youth could experience positive identities, I spent the majority of my research in these four programs and did not observe academic remediation. I did not observe the more academic after-school programs such as ACT Prep because I was not allowed in that program because the teacher in charge did not want my presence to be a distraction. Many of the youth in programs like Dream Act and The Social Justice Club were also in the classes I was observing such as the IB students in Dream Act and the AVID students in Social Justice Club. My participant observations were more active in these programs depending on the adult leader. I discuss these programs in detail in chapter four as they were the sites of social identity production for youth.

The traveling field: While many of the after-school programs also had activities associated with them, the “traveling field” became more than just field trips. I anticipated that I would intensely study and observe social interactions in after-school programs. However, I did not anticipate the degree to which I would “move” with youth across socially and politically contested spaces. The traveling ethnographic field became the site of the experience of the Regulars, the students that I followed through various organizing activities beyond the community-school and its after-school programs.

To explain the movement I engaged in as I sought understanding about youth identity, I turned to the theory of James Clifford (1997). Clifford’s theory of method uses the term travel as a metaphor to describe the social practice of ethnographic fieldwork. Clifford introduces traveling as a metaphor for fieldwork to counter the notion of dwelling that was the mainstay of traditional anthropology. As mentioned at the

beginning of the chapter, ethnography as a methodology has evolved to allow researchers to engage in such movement with participants as opposed to traditional notions of the ethnographer “going native” or “making the strange familiar.” To me, these are clichés at this point given that they lack an understanding the evolution of thinking around ethnography and the transformative power of critical ethnography, particularly through the notion of travel. Clifford theorizes that travel or movement in ethnographic fieldwork captures the sense that a researcher moves from a place, his or her home and academic institution, and goes to the place of research. Traveling as fieldwork involves the deep commitment to understanding that observations can only follow experience that is changing and moving. The researcher needs to follow and move with the experience she intends to capture. The researcher is changed as she moves with the participants.

Given my interest in privileging youth experience of social reality, these notions of movement and travel became a necessary dimension of the research in ways that were unforeseen at the outset of the study. Scholars have given attention to the ways travel connects with ethnographic work in new ways beyond just romantic notions of leisure. Scholars emphasize the ways that travel across social space is necessary to capture identity struggles (Grgurinović, 2012; Kaplan, 1996). Grgurinović (2012) and Kaplan (1996) both offer ways that we might re-conceptualize travel as part of the ethnographic field. The re-conceptualization of travel does not reduce the notion to mere leisure, tourism, or a cosmopolitan tendency in Western culture. They employ the concept in fieldwork to open up opportunities to understand how marginalized groups de-stabilize fixed notions about their abilities and identities.

Each of the types of participant observations contributed data to answer the research question. Additionally, the various participant observations allowed me to connect field experience with the conceptual framework around identity. I ultimately discovered that different spaces produced different identities for youth. Each of the analysis chapters explores these different spaces. Chapter Three examines the spaces of the school, drawing heavily on classroom observations to inform the academic identity formation processes for youth. Chapter Four explores the spaces beyond the classroom, drawing from observations in after-school programs and the field trips that youth took as part of their participation in the after-school programs. Chapter Five takes us well beyond normalized conceptions of observations, and challenges us to consider these productive social spaces as spaces where youth self-articulate positive, social identities through their organizing.

Organization of Data

To organize data, I used an online storage location that was password protected. The initial data was separated by type of data (e.g. youth interview, teacher interview or field notes). I separated interview data by student, teacher, school staff and community organization staff. Initially, I labeled each interview as “S1” for student number 1 and so forth. Eventually, I moved student interviews from numbers to pseudonyms. I separated field notes initially by monthly folders (e.g., FN December 2013), and then within each folder with the monthly label, I further separated data by week. I also labeled data by subject or the name of after-school program (e.g., U.S. history or Dream Act Club meeting), month, day and year so that I could easily search a piece of data. I used labels

such as the class I observed or the after-school program and its dates to easily identify data (Hesse-Beber & Leavy, 2006, p. 347). During latter stages of data analysis I also printed out the data and organized it in binders to engage in focused coding.

After I had collected data for approximately three months, I began to create another process for organizing the data. This process included creating folders around specific emerging themes, and then placing pieces of data into the folders so that I could store all data related to a particular theme together. For instance, a theme that emerged was, “This is why I join...” and this theme was related to the reasons that youth participants joined after-school programs. The folder labeled, “This is why I join...” contained several pieces of data from student interviews as well as various field notes. This process allowed me to compare and analyze data “horizontally,” meaning across types of data, and vertically, meaning within types of data (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 218). The conceptual framework also contributed initially to my organization of data.

At various stages of data collection and analysis, I also created excel sheets to help me track and locate data in my online storage location. For instance, I created an excel sheet that contained particular codes, the data source, and then any methodological or conceptual notes or citations that I wanted to ensure aligned with those particular data sources. This organization process helped me manage the 1,100 pages of field notes and approximately 300 pages of interview transcripts. I then was able to use different analysis strategies to prepare to write the analysis in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

Data Analysis

Interviews and participant observations provide the bulk of data for analysis. In a qualitative study, data coding and analysis begins as soon as data is collected. LeCompte and Schensul (2010) argue that ethnographic data analysis can sometimes seem mysterious, but remind us that it is a systematic process. They argue, “Ethnographers speak of how patterns emerge from the qualitative data as if the emergence were a kind of mystical process. Though it might seem to be surrounded in a kind of mysterious haze, patterns actually emerge because the researcher is engaged in a systematic cognitive process involving comparing, contrasting, looking for linkages, similarities, and differences, and finding sequences, co-occurrences, and absences” (pp. 199, 217). In addition, Merriam (2009) argues, “Findings can be in the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes, or categories that cut across data” (p. 176). Throughout the process of analysis, I compared categories across pieces of data, looking for patterns and themes from interviews, observations and documents that I collected and produced through my own field notes and memos. Since qualitative data analysis is emergent, the steps of organizing, categorizing and interpreting the data as I collected it are reiterated until I reached saturation and my thematic categories address my research questions, and were conceptually congruent (p. 186).

Additionally, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) provide a visual model of steps in the data analysis and interpretation process (p. 358). The four steps of data analysis included: data preparation (transcribing and management), data exploration (get familiar with data, read data, think about data, and write memos), specification/reductions of data

(code, memo and identify patterns), and interpretation (research findings). I focus next on the coding processes since this was a critical step in data analysis.

Coding

In ethnographic data analysis, I engaged in multiple levels of analysis. I describe these levels of analysis specific to the coding processes I undertook. First, I collected data from participant observations in the first two months of the study and engaged in an open coding process. I drew from Saldana's (2013) distinction of a code and a process code. A code can be a word or phrase while a process code is a word or phrase that captures action. In the initial coding process, I read field notes and the few interviews I had and drew from larger conceptual categories that were connected to my conceptual framework on identity. The two codes I used initially during open coding included: identity, self, community. For instance, I read through field notes and interview data and coded for "identity" and "community." In ethnographic data analysis, researchers begin with these conceptual categories as guides, but these concepts of "identity" and "community" were also expanded and enhanced as I collected for data. For instance, I deepened the notion of identity, from my conceptual framework, by coding for institutional, academic identity and discourse, social identity as the data became more familiar. The focus of Chapter Three is on the deepened understanding of identity and specifically *Institutional identity*, drawing from the conceptual framework's model of identity (Gee, 2000). And, the focus of Chapter Four and Five illustrate the conceptual framework's model of *Discourse identity* with the exploration of social identity as I deepened my understanding and developed codes around social identity.

As I engaged in more focused, analytic coding, I developed specific code lists for the data. I include here a sample of the codes that were used in the data analysis process that was on-going. This focused coding was enabled by the emergent themes I detected (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 210). This focused coding process enabled me to engage in horizontal pattern analysis as I more deeply familiarized myself with the data and began to “figure out what the story means” (p. 220). Below I provide examples of codes that were used in this horizontal pattern analysis in preparation to interpret data for Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

Drawing on LeCompte and Schensul (2010) and Saldana (2013) to detect patterns in the data, I interpreted, analyzed and reduced data during the transcription process as well as reading data. Saldana argues that when researchers code for patterns they are looking for several things, Saldana writes that researchers look for:

- similarity (things happen the same way)
- difference (they happen in predictably different ways)
- frequency (they happen often or seldom)
- sequence (they happen in a certain order)
- correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events)
- causation (one appears to cause another). (Saldana, 2013, p. 155)

In the data analysis particularly around how youth identity formed in relation to participation in community-school programs, I analyzed data for similarity, difference, and correspondence. Specifically, I developed focused, analytic code lists during horizontal pattern analysis in order to move into the analytical, conceptual domains that help contribute to youth identity formation in relation to community in the study. Below is a list of codes related to academic and social identity that became the focus of Chapters Three, Four and Five.

Chapter Three:

- “I’m IB”
 - “The nerds think they’re all ghetto”
- “I’m AVID, but not IB”
- “I’m just regular”

Chapter Four:

- “This is why I join...”
- “We’re like a community, ...like friends”

Chapter Five:

- They’re just regular”
- “I do activist things even though I’m nothing”
- “It’s a movement”

From these codes, I connected data back to the conceptual framework and ultimately argue that academic identity forms through a process of institutional labeling (described in Chapter Three) while social identity formation occurs through two processes. “This is why I join” and “It’s like a traveling school” speak to the first process that social identity production occurs through participation in after-school programs (described in chapter four). The three codes, “They’re just regular,” “I do activist things even though I’m nothing,” and “It’s a movement” helped me move from data to theorizing and ultimately to explain the second process that social identity production occurs (described in Chapter Five). In order to do pattern analysis, data had to be reduced, displayed, and then interpreted in order to draw conclusions (create patterns) and the list of codes above

reflect the patterns that emerged and informed the substance of the chapters (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Memo Writing

I used memo writing throughout the analysis process as I narratively responded to themes in the data. I also used memos as a space to write reflective commentaries. I would write memos and link what I was observing with previous literature as well. These memos were written every week or every other week, depending on how much data was collected. I also wrote extensive memos after field trips because those were periods of intense participant observations that required extensive processing on my part.

Validity and Trustworthiness

In order to address issues of validity, specifically internal validity of the data, I triangulated the data by examining field notes and semi-structured interview data. The interpretations of participants and the themes I discovered provided the foundation for the narrative of the ethnography. The ongoing analysis of field notes and semi-structured interview data along with the many informal conversations I had with research participants led me to realize that I needed to articulate stories as closely aligned with the way I experienced them as possible. In each of the chapters I tell of these experiences through a narrative style that draws on edited, yet raw, field notes. I also shift to the analyses as best as possible in order to demonstrate the process of interpreting the experience.

Narrative analyses, for instance, “rely on stories as a way of knowing [and are] framed and rendered through an analytical process that is artistic as well as rigorous”

(Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 577). After the coding process, and the development of themes from the data, I linked themes into analytic descriptions by considering the following process for analytic description: Making connections, Interpreting, and Validating. In order to make connections, I considered how the themes that emerged related with each other. I then interpreted the themes from my perspective and from the respondents' perspectives, hence the reason for member checking. Member checking occurred through the months of multiple conversations and multiple rounds of semi-structured and open ending interviewing that occurred. I also in some cases spoke with youth about my interpretation of a specific occurrence, particularly in Chapters Four and Five, in order to ensure that I accurately interpreted their words and experiences.

Education Policy as Social Context: Setting the Conditions for Youth Identity Formation

Education policy as part of the social context in which Latino immigrant youth identity formation occurs is relevant because these policies are part of a historical, political set of conditions that youth in low-income communities must navigate as their social identities take shape. As part of the methodology of critical ethnography, the researcher considers the socio-political context because it assists in interpreting the experiences of participants. Additionally, the social context informs youth interpretation of social reality and furthers their desire for change. Throughout the course of the study, the social context was contentious and a large focus of youth organizing was around the educational policies intervening in their social realities. Thus, to set the reader up for narrating moments of youth organizing in particularly and activities that youth

participated in, an understanding of the social context is imperative. Other studies of Latino immigrant youth in schools have argued that federal and state level policies must be studied in conjunction with the youth' experience in schools if we are to understand the effect of policy on the social worlds of Latino immigrant youth (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011, p. 51).

While my study focuses micro-level interactions of youth, it is considered here that local, education policy functions and tries to order behavior of youth, and local educational policy attempts to intervene, unjustly in many cases as the youth articulate, on their lived realities. I argue that policy sparks youth engagement in organizing as they struggle against what they perceive as unjust educational policies. The local educational policy enables a productive social identity—an activist identity—to emerge. This identity is not a “group identity,” though, meaning students within the same set of conditions do not collectively identify as the reader will discover in chapter five. However, the students in this localized, “intimate culture” are privy to the same knowledge and possibility to act or engage in the possibility of action despite the fact that they do not exhibit the same level of activism or necessarily share the same reasoning for choosing or not choosing an activist identity (Levinson, 2001, p. 147).

Looking at a map of Chicago (see Figure 4), one can see the racial segregation and thus the segregation of schools in Chicago. This map is important for an understanding of the social realities of youth in the study. In addition, youth viewed this map as they unraveled the educational policies in Chicago. This map highlights the number of schools slated for closure in red dots, and then these red dots are alongside the

number of charters opening up in the city. Youth in the study struggled to understand why local neighborhood schools needed to be closed, but how the board of education could open up charter schools.

In the fall of 2012, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) published a report on the school closure policy that the Chicago Public Schools district was working on. This report was entitled, “The Black and White of Education in Chicago’s Public Schools: Class, Charters and Chaos: A Hard Look at Privatization Schemes Masquerading as Education Policy.”⁴ The CTU argued that the schools slated for closure—those considered underutilized by CPS—were in neighborhoods where there was a proliferation of charter schools. The argument made by the CTU was that schools in predominantly African American and Latino communities were subject to both school closure and charter proliferation. This local policy context is significant as many of the after-school programs sponsored by the community-school partnership engage youth in taking action in what they deem as unjust education policies such as the school closings. In particular, there are three groups, two of which are sponsored by the community-school partnership, that raise awareness, and engage in action since November, 2012. These groups include: Chicago Youth Speaking,⁵ the Dream Act Club and the Social Justice Club. These programs are discussed in chapter four and it is argued that social identity formation occurs within the context of after-school programs. Much of the content that enabled

⁴This was a public document that circulated among teachers at O’Donnell. A link to the document is here: <http://www.ctunet.com/quest-center/research/black-and-white-of-chicago-education.pdf>

⁵This is a pseudonym and the after-school program that is largely discussed in Chapter Four.

youth to explore positive, social identities derived their developing knowledge of the local education policy.

Additionally, several students from a civics class at the community-school were also engaged in a research project on the issue of school closings and other education injustices, including Marley and Amelia.⁶ Amelia and Marley chose to work on an educational issue in Chicago as their narratives previously indicate. The reader will meet these two youth in Chapter Four and more extensively in Chapter Five.

I discuss the context of educational policy briefly to set the stage for understanding the issues students are discussing and as part of an argument that social context is a factor influencing the emergence of social identities for particular youth. I then discuss meanings of this “intimate culture,” (Levinson, 2001) and the ways in which the space of the civics class in particular produces a youth culture connecting to the organizing across the city detailed in the next section. This brief description is intended to orient the reader into the ways in which students that are labeled academically as regular and thus not college bound transcend the limitations of this institutional label. The Regulars became the heart of the research and are discussed in Chapter Five.

⁶These are both pseudonyms.

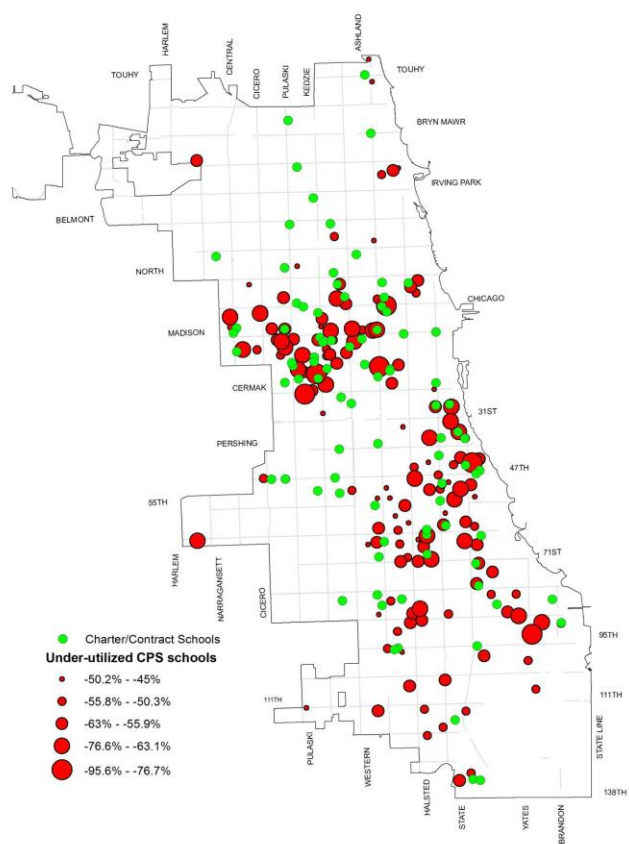


Figure 4. Map of Chicago

Upon my first encounters with youth at O'Donnell and in the civics class of Regulars, I thought some students' apathy toward social issues was a product of their adolescence or their ignorance even. But after months of participant observation in Mr. Shepherd's civics class, I came to understand the various social identities of the Regulars were not the opposite of Marley and Amelia's activist identity, but rather their subtle comments and listening functioned as a strategy for them—a form of resistance that was rooted in their knowledge of social inequality. Put another way, many Regulars experience desire around social issues, desire for change—read as the youth featured in the chapter—or action, desire for knowledge and some combination of knowledge and

action. Other youth make observations about inequality and think it is wrong or unfair to close schools, but they did not know how to organize initially. One youth in this civics class said, “With the charters poppin’ up, CPS kids where will they go? They’re makin’ it like no education in these neighborhoods” (Field notes, February 11, 2013). Learning about the social context and developing their interpretations of social reality necessitated my own understand of the local policy issues during the study.

Policy Issues during the Study

The main policy issues circulating during my participant observations at O’Donnell include Chicago Public Schools (CPS) historic closures. “Underutilization” is CPS’s reason for closing and/or consolidating neighborhood schools in mostly low income/racially segregated communities. The list of schools includes 120, 80, 54, and 50 (November, 2012-May, 2013). CPS hired an independent council to review the closings. Their recommendations were that of the original 80 on the most recent list of schools slated for closure only about 13 were justified, citing concerns over the logic of the board of education’s closure policy on some schools. Mayor Emmanuel disagreed with the district-appointed commission’s report and said their recommendations would not be considered.⁷ The board voted to close 50 unanimously on May 22, 2013. Many opponents across the city joined forces on the school closings.

⁷While I am interested in youth experiences of policy and research, the documents that youth found during the course of their research on the school closings were publicly available. For the final report from the district-appointed commission, see: <https://docs.google.com/a/schoolutilization.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=c2Nob29sdXRpbGl6YXRpb24uY29tfGNvbW1pc3Npb24tb24tc2Nob29sLXV0aWxpemF0aW9ufGd4OjRiNzFjMWEyNGIxZWU0YmU>

As a researcher, I was sensitive to the social media and news outlets' portrayal of the issue for several months.⁸ While I collected data on youth, I also read various sources in information circulating in the public sphere on the issue. Many parent groups, teacher allies and youth were involved on some level in speaking against the Board of Education. I also attended the Board of Education meetings in March, 2013 and April, 2013 since they were public. In these meetings I heard testimony of parents, youth (from O'Donnell and from other high schools), children, and various community organization members speak against the school closures. I learned from these public hearings, other media sources, and youth presentations in various after-school programs at O'Donnell that roughly 30,000 students were impacted by the school closure policy. I also learned of research that demonstrates that Chicago Public Schools has not upheld its word that students in closing schools move to "better" schools (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009, 2012, 2013). This was the local policy context and social context for youth organizing. At various moments during participant observations and during meetings of youth organizing, these issues were raised as fuel and organizing fodder.

As mentioned earlier, part of the methodology of critical ethnography includes the researcher's awareness and consideration of the socio-political context because it assists in interpreting the experiences of participants. The importance of social context relates to the formation of identity for youth in particular communities that experience marginalization. Much of the youth organizing beyond the school space centers on mayoral education policies. Youth are aware of the educational instability in their

⁸The youth located research on the issue via the local news source, see: <http://www.wbez.org/news/commission-says-chicago-has-capacity-80-school-closings-105946>

neighborhoods are aware of low-resources in their schools. The youth in the latter sections of this chapter use the map in *Figure 4* provided above to make sense of how and where educational policies are intervening in the lives of youth in problematic ways. While the youth in this study are in high school, nestled in between two predominantly African American neighborhoods, they still feel solidarity with members of the community across the south side of the city. Many of the youth in the organizing efforts both from O'Donnell and from other high schools reflect upon the fact that high schools are not being targeted for school closure, but that their siblings' or other family members' elementary schools are slated for closure. All of these things contributed to the ways in which youth interpreted their social reality as part of a particular socio-political context.

Summary and Organization of Findings Chapters

This chapter has outlined the methodology for the study with specific attention to researcher positionality and a description of the social context as crucial components of critical ethnography. It has also outlined information for understanding the site and its context, data collection methods and procedures, and data analysis procedures.

In the following three chapters, I use multiple forms of writing and narrative style to communicate findings. Each chapter orients the reader by situating the data in larger scholarship and theory, and uses youth voice to convey the heart and soul of youth experience of identity formation.

Chapter Three: This chapter invites the reader into the academic and social worlds at O'Donnell. It situates data in the scholarship on student identity in relation to academic achievement and academic tracking practices in schools. It also invites the

reader to understand the academic hierarchies that are set up and the ways in which such hierarchies attempt to predict academic and social identity formation for youth. Drawing on the conceptual framework and Gee's (2000) model of identity, specifically *Institutional identity*, we see the ways in which institutional identities are ascribed to students. These institutional identities in the form of academic labels are detailed. Readers learn of the International Baccalaureate (IB) students that are the "smartest in the school," the AVID students that are "not as higher or intellectual as the IB kids," and the Regulars. The Regulars are the lowest on the academic hierarchy. Academic identity formation occurs through an ascription process that intersects with assumptions about racial and ethnic identity and ability, which is problematic given that I argue youth should not be subject to such essentialist practices in schools.

Chapter Four: This chapter invites the reader to more deeply understand the ways in which positive, social identities emerge through participation in after-school programs. Youth in this chapter are from the AVID and Regulars institutional labels, and desire more than what this academic position offers them in schools; thus they desire to articulate and enact social identities. Drawing on the conceptual framework and Gee's (2000) model of identity, specifically *Discourse identity* as well as other scholarship on social identity formation, we see the ways in which social identity emerges through participation in after-school programs. Given that students on the middle and lower rung of the academic hierarchies wish to articulate and negotiate identity, I argue they can and chose to do this through participation in after-school programs. In this chapter, readers will meet specific students and learn of specific after school programs that contribute to a

positive, social identity for youth. Readers will meet such youth as Amelia, Karmina, and Jane among others to understand the reasons youth join after-school programs and the sense of community they build as part of these programs. Within the chapter, readers learn of three specific programs that enable youth to also interpret social realities that include injustices they experience in their marginalized communities.

Chapter Five: This chapter invites readers to step outside the logic of the school and its academic hierarchies as well as social identities in after-school programs. Readers meet four youth, deemed Regulars and thus not worth much time and investment. Youth engage in a process of social identity formation that was unforeseen at the outset of the study, and provide the second process of social identity formation. I argue that these four youth engage in a brand of cultural organizing that enables them to shed their academic positioning as Regulars and grapple with unjust educational policies and larger societal injustices as they interpret their social reality and develop a critical consciousness. The stories of Isaiah, Penny, Marley, and Amelia, lead readers into the social worlds of youth, and reveal that their thinking and organizing demonstrates they are certainly much more than regular.

CHAPTER THREE

“THERE’S TIERS OF EDUCATION HERE IN THE SAME SCHOOL”:

INSTITUTIONAL, ACADEMIC IDENTITY FORMATION

Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the debate about how schools reproduce inequality through academic tracking practices. This debate is relevant because this study aims to build upon previous research on student identity formation and its interaction with academic achievement. While I depart from the ways in which previous scholarship both examines and frames identity of Latino immigrant youth, it is necessary to situate this study in the larger research literature in this opening analysis chapter. The arguments around tracking in the sociology of education literature remain contentious, thus my intention is to note the larger questions around which students get ahead, why, and how? To understand the impact of invisible processes such as sorting students into differential academic programs, this chapter discusses two positions on academic tracking as it interacts with racial and ethnic identity and student achievement. These two positions on tracking practices represent the most prevalent arguments in sociology of education literature (Hallinan, 2007; Oakes, 1985, 2007). To move the conversation forward, however, this chapter introduces the ways in which academic tracking practices can be subtle yet bring issues of race and ethnicity to the forefront and ultimately produce differential academic identities for students.

Using an urban public high school as a site to study identity formation of youth in a community-school, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which academic tracking produces academic identities. I map the ascription processes of identity that occurs at the institutional level of the school. While my findings are consistent with previous research (Carbonaro, 2005; Oakes, 1985) on tracking, specifically that higher-track students tend to have a stronger sense of academic expectations for themselves, this study challenges us to consider the ways students re-negotiate the academic identities and the boundaries that are drawn for them within each academic program, and in some cases pursue social identities as they transcend the limits of their academic label.

After describing each academic track, this chapter discusses the experience of participants in the study across the academic tracks at O'Donnell. The participants in the study experience complex and often contradictory feelings around their academically ascribed identity and its interaction with their racial and ethnic background. The analysis of interview data with youth and teachers, and field notes reveal several patterns within and across each academic program. I highlight youth¹ voice in this study as a way to demonstrate how an ethnographic study captures the meaning-making processes of my participants in their daily lives at micro-levels, particularly around issues of identity formation for youth (Staiger, 2006). As I discuss the student experiences across the three academic programs, I position the data within the research literature on tracking, illustrating, as Oakes' (1985) argues, that tracking practices—whether visible or invisible—sets up social hierarchies. Youth responses to their academic track

¹As previously mentioned, the youth in this study are part of the larger category of Latino immigrant youth, but in the chapter I refer to them as youth.

demonstrate that academic and social hierarchies operate in the school to the detriment of a large number of students at O'Donnell. Using interview data, this chapter illustrates the negative impact and moments of exclusion when youth define, navigate, and in some cases, re-negotiate their academic identities within their given academic track.

In the latter part of the chapter, I draw on and problematize Amanda Lewis's (2003a) typology racial and ethnic markers in schools. The data challenges us to consider Oakes' argument on tracking, thus this chapter argues that tracking in schools sets up racial and ethnic isolation of minorities in all three of the academic tracks. This means, even youth in the highest track express isolation and dismay over being the "smartest kids in the school," and positioned and disciplined only in academics while students on the middle and lower tracks express they are not allowed to take honors, or higher-academic courses. One student notes, "I'm not allowed to really have a social identity even if I wanted one." This chapter lays the foundation for our understanding of how youth, who are often perceived to be under-achieving due to their racial and ethnic background or cultural difference and its perceived misalignment with the rituals of schooling (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), transcend both racial/ethnic identity markers and assumptions around their achievement ability. The implications of the data tell us to move beyond merely studying identity through race and ethnicity and its interaction with student achievement as some scholars have complicated (Tyson, Darity & Castellino, 2005) and instead focus on the ways youth negotiate and re-position themselves across school spaces to engage and express social identities.

Tracking: A Formal and Informal Practice that Impacts Identity and Belonging

Recent arguments for and against tracking still reveal divided views on the implications and effectiveness of tracking as a practice used in schools in hopes of raising student achievement (Hallinan, 2007, Oakes, 2007). That is, tracking as a process by which students are assigned by different ability groups has advantages and disadvantages according to scholars and impacts a student's sense of self (Carter, 2005; Ballantine & Spade, 2008). Although early practices of tracking were done in hopes of improving society, recent accounts of the practice of tracking have been more narrowly defined, narrowly evaluated, and rightly critiqued on the part of some scholars (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Hallinan, 2007; Oakes, 2007). Maureen Hallinan's arguments for tracking in, *Tracking: From Theory to Practice*, are critiqued by Jeannie Oakes' piece, *More than Misplaced Technology*. Both of these pieces are in Sadovnik's (2007) edited volume on the Sociology of Education. Oakes' critique of Hallinan's argument for tracking suggests the narrow, ill conception of tracking on the part of Hallinan. O'Donnell's tracking practices have particularly disregarded the social inequality and the emotional insecurity of the students that result from their placement in each of the three academic tracks. These inequalities persist because student's social realities are omitted from the disembodied tracking practice, while their emotional growth remains vulnerable in a tracking system.

Hallinan (2007) defines tracking as "the practice of assigning students to instructional groups on the basis of ability" (p. 313). She argues that tracking is an "organizational practice" that aims to increase the learning outcomes of students.

Moreover, Hallinan argues that the student learning outcomes will increase because tracking according to ability groups allows teachers the capability to tailor instruction to the individual needs of the student. She acknowledges the “unintended consequences” of tracking, i.e. segregation, slower achievement of lower track students, and the negative social/psychological consequences, and attempts to offer solutions to these problems. Hallinan examines school structures but does not discuss the impact of tracking on individual students or the ways in which students internalized their institutional, academic label. First, she suggests that schools need to use tracking as an organizational practice for maximizing student achievement, and this is accomplished by allowing for a flexible tracking practice (p. 316). At O’Donnell such flexibility is not present.

Second, she contends that educators need to create rigorous learning opportunities for low-ability tracks, and this is accomplished by tracking students according to “objective criteria,” i.e., test scores and GPAs. The third key suggestion Hallinan (2007) offers is that school administrators should create more communication systems and activities that support the social and emotional experiences of students in lower tracks (p. 316). Hallinan fails to account for the negative social/emotional impact students, which are the unintended consequences of tracking. Instead, she offers unrealistic solutions and places the burden of overcoming the embedded racism in tracking practices on school administrators. Hallinan removes the potential social, cultural, and political context and the overall negative consequences of tracking from her discussion, which is the point on which Jeannie Oakes critiques her (p. 318).

Oakes (2007) critiques Hallinan's view because it excludes the social, historical, and political inequalities members of minority groups have faced. The historical reasons for tracking—placing students for vocational training over intellectual training—was based on an embedded racist belief that minority groups were inferior in their mental capacity (p. 319; Reese, 2005). The conclusion that Oakes draws here is that tracking places students on a path, and students placed in lower tracks do not receive the same intellectual stimulation in school. Thus, when they enter into society, their chance of enduring anything other than an impoverished quality of life is slim (Berliner, 2006).

Urban schools like the school in this study have diverse populations of students with histories of negative experience in schools. These diverse needs not only affect their lives outside of school, but rather these needs often affect their ability to function in school. The school should provide a safe, inclusive and diverse environment, which de-tracking promotes (Oakes, 2007). If we embrace Hallinan's method, then students, as evidenced by O'Donnell challenges, only recognize difference as this chapter illustrates. The participants in this study understand their academic track as a type of symbolic status within the school, and they are aware of the hierarchies that manifest from these academic programs, marking their difference and the exclusion they experience. The difference and exclusion they experience, particularly in the second and third tracks (AVID and the regulars, respectively), I discuss, is not something that students are taught to celebrate. Instead, students learn through the experience of being tracked that difference is something that divides human beings and that certain students are both literally and symbolically earning a certain status in the school and in society.

The effects of fostering a school culture where difference is attached to academic and social hierarchies leads to negative perceptions of certain groups of students, particularly lower track students. In addition, the lack of emotional support systems to counter student insecurity and social hierarchies contributes to a decreased sense of belonging at the school, the likelihood of dropping out, and an overall perpetuation of their impoverished quality of life. In other words, the school needs to provide an environment for students to feel successful no matter where they come from or what their ability level is. This inclusive, diverse environment cannot be accomplished if schools implement disembodied tracking practices that seek to exclude students.

Organization of the Chapter

Amanda Lewis' (2003a) book, *Race in the Schoolyard*, argues that while school settings, demographics, contextual factors, and conditions may vary, the racial logic of schools, particularly the three in her study, is similar. This means, the racial and ethnic identity of young people forms through an ascription process. While I argue that racial and ethnic identity formation is but one type of identity, this is what much of the conversation about school achievement and success trajectories for youth of color focuses on. Scholarship in the sociology of education tends to point out the ways in which schools operate to reproduce social inequality of racial and ethnic groups. I begin here because my study is not refuting that racial and ethnic identity formation exists and exists through an ascription process (Carter, 2004; Lewis, 2003a, 2003b). Rather, I make two claims. First, I argue that the ascription process of academic identity occurs and these academic identities rely largely on assumptions about race and ethnicity even for the

higher-tracked students in the setting I studied. The effect of this ascription of academic identity manifests in teacher-student relationships, and peer-peer relationships. This chapter demonstrates that teacher' perceptions of student ability impact student's sense of belonging at O'Donnell and in particular academic programs impact social identities as well. In other words, students enact academic identities, experience tension within the academic identity they are ascribed, and grapple with their sense of self within and across the academic programs. I argue there is not a racial logic² at O'Donnell that is negatively stated toward students. By this I mean that teachers did not say to me that students are sorted based on their race or ethnicity; however, I do note the ways in which teacher's perceptions of student ability interacts with teachers' beliefs about the ability of racial and ethnic minorities at O'Donnell. This connects with Lewis' (2004) point that often schools do maintain a racial logic explicit or not, and the racial logic of schools negatively impacts the educational trajectories of students of color.

Second, I argue this process of ascription pertains, in this study, to academic identities as they intersect with racial and ethnic identity formation. Racial and ethnic identity is just one type of identity that students are assigned and navigate. In some cases, particularly with the lower-performing students, the ascription process also assigns

²By racial logic, Lewis (2004) means the ways people talk about and think about race. Lewis' work problematizes the ignorance about the ways in which race operates through discourse and materializes in institutional practices in schools. She argues, "Racial ideologies in particular provide ways of understanding the world that make sense of racial gaps in earnings, wealth, and health such that whites do not see any connection between their gain and others' loss. Whites [in the school she studied] often fail to understand how race shapes where they live, who they interact with, and how they understand themselves and others" (Lewis, 2004, p. 633). A racial logic in a school could function as the appearance of sorting students in different tracks in the name fairness, or in order to best prepare students for success. Teachers in this study said they sort students based on ability. But, as is discussed in this chapter, student placement in various tracks was determined subjectively and often based upon teachers' racialized perception of low-income, minority students.

negative, social identities. The added ascription of social identities for lower-performing students—the regulars—increases the negative school experience and lack of belonging at the school for these students. In line with limited scholarship, I attempt to move “beyond ascription” as I explore more than just racial and ethnic identity formation as an ascription process in this study (Carter, 2004). This chapter describes the three academic programs at the school, their characteristics, and the processes underlying how youth are placed in the programs. Again, all of the stories and experiences in this chapter are from Latino immigrant youth, but I refer to them as youth throughout the chapter. The three academic programs that exist at O’Donnell from the highest to the lowest track include:

1. International Baccalaureate (IB)
2. AVID, known by the students as AVID or AP/Honors
3. The regulars

This chapter discusses findings across each track, which includes a discussion of the various ways youth interpret their institutional, academy label. First, students in the higher tracked, International Baccalaureate (IB) program are ascribed strong academic identities. Yet, the youth themselves experience tension in having this strong academic identity forced upon them in ways that were unexpected, particularly here the intersection of race and ethnicity is critical as Asian students grapple with and resist the “model minority” stereotype” (Lee, 1999, 2009) and the ways in which high-achieving Latino students express discomfort and vulnerability in their privileged status.

