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Publication Date
2016

Peer reviewed

The Development of Ethical Civic Actors in Divided Societies: A Longitudinal Case

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Abstract

This four-year, case study of the development of Gabriela, as civic actor during secondary school, comes from a cross-national study of civic development in divided societies. Her case contributes to developmental theory and adds to civics research by exploring how school, family, and community are intertwined with civic development. Gabriela's ethical civic development is both remarkable and uneven. She overcomes seemingly insurmountable struggles to project her voice in the world. Her story shows the

critical nature of intertwined support from her school and family to make this growth possible. Her remaining struggle—to acknowledge the needs of those from other societal groups in relation to her community's substantial needs—shows the complexity of satisfying multiple groups' needs at once in divided societies. We conclude with the addition of the concept of *macro-supports* and *micro-supports* to explain how the school, other institutions, and the student grow reciprocally.

Introduction

Every year in the United States, South Africa, and Northern Ireland critical moments surface that show the depth of the divisions within these three societies where we have been studying how young people develop as civic actors. The following events of 2012, occurring in the midst of our data collection, were part of this larger pattern.

In the United States, on February 26, 2012, an unarmed black 17-year-old, Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman, an off-duty neighborhood watch coordinator. Martin had just bought snacks at a convenience store in Sanford, Florida, and was on his way home. Zimmerman, claiming that Martin threatened him, was acquitted. Martin's death and Zimmerman's acquittal spurred protests in the US, primarily led by African Americans, and led to a national debate during which an ongoing controversy surfaced about the common nature of police brutality connected to racial profiling. Since 2012, other similar incidents involving young black males and similar rulings in favor of law enforcement have continued. These incidents sparked a movement called Black Lives Matter, aimed at countering violence perpetrated by law

enforcement against African American males. The movement has inspired conversations regarding the link between these killings and America's racist, violent past.

Six months later, on August 26, 2012, in the town of Marikana, north of Johannesburg, black South African mineworkers went on strike for higher wages. In what became known as the Marikana massacre, the police killed over 30 strikers, claiming the mineworkers had attacked them. A presidential investigation to respond to protests about the massacre resulted in officially absolving the police of any responsibility. This incident was reminiscent of police brutality during apartheid and most vividly of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre when almost 70 black South Africans were killed by police while protesting the "Pass laws" that required blacks to show government issued passes to move from one place to another. These laws were central to curtailing the movement of the black population during apartheid, and Sharpeville is now remembered with a national holiday since it marked the beginning of violent protests against the apartheid government. Many media reports and activists have viewed Marikana as a symbol of South Africa's ongoing inequality, injustice and violence targeted at the Black population [c.f., http://newint.org/blog/2015/08/14/marikana-mining-massacre-south-africa/, Retrieved May 1, 2016].

As 2012 came to a close, on December 3 in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the city council decided that the British flag atop the Belfast city hall would only fly on special days, instead of every day. Protestants (Loyalists/Unionists) protested, shutting down the nearby Christmas market. The protests spread through Northern Ireland over the next couple of months, often becoming violent. These protestors saw the removal of the flag

as an assault on Northern Ireland's Britishness. Ongoing violence in Northern Ireland almost always has roots in the violence of the Troubles that began in the late 1960s and ended with an externally brokered political solution in 1998 (the Belfast Agreement), as well as in the divided history that long preceded and led to the Troubles. Though the Belfast Agreement stopped mass violence, as the flags dispute shows the peace agreements have not been fully implemented, and Northern Ireland remains deeply segregated by the same societal divisions that led to the Troubles. Further, a shroud of silence falls over most of the conflicts that surface, making them difficult to confront and difficult for young people to understand.

These three critical moments show how the past surfaces in the still divided societies where the students in our research were growing up. In Northern Ireland Protestants/Loyalists/Unionists and Catholics/Nationalists/Republicans mostly live separate lives. In South Africa grave inequities and lingering segregation remain across black, coloured, and white groups. In the United States black, brown, and white groups, some of these immigrants, face inequities and segregation akin to that in South Africa.