Second, students that are identified as middle-of-the-road-achieving are further identified through subjective criteria with teachers perceiving them as “highly

motivated,” and then recommending them for a second particular track called AVID, which stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. AVID is defined by the Chicago Public Schools district as a program that ensures that all students, and most especially the least served students performing in the academic middle, will be capable of completing a college path. This national program partners with Chicago Public Schools to provide academic support for students. The third track I discuss is labeled regular. These are students who do not take AP or honors classes as AVID or IB students do. A note here these are three overarching academic programs, but interviews with teachers led me to understand that in fact students are tracked and sorted in more subtle ways than even these three overarching programs would indicate. Within each of the discussions of the three academic programs, I draw on field notes and interview data collected to illustrate the ways in which academic, and racial and ethnic identities are ascribed and produced, and student responses to these processes.

To orient the readers, I provide an overview of the institutional, academic identities at O’Donnell. As will be discussed, students in each academic program grapple with their academic identity and experience various forms of tension within it. Another note on the table is that the number of students in each academic program represents the number of students I observed extensively throughout the study. The sample number is represented by n , and that n represents the total number of students that I observed throughout the 2012-2013 academic year, and then within each of the total sample numbers, I deepened by understanding of each group by interviewing students across

each program. They do not represent the comprehensive number of students in each academic program. The overview is provided below in Table 1.

The table provides an overview of the three academic programs and the academic identities that form out of being positioned in each particularly program. While academic identity emerges from the ways the school positions students in each program, we also begin to see the implications for social identity, too. This means, there exists a cost for IB students when it comes to social identity formation. They are unable to pursue or experience social identity as IB students. While AVID students have a medium academic identification, they desire and pursue social identities through their participation in after-school programs (Chapter Four). Regulars experience negative academic identification, but also the implication of their academic positioning as regular results in negative social identities. This means, teachers and other school staff presume that since they are regulars they are also not able to or capable of experiencing positive social identities. I challenge this in Chapter Five by demonstrating the ways youth such as the regulars transcend the institutional barriers to their positive social identity formation.

Table 1. Typology of Institutional, Academic Identity at O'Donnell

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
IB (=42)	Strong academic identification: "I'm IB"	Tension and vulnerability in this academic identity: "Am I good enough?"	Desire for more than academic identity but limited opportunity for social identity: "This isn't all I am" and "The nerds think they're all ghetto"
AVID (n=15)	Medium academic identification: "I'm AVID, but not IB"	Tension with academic identity Positive social identity: "We're like a community, like friends"	Desire for more than academic identity and pursue desires: "I'm pursuing more than this"
Regular (n= 30)	Low, weak, or negative academic identification signified by the term regular: "I'm regular" or "They're just regular"	Tension and vulnerability in this academic identity and in social identity; Assigned social identities through perceptions about their racial and ethnic markers	Desire for more than academic and social identities ascribed to them: "You don't have to be AP or Honors to be politically engaged"

Mapping Academic Identities and their Interaction with

Race and Ethnicity at O'Donnell

Academic Program One: International Baccalaureate (IB)

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program at O'Donnell is small cohort of students. Students are identified by the school based on their test scores in eighth grade.

One teacher explains:

Initial sorting happens with eighth grade reading scores and then their transcripts. Then, they get put into honors classes. In fact, at the beginning of the year we had this great brew ha ha because for some reason all the kids that should have been in the honors classes were mixed in with the regulars. They went through and reorganized them for World Studies, and sorted them based on some test scores but we have more than just two levels. (Interview, December 21, 2012)

Upon entering the high school, students are tracked as "pre-IB," which is a misnomer since such a label is made-up by the school. For the students given this label it just means that in their freshman year they take one honors World Studies for pre-IB. Then,

junior year students become full-IB, which means they take all IB designated courses and “become official IB,” as one teacher explained. They take IB English, IB math (pre-calculus), IB Chemistry or IB Biology, IB Technology, IB European History, and then Theory of Knowledge (TOK). I extensively observed these IB classes because it is a course that separates the ideological and pedagogical choices for IB students versus any other student in the building. This means, this class is taken as a two-year sequence for junior and senior IB students, is a unique course that privileges critical thinking, advanced, controversial topics, and uses Socratic questioning to draw out student reasoning. It is also taught by the newly appointed director of the IB program, a teacher who has a Ph.D. in literature.

Characteristics of the IB cohort. As of 2012-2013, there were 2,575 students enrolled at the school and 42 were designated as IB in the junior class. The senior class had eight students at the start of the study. Knowing that O’Donnell is largely students of Latino or Hispanic background it was interesting to learn that Asian students are over-represented in the IB cohort. Hispanic and Latino students are present in IB courses and the participants in the study who had been identified as IB expressed an awareness that they, referring here to their cultural and ethnic marker of “Latino-ness,” are in the minority in terms of the number of students in IB. In addition, youth in IB expressed that while there are fewer Asian students at the school generally, most Asians are in IB or honors or AP because “teachers just think they’re smart.” This sentiment was further affirmed when I first arrived at the school and a guidance counselor told me, “Latinos don’t really graduate from this school,” speaking to the roughly low graduation rate of

approximately 53%. While I am highlighting key moments where race and ethnicity appears to interact with the school sorting processes, once students are in IB, they become the academic identity of “IB” and their racial and ethnic markers of difference became less visible as patterns in the data with the exception of the regulars that I discuss in later chapters.

As I spent more time with IB students, though, I realized this process of sorting students was largely subjective, meaning that it was not always rooted in a measurement tool of student’s ability. Rather, students were largely placed in IB based on teachers’ perceptions of their ability. Similar to Morris’ (2005) study of teacher perceptions of white students when they are a minority, perceptions of student ability at O’Donnell were linked to social class and its intersection with race. Students were thought to be smart by a select group of teachers and administrators in the school and therefore given a place in the IB academic program. I elaborate on the teacher perceptions’ of student ability as they link to social class and its intersection with race and ethnicity later in the chapter.

The data from field notes and interviews serves to reconstruct the experiences of youth across the three programs in the remainder of the chapter. The sections within each academic program align with the “type” outlined in the table at the outset of the chapter.

Students who are labeled as IB have a strong sense of belonging to this particular group. This was revealed by the pattern across the interviews of “I’m IB,” signaling a distinguished status from the rest of the O’Donnell population, and pride despite the many sources of tension that students experience as IB. By tension, I observed three characteristics; first, while students strongly identify as IB they grapple with their

confidence in their academic abilities. Second, they question their status as IB, as though they “don’t fit in” or are un-deserving of it. Third, these IB students, while ascribed the academic identity of IB, also express they do not have other identities such as social identities because they do not have time to partake in social interactions outside of the IB cohort and academic activities expected of them. Their opportunities to take on other identities such as social identities are limited and will be discussed in the next chapter.

“I’m IB”. Observations of the IB cohort reveal a strong identification with this academic identity that is available to these particular students. By strong, I mean one of the first statements students made to me in this particular group was “I’m IB” and thus I explore the meaning of this academic identity from the beginning moments of the study. The school identifies these students as “the smartest” in the school despite comments from teachers that suggest that being an IB student at this “ghetto school on the south side of Chicago” does not guarantee admission to college or upward mobility in life after high school.

This conversation with a female student illustrates the pride students have in being in the IB program, as she tells me up front that she is proud of being in IB:

Student: I think I have an academic identity. I think that is the one that is gonna help me have a better future and be a better person. I am a nature-lover, too, I guess, so you could I say I have an environmental like identity. I like being creative and making stuff with my hands. I like making bracelets. I like that. I feel like that is also a way I identify. I know I’m labeled. I do notice it. You do see the difference. We don’t have to deal with the other ones who are just here to sit and not do anything. A lot of people don’t really see the IB. They label most of the students, like oh you go to O’Donnell, and they don’t see that our school has an IB. They don’t think there’s people like us here. Did you hear about the incident on our college trip? We got really upset. A kid from [high-performing selective enrollment school in Chicago] was like, ‘Your school has IB,’ like he didn’t know. I kinda think our school has in a

way had a bad reputation. I understand why, though, like they say O'Donnell is filled with gang-bangers. They don't really see that there's IB and teacher's teachers who care. There's IB here, too. There's a lot of expectations, but we are all pretty close and it's not just Latinos, Asians, too. (Interview, January 15, 2013)

This student experiences pride in being IB given that her school is often perceived to be low-performing and filled with gang bangers. She also intimates that students in IB “don't have to deal” with the other students because they are isolated from the rest of the students in the school. Other students expressed the knowledge that being IB meant something positive. One male, Latino student said, “I'm IB, and I know we get special treatment. Like I know people in regular and it's different.” These sentiments of recognizing the value or status of having the academic label in the school distinguished them—whether they were comfortable with this or not—from Regulars.

Students recognize their different and the academic hierarchies that are set up through the various programming. Specifically, students recognize their different and the different treatment they receive as part of their positioning as IB. Such positioning and the hierarchies and perceptions of the Regulars versus IB are the “unintended consequences” of the disembodied tracking practices in schools that seek to reproduce inequality in society, particularly with lower-tracked students (MacLeod, 1987; Oakes, 1985) while higher-performing students such as the IB ones in this study experience social isolation (Davidson, 1996, p. 39). While IB students adamantly identify as IB to distinguish themselves from the Regulars (read: the low-performers there to “just sit there and do nothing”) and to dismantle negative perceptions of their school, they still experience tension and even limits to their social identity due to the social isolation.

Tension of being IB. The tensions that arise around being IB occur on three levels. The first level is that students, particularly Latino students that participated in the study expressed concerns over their academic abilities and the pressures that accompanied the status of being IB. For instance, one Latino male student told me, “I am a lower type student. I don’t see myself as outstanding or even average student, but I’m IB.” His quiet disposition in classes suggested to me that he was a contemplative student. I also observed this particular student in an after-school program devoted to raising awareness about teen dating violence and sexual abuse during the academic year. Despite his quiet, reserved demeanor, the interview with him revealed his knowledge of the community, the racism and discrimination he experienced in the school and outside of the school, and his reasons for wanting to acquire an education.

This student explained, “I know I can handle the work, but I don’t fit in with the rest of those kids [other IB students]. I mean, I’m IB, and I know we get special treatment...like I know people in regular and it’s different.” This particular student also affirmed earlier sentiments about understanding the academic hierarchy in the school with the IB academic program having the highest status. Like many of the other IB students, this student came to understand that having the status of an IB student would likely yield a positive education experience, or at least provide a space where learning could happen.

A second level that connects tension around the IB identity with student experience is when a student expressed that she did not think her IB teacher thought she

was smart enough to be in IB. This student also expresses a similar experience to the previous student as she notes her feelings of not fitting in with the IB students. She said:

Student: The IB teacher knew my brother but she had him for regulars; they didn't like each other and my mom always had to come to parent conferences with her and everything. So then sophomore year when we were going to go in IB that teacher asked us who's going on IB and I raised my hand. She took like the worst face ever when she saw my hand go up. She said to me in this sarcastic voice, 'You're going on IB?' and that kind of like made me feel like I don't know. I was like, 'Yeah,' and then I felt weird. She really didn't like me a lot. She always screamed at me a lot because I was late and like she would always pick on me, but I think it's because she got a sense of my brother and she probably thought that everyone was the same. I don't know how to explain it. I'm IB and I want to learn. I want more Hispanics and Mexicans to become professionals and get educated. I don't identify myself as a nerd cause I don't think I'm smart and because I'm not a nerd. I think my sense of humor kills my nerdiness. (Interview, January 23, 2013)

This student along with others experienced tension within the IB academic identity. As stated previously, the students realize that they are considered the ones who are worth teaching or able to learn when compared to the rest of the student body, but within the group each student did not feel like they "fit" the IB identity or they felt pressure to fit the expectations that accompany the IB identity. Or, students such as the one above encounter negative perceptions of their ability by adults.

A third way that tension arose around the IB identity was when students felt as though they were being stereotyped. This occurred for both Latinos and for Asians. Latinos felt negatively stereotyped as though they were not capable of doing the work of an IB student while Asians felt misunderstood. Some students attributed this feeling of discomfort around their ascribed institutional academic identity to teacher perceptions of their ability while other participants attributed their lack of fitting in with the "rest of those kids," to something other than academic ability. Tension specifically arose when

one teacher persistently referred to the Asian students in the IB Theory of Knowledge class—a course that is restricted from non-IB students—as “knowing what to do or getting a 4.6 GPA and being really smart.” A participant during class discussion responded to this by exclaiming, “I hate my own race; there are so many stereotypes that come along with being Chinese like being smart” (Field notes, November 19, 2012). The teacher, the same teacher of all of these students, laughed at the student and proceeded throughout my time at O’Donnell to refer to this student as the “self-hating Chinese girl,” instead of acknowledging that the student did not want to have circulating stereotypes around her racial marker of Chinese-ness since she did not “feel Chinese,” as she told me in our interview (Interview, February 5, 2013).

These statements demonstrate the ways in which students are proud of and strongly identify as IB as their given academic identity. They understand the positive position and status of the identity they are given and the symbolic value that is inscribed in the identity. Yet, they either struggled to maintain confidence as an IB student or they felt susceptible to negative teacher reactions to their participation in this academic program. The next section refers to the ways that these IB students experience social isolation in the school and are limited or explicitly discouraged from joining after-school programs or pursuing social identities beyond what are available to them in the IB program.

“The nerds think they’re all ghetto”. Another phenomenon that arose in the IB academic identity was the social isolation these IB students experienced. In a school of 2,500+ students, these students did not have a strong connection to students beyond the

IB cohort. Within the IB cohort, social identities were less prevalent, meaning most of these students were being disciplined and trained to be academically oriented so evidence of their exploration of social identities is limited. They are not encouraged or nurtured in school spaces to socially interact with each other. That said, as with all adolescents, these students were also experimenting with or performing social identities, often times unconsciously, in subtle ways. The subsequent chapters examine the formation of social identities as students encounter a community-school partnership, building on and charting new territory in education research, particularly the need for research on students that are considered low-performing and often forgotten about unlike the ways in which the IB students are coddled and nurtured in their academic trajectories at O'Donnell. In the beginning of the study, I did not foresee the ways in which IB students would be limited or hindered from pursuing social identities, so expressing the ways in which they experience social identity is different from the AVID and the Regulars in Chapters Four and Five.

Previous research suggests that certain elements of style, dress, and/or language use as forms of capital in some cases or evidence of a lack of capital in other cases, particularly nonwhite students' "street" styles can signal lower, class-based identities that can impact teacher perceptions of academic ability (Morris, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977).

This study finds participants in the IB cohort to be less associated with the complexities of social identity markers. Due to their social isolation as part of this IB cohort, their social identities are imagined and while materialized within their IB cohort,

these social identities are only expressed through style and dress as opposed to the ways in which other students in the studies develop and generate social identities. One of the participants in my study explained the social worlds of IB students. She perceived that students unconsciously express social identities in limited ways because of the constraints of their academic identity. These ways include visible expressions such as clothing style, or dress. The result of witnessing this was observing the imagined, social identities of these IB students. I use the term imagined because these identities were projections of identities these students thought or felt they should have within their academic group, knowing they had limited access/opportunities to experiment with social identities due to their structured, rigorous academic course load. One of the female, Latina, IB students explained:

Student: “The nerds think they’re all ghetto. I kind of have a little secret. I kind of don’t like the people in IB. They get on my nerves, I don’t know. I feel like, yeah it’s true, I feel like we’re a little like group. It sometimes seems like we’re the only ones in the school. When I’m in class I feel like they try playing the roles that are not theirs, like that belong to other kids in the actual school. Sometimes, like the cheerleaders like they try taking the role of, you know how there’s usually like the popular girls? It seems like that when we’re in our IB group they think they are the popular girls cuz they’re cheerleaders, but when we get out of our IB group they’re just nerds. But they think they are the popular people within our little group. Some of them are trying to be like the really ghetto ones, kind of like the really loud ghetto ones. When you see them in the IB group, yeah sure they look like it they ARE the ghetto ones, but when you put them next to the whole auditorium they disappear. You don’t even notice them. Like Fred, like she tries to act all ghetto. She’s got like angsty, like tough. I always get mad when the teacher says, “She’ll beat you up!” Like seriously, the Chinese girl is gonna beat me up? That’s why I think if other people see her, they will be like, “it’s just a Chinese girl, what was she gonna do?” [smirks at me]. I just think it’s funny. I find it really funny that the kids in our group think they are different within our IB group. They’re just nerds in the bigger student body yet within our group they take on these roles that are usually for people in the larger student body. You get me? (Interview, January 23, 2013)

This student's observation of the IB cohort is consistent with data from field notes and interview that reveals that the IB cohort are strongly disciplined and adhering to their ascribed academic identity. Even though they have little interaction with the larger student body, some students in the IB cohort do attempt to take on social identities in minimal ways such as dressing a certain way, or attempting to "act all ghetto," as the participant noted above. They are attempting to access the social identities in the larger student body. Such social identities in high schools have larger meaning and connect with class inequalities in our capitalist society (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Eckert, 1989). While students may not have access to social identities in the larger scheme of their IB academic trajectories, they attempt to access social identities they perceive will allow them to assert power within their IB cohort. The student above is one of few that perceive this as happening. The analysis of the IB cohort as with others in the next sections demonstrates the complexity of youth culture in high schools. What happens with access or limited access to social identity is much more than just dominant culture and counter culture. This student's point, however, is that the IB students are "just nerds," and if we are to place them alongside the larger student body, they just "disappear," because those social roles of tough, ghetto, or angsty are reserved for other members of the social hierarchy at O'Donnell. This social hierarchy, in part, is set up through institutional ascriptions of academic identities for students. The next section explains the "middle-of-the-road" students in depth and the way academic identities are assigned. These students, however, differ in that they recognized their desire for social identities and actually pursue them.

Academic Program Two: Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID)

This section outlines the AVID program features, the details of the application for current high school students, teacher perceptions of the program, and then student perceptions of the program including the ways in which it produces academic identities in relation to feelings of connectedness to the school. Much like the IB academic track, students in AVID identify as AVID and experience an increased sense of belonging as participants in this particular academic program. To examine the perceptions of this academic identity this section draws from teacher interview data to ground us in the underlying processes and context of AVID at O'Donnell, and then I draw on student interview data and field notes to explore the various, "types," that emerge within this second academic program. While student experiences vary across participants in AVID, I studied and observed 15 AVID students, and from that number interviewed several to deepen the understanding of perceptions of this academic identity. From both field notes and interview data types emerge both within and across academic programs. The academic identity of AVID is not enough for these students, and so I also discuss the other ways they experience social identity more positively than IB students.

AVID is a nation-wide academic support program that partners with various school districts around the country. I first learned about AVID during an interview with a teacher. There is a banner hanging in the first floor hallway that said AVID. I did not think much of it given that I did not observe a clear definition or acknowledgement of the program in my first months at the school.

After that initial interview with a teacher who identified himself as an “AVID teacher,” I attempted to keep my ears keen to mention of this academic program. I also visited an “AVID class,” which is marked by its student-generated curriculum. This class also known by teachers as a “tutorial,” contained tutors from outside the school that arrive at the school during one period and work with students on problems they face in their subject area classes. One teacher sat in the corner of the room while students worked in groups of five to six, and then five tutors were in the room. I observed minimal interaction between adults and students in this class. I sat with a group of six female students and asked them questions about the class. They explained to me that they fill out a form with the problems they will work on for that particular class period, and then the tutors are there if they help. I became curious about this seemingly student-led and student-focused program, and so I explored the website for more information in addition to asking teachers about it. I found it peculiar that there was a lack of clarity around the process by which students are placed in AVID at O’Donnell despite the fact that this is a nation-wide academic support program that maintains an informational website.

On their website, AVID provides the characteristics for its students. In a section on their website called, “The AVID student,” it says: AVID targets students in the academic middle – B, C, and even D students – who have the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. These are students who are capable of completing rigorous curriculum but are falling short of their potential. Typically, they will be the first in their families to attend college, and many are from low-income or minority families.

The AVID program at O'Donnell is treated as an academic program. It is presented as though students "self-select" into the program through their application processes, but after discussing the program with teachers it became clear that an invisible process occurs among teachers as well. One teacher noted, "Students aren't self-selected, but pushed to enroll" in AVID. Informally, I learned that students applying as freshmen or sophomores also need a recommendation from "AVID teachers." According to the school's website, AVID is defined as a program that is for students who are highly motivated to go to college, but are not necessarily high performing on standardized tests. More specifically, the application form for students notes, "The AVID program is an academic support program. We are looking for students who are performing in the academic middle (earning a "C" or better) and demonstrating the potential and motivation to go to college." The application asks several questions related to student motivation to go to college. The second part of the application is for parents of the student. The third part of the application is a teacher recommendation form. It then asks teachers to rate students on a scale of one to five in areas related to both academic ability and to assess their perception of a student's potential and motivation. One teacher informed me there's a strong, self-selecting team of teachers that make the decisions. The teacher suggests that it is unlikely that high-performing students would be in AVID unless there was a mistake in the process of placing and sorting students for IB.

Informally through teachers' comments, I learned that there is what one teacher called a "real AVID community" among the AVID teachers, suggesting that teachers choose to become AVID teachers and make an effort to reach this group of students. He

notes, “We sit around and talk about the kids and discuss their applications.” When I asked the AVID students they overwhelmingly noted they have “no idea” how they got into the program. Most students, however, identify positively as AVID, develop strong relationships with teachers and with other AVID students. A teacher corroborated this, he said, “There’s an affective component to AVID. It teaches kids to communicate.” This “affective” component is evidenced throughout the many months of observations and participant observations I experienced with AVID students. It is within this academic program, that students challenge the limits of academic identity labels and attempt to form social identities as they encounter the community-school partnership.

Students’ perspectives on the AVID academic identity. As I learned more about AVID students, I discovered their unique positioning within the school community, and their ability and desire to pursue social identities beyond what their academic label. AVID students identify positively as AVID, but they recognize that this academic identity does not signify the same high level of academic expectations or constraints as the IB cohort. AVID students experience a similar pattern of self-questioning and self-identifying, a concern about how others’ perceptions of them impact their status, and a desire for social identities beyond merely the academic ascription process in the school. These students identify as AVID, but see themselves as separate, or on a lower rung of an academic hierarchy. The second theme within this particular set of students is they view themselves as more than an academic label. Here, a phrase that was repeated across data is, “We’re like a community, like friends.” A third theme or “type” of AVID student revealed that youth pursue after-school clubs and activities to develop their social

identities, which is a key difference between AVID and IB students. This section discusses this from the student perspective.

“I’m AVID, but I’m not IB”. Students in AVID are aware of the potential to be what the school considers “good students,” and this definition of a good student for AVID students is different from other students in the school. These students are expected to take one or two honors or AP classes, and to be involved in after-school programs or other extracurricular activities. Students in this academic program are involved in a broad range of programs. In the early months of the study, I observed a range of such programs from debate, law, Model United Nations, Social Justice Club, Chicago Youth Speaking (CYS). These programs, among many others, are offered at this school as a unique feature of the community–school partnership. I discuss the exploration of social identities as students encounter the community-school partnership in chapter four in more depth.

I found early on that most of the students in these programs were also AVID students. While AVID students were not screaming “I’m AVID” from the tops of their lungs, if I asked them which classes they took, usually the term AVID emerged. To deepen the understanding of the AVID student experience I traveled with students to their classes, after-school programs, and on field trips mostly as part of the after-school programs. I did also attend class field trips, but only with AVID students in an AP human geography class. Students would invite me to meet them at lunch and then “we could talk after somewhere in a hallway,” I think they liked meeting with me, and would often ask questions about college and travel. In one of our group interviews they explained

AVID to me. We sat cross-legged in a windowsill of the high school, a window on the northeast end of the building, which means we could see the skyscrapers in downtown Chicago from where we sat as they expressed their desire to study abroad in college.

What emerges across these interviews and field notes are a positive identification with AVID, but also hints that there is a stronger sense of connectedness among this group of students. This is a sample from a conversation with three AVID students as they reflect on their experience. These students will also be returned to in chapter four. These said:

Lennon: The more you go through high school, the more people you know so like in her experience [referring Eli] she's been having his little family with sports. Sports is like you get in touch with other people. And, like with all of us in Social Justice Club.

Corrin: Like closer relationships than you would just having friends just in classes.

Eli: I didn't know how high school would be in the United States so it was weird. I did softball and met new friends and coaches and I found out all these really cool sports that I like now. I feel like the juniors all know each other and we could....

Lennon: have a community [finishes her sentence].

Eli: Play around, if you don't know them you can make them friends. There's a lot of people that There's a lot of people that are really smart and do sports and are in clubs. (Interview, June 6, 2013)

Students quickly go into the social aspects and the "community" they feel among AVID students. These students identified positively as AVID, but quickly distinguished their academic ability (or perceived academic ability) from the IB group. Students in this academic track understand themselves as "not as smart," as the IB students.

SR: What has made you feel connected or disconnected?

Corrin: For me, taking AP classes and being with the same people in more than one class. I have never joined sports.

Eli: I joined softball I wanted to be involved in clubs and stuff. I went the first day and didn't even bring a glove. Like the whole first year I was like benched.

Lennon: You are amazing, though. [laughs]

SR: You said you take the same classes, so the IB students they are an isolated group. Do you guys see yourself as part of a larger school community or feel separate?

Lennon: It's hard; we are separate. IB are considered higher or intellectual or whatever. I don't know [pauses] we are separated in that way because we are in different classes but I still talk to IB students so I mean I don't feel disconnected.

SR: What about general education students? Do you feel distance from them?

Lennon: Oh, yea, some of them don't even know what AP classes are (Interview, June 3, 2013).

This group interview sheds light on the similarities and differences across academic programs. The AVID students tended to be more social, and to know more of the IB students than the IB students. AVID students were very specific about saying they are not considered IB, or honors, but that they are AVID. In terms of academic ability, these students see themselves as capable and in nearly all of the cases at the school, as college-bound. But, they are just not as "smart" or as "high or intellectual" as the IB students.

"We're like a community, like friends". The AVID students in the study participated extensively in after-school activities and were keen on social interactions with each other. The three that I conducted group interviews with emphasized and describe the "communal" nature of the AVID students. Students referred to this program as giving them "networks" in the larger school. For these students, community meant

different things depending on life history, culture, and space. For instance the three students described their varying connection to the neighborhood community, but all noted the strong “community” among the AVID students, but “not so much in our classes, but we’re fine with each other there, but more so outside of classes in after-school clubs or sports or whatever.” AVID students take the initiative to form communal bonds with each other through participation in after-school program. This AVID community was developed through student interactions in social spaces beyond the classroom. For students, they perceived this community as providing them with an increased sense of belonging to each other. It is proposed in Chapter Four that this communal sense that forms among the AVID students enables them to enact desires for social identities such as the organizing and activism that occurs through their participation in after-school programs.

“I’m more than my academic label”: **Beyond the academic label into social spaces.** Many of the students in AVID readily communicate their interests and reasons for such interests. Traveling with these students on field trips with my digital recorder out as we walked through parks or around college campuses enabled me to gain insight into their sense-making process as they grapple with their academic program. The many conversations I had also led to an understanding that these students re-define what it means to be “smart,” by being in AVID. They are considered not as “higher or intellectual” as IB students, but they instead pursue social identities beyond what the academic label and its perceptions of ability bring with it. Interview and group interview data revealed the rich histories and cultural experiences that shape these students’ sense

of self across social spaces. This section highlights three rich cases to illustrate the various ways in which identities are shaped by histories and culture, negotiated in institutional contexts such as school labels in academic programs, and recharted by students' pursuit of "more than my academic label."

In the interview below, Eli revealed that many of her reasons for pursuing social identities was in a way grappling with pressure she felt from her fragmented cultural identity and the competing expectations she experienced. She is ethnically Chinese, but culturally a "mix of Panamanian and American." Ultimately, she discovers that pursuing cultural and social identities is possible through after-school programs and the various social bonds formed in after-school programs. She explains:

The difference between schooling in China versus at O'Donnell is that in China students were really disciplined. The schools were different. The classes would continue until 5 and it was really exhausting compared to here. At O'Donnell students have more freedom. I do consider myself both Chinese and Panamanian, though. I'm still not sure what to call myself but most likely I would tell people that my nationality is Panamanian because I lived there for almost eleven years and that I'm also Chinese because my parents were born in China and I went to boarding school there because my parents wanted me to be disciplined in Chinese culture. I have this mixed ethnic history, which is sometimes really amazing but at times really confusing because sometimes I don't know how I am supposed to act or what cultural rules to follow. It is fun to know Chinese culture because in the end it is where my descendants came from. I joined Social Justice Club because I wanted to be involved in a big project like going to New Orleans over spring break in which I could help out the community there and at the same time work with my peers. I wanted to make a difference and discover different problems that the U.S. has and it didn't matter if I picked to be Chinese or Latina or whatever, we were just a community of social justice. (Interview, May 23, 2013)

This student's experience of having a more "disciplined" experience in academics, and feeling pressure from her parents to live up to the academic expectations of Chinese culture such as "being successful" and only "focusing on school" is something

she grapples with but explains that being involved with sports and after-school programs such as Social Justice Club enables her to explore social identities and develop a sense of justice. She, like many other students, expressed a developing sense of social justice from their participation in the club.

The other two students expressed similar desires to see the world beyond their neighborhood and pursue social identities beyond classroom spaces. Corrin said:

I wanted to be an activist since I was a little kid. I definitely want to go away for college. I just hope I'm successful and I don't feel obligated to stay here. I want to know the world around us, and not just confined to where we live. I want to see other cultures and meet other people. (Interview, May 23, 2013)

As this student finished her sentence about wanting to pursue more than what was available to her in O'Donnell and the neighborhood, Lennon expressed similar feelings. He said:

I just feel like getting away here too, not forever, but I would like to go explore. Sometimes I feel like I should stay because my family, they are kinda struggling a little bit because my dad. . he has a condition, Parkinson's disease, so he needs a lot of help at home. So sometimes I feel like I should stay. but my mom she tells me 'get out there,' but I never get the sense that she's giving me that guilt like she never would say you should stay because you're dad has this but moving out would be pretty cool. And, studying abroad. I would love to do that. (Interview, May 23, 2013)

These comments illustrate that these students have an awareness of the fact that exploration is a part of their journey. Many of the students in AVID and after-school programs, unlike the IB students and the Regulars maintain this sense of exploration as though it is a necessary component of their development. They also see this sense of awareness and relationships among each other as contributing to a personal sense of justice. The process of exploring social identities also enables the students to reflect on

their developing sense of social justice, which is discussed later in the chapter. These students' sense of "beyond" permeates their thoughts on education and their future, and their ideas and beliefs materialize in the participation in activist events and for these three the after-school program, Social Justice Club.

The intent of this section was to provide an overview of the three types of experiences with academic and social identity. I learned throughout the study that the role of the community-school programs were crucial for AVID students. Students were able to explore their social identities knowing that their academic positioning as AVID was insufficient for them. This line of inquiry is pursued in Chapter Four. The next section introduces the third academic program and label that students in it are ascribed.

Academic Program Three: General Education: The Regulars

This section provides an overview of identity formation for the third, and largest, group of students known throughout the school as the Regulars. I discuss perceptions of these students, and the process of identity formation for these students. Key differences exist for this large group of students at O'Donnell. For instance, the academic identity of a Regular is not a positive one. The institutional label also interacts with race and ethnicity more than the other two academic programs as will be illustrated by the ways that teachers perceive and assign social identities to the Regulars. After discussing the processes of identity formation in this academic program, I highlight the ways in which few students in my study emerged as "different" from the rest of the Regulars. These exceptions are the focus of later chapters.

The Regulars make up the largest portion of the student body. Despite the ways in which the school perpetuates this group's non-academic identity, by labeling them as Regular, students in this program emerged as more than their negative label or assumptions about their ability and motivation. The students in this program take less rigorous coursework. One student noted, "I wasn't allowed to take AP or honors because you have to be picked." Research on urban schools often highlights common features of low-resourced schools such as less experienced teachers, high teacher turnover, and a watered-down curriculum. However, at O'Donnell name these features only pertained to the Regulars' classes. By this, I mean that the structure of the academic programs generated a three-tiered school system, or an "academic pyramid" as one Regular student described. One student shared his perceptions of the academic hierarchies at the school and the "tiers of education in the same school":

Student: This is something I have started to notice. There's like different tiers of education inside of the same school. You have your Regular, honors and AP/IB students. I started off as an IB student, but because my grades weren't all that well, I left the program and started taking AP classes and honors classes by choice. They let me. But, there's also this academic segregation through those classes and more rigorous classes than in the general ed classes. My question was: Why? Why is this happening? (Interview, June, 3, 2013)

This student understands the ways in which the institution ascribes academic labels to various students and the result is that students received differential educational experience in the same school. A key piece of learning about these "tiers of education" is that in the Regulars, sophomore year is a critical year because it is when most of the students turn age 16 and have the opportunity to drop out of school. One teacher told me to "watch for it" after Christmas break. He was referring to the fact that he would lose a

number of the students in his regular, general education U.S. history class due to the “natural phenomenon” that occurs when “kids who just haven’t had a good experience in schools can make the choice to leave without much the parents can do.”

Building upon this perspective, it is evident that several reasons contribute to high dropout rates, particularly the conditions and contexts of students that attend urban schools across the country (e.g., family income, education, and occupation (Allensworth, 2005; Barton, 2008); and, this school is no exception as its dropout rates are steady around 52% in the last five years. Research considers the ways in which schools reproduce inequality through the process of labeling and assigning students into academic tracks, in effect distributing a “life sentence” and generating academic identities that favor or disfavor positive academic trajectories for students (Ballantine & Spade, 2008, p. 8). However, rarely do we consider the institutional barriers that exist for students of color in urban public schools and more specifically their impact on students from the students’ perspectives.

These institutional barriers combined with teacher perceptions of general education students, overrepresented by minority groups, contribute to students’ sense of disconnectedness and alienation from the school experience (Fine et al., 2004) and the ways in which schools contribute to students’ sense of self (Ballantine & Spade, 2008, p. 7). Fine’s (1991) study focused heavily on the ways in which schools fail to retain or reach out to students who might potentially dropout. Another teacher explained to me that the school considers this the norm. He said, “The school administrators do not have much incentive to keep these students here given that these are the students who typically

bring down the school's test scores. It [self-selected dropout] is like a natural way to trim the fat at the school." While the focus of the study became more about the Regular identity, this section outlines the types that emerged within this program. Later chapters discuss this stigmatized, non-academic label. To begin the analysis of interviews with teachers and students, group interviews with students, and field notes generated the types for this academic program.

"I'm just Regular". One student describes her experience as a Regular. She understands her educational experience is different from students in the previous two academic programs. She said:

Student: I am Regular. I feel like people who are in IB get more respect from everyone, adults and students; it means they're bright students. At the same time, the people in regular [general education] classes, we're not dumb, we just maybe not advanced. I don't know how they pick honors and stuff, but a lot of people say it's based on your test scores. Hopefully it's not based on test scores. I am a horrible test-taker (Interview, May 24, 2013).

This student raises the issue that Regulars are perceived to be dumb or forgotten about by teachers and school staff. Additionally, the experience of Regulars includes lack of quality education. They are not provided access to higher order thinking classes, rigorous coursework, or teaching methods that encourage and foster critical thinking such as "Socratic seminars" in IB, and AVID or the "tutorials" in AVID that encourage student problem-solving. During a group interview with a sophomore general education U.S. history class, students explained their school experience that suggests the ways their position as a Regular fails to afford them educational opportunities:

Student 1: The academics are different here. I think the academics are lower in our neighborhood and even in our school. I don't exactly know why, but I think the classes here are easier.

Student 2: I want to add on to what she said. My freshman and sophomore year, I was in Atlanta, and now I am learning stuff that I learned in eighth grade. So, I am going three steps back to get credit I already have. My thinking is the reason they do that is to make it easier for the kids to pass. They say are not trying [in their classes] so they [teachers] are gonna bend it or curve it so they [students] can get it outta school (Field notes, January 31, 2013).

As students expressed their perceptions of the education they receive as part of the Regular track, the role of teacher and other adult perceptions of these students impacted their sense of self and belonging in the school. This section introduced the ways students view themselves and the education they receive as part of the Regular track and the ways they experience this academic identity as well.

The next section discusses the ways in which negative perceptions of student academic ability interacts with the ascription of social identities. Teachers perceived the Regulars to not only lack academic skills, but also assumed they were involved in gangs or knew “how gangs worked.”

“Regulars know the inside life of gangs”: The ascription of social identities through perceptions of racial and ethnic markers. A theme that emerged about the Regulars is that they also did not have the freedom to pursue social identities in the way AVID students could. This means, students in this track experience not only experience a negative or non-existent academic identity, they also experience limited opportunities for positive social identities. An analysis of data revealed that at times, teachers and students alike associate the Regular identity with knowledge of the gang violence, suggesting they are more likely to have involvement with gangs—voices of teachers saying to me, “maybe they had a brother or a boyfriend who’s involved” are sprinkled across field notes. I turn to field notes data on a group discussion with a sophomore United States

history class on the topic of community and gang presence as a way to demonstrate that youth actually are just offering a level of self and community-awareness and yet are assumed to have the social identity marker of gang-banger.

Teachers' perceptions of the Regulars seemed more tenuous than in other academic programs, as evidenced in the following data. Additionally, the students deemed as the Regulars experience a "process of racialization," meaning they are marked by teachers and their academic program in subtle and not so subtle exclusionary practices such as their placement in subsequent label of Regular (Lewis, 2003a, p. 141). Lewis (2001, 2003a) posits that racial categories such as Latino/a, Hispanic, or Black are imbued with meaning. When a student says, as they have across this study, "oh, they [teachers or other adult staff] are racist," they may not fully understand the racial logic of their school or even see their school as being impacted by institutional racism (e.g., neighborhood segregation), but what they articulate is their attempt to make-sense of this process of being marked by their academic ability as it interacts with their race and class. In other words, schools, by way of processes such as sorting students through academic programs, produce racial and ethnic identities that link to low-achievement in the general education program. This is a key piece of the experience of the Regulars.

The excerpt below is lengthy, but it is included here because it reflects the various ways Regulars experience the negative dimension of being a Regular, the ways teachers and other adults perceive their social identities as gang-bangers, and the ways their academic and social identity formation is a "process of racialization" (Lewis, 2003a):

Student 1: Some of the teachers here they just don't give a crap whether you succeed or not.

Student 2: My sister had my gym teacher; she was being very disrespectful to my sister, and like talking a world of crap to my sister. She called her stupid. My sister had told my mom and the teacher said if you wanna fail go ahead and don't come back to school if you're gonna fail anyway.

Student 3: I don't know if this teacher I have is racist, but he called me a ho.

Student 4: Maybe you are?

Student 3: Fuck off Daniela. So I told my mom. I'm Mexican, and this teacher said, "At least I was born here," and saying all this stuff to my mom. My mom told the dean and he said he was going to handle it and they never did. But that was last year. This year he was like you're a ho.

Student 2: What about like if we witnessed unfairness, but not necessarily racism?

Student 5: I got disrespected by a security guard. I was trying to leave the building. It was this year. He grabbed me and shoved me and was like, oh you fucking 3/5, and I was like what [students laugh]. He grabbed me and shoved and called me 3/5 and told me to get outta here. I was like, I'm trying to leave.

Student 3: I had something similar happen when I was trying to walk to the third floor. It was a security guard, and I was waiting for my friend. She was waiting for gangs, and I was passing by and he said, 'what up lady 2 shit.' I'm not even anything [not gang-affiliated] and he just said that, so they assume you're a gang-banger because either you're here at O'Donnell or you're Latino. The gang is called TWO SIX, so to be negative, people will call you '2 shit.'

Student 6: I think mine is more on a racial profile. The teacher always picks on me, kicks me out of class, and plus I am the only black person, too. Why am I put out? Why me?

Student 4: Last year I had this teacher Ms. X...she's racist

Students in unison: She's rayyyyyyy-cist.

Student 4: Well, she's black, too. I don't know for sure but she is disrespectful toward Hispanics. Before we used to have, like one black guy and she would treat him better. She would be disrespectful. There was always a group in the corner, like I was one of them. We wouldn't disrespect her but she would always try fighting with us.

Student 2: I was in the same class as Student 4. She would tell us to read the book and not answer our questions. She'd be like, 'put your hand down.' She would

think that we were talking and blame someone from across the room. (Field notes, February 11, 2013)

This group of students did not agree on all of the claims made about teacher and other adult treatment of students. There was certainly variation among the experiences.

However, the Regulars were more likely to express that they had negative examples of teacher-student or other adult- student interactions. Most of the students in the above dialogue equate a teacher's disrespect and low expectations of students as racist behavior. One student (student 2) in the above conversation, however, makes a distinction between racist behavior and unfairness. She struggles to determine if the teachers' behavior toward students is racist, and instead she makes the claim that she interprets the teacher's behavior in some instances as unfair, but not necessarily racist. Other students in this group, as mentioned, are quick to express their belief that teachers' favoritism and/or disrespect toward some students is racist.

These moments in which students recall interactions with adults and teachers in the building shed light on their educational experience and the daily experiences and life in the school context. They are constantly engaged in power struggles, whether it is with a security guard about going to their locker as they are accused of being in a gang, or being a "ho," or with a teacher about raising their hand. Lewis (2003a) argues, "The moment of identification is also a moment of inclusion or exclusion; an understanding is not merely formed but in many cases is subtly or explicitly acted on. Inclusion or exclusion can take the form in how one is treated in a particular context or in concretely material processes of who gets access to what kind of resources." Here, race, or the accusation of racism, take meaning through social interactions students have with their teachers and

other adults such as hallway staff or security guards – even when these authority figures are also from minority groups, the interaction is viewed as being racist – which makes Student two’s comment even more powerful because she attempts to separate bad behavior from one’s racial identity by advancing that a teachers’ behavior is more an issue of unfairness. Her attempts to distinguish between racist behavior and unfair behavior is a step she makes toward seeing herself outside of a racial logic that is persistently reinforced in most of the social interactions between Regulars and teachers and other adult staff. Through these interactions, and the sense-making processes of what it means to be Mexican (Hispanic, Latino/a, or Black), a boundary is created. For instance, one female student, student three (3), who said, “I’m Mexican,” and the teacher responds, “At least I was born here,” and this comment creates a boundary that sets up a symbolic moment of exclusion for this particular youth.

These racial and ethnic identities and the boundaries that mark sameness and difference are far from seamless. Even the movement and alignment among student three (3) and student four (4) in the above excerpt, two Latinas, against student six, a black female is challenged when student four (4) calls student three (3) a “ho” and looks down at her as part of a more “ratchet” brand of Latina. I learned that the term ratchet is mostly used among females of color at the school. This word means dirty or worse than ‘hood,’ which is a term the youth use to mean low-life or loser, promiscuous and not smart. This is to say that just because some youth are Latino/a does not automatically mean they share a collective identity that empowers them, but they do share in moments when an external ascription of identity occurs, e.g., when the security accuses Latino/a

students of being in gangs because of their race/ethnicity or when teacher assumes the Mexican student is undocumented. The ascription process that the school imposes is a powerful one, and these particular students deemed as the Regulars are more susceptible to the limits and challenges their academic program offers them.

Based on my observations and interviews, few students are able to re-claim, or even claim an identity for themselves. Despite the ways identities, both academic and social, are ascribed to the Regulars, some students still attempt to negotiate the non-academic identity and/or the ascription of their social identities vis-à-vis teacher assumptions of their racial and ethnic groups. Most of the Regulars' identities at best are reactionary, such as student 3 in the discussion in the section theme carving out her Mexican-ness, only to have it crushed by a white, male adult in the building that further essentialized her based on the neighborhood and racial logic of the school when he refers to her as a "ho" and in another instant suggests she was undocumented given that he perceives her as Mexican. These exceptions to the large number of Regulars are discussed next and the focus of later chapters. Despite the ways in which the school assigns students a "life sentence" by placing them in the regular, general education track, students in the regular track and deemed as the Regulars engage in the power struggles such as the ones reflected in the excerpt above or they attempt to break out of the ways that schools try to make and mold them (Davidson, 1996). The ways in which AVID and Regular students attempt to break out of the institutional forces of assigning academic identities and attempting to limit social identities is the focus of Chapters Four and Five.

Transcending Academic and Social Identity Ascription Processes

Despite teachers perceptions of the Regulars and the host of Regulars that did not succeed in classes, or perpetuated stereotypes made about them, I did find a third way of characterizing the identity formation process of Regulars. These students understand the stigmas attached to being a Regular, knew of gang violence in the community or knew people in gangs, and recognized the institutional barriers they faced toward success. However, as one Regular told me, “You don’t have to be IB or AP to be an activist.” Within the context of classes, after-school programs, and other community-organizing efforts, a youth organizer, social identity emerged—one that enabled youth to transcend the constrains of the non- academic label of Regulars and the ascribed, negative social identities that linked these students to gangs. Given the ways that youth were positioned at O’Donnell, I sought questions about the Regulars’ experiences in order to capture fully their negative experiences and also potential positive identity formation. I found youth in the regular program who desired more than what their school experience was affording them. One youth, who readers meet in chapter five, said, “You don’t have to be IB or AP [AVID] to be an activist or politically engaged” led me to pursue an understanding of how students, particularly those in regular track, dismantle the systemic and institutional constraints that reproduce inequality. For now I just mention the initial argument that Regulars can and do transcend institutional ascription process of identity in the face of racialization processes of such tracking.

Discussion: Negotiating Ascribed Identities across the Programs

This discussion section is organized around two key dimensions. First, I discuss teacher and student perceptions of the ascribed academic identities. Across each of the three programs instances occurs in which academic identities are ascribed and also perpetuated and reinforced by teacher-student interactions. Second, despite the force of the ascription processes, particularly around the Regulars, teachers and students strive to negotiate ascribed academic identities and transcend the constraints of each academic program. Each student across the three tracks experiences tension within the institutional, academic identity. This section discusses teacher perceptions across all of the programs, and then ends with a few comments from the youth that illustrate the ways students are dissatisfied with the academic positioning they endure.

One way that we can examine these three programs is the role of the teacher in perpetuating the school's ascription process, teachers' challenge the academic, or non-academic identities produced through these tracks and the academic discourse. These teacher perceptions of the various tracks reinforce and reproduce the academic identities despite the fact that viewing students through the lens of their perceived ability is insufficient as an analysis of student interview data revealed. Students see themselves as more than merely an academic label across all three programs, even when social identities are not pursued (IB), or are assigned (the Regulars). A summary of teacher perceptions of the academic programs is below:

Table 2. Perceptions of Difference among Academic Tracks

Teacher 1	I prioritize them [AP students]; it's the stuff that is closed to my heart is what I teach in the Civics class. I would say the class that I invest most of my time into is the AP classes. Ah, because, largely because it is a group who are willing to work at a higher level of intensity and I accommodate them [laughs] so I have extra papers to grade and also we proceed at a much faster pace. That is the most intense. But I get a great deal of enjoyment out of that because of working with kids who are more highly motivated. You don't have to solve the motivation question. You have kids who are ready to work and are pretty dutiful about the assignments. Then, the regular level kids, for me, the challenge is that how to engage these students, perhaps reluctant learners or students who had felt defeated by academics or education and therefore not putting in an effort, and kids whose reading levels are not as high, and how to successful teach a class that will engage them and improve their skills and raise their awareness.
Teacher 2	On Avid: The challenge of that class is that some of the concepts that I have to teach are over the heads of some of the kids because it's a college class. Some of these kids are the cream of the crop that got missed, but for the most part, the highest achieving kids would not be in that class. They're in IB or other AP classes. AVID kids like are like supposed to be more middle, average kids academically. So sometimes I would, it happened more in the beginning of the year I would come in with a lesson and, they will just totally not get what I am trying to teach that can be kind of painful.
Teacher 3	They don't know the realities of college unless you have older siblings or you live in a community where everyone goes o college, so that's the standard assumption is that if you live in a community where the assumption is everyone goes to college and you will too, but you don't know the particulars unless you have immediate siblings or neighbors who talk about. So, for most of our kids unless they have a sibling who has gone on, which is the case in he IB program. They don't have much knowledge of the particulars.

Teachers and students alike are aware of the benefits and constraints of each program. In a follow-up interview with an IB student, she describes the benefits and

limitations her IB status affords, knowing, however that she is unable to pursue or experience social identity formation within this academic track. She explains:

I can only talk about my experience and the only thing I've known is the O'Donnell IB group. There have been times that I've felt like we (IB students) are simply a monetary and propagandist tool to the school and to CPS. I also feel like the IB promoters are shady when they try to recruit more students. You heard about how they only reported certain students' test scores this year, right? They averaged the highest ACT scores from the IB juniors this year, and then told parents that that is the average. Why did that teacher admit that? (Interview, May 27, 2013)

Student perceptions of the ways in which these tracks function to reproduce class hierarchies in society are critical as we investigate how schools in low-income, urban areas of large cities like Chicago continue to perpetuate inequality (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Staiger, 2006; Willis, 1977). Some students recognize this process of class reproduction while others are unconscious of it. One Regular explained what he sees as the unequal, “tiers of education,” he said:

You don't have to be an AP AVID or and IB student to be politically engaged, or in some other form of activism, or not even activism but after- school activity, which is an alternative form of education. A good friend of mine graduated from a high- performing Chicago public school with really bad grades, and he's now a poet. He works with young Chicago authors. He has done a lot of Ted talks. He has this really interesting poem called Chicago Public Schools Training Ground. He pretty much says how CPS is designed to, through academic segregation, create a system where there are really few intelligent, well-prepared students, a few mid-tier students, and a whole lot of other students. That creates an academic pyramid where there are very few powerful people at the top and a lot of very poorly educated, less powerful—well not really I think there's power in numbers—but you get what I mean. (Interview, June 3, 2013)

This student sets up the foundations for the findings in later chapters. He notes how CPS is a differential system in which youth are not given opportunities. They are limited in their ability to participate in critical thinking and dialogue. Instead of accepting this

process of social reproduction, youth in this study challenge the dominant ordering process that schools seek to reproduce. Youth in this study challenge this process and produce their own positive, social identities, in effect, transcending the institutional, academic identities ascribed to them.

The process of identity ascription at O'Donnell is much more complex than previous typologies offered on racial and ethnic identity production in schools (Davidson, 1996; Eckert, 1989). Rather, the data collected in this study extend our understanding of identity ascription to include the ways in which social identities are also ascribed through an interaction with race, ethnicity, and perceived academic ability as was discussed with the general education program that included the Regulars. Students identify or distance themselves from racial and ethnic markers. Yet the ways in which meaning is made through social interactions in the classrooms reveals that teachers' perceptions of student ability and student value is rooted in teachers' understanding of race, meaning the students are marked by the school and is agents, teachers, and meaning around student ability emerges. Sociologists like Lewis (2003) provide a typology for markers of racial difference. While this study reveals that race matters, the lived experience of race is complex at O'Donnell; thus I observed how and where racial and ethnic identity was produced e.g., in classrooms/ through teacher-student relations (Morris, 2006), and I also found it necessary to move beyond racial and ethnic identities and examine social identity as well. This is the focus of subsequent chapters.

End of Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the identity formation processes at an urban public school. In this chapter, I argued that the institutional, ascription process occurs in the school and sets up conditions for various academic and non-academic identities to emerge as well as social identities. Such material processes occur through the academic programs in which students are sorted together with teacher perceptions of students' cultural backgrounds and abilities. Teacher perceptions of racial and ethnic identity contribute to beliefs Latino students as not college bound, and that few students are "capable" of the work required for AP courses, or IB courses at the school. Thus, the structure of academic programs limits most students from having access to positive academic identities at the school. Students are aware of these processes and express tension around the various academic identities that are ascribed to them. Students in IB did experience positive academic identity formation as they are treated like the "smartest in the school," while their opportunities for social identity were limited and they even were socially isolated. Students in AVID less strongly identify with their academic label, and seek "more" than what their academic identity affords them. This is explored in chapter four. Regulars experience the least positive academic and social experiences. They are constantly dealing with power struggles and issues of power in the school with adults. Some Regulars are aware of the inequality in their school and seek other options for social identity formation. This is the focus of Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

“WE’RE LIKE A COMMUNITY, LIKE FRIENDS”:

SOCIAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Once one steps outside what’s been thought before, once one ventures outside what’s familiar and reassuring, once one has to invent new concepts for unknown lands, then methods and moral systems break down and thinking becomes, as Foucault puts it, a ‘perilous act’, a violence, whose first victim is oneself. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 103)

It’s like a traveling school. We go here, and there... (Youth participant, Field Notes, March 23, 2013)

Introduction

This chapter pursues lines of inquiry emerging from the various analyses in Chapter Three. This chapter argues that social identity for youth¹ at O’Donnell occurs through a process made possible by participation in after-school programs. Drawing on data, I explore the theme from the AVID track in Chapter Three, “We’re like a community, like friends,” by discussing the ways in which students in the AVID program form a sense of belonging by pursuing social identities as they encounter the community-school partnership. I consider what youth mean by community and what makes them feel a sense of community. They state they are “like a community, like friends,” as they participate in after-school programs. The definition of community is not fixed or stable, though, and I learned that community meant different things in different moments for the

¹As mentioned in each chapter, the youth in this chapter are all part of the larger category of Latino immigrant youth, but I refer to them throughout the chapter as youth.

youth. The experience of community also shifted within and across after-school program activities. Some of the exclusion practices that youth encounter as they move across various community spaces are addressed.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the voices of youth and their reasons for joining after-school programs. Given that AVID and the Regular students are ascribed academic identities through school tracking practices, as noted in Chapter Three, I studied particular youth who sought to pursue “more than this,” their ascribed, academic label provided by their school and their racial and ethnic status. Most of the youth in this chapter are part of the AVID track, pursuing more than the limits of their academic label of AVID. I do include the voices of select youth that are part of the Regulars because I found them to be exceptions to the negative stereotyping of Regulars. It was in the after-school programs that they were able to pursue positive social identities and experience success as organizers and engage in various activist-oriented matters.

While I intently observed eight to ten after-school programs, the majority of my time was in three, and these three programs are the focus of sections two, three and four of this chapter. Each of the programs has unique features and purposes, and students experience various forms of activist identities, justice-making, all of which I ultimately argue is a type of *relational curriculum*.² The fifth section of the chapter comprises the discussion section. In the discussion section that follows the description of each program and the experiences of youth within each program, I explore the theme, “We like a

²I italicize this term because I am developing meaning around this term based on observations from the data. Youth engage in after-school programs in order to pursue social identities and within these social relations a different type of learning occurs.

community, like friends” and how this theme gives birth to what I am calling the space of *relational curriculum*. This materialization of *relational curriculum* is made possible by youth discovery and inquiry, and at times it is troubled and in conflict with expectations of teachers and community organization staff. Ultimately, youth experience is contradictory and in a process of unfolding. I close the chapter with a brief discussion of community and space, and its intersection with social identity for the youth in my study. The fifth chapter, then, moves beyond the programs and reports on the Regulars and digs deeper into the social identities and cultural organizing that emerges, and implications for school reform.

Research Question, Conceptual and Methodological Description for the Chapter

To address the research question, “How do Latino immigrant youth experience identity formation in relation to community-belonging?,” I engaged in a simultaneous process of observation, participant-observation, and interviewing students to explore the types of identities students generated and/or negotiated at a particular moment across a particular space. I also considered the various brand of community, or sub-communities that formed around particular identities in particular moments. The process of feeling connected or experiencing belonging, for students, occurred and often increased within particular sub-communities that were formed across after-school programs. These sub-communities do not have boundaries around them, meaning a student could be involved in Model United Nations Club, Chicago Youth Speaking (CYS), or Social Justice Club (SJC). The point, however, is that within and across each of the after-school programs various youth encountered positive social identities and the “intimacy of culture” that

occurs during youth identity formation (Levinson, 2001). To elaborate and situate the micro-level processes and interactions that this chapter explores, I turn to the work of educational anthropologists (Levinson, 2001; Staiger, 2006; Villenas, 2007, 2009, 2012).

For instance, Levinson (2001) argues:

Intimate cultures share an experience that implies a sharing a position of space and time as well as a set of cultural understandings about that position. Intimate cultures may not have well-developed identities as such, but they do have localist ideologies that must be perceived and reconstructed by the ethnographer. Such ideologies circulate in the public culture of social relations, the interactional frames that permit intimate cultures to speak to and understand one another within a power region. (p. 147)

The intimate spaces of identity formation for youth in the study revolved around participation in after-school programs sponsored by the community-organization and school, e.g., Model United Nations, CYS, and SJC, and thus are the focus of the chapter. As ethnographers do, I made sense of events, times, spaces, and experiences to deepen the understanding of both social identity production within/across the community-school programs and its connection to youth' interpretation of community and their sense of belonging "somewhere." That "somewhere," for youth, often was a set of social relationships. Their interpretation of community was not unproblematic, but rather it was complex. These sets of relationships emerge across the programs I discuss in this chapter. The events are contained within the school or an alternative space beyond the school, e.g., a bus ride, a march, a protest at Daley Plaza or outside the Mayor's office. In sections two, three and four of the chapter I get deeper into the traveling, moving spaces that are provided through membership in community-school programs, e.g., Model UN, VOYCE, SJC and in the fifth chapter, this "traveling field" (Geertz, 1997) is taken up as

students loosen their connection to the physical school building, community-school programs, and explore social identities through material, activism across the city and other cities (for the SJC youth).

A brief conceptual note here in this chapter with regard to the notion of event. To understand the experience of social identity, I argued at the outset of the study that Gee's (2000) concept of *Discourse identity* enables researchers to see identity emerging through social relations. While this concept of *Discourse identity* enables us to see identity forming in and across social relations, I also propose that we see social space and occurrences of identity formation through the notion of *event*.³ In Chapter Five, I describe this concept further as students move beyond the spaces of after-school programs and into unchartered social spaces. For now, I rely upon the work of Gilles Deleuze (1995) and other contemporary philosophers. Rather than explicating or merely applying a philosophical concept, I am mapping how the concept operates in lived realities of youth. This notion of event is also given attention in Chapter Five and the conclusion.

Deleuze's conception of the world is in what he sees as "neither unities nor totalities but the relational entities constituted by multiple lines (Semetsky, 2006, p. 2). When exploring identity formation processes through ethnographic research, an assumption of the study is that the youth experience identity in relation to community and social interactions within communities and sub-communities. I propose, in this chapter, to set Deleuze's thinking in motion due to the inquiry process I undertook through

³I italicize the word here to cue the reader to a specific philosophical understanding of the term. I will not italicize it in the rest of the chapter, though.

ethnography—a moving and stuttering methodology at times. I conceive of the youth and the programs, the adults involved in their learning, and participation in after-school programs as in relation to each other, cueing Deleuze’s “relational entities constituted by multiple lines.” Given that I, the ethnographer, was at times involved in multiple lines of inquiry simultaneously, I experience the notion of event. Thus, to think of social identity production, we must also consider the process of becoming, meaning ourselves in relation to others, as unfinished. The research, the youth and I, move toward new moments that can, will and did generate new variations of ourselves. Since the philosophical site for Deleuze is always an open space or the multiplicity of planes on which concepts function in a social field and that involve social, cultural, and political dimensions simultaneously, the concept of event is useful for social science attempts to capture identity, or subjectivity, production. Deleuze (1995) urges that we see “events rather than an essence” (p. 25). The notion of event opens up the social field for identity formation. Much of the identities in this chapter emerge out of social relations, but as we will see, a more expansive conceptualization of identity formation is needed in Chapter Five.

A final note on the conceptual orientation of this chapter is to remind readers that as the ethnographer, I recognize that these experiences in the chapter are “generative,” meaning in my explanation of them, I experience conflict, knowing that these youth already moved onto the next moment of identity formation in relation to their sub-communities (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987, p. 199; for discussion on Deleuze’s generative experience in relation to Deweyian notions of experience, see Semetsky, 2006).

The first section of the chapter focuses on interview data that speaks to the reasons why these youth join after-school programs and how they came to understand and perceive community.⁴ The issues they face are noted based off of themes across the interviews after multiple phases of coding the interview transcripts. Students expressed that they joined to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness, or to avoid disconnectedness. They defined community as a set of social relations they encountered through participation in after-school programs. They perceived this experience of community to increase their sense of belonging. The two main themes that emerged in relation to identity include: (1) “This is why I joined”; and (2) “We’re like a community, like friends.” I found that students in AVID explored social identities beyond what the school structures and classes could offer them. The first section explores the “This is why I joined” theme. Sections two, three, and four, then, explore the “We like a community, like friends” theme. To gain more understanding of the three “types” of identities of AVID students produced out of their academic position as AVID that I delineated in Chapter Three, which to remind the reader include: identification [I’m AVID, but not IB], academic identification and social identification [We’re like a community, like friends], and tension/contradiction in identification or non-identification [I’m more than this]. For this chapter, I focus on the two latter types listed above. The after-school programs discussed include: Model United Nations, Chicago Youth

⁴As was the case with all data for this chapter, and the previous and following chapter data was coded in multiple phases. In the first phase of coding, I engaged in inductive and emergent coding strategies while reviewing transcriptions of interviews and field notes. I also coded data based on the research literature on youth identity, social identity, and Latino immigrant identity as I came to focus areas of the research that spoke to the research question (Cammarota, 2008, Cammarota, 2011; Cammarota & Ginwright, 2007; Flores-Gonzalez, 2002; Ghosh, Mickelson & Anyon, 2007; Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2005; Noguera, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2006).

Speaking (CYS), and Social Justice Club (SJC). Each of these programs provided a space for social relationships and identity-dynamics/production. In these programs, intense, intimate topics are explored because the space of the community-school programs is safe. Students are nurtured in their development of ideas and critical thinking around issues related to school segregation, school closing, and inequality.

The Sample⁵

Across the youth interviews, I found that youth consistently expressed a desire for “more,” than whatever their current status was. The “more” for students related to several things that went beyond just their academic positioning as AVID. I found some students pursue social identities to “work out cultural backgrounds,” (Eli) as one participant said. In these cases, students who came from mixed, ethnic or racial groups were tiresome of the ways in which “society” or “teachers in the school,” label or “assume stuff” about them based on their race or ethnicity. The strategy in which they engaged in was to join or participate in community-school programs in order to explicitly or subtly explore identities they did not feel safe in exploring in classroom spaces. A second reason students pursue social identities in community-school programs is a desire for “more,” where “more” is a desire for knowledge, travel and an imagined world beyond the constraining conditions of poverty (Lennon and Corrin). Despite the fact that students desire “more” and hope for positive experiences across community-school spaces, the larger society challenges them to maintain confidence in their struggle and to maintain stability in their explorations across each program.

⁵All names are pseudonyms. Quotes here reflect student voice.

Preview of Key Findings

The key findings across the chapter revolve around social identity production in relation to community belonging. First, I argue that social identities manifest in teacher student relations, particularly in the Model UN field trip to a large Midwestern university outside of the city of Chicago. Second, I argue social identities emerge in peer to peer relations, particularly in CYS and SJC, when students develop an individual and collective understanding of policy issues that impact their local communities. These moments parlay the *relational curriculum* that I argue occurs in the process of identity formation for youth—a process that simultaneously involves cultural youth organizing for Latino immigrant youth in the study (Cammarota, 2008). Third, and interrelated, I argue that social identities emerge in the spaces of the community-school and beyond the classrooms through programs like Model UN, CYS, and SJC. While the focus of this chapter is on the spaces of the after-school programs, Chapter Five will document additional spaces beyond the classroom, school, and community as students move beyond the school, and even the spaces provided through the community-school partnership—illustrating the “breaking down of systems,” and the ‘perilous act’, a violence, whose first victim is oneself” as they forge a new, social identities as activists in the dangerous spaces of the *relational curriculum* (Deleuze, 1995, p. 103). Youth in this study begin this process that is explored further in Chapter Five.

“This is Why I Join...”

This section outlines reasons that youth join after-school programs. Students from the AVID track wanted to pursue more than what the school perceived to be their

limits or deficits. While many of these students such as AVID are ascribed a limited academic identity and the Regulars are not identified by the school in positive ways, these students express knowledge of their community and instances of injustice, seeking action and opportunities for critical dialogue (Cammarota, 2008).

The interview data revealed reasons that students joined after-school programs. They connected their reasons for joining with their sense of community, and the social identities that emerged and articulated in / through participation in various communities across after-school program. My intention here is not to offer an incisive problematization of community, but rather to understand the lived experience of community for youth that joined after-school programs. The lived experience of community for youth is complex and it shifts for particular youth at various moments. I did not observe a larger “AVID community” but I did observe that youth forge “intimate cultures” in after-school program communities. Later in the chapter I explore the ways that youth encountered the exclusionary practices that simultaneously order behavior as individuals form communities, which draws from my earlier comments in Chapter One regarding the complexity of the term community.

While differences exist across student reasoning for joining, most students’ responses generally fall into two categories associated with their academic trajectory. Most AVID students expressed that they wanted to “feel a sense of community, or belonging.” To elaborate, the AVID students were concerned with social bonding across community-school programs and desired to learn about themselves in relation to a community they anticipated would form from their participation in after-school

programs. Second, AVID youth and the Regulars involved in CYS (section three of the chapter) discussed issues such as gang violence and stereotyping of low-income, minority groups, and they felt involvement in after-school programs could give them more knowledge around issues and to “stand up and voice opinions.” There were a few exceptions as students added their desires for knowledge and travel of the world, but after listening to their answers holistically, these students fell into the first group, who wanted to feel connectedness, belonging, or a sense of community among other people, and a desire for “more than this.”

Student responses reveal a few different reasons for joining after-school programs. First, a student expressed that she pursued an understanding of social identities because it made her feel grounded. She discussed her unique cultural background of being ethnically Chinese, but culturally Panamanian. She said, “After-school programs let me meet other Chinese or Latina people and it doesn’t matter what my struggle is in my head about “Who am I?” (Interview, June 6, 2013). Second, several students in AVID expressed a desire for “more than this.” One student told me, “I just want to know more than this,” as she looked up at the ceiling of her school building and pointed out the window to the area around the school (Interview, June 6, 2013). Third, a student agreed with this sentiment and said, “I know I don’t grow up with a lot, but there’s got to be more than this poverty out there. I want to just try to start a life when I get to college.” These particular youth and their articulations for why they join are related to their desire for more and an increased sense of connectedness.

According to one teacher, AVID students are encouraged within the community of AVID teachers to participate in after-school programs, but I did not observe AVID students in classrooms being told or encouraged to form an “AVID community” despite teacher comments about this and despite the participation in after-school programs as a part of the AVID experience, the school does not guide or reinforce the positive aspects of participating in after-school program. I found this interesting given that community is functioning through the teacher’s comment as a way to form a group of students that share the value interests or values as AVID students. On a surface level, it appears that this teacher’s comment attempted to promote the existence of an “AVID community” in his words. But for youth, community was more connected to their participation in after-school programs and the relationships within those than a larger perceived “AVID community” that the teacher seemed to think existed in the school.

The particular students in this chapter were sensitive to issues in their community and maintained a strong desire to pursue “more than this” as they attempt to belong, seeing participation in after-school programs as a space to pursue more. AVID and also a few Regulars⁶ expressed the desire to pursue “more” [knowledge, travel, a world beyond poverty] than “this” [status in the low-income community, their school, stereotypes of being Latino and/or an immigrant youth]. I incorporate the voices of all of the youth from the programs in this chapter. I do this because their voice is equally relevant as the AVID students when participating in community-school programs. They were present

⁶While the IB students experienced social isolation, students in AVID and the general education program, known as the Regulars, intermingled and shared the after-school program space. Most of this chapter reflects the AVID students’ pursuit of social identity; however, Regulars also were present. A few of the Regulars become the story for the next chapter. In this paragraph, the quotations around various phrases are drawn from interview data.

across the programs as members in the programs, or advocates for policy issues that they wanted to seek out “other like-minded youth,” to get involved in the efforts and agendas of the programs.

To elaborate on the points above—students desiring more than their academic label or class/race status—I draw on interview data that reflects this desire for “more.” Students from the AVID and the few Regulars that I discuss across two programs (CYS and Social Justice Club) experience issues related to their identity, realities of poverty and injustice in their community, and tend to draw connections more explicitly between their personal experience and reason for joining the after school programs. One student, Amelia, explained to me that she sees after-school programs through the community-school as a place she can make sense of herself. She said, “There are conversations I want to have about identity for school or whatever. I can’t have them at home, so I have them with people in the clubs, like Model UN or Social Justice stuff. Where else am I supposed to have these conversations?” I continued to ask Amelia and other youth about their participation in community-school programs and other organizing efforts in relation to their identity. She replies:

Amelia: Thinking about like where identity comes from, school, relationships, after-school clubs, ourselves. I have heard the term ‘at risk’ used to describe students here at O’Donnell [example of ascription.]. But my answer to that is, at risk of what? [laughs] AVIDs and Regulars are “at risk” and IB or honors or whatever are safe? I have struggled with my identity before, but in terms of schooling I don’t know I guess I don’t really care how my school sees me. You know, you see me in classes and after-school programs, and it’s the outside of school stuff that gives me confidence.[. . .] Like for identity, like the ACT. The way that it kinda for colleges that identifies you. Your transcript. I didn’t do so well on the ACT, but that’s what colleges look at, and that’s who I am to them (Interview, May 30, 2013).

Amelia describes the way the school positions AVID students and the Regulars as well as ascribes the term at risk in this passage. She comes to understand that after-school programs are a space for her to develop confidence. Similar to Amelia, an AVID student, Karmina expresses her desire to be more than a failure, and the ways in which joining after-school programs sponsored through the community school helped her “survive.” In our interview, in the stairwell of O’Donnell at 5pm, she explained specifically why she wanted to be involved and how participation in that particular community-school program increased her sense of connectedness to the school. She had been failing her freshman and sophomore year. She said:

Karina (K): Wednesdays I go to Chicago Youth Speaking (CYS). We usually do go to rallies and meetings. Right now it’s a lot about CPS closings so we can make a change about how students are getting an education. We are trying to decrease the dropout rates. That program is really helping me because so in the future my kids won’t have to go through what I am going through. Usually in those meetings I tell people what I learn and they like don’t even know this stuff.

SR: Can you explain what you mean by things you’re going through?

K: One thing I learn in CYS is that charter schools are getting higher education than kids here. They are being tested a lot and that is hurting me. I am getting tested a lot. It’s very stressful. I don’t want my kids to have CPS school like this and the system we have now. We went to the rallies like the one for the pay raise to 10.50. Like the minimum wage. I also am in peer-mentoring through the community-school paso y paso mentoring program. I am AVID and we have to do a service project for every semester. We can do tutoring or be a peer-mentor. I wanted to be a peer-mentor because I had a peer-mentor like I told you. I got mentored and I wanted to do that for freshman. I applied for AVID last year. Some kids get interviews. I didn’t get interviewed cuz I got recommended into it. My AVID teacher was my reading teacher and she recommended me into the program. You have to be on track, and then you have to do your work. You have to be coming to class and show that you’re motivated. It’s for kids who want to go to college. We do study skills. I feel more connected to the school. I feel like I feel safer in a way.

SR: Why do you think you feel more connected?