In our larger study, we focus on gaining a nuanced understanding of adolescents' development as ethical civic actors during their four years of secondary school in these three divided societies. We define "ethical civic actors" as competent and responsible citizens, who recognize their responsibility to participate in creating and upholding a just and democratic society and are capable of taking prosocial action that helps to fend off threats to democracy and rectify injustices in their worlds. They are able to form thoughtful, reasoned judgments about social and civic matters, are concerned about the

rights and welfare of others, have the capacity to deliberate with others about issues affecting the common good, and believe that they can make a positive difference in relation to these matters [e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2004; Beaumont, 2010; Cohen, Pickerel, & Levine, 2010; Gould, Hall Jamieson, Levine, McConnell, Smith, McKinley-Browning, & Cambell, 2010; Malin, Ballard, Attai, Colby, & Damon, 2014; Youniss & Levine, 2009].

In this article, we aim to show how theories of development, which focus on how emerging civic actors' paths are intertwined with their sociocultural worlds, guided our analyses and how our emerging findings are adding to the theories. For this reason, we focus on the developmental path of one student from the larger study: Gabriela, a Latina from a low SES home in the northeastern US. She was in many ways demographically predicted to be "in the middle" of our data with respect to her civic development, based on findings from surveys of students in the three societies. The surveys measured students' civic understandings and responsibility and examined how their scores varied depending on the students' place of residence, ethnicity/race/religion, socioeconomic status, and gender.[1] US students were "in the middle" in that they generally scored significantly lower on civic understanding and civic responsibility than students from SA but significantly higher than those from NI. With respect to other demographic characteristics, she was "in the middle" since she was predicted to scored low on some

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[1]In all, 1,249 ninth- and tenth-graders completed the same surveys, adjusted only to account for potential differences cross-national interpretations, toward the beginning of the research. Surveys consisted of 7-scales from which we created a mega-score for each survey, which we used to make comparisons between how civically responsible and knowledgeable students were depending on: (a) the society in which they lived, (b) their gender, (c) their socioeconomic status, and (d) their ethnic/racial/religious group. After finding no interactions among these four variables, MANOVA revealed significant differences at the .0001 level between the levels of each variable. Separate country analyses revealed that in the US, differences across gender, ses, and ethnicity were significant at the .0001 level as well.

but high on others. In the US, Latinos and African Americans generally scored significantly lower than whites and Asians; and across the whole data set those from low SES families generally scored lower than those from high SES families. In these categories, then, Gabriela was expected to score low. However, females scored significantly higher than males. A single case "from the middle," and predicted to be high on some dimensions but low on others, we concluded, would allow us to examine the complexity of civic actors' intertwined sociocultural worlds. Also interesting about Gabriela was that fact that she attended a US school that was extraordinarily skilled at providing opportunities for all students, regardless of their ethnicity, socioeconomic class, or gender, making it unclear how strong the US societal forces would be that normally tend to push toward the national and international trends. In the end, Gabriela's case, with data across her four years of secondary school, has led us to refine our theories about how varied sociocultural worlds and an individual come together during civic development across time as well as to examine in some detail the role schooling can play.

Cultural-Historical Developmental Theory Grounds Analysis

We study the development of civic actors through a cultural-historical lens, relying on the theories of Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and some of his followers who focus on development as it occurs within activity systems [e.g., Cole, 1996; Engeström, 1987, 1999; Leont'ev, 1981; Saxe, 2012]. Using this lens, we examine activities that occur across time and during which we can observe development occurring. Engeström (1987, 1999) also writes about the importance of struggle to the process of learning and

development.[2] Struggles surface as activity systems come into conflict, for example when family or community activity systems around learning meet very different school activity systems. A focus on struggles that lead to development and which occur as part of "activity systems" that are embedded in sociocultural worlds is what guides us in examining development at points in time when sociocultural and individual worlds intertwine.

We supplement these Vygotskian and neo-Vygotskian theories with Mikhail Bakhtin's (1973, 1981; Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1991) theories of dialogism, which explain how multiple and variously influential voices of those with whom people come in contact enter into an individual's thinking as well as into the culture writ large. Further, just as Vygotsky and his followers study development across time, Bakhtin and his followers are concerned with how people develop their ideologies or idea systems, a process he labels "ideological becoming [see also Freedman & Ball, 2004; Morson, 2004]. Bakhtin too privileges struggle as part of what promotes learning and ultimately leads to ideological development.