K: I feel like I come to school. You know how there's certain groups of people. I guess there's like different little communities or sub communities here. I don't feel like I have one of them, or I'm not a part of them. I don't feel like I have one. The years before I felt like I was my own thing. I didn't talk to anybody else. Now this year I talked to a lot of different people now. I think it's cuz I am involved and around more. (Interview, February 14, 2013)

These two youth along with others commented on the ways in which their sense of belonging and connectedness increased through participation in community-school programs. They join to feel connected.

Other youth also comment on their personal reasons for joining in addition to wanting feel connected, they also associate their participation in after-school programs or activities outside the school as ways to increase their mobility. This narrative is powerful because despite the ways in which the structural barriers persist and attempt to suffocate low-income, youth of color, there are moments of power and agency through their articulation of "This is why I join..." and the spaces beyond the school provide them with these opportunities to speak about their desires. I asked one student, Jane, why she joined CYS, she replies:

Jane: It's not like a pressure; it's something I want for myself. Because I see my mom as a single parent and just doing it on my own. It's hard, you know it's crazy because, yeah we're poor, but we never lived nowhere where it was like, you know what I'm saying? We've always lived good, my momma's always had a job. All this she does, I want to do better. I want have that life for my little brother, just have a better life. I want to provide for her. It was hard you know not having a dad always. Partly when I was little you know that I'm growing up now I know, when I was little I didn't know, it makes me want to be better. She got pregnant when she was 16. I can do better. I gotta think about all this stuff, and she tells me, Jane, be better. So this is why I join. People in the group [CYS] we love each other, we want to help each other. Like we're a family. (Interview, March 7, 2013)

Jane's testimony illustrates the reasons for joining connected her personal life experiences with a desire for belonging. She felt as though her participation in CYS enabled her access to that "family."

Across the formal and informal conversations I had with youth, I found that they told me their reasons for joining programs were connected to a desire for both belonging as well as a way to work through their personal struggles as students living in poverty. The next section explores the specific program of Model UN, and the various social identities that emerge across events and spaces. Section three explores CYS and section four explores Social Justice Club (SJC) in depth as well.

**“We’re like a Community, like Friends”: The Emergence of Social Identities in
Model United Nations Club**

Week after week, Thursdays specifically, I would hear a teacher announce on the intercom in a sportscaster-like voice, “Model United Nations Club meeting after school today, Come One Come all.” But I did not attend, or think to attend. After being at the school for four months, this teacher said to me, “You know, if you’re interested in social identities, or identity, you may want to visit my second period class. The students are practicing their speeches for our upcoming conferences.” It was then that I realized several students that I had been observing elsewhere in classes and after-school programs were also in the global classrooms course. I decided to stop by the class as part of my observations at the school, but when the teacher explained to me that the club met after school, and that they went on field trips to participate in city and state-wide competitions. The rest of this section describes the context of the class and its connection to the after

school club. Then, I focus on key events that I participated in with the students in this club, including two Model UN conferences, one statewide and one city-wide, and one field trip, all of which illustrate the spatial dimension to identity formation for these students. Social identities emerged across these three events, through participation in the after-school club, teacher-student relationships, and peer-peer relationships.

Context for Model UN

Global classrooms (GC) is a senior elective that is connected to an international program with participating schools across the U.S.A. and in Chicago specifically.⁷ The inter(national) program is called Global Classrooms while at the school the club is Model United Nations Club. The GC website has some curriculum, however, (Model UN simulations, tips for writing resolutions, etc.) that are available to participants in their program and some of it can be found on their website. GC also offers two professional development sessions during the year to participating teachers and support from the lead teacher (the role the teacher currently holds with GC). This is common across the after-school programs. I learned how teachers and organizers can choose to start clubs/ programs and often they take on much of the financial responsibility of participating in activities. When I asked the teacher if he had to go through any process or particular bureaucratic constraints to start the club, he replied:

It was entirely my decision to start the club and I get a little support from the community organization you know of here at O'Donnell. GC can be taught as the basis for an entire class, as one unit in a teacher's curriculum (world history or human geography, for example), or as part of a club. I simply wanted to make the

⁷<http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/for-educators/curriculum/economics-of-globalization>

opportunity available to kids that weren't in the class, and to offer kids in the class the opportunity to do even more with it. (Email correspondence, March 17, 2013)

The “opportunity to do even more” is largely connected to enabling students to pursue social identities beyond what their academic programs offer them. He explained that many students join not necessarily knowing what to expect, but in fact walk away not only with a stronger set of academic skills, such as public speaking, critical thinking, and writing skills, but also students gain and engage in a kind of “cultural or community experience,” he said. I elaborate upon this cultural or community experience that students experience as I was able to witness it across the trips that I attended with the students to various sites in the city of Chicago and across the state as well.

“Students have a cultural, communal experience...”: While I did observe the class that met during the school day, most of my time as a participant observer was spent in after-school program spaces and field trips with this club. I attended several field trips with this after school club. These trips provide the sources of data, relying on field notes, conversations with students and the lead teacher, and analytic memos that were written after I returned from the field. The field trips served a different purpose than one may expect when one hears field trip. The field trips that students experience are not merely trips to an amusement park (social interaction) or history or science museum (to justify academic alignment with school curriculum). Rather, the students in Model United Nations gain insight into social, interpersonal skills, academic skills, and most importantly engage in a cultural, communal experience. Thus, I have two aims in this section. First, I argue that social identities emerge among these students, particularly a social bond forms, “a community, like friends.” This means, students perceive that they

have a community within the Model UN club at O'Donnell. I liken their perception and feeling of community in Model UN to Levinson's description of "intimate cultures" because the experience in Model UN is a space of social interactions that enable youth to speak to and understand one another in a power relationship (Levinson, 2001). In addition, youth also expressed a stronger sense of connectedness, or belonging to the school even when the school was only perceived to be comprised of the students they interacted with in such after-school programs. The purpose is to, then, explore the theme noted in chapter three, "We're like a community, like friends," describing how that interacts within the space of the after-school club. I also argue their sense of belonging is further supported and nurtured through the caring and emotional work of their teacher, Mr. Alex.

Second, I intend to use the Model United Nations Club as a way to also investigate the relationality of space, meaning, the ways that students in Model UN challenge the traditional notion of school occurring in a classroom by using the spaces of Model UN. The movement of space and the relationships that emerge and occur across space enable and produce specific social identities in relation to community belonging. A key finding here among the first two aims of this section are to also point out that students connect their identity with multiple levels of policy here, comprising a *relational curriculum*.

Most of the students in the Model United Nations Club were involved with AVID, but not all. The teacher informed me that a few of the kids were AVID but others were "just in regular [the general education program] and for whatever reason decided to join

the class and/or the club.” The teacher encourages all students to attend to help them increase their skills. I highlight three events related to the Model United Nations Club. The first conference was the statewide competition and Model United Nations conference at a large public university in Illinois in early April, 2013. The second conference was the Chicago Public Schools competition at a university in Illinois on April 5 and 6, 2013. I reflected on the fact that given my argument that identity forms out of social interaction, this trip seemed like an opportunity for me to observe them for the most part out of their comfort zone. Moving outside of the traditional classroom space calls attention to Geertz’s (1973) comment about the “traveling field,” and how as the research subjects move and evolve so does the researcher. This notion of movement resonates with the youth in the study.

Observational data suggests that some students have their creativity stifled either by testing or by the ways the teachers run their classroom. Students do not have many opportunities to enact social identities and/or reflect on their social worlds, so this trip seemed like an opportunity to make visible their social identities in relation to community. The three dimensions in which identity emerged include: (1) their identity in relation to their specific public high school community at O’Donnell level; (2) their identity in relation to a Chicago Public Schools level since students at the competition were not from urban districts; (3) their identity in relation into a sub-community of Model UN. These identity dynamics interact with each other and their academic and class positioning as O’Donnell students. Mr. Alex has coached Model UN for the past three

years, and he told me that one thing that happens is O'Donnell kids recognize their cultural and socio-economic differences at this competition.

Narrative of Model UN

I arrived on the college campus around 7pm, and headed to the opening ceremonies on Friday April 5, 2013. I sat in the back of a large auditorium that had stadium-style seating. I scanned the audience below me, looking for O'Donnell students. The opening ceremonies included a key note speech from a British scholar and professor of political science and directions by the college students that run the conference for high school students from across the state. As the keynote speaker quoted Trotsky to the students, I wondered if the O'Donnell students would know that author. I finally spotted one of the students, waving at me from below, and motioning for me to come down and sit near them.

Immediately after the keynote speech, students were directed to various rooms in the campus buildings to begin the Model United Nations conference. I walked with the students as they excitedly explained to me that they were nervousness, and that they had a desire for me to come and watch them. Two of the students whom I had consistent contact with throughout the course of the study, and who were studied in-depth are among the students who are present, Amelia (a Regular) and Marley (a Regular and an "IB dropout") are highlighted in this section. I visited Marley's session first along with his partner for the session. These two males represented France in the Security Council. I also visited Amelia and three other students that were a part of the Human Rights Committee.

The first thing I notice is the high levels of confidence of students from most schools. Much as I experienced when I participated in high school Model United Nations, certain students are eager and aggressive and participate by raising arguments immediately, which I share with O'Donnell students because they seem intimidated at first. There are certain rules and procedures around Model United Nations that students are expected to mirror in the high school conference. The language and style of speaking is noticeably diplomatic and rehearsed by the students from the various schools. However, O'Donnell students did not take on or step into this role naturally, comfortably or at all that first night of the conference.

During the first break that night, students approached me, expressing various emotions such as frustration, anger, and annoyance with the students from other schools, saying, "Those kids talk too much," and "They have such high vocabulary." I listened and encouraged them to "get in there, and to start talking to their allies." One of the ways they are judged at the competition as representatives of their school is how they engage in collaborating with allies in sponsoring resolutions. Students were initially shocked by how much more prepared they perceived their counterparts to be. I reminded them that they had studied the issues and had written papers in advance of the conference and to use that information just as their competitors were doing. After the brief 10 minute break, the sessions resumed, and O'Donnell students continued to remain silent, and not know when or how to engage in the process of debate. At the end of the session, students traveled from the campus to the hotels nearby.

We arrived at the hotel around 11 o'clock and students settled into their rooms. The lead teacher, Alex, informed students they needed to meet downstairs in the lobby area for a group meeting just before midnight. Students groaned and laughed and piled into the elevators.

The themes across the data from this trip reflect students' sense of self in relation to communities beyond the one that has been created within the Model United Nations Club. By this I mean that students felt they formed a Model UN community, but that positive feeling of community was challenged by a larger Model UN community that included students from various high schools. The students experience disconnection, exclusion, and identity struggles as they interact with students from other schools across the state. These experiences of student exclusion were confirmed in multiple conversations with students and with the teacher. Below is an excerpt from field notes at the time of this group meeting in the hotel lobby:

Students expressed concern, disappointment and frustration as we roamed the halls of the hotel. I walked with two students to get snacks at a 7-11 store near the hotel around 11:15pm, knowing we had to be back at the hotel for a group meeting by midnight. They talked about how they felt like the other students were very smart and had such high vocabularies. They commented that they did not feel like they belonged here at this conference. One student said, "We practice and practice, and we show up and they are just better than us." The girls also expressed that they just did not know how to engage with the other students. On the walk back to the hotel, we were silent. The teacher, Alex, was waiting for students as they trickled back into the hotel lobby. He met with the group around midnight to re-group and give them a confidence boost. He told them that the students from other schools were prepared and sharp, but so were O'Donnell students. He reminded them that they researched the issues, and reminded them that in order to do well at the conference, they have to be involved in conversations with their competitors. The energy was low as Alex stood in the center of the group waving his hands in the air, and attempting to encourage them. Students slowly smiled at him, knowing he cares about them. He told them that it didn't matter where they came from, or what their background was that they were

just as capable of competing with the kids. O'Donnell was the only CPS school in attendance, and many of students noticed they were the only Latinos there as far as I could tell. Students dispersed after the meeting to their rooms, various areas in the hotel lobby, and in the dining area. One of the students, Dominique asked me to meet with her to develop a plan for the Syria crisis, which is a topic she needed to prepare for the next day. She represents Cuba and is struggling to figure out what to do and how to get people on her side. She had apprehension about speaking on the first day she told me. As I sat with her, Alex sat with another student. Amelia sat down with us, and we met briefly to talk about human trafficking for the committee on human rights. A few of the students needed to do some more recent research, so I showed them the United Nations website and searched the internet with them for a bit. It was near 1:30am when I finally headed upstairs to my room. Alex was still working with a student because she had a last minute change to her assignment so she had to do research and prepared herself. She seemed nervous and overwhelmed as she sat with him, but he was right there with her helping her. The overall feeling of the first night was excitement and fear. The students from O'Donnell were aware of their difference. They experienced difference through being the only CPS school at the competition, the only Latinos, and the only students from low-income backgrounds. I was struck by how open Alex, their teacher, was with them about the socio-economic background differences and how it doesn't matter where they come from because they are smart and can compete with the other white kids or Asians, too, Mr. Alex told them. It was both sad and inspiring to know that these students recognize how where they come from is far different than the students they were competing against. (Field Notes, April 5, 2013)

This first night opened my eyes to the ways that identity forms through social interaction, which is the focus in this inquiry. But, even when positive social identities emerge in social interactions in a seemingly positive community such as Model UN club, Latino immigrant youth in this study still face structural, institutional differences related to class and race and their overall marginalization in society. It was in this setting of the Model UN conference that youth and the teacher, Mr. Alex, raised issues related to race, class, and immigrant status as part of the structural barriers that Latino immigrant youth face in achieving educational success. One of the first comments Amelia said was, "You know what Miss Rodriguez? We have unequal schooling in Chicago Public Schools. I am

going to tell my Civics class that when we get back.” She had expressed frustrations with herself and the members of the human rights committee that night in the hotel. At this point, Amelia is interpreting her social reality in comparison to other students she encounters. Even though she, like other students, were excited and connected to a Model UN community, she encountered a moment of exclusion going up against other students at the conference.

At breakfast the next morning, Saturday, April, 6, 2013, I sat with two students that are central to the story in Chapter Five, Marley and Penny. I asked them how they felt about the previous day. Penny said she felt like she made an enemy in her committee. I encouraged her to stand her ground. All the O’Donnell students expressed their perceived inferiority to the other students from other high schools. We left the hotel around nine o’clock in the morning for the campus. I visited Amelia’s group in the human rights committee. Amelia immediately passed me a note on a post-it. As an adult ally, I had to sit in the back of the room on the floor, and I was not allowed to talk with the students. They were allowed to pass notes. Amelia expressed that she was frustrated by the dominance of some of the students from other schools. She felt as though other students were not willing to let them build coalitions. It is interesting to me that when she and others are filled with outrage and passion when they talk to me, but then, they have little self-confidence in the larger group. Amelia said she tried to talk and tried to make allies, but she “kept getting shut down by the student from Russian delegation, a fat white kid.” Initially, Amelia and other students were feeling excluded, and if and when they did try to engage, other students “shut them down.” I did witness this happen to

Amelia, and I think part of it is that students across the other schools felt confident and entitled to speak whereas O'Donnell student did not experience that same sense of confidence and entitlement as though they had a right to speak.

I left Amelia, and attended the Security Council meeting where Marley and another student represented France. They were sitting quietly and listening. I sat in the corner, and they asked me for some confirmations on information. They passed me notes. They wanted to make sure their argument was factually accurate, so I nodded a yes toward them. The chair of the Security Council asked me if I was the adviser for France and I said I was informally there to support them. He said he is trying to give them opportunities to speak because he knows that some students are dominating the discussions.

The chair of the Security Council treats the students fairly and encourages them to push themselves to improve their arguments as time is passing and progress is lacking. There exists an element of performance to the session. Various students from various countries take on diplomatic personas. As I observe this, I think about where and how the O'Donnell students fit into the performative aspect of Model UN. While most students at O'Donnell are less social generally, and with their expressed apprehension, I am curious how they are feeling about the implicit expectation to engage in the performative identity that emerges in Model UN. This performative identity in Model UN seems to be linked to an academic identity in part and to social class, and potentially race and ethnicity. By this, I begin I ask myself is a performative identity within the Model UN difficult for O'Donnell students because of their limited academic identities?

My analysis enables me to posit that Model UN fosters social identities for youth is challenged by the performative identity involved in Model UN that is seemingly connected with an academic and class positioning that O'Donnell students do not occupy, illustrated in Amelia's comments, "the fat white kid" who rejects her invitation to speak and her perceived since that as a Chicago public school students she has "unequal schooling."

By performative identity, I cue reference to Judith Butler's work on identities (Butler, 1993; Salih, 2002). Butler (1993) argues, "Normative heterosexuality is not the only regulatory regime operating in the production of the body, but that other regimes of regulatory production contour the materiality of bodies" (p. 17). Here she adds the dimension of race to other markers of identity formation such as race and class. The experience of the youth at O'Donnell is in conflict with a larger Model UN community, a largely academic program aligned with the normative, white, upper-middle class behaviors and dispositions despite the teacher's attempts to make it a "cultural, communal experience." Butler's work rejects such normative functions and treats identity as performative, enabling those who experience marginalization an opportunity to restructure power relations.

Many of the students approach me and tell me about how they feel shut down, and rejected by the students from other schools. Students in the Security Council did not choose to perform the diplomatic identity or persona. Rather, these students found ways to engage in conversation and debate in smaller groups during the "unmoderated caucuses," which is a chance for students to engage in collaboration. These are informal

spaces of learning for the youth. O'Donnell students are largely more comfortable in these less formal spaces.

As the conference progressed, students from O'Donnell continued to experience tension with their social identities as global citizens when such social identities are connected to a classed, performative academic persona. They felt as though they were a “community, like friends,” within the Model UN club and they were supported within the club. The teacher provided reminders of their abilities and motivated them. The students respond to his care. They recognize the ways in which they simultaneously experienced inclusion and exclusion. They experience inclusion, feeling connected to their teacher and to each other, but they experience exclusion through perceptions of academic inferiority in relation to other students from around the state.

Narrative Analysis: Identity in Relation to Community

The focus of this chapter is on the social identities that emerge for students when they participate in after-school clubs. In fact, students experience a sense of community and belonging as part of the social bonds formed within the Model UN club, but nonetheless these social identities were challenged by external forces, forcing students to reflect upon the conditions of education in their Chicago public school. In this chapter, students in this particular after-school club have not been identified as “high-achieving,” but they are smart, engaged in social issues of equality and global issues as members of the Model UN club. Students expressed that they are not IB or “higher intellectuals,” like other students in their school and not as “smart with higher vocabulary” as the students at the Model UN conference, but they still feel they can care about and explore

international issues and in Marley's words, "become knowledgeable about topics that matter."

This chapter argues four key findings emerge across the space of Model UN and the pursuit of social identities. First, students joined the club to pursue social identities because they believed that participation in Model UN would allow them the space to engage in "topics that matter," topics they were not able to explore in school spaces. Second, across the emergence of social identity in Model UN, youth experience social identity formation in relation to multiple layers of community, which is discussed below. Third, I argue that across the emerge of social identities in Model UN, the role of social class troubles students in their journey toward making sense of themselves as global citizens and activists, which are variations of social identities. Within this, it is noticeable that O'Donnell youth identities are not a part of the normative, white, upper-middle class identities that are performed as part of the larger Model UN conference community as I suggest in point two. Fourth, despite the tension and disappointment in particular moments of struggle, Model UN provides a space for students to learn and make sense of themselves and of large issues of social inequality. Each of these four key findings is addressed next.

The first finding with regard to social identity formation in Model UN relates to students reasons for joining and their perceptions of what the Model UN space could offer them. Participating in Model UN for these students was not just about acquiring academic skills or parading around in suits as many of the other students did at the conference. For students at O'Donnell, their connection to this club had personal, social

and cultural dimensions. I found the desire for such knowledge to be related to students' cultural experiences. Several of the students in Model UN, Dominique for example, told me she and others have only lived in the U.S. for four and five years, meaning they learned English when they arrived. While at this conference, however, they felt academically inferior when compared to the students from other schools because they did not have as much experience orating in English, their second or third language. Yet, their reasons for joining Model UN stemmed from their desire to understand global issues given their knowledge of poverty in their home Latin American countries, and the experience of immigrants and refugees in the U.S. In the process of exploring social identities through participation in after-school clubs such as Model UN, they came to also understand the dehumanizing experience of feeling inferior due to social class, race, and ethnicity. Recognizing their difference at first was dehumanizing, but it did not necessarily make them explicitly associate this larger academic community with whiteness and the performative, normative identities that circulated in the context of the Model UN conference. It also did not necessarily make them feel like they could not access it, but they did express that it would be a struggle to access it.

A second finding with regard to social identity formation in Model UN relates to the layers of community that emerge. The layers of community here include the Model UN identification as a social identity that creates a community for the students, an O'Donnell community, which is unusual thus far in the data, and a Chicago public school or Chicago community since they were the only "city kids" at the competition. The youth are aware that there was an academic or scholarly community of the overall feel of

the students at the Model UN conference. They seemed to recognize this academic or intellectual community as something they were excluded from. This was evidenced by their constant comments on their “unequal schooling in CPS,” and their “less resources” when compared to some of the other students. They also expressed the “higher vocabulary” of the white kids, and commented on their nice clothes and their ipads and laptops. The perceptions of community for O’Donnell students were multi-dimensional and complex. Youth may perceive community to be positive and inclusive when in the safety of the hotel room lobby with their teacher and with each other while simultaneously being excluded—symbolically—through the norms and behaviors that are not available to them in the larger Model UN community. This exclusion occurs when students try to speak up and engage at the conference and have limited opportunities.

The experience of youth at Model UN problematizes notions of community by calling into question the exclusionary practices that are part of specific communities (Fendler, 2006) and the counter-effective discourse on empowerment (Cruikshank, 1999). This empowerment discourse notes that if individuals participate in collective efforts, they can enact social change. This is not the case for Latino immigrant youth in the study at O’Donnell because of their systemic marginalization in the larger society. Even though they see their participation in a community as possible and potentially positive, their membership, as “part of a community becomes conditional on conduct” and specific ways of behaving, speaking, and acting in the context of Model UN (Rose, 2000).

A third finding with regard to social identity formation in Model UN relates to the role of class and the ways it troubles students on their journey toward positive, self-

making as global citizens in this club. Lareau's (2003) important book, *Unequal Childhoods*, helps researchers make sense of how or if students perceive their social class as a factor in the learning. O'Donnell students in some spaces, spaces other than their school classrooms, recognize their difference and their poverty, but they do not use it as an excuse or really think it determines or needs to determine their academic experience. They still choose to be in Model UN, learn about global issues related to education, poverty, foreign affairs, and fight for social equality. The data here aligns with Lareau's claim that social class certainly impacts a students' educational experience. However, in the previous research on social class as a factor in identity formation only highlights how class impacts student and parental ability to access the norms of school. The data in this chapter and on this particular trip with the after-school program suggests that the social class positioning of youth did impact their mental ability or perceptions of themselves as academics, or scholars in Model UN. Specifically, youth connected their experience of poverty and being from a low-resourced urban school to impact their ability to "butt their way into the conversations like the white, rich kids do." This said, however, even though social class impacts the daily lives of youth back in Chicago, it did not determine their desire to participate fully. They struggled at this conference, but they believed they could still compete. Part of this belief stems from the ways in which their positive relationship with their teacher, Mr. Alex, consistently told them that they could compete regardless of their socio-economic background. The strength the youth drew from the community built among the Model UN club enabled them to persist in a larger community that they felt excluded from.

The fourth and critical finding here is that despite the struggle and tension that arose during the social identity formation process within the Model UN experience, students find value and treat the experience holistically. The teacher, Alex, gave me the reflections that the students did on Tuesday, April 9, 2013 after they returned from the trip. Overwhelmingly, the students discussed class differences that exist between them and “white America.” They commented that they felt academically inferior to “white, fancy people” but that they knew they needed to learn to be around “them” because as their teacher said to me on our walk through campus, “These are the people who these kids will encounter in college and when they apply for jobs. They need to learn how to stand alongside them and compete.”

The students’ reflections are drawn from the documents that the teacher gave to me in a pdf format. These statements from youth on the experience along with the reflection of the teacher reveal an overall theme in the data that despite perceived academic inferiority of O’Donnell students and visceral challenges to pursuing social identities, students express that they had a positive learning experience. The looming question for the teacher was:

Mr. Alex: Are O’Donnell students better off simply competing against other CPS students, where I expect them to feel very successful at the end of the day, or is it truly worthwhile to have that frustrating experience, for the reasons we discussed on our walk to your car - that if an O’Donnell kid really wants to compete for jobs in academia, law, medicine, politics, etc., you have to be aware of the kinds of people in the larger society that they will be measured against - and Lord knows we don't have enough O’Donnell kids going into those fields. (Email correspondence, April, 12, 2013).

Here I offer the overall expressions from the voice of the students in Table 3:

Table 3. Overall Expressions from the Voice of the Students

Student	Reflection on Model UN conference at University of IL, April, 4-6, 2013
1	“You have to speak up in order to be recognized or win something in life. I have to do it the right way in order to truly feel successful.”
2	“I will take away from this experience that you need to be confident, tough, and loud.”
3	“I saw another culture I see on TV. I am still in shock from the weekend and this experience.”
4	“I know that those white kids prepared better than me. They just know more about the motions [for Model UN procedures]. I want to do this more in college. The whole world is connected.”
5	“This weekend was a learning experience that I will never forget. Of course it was very challenging, and hard but now I know that I have to be prepared for everything, not only for this class, but also for life.”
6	“I got experience debating kids that come from a better background. I’ve learned not to be intimidated by the other students just because they come from an affluent school.”
7	“I dealt with more white people than I ever have, which may come in handy in America. While everything we had wasn’t as fancy as the other kids I think that it definitely wasn’t that bad of an experience.”
8	“This experience helped me break out of my shell a little and although the kids were a bit intimidating I tried to get as involved as I could.”
9	“I wish we would have been taught more vocabulary or more ‘fancy’ words to use in our speeches or at the conference.”
10	“I learned that you should speak up and not be afraid that people will disagree with you. The least enjoyable part for me was not being up to the same level as the other students who were there. They all had a very extensive vocabulary and it was really intimidating.”
11	“I learned that just because someone uses big words don’t let them intimidate you.”
12	“The most important lesson is that no matter where you come from or who you are all students are equal and you not be scare of any person or undermine your own intelligence.”

Each of the statements above reflects the finding that despite the struggle and self-realization work that occurred for students, overall they see value and promise in social identities and participation in after-school clubs such as Model UN.

To conclude this section, I reiterate the sections intent is to map the social identity formation process that occurs and emerges out of participation of Model UN, the challenges the students face in the process, and reflections by their teacher and the students on the experience. The risk students take as they pursue more than their academic label of “not high achieving,” enables them to engage in social bonding with their peers and teacher in the club. The next section considers the emergence of social identities across another community-school program, Chicago Youth Speaking (CYS).

CYS: “We Act Out of Necessity. Youth Need Social Identities.

All of this is Connected to Racism against Black and Brown Kids.

Here we have Immigrants, too.”

The second program that I observed between October and June is called Chicago Youth Speaking (CYS). This program offered AVID and the Regulars an opportunity to explore social identities and to illustrate the themes found among such groups.

Specifically, this section addresses the ways AVID students form social bonds and experience community while the Regulars explain their perspective on what it means to be a part of their community that is often stereotyped and deemed non-academic.

Context for CYS

This program, CYS, is specifically led by a community organization staff member. In one of my first interactions with him, the executive director introduced me to him by say, “This is a researcher, she is hoping to schedule a bit of time to discuss CYS in regards to its impact on immigrant students at O’Donnell and her research.” The organizer, Mark, sent me an email inviting me to a “Halloween Party” and information

session on the after-school program. The excerpt below was my initial introduction to

CYS:

Come learn about CYS and meet everyone involved! We'll have food, drinks and games. CYS is a city-wide, student-led collaborative whose goal is to raise the high school graduation rate and reduce the dropout rate of students in low-income communities. We do it through a variety of ways: retreats, meetings with Chicago Public Schools and government officials, rallies, press conferences, protests, workshops and many other ways that youth leaders help develop. Young people can work on leadership development, public speaking and facilitation skills, meet students from other high schools, and have fun! (Email Correspondence, October, 22, 2012).

From the initial meetings I attended, I learn quickly that students in this program are introduced immediately to the policy campaigns of the coalition. During meetings in November 2012, I observed the facilitator, an undocumented young man and graduate of O'Donnell, introducing students to the impact of Chicago Public Schools' "Harsh Discipline Policy" on students of racial and ethnic minority youth. He discusses the issues students face as well as the role that CYS can have in contributing to improving these policies through action. The organizer explains, "Students become victims; we see a lot of policies that impact minority schools and schools on the south and southwest side are impacted. CYS did research and found 90% of suspensions were minor infractions" (Field notes, November 28, 2012). There were two issues raised in this initial meeting. The first issue was the harsh discipline policies of Chicago Public Schools and the ways in which racial and ethnic minorities are often more severely punished.

The second theme of this meeting is the issue of charter schools and the privatization of public education. The students are immediately brought into the local policy issues, and encouraged to take a role in taking action around these issues through

their participation in CYS. In the November meetings with youth, I witnessed the organizer draw graphs on the whiteboard to explain the high rates of arrests in Chicago are black and Latino, and the profound discussions of charter proliferation in Chicago. Students in the meetings express that they think, “Chicago Public Schools was built for a reason for you to come here and go to jail,” and that, “other students were sent to charter schools to be successful and go to college.” In this exchange, youth asked why it felt like attending their school, O’Donnell, felt like “losing the lottery.” The organizer compels them to think about where perceptions of their school and community derive. One student replies:

We can trace this back to WWII and the propaganda like of Hitler; like our modern day Hitler is Rahm the Mayor and his secret sauce is charter schools. He doesn’t care about kids dropping out. (Field notes, November 28, 2012)

Students were making sense of the local educational policies in Chicago and their impact on the community.

The meetings in October-December, 2012 largely center on students developing an understanding of CYS’s agenda. The organizer, Mark, is a source of information for these youth. He explains the main issues that the students face, with students providing input from their personal experiences with injustice as well. Amidst these initial meetings for the youth, Chicago public schools (CPS) is engaging in its initial announcements that schools are potentially closing; thus, the organizer feels pressure to compel students “to get out there and take action,” but also to educate the youth on “how to take action.”

I experienced these initial meetings just as the youth did, learning of the local educational policy issues. As the year progressed, the agenda of Redwood Park Council became more visible. Redwood Park Council was interested in action and teaching youth how to organize. The organizer informed me at a December meeting that CPS “attempts to engage the community on the school closure issue were bogus,” given that they plan “community input meetings,” Friday nights in random parks around the city. Here, the organizer’s understanding of community was unclear. Given that he works for Redwood Park Neighborhood Council, his use of community seemed to refer to people within the parameters of the neighborhood. The meetings for community members to speak out against Chicago Public Schools are announced last minute, and from an organizer’s perspective, it is difficult to order a bus to pick up youth and families to take them to the meetings. He was frustrated by the lack of care regarding the impact of school closings on families and communities. He explained, “This issue will be the focus of most of our work this year with the youth.”

The organizer from Redwood Park Council sees three issues that youth face as interrelated. The three issues that youth face in low-income communities all intersect with what the organizer described to be as forms of institutional racism. He explained, “School to prison pipeline, school closures as policy, and charter proliferation and the privatization for education by the mayor. All of this is connected to racism against black and brown kids. Here we have immigrants, too.” His attempts to elucidate the issues for youth were the crux of his work.

Narrative of CYS

One Wednesday night in the empty school building, I sat on the floor of the classroom where this particular CYS meeting was held and listened to how youth made sense of the macro-policy perspective that their organizer was trying to impart upon them. Their micro-level interpretations of policy and their local community context reveal firsthand, often palpable experience with racism, and in their eyes unjust policies of Chicago Public Schools, and the broader city and national context.

The excerpt from field notes below demonstrates the sense-making process of the youth. This discussion occurred in preparation for the youth to provide a workshop for students in their school and other schools in the city. The themes in this discussion included: identity, inclusion and exclusion, and spatial dynamics that inform identity. In particular, the theme that was identified in Chapter Three with regard to identity, “I’m more than this [academic ascription and/or limited social identity]” is explored through youth participation in CYS. The discussion begins as youth attempt to make sense of and articulate perceptions of youth at O’Donnell. Then, the discussion moves from local policy issues that impact their community to specific personal experience with the violence in their community:

Student 1: I think it is important to talk about the school to prison pipeline. We are facing issues in Chicago related to the school to prison pipeline. Harsh discipline and zero tolerance policies where you get suspended for minor infractions. Then, they get pushed out as dropouts and that leads to violence in the community. This is stereotypes of O’Donnell. We aren’t just the stereotypes, though.

Student 2: What O’Donnell is, if you don’t get in the lottery for charters then you’re like awwwughh, that’s where I’ll go I guess. We know that O’Donnell has great teachers and good programs, so a lot of these systems and policies are

what give O'Donnell and other schools like O'Donnell a bad stereotype. Consequences are if a student get suspended or arrested, and it affects them so they don't get to go to the school they want. So it's like dealing with the aftermath of the minor of infraction. For example, say you're tagging on your desk and you get suspended for five days and that goes on your record for a school that you really want to go to says no because of that suspension all because you were doodling on your desk. These are ways we are excluded in school. You could wipe it off before and clean the room, not stay and get suspended. Some students have gotten arrested for that as well. When you have harsh discipline policies like that you push students out. More young people in the streets that should be in the school not to say that young people are violent but they are in the streets looking for something to do they have that behavior as an option.

Organizer: What do you guys think O'Donnell students need to know about the school to prison pipeline? What themes should we use in the workshop?

Student 3: I think we should talk about violence, gun violence, and young people dying.

Student 4: more mentors, like what I mean is some people is makin good grades and some people are makin bad grades. A lot of people that have bad grades, and they parents are good, but they still making bad grades. They need that. [They are more than this]

Organizer: Yes, you have students who are getting pushed out or dealing with students in the streets or violence. Mentors to make sure they are okay. We need more social services not more police. These are reactions to school to prison pipeline. Violence in the community and reactions, restorative justice and increase in resources. What would these two look like? If we talk about violence in our communities what do we share?

Student 3: How like when kids get kicked out of school they don't have nothing to do. Push outs sort of create violence.

Organizer: Ok, so push outs creates more violence. What else?

Student 5: Bad things because of violence?

Organizer: reactions could be anti-violence programs. What to those look like?

Student 1: After-school programs build leaders, and programs through community-schools.

Organizer: Right, programs to keep those students off of the streets.

Student 6: Could we record or do it with O'Donnell students. What was their experience with violence in this community and then we could show them this is what happened to people in our school.

Organizer: We had 20 people shot/killed in the last few months and it's not discussed.

Student 1: But like those are just the ones that are recorded. You know you be sitting watching tv every Saturday night and you hear BAM BAMBAMBAM so...

Student 5: Could we say our stories?

Organizer: I prefer that you tell your stories.

Student 5: Cuz we all have them.

Sophia: What kind of stories would you share?

Student 3: Me and my friend and my cousin was here visiting and we were hangin outside late at night with our male friends on the porch. One was a gangbanger. A cop pulled up and they just started shooting. He didn't even know who he was. I literally saw the fire comin' out of the gun. I'm like, whoa. My friend pulled me down. There's a couple of stories like just from bein' in the neighborhood. That's why I joined clubs so I don't have to go straight home from school.

Student 6: It was just like they shot all the time. It's like maaahn, it's like you get used to it. They shoot. It's like they shootin. They shootin.

Student 5: Niggas be shootin' again.

Student 3: People ask us if we are scared, and like...

Student 6: You get used to it.