In the civics arena, Flanagan (2003), in her research on political engagement, shows that civic development depends on Vygotsky's concept of mediation. Consistent with our understanding of Vygotsky, she shows how membership in institutions and communities "mediate" youth development as young people strive to contribute to a larger civic culture or "polity" in her words (p. 257). Finally, Daiute (2006, 2014) shows

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[2]Engeström (1987) claims that struggle marks the highest level of learning, what he calls Learning IV, which seems similar to Vygotsky's concept of development. At this level Engeström argues that learners face "double binds," a concept derived from Bateson (1972). The struggles related to double binds present problems so serious that they may be impossible to resolve successfully since every choice has significant disadvantages, with no choice a good one.

the importance of analyzing young people's evolving values as they develop as civic actors who also shape the institutions with which they affiliate, just as those institutions shape them.

How Sociocultural Worlds Come Together in Relationship to Civic Development

Studies of civic development, regardless of their theoretical orientation, provide evidence that varied societal spaces come together to influence civic development [Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010]. Much of the research on these spaces, identifies how the civic dispositions and engagement of young people differ, depending on the societal spaces with which the youth identify—as determined by common demographic markers—ethnic affiliation, gender, and socioeconomic status. Many of these studies are based on large scale surveys and assessments (including the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] and the CivEd studies by the International Education Association [IEA]). They do not examine what happens within varied societal spaces but rather indicate differences by showing contrasts in the survey responses of varied groups. The results highlight a "gap" between rich and poor and on NAEP between whites, Latinos, and blacks [Lutkus & Weiss, 2007; Niemi & Junn, 1998], though Latinos narrowed their gaps with whites on the the 2006 and 2014 NAEP assessments [Retrieved April 23, 2016 from: http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/hgc_2014/#summary]. Complicating this picture, high percentages of young people from these same "low-performing" groups are participating in civic life [Hart, Atkins, Markey, & Youniss, 2004; Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, & Barber, 2008]. Levinson's (2012) classroom study offers additional complicating data,

showing the inadequate explanatory value of the familiar demographic labels of white, Hispanic, black, and Asian that mark large scale survey research.

Other research shows that these same young people generally receive less or lower quality civic education [Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Levinson, 2010] and that school characteristics explain civic engagement outcomes over and above individual demographic characteristics [Baldi, Perie, Skidmore, Greenberg, & Hahn, 2001; Wilkenfeld, 2009]. These findings suggest that the "civic empowerment gap" [Levinson, 2010, 2012] can be narrowed when the "civic opportunity gap" [Kahne & Sporte, 2008] is reduced. Further, they suggest that schools can matter for all students.

Qualitative studies and collections of essays have begun to offer suggestions for the kind of civic instruction that might support civic development. The studies show the value for students of debating about controversial political issues and the necessity for teachers to learn to handle conflict [Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015]; the importance of students learning to respect diversity in a democracy [Parker, 2003, 2015]; and the necessity for teachers to understand that many students from oppressed groups have had experiences that may conflict with democratic ideals and that may decrease their interest in some types of civic action, such as voting, but increase their interest in social protest [Rubin, 2007].

To date, in the field of research on the relationship between societal divisions and civic development, we have not found studies that have explored the relationship between students' school experiences and their development as ethical civic actors, especially as they develop across the four secondary school years.

Research Questions

The aim of this study is to build from and add to cultural-historical developmental theory and civics research with a focus on the development of ethical civic actors. Towards that end, we ask the following questions of our case study: What sociocultural worlds are intertwined with this student's development as a civic actor, and how do interactions among activities within sociocultural worlds function across time in relation to the case study student's development? In particular, what struggles does this student face as these worlds interact, and how do the struggles change across time? What is the role of civic action in the student's development and in the very nature of the sociocultural worlds themselves? What developmental challenges remain?

Selecting the Case Study Student: Gabriela and her School

We selected Gabriela from a subset of the data from the larger study, that includes 18 carefully-selected, focal students (six per society).[3] These students attended a case study school in each country that inasmuch as was possible served students from multiple sociocultural groups and had a strong, whole-school civics program that dealt explicitly with issues of societal division.

Gabriela's school in the US was somewhat integrated across racial groups and had a strong, whole-school civics program. At this school we also could observe students' interacting in intertwining worlds related to the major ongoing societal conflicts essential to our theoretical understandings about civic development in divided societies. Magnet, a small school with about 250 students in grades 9-12, was labeled a somewhat

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[3]Other student data, besides the case study students, included a series of focus groups across four years with students at two schools serving populations on different sides of the divides in each society, surveys from a larger number of students. The rest of the data set provides important contextualization for the focal student data.

desegregated school (over 50% non-white).[4] At the time of our study, 74% were African American, 13% white, and 13% Latino. Though not perfectly balanced across ethnic groups, Magnet worked hard to integrate members of all groups into the school community.