Student 3: I'm not even scared no more. I witness it every single day. It don't affect me unless it's my family though. But hearin' it. It doesn't bother me. It doesn't affect me.

Sophia: It's not okay that this is your norm.

Organizer: No, it's not ok.

Sophia: I saw a sign today when I was walking down Archer that said, "Think Don't Shoot." And it was just one of those things. You would just never see a sign like that in other neighborhoods. Nobody really cares that this is happening.

Student 1: NoNO it's not like that. Some of the kids in this school you know we grew up in some of the bad parts of town, some of the ghettos some of the projects we are use to hearing about gunfire. My first gunfire I heard when I was 4. Me and my mom crashed in this light pole, me and my mom threw ourselves on the floor. Another time when I was in elementary school in the neighborhood, teachers or whoever would yell and you would hear it and go to the ground. It's an instinct. You get down. You get down. The teacher didn't even know the sound of a gunfire. She was like, "That was a gun." We were like yeah. She was so surprised. We couldn't believe that our teacher hadn't heard a gunfire before. We were so used to it. So you [Sophia] see that sign and think it's a big deal but we're used to it.

Student 6: We got shot at too. It was like a what, why would they shoot at us...laughs..we're girls. We minding our business. [Students laugh] It's like, whaaaatt, I was like we were in the car. We were just in the car chillin' like that's what we do. We sit and chill. Like in front of her building. We were sittin out front.

Student 5: We were just sitting. We weren't even driving.

Student 6: We were just having a good ole' time, and we was just TAAALKIN'. And all I hear is PING, and she flew in the door. We was talkin' about the boys. Laughs

Student 5: I get out of the car. It flew past me and I was like..WHAT.. PING! It was bullets. They flew pass me or something. I was runnin I saw Jane in the car. My cousin was like get down girl get down! They was another time. They shot. They shot through the door. The glass flew in me and my sister's hair. We was like what you shootin at us for? He didn't mean to, he was trying to shoot at someone else.

Organizer: I am used to hearing this.

Student 6: I feel like people shoot up the neighborhoods because they set it out for them to do it.

Sophia: Who's they?

Student 6: We have a school to prison pipeline. You are expecting us to go to jail. You're not expecting us to do nothing. I have a friend who's a gangbanger,

and I am like boy you are so smart, and I'm like you so smart. I am like why don't you ever do your work. He's like nobody tells me to do my work. I think he is more than what expected of him living in this community (Field notes, March 6, 2013).

Narrative Analysis: Identity in Relation to Community

This section argues that three key findings emerge across the space of CYS and the pursuit of social identities. First, students joined the club to pursue social identities because they believed that participation in CYS would allow them the space to engage in “something more than this,” and given them the chance to “speak up” about issues that impact their community. Each of the youth in the excerpt above also participated in individual interviews as part of the study. All of the youth in this program reflect upon their experience at O'Donnell and the reasons they join after-school programs such as CYS. Their reason for joining in addition to wanting to “speak up” is to also gain leadership skills and help them increase their potential to go to college. Each of the students acknowledges they would be the first in their families to be involved in high school and to graduate from high school.

Second, across the emergence of social identity in CYS, youth experience social identity formation in relation to multiple layers of community. The sub-community of CYS is a source of safety. Their perception of community, while lived in the spaces of dingy classrooms and on bus rides, also emerges through the set of social relations in CYS. These social spaces provide these youth with the opportunity to connect with each other and their organizer around policy issues. To elaborate, social identity formation is almost in direct response to issues that they face with inequity in schools, racism, and violence. Through the safe space and the social relations, students make sense of

themselves, their community [Redwood Park] and its inequities and recognize the potential for change. And, in order to process their personal experiences and connect them with larger social action, they come together to form an “intimate culture,” or a community of relations among each other (Levinson, 2001). The set of relations across these intimate spaces form a new source of curriculum or learning for these youth.

Third, the emergence of social identities in CYS is deeply personal for youth. As the transcript noted above, the meetings often began with policy issues and the organizer doing much of the talking. Once students settle into each other and the space of the group, however, it became clear that they were more willing to share their personal experience with the aim of reshaping policy. While it is difficult to infuse emotion and inflection into the written word of field notes, youth sat in circle in the CYS space and told their stories of and experience with violence. They described it as a norm to witness violence. They experience the space of CYS and come to understand that talking about these issues is a step toward planning and organizing to change them.

The data suggests that despite intense lived experiences on the part of the youth, CYS is a space to experience positive social identities in relation to the CYS community. As they fought against negative stereotypes of their community and school and even their limited academic identity, their social identities and social bonding processes that occur in the space of the CYS meetings enables them to understand that they can do something to change the unjust conditions.

Summary of Programs Discussed

The next section discusses the final program that was observed intently as a way to illustrate the ways that AVID students and few Regulars pursue social identities. I started the chapter with Model UN because that program had the strongest connection the school building still, particularly because it was led by a current teacher in the school. I then discussed the gritty group of CYS led by a community organization staff member. Students in this particular space experienced intense personal connections to their participation in this program, and used the program space as a way to explore other selves beyond what was possible in classrooms. The final program I discuss is Social Justice Club. It is this program that offers the most unique exploration of social identity exploration because the nature of the program, much like CYS, is centered on developing, articulating and ultimately applying youth understanding of social justice. Many adults are involved in the operation of this program, a teacher from the school (who has since retired, but is still involved as of Fall, 2013), adult allies from the community (myself), teachers and former teachers from other schools around the city that have been a part of this social justice effort over the past seven years (2006-present).

“It’s like a Traveling School”: The Emergence of Social Identities of Youth and the Stretching of Social Spaces

Context for Social Justice Club (SJC)

The birth of the social justice club occurred in 2006, when it was a nascent idea that a teacher had. I found this particular teacher along with Alex from the Model UN club to engage in a particular kind of social justice, emotional work. This chapter argues

that the social identities are made possible, in part, through teacher-student relations. In order to understand the context for the Social Justice Club, data from a teacher interview is provided. Mr. Shepherd's vision of the club is to have students engage in social justice work that is focused on activism and current events. Within these settings students are able to engage in conversations about wider social and political issues. The teacher stresses his desire to expand the students' knowledge of what goes on outside of their own communities. He argues that the lack of exposure to the wider world gives the students a very narrow set of experienced to foster their knowledge of social issues. To achieve his vision, he physically takes the students out of their personal environment and on trips to New Orleans for service work. This service trip enables students to acquire knowledge of general society, according to him, and how they as individuals fit into that system. He believes in "identity consciousness" because it allows students to better understand social issues that are affecting them personally. To nurture students in the development of, "identity consciousness," he gives the students a large level of autonomy in their thought processes. He provides the students with just enough material to come to their own conclusions about social issues and their own identities, which he believes promotes social justice more effectively.

As I listened in my 90 minute interview with him in December, 2012, and the subsequent conversations I had with him, I also had the opportunity to witness the materialization of his vision for social justice. In the spirit of performing the notion of event, I turn to my field notes and the section I wrote up after I returned from a field trip with the SJC. In these moments of the journey, I learned how students pursue social

identities related to activism. The key theme across the seven day journey I spent with these youth was that they came to understand their identity and a sense of community. They learned about themselves and the larger society through social relationships and the movement across social spaces that stretched from a community on the south side of Chicago down to a city in the South. And, as participants articulated, their journey and identity formation processes were wrapped up in this theme of, “It’s like a traveling school.”

Narrative of Social Justice Club (SJC)

At six o’clock in the morning outside of O’Donnell, 42 youth stood in line to board a Coach bus for an 18 hour ride down south. Nervous, non-English speaking parents huddle close to their son or daughter as the youth chatter and moan that is too cold to stand outside the bus. For most of these youth, this service trip they are embarking upon is their first trip outside of Chicago and outside of their state. I learn immediately that one youth on the trip, along with his non-English speaking mother, arrived at the dark empty parking lot at five o’clock in the morning without a suitcase or any items for the trip. The teachers along with me looked at each other blankly and in silence as we processed that neither he nor his mother thought to pack clothes for a week long service trip.

As part of this community-school, one teacher leads an after-school program called The Social Justice Club (SJC). For the past seven years this particular social studies teacher has led a service trip with the juniors and seniors from his after-school program. He has formed partnerships with other area public high schools, so this trip

includes students from multiple urban schools on the Southside of the city. Teachers from each of the other schools serve as chaperones and “like-minded folks” on this trip. The teacher asked me two days before departure if I’d like to go, noting, “It would be good for your research, and you’re just the right person to attend a trip like this.” I smiled, and told him I’d think about it. I went home that night feeling conflicted. The researcher in me thought, what an opportunity to travel with the some of the youth in my study out of state, witnessing their interactions and their embodiment of social justice values. My concern was with my ability to maintain my researcher status and ensure that participants knew that while I was there as an “adult-ally,” I was still a researcher. This is the heart of critical ethnography in terms of tending to the socio-political context and to what Clifford (1997) illuminates for ethnographers when he discusses ‘travel’ as a metaphor to describe the social practice of ethnographic fieldwork. He argues:

Travel captures this sense that a researcher moves from place, his or her home and academic institution, goes to the place of research and then returns home. Traveling as fieldwork involves the deep commitments evoked in the idea of dwelling, but more with a sense that observations can only follow experience that is changing and moving and from a researcher perspective that is changing and moving as well. (Clifford, 1997)

I called the teacher that night at home and said I would love to join for the trip and that I’d be whatever help I could. He immediately thanked me and said he’d see me at 6am in the parking lot. I did not know much information about the trip other than he told me I would have a place to sleep—the floor of a church—and meals would be covered. I was nervous as we left the city for an 18-hour bus ride, thinking through how I would maintain my researcher status but also balancing my genuine curiosity about the youth and the process by which they have come to understand social justice. It was a moment

to take flight in the research, to deepen my understanding of the intimate social identity and social bonding process students were engaged in as part of this program.

As we huddled near the entrance of the bus, I was an outsider with this group of teachers from across the city; they asked me if I would talk through my own vision of social justice as I climbed the stairs onto the bus. It was in this moment that I observed seven teachers express their hopes for these youth on the trip. They also immediately recognized my strengths and ability to connect with the youth, asking, “Can you get their stories?” I said I would be happy to ask them questions about social justice what brought them on the trip, and what they hoped to gain from a volunteer service trip to another poverty-stricken area. My role became to talk with youth in a brief minute and attempt to understand their initial thoughts on the trip. I bounced around the seats on the bus, asking youth I did not know for the most part, why they wanted to come on the service trip. These questions were impromptu, and I recorded notes after each conversation, and attempted to type on my computer during the bumpy bus ride near Memphis at that point in the trip. As we continued our adventure at rest stop two, I strolled through a misty wilderness with a student:

SR: Can you tell me a little bit about why you decided to come on this trip?

Student: I think it would be a great experience for me. I haven't really traveled out of the state as a part of a school group and I wanted to do volunteering. They got problems there, too.

SR: What do you hope to experience, see, or learn?

Student: NOLA, I've been told there is like French culture in NOLA and I would like to see that; I would to experience the culture there. I want to see if it is like Chicago.

As I interact with student after student on the bus, exploring the youth in the back of the bus, the middle, and the front, patterns emerged across youth' responses. Students knew they were traveling to a city that experiences poverty. Their volunteer work would include housing rehabilitation, planting community gardens in order to build sustainable food sources for people, and working with children at an elementary school. These three work sites all were organized by the teacher. The youth suspected that they would be able to connect with the children and families they would encounter because of their awareness and experience with poverty. These powerful testimonies from youth included their sensitivity to issues of injustice, neighborhood segregation, and poverty. Despite that many/most had not traveled their anticipated responses suggest they would see something new but also recognize similarities between their city and their educational experience.

A moment that was particularly critical for the emergence of the youth activist, social identity was working at a charter school as volunteers. Youth witnessed a discipline model at his particular charter school that they hadn't seen before. In addition, many of the youth in the SJC also participate in other events around charter proliferation in Chicago, so their sensitivity to charter school proliferation in New Orleans was acute. Youth witnessed things that made them experience discomfort, specifically the ways in which teachers in this particular charter school treated elementary-aged children such as when young children were forced to stand outside in the cold as a punishment for falling out of the lunch line. Youth also had the opportunity to meet other youth activists in this city to discuss the presence of charter schools post-Katrina. Specifically, youth met with

other youth in New Orleans participating in a community organization similar to Redwood Park Council. These moments in which one moment generated more moments of and a desire for more knowledge and action enabled this development of a youth activist identity.

This section discusses youth' experiences and responses to what they perceived as injustice around the issue of discipline in charter school. We met with a representative from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in New Orleans. From field notes:

I observed a conversation about charter schools with the woman from NAACP at a local community organization that the youth visited today. A local community organization provided youth in New Orleans an opportunity to improve their writing skills to improve college applications to top universities. The program was found in the mid-1990s by a group of public school teachers in New Orleans. We met with the director and teachers in this non-profit, all current public school teachers in New Orleans as well, and met with two students from the program. These two alums had successfully completed the writing program and just finished their first year at Bard College. Our youth felt connected to these youth as they learned these two youth grew up in poverty, one of the alum told the youth in my study how she struggled through school because her father was in jail for murder. She shared her personal writing that helped her overcome the challenges she faced in high school.

We learned about the public school system in NOLA and how Katrina became a way to mobilize the charter movement here. They passed a law that basically removed unions here, and fired teachers according to the representative from NAACP. As of 2009 a number of charter networks had taken over, but by 2013 of the 88 schools here in NOLA, 67 are charters. Now, the movement is that charters are being swallowed up by larger charter networks. For instance, KIPP in 2009 had 4 schools and now they are up to 10 schools. The charter presence here is the only option. The mood of both the public school teachers who are leaders of this non-profit writing program for public school students in NOLA and the representative from NAACP is somber.

O'Donnell youth reflected upon the experience of visiting other youth activists. One student said, "I like the girl's story because it incorporated many aspects of her life and basically what others are facing too, not only her; it gave us glimpse

into other people's lives. And for the guy's essay I really liked it because I really love history so all of those historical references he was saying, I got it. Another youth said, "With the girl's story about her dad, I really understood it because I've been through the same situations, not with my dad but with friends that had to go through courts." Students ask questions about have you ever had the experience that outside of school you're experiencing something big, but in school you feel even more stressed and have things put on you and you just think, "They don't know what I'm going through." [Student talks about how not having one parent is unjust to the child(ren) because they didn't do anything to deserve not having them. Another student brings up the issues of knowledge in this car ride. Marley replies, "To release what is inside of you all this stress all of these emotions that you can put on paper and share it. To go back to what she said, to inform to spread knowledge, it's kind of selfish if you have this knowledge and won't share it with other people. Yeah it's unfair to keep that knowledge to yourself." I was sitting in the front with another adult just listening to the youth reflect upon what they had heard about charter schools and youth experiences in NOLA. (Field Notes, March 27, 2013)

Throughout the course of the week on this service trip, youth reflected upon their role in fighting for social justice. The adults, while present, remained on the periphery of student reflection, learning, and plans for action. Moments such as the ones I recorded in the field notes above were the way the adults remained engaged. We listened to youth.

This section involving SJC argues that the experience of critically reflecting on issues of social justice while bearing witness to these issues for these youth enabled them to explore and ultimately experience an activist identity. These moments when youth both reflected upon and lived something are crucial to their development as young people. As part of this identity, they were in the process of developing a definition and understanding of justice.

When asked why one youth joined SJC and what he learns from being a part of the club. He replies:

The influence from Mr. Shepherd totally decided my choice of joining. In the beginning of the year he urged me to go to at least one meeting. He told me I'd

fully understand some of the issues they talk about, which, at the time, I didn't pay much attention to such as the school closings and chartering of schools. I guess the curiosity Mr. Shepherd built up in me about the many issues that I was somewhat oblivious about gave me that push to finally go to my first meeting. I absolutely loved the first time experience with SJC. The freedom to express ourselves there about societal topics is also welcomed and, most of the time, shared and viewed the same way by everyone there! Social Justice has taught me, justice is not something immediately attained. One can only build on justice like a fortified structure. Justice is a stronghold that could be constructed by an individual, a group, and especially a community; with that stronghold comes integrity and the power to demand what's right from wrong. It is all part of justice's foundation. For example, the trip to New Orleans deals with the process of constructing justice. We all went down there, saw the conditions the city was in, and acknowledged that something had to be done, especially in one of the charter schools. (Interview, April 3 and May 28, 2013)

Students like Lennon and Marley highlight the ways that involvement the Social Justice Club helps youth in the club develop an understanding of justice. Other students said that their sense feeling connected to a community was necessary for her to progress through high school.

Students express various reasons for joining SJC and what they gain from it. Each of their responses related to feeling a sense of community and understanding themselves and the larger society as part of the process of being in SJC. After two of the youth had witnessed poverty in both of their home countries of Panama and China, these sisters arrived for high school in Chicago. Both felt far from connected to their family and each diverged in terms of the ethnic and racial identifications. Despite these differences, both sisters joined after school programs as a way to develop a sense of belonging at their new school. These young women—who bring so much worldly, cultural knowledge—still found themselves like many youth in the study: lacking a sense of belonging and a strong identity. Eli describes reasons she joined The Social Justice

Club. She said, “I joined SJC because I wanted to be involved in a big project (service trip out of state) in which I could help out the community. I wanted to make a difference and discover different problems that the United States has.”

Narrative Analysis

From this narrative and the experience, I came to understand four key components to student identity formation in relation to the SJC community. The data suggests four findings related to identity formation in the SJC. First, youth pursue social identities across the SJC space because they feel supported in it and they felt it was a space to explore topics that they were not learning about in school. Second, their sense of self and sense of belonging occurs through social relationships and the movement across social spaces, stretching from a community on the south side of Chicago, across the state, and down to a city in the South. Their feeling of being a part of a “traveling school,” suggests that they feel as though they are learning despite the fact that they also feel autonomous. Third, the role of the teacher in building relationships with the youth from O’Donnell was a factor in all of the youth articulations of why they joined, and how they felt supported to pursue social identities. Fourth, youth here, as they witnessed poverty and injustice due to Hurricane Katrina, were dismayed and sad at times throughout the week. They could not fathom how the government could abandon the people of New Orleans. Youth made connections to their own neighborhoods by noting how policy-makers in Chicago abandon local communities, as one youth said, “like how the charters be poppin’ up in south side neighborhoods; it’s like they want no education in our communities.” Overall, the key lessons for youth are that youth connect their experience of identity to movement

across social spaces, the learn education is not limited to a classroom experience, they connect their experience of poverty with others' experience of poverty and their desire to work for justice continues.

Summary of Section on Social Justice Club (SJC)

As I lived this week, and re-lived it in my mind after my return, there were moments that I burst into tears because I did not know how to process what I had experienced as a researcher. I observed youth observe injustice and build a sense of solidarity, for instance, with other activist youth in New Orleans. Our youth along with other youth from multiple public high schools—the handful left in New Orleans—partner with a community-organization to engage in activist projects around charter proliferation in their city. Watching the O'Donnell youth see the power and agency among like-minded youth contributes to their “identity consciousness,” and an emergence of an activist, social identity.

The purpose of this section was to map the movement of youth and their social identity production in relation to community-school sponsored after school programs. These moments captured the contradictory, confusing experiences youth had. As students shed the safety of the school, literally moving, traveling, they sought to shed the labels of the institution and their own experience with stereotyping and injustice. The youth in this particular set of experiences still maintained some connection to school spaces, but the next set of findings indicates that even in the community-school spaces, youth were still constrained.

I close this section with a post-trip reflection that a youth offers as a transition into my discussion across the three programs and the various emergences of social identities. This passage reflects the process of social identity formation and what is learned and gained from participation in after-school programs such as SJC. This youth, Shannon, replied:

When I arrived on the first day at the charter school, I saw children with their finger on their mouth and it made me curious. The children there did not make a sound standing in line and not even a smile. Usually when visitors visit there is excitement, but in this school not a soul makes a move as we enter to volunteer. On the second day, it got a little bit better because we actually worked with the kids who are from pre-K to 5th grade there, but I was filled with questions. During my time in the school, my curiosity grew. The way that the teachers treat their kids was unacceptable. When I was outside for recess, I saw kids outside without their coats, standing by the door, so we went over and asked them why they were standing there. They answered “We are being punished.” Then we asked, “Why didn’t you guys get your coats?” They answered “They didn’t let us.” I didn’t know about their discipline rules, but I thought it was outrageous to punish kids the way they do. If I could say something about it to the public about their outrageous strict rules I would because kids shouldn’t be treated that way (Personal correspondence, 2013).

Discussion: “If I Could say Something...”

This section discusses the three key similar findings across each program despite different, literal events, students’ immersion in social spaces and relations contribute to their social identities—what they perceive them to be—as well as their sense of belonging. Across the chapter, I explored social identity production in relation to community belonging. First, this chapter argues that social identities manifest in teacher-student relations, and relations with adults from the community organization staff, particularly in the Model UN with Mr. Alex, the CYS’s organizer who understands and experienced similar acts of racism and violence in the O’Donnell community, and the

adult allies involved in the SJC trip. Second, this chapter argues social identities emerge in peer to peer relations, particularly in CYS and SJC, when students develop an individual and collective understanding of policy issues that impact their local communities. These moments parlay the *relational curriculum* materialized in the lived spaces of the after-school programs and expressed through statements such as, “It’s like a traveling school.” Third, and interrelated, this chapter posits that social identities emerge in the spaces of the community-school and beyond the classrooms through programs like Model UN, CYS, and SJC.

While the focus of this chapter is on the spaces of the after-school programs, which begun with Model UN traveling outside of Chicago, CYS traveling around the city of Chicago for various protests and rallies, and SJC traveling outside of the state to New Orleans, students experience social identities in unpredictable ways. As adults watch, and nurture the spaces of their “traveling school,” students experience frustration, sadness, the “breaking down of systems,” (Deleuze, 1995) both the systems of formal schooling and larger systems in society that they may or may not have observed prior to their engagement in community-school programs. Moreover, students also experience the “perilous act, a violence, whose first victim is oneself” as they seek to discover themselves across the contradictory, confusing spaces of a *relational curriculum* that has the intimacy and connectedness they seek along with the symbolic and material acts of violence, witnessing of oppression, and reflection of their own oppression within the communities.

Within these spaces of the *relational curriculum*, the youth, as they discern inequity and witness or reflect upon injustice, figure out ways to say something, but still feel apprehensive about the nature of their role in social change, suggesting the “If” in “If I could say something..” needs to be broken down for the youth. This said, however, I continued to explore the power in their desire for “more” across these community-school spaces and to document what Deleuze calls, “prehensions,” which are interactions within the ‘event’ or moments described here when youth perceive things and may not always be cognitive of the happenings around them, but these prehensions are equally valid and real for them as they figure out who they are becoming.

Furthermore, across the three programs several patterns emerge. Students spent hours upon hours discerning who they are in relation to each other, to their school, to their community. In so many moments and across the events discussed in the previous three sections, students struggle, and desire to say something, to do something, and to be something ‘more.’ Most of their moments are contradictory and in conflict with barriers such as social class, or merely not knowing how to move past the if in the “if I could say something...” as Shannon said above, they do say something, say it to me, or to their teachers or organizers, but they do not always see the immediate impact of their desires and words.

Youth across the programs express that they get to meet “students who like to express and fight for justice” in the same manner they do. While students in Model UN still felt constrained, their experience in Model UN enabled them to see themselves in relation to a larger society, as Mr. Shepherd from SJC mentioned. Additionally, CYS

enabled students to reflect upon their personal experience in relation to their city and local community context, and to develop a sense of the violence they experience as part of larger societal inequities. While SJC students were able to materially experience difference and similarity between Chicago and New Orleans, and develop their sense of self in relation to others fighting for justice both within SJC and across the other youth organizers in the community organization in New Orleans. One student from SJC reflected on this realization as her experience and identity form as the space of learning stretches to New Orleans:

Going to New Orleans taught me that somebody always needs help. Seven years after Katrina, residents from New Orleans are still struggling to get their lives back on track. It might be even harder now for them since not a lot of attention is being directed their way anymore. It was amazing to physically be in the Ninth District helping rebuild after seeing the disaster on TV in fourth grade. Establishing relationships with people in New Orleans and learning about their educational system was also very important to me considering we're from Chicago. A lot was learned on both the Chicago side and the New Orleans side on educational injustice, and I feel that those connections have made activists in both cities even better at fighting unjust systems. (Personal correspondence, 2013)

Students enter into programs for reasons outlined at the beginning of this chapter: to pursue “more than this.” In each of the programs, students reflect on their positioning in their school, community, and have the opportunity to also reflect upon their positioning in the larger society. All of these experiences enable students to develop understandings of policy issues.

Implications and the Role of After-School Programs in Social Identity Formation

The implications of considering community-school programs and what they offer social identity production is critical for understanding how we can increase students’ sense of belonging in school. The analysis of data leads to a few key implications.

Youth are marginalized in their schools, but are able to experiment with positive social identities in other communities. These social identities emerged in social relations provided through community-school partnership. With that, this process of social identity formation generated a feeling of a “traveling school” for youth. The process of social identity formation is an asset-based model for examining identities of marginalized groups. Looking at the desire, work, and experiences of youth through their perspectives and voice moves us beyond sociological categories of race, class, and gender that are certainly important to field of education, but also have the propensity to only view structural and institutional forces that impede upon youth identity. The social here is a departure from previous research that studies the social in terms of the ways social identities are class-based and reproduced in school settings (Eckert, 1989; Van Galen & Noblit, 2007). Instead, the social here is more expansive and inclusive of youth social interactions and the ways in which youth develop positive relationships with each other in order to see oppression and inequity in their society and then we also see the ways their interpretations of social reality and its inequalities interact with race, class and gender. Rather, the notion of social identity here is discursive and attentive to the movement and contradiction that is part of identity formation processes for youth.

The comment, “It’s like a traveling school,” suggests that youth perceive the spaces provided by the community-school programs to be like school: they learn there. Youth need spaces, relationships, and movement to be coupled their abstract thoughts or adults telling them about injustice. Giving students the space to develop themselves is risky or dangerous. This chapter and the next, seek new ways of mapping the process of

social identity formation without reliance upon psychological theories of youth development or youth participatory action research, as are examples of dominant discourses around social justice pedagogy and youth development (Camarota & Fine, 2008; Ghosh, Mickelson, & Anyon, 2007). This study departs from previous literature because I re-frame social identity. Instead of operating in a dualistic paradigms such as school identity (associated with whiteness, or upper middle class cite) or school identity versus street identity (associated with cultural markers of difference such as style, dress, music taste, linguistic habits (Flores-Gonzalez, 2002; Staiger, 2006), I focused on how students pursued social identities in social spaces.

This study and this chapter sought to understand how youth see themselves in relation as they participate in after-school programs offered by the community-school. I wanted to move past merely seeing these students as failures in the public schools system. In fact, I asked youth in my study, “What do you think of the fact that there are educational researchers who refer to you as “non-dominant?” and the youth laughed and said, “Well, those people don’t know us.” As a critical ethnographer, I chose to move beyond the ways in which critical theory and praxis arguments perpetuate the language and discourse of non-dominant youth. Thus, this chapter, from its conceptual orientation, seeks to map the movement of youth, social identity formation and capture the symbolic violence involved in the discernment and identity-making and re-making processes.

In addition, these students engage in a type of cultural organizing as part of a *relational curriculum*. Hemmings (2006) argues that this process involves, “navigating cultural crosscurrents and produces fluid, complicated identities that continuously shift to

engage and concatenate the multiple words of Latina/o families, peer relations, and dominant institutions (p. 11). Additionally, cultural organizing is a process by which people reflect on their situation and determine the most appropriate approach for daily interactions, an approach that will ameliorate the conditions of existence and maintain a certain degree of autonomy with identity formations (Cammarota, 2008). What matters here is that these processes are youth organized, and experienced, and this chapter sought to capture these youth perceptions and experiences despite the painful, struggle that comes with shedding one's connection to institutions, ideologies, and histories of oppression. Because, youth can and did say something, and through this critical ethnographic research it is made visible. The next chapter expands this discussion of cultural organizing and alternative curricula as part of youth experience.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter explored themes that emerged from Chapter Three, specifically, “We’re like a community, like friends,” by drawing upon interview data and field notes. I explored the theme “I’m pursuing more than this...” by drawing on field notes and analytic memos across the programs, devoting a section to each salient community-school program, including Model UN, CYS, and SJC. In these programs, policy topics and controversial issues are explored because the space of the community-school programs is safe. Students are nurtured in their development of ideas and critical thinking around issues related to school segregation, school closing, and inequality. The argument in this chapter was twofold. First, I argued that social identities emerge among these students, particularly a social bond forms, “a community, like friends.” These

AVID students express that they are more likely to be involved in after-school programs such as Model United Nations, CYS, and SJC in part because of their academic status as AVID. Students also expressed a stronger sense of connectedness, or belonging to the school even when the school was only perceived to be comprised of the students they interacted with in such after-school programs. I sought to document and describe how that interacts within the space of the after-school club. This community and the social bonds that stretch across it enable social identity formation. The social bonds form and social identities manifest in teacher-student relations and the emotional work of a particular teacher and peer-peer relations.

Second, I used these three programs, Model UN, CYS, and SJC to also investigate the relationality of space, meaning, the spaces of learning for students in after-school programs is both used and produced through complex sets of interactions. The movement of space and the relationships that emerge and occur across space enable and produce specific social identities in relation to community belonging for students. I began with Model UN intentionally because there is a strong connection between Model UN's origins and the role of the teacher, who provides the connection to the school. I then moved to examine CYS and SJC because it is in the spaces created by CYS and SJC that we begin to see a peeling away of the protections and constraints of the institution of the school. Certainly, there are literal connections to the school such as CYS and SJC having some meetings in classrooms. The point, however, is to demonstrate how these clubs, organized through the community-school partnership, begin to re-define the

boundaries and spaces of learning and the ways in which students move across these spaces and experience social identities.

The fifth chapter explores the ways in which students move beyond the “If I could say something...” moment into the realm of possibility and live out the relational curriculum that is brewing across these three program space, alternative spaces of learning and social identity production. The next chapter explores moments that youth from the Regular group take matters into their own hands and pursue social identities across the community-school spaces.

CHAPTER FIVE

“I DO ACTIVIST THINGS EVEN THOUGH I’M NOTHING”: SOCIAL IDENTITY FORMATION AND THE PRODUCTION OF YOUTH CULTURAL ORGANIZING

As soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world. In a world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. (Franz Fanon, cited in Bhabha, 1994)

An event does not just mean that “a man has been run over.” The Great Pyramid is an event, and its duration for a period of one hour, thirty minutes, five minutes . . . a passage of Nature, of God, or a view of God. What are the conditions that make an event possible? Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes. (Deleuze, 1992)

Amidst a series *and* event¹, youth participated in and circulating desires and awareness they expressed about identity, tension emerged as youth attempted to “create their own cultural forms” and renegotiate identities within such a process and creation of culture (Cammarota, 2008, 2011).² As stated in previous chapters, the youth in this chapter are also part of the larger Latino immigrant youth category, but referred to as youth. As we walked down the hall of O’Donnell after the events that will be discussed in this chapter a student yelled to Marley and Penny, “Hey, go back to jail,” and another

¹By event, I am invoking a Deleuzian notion of the term. I describe this in the conceptual orientation section of the chapter. I italicize it in the introduction to inform the reader of a particular understanding of the term, but throughout the chapter will not continue to italicize the term.

²Similarly to Cammarota’s work, the youth in this study are Latino immigrants. Cammarota (2008, 2011) refers to youth in his scholarship as youth at some points and refers to their experiences as Latino immigrants as well. Cammarota’s scholarship on cultural organizing was based off of his work with Latino immigrant youth. As I have stated throughout the dissertation, youth in the study were less likely to identify as Latino, but did self-identify as youth. Thus, this chapter follows their articulations of themselves as youth.

teacher passed us and said, “Hey, should you two be seen together? It’s the revolutionaries” (Field notes, May 21, 2013). Marley and Penny smiled and blushed. I was at O’Donnell that day to discuss the recent youth organizing that occurred and to follow up with these two after their recent arrest. They walked me through the back stage of the auditorium, through the darkness, whispering, “Come on, this way.” We sat outside in the quad area, which included a few concrete benches outside of O’Donnell. The opening comments made by a teacher and a student in the short 30 step walk through the main hallway provides an entry point into the experiences and identities that surround the youth cultural organizing that occurred beyond the school walls and even beyond the spaces nurtured and sanctioned by the community organization. As we sat outside in the quad area, these youth reflected upon the events and their arrest, noting, “At the vigil on May 15, we performed an act of civil disobedience in which we laid down in the streets with white t-shirts with mock blood on our shirts to represent possible causalities that would potentially result from closing down the nearby school” (Interview, May 21, 2013). Here, the youth refer to the educational policies in Chicago that are central to their cultural organizing. The opening epigraphs along with these initial snippets of conversation from youth are intended to introduce key themes and concepts for this chapter; for instance, I address the role of desire and the notion of *event* in the production of youth cultural organizing.

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that youth pursue social identities in positive, albeit contested forms as they renegotiate their identity and restructure their experience,

shedding themselves of the institutional labeling the school insists upon them. I also argue that youth produce their own brand of cultural organizing that is distinct from community organizing agendas and definitions, and that is distinct from mere rebellious teenage angst or protesting. To understand the symbolic and real value of social identities that emerge in youth cultural organizing, I argue that the notion of *event* as conceptualized through the work of Gilles Deleuze (1990) and briefly outlined in chapter four, is a useful optic for seeing and experiencing what marginalized youth such as the ones in this study live. Deleuze argues:

An event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us. It must be understood, willed, and represented in that which occurs [...] to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby, to have one more birth, and to break with one's carnal birth—to become the offspring of one's events and not of one's actions effectively liberates us from the limits of individuals and persons. (p. 150)

The youth in the study are marginalized and silenced by academic tracking practices in the school, institutional labels such as Regular, or the less neutral, 'at-risk,' and set up for failure at worst and the cultural reproduction of inequality in the school setting at best (Cammarota, 2008). But, instead of only seeing these youth as their academic status or label, as only what their predicted outcome of achievement may be, or as only tied to one or a set of actions, this critical ethnography utilizes the notion of *event* to capture youth desire and to let youth narratives speak in order to hear them and to write against the process of marginalization, objectification, silencing and othering (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012).

The contribution of this chapter to the larger academic literature is that social identities are largely studied through their interaction with race, class and gender

(Davidson, 1996) whereas my intention here is to employ a nuanced notion of *event* as a way into the social worlds and relations of youth and their experience of identity therein. I also contribute to and build a new dimension to the theory of cultural organizing by defining it on youth terms. I argue that the youth cultural organizing produced here is distinct from previous scholarship on the topic, e.g., cultural organizing as pedagogy (Cammarota, 2008, 2011), cultural organizing as the intersection of art and activism, and cultural organizing as only political and connected to community organizing. Instead, I argue the “culture” in cultural organizing garners strength and creativity from intimate discourses and narratives of youth and youth’ perceptions of social realities. The contribution to literature is to insist we see culture and the continual remaking of youth culture as a process—an *event*—of developing a critical consciousness about social reality as well as a process of transforming themselves from merely a Regular to leaders for their communities; thus, I draw on the rich ethnographic data to articulate the symbolic cultural knowledge that “informants” such as the youth in this chapter offer. These youth are the “brokers” of such cultural knowledge and understand their social realities as they work for social change (Foley, Levinson, & Hurtig, 2000, p. 40).³

First, I situate the narratives of youth in the larger academic discourse on cultural organizing and the structural forces, represented by the principal of the school’s comment on their “getting a high on protesting,” and the social forces, represented by the Executive Director of the community organization and his comment, “community organizing has to

³For clarification on the history and current diverse practices of cultural organizing, I am indebted to Paul Kuttner and both his published and unpublished work on the ways in which youth engage in their own brand of cultural organizing (Kuttner, 2013).

have a political strategy and effect social change.” Second, I conceptualize the process that youth undergo through the notion of *event*. I prepare the reader for how to read the narrative by outlining key features of Deleuze’s notion of *event*. Third, I provide background and rationale for the methodological choice of using educational narratives as a way to “talk back” to policy and other structural forces, and as a way to “draw the reader into the social worlds of youth” (Davidson, 1996). Fourth, I narrate four critical episodes that youth experience. The fifth section of the chapter analyzes youth responses to episodes and serves as the discussion section in which I address the dimensions of youth cultural organizing as a theory for understanding the episodes that the youth participated in.

Part I: Youth Cultural Organizing

In this chapter, I examine the process of identity formation for youth as a process and production of what I call youth cultural organizing. To fully understand the concept of youth cultural organizing, I use interview and field notes that emphasize youth voice because youth cultural organizing is produced through their experience. Two salient models of cultural organizing exist in previous scholarship. These models offer a working definition of cultural organizing, but I use ethnographic data throughout the chapter to build a new theory of youth cultural organizing. I call this youth cultural organizing because it is produced through youth’ experience and experimentation with social identities in particular events all relating to their engagement with educational and social policies impacting their local communities. The data from the study challenged

previous theorizations of cultural organizing; thus, I distinguish what I observe as youth created cultural organizing conceptualized through Deleuze's notion of event.

To situate the data in this chapter, I turn to the academic literature for a working definition of cultural organizing. Two salient lines of inquiry exist on the theory of cultural organizing. First, scholars argue cultural organizing as a form of pedagogy (Cammarota, 2008, 2011). Cammarota (2008a) argues:

Cultural organizing as a pedagogy seeks to take students beyond their informal acts of resistance by having students engage systems of domination and oppression directly and creatively. Cultural organizing involves the formalization and organization of stakeholders' cultural agency through an ethnographic pedagogy. The formalization of critical insights through ethnographic observation and documentation facilitates the organizing of stakeholders and constituents for taking direct action to transform practice, policies, and conditions in school sites. A more formal praxis pedagogy helps social actors like students organize themselves for the explicit purpose of changing their social milieu. When they attempt to change their lived reality, they learn to see that reality and themselves differently. A pedagogy of praxis built on active cultural organizing produces a deeper, more personal learning experience than pedagogies based on the informal rebellious acts of students, or non-praxis oriented, passive, classroom-based pedagogies. (p. 48)

Second, scholars take on a practical definition of cultural organizing to elucidate the "lived" realities of youth in particular in low-income communities. In this way, cultural organizing has been more aligned with arts-based activism, e.g., youth use dance, language, expression, music, theatre, to explore their lived, social realities and experiences of marginalization (Kuttner, 2013). Here, cultural organizing is understood as not only a political endeavor or a move to enact social change, but also to harness strength and creativity from culture and its intimate discourses and narratives that produce an alternative reality for marginalized youth.

A few assumptions persist across both of these models and definitions of cultural organizing. Kuttner (2013) and others argue three assumptions that are part of the conception of cultural organizing are of note. First, cultural organizing is an asset-based model of historically marginalized communities unlike persistent deficit models that approach student identity and academic achievement in low-income communities (Foley, 1997; Foley, Levinson & Hurtig, 2000, p. 43; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Cultural organizing as a powerful, asset-based approach to the work in communities is an attempt to counter dominant discourses about communities and youth of color. Second, cultural organizing understands that power is not restricted to or operating only in the political arena. This model views power relations as operating through discourses and narratives that contribute to the reproduction of inequality and also narratives that can “talk back” to dominant narratives about low income communities and youth of color or varied immigration statuses (Chae, 2004; Conchas & Perez, 2003). The point is in cultural organizing, youth voice and narrative is central and highlighted.

I argue Cammarota’s (2008) work on cultural organizing is pertinent as a starting point in this study. Specifically, I find the usefulness in thinking about the model of cultural organizing to theorize the ways in which youth engage in a process of transforming themselves from the negative academic, institutional label of Regular⁴ into

⁴A Regular is student that is not in honors or advanced classes at O’Donnell. It is the institutional label that the school ascribes to a large number of students. In doing so, I learned that Regulars are considered to be on the lowest rung of the academic and social hierarchy within the school. The point of the project is to highlight the positive social identities that youth, specifically the Regulars, experience despite the low expectations attached to their institutional label. Other scholarship has examined the negative effects of positioning students and the “prejudice of differential school treatment” (Eckert, 1989,

the positive social identities that emerge in their brand of cultural organizing. I address this in the analysis section further. But, to prepare the reader with a working definition for understanding the connection of cultural organizing to literature in sociology of education and for understanding how to view the events described in the chapter I turn to Cammarota's work. Cultural organizing as distinct from cultural production or social reproduction theory (for empirical research using social reproduction theory, see Bettie, 2003; Foley, 2010; Lareau, 2003; MacLeod, 1987) is a less charted empirical territory particularly on issues related to Latino immigrant youth in schools. What distinguishes the youth in this study is attention to their experience of the process of social transformation both of self and social context; this is explained through the narratives and analysis later in the chapter as well. Cammarota (2008b) argues:

People create their own cultural forms and activities to interpret and respond to their positions—and the macro forces positions them—in the social order. The creation of culture always relates back to the identities of those initiating the production. Although similar to cultural production (Willis, 1977), cultural organizing moves one step further by using the interpretation of social reality as a basis to reorder or redefine experiences and conditions to better reflect group or individual identities. Cultural production implies a reflection on social conditions to form and preserve the cultural characteristics of identity, whereas cultural organizing implies a creative restructuring of human experience to fluidly link it with self-created identities. (p. 11)

The focus in this chapter then is on the process of “restructuring of human experience” as linked to “self-created identities.” The youth in this chapter, labeled as Regulars, their bodies inscribed with low expectations seek alternative avenues to explore their desire to

p. 11). Eckert argues, “A child is labeled not simply as low-achieving or high-achieving, but as a member of a low or high-achieving peer group and the group bases its identity and interactions on the strategies that intensify class differentiation” (p. 11). I capitalize the term Regular here and throughout the dissertation as a way to point out those students used air quotes when describing the term to me, or if they did not use air quotes that the term still meant certain things to people in the school and to the youth.

“share knowledge,” as one youth named Marley stated. They interpret their social reality using the social context of unjust educational policies as one piece of their interpretation. Other contributing factors to their interpretation of their social reality include conversations with other youth at O’Donnell and at other high schools across the city, at the lunch table, in hallways, in after-school programs such as Model UN, Chicago Youth Speaking,⁵ and Social Justice Club and conversations with community organizers across the city. Thus, this chapter reveals the ways in which youth begin to create and interpret their social reality, and disrupt the process of cultural reproduction and marginalization by which the institutional label of Regular seeks to reify their social positioning as a Regular. The disruption of this institutional positioning yields a renegotiated form of youth cultural organizing.

Part II: Seeing Cultural Organizing as a Process, a Deleuzian Event

I also argue that to “see” the process of cultural organizing as a process of self-created identities and the restructuring of their human experience we need to conceptualize this process through Deleuze’s notion of *event* as a way to help us “see” the process of cultural organizing. Most importantly, Deleuze’s event is a process as opposed to a singular, linear moment in time. Deleuze (1994, 1995) explains, “Underneath the large noisy events lie the small events of silence. I’ve tried in all of my books to discover the nature of events: it’s a philosophical concept, the only one capable of ousting the verb ‘to be’ and its attributes” (*Negotiations*, 1995, p. 141). A description of the notion of event holds that an event functions as, “...an incorporeal, complex and

⁵This is a pseudonym.

irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition” (Patton, 1997). Events are expressions, through language and statements, but also they are parts of bodies and states of affairs. Deleuze (1992) asks, “What is an event?” In his descriptive answer, he contends that four conditions persist that make an event possible: extensions, intensities, individual prehensions, and eternal objects. The first two conditions are interrelated as an extension is a stretching of elements across time and space, and the intensities are the ‘matter’ that fills such extensions. The third condition, the prehension, is individual creativity and desire. In this chapter I focus on the prehensions of youth as they encounter various moments in their cultural organizing. The fourth condition is eternal objects. The eternal objects give permanence to an event. The permanence of events through eternal objects is what Deleuze (1992) calls “ingressions.” These ingressions can be sensual, perceptual or scientific. I elaborate on the sense of what happens and both the sensual and perceptual are articulated through youth narratives.

Patton (1997) and others provide examples that help conceptualize the “event.” For instance, he explains, “The knife opening up a wound in flesh is an attribute of interpenetration of bodies, but the event of ‘being cut’ is what is expressed by the statement.” For purposes in this chapter, the voices and bodies of four youth and my narration express the event they experience. The hands of the police officers wrapping handcuffs on the wrists of Marley and Penny, the hot sensation of the concrete pressed against their backs as they lay in the center of the intersection to stage the “Die-in” demonstration, and the noise surrounding them by other youth in solidarity all make up

the state of affairs and uses and sense of the body—the affective, sensual dimension of event. Events are also expressed through language such as in the opening of this chapter, “the youth were arrested,” which can limit our understanding of an event, seeing it as a singular thing that passed such as arrest. But a Deleuzian notion of event is more expansive than a singular incident.⁶

Furthermore, Patton (1997) argues, “Events are the epiphenomena of corporeal causal interactions; they do not affect bodies and states of affairs but they do affect other events, such as the responses and actions of agents.” Using event as a conceptual tool in this chapter allows me to get closest to the reality and interpretation of social worlds of youth as they create and negotiate spaces for cultural organizing. Descriptions of event are discursive and their interpretations can take on multiple forms as with the perspectives of the school principal and the executive director of the community organization, Redwood Park Council, later in the chapter. The ways in which events are constructed influence other events, opening up new spaces for identity formation and social action. Despite the description of four particular episodes—all part of the event—presented later in this chapter, I note here that the notion of event is not reducible to its date of occurrence.

When I think with Deleuze, I am subject to making an event “impure” by reducing it to “the youth were arrested,” but in my own awareness of this linguistic limitation, I address this by using youth narratives. Youth make sense of their social

⁶In this chapter, the notion of event is conceived not as a singular moment but as a process and series of occurrences. Thus, I refer to event as the way to conceptualize experiences of youth, and when I discuss specific dates I refer to them as episodes merely to not confuse the use of the word event.

context and are able to contest descriptions of the events (e.g., the media depiction of youth, the silence of the Board of Education as youth marched outside their headquarters). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue this contestation is part of social and political action because often people are struggling over the most accurate description of events. The limits of language to describe an “incorporeal transformation” or that which takes place before an arrest, for instance, during and after the police car ride to the county jail, and after the sentence is distributed to the youth, “directly affects their bodies, passions and interrelations.” But their transformation from these moments into a social identity that is in their words at times “activist” is attributed to youth by the media, community organizations and city wide coalitions, teacher unions, and teachers and students alike as actors in the social field interpret youth’ actions and assign the language of activism. But youth do not always see themselves as activists, and thus they produce their own brand of cultural organizing that includes action or activism. This cultural organizing, where social identities are pursued, involves action but is youth-generated and created and also includes ideas, movement across social spaces, and desires.

As an ethnographer, I was able to move through multiple phases that were not captured through media images or even others’ interpretations of events. Thus, this chapter also reflects my attempts to capture in fragments the movement of the event as youth produced their own brand of cultural organizing. The purpose of this endeavor is to reveal the desires to reject normalizing views of youth, in particular of these four Regulars, and to stand outside the forces that seek to position them as Regulars.

Part III: Methodological Particularities: Youth Speaking

In order to capture the unique dimensions of youth cultural organizing, I draw on ethnographic data, including interviews and field notes from participant observations. I name this section methodological particularities drawing from George Noblit's (1999) emphasis on the particulars of a context in order to draw out the significance and interworkings of youth cultural organizing. Noblit argues, "Theorizing is an act of interpreting and making the connections. A process of trying out ideas with the emic ideas of lived everyday lives (p. 12). To build a theory of youth cultural organizing, as is my intention here in the chapter, I use interpretations of everyday life in a particular context. In critical ethnography, a focus on particulars allows us to write against relationships of power and to produce "focused, well-theorized accounts of societal institutions and sub-groups in order to illuminate the workings of power in a way that may help transform oppressive power relations" (Foley, Levinson, & Hurtig, 2000, p. 42). Similarly, Luttrell (2001) argues, "Narrating a life, what it's like to be part of a particular culture" allows us to see into the social worlds particular to those whose voice are often on the margins or in the "ruins" of dominant narratives (p. 503; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000) and to investigate the cultural processes of youth in school settings (Hemmings, 2006).

Within the framework of critical ethnography, I use youth narratives and their reflections upon events to redefine "relationships of dominance" and the ways in which institutions such as schools categorize and essentialize youth through normative discourses connected to perceived academic ability (Koro-Ljungberg & Greckhamer,

2005, p. 294). This occurs through my extensive participant observations, and “intensive empirical investigation of everyday cultural experiences,” key informants such as the ones I discuss below, Isaiah, Penny, Marley and Amelia, and my overall philosophical critique of cultural study as expressed through my reconceptualization of the event and my insistence on interpreting events as inclusive of youth desires and perceptions. I am intentional about seeing the movement of the social and social movement characterized as youth organizing in a particular context.

“They’re just Regular:” Educational Narratives of Four Youth

Youth voice is central to understanding the process that is cultural organizing. Their interpretation of social reality and their increased levels of awareness provide a foundation for the production of youth cultural organizing. Each youth in the study grapples with and interprets his or her social reality as a first step toward transforming themselves, transcending the institutional labeling, and with the hope of transforming their social context.

The youth in this chapter became the heart of my research as I realized that youth are certainly more than just Regular, despite this seemingly innocuous label. It was the normalization of the word regular that piqued my interest initially because I kept hearing this word in the beginning months of the study from teachers, “They’re just Regular,” and from various student groups, “Oh the Regulars don’t do as much work and teachers don’t teach them really.” When I learned the perceptions of the regulars at O’Donnell during the study, specifically the negative stereotyping and differential educational experiences they had, I pursued questions related to academic identities of regular, such as, What does

it mean to be a Regular? What do these youth think of their academic label of Regular? How do these youth negotiate academic identities and pursue social identities? I pursued the experiences of these Regulars in particular to see how they made meaning out of this positioning as Regular. I observed their process of dismantling the negative stereotyping around the insipid, normalizing use of the word Regular to describe the largest body of students at O'Donnell. This is significant because so many youth in low-income communities are treated as throwaways and stuck in their positioning on the academic and social hierarchies. These youth in the study counter assumptions about their ability to think critically, and about their potential to impact social change.

To draw the reader into the social worlds of the youth, I select four youth to interpret and help make sense of the events I narrate next. These youth, along with others in the study, make sense of their identity positioning as a Regular and transcend the limitations of their positioning in the school space. Each of the youth discusses their perceptions of community, “bursting their bubble,” and recognizing segregation and inequality. Each of these four youth view the purpose of education as more than the content learned in classrooms and the academic hierarchies set up in their school. Part of their process of developing themselves is to begin to see the world around them in connection with their view of education. In other words, youth perceptions of their social realities are related to their social identity transformation. For instance, Isaiah said to me, “You don’t have to be an AP, AVID, or an IB student to be politically engaged.” I asked Isaiah questions about his perception of his identity within the institution of O'Donnell.

His comments connect with the desires he has for alternative spaces of learning beyond what the school affords him. He said:

Isaiah: Education is definitely something of value. I really don't think that education is limited to the things you learn in school. Although the things I learned in school are extremely interesting, they don't exactly relate to my real life circumstances. Education is not something that is only done in the classroom, but through after-school programs, through activism you know just living life and observing what's around you is a form of education to be able to understand the world you live in. The more you understand the larger system, I believe, the more educated you are. By this, I mean just the politics that really touch on our lives. We are reluctant to see it because they are not always these visible things. Things like laws, for example, particularly in these areas, where the majority of them are Hispanic; immigration laws are things that affect all of us directly or indirectly.

Youth like Isaiah develop a sense of what it means to be educated. Youth' perceptions of the purpose of education are in conflict with the school's definition of what it means to be educated. The schools production of educated young people, however, occurs through an unequal, differential education experience that is built into a school's structure; this is a cornerstone of sociological research in education (Gamoran, 1996; Oakes, 2007). This observation of Isaiah is important given that the structural, institutional forces that label students also limit their academic experience as Regulars. However, these youth transcend the limitations of what the school thinks it means to be a Regular. This unequal process of producing educated youth in schools mirrors the social hierarchies in society, and youth are not to disrupt this process. That said, however, the youth here begin to observe inequality in society and how it also manifests in their school. For instance, Isaiah explains this realization:

Isaiah: My entire life, all of the schools I have been to are about 90% Hispanic and I didn't realize that they were segregated until I traveled to CA in 2011. My godmother showed me one of the schools there. The students were significantly wealthier, but there were a lot of different ethnicities present at the school, which

made me realize that not every school is like my school. This has continued on once I learned about standardized testing, and other things how unequal that is here. The inequality in funding that is faced in CPS, Chicago Public Schools, things of that matter (Interview, June 3, 2013).

Similar to Isaiah another youth realized the purpose of education and the experiences of inequality. Penny said in our interview:

Penny: I think education important in life. You need a general education to fight false things about you. I had a history teacher that was like poor people are poor because they are lazy. I didn't like that. Like our Chicago Mayor, Rahm Emanuel, he's ridiculous. Americans started off as immigrants. This nation is made up by a lot of races and ethnics. Everyone has different beliefs. I want to prepare for the future. I don't get good grades. I don't understand the point of homework. Why do we have to memorize random facts to get a perfect score on a test? I know we need to have math and reading. My grades aren't good, but I got a pretty high ACT score. I got a full ride to a college here in Chicago, but I've always been a 'regular'. (Interview, April 22, 2013)

Penny expresses her views on education and similar to Isaiah struggles with what the school's perception of an educated person looks like. Each of the students told me that as Regulars they cannot take honors or AP classes as seniors, so they join a variety of electives such as Model UN (the class and/or the club), Law, or Civics. Penny, for instance, shared with me that she was failing her senior English class because she does not do the homework, but can do the analytic work "better than the other Regulars" but she was not "picked for honors" because teachers do not see Regulars as capable of higher order thinking and analysis (Interview, April 22, 2013).

Penny develops self-awareness despite being positioned academically as a Regular. This level of self-awareness connects with her developing a sense of

community awareness.⁷ Her realization and desire to become involved in youth organizing and experiment with various social identities grew out of her budding awareness of the neighborhood, joining Model UN and Law, and the educational policy issues impacting the community(ies) in the city. She expresses:

Penny: I have always had labels on me. This year, joining things like Law and Model UN, I feel like I found myself. Being in Law and Model UN, since we as regulars don't have honors or AP options, I became more social with other people. It just opened my eyes and took me out of this bubble. I feel like I was in this bubble. Me and my family was like the bubble, like my everyday life. I didn't really care what happened outside of it. I see now. Like, with the neighborhoods and with the school closings. That's why I was really against the school closings. One of the schools being closed was my elementary school. I grew up in that neighborhood. It just makes me sad. All the teachers, the kids, and that building...I remember that building. I love that building. It's history rich. It's just being closed. I remember every year on the day of the kids, el dia de los ninos, they would take us to the park, across the street from it, and we'd have ice cream. I care about the community. I also think that because it bothers me that Chicago is so segregated. I think it's because communities are being treated differently. I feel like that's unfair. I think that community work is really something that is big. You should bring the community together (Interview, May 28, 2013).

Penny's narrative here parleys the youth perspective of their social reality and the ways in which social conditions are unequal, specifically that their city is segregated. She experiences what Cammarota (2008a) emphasizes as, "When they [youth] attempt to change their lived reality, they learn to see that reality and themselves differently" (p. 48). Like Penny and Isaiah, other students, like Marley and Amelia, also value education, and consider being educated and gaining knowledge as more than the ways school

⁷Cammarota (2011) argues that youth begin to transform themselves by interpreting their social realities and the inequality that persists in low-income communities. He outlines three levels of awareness that youth acquire in this process of self-identity formation: self-awareness, community awareness, and global awareness. Youth in this study experience these levels through both participation in after-school programs in the community-school (Chapter Four) and through self-generated identities experience in youth cultural organizing.

positions them. Their recognition of inequality is connected to their developing sense of self as it relates to their perception of community. We discussed the various ways that youth come to forge new identities in relation to their perceptions of their social worlds and involvement in organizing. For instance, Marley said:

Marley: I think education is key for success in life. Knowledge is power and sometimes knowledge is gained through the education system. I think to be a functioning citizen of society you need to obtain an education. I was always pretty smart, always top of the class throughout like elementary school. I guess that shaped me to become who I am and who I am still going to be. I am considered an IB dropout though and now a regular, but that doesn't mean I'm not smart. (Interview, March 28, 2013)

Marley develops a passion for social justice and a broader understanding of inequality in his sophomore year. While Marley does not specifically use the phrasing of the “bubble,” that Penny and Isaiah describe their process of realizing inequality in their community and school and ultimately their seeing the world differently as the “bursting of the bubble” occurs. Marley’s comments do reflect a moment of a youth interpreting social reality as part of the process of transforming it. He said:

Marley: I just got really interested in politics and all that stuff. I'm in Model U.N. class so that's really interesting for me because I like international politics. I started to learn about the whole wealth and inequality and how like there's really a small amount of people that have all of the power because they have lots of money and from that money and power they manipulate things; they manipulate society. I'm pretty sure you've heard the term 1% and all that and how the 1% is oppressing the people by many different means like I guess the media is a big one, it's like a fourth branch of government, I'm quoting an artist. Media, as we see in education how they're charter schools, how as we kind of see in this school how it's kind of oppressive. Kids are being taught to be oppressed and yeah I see that. I learned things on my own. We have this project in our civics class. We came up with that idea and agreed that education would be a really good topic to work on. We are basically fighting against school closings and issues of the educational system in Chicago, how they are trying to close all the schools and how that is a correlation of school closings and the proliferation of Charter Schools. We basically think that's, like I said, a way for Mayor Emanuel to again

oppress the people. As people have observed, most of the schools that they are trying to close are predominantly African American neighborhoods and of course some people are going to look at this as the mayor is out to get minorities; they're trying to close schools while he's giving subsidies to building new condos and stuff like that. (Interview, March 28, 2013)

Marley's realization of the ways society operates develops in conversation and through his interpretation of social reality. He describes the moments he has learned about political and international issues, and inequality, he also mentions the segregation issue in Chicago like the other youth in this chapter. He tells me that Chicago is made up of neighborhoods that the news does not capture. He said, "Chicago is working class citizens that struggle every day. I think Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in the U.S. It really is because I mean you have Englewood, predominantly African American, Little Village, predominantly Latinos, Chinatown, predominantly Chinese. Our neighborhood where O'Donnell is mostly Latino, too. That's not an accident" (Interview, March 28, 2013).

The fourth youth in this chapter, Amelia, engages in conversation about her identity positioning as a Regular and the ways in which she develops her sense of social conditions that limit many students like her at O'Donnell. Amelia explains her involvement in after-school programs such as Model UN and the leadership and advocacy skills she has gained. She then makes connections between her participation in Model UN her civics research project with Marley, and a developing understanding of organizing. Amelia's description of the school closings as a policy issue frames many of the conversations that students had in the civics class and at various organizing events between February-June, 2013. She said:

Amelia: Mr. Shepherd is an awesome teacher. He introduced us to issues going on all around the world. We got into education. From education it evolved. A lot of us got interested in what was going on because it affects us, you know not directly, but around us. A lot of us didn't think that was fair how they [Chicago Board of Education] are closing 49 schools, so we decided to do research. From that research, we got more passionate and felt that something should be done. We took steps. We took baby steps, at first, and that led to a couple of big events. I felt like from there we've spoken out to the world. We showed what we want. This policy impacts our community. They criticize how they evaluate, you know, the school. I feel like closings like this make kids fall behind if they don't get the attention they need. You know a lot of people in this neighborhood have brothers and sisters who go to elementary schools and by closing down the elementary schools, and some people have to travel farther lengths to go to these schools and you know cross gang territory to get to their receiving schools and I feel like that is just going to cause more violence in Chicago. (Interview, May 30, 2013)

Amelia and the other four youth express the unfairness they witness as the local educational policy context impacts their communities. I asked her why this school closing issue matters to her, and she replied.

Amelia: Well the studies show, all the research we did, shows the schools being closed are in African American and low-income areas, and Latino areas also low-income areas, so more African American, but still. This is impacting people on the south side. It is a geographic issue. Being a Latina, coming from a low-income school and community, doesn't mean that I can't be the best and do something, though. (Interview, May 30, 2013)

All four youth in this chapter interpret their social realities. The commonality among them is they develop a sense of self-awareness about their positioning as a Regular inside the school just as they realize they are not limited in their ability to desire social change. They develop a sense of the social reality and unequal conditions, e.g., segregated schools and school closures. These four youth in particular played central roles in the cultural organizing that occurred within and beyond the walls and halls of O'Donnell. Their narratives help produce the ways in which the "social is interwoven into the production of identity," and in particular the production of youth culture organizing

(Elliott, 2011) because it is their interactions with each other and with their social context that produces positive social identities.

Moreover these four youth develop a sense of awareness of the “system,” in Isaiah’s words that limits community members from advancing or effecting change. The youth discuss how their sense of self-awareness and community-awareness of this larger “system” constitutes a “bursting of a bubble” that they live in. Their interpretation of social reality and their increased levels of awareness provide a foundation for the production of youth cultural organizing (Camarota, 2011). For instance, Isaiah said:

Isaiah: That’s the situation you are in, we are in. It is entire communities. That bubble is created by socioeconomic limitations that people have. I thought to myself, ‘Why does my school barely have enough resources and these kids have everything they need and more?’ It’s only when you see somewhere else it’s when you realize this is bigger than just your school. (Interview, June 3, 2013)

He wanted to understand, “who I am and the world around me” (Interview, June 3, 2013).

His perception of himself as a Regular changed and he realized that he did not have to fail just because the institution as the school, and those in the community had a certain path of failure predicted for them.

The youth developed a sense of themselves as they interpreted their social realities. This development of self translates into their recognition of inequality in society and also back inside the school society. The youth explained the “tiers of education inside of the same school.” Isaiah describes the academic segregation he sees and is a part of as a former IB student now experiencing the “lesser education” that the Regulars are given. Their narratives dismantle the negative perceptions of the Regulars as academically deficient and demonstrate that learning is about more than what the

“system” sets up for youth like them. Their development is critical for their transformation:

Isaiah: You don't have to be an AP, AVID, or an IB student to be politically engaged or in some other form of activism, or not even activism but after school activities, which is an alternative form of education. CPS is designed to, through academic segregation; create a system where there are really few intelligent, well-prepared students, a few mid-tier students, and a whole lot of other students. That creates an academic pyramid where there are very few powerful people at the top and a lot of very poorly educated, less powerful—well not really I think there's power in numbers—but you get what I mean. (Interview, June 3, 2013)

To summarize, I outlined the process that youth undergo to develop a sense of their identity and the process that involves their interpretation of their social reality. I argue that as youth articulate their interpretations of social reality, we see the movement of ideas, formation of social identities, and a heightened awareness about their school and societal inequalities. These initial things comprise the beginnings of their brand of youth cultural organizing. After considering the youth narratives, I turn to particular episodes as youth engage in enacting desires for social change. I refer to these moments as episodes to distinguish from the use of the word event. Event describes the entire process of cultural organizing that encompasses episodes.

Part IV: Narrating Event and Episodes of Cultural Organizing

To demonstrate that youth cultural organizing is an iterative process, I describe here a series of episodes and their literal dates that show the on-going process that is taking place, and then I use raw data from field notes and interviews to interpret these episodes from youth perspectives. The first episode is the walkout and protest at Chicago Public Schools headquarters on April 24, 2013. This was the day that juniors across the city were scheduled to take the PS AE exam. It was a day determined by youth across the

city as a day to protest the school closures and other issues related to education in Chicago. Several months of planning went into this day as youth from O'Donnell gathered with youth across the city to find a way to approach the walkout. They created fliers and held “secret” meetings across the city. Incidentally, this was also a day that the Board of Education met for their monthly meeting at Chicago Public Schools headquarters. The second episode is the May 15, 2013 act of civil disobedience also referred to as the “die-in demonstration” by youth. This event was organized by youth, and will be interpreted through the narratives of Marley and Penny. I attended meetings with Marley and Penny across the city as they engaged in the organizing process. The third episode was the May 20 protest around Chicago, ending at Chicago Public Schools headquarters. The fourth episode was the May 22, 2013 vigil and peaceful gathering—the day the Board of Education voted to close 50 schools while youth gathered outside the Board of Education. On this day, Marley and Amelia presented their research on the Chicago Public Schools closure policy at a civics fair held at a local university. As I watched Marley and Amelia present their research to teachers, organizers and other youth, we also received messages from Isaiah and other youth that were standing outside of Chicago Public Schools’ headquarters when the school board announced its vote to close 50 schools.

Narrating Episode 1: April 24th walkout / protest at Chicago Public Schools (CPS) headquarters

This day represents a culmination of ideas and desires. It is an important piece in the on-going process of youth cultural organizing. Students from high schools on the

south and southwest sides joined forces and protested CPS closings. About 100 students walked in a circle outside the 125 S. Clark Street entrance at CPS headquarters this morning. Students from the various schools took buses from their respective high schools in time for the protest. I arrived at CPS headquarters at 9:30 a.m. As I stood in the rain, students passed me, chanting “Whose schools? OUR SCHOOLS,” and “Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar? RAHM stole the cook from the cookie jar!” One student ran up to me and said, “I got you a t-shirt,” handing me a white t-shirt that said, “C.S.O.S.O.S.⁸ April 24th Boycott” and “We Demand: (1) No School Closings; (2) Tax Increment Finance Money Back in Our Schools; (3) Elected School Board in CPS.” I smiled as other students from O’Donnell and other high schools fell out of the protest line to give me a quick hug. I told them I would be along the sidelines to observe. The energy and excitement was evident for them. I saw local news stations near and one was interviewing a youth from O’Donnell and in Mr. Shepherd’s civics class that Marley and Amelia were in. The message was clear: The students were there in an attempt to save their schools.

I observed outside with the students for about an hour as various news reporters continued to follow the kids with their cameras. Students would yell, “Mic check! Mic check!” amidst the noise of the crowd in order to regroup and come together to plan their next steps. This happened at one point and Isaiah from O’Donnell gathered the group around him in a circle outside the Clark Street entrance. I paused a moment to look in the

⁸This is the name of the student organization that youth from across the city joined together to found on their own during the months that protests were underway city-wide to protest the Chicago Board of Education’s pending school closure policy. C.S.O.S.O.S. means Chicago Students Organizing to Save Our Schools. This is a public group on various social media and news outlets during the course of the study and while O’Donnell students were members their identities are protected here with pseudonyms.

street near me to see police lined up alongside the curb. Isaiah told the students they were going to attempt to enter the CPS headquarters given that the monthly board meeting was in session upstairs. Their plan was to send a few students up to the overflow room, which is a holding cell in the building for those wishing to give public comment to the Chicago Board of Education. Isaiah and another youth from O'Donnell along with six or seven students from another high school went inside to get their passes to go upstairs. I stood outside a bit longer watching the protests and chants by Marley, Penny, Amelia and other students from the civics class.

Then at about 10:45 a.m., I went inside and headed up to the overflow room. A woman from the citywide coalition of youth organizers, CYS, whom I had met in December 2012, was there with Miguel and Isaiah. This citywide coalition will be referred to as The Collaborative. She was briefing them outside the overflow room about what to do when they got their numbers called to go downstairs to the actual room where the board meets. She said to them, "Go up there with Ms. P from The Collaborative." Students asked her, "Then what?" She urged them to say they were there to save their schools, and to ask to make a statement. She prepared them for the fact that the board would likely reject them. It was interesting to me that this woman was such a central figure in the planning that day given that all along I thought the actions were in the hands of the youth. I wasn't surprised to see her there but given that the community organization, Redwood Park Council, and Mark's group of CYS students were specifically told not to boycott, I was surprised to see her leading the entire group of CYS students from the various schools other than O'Donnell. The planning for the boycott

over the past three weeks was more intensive, and supposed to be student led. Yet, today I learned that this boycott plan had been in the making for the past three months by this woman, and her allies at The Collaborative.

As I stood and listened, Isaiah waved and smiled at me. I then went into the overflow meeting to listen to the speakers. Students waited for nearly two hours for their turn to go downstairs. I headed down into the board meeting ahead of them only to hear countless parents speak of their concerns about school closures in their communities. I also noticed that representatives from KIPP, NOBLE, and UNO were present to praise CPS and urge the board to expand their charters in the city. These charter organizations received praise and attentiveness from the board members. This was important for youth to witness given that much of their interpretation of the inequity surrounding the school closures was that youth did not understand why community-schools were being closed while charter networks in the city were not subject to the same scrutiny by the board as the community-schools were.

At about one o'clock in the afternoon Isaiah and other O'Donnell students approached the podium with a representative from The Collaborative to execute their plan of getting their voice heard. Despite their initial confidence outside and even as they took the elevators up to the 15th floor of the CPS headquarters building, they seemed reticent in this moment. I moved closer to the front, crawling alongside the wall, as the youth approached the podium near the board. To my dismay, I came upon Tim Cawley who I have seen speak at previous engagements. He has made remarks about the deficiencies of Latino immigrants and other families of color in his two years as the CFO

of CPS. A student from another high school said, “Hi my name is..” and he was immediately cut off and told it wasn’t his turn to speak by David Vitale, president of the Board of Education. The Chicago Teacher’s Union representative at the podium told David Vitale that he was willing to yield his time and “Let the youth have a voice if they want and if the board will allow it.” David Vitale immediately said “No.” He pointed to the youth and said, “You can’t speak.” The youth stood there silently. The entire room was silent. The youth were ushered out of the room by guards. The room was silent despite the 75+ bodies stuffed in there. As youth were ushered out to the hallway, I heard the faint chant of a few youth, “Whose schools? Our schools!” Given this was a public meeting I did take video of the youth so that I could accurately recall what happened and as I rewatch it as I write here I see the stoicism of the members of the Chicago Board of Education, all in suits, utterly unphased by several youth standing before them asking to be heard. I left shortly after this moment because I was immediately depressed that the students were rejected a voice. The board members refused to even acknowledge that over 100 juniors and roughly 200 students were downstairs made me a bit ill. The repeated comment all over the media today has been Barbara Byrd Bennett, CEO of CPS, saying, “The only place students belong today is in school taking the PSAE.”

I was thinking about how the youth must have felt in that moment—to organize, to criticize, to advocate for themselves only to stand up against whiteness,⁹ suits, blank

⁹Leonardo (2002) argues, “Whiteness is a racial discourse, whereas the category ‘white people’ represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color. For practical purposes, we are born with certain bodies that are inscribed with social meaning” (2002, p. 31; 2000). I am invoking “whiteness” here as an intersection of the racialized discourse of whiteness and class because the board of education members are distinctly different from the youth standing before them. Youth here are silenced literally, but also symbolically as members of a non-white racial group and as members of lower class status. Leonardo

stares of board members and be told “No, you can’t speak.” The youth had felt as though they were grabbing power, becoming something other than a drop out statistic or a stereotype in the moments leading up to today. They were building steps to disrupt the master narrative, a reform agenda, a series of blank stares in hopes of changing minds, and contributing to a movement—a counter-narrative for their communities. Instead, the Board of Education told them, “No, you can’t speak.”