Second, the civics program at Magnet was carefully designed to support civic development in a divided society through the development of young civic actors. The whole-school program used history to ground students' awareness of the legacies of identity-group conflict, to develop their capacity to think critically about how history relates to events in the present, to deepen their awareness of how the choices of individuals and groups shape society, and to foster their ethical civic engagement. In the area of civics, Magnet benefits from its partnership with the educational organization, Facing History and Ourselves (FH).[5] Facing History provides Magnet teachers with ongoing professional development, curricular materials, and methods for using historical cases of collective violence against identity-groups as well as examples of efforts to promote civil rights and social justice. Magnet also emphasized civic action and helped students learn to carry out effective projects in their communities. Finally, Magnet offered rigorous college preparation for all students. Magnet students experienced

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[4]Though the US Department of Education classified Magnet as a somewhat desegregated school (over 50% non-white), it was not classified as multiracial (less than 50% white). Still, Magnet is not an intensely segregated school of the sort often found in the US with over 90% or even 99% minority populations [Orfield & Ee, 2015, pp. 31, 46]. Magnet also included students across income levels but had 74% on free and reduced lunch, a significantly higher percentage than the state average of 33.6% (Retrieved May 20, 2015 from http://high-schools.com/directory/ct/cities/new-haven/new-haven-academy/90279000547/).

[5] Facing History was established in 1976 and has trained 25,000 teachers to emphasize ethical reflection alongside intellectual rigor and emotional engagement to promote an end-goal of informed civic responsibility. FH workshops and materials stress nuanced and complex thinking about civic action as it focuses on "the meaning of civic participation and the critical need to promote a just society." The focus is not on participation in general, but on *ethical* and *just* participation (see https://www.facinghistory.org/ for more detail).

unusually high levels of success in college attainment and retention across all

ethnic/racial and income groups.[6]

Of the six US focal students from Magnet, we chose Gabriela not only because

she was "in the middle" with respect to the data set, but also because she faced a number

of fundamental struggles related to developing as a civic actor, struggles which we

thought would inform theory and also allow the reader to see clearly the complex

intertwined processes involved in civic development. Although not the only story of civic

development that we have to tell, Gabriela's story is an important one.

Learning about Gabriela's Development as an Ethical Civic Actor

We learned about Gabriela's development as an ethical civic actor through

analyzing extensive qualitative data that we collected over her four years in high school.

These data included (a) six, hour-long, audio recorded and fully transcribed interviews

with Gabriela focused on her thinking about civic issues, conducted by Freedman or

Murphy: one toward the beginning of 9th and 10th grades and one toward the end of

grades 9, 10, 11, and 12; (b) copies of Gabriela's writing for civic-oriented class

assignments and other relevant writing during grades 9 and 10 and as available in grades

11 and 12; (c) Gabriela's civics teacher's end-of-term written evaluations, audio recorded

and fully transcribed interviews by Freedman or Murphy with this teacher about

Gabriela's civic and academic development, and her teachers' research field notes from

informal conversations with Gabriela that pertained to her progress; (d) classroom

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[6]In a study of graduates between 2007 and 2012, all were accepted by at least one college and 74% enrolled within a year of graduation. Of those, 85% persisted from the first to the second year in college [Romer, Leonard, & Barr, 2014]. These persistence percentages are higher than the national averages of 80% for high-minority, low-income, urban schools, and the district averages of 75%, but slightly lower than national persistence rate for high-income, low-minority schools of 88%.

observations by Freedman, Murphy, and research assistant, Ali Hawkins, resulting in

field notes and selective transcriptions or audio recordings: 10 observations in grade 9

and 13 in grade 10; and field notes from informal observations during visits to the school

to conduct interviews in grades 11 and 12 or to collect other written data; and (e) whole

school data related to Gabriela's experiences and growth that included field notes from

informal interviews with other school personnel who interacted with Gabriela; field notes

on observations of whole-school civic-related activities, such as Town Hall Meetings

when students and teachers gathered every other week to discuss and participate in issues

affecting the community; and copies of school documents, including photos, art, and

signs around the school.