The executive director, Quinn, from Redwood Park Council¹⁰ called me at six o’clock the evening of the walkout to discuss what had transpired earlier in the day. He was fairly furious with the entire organizing, and not surprised of course by the Board’s lack of interest in the students’ peaceful protest. He said a few things that I want to mention here for now and will juxtapose his views of youth organizing with youth narratives in the latter part of this chapter. He said:

Quinn: It is our responsibility as organizers to ensure that the youth lead themselves to a point. They have to have a clear message. Today was not a clear message, and it was not well-organized. We can’t just give youth a random set of experiences or something cool to protest. It is our responsibility as organizers to do more than that. How will they feel after today? It’s a learning moment. We have to follow up with our kids at O’Donnell who went because they knew that Redwood Park, Mark and CYS overall wasn’t supporting today’s action. It’s fine that they chose to go. I support them wanting to organize, but not like this. (Field notes, April 24, 2013)

(2002) goes onto argue, whiteness is supported by material practices and institutions. He explains that white people are often the subjects of whiteness because it benefits and privileges them. As a collection of everyday strategies, whiteness is characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions (2002, p. 32). The Chicago Board of Education, as will be narrated next, chooses to ignore the youth but also the issues raised against school closure policy as further marginalizing low-income, non-white communities or as the youth say, “Racist school closure policies” (Field notes, April 9, 2013).

¹⁰This is a pseudonym for the community organization that is partnered with O’Donnell.

I listened as Quinn repeated the word “responsibility” over and over. He has done this work for nearly 15 years, dealt with media and CPS, fought battles in the community, city, and state. I was confused and shocked to learn that Redwood Park Council wasn’t in support of the action initially, but after listening to him describe the way that The Collaborative hijacked the organizing from the students, and truly from other CYS groups like the one Redwood Park Council sponsors at O’Donnell, I understood his reaction. Seeing the faces of the youth, and how the day played out, I see his concern that they will lose hope in their organizing. He ended the conversation by saying something that is sticking with me tonight: “Poor organizing destroys leaders, especially our youth leaders.” After this first episode, I began to ask myself and will address this question in the discussion section: What counts as organizing?

Narrating Episode 2: May 15th act of civil disobedience—the “die-in” demonstration

I received a few tweets and texts from one of the youth in my study telling me he had been arrested. I replied to the youth, Marley, asking if he was alright. Some students, as part of Chicago Students Organizing to Save Our Schools (C.S.O.S.O.S.), joined with another group of youth from around the city to stage a “die-in.” Students sprayed fake blood on white t-shirts. They gathered at 51st and Cottage Grove in the Woodlawn neighborhood near King High School to stage the “Die-in.” This is on the south side of the city of Chicago in a predominantly African American neighborhood. The youth, Marley and Penny, laid down in the middle of the intersection to protest the school closings. They had painted fake blood on their white t-shirts. The purpose of this act of civil disobedience was to argue that closing schools in some of these neighborhoods

would result in the death of students. By this, the students were arguing that the closure of one school, and the movement of those students to another school, creates danger for students traveling from one gang territory to another. Of the half dozen students that staged this demonstration in the street, five were arrested. Of the five, two were students from O'Donnell, Marley and Penny.

Marley and Penny reflected upon their participation in this act of civil disobedience. Penny said, "We lay down silently, on a red light of course. We were silent but I started chanting when I was arrested." Marley said, "We were protesting, and then a press conference started. And it was all just happening. Penny grabbed the microphone and said, "All my great teachers taught me that if you believe in something, you can make change." The cops told them to get up out of the intersection or they were going to get arrested. "People were chanting. Cars were also beeping at us, we did stop traffic." He said, "We didn't get up, so they put handcuffs on us. It was sorta sharp and tight on my wrists." He pushed his hipster, square glasses against his face, and said, "The cops said we were obstructing traffic and it was criminal negligence. We have a court date for July 1, 2013. We were taken to the police station somewhere. I can't remember where, though. I was held there until 1:30 a.m., but Penny got out earlier around 10:30 p.m. Mr. Shepherd was there with us until about 9 o'clock at night." Marley said that of the five students arrested only he and Penny were from O'Donnell. The other two O'Donnell students weren't arrested because they weren't lying in the intersection. Isaiah was among the youth not arrested. He remembered that it was warm that day and he felt

the concrete, hot against the thin white t-shirts they had purchased to make for the “Die-in.” Marley commented:

Marley: We did something right. We got arrested because we want to get our point across. The system is set up to keep us down, like CPS’ doesn’t acknowledge this civil disobedience or our walkout and protest at CPS back in April. The group of five of us that were arrested were held together before questioning. The room they had for us wasn’t big enough so they split us up into groups of two. The students who were minors were let go fairly quickly, but those over 18 like me and Penny had to stay longer into the evening. There was this office processing our information. She said she agreed with us, like she agreed with what we were doing, but she said she couldn’t protest with us or stand up with us because she is a cop. She was on our side (Interview, May 16, 2013).

Marley’s description of his arrest and time at the police station was part of an anticipated process of self-understanding and engagement with organizing. The youth knew they would likely get arrested, but they highlighted that that was not the point. The point was to “get our point across.” Marley said the next steps for C.S.O.S.O.S were a three day march this Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, May 18-20, 2013. “Students are boycotting school on Monday,” he explained. Buses will be picking them up near O’Donnell and taking them to a nearby elementary school that is slated for school closure. The students will then march from the west and south sides downtown to Daley Plaza. The march welcomes parents and families of students who are going to be impacted by the school closings. Most of the organizing around this, however, has been led by youth from the various high schools on the south and southwest sides, although these high school students will not directly be impacted by the school closings. This means, the high schools with youth participating in these actions are not in danger of closure. However, these students feel that they understand the impact of these closings on younger students

in the schools in the various communities nearby, and therefore, they intend to use their voices to speak on their behalf.

Narrating Episodes 3 and 4: May 20 March to Daley Plaza and May 22 Board of Education Meeting

As citywide marches occurred between May 18-20, 2013, many of the youth tweeted and texted me throughout the three days to let me know they were out in the streets. The end of the three-day march was held at Chicago Public Schools headquarters once again. I attended this component of the march. The days leading up to the march I had been at O'Donnell working with Marley and Amelia on their research and presentation for the civics fair that was held on May 22, which was the same day as the vote of the Board of Education to close a historic number of schools in low-income communities in Chicago. The youth were required to be in school, but were itching to be in the street to show support for communities whose schools were under attack. Isaiah, Marley, Penny, and Amelia had their photos taken with banners saying, "Support our Schools Don't Close Them." They tweeted me these photos to show me their involvement on days when I was at O'Donnell and they were out marching after school. Marley described the march on May 20 to the civics class, remarking that he was not at school yesterday because he was marching to Daley Plaza. The teacher of the class, Mr. Shepherd, allowed this time even though the school was not to be a place to discuss cultural organizing. Marley said:

Marley: Youth stood outside an elementary school and the administration put the school on lockdown. We were marching outside a school slated for closure and the principal forced all of the teachers to put down the blinds so the little kids couldn't support the youth marchers. [Amelia interrupts]

Amelia: It was like a jail, and the little kids couldn't express themselves. It was like we knew they were on our side, but they got shut down by the principal and CPS ordered the school to go on lockdown. Marley: We saw all the little elementary school kids in the window like cheering us on, and then the blinds came down. (Field notes, May, 21, 2013)

Marley and Amelia were the representatives for the education research project for civics. They were preparing their civic education research project for the Mikva Challenge Annual¹¹ Civics Fair to be held on May 22, 2013 at Columbia College's campus—just a few blocks away from where Isaiah and Penny would be standing outside Chicago Public Schools headquarters for a Peaceful Vigil event. May 22, 2013 was an important day for the youth because it was the day the board of education would vote on whether or not to close 50 elementary schools. After months of protests, speeches, tears and an entire portion of a city coming together, the board would decide.

On May 22, 2013 I attended The Mikva Challenge Civics Fair with Marley, Amelia, and another classmate downtown while Isaiah and Penny attended the Board of Education meeting and the Peace Vigil at Chicago Public Schools headquarters. As I listened to Marley tell passers-by at the Civics Fair about their project, they pointed to their poster that read, "Civics Educational Task Force," on which there were various media clippings and maps of Chicago. Specifically, the youth had pasted a copy of the map that was included above in this chapter of the overlay of school closings and charter proliferation. They also included a flier for the April 24 PSAE Boycott that read "Wanted Freedom Fighters." I had the chance to observe Marley, Amelia and Miguel

¹¹The Mikva Challenge is a nonpartisan organization that assists in the development of youth leadership and civic education in underserved communities. The teacher of the civics class, Mr. Shepherd is connected to this organization and teaches the civics class. The two groups in this class presented at their annual city-wide Civics Fair that I attended. For more information, see, <http://www.mikvachallenge.org/>

present their project and their experiences to youth and adults at the Civics Fair. Marley reflects on the experience and points to the various photographs on their poster:

We decided to research on school closings. We conducted research and found that schools were on the south and southwest side in low-income communities. We believe those are the communities that need education the most, you know, to get out of the poverty cycle. We joined up with the student led organization C.S.O.S.O.S. We organized multiple events and actions to try and stop the school closings. One of those events was on the second day of the PSAE in April. We did a demonstration to the Board of Education that we don't want them to close schools. We also did a demonstration in an intersection. We chose that intersection because that is a dividing line for gang territories. We said that if they close these schools, then children would have to cross a line that would put their lives in jeopardy. This will exacerbate gang violence in Chicago. At the vigil on May 15, we performed an act of civil disobedience in which we laid down in the streets with white t-shirts with mock blood on our shirts to represent possible causalities that would potentially result from closing down the nearby school [names school]. I was one of the students that got arrested for laying down in the street because we were blocking off traffic. That's what we wanted to do. We wanted to do something to get attention for this cause. I think we did that with this act of civil disobedience. Going into it I didn't know what you expect. I have never been arrested. [laughs]. I got to school a bunch of teachers were saying, "right on, you stood up for something you believe in." A couple days later and we've been approached and told by adults that they would help us if we have to pay fines for the arrest. Today, as we've been here at the Civics Fair, the Board of Education voted to shut down all 50 elementary schools. All of these schools are in African American and Latino communities and most are in low-income communities. It's happening right now. Our friends are over there. I'm excited for the next meeting of CSOSOS to see what will be next. I've enjoyed all of this, the solidarity with other students and the teachers. (Field Notes, May 22, 2013)

Marley's reflection is a key moment in understanding that youth cultural organizing is not a onetime thing, but rather Marley and other youth see their organizing as part of a movement. They will not stop fighting for educational policies that serve local communities instead of marginalize them. As Marley and his classmates were present at the Civics Fair, youth such as Isaiah and Penny were standing outside of CPS headquarters. Images from that day convey the sentiment. Students such as Isaiah stood

in a circle with other youth, leaning on each other with their t-shirts that said, “We Demand No School Closings.” Isaiah’s friend, a youth from another high school, stood in the center of this circle with tears streaming down their face upon hearing that the Board of Education voted to close the 50 schools. Echoing Isaiah’s words, “The Board of Education has persistently shut out student voices, and we will not stand for this. We are here to change this.” So, despite the vote to close schools, youth did not see this as a loss, but as a beginning of a process of organizing.

The data reveals that youth experienced joy, frustration, confusion and desire for more change despite the Board of Education’s vote to close schools. Youth, while seemingly facing a loss—a board vote of yes to school closures—still develop a sense of critical consciousness about their community, local policies, and social justice. Throughout the process of developing their sense of self, interpreting their social reality, and enacting their desires for change, youth themselves as part of a “movement”.

The next section juxtaposes youth interpretations of organizing with what I call the “mixed reviews of youth activism,” by the community-organization executive director, Quinn and the principal, representing the administration of O’Donnell. Seeing multiple perspectives is critical if we are to understand not only youth identity formation but the role and impact, or influence of a community-school partnership on identity formation and youth development. The question for me after listening to multiple perspectives was: What counts as organizing? I ask this after I offer the juxtaposition of youth perceptions of organizing and members of the community-schools’

perceptions of it. Ultimately, this chapter argues that what counts as organizing is what youth define and interpret as cultural organizing.

Part V: Discussion: Youth Identity and Cultural Organizing

This analysis is divided into two parts. First, I discuss three overall findings on social identities of the Regulars. The theme related to this discussion is “I do activist things I’m nothing.” In this process I discuss the tension that youth face as they pursue positive, self-articulated social identities. Second, I discuss the risks and costs students endure as their social identities emerge and are contested by various actors. However, the theme, “It’s a movement,” speaks to how cultural organizing functions as a way to transform themselves from regular to activist, and to transform their social context, restructuring their human experience (Cammarota, 2008) and even disrupting the ordering process that the school attempts by positioning them as regulars. Within this, I argue that conceptualizing cultural organizing through Deleuzian event enables us to witness and experience social identity production, youth voice, and youth desire and actually account for the production and enactment of their desire in their brand of youth cultural organizing. Part of seeing cultural organizing is recognizing the role of youth voice and reflection upon their social identities and their understanding the “movement” of their cultural organizing.

I argue three findings emerge in this process of social identity production. From this data, we see youth engaging in a process of self-actualization. Considering Deleuzian event as the conceptual frame we capture the moment of actualization when youth realize what they are able and much like the “die-in” they engage in a symbolic death against

themselves in order to shed the “I” and that “I’s” label of regular, or any other label that seeks to position and marginalize them. For the Deleuzian event, “every event is like a death.” Deleuze (1990) argues, “With every event, there is indeed the present moment of its actualization [youth are arrested], the moment in which the event is embodied in a state of affairs, an individual, the moment we designate as ‘here, the moment has come’ [April 24th, May 15th, May 22nd as examples of such designation]. But, that which happens before and after is also wrapped up in this event—the movement that is “free of limitations” (p. 151).

This chapter presents both the narratives of the youth and the narrative of each episode as a way to allow the ideas and desires of the youth to interact with literal moments. As they interpret their social reality, they acquire self-awareness. The opening narratives provided by Isaiah, Penny, Marley and Amelia take us into the thought process of the youth as they make sense of their world, their society, and their community. In those discussions we see their “bursting of the bubble,” which for all of them meant coming to an understanding of inequality in society and in particular the inequality in Chicago Public Schools. Much like the youth in the previous chapter, the youth begin to see issues such as segregation in their city, race and class disparities as part of their social realities, and the inequalities in their own school—“the tiers of education,” as Isaiah called it.

Second, youth emphasize the role of education and “sharing knowledge,” as Marley said, in their process of development. But instead of just saying that education is important, these youth go a step further and challenge us to see that part of their

education is developed through social relations with peers, youth around the city, community organization staff, adults, and their interpretation of their social reality. Many students in chapter four commented on the fact that their participation in after-school programs were like a “traveling school,” and this experience is elaborated upon with the organizing of the regulars in this fifth chapter. As Isaiah said, “Education is not something that is only done in the classroom, but through after-school programs, through activism you know just living life and observing what’s around you is a form of education to be able to understand the world you live in” (Interview, June 3, 2013). The combination of self-actualization and self-awareness with the recognition that education is not just something that occurs in schools enables them to articulate their desires for change and build ideas about how to transform their social context.

Third, youth encounter obstacles and varying agendas of adults even as they attempt to become-other than just regular. Despite the varying agendas and tension around their “activism” or “protesting,” youth become-other than their essentialist label of regular and continue to remake culture and to reorder their social identities on their terms. In addition to youth merely trying to make sense of their social reality and their role in effecting change, youth face multiple actors in the social field of organizing. This is challenging for youth because on the one hand they had not engaged in protesting so when they entered the Board of Education’s public meeting there are certain rules behaviors that are expected of them. Youth were unfamiliar with this process because they had not attended a public board meeting previous to the year of study (2012-2013). Youth also interacted with other experienced community organizers from various

community organizations across the city and the Chicago Teacher's Union. All of the adults involved in these organizations had various priorities and agendas and at times the youth were pulled into these conversations without knowing various adult agendas toward the Board of Education. Another point here is that the process of becoming-other than just regular challenges youth. Amelia noted, "I'm a regular. Being a Latina, coming from a low-income school and community doesn't mean that I can't be the best and do something, though" (Interview, May 30, 2013).

The second part of this analysis relates to the ways in which youth experience tension around their social identities that emerge within cultural organizing. Their social identities are contested by the school principal and the executive director of the organization, Redwood Park Council that partners with O'Donnell. I offer the mixed reviews of what is labeled as youth activism and then I discuss the ways in which the youth persist in their "movement" to transform their social context and restructure their human experience.

As I experienced each of the events that youth such as Amelia, Marley, Penny and Isaiah participated in, I listened for the ways in which their identity shifts and their perceptions of community develop. By way of discussion, I detail the mixed reviews of student activism, marked by three perspectives to unravel the ways youth cultural organizing is contested by adults.

This table reflects the multiple perspectives of youth cultural organizing. First, we can see that the adults do not wish to sanction what they deem high-risk activism that students engage in as part of the process of youth cultural organizing. Second, due to

this, adults both in the school and community organization do not reward and recognize the positive identity transformation that occurs for youth as part of the process of youth cultural organizing. The principal and the executive director's perspective are different, but both are unable to provide recognition of what youth were gaining as part of this process. This is why the youth perspectives in this chapter, Amelia, Isaiah, Marley and Penny, are critical because we can see the ways these youth form social relations within their new cultural organizing that emerges. The youth do this to generate a sense of belonging to that particular sect of social relations and to renegotiate their identities that are not available to them in the school or community-school programs. As youth develop an understanding of school closures as an example of inequity, social identities emerge in the process of cultural organizing. Youth are disrupting the ordering process that the school engages in with their academic marginalization. The principal chalks up their desires, ideas, and engagement to "getting a high on protesting," without ever having discussed any of it with the youth or reflected upon the ways in which the "high from protesting," might actually be the development of a critical consciousness about social inequality in their community and school structure. The principal wants them "inside the school," as a way to control them.

Table 4. Mixed Reviews of “Activism” and Organizing

Student perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wanted to be an activist since I was a little kid. • I do activist things even though I’m nothing. • I didn’t really know about activism, or that I was one. I just notice what is fair and unfair and it’s unfair that we have our schools closed. Is it cuz we’re poor? • CPS wants to close schools in high-need communities, poor, and minority communities on the southwest side of the city. I came to realize this is really unjust. If there’s anyone that should be doing something about it should be the youth because we are the ones affected. All the organizing has been carried out by high school students.
Principal of O’Donnell perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You know what Sophia, you can sit here all day and talk about justice, but the reality is this generation doesn’t understand the value of hard work. They can’t be leaving school and get on a high about protesting. They have to have a sense of hard work and their families need to support the work they need to do inside the school.
Executive Director of Redwood Park Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have to take an organizing perspective, Sophia, and organizing has to be done strategically, not just so kids can have an experience. Our goal as a community organization that partners with the school is to always effect social policy and social change. I’m little upset, and I talked to my organizers to see how this got so out of hand. We can’t just to this stuff for the experience of it. Some of the stuff is about risk-taking, and some of the risks aren’t to happen in the school. Our model right now is still school-based, so we have to consider our partnership with the school leaders when we encourage kids to go off on their own. The quickest way for minority kids and low-income kids to get crushed is to experience what they did today, and have the CPS Board of Ed completely tell them to fuck off and silence them. We don’t want to destroy our young leaders. We want them to grow.

Youth Cultural Organizing: “It’s a Movement”

I began the chapter with a few lines from moments with Marley and Penny after the events discussed in the chapter, moments when teachers and students referred to them as the “revolutionaries,” and told them to “go back to jail,” after their arrest for the “die-

in demonstration.” Like veterans, they walked the halls of O’Donnell, knowing they had stood up for something, knowing the events they participated in were merely a beginning. I close with the remainder of notes from the field that day. Despite the arrest, the policing of school administration to suppress any momentum around youth organizing, the literal silencing of youth by the Board of Education, and the disagreement over what counts as organizing between the principal and the executive director, the youth were still able to perceive their cultural organizing from within and to develop a sense of social justice and a model for change beyond the events captured here. Marley and Penny spoke of their views of social justice:

Marley: I mean I feel like I have learned and developed my view of social justice these last months. I feel like school is a place I at least began to learn and think about these issues, so education became connected to social justice for me. This is a place where you can come and learn, and yet CPS is closing down all these schools and taking that away from kids. That is not justice.

Penny: I have always been interested in these issues and would talk about them with Isaiah for example. But, then, lately I just decided to get more involved. I think it is important to be a part of a movement.

M/P: When we were put in the police car, it was exciting and we had a moment of feeling scared...

Penny: like ‘what is gonna happen next...?’ and I turned to Marley in the back of the police car and said, “did you ever think we would be arrested together?”

Marley: Even if the Board votes to close the 50 schools doesn’t mean our fight will end. This is a movement.

Penny: As long as there is humanity, there will be people to fight. It’s a movement. (Field Notes, May 21, 2013)

In each of the four youth narratives, common themes and differential experiences occur for the youth. Each of the participants reveals their struggles to make sense of their

identities in relation to the various communities within the school, in after-school programs, and beyond school spaces. Each of these youth had to negotiate the labels they have been ascribed by the school institution and in varying ways describe their reason and desire to become more than that “bubble” allowed for them. The trope of “breaking out of the bubble” as expressed by Penny and Isaiah connects the ways in which their views of the world and themselves morph over the course of high school, and in particular, during the duration of the research study.

At the outset of the chapter I discussed the unique positioning of regulars such as Marley, Penny, Isaiah, and Amelia. Each of the four expressed their belief in education, perceptions of their low-income communities, and a desire—unconscious and conscious—for knowledge, equality and justice. Each of the four explicitly or implicitly referred to their desire so social identities connected to activism. Across the episodes in this chapter and the countless other moments in which they engaged in conversations with each other, teachers like Mr. Shepherd and others unmentioned, and myself, I learned of their desire. These encounters with youth and youth encounters were not linear or singular moments despite my futile attempts to record and categorize their definitions of justice and knowledge. I hear and see Marley, staring over his rectangular framed glasses, and saying to me, “People write to inform to spread knowledge; it’s kind of selfish if you have this knowledge and won’t share it with other people. Yeah it’s unfair to keep that knowledge to yourself” (Field notes, March, 26, 2013). Marley believes that knowledge should not only be shared, but that particular types of knowledge are often promoted across some communities while not others.

Over the course of the year, the study enabled me access to Marley's thoughts on the notion of knowledge-sharing, and the use of knowledge to manipulate parts of society. We talked extensively about his role to effect social change and himself in relation to his local community. Reflecting on the civics research project and the other actions, he shared his frustrations with his classmates who do not share some of the same values or opinions about the need to fight for social justice, suggesting his potential belief in collective action to effect social change. He tells me, "I don't know. Yeah it's like...there's a couple people in the group who do honestly care about what we're fighting for. And I really do not know what I guess the situations we're brought up in like dictates what we eventually believe and stand for. I guess they're not there yet." The use of "we" here signals his sense of community; yet, the "we" is simultaneously his classmates and potentially Latino immigrants. But, then he differentiates individuals who understand what they are "fighting for" and those who do not have this shared understanding. In these moments, Marley is poised to understand the social and cultural dynamics operating in his community, his school community, and potentially his ethnic affiliations; by this I mean moments he does/does not align himself with other Latino immigrants. He elaborates on how a few of his closer friends—other activists—comment and critique their social worlds and those inhabiting the same social spaces.

Marley: Isaiah, the guy I mentioned, we were having a conversation Isaiah, Penny, Amelia and me we were having a conversation like sometimes you can't help but feel like, I don't want to sound like an ass, but sometimes you can't help but feel like you're somewhat better than them, that they're still living in a box I guess, that they still don't know what's out there, and at least we have glimpsed, that we got a glimpse of what's happening. Our freshman selves are way different as what we are now. We weren't as developed as we are now. After a while we finally got the picture, started going for more. (Interview, April 3, 2013)

The four youth lament on some of their classmates' and fellow community members' lack of knowledge, or understanding of their marginalization. These youth likens their classmates'—the regulars'—lack of knowledge and critical consciousness to “still living in a box.” Isaiah also told me he thought that the youth in low-income, marginalized communities just do not always know the ways that policy impact their lives. He said, “A lot of times I would ask students to get involved, and they didn't want to because they believed they couldn't do anything. They thought if we march down the street CPS is still going to close the schools. I tried to explain to them that even though they might still close the schools we still have to voice our opinions otherwise we are just being stepped on. It takes time.”

Each of the four youth experiences themselves through the social processes that enable identities to emerge. The process of experiencing themselves occurs in spaces that function to erase themselves as regulars, for instance, the moment when Marley and Penny lie down in the street at the “die-in” demonstration, a literal act of civil disobedience but also symbolic act of violence and “erasure of their ‘regular’-subjectivity in the sites of their marginality” (Kaplan, 1998, p. 86). Using Deleuze's notion of the event, accounting for desires, movements, and expansions and moments when youth transform themselves within their sensual and perceptual underpinnings of an event, we can begin to break the social spaces and theorize alternative forms of identity. At times, these youth question whether or not they desire recognition for this particular activist identity as the youth move across spaces and experience events. It is the desire for knowledge, for “more,” and that sustains them. Isaiah claimed, “I just came to realize

how valuable youth are when it comes to injustice” (Interview, June 3, 2013). It is the unsteady and uncertain desires these youth experience that enables them to experiment socially, culturally and politically with their social identities and to produce youth cultural organizing. It’s a movement.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion serves as a space to revisit the initial questions I proposed for this research project as well as considers the many questions that emerged throughout the course of the study. I summarize the answers I discovered to the research question in addition to answers to other questions that were critical and relevant in the study. I also provide a discussion of the implications of the project, what it contributes to the field of educational research, and what future directions and questions this study opens up.

Research Question and Summary of Findings

This research study sought to understand the following research question: How does the interaction between a specific set of Latino immigrant youth, a community organization, and its partnership with a high school impact students' understanding of and experience with their academic and social identity(ies) in relation to community belonging? I had a broad interest in identity formation for youth from immigrant backgrounds that was narrowed to the Latino population because the review of literature often conflated the Latino experience with other immigrant groups and minority groups. In the literature, Latino immigrants' school success hinged on cultural deficit explanations for underachievement. I wanted to be careful of how I identified and differentiated the Latino immigrant experience so as not to essentialize cultural groups like previous research has done. This was challenging at times because I did not want to only refer to a Latino immigrant youth experience and risk the essentialization of a

cultural group but I also wanted to be able to say something about Latino immigrants as distinct from “successful” immigrant groups as defined in the literature. The literature on the ways youth from nonwhite cultural backgrounds, specifically drawing on Ogbu’s notion of voluntary and involuntary minorities, characterizes youth as school failures because they lack the ability to assert identities that conform with the identities aligned with school success. Other scholars (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001) that were discussed in chapter one often comment on the ways some immigrant groups are able to succeed—assimilate—in school while others are not. The result of previous research like this is that Latino immigrant groups and African American students are considered lacking the ability and culture markers for success in school. Again, to break this tradition, I needed to re-conceptualize identity.

Identity in this study was not limited to a racial or ethnic marker. Race and ethnicity certainly emerged in the study and interacted with teachers’ perceptions of youth ability (Chapter Three), but I wanted to understand youth as more than their racial or ethnic marker, their immigration status, and their institutional, academic label. I grew tired of reading scholarship that sought to affirm or disaffirm the “oppositional identity” and “burden of acting white thesis” that pervades literature on student identity formation and academic achievement. Each of the three findings chapters contained a different theme and spoke to the various ways I observed identity formation at O’Donnell. In Chapter Three, I observed and analyzed the institutional identity formation processes and in chapters four and five I observed and analyzed the social identity formation process.

To do this, I conceptualized identity through Gee's (2000) model in order to consider identity formation from multiple angles, and to focus on institutional identities (academic labels) as one piece of identity formation. This was discussed in Chapter Three. Gee's model enabled me to conceptualize racial and ethnic identities as socially constructed and limiting. Gee's work on *Institutional identity*, outlined in chapter one, helped rethink the types of identities that schools—as authorities—label and ascribe to youth. The institutional, academic identities such as IB, AVID, and regular carried with them a set of behaviors and expectations and also determined the educational trajectory available to students at O'Donnell. I was interested in how youth were positioned in the school and how they perceived their academic abilities in relation to that positioning. I envisioned that this line of inquiry would connect to previous scholarship in the sociology of education. I found the racial logic of the school was not explicit. Teachers did not say that they put all Asian students in IB; however, teachers did say, "Most Latinos in this school don't go to college, so we have few IB and honors kids." A statement like this shows that race and ethnicity interact with teachers' perceptions of student ability and other adults' perceptions of student mobility beyond high school. For instance, a student said, "Asians are all in IB; teachers just think they're smart." It is concerning that schools such as O'Donnell are under financial pressure from large urban districts and unelected school boards like the one in Chicago and thus are allowed to offer differential educational experiences and levels of resources for students depending on the academic track.

The findings in Chapter Three reveal that students in their academic track know what it means to be in that track and the ways in which the school views them and their ability. These institutional identities in the form of academic labels are detailed in Chapter Three. Readers learned that the International Baccalaureate (IB) students are the “smartest in the school,” but even if they are IB they are still, as one teacher said, “ghetto kids in a ghetto school on the south side of Chicago.” The teacher meant that even students in IB are not likely to experience college readiness and success beyond high school. Despite a student’s strong academic identification as IB and a positive perception of the IB identity by school staff and teachers, IB students still struggled with this label. They felt at times used by the school “as propaganda” to make it seem like “O’Donnell isn’t that bad of a school since it has IB.”

Readers also learned that social identities (discussed next) for the IB cohort are limited or non-existent because IB students are trained to be academic drones or an institutionalized “docile body” that performs the regimented activities required of the IB label (Foucault, 1995). As an ethnographer, I walked to each IB class with the youth, took notes religiously with them, took their examinations that determined their worth and ability to keep the status of IB, and remained socially isolated from the rest of the school as their bodies became sites where power operated. The ways IB students’ behaviors and practices upon their bodies were normalized furthered the reproduction of inequality in the school. Not all students had access to this training and discipline, rendering the training in how to be docile a privilege. The IB youth attempted to perform and enact social identities within their IB cohort (discussed in the theme, “The nerds think they’re

all ghetto), but were unable to fully realize their social identity due to the constraints (and privilege) of being IB. Social identities were contested and pursued by youth in other academic tracks.

Drawing on Gee's (2000) notion of *Discourse identity* enabled me to apply this to social identities at O'Donnell, specifically among the AVID and regular students. Using and adapting Gee's model I was able to make meaning around social identity formation at O'Donnell. With regard to *Discourse identities*, I argued that social identities emerged through two processes. The first process was detailed in Chapter Four through such themes as "We're like a community, like friends..." and "It's like a traveling school." I argued that social identities emerge for youth as they encounter the various after-school programs sponsored by the community-school partnership. The key findings across chapter four revolved around social identity production in relation to community belonging. First, I found that social identities manifested in teacher student relations, particularly in the Model UN club. Second, I found social identities emerged in peer to peer relations, particularly in CYS and SJC, when students developed an individual and collective understanding of policy issues that impacted their local communities. These moments parlay the *relational curriculum* that I propose occurred in the process of identity formation for youth. Within the *relational curriculum*, students forged bonds through the social relations and learned outside the classroom setting. The curriculum was a "traveling school" for youth. Again, the implications from the data suggest the need for a more expansive and inclusive view of the social in order to capture the ways in which youth develop positive relationships with each other in order to see oppression and

inequity in their society. From this, youth interpreted social reality and its inequalities and this led to a desire for social change.

The second process that I observed with regard to the social identity formation of youth was detailed in chapter five, and it stretched beyond what Gee's (2000) model of *Discourse identity* made available to me as a conceptual orientation. The second process of social identity formation occurred as youth self-articulate identities beyond the spaces of the school and community-school programs to create their own brand of cultural organizing. I call these self-articulated because these were identities that revealed themselves on the terms of the youth through the process of cultural organizing. Partially aligned with the *Discourse identity* dimension of Gee's model, these self-articulated identities are still connected to social relations. But youth organized outside the borders of the community-school to explore unforeseen dimensions of social identity. I had to utilize new theoretical tools as levers for understanding the empirical processes in the field during this youth organizing. I proposed that we see social identity formation through Deleuze's theoretical notion of event and that we conceptualize cultural organizing through Julio Cammarota's work (2008). This is detailed next in the section on how this research contributes to a theoretical understanding of youth identity formation and the notion of cultural organizing.

To summarize, the model of identity offered in Gee's (2000) work contributes to the literature in that it breaks away from deficit-models that attempt to explain the underachievement of racial and ethnic minorities. The model and approach to identity, here, also contributes to scholarship as I have moved beyond studying the prevalent

sociological categories by which identity is commonly studied, e.g., race, class, and gender. I re-conceptualized institutional and social identity in order to study the underlying and emergent processes of youth identity formation. Within this, it is argued that the lived experiences of youth as they encounter organizing for social change is a contribution given that much of social science research focuses on the under-achievement of Latino immigrant youth without privileging youth voice. We know Latino youth are overrepresented in dropout statistics in large urban districts, but we do not necessarily know why this “failure” is persistent and what role institutions play in setting up conditions for Latino immigrant youth to be unsuccessful. Thus, this project explored the ways a school sets up conditions, creating differential educational experiences for youth and how youth transcend the limitations of the school conditions.

Contribution to Theoretical Understanding of Cultural Organizing

As mentioned above, the ways that social identity emerged for youth stretched beyond the abilities of Gee’s (2000) model, and thus I proposed other theoretical tools with which to view social identity for the regulars in Chapter Five. I urge that these tools make a contribution to our understanding of the notion of cultural organizing and the ways social identity forms within cultural organizing. I propose seeing cultural organizing through the Deleuzian (1990) event enables us to witness and experience social identity production, youth voice, and youth desire simultaneously, and actually account for the production and enactment of their desire in their brand of youth cultural organizing. Part of seeing cultural organizing is recognizing the role of youth voice and reflection upon their social identities and their understanding the “movement” of their

cultural organizing. I review components of Cammarota's notion of cultural organizing and then build on it by adding the optic of the Deleuzian event and the dimension of productive desire.

In Chapter Five I proposed that Cammarota's (2008) work on cultural organizing is pertinent for interpreting the social identity formation that occurred for the regulars in the study. The model of cultural organizing can be used to theorize the ways in which youth engage in a process of transforming themselves from the negative academic, institutional label of regular into the positive social identities that emerge in their brand of cultural organizing. A key contribution of Cammarota's model of cultural organizing to sociological and anthropological studies of immigrant identity, and particularly on Latino immigrant youth identity, is that it challenges previous sociological research that seeks to position immigrants in a linear process of assimilation. This is discussed next.

Cultural organizing as distinct from cultural production or social reproduction theory (for empirical research using social reproduction theory in sociology of education scholarship, see Bettie, 2003; Foley, 2010; Lareau, 2003; MacLeod, 1987) is a less charted empirical territory particularly on issues related to Latino immigrant youth in schools. The findings in Chapter Five called for a different set of theoretical tools in order to explain the self-articulated social identities that were fragmented and contradictory at times for the regulars in the study. What distinguishes the youth in this study is my attention to their experience of the process of social transformation both of self and social context; this was explained through the narratives and analyses in Chapter

Five. To remind the reader, I offer an explanation of cultural organizing according to Cammarota (2008b), he argues:

People create their own cultural forms and activities to interpret and respond to their positions—and the macro forces that position them—in the social order. The creation of culture always relates back to the identities of those initiating the production. Although similar to cultural production (Willis, 1977), cultural organizing moves one step further by using the interpretation of social reality as a basis to reorder or redefine experiences and conditions to better reflect group or individual identities. Cultural production implies a reflection on social conditions to form and preserve the cultural characteristics of identity, whereas cultural organizing implies a creative restructuring of human experience to fluidly link it with self-created identities. (Cammarota, 2008b, p. 11)

The focus in Chapter Five was on the process of “restructuring of human experience” as linked to “self-created identities” that pushed beyond even the loose boundaries of social identity conceptualizations (*Discourse identity*) in Chapter Four. Youth in this study on some level experienced marginalization or tension around a given institutional label (Chapter Three), and youth that attempted to transcend their institutional label such as the AVID and the regular students had their bodies inscribed with medium, low, or no expectations by the school. They sought alternative avenues to explore their desire to “share knowledge,” as one youth stated. Seeing youth’ efforts in Chapter Five through the lens of cultural organizing structures their identity formation processes while also enabling readers to see the ways in which youth can and did disrupt the ordering process that is attempted by schools through institutional labeling.