To analyze Gabriela's interviews and her writing and interviews with her teacher,

we first coded them in Atlas ti, using thematic codes, which emerged from the analysis of

cross-societal data collected for the larger study. Coding first helped us organize the data

by topics related to students' understandings of civic responsibility and action, their

references to their struggles, and indications of how their understandings and actions

changed over four years. In the coding, to explore development, we focused on

identifying what neo-Vygotskian Engeström (1987, 1999) calls "activity systems." Then,

we looked within the activity systems at what neo-Vygotskian Saxe (2012) calls

"collective practices." These show occurrences of "microgenesis," which Saxe explains

are group practices when the individual (ontogenesis) and society (sociogenesis) come

together in "recurring structures of social activity that are constituted as people construct,

communicate about, and accomplish recurrent problems over historical time" (p. 22). We

found that the "collective practices" were often embedded in students' narratives and

narrative explanations.[7] Following methods from Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) and Daiute

(2014), we identified Gabriela's narratives, including her narrative explanations,

especially looking for narratives of struggle. Then we explored those narratives for

Gabriela's values; changing values provided another lens for viewing her civic

development [Daiute, 2006, 2014].

Gabriela, like all the students in the research, freely chose what she wanted to

divulge. Before coming to conclusions about patterns in the data about Gabriela's

development, we also read the rest of the relevant data and looked for contradictions and

for confirmation of the patterns we had identified. In this process we also were attentive

to how she framed her thoughts and feelings--both for the researcher audience and for her

teacher audience. Through this process we worked to be sensitive to and note any

potential influence of audience on what Gabriela divulged.

Gabriela's Intersecting Sociocultural Worlds

Gabriela's civic development was bound to three, intersecting sociocultural

worlds: (a) her family, (b) her mostly Latino community outside school, and (c) her

school. As reported by Gabriela in the school context, these worlds are embedded in and

shaped by US society. Gabriela's story is one of how these worlds intersected and though

their intersections created sites of struggle and led her to shift her values, come to new

understandings, meet challenges, and receive support in the process of learning and

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[7]We developed the term "narrative explanation" because sometimes Gabriela seemed to narrate an explanation in ways that did not fit conventional definitions of narratives but were important for the analysis. The narrative explanations did not tell about past events but rather explained students' opinions and interpretations. Sometimes they referred to narratives that had been read in class and recounted those narratives in the service of an explanation of an interpretation.

development. We explore its support of her growth, its challenges, its development alongside hers, and its interactions with her family and community worlds that were also central to her growth.

Gabriela Struggles to Speak her Mind

We first met Gabriela as a reserved and anxious ninth grader, unable to and uninterested in speaking her mind publicly. We could not imagine that by the end of her journey we would see a confident and accomplished 12th-grader, excited about beginning her university days at nearby Yale University and ethically committed to putting forth her views. In order to grow into being able to speak her mind, she struggled mightily to face and understand her past school experiences that in effect had silenced her. She also struggled to cope with many ongoing, seemingly small, but often consequential conflicts between her family and her school that occurred as she engaged in this process of coming to terms with her past.

Gabriela was the oldest of three children, born to immigrants from Mexico who came to the US just before Gabriela was born. Though they placed a high value on education for Gabriela, they had little formal education themselves and no experience with the US educational system. Gabriela's parents worked hard at low-paying jobs, and the family lived at the poverty line. Gabriela gained much emotional support from them and felt responsible for contributing to their financial security. Like most of her peers, Gabriela came to Magnet because she wanted to go to college and was attracted to Magnet's reputation for placing students in higher education. Magnet played a pivotal role in helping her overcome barriers that could have easily stymied her, including how

they worked with her to learn to speak her mind, with the school's influence boosted, and in some case made possible, by how it involved her family.

At the end of 12th grade Gabriela narrated what she saw as her two greatest civics-related developmental accomplishments, which showed up in the codes related to her talk about her development and change. Within this talk she named these accomplishments and related them to each other: (a) coming to believe that she mattered and could contribute to the world, and (b) learning to speak up about her thoughts. Further, her talk about these accomplishments co-occurred with codes related to ways her school contributed to her development and change:

> I really didn't even speak when I first got here [Magnet High], and I really thought that I didn't matter, but . . . Magnet High teaches you that you do matter. No matter how small you may think you are in the world. And that every person can contribute to the world. And they have a wonderful team of amazing people that will help you and will push you to better yourself. They won't necessarily better you. They will push you to better yourself. (Narrative 1: Interview, Grade 12, June)

Gabriela's past school experiences both supported her and presented challenges. Her K-4, bilingual, elementary school gave her a solid academic and social start. Like most of her peers at the school, she spoke Spanish at home and became fully fluent in academic English and Spanish at school.

While she thrived in her elementary school, which she said was mostly Latino, her 5th-8th grade middle school experience proved difficult, and ultimately we learned

that it left her with lasting trauma. She explained that she was bullied there, a topic she initiated 12 times across four of her six interviews. The bullying in middle school contributed to her inability to speak when she first came to Magnet.

At the middle school, Gabriela had few friends at first and in fifth grade was bullied for sticking up for another student who was being bullied. She recounted the following story of what led to a major life struggle critical to her civic development:

> I was the new student, and I was used to saying what was on my mind and having people **back me up** or **not back me up** . . . So one time I stuck up for another person, who was being bullied, and then that brought the bully's attention towards me, but at that school nobody wanted to **back you up**. So I was **by myself** [bold ours]. (Narrative 2: Interview, Grade 12, June)

Her middle school felt unsafe, not only because she was bullied but also because she felt alone, with no space to speak honestly about her thoughts. In her narrative, she mentions four times not being backed up or being alone (see bold). Indeed the bullying connected to her first narrative about what she was like when she first came to Magnet; "I really didn't even speak" and "I didn't matter" (see Narrative 1).

Her feelings of aloneness during middle school were also clear in how, during her interviews, she inaccurately recalled her minority group status. In middle school, she felt that she was more in the minority as a Mexican American than she was at Magnet: "it [the middles school] was mostly black people and now I come here [to Magnet] and there's like all kinds of different people." In fact, the middle school was 33% Latino at the time, with African-Americans in the majority at 56%; Magnet, by contrast, had a

much lower percentage of Latinos, only 13%, and an even greater majority of African Americans at 74%. Her perceptions are likely grounded in the fact that at Magnet one's ethnic identity seemed not so consequential since the community was inclusive of and valued students' differences across many boundaries. The sense of it being a place filled with "all kinds of different people" became a reality, with traditional categories becoming blurred. We watched one of our focal students being accepted as he questioned his gender position and explored his femininity; we watched another go through a "goth" period, sporting an extreme hair cut and many body piercings.

In ninth-grade Gabriela also blamed herself for the bullying: "I didn't know who not to mess with, who not to say the wrong thing to. So then they started targeting me, started bothering me" (Narrative 2: Interview, Grade 9, December). She concluded that she was bullied because she was new and unknowingly messed with the wrong people. She left clues to her lingering problems in December of ninth grade on an identity chart she constructed as part of a journal activity, with spokes identifying how she would describe herself. She said on one spoke that she was "moody" and on another that she would "panic a lot." The comment about panic elicited a response from her teacher with an invitation to talk; however, we have no information about whether Gabriela responded to the invitation or about whether she and her teacher talked.

In January of ninth grade, on an end-of-semester evaluation of her Facing History civics class, Gabriela further revealed her struggles. She wrote that she disliked this class that was central to Magnet's goals of encouraging civic responsibility, using strong language to denounce class discussion, both about being expected to speak in class and

about listening to her peers' speaking. She first voiced her feelings in writing as something of a rant in response to a much broader question, "What films, readings, discussions, or activities did you like the least in this class? Why?" She wrote, "Well the discussions and reading out of the blue books were dull. Speaking aloud in class is horrid. And hearing people ramble on mindlessly was even worse." Knowing she was expected to speak more, she claimed that she "could," but she reiterated her resistance and resentment, claiming not to know what "difference" it would make if she spoke or didn't. Finally, in response to a question asking if she wanted to say anything more, she restated her feelings, this time with even more anger, some of it again focused on her classmates:

> I despised having to talk sometimes and especially listening to people talk and talk, and argue and just be mindless and hypocritical. I thought that they would just not [be] quiet and think before they speak. People even applauded whilst I shook my head. (Narrative 3: Journal, Grade 9, January)

By Grade 12 (Narratives 1 and 2), Gabriela clearly had come to value being able to put forth her ideas and hoped thereby to make a difference in the world; and she had come to recognize the importance of a supportive community to be able to do that safely. But in ninth grade she critiqued those who spoke out, calling them "mindless and hypocritical." Her language was so harsh that if she acted out any of these feelings, she could have made others feel unsafe.