A broader implications of using the notion of cultural organizing is that it offers us an important alternative to the standard assimilation model that is advocated by the traditional/standard school system in addition to the model that is perpetuated in scholarly research as mentioned in chapter one and again in this conclusion. A “good or educated”

student is one who has been taught to buy into and accept the status quo without questioning or addressing the gross inequalities that maintain oppression. This was evidenced in many moments during the research. Students in IB were praised and positioned to be model students while students engaging in the interpretation of their social reality and unjust educational policies were seen as a threat to the order of the school (and to the agenda of the unelected school board). This was evidenced by the Assistant Principal and Principal on the school intercom threatening students for opting out of testing to attend various protests and rallies around the city in their fight against the school closure policies. In addition, this was evidenced by the principal's characterization of youth organizing as "getting a high on protesting." The academic identities given to youth by the school were reinforced and attempts to disrupt this ordering process were frowned upon by school leaders.

In addition, the label of IB was a coveted label for very few students in the school (42/2,600 approximately). If students are not in IB, then they are left on their own to pursue and engage in forms of critical thinking. Many of the non-IB students pursued other ways to engage in "topics that matter." However, the fact that so many students are left to unequal and differential educational opportunities is the very reason why using a lens of cultural organizing is important. It enables researchers and participants alike to capture unequal conditions. Students forced to accept the assimilation model may succeed as individuals but the roots of oppression will remain, which means their communities will continue to suffer.

Cultural organizers such as the youth in Chapter Five look to challenge hierarchical structures so that communities transform and become liberated. The benefits are not only for the cultural organizers but also for others in their communities, family, and the next generation. Cultural organizing should lead to better schools, stronger communities, and historical pathways for other youth to follow and bring about social change.

Within this I must address here why the notion of cultural organizing captures the process in Chapter Five. For instance, the title of chapter five and the overall study suggests an activist-identity, and I remain grounded in that title. But, I am hesitant to call these students activists given the tension around the term and the negative connotation of the term activist. I acknowledge that youth engaged in their words, “activist things,” but this is in relation to their identity of “nothing.” The point here is that youth, despite their feeling of a “nothing” identity in school, engaged in a process. This process particularly for youth in SJC in Chapter Four and the regulars in Chapter Five align with the notion of organizing. I suggest that organizing and activism are connected, and then turn to youth voice—since after all they are the central focus—to consider their thoughts on cultural organizing versus/or activism.

After reviewing Cammarota’s work on organizing and reviewing the data, it seems that organizing is an apt term to understand the social identity formation process of youth particularly the ways youth move beyond social identities in after-school programs. Activism is subsumed under organizing. Activism is taking action in order to bring about social change. Organizing may have the same goal, but it represents the process by

which change occurs. Part of the process for youth in the study was interpreting their social reality, which I discussed through the eyes of Marley, Amelia, Penny, and Isaiah in Chapter Five. In addition, the many moments of planning, talking, thinking, and reflecting on policy issues that occurred for youth contribute to this process. It was difficult to provide the 1,100 pages of field notes that documented the many conversations that contributed to the organizing process.

As I have done throughout the study, I turn to data from youth to connect the process of organizing to social identity formation for youth in the study. Isaiah commented:

Isaiah: Of the difference between activism and organizing, that's very interesting – I had never really dichotomized the two before. I consider myself as both. I consider myself an activist because I do things. I am part of the movement, one body among many. However, I also think of myself as an organizer because like many other students across the schools in the union, would “organize” – plan demonstrations, lay out plans of action, and develop a vision of where to lead the group. I think that no movement is complete without either. The activists keep the ball rolling, and they are the ones with the momentum without them an organizer can't really organize because there are not always the participants or activists. Organizing is a process; it's all the stuff we do to get to the action. No movement can really continue without organizers or leaders. They are the process. The process that keeps it going, gets it going. We saw this in Occupy Wall Street which was made up of tons of activists, but really lacked strong leadership or organizers. To put it simply, activists are those who invest themselves in the movement, show up to meetings, and spread the message, and more than anything make the movement grow and organizers are those who listen to the activists, help lay the direction of the movement and the process. (Interview, June 3, 2013)

I found Isaiah and other youth in the study to focus on “the process,” which is integral to their identity formation but also to the emergence of the organizing itself. Organizing is the process that youth get to remake culture; they get to decide who they are and who they want to become as part of this process upon their encounter with the social context.

Cultural organizing refers to changes in the social context, which connect with the identities of the youth organizers. Instead of youth changing their cultural and social identities to align with what the school wants of them, they pursued their own ways of coming to understand themselves in relation to their context. This led me to consider why they do this, and how desire played a role in the process of cultural organizing. Next, I suggest a contribution to the conceptual model of cultural organizing that can emerge when I/we think with Deleuze's notion of event as chapters four and five tended to.

Elements of Desire in the Production of Youth Cultural Organizing

To add to the conceptual model of cultural organizing, I suggested in chapters four and five that we see cultural organizing—the process—through the theoretical tools engendered in Deleuze's event. I outlined working definitions of event and here I review those as well as add to it the dimension of desire.

Deleuze (1990) argues:

An event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us. It must be understood, willed, and represented in that which occurs [...] to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby, to have one more birth, and to break with one's carnal birth—to become the offspring of one's events and not of one's actions effectively liberates us from the limits of individuals and persons. (p. 150)

Deleuzian event is expansive and “free of limitations” (p. 151). It includes moments when youth shed restrictive parts of themselves such as labels placed upon them by institutional and structural forces. Using Deleuze's notion of the event accounts for desires, movements, expansions and moments when youth transform.

Deleuze (1993) asks, “What are the conditions that make event possible.”

Readers will be dissatisfied if they think Deleuze provides an answer to his own question. The apt approach is to think of the process that enables Deleuzian event, and the elements of desire that circulate in the process of human experience. Arguably, Deleuze tells us a bit about event as I noted in chapter five. Deleuze (1990) argues, “With every event, there is indeed the present moment of its actualization [youth are arrested], the moment in which the event is embodied in a state of affairs, an individual, the moment we designate as ‘here, the moment has come’ [April 24th, May 15th, May 22nd as examples]. But, that which happens before and after is also wrapped up in this event—the movement that is “free of limitations” (p. 151).

As I considered the narratives of four youth in Chapter Five and theorized identity within the notion of event, I considered the movement and utterings of desire in the production of youth cultural organizing. To elaborate, I considered what and where desire generates. Few scholars have theorized desire and identity formation through poststructuralist ethnographic perspectives (Grinberg, 2013; Youdell, 2011). In the process of this research I positioned realities of youth alongside perceptions of other youth as well as various adults in order to interrogate processes of identity formation, and the “dominant as well as the little cracks, the imperceptible ruptures, the emerging forms of knowledge, the rationalities that manage to take hold as well as the struggles and resistances experienced on a daily basis with their contradictions”—the folds and desires of everyday life (Grinberg, 2013, p. 204). Deleuze’s (1990, 1993) work enables us to ask

questions and capture through ethnographic accounts the pieces of language that youth utter and even moments when language fails them/us.

To explain, desire emerged in the pauses and the brackets in field notes as youth sigh like Amelia did before she told me that she thought she was a good student despite the institutional perception of her. Desire emerged in the thick tension in the room at the Board of Education and the ethereal feeling of hearts sinking when the President of the Board of Education told a youth, “No.” he could not speak. Desire emerged in moments in my research journal where I wrote, “I cried on my train ride home from O’Donnell today” and the rest of the page was left blank. These are examples of desire because each contains generative and productive features, enabling the participants and myself to ask more questions and to engage in future events—even though we did not know it.

In these desiring moments, desire is a social force and this productive social force is able to form connections and enhance the power of bodies in their connections (Parr, 2010, p. 63). Desiring machines are forces of desire that are acting or permeating through research participants and the sense-making around such desires—desires are productive and come together to produce something (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 18). What gets produced is not always visible or tangible, but it includes thoughts, utterings, sensations, and potentially actions. Deleuzian desire is productive and generative. Mazzei (2013) argues, “Desire is seeking, resulting in the production of power and voice” (p. 99). If desire is productive as opposed to resulting from lack (what we do not have), then how does desire occur? The aim here is not to define desire but to consider the conditions that produce it and the interests that surround it. To ask, as I did and as I have shown, how

desire works [conversations and participations in organizing] is part of the process. More important than the desire to act or the desire for large scale change, the youth create and acknowledge the desire to think, to sense or to reveal.

Specific to the youth, if we see youth desire as positive and part of a social force, then we can see the imperative in youth cultural organizing. It is in their intimate space that their identities and perceptions are valid, non-codified or judged as silly or ignorant by adults. Deleuze and Guatarri (1984) argue, “If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial, on the contrary” (p. 121). The social, productive dimension of desire within a youth cultural organizing space enables youth to ask and question such established orders of a society in the process of their version of organizing. Further:

To a certain degree, the traditional logic of desire is all wrong from the very outset: from the first step that the Platonic logic of desire forces us to take, making us choose between production and acquisition. From the moment we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object, a lack of the real object. (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1984, as cited in Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 101)

These authors offer us a new way of viewing identity formation in social spaces by including an understanding of desire within event as productive. We see a process rather than a product or what youth are lacking. The conception of youth cultural organizing accomplishes a view of youth action and desire as productive.

As evidenced by the multiple realities juxtaposed earlier, youth desires are in conflict with and pose problems for community organization staff and school leaders. As

I ask and think through how desire works within the youth cultural organizing space, I propose it moves ideas of youth toward coherent narratives of social justice and in some instances toward action. Desire also works in the moments captured during the events youth participate in, e.g., seeing a youth lean on Isaiah's shoulder with tears as the youth on the street heard the news that the Board of Education voted to close 50 schools in Chicago. Asking who desire works for, as Deleuze would, I realized desire works for youth in their identity formation while conflicting with institutional labels and categorizations and definitions of what counts as organizing for even the community organizers. It produces more knowledge and violence against themselves, and a willingness to continue to move and to become part of the/a "movement."

The meditations I have offered contribute to the literature on cultural organizing and the theoretical contribution to the notion of cultural organizing by including the dimension of Deleuzian desire. This is an important step in opening up spaces to study Latino immigrant identity in relation to community belonging in schools. Much of the previous research, as has already been argued, views the "stuff" of culture in cultural organizing as dualistic or dichotomous, or as a linear movement toward variations levels of assimilation into the American, dominant culture.

The youth cultural organizing in this research study is much more than the dichotomous views of culture as closed. By closed, Hall (1990, 1996) proposed that "culture" is a set of shared meanings that individuals from a common group or nation use to interpret the world. This perception of culture is limited because it assigns the notion of "cultural" work to a specific national origin. The data in this research study

challenged this view of culture because youth in the study—while certainly Latino immigrant youth and some undocumented—preferred to distance themselves from a racial or ethnic marker. This means they did not see the “culture” in cultural organizing as defined by their Latino-ness or their immigrant-ness. Instead, through the notion of *Discourse identity*, and conceptualizing identity formation within the process of Deleuzian (1990) event, what emerges is a complex set of social relations and experiences for youth as they interpret their unequal socio-economic conditions and seek to enact social change. Specifically the social identity formation process of youth in the study challenges linear, essentialist models of assimilation processes that are espoused in previous scholarship. This study adds to a non-essentialist, discursive and complex view of culture and the ways in which youth remake culture specifically through the anti-assimilationist brand of cultural organizing. This study offers a new way to rethink how youth remake culture and talk back to inequality. While I mentioned my struggle to not essentialize their experience as Latinos and immigrants, it is of note that this open, fluid approach to identity and culture is a contribution to the study of Latino immigrants. It is challenging even in current lines of inquiry on immigrant identity formation in schools to initiate non-essentialist models that render identity as “unresolved” (Ngo, 2010). The challenge to education researchers and policy-makers is to honor and dignify non-essentialist models of identity in relation to school success. In particular, education researchers and policy-makers need to listen and actually hear the experiences of youth.

Implications for Youth Identity and Youth Agency

In addition to the theoretical contributions of the study, I offer a few implications for studying identity and youth agency as well as the role of community-school partnerships. I entered the study knowing that youth of color are marginalized. I was attentive to the normalizing function of discourse particularly the ways in which discourse functions to marginalize through words like regular while seemingly more neutral than at risk, ghetto kids, or street kids. In the face of many dominant narratives in academic research and everyday conversations in schools about how youth won't likely go anywhere, I found that the experiences of youth in after-school programs and beyond the organizing efforts of the community-organization asserted their own brand of agency. What I observed in after-school programs and in other activities demonstrated that youth that are considered under-achieving on standardized tests can and do engage in critical thinking and critical dialogue about social contexts, education policy and other issues that impact their local community. These are things that standardized tests and performance indicators do not always capture.

Additionally, the youth in the study formed positive relationships with each other, other youth across the city, and with adult allies interested in their organizing work. Instead of referring to these as acts of resistance or counter-narratives, I prefer to see the youth as emerging out of conditions that seek to limit their positive growth. These youth organize and seek to restructure their experience, and expand their voice in an effort to enact desire and social change. The way I chose to study identity and move us beyond just institutional identity to see positive social identity formation for youth was an

attempt to change the narrative about immigrant youth and Latino immigrants in the study. These youth are certainly more than just regular, and their voices and experiences demonstrate their active involvement and care for their school experiences and communities.

The broader implications for educational research challenge urban districts and their schools in low-income, urban communities like Chicago to stop their mission of reproducing inequality. Students in the study reflected upon the inequalities they witnessed and experienced by saying, “Are they [the board of education] closing are schools cuz’ we’re poor?” Up against the “whiteness” of education policy in Chicago and elsewhere across the country, youth from low-income, minority groups attempt to make sense out of what happens in their local communities. While school leaders think they are doing youth a favor by pouring what little resources they do have into the students they deem worthy, motivated and/or capable of graduating high school and going to college, the hundreds of other students (much like the ones in the study) are attempting to understand policy and inequity and move toward effecting social change.

It is imperative that we listen to youth voice as they talk back to local policy (and national policies in some cases here with regard to the national discourse on school reform). Instead of only “saving” the IB students and some AVID students from what Ballatine and Spade (2008) call “a life sentence” based on their academic track, schools need to provide rich opportunities for critical thinking and honor other spaces of learning. The regulars were the ones that emerged as those wanting to challenge and transcend what schools thought they were capable of. A challenge that remains is that the number

of regulars that emerged at O'Donnell as those students seeking change was few. The institutional forces that position youth as regulars have a profound impact on their psyche. There were many youth in the study who did not see themselves as capable of getting their voices heard. But, it is their voices that provide the Deleuzian “ruptures” to the ordering process and to the social reproduction of inequality in schools.

Implications for Community-School Partnerships and the Study of Identity in

Relation to Community

Another implication and contribution of this study is the examination of a community-school partnership as a factor in shaping identities of Latino immigrant youth. The role of community organizations in relation to schools is a recent—underdeveloped—area of social science research in education. And, thus far, this area of research addresses how community organizing can be a broad strategy for school reform (Warren & Mapp, 2011). I contribute to this burgeoning body of scholarship by considering the ways community-school partnerships offer a space for otherwise marginalized youth to explore and renegotiate identity. Community organization-school partnerships provide youth in the study with the knowledge, skills and other tools to assist in their advancement through the K-12 educational system and provide them with spaces to explore and take risks in their learning (Warren & Mapp, 2011). The spaces also offer opportunities for reflection and dialogue about policy issues. The after-school programs are spaces of social identity formation and can alter educational trajectories in positive ways for youth.

In the next several paragraphs, I reflect on some of the implications of studying identity in relation to the notion of community. As I noted in Chapter One, I had some concerns about the notion of community. I chose a community-school partnership because I wanted to understand the identity formation of youth in a community-school. Gee's (2000) model of identity had its limits as I sought to understand how identities connected to community. I was also suspicious of the ways in which policy-makers (and other individuals and institutions) in particular attempt(ed) to mobilize a discourse about community as if it is an all-inclusive thing that unifies people, generates solidarity and empowers people to effect change. Instead, I wanted to de-stabilize what I, and few other educational theorists, deemed to be taken for granted assumptions about community as if it is something that always brings people together and unifies people. Drawing on literature from Foucauldian scholars (Fendler, 2006; Foucault, 1994, Rose, 1999, 2000), I was able to rethink community as something potentially complex and as something that is not just inclusive of all people without a cost. I wanted to destabilize these taken for granted assumptions so that we are not blinded by the notion of community without attention to its normalizing and exclusionary features.

My suspicions about the ways in which policy-makers "care about communities," and said they would listen to the "needs of the community" in the Chicago community-school setting became more of a concern as I observed the mayor and board of education's particular understanding of community was in conflict with youth's perceptions of community. The youth in low-income areas of Chicago, joining forces and emerging as a particular community (perhaps low-income, and of racial and ethnic

minorities), were excluded from the decision-making processes of Chicago's board of education and its mayor around school closings as I noted in Chapter Five. Despite youth participation in community-school programs, and activities of and beyond the community organization, their efforts became a spectacle across the city. Meanwhile, the board of education, ignoring youth in particular and not allowing them to speak at board of education public meetings, maintained they were "listening to the needs of the community" as they considered school closings in Chicago.

Franklin, Bloch & Popkewitz (2003) and Rose (1999, 2000) posit that the family, the community and the school are central sites of the regulation of behavior even though individuals may not always be aware that their bodies and the spaces of family, community, and school are sites of intervention. Having community involvement in social and political projects assists in shaping norms while not seeming to destroy the private authority of families or take away individual choice. Again, to draw on Fendler (2006), individuals are "invited" to participate in such projects, and this choice or freedom to participate in social projects and community-building shadows the effects of such normalization, or the "double relation" of linking the governing patterns of the state with civil society and the principles of individual action (Franklin, Bloch & Popkewitz, 2003, p. 6). The concern, then, is to reveal the social and cultural practices embedded in community by investigating the interpretations and mean-making process of youth who participate in community-school activities instead of assuming that community forms a priori. To avoid a priori assumptions of community, I sought to understand the lived experiences of community and the interpretations of community from the youth

perspective. The study of identity formation was connected to community formation and also the process of cultural organizing.

The perceptions of community for O'Donnell students were multi-dimensional. I explored the various identity dynamics within and across after-school programs in each of the findings chapters. When youth said to me, "We're like a community," when referring to their participation in various after school programs, I wondered why they used "like" and what a "community" meant to them. I really wanted to understand their lived experience of community. Youth pursued positive social identities in relation to community(ies) formed through participation in after-school programs. However, in Chapter Four I noted the complications of youth perceptions of community.

The experience of community also shifted within and across after-school program activities. Some of the exclusion practices that youth encountered as they moved across various community spaces were addressed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Youth at times perceived community to be positive and inclusive when in the safety of the hotel room lobby with their teacher, on a bus ride to a field trip, or while they discuss policy issues that impact them. However, youth were also simultaneously being excluded—symbolically—through the norms and behaviors that were embedded in certain communities, e.g. the school community, the community-organization sanctioned notion of what counted as organizing, and of course the board of education and mayor versions of community. Thus, their participation in some communities (school, community-organization, a larger Chicago Public School community) became "conditional on

conduct,” meaning they had to behave in a certain way to actually maintain, or gain entry to a particular community (Rose, 2000, p. 267).

To elaborate, the regulation of such conduct is imagined and materialized through school tracking practices and institutional, academic identities and various school programs with titles such as “academic remediation,” and more overt disciplinary systems such as the security guards at O’Donnell scanning students in as they enter through the metal detectors. The 2600+ students at O’Donnell are forced in a single line outside the building every morning as they wait for their “scan” into the building. If students are late for “their scan,” then they get put on a “list” and are unable to participate in various dances or other school functions. In my months at O’Donnell, I asked several times what the “list” was and where I could find it. I never received a response from anyone at the school. Yet the “list” was able to govern behavior. These small, seemingly productive instances speak to the processes at play that exclude. These instances reflect the process of governing conduct within the O’Donnell community in this setting.

Despite my concerns about the mobilization of community as a discourse, I still found value in the process that youth undertook to self-articulate their identity as organizers and forge a version of a community that was on their terms. This occurred in Chapter Five and my focus on the process of cultural organizing. The school and the community organization attempted to regulate youth cultural organizing as I discussed in Chapter Five by trying to puncture holes in the youth’s purpose for organizing and by trying to negate the learning and critical thinking that youth engaged in by relegating

youth cultural organizing to silly, rebellious teens trying to “get a high on protesting” as the Principal said to me.

This study approached community in such a way to create openings for research to also examine spaces of regulation and spaces of meaning. Using the notion of governmentality to think through community shifts the object of inquiry to “an emergent pattern or order of a social system, arising out of complex negotiations and exchanges between intermediate social actors, groups, forces, or organizations”(Rose, 1999, p 21; Kooiman, 1993). Community in this way may allow us to see and interrogate the socio-cultural processes of identity formation that are integral to an understanding of community and exclusionary processes that also contribute to or inhibit identity formation. Exposing community as a strategy of governance may lead researchers to query about the socio-cultural processes that operate as effects of such governance. Further empirical, ethnographic study is critical if we are to understand the various ways power relations materialize in social practices of communities.

Identity, constituted through community membership, results in coherent/multiple identities and a combination of memberships across communities that are positive and negative for youth. Identity as an analytic in education research, then, points to the various memberships or categories that a subject might –become within and across communities. Modern identity is theorized through ascriptions like race, class, gender, and sociological categories like these are used by educational researchers to help understand “difference” instead of investigating the actual processes of exclusion occurring through this categorization. To return to the analytic of community as

governance, we can diagnose social processes of exclusion that occur through becoming members in communities if we examine individuals at the level of micro, social interaction. It was the “stuff,” the “matter,” or the “material” of the cultural organizing process—youth interpretation of social reality, ideas, desire, and action—that ultimately held value for youth even though youth cultural organizing was risky, precarious and quite literally dangerous and a Deleuzian event calls for the “materialization” of ideas and desires through bodies.¹ Youth (their ideas, desires, and actions as part of cultural organizing) are the “stuff,” the “matter,” the “material” that matter. Researchers need to examine the material practices of governance in communities. This is a less chartered path, but ethnographic methods in conjunction with considering identity in relation to community may be a useful avenue for more exploration.

Limitations

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to re-conceptualize identity formation of Latino immigrant youth in order to break away from deficit models of identity and culture and to explore identity formation in relation to community belonging. To do this, I had to break away from previous scholarship and map social spaces where identity formation occurred. I also had to turn to theoretical and conceptual orientations that are

¹A promising line of inquiry that emerges from Deleuzian philosophy is that educational settings and experiences can be thought of as “material” and “stuff” or what Deleuze calls, “matter-flow.” For Deleuze, the “material” connection to philosophy actually connects social, cultural and political forces to the philosophical realm. Cole (2012) argues, “The future of education is connected to the future of capitalism and government, and these global systems seem to show no signs of slowing down. As educators interested in understanding practice and in making a difference with respect to the ways in which education proceeds, Deleuze is an attractive outside to the all too frequently normalised discourses of education. It could be stated that professional standards, curriculum outcomes and assessment regimes stand across a vast divide in relation to the concept-creation of Deleuze. Yet these realms are not necessarily oppositional; learning requires creativity, not just as a type of constructivism (see Semetsky, 2006) with respect to knowledge application, but education also entails coping with system constraints” (Cole, 2012, p. 13).

less utilized in education research in order to help make sense of the messy, social identity formation process. The findings in this study are from one urban public high school in Chicago. While I cannot make extreme claims about Latino immigrant youth in large urban schools like Chicago's, I did have the opportunity to interact with youth from other high schools in Chicago that faced similar issues such as institutional and academic labeling that contributes to unequal educational experiences. In Chapters Four and Five, many students from O'Donnell joined forces with youth at different public high schools for Social Justice Club and for other organizing activities. That said, the findings here reflect a set of 40 Latino immigrant youth in a Chicago public high school. I intentionally chose an urban public high school because I found attention to "urban" schools in previous scholarship (Conchas, 2001, 2006, 2010; Taines, 2011, 2012) to not actually reflect the experiences of Latino immigrant youth in low-income communities in large urban districts like Chicago. Certainly Latino immigrant youth and other immigrants live in suburban districts and in smaller "urban" districts such as the ones in previous scholarship, but I was interested in the third largest district in the country that is tasked with educating a majority of non-white students and also is plagued by low graduation rates of such students. Despite my efforts in this study, the fact remains that the voices in the study are from 40 youth at one high school.

Another limitation that is commonly associated with ethnographic research is connected to reliability and validity. Ethnographic research occurs in natural settings, and those settings are lived and not reproduced. The data here occurred in a large, urban high school like many across the city and country. There were persistent structural and

institutional patterns that emerged and were discussed in Chapter Three and are discussed in other scholarship, which leads one to believe that studying patterns in one school can contribute to broad conversations. However, the social identity formation process was much more complex and context-specific, and thus a limitation is to locate a similar inquiry in another context. To do this, one would need to identify community-school programs in cities like Chicago. Chicago's rich history of organizing and attention to local communities and their identities would be a challenge to locate in order to replicate the procedures used here. To counter the limitation of ethnographic research related to reliability and validity, I described my positionality as the researcher, the "critical" stance I maintained entering into the research study, the data collection and analysis procedures as comprehensively and as detailed as I could in Chapter Two. The replication of procedures and interpretive mechanisms applied to the findings remain a challenge because as an ethnographic researcher, I pursued trajectories and questions of the study as they sometimes arose in the moment. A final note here is that to increase the generalizability of the findings, it would have been/could be helpful to pursue multiple sites (high schools) with youth facing similar constraints and conditions.

Future Research

This study started in one school and in one community, and by the end of the study I had traveled with youth around the city, the state, and other cities across the country. Moreover, the youth in the study also traveled and participated in and continue to participate in the national movement around youth organizing and anti-privatization efforts across the country. While the findings cannot be generalized across the country

given common limitations of ethnographic research, elements of the findings can be explored and studied more deeply to help understand the role of local community organizations in fostering positive opportunities for youth development. This section addresses a few of the potential trajectories that emerge from this exploratory study of Latino immigrant youth identity in relation to community belonging. The ideas for future research stem from specific findings from this study.

First, I entered the research space knowing that O'Donnell had a high population of immigrants from Latino and Asian backgrounds. Because I wanted to move beyond only examining racial and ethnic identity markers, future research could draw from a specific set of immigrants from across cultural backgrounds in order to compare educational experiences, but while maintaining a re-conceptualization of identity beyond the static, deficit models that this study sought to break away from. This was hinted at during Chapter Three with some attention to the ways O'Donnell placed Asian students in higher-performing tracks arbitrarily. A closer examination at how schools treat and compare immigrant educational trajectories would be useful. By this, I suggest a study of teachers' perceptions of youth based on perceived cultural backgrounds.

Second, I would suggest that future research hones in on the regulars because it would provide more information about the experience of marginalization that regulars encounter. I learned from youth at O'Donnell that the institutional patterns of tracking and positioning regulars as throwaways or the fat that needs to be trimmed from public schools in order to boost standardized test scores are consistent across public schools. I think more research that examines the large number of regulars that receive little

attention in Chicago Public Schools could shape a conversation about education reform that does not include just shutting down schools across the city and further dehumanizing local communities. Youth voice is powerful, and including their perspectives from multiple sites could challenge educational policies and the national movement to privatize public education.

Third, I entered the research space knowing that O'Donnell had a partnership with a community organization, Redwood Park Council. I found that a community-organization provides spaces for positive social identity production. This was discussed in chapter four. Given that this ethnographic study was exploratory, I initially observed nine after-school programs, but then reported on the three in chapter four. More attention to the various programs that nurture and tend to positive youth identity formation is needed. While it was evident to the youth and me that Redwood Park Council's programming offers a positive educational experience, and so future research could dig deeper into the programs and the ways in which they have a positive effect on student outcomes and belonging. I was able to view program evaluation data from Redwood Park Council, but this study's focus was on the youth perception of identity and community belonging. It would be beneficial to collect more data on the impact of the programs as they relate to belonging and outcomes.

A fourth future trajectory for the research is to investigate more fully the experience of undocumented youth. These youth were present during this study, and I knew they would be going into the study. Due to the vulnerable status they occupy, however, I was unable to focus solely on their experience. I did interview and learn of

the undocumented statuses. I also studied an after-school program called the Dream Act club. As I learned of their experience, I found it included so many other factors, legal and political, that connected with other activities and agendas of some of the other after-school programs. However, for reasons I cannot fully express here, I found that the experience of the undocumented youth in the study needed to stand on its own and not be lumped in with other after-school programs and organizing efforts. There were connections to how undocumented youth used and did not use the space of after-school programs to talk back to policy. A future study will yield more data specific to the undocumented youth organizing efforts that I found beneath the surfaces that I encountered in this study.

Final Thoughts

This study asserts that youth from low-income communities can transcend the labels from their institutional, academic positioning, their perceived propensity for failure and negative stereotyping attached to their immigration status or racial/ethnic identity markers. By highlighting moments of youth activism and their articulations of justice, it is evident they engaged in critical thinking beyond what their achievement data reveals and beyond what school leaders thought or cared to recognize as legitimate. The data lead us to consider how schools often fail to reward social identities and alternative pedagogic spaces—provided through community-school partnerships—such as a protest or a service trip, but there exists cultural and symbolic value when asserting a particular social identity. The research offers insight into the disconnection between how

institutional forces and policies situate youth and then abandon or intervene through false assumptions. I suggest we build on youth's knowledge and assets.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. I really appreciate you taking the time to do this. As you know, your participation is voluntary and your remarks are confidential. Having read the Consent Form, you have some idea about what I want to discuss. Do you have any other questions regarding this study before you sign the Consent Form and we begin? You may ask to end this conversation at any time. I will be recording this interview so that I can make sure to get your input accurate. Before we get started, I wanted to let you know that I will be asking these questions in English, but if you prefer to answer in Spanish, or if there are words or things you'd like to say that you can say more accurately in Spanish, please feel free to use the Spanish words.

[The interview protocol is intended to serve as a guide for various phases of interviews. I have divided the questions into topic areas. The headings are interrelated and thus the questions within each could potentially overlap.]

Part 1- background information /family dynamics

1. Can you tell me a little about where you grew up? [If the interviewee describes growing up outside of the U.S., will ask when they arrived in the U.S. I will also ask if they would describe their journey to the U.S. and their feelings about coming to the U.S. if they're comfortable with this question. This strategy is a life history or an immigration story strategy.]
2. Reasons for coming to the U.S. [Trying to get a sense if the reasons were financial or for an educational opportunity.]
3. What's your relationship with family members in your home country [Trying to understand the connection to home, or if there is a connection still]
4. Do you have family in your current neighborhood? [Trying to understand the level of family and / other social networks in the neighborhood to see if there is a possibility that these networks inform sense of community. Depending on answer, I may probe them to describe the relations with family or other networks in their neighborhood. What are the activities they participate in together with family and other networks? How much time weekly is spent with these people, if any?]
5. What are some of the other races and ethnicities in your neighborhood? Can you describe the backgrounds of your neighborhood where you're currently living?
6. How connected do you feel to your block, your street, your neighborhood and the people in it? Are there times when you feel more connected to your family over your neighborhood more than others? Can you describe a time when..[need a concrete example of how/when and what type of activity makes them feel connected]

Part 2- Views of education

1. How do you define education? Where are potential places that education could occur for you? [Here I am trying to understand if students see education as occurring in classrooms and through content or if there are other ways they define and understand education.]

2. Where do you learn best?
3. What are some of the topics or interests you have either in your classes or in other places?
4. What do you think the purpose of education is? [Trying to understand their expectations for themselves and their families in order to understand what influences their decisions to be a part of community-school activities; The assumption with this set of questions is to gauge how this particular group of students produces a cultural understanding of an “educated” person(s), is it part of their identity to potentially see themselves as being educated or capable of being educated]
5. Depending on answers, I will ask a question to gauge the connection between education and community.

Part 2- Peer groups (community-school activities) / school context / teacher-student relationships

1. I'd like to begin by asking you to describe a typical school day. Walk me through your day, from the time you enter the school, through lunchtime, and then when the bell rings for you to leave to go home.
2. Describe your favorite activity of the school day, and why do you like it so much? [Probe to see who student interacts with at school, or community organization; If there isn't mention of school activity, then ask before or after school activities]
3. Who are the people usually involved in the activities? Do you consider them your friends? Why? What connects you with these people?
4. Do you have many friends at school, and are many of them in your classes? How often do you see them outside of school?
5. Describe a typical interaction with a teacher. How do you and a teacher usually talk to one another? Is it often? How do you feel teachers treat you in school?
6. Have you ever been frustrated with a teacher? When did this happen, and why do you think you felt so frustrated? Describe a specific incident or interaction as best you can remember.
7. Who do you feel most comfortable asking to help you with your homework (your parent(s), friend(s), teacher(s), or someone else)? Why do you think you are most comfortable asking this person?
8. Can you describe instances when you felt frustrated with yourself at school? What did you do to decrease the frustration?
9. What should the school do to make it a better environment for you? If you feel like it is already a good environment, what are some of the reasons that make it such?
10. Do you feel like you have an adult inside the school, who is neither your parent nor your teacher, who you can trust and talk to? Describe that interaction.
11. Do you think that someone like your teacher(s), parent(s), and other students force you to be someone that you do not feel like you represent very well? Can you describe that situation?

12. What are some of the other activities you're involved in either before or after school?
13. How did you become involved with them?

Part 3- Layers of community / Spaces of community

1. How do you define community?
2. Do you feel like you have multiple memberships/ belong to multiple communities?
3. Can you describe these? What brings the people together? What do you talk about together?
4. Describe some of the places you feel you belong?
5. What are the activities there?
6. Who are the people with you in these spaces?
7. Do you think your definition of community changes when you're with different people? How so? Can you describe a specific time when you felt a shift in what it meant to be a part of a community? [Here, I am trying to understand if there are competing definitions of community and / or if community means something different in different spaces.]
8. Do you think your definition of community has changed since, or during your time at this high school?
9. If their participation in community school after school programs hasn't come up, yet I will ask an explicit question about their involvement
10. Why do these students/you come to the community-school programs? What is gained? What do you get out of it?

Part 4- Academic identity markers / Social identity markers

1. What three things describe a typical "good student"? Do you think that you have any of those qualities?
2. Can you describe an instance when your friends were important to have in school? And then describe an instance when it was better for you to be alone.
3. Can you explain an instance when you experienced being labeled by someone in school? (An example of a label is: a nerd, a jock, a freak). If you're comfortable enough to share, what was that label?) How did you feel? Do you every think about how you would label yourself? Is there one way you'd describe or label yourself?
4. Where do you think that label comes from [teachers? School principals?] Are these labels different from your experiences and interactions outside of school?
5. Would you describe or label yourself differently in different places, or classes?
6. Would you describe or label yourself differently with different groups of friends?
7. Where else do you feel comfortable, or most like yourself? Who are the people in this space? Describe the nature of the interactions in this space? Are they similar to or different from interactions school? Does the space determine the interaction, or does the interaction only matter?

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