Gabriela mentioned two types of school-related activities that helped change her stance and push forward her development as a civic actor. First, was the substance of the curriculum and second was space to have a private written dialogue with her teacher in

her journals. Gabriela's talk in her interviews indicated that the curriculum, which was based on Facing History materials, was at the heart of what began to help her understand intellectually why speaking up was important. In ninth grade, the class studied the varied responses of everyday Germans during the Weimar Republic in Nazi Germany. They learned how passivity played a large role in letting Germany fall to Hitler. Even as Gabriela was writing that being asked to speak in class was "horrid," she also wrote in her journal that she was horrified by the consequences of people not speaking up in Weimar Germany: "These people have been very brave and courageous by upstanding and uprising from their crowd. They hid Jewish people, **spoke up**, and stayed to their beliefs. I don't really know what else they could've done. They did a terrific thing by helping out [bold ours]" (Narrative/Explanation 4: Journal, Grade 9, December). She faced the kind of "double bind" that Engeström (1987) argues creates serious, almost unresolvable struggles and underlies the most profound learning (see footnote 2). Having a voice took on more meaning than just speaking out during a class discussion, while her experience with bullying in middle school sensitized her to the complexities of speaking out in what she felt were dangerous civic spaces. On the one hand Gabriela indicated that she knew she must speak out, but on the other hand she felt that she couldn't.

Meanwhile, as the above entries from Gabriela's journals show, including the one about her disdain for her peers, her teacher was finding strategic ways to begin to develop Gabriela's voice through her writing. In her written voice her teacher saw not only Gabriela's struggles with her peers, but also her willingness to confide and her underlying sensitivity to the plight of others. Gabriela's writing became her first safe space in the

school context for engagement and her teacher took advantage of that space to push her forward.

Worried that her inability to talk in class might affect her grades and knowing that she had much to say, sometime during 10th grade Gabriela concluded that in order to change, she would need additional help. She decided to talk to the school counselor. The counselor suggested that she see a therapist, which resulted in tensions between the values of her family and her school worlds. Her parents were opposed to therapy, thinking it was only for crazy people, not for their Gabriela. The school made a critical, timely intervention, bridging divides between Gabriela's school and home worlds. The counselor visited Gabriela's parents at their home and helped Gabriela convince them to allow her to see the therapist. The therapist ultimately led Gabriela to conclude that her anxiety was related to being bullied for speaking out, and the bullying had left her with a fear of her peers. Further she realized being bullied was not her fault. The therapist then helped her develop strategies for overcoming her fears.

By the end of 10th grade, after that intervention had occurred, Gabriela narrated how she made the transition to talking in class and what it felt like. In her interview we asked if she had ever chosen to "cross a border" to meet or interact with other people who were not like her. While we were expecting answers related to engaging with people from different backgrounds or crossing into other communities, Gabriela replied, "I guess it was an internal thing" (Interview, Grade 10, May):

I'm like, "Let me let me cross that boundary," I guess. "Let me branch out. Let me talk to people. Let me be a little louder. Let me like say what I feel." Maybe I

shouldn't keep it all inside. Maybe I should say what I feel even though nobody

may care. At least it's out there. (Narrative 5: Interview, Grade 10, May)

When next asked what led her to actually change her behavior, she referenced the

bullying, without explicitly naming it:

I was like, "What if someone's **mean** to me? What if someone **says something to**

me?" Like I don't like talking in front of the class because I feel like someone

would say something **mean** to me because it's happened before. You know. Or

like I couldn't even come inside a classroom without someone **saying something**.

And it's like "Why?" I didn't understand people. I was like "I don't understand

anything." And then I was like, "I don't care anymore." [bold ours] (Narrative 6:

Interview, Grade 10, May)

In spite of these fears she developed her voice. She decided that she would no

longer allow her fears of what others thought prevent her from speaking. She also

developed a growing trust in her peers. By the end of 10th grade, Gabriela began to speak

up when she disagreed with something. She was feeling safer in the school because she

was making friends whom she trusted and feeling close to the teachers and principal as

well. As she said during her interview at the end of tenth grade, "I've made good friends.

. . . My friends this year, it's like they understand more. They get me more." And about

her teachers she added: "Last year it was like you taught me and that's it. And nobody

wouldn't really care but . . . this year is like, "Oh yeah, I can conversate with you. You

know, you're a cool adult." She further volunteered that "This principal is different, like

he'll take the time to make sure you're okay in this school." Gabriela concluded that

Magnet's small and strong community allowed students to get to know one another, and she revealed that she "would be SO so nervous" about voicing her opinions in a bigger school.

She further no longer felt alone intellectually because she thought she could find someone who would agree with her in spite of people's differences:

> I feel a little comfortable. It's like I know we're all so different, and if I say something, I know someone's gonna agree. . . So like let me just talk to them about how we agree on things. (Narrative 7: Interview, Grade 10, May)

To access the full range of support that was necessary for her to make what seems a major developmental change, Gabriela needed a whole-school "activity system" that connected to and coordinated with her family [Engeström, 1999]. No single person was sufficient. Many whole-school, communal activities supported her as well. In the end, it was not Gabriela's ability to speak per se that developed; rather what developed were aspects of her sense of self that allowed her not only to speak but to heal from being bullied and to differentiate between safe and unsafe school spaces. At Magnet, she developed friendships and become part of the school's social and intellectual communities. Further, she came to understand the importance of speaking up as part of contributing to her socio-cultural worlds.

Struggles to Activate an Inclusive "Universe of Obligation" for Civic Action

Facing History courses introduce the term "universe of obligation" to help young people reflect on those in society for whom they feel a sense of responsibility and whose

"injuries call for [amends]."[8] This concept proved crucial in examining Gabriela's civic development since many Magnet ninth-graders, including Gabriela, entered with a very narrow understanding of others' perspectives related to societal divisions and a limited sense of responsibility with respect to those divides. Gabriela revealed the local nature of her initial universe of obligation when she explained what she thought she had to do to be a good citizen:

> I think [what] it takes to be a good citizen is that **you** have to help **your** community, **yourself**, **your** people, and the ones around **you**. You have to become a part of **your** community. Be a citizen of **your** community and help as much as **you** can, help others as much as **you** can, and others will help **you** as much as they can [bold ours]. (<u>Narrative/Explanation 8</u>: Interview, Grade 9, December)

She signaled her personal and local focus with her repetition of "you/your/yourself" to refer to the relationship between the helper and the helped. Her objects of responsibility seem to be those whom she knew and was close to personally—"your people" and "your community." She also thought about civic responsibility in terms of social reciprocity—when you help others, "others will help you" [Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Westheimer, 2015]. She did not mention that it might be important to stand up for others, even people one might not know, in a civil society, though in her writing about the Holocaust she was moving in that direction.

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[8]The term "universe of obligation" and the concept of needing to make amends appears in Strom's (1994) Facing History book (from Fein, p. 4). Originally the term applied to nations, not individuals, and the idea was that a nation's universe of obligation needed to include and make amends to groups vulnerable to discrimination and persecution. In thinking about individuals and young people's growing universes of obligation, we think about civic growth that supports a democratic nation-state or country involves a similar sense of one's universe of obligation. The term responsibility is sometimes used instead of obligation.

Opening the global space during summer school at Yale. Though Gabriela

made new friends at Magnet during ninth and 10th grades and was involved in an

extracurricular social action project in 10th grade, she came to know new civic spaces

when she won a highly competitive scholarship to attend a summer program at nearby

Yale University between 11th and 12th grades.[9] The program opened a global space for

Gabriela and previewed what an environment like Yale might offer and how it might

affect her civic development. She met many other young people who were very different

than she was.

Magnet supported her at every step to make this turning point happen.

The school counselor put an application on her homeroom desk, with a note encouraging

her to apply. When she was accepted her parents had reservations about allowing her to

live away from home, and she also was nervous about going away for the first time,

admitting how her old fears about her safety in a new school community came back, "I'm

always a bit nervous when I'm in environments with new people" (Interview, Grade 11,

June). The school counselor once again intervened to convince her and her parents that

spending five weeks on the Yale campus "was not only safe, but was in fact worthwhile"

(Teacher Interview, Grade 12, August).

Gabriela recapped the highlights of her summer, with a tone of amazement,

especially about the affordances of exposure to distant others:

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[9]Gabriela was awarded a highly competitive, all expense paid scholarship, the Shafer Family Scholarship, for summer school at Yale. All applicants had to be nominated by their high school guidance counselors. The scholarship gave its winners "the opportunity to participate in the co-curricular, recreational, and social programs with students from other high schools and colleges from across the country and around the world." (http://onhsa.yale.edu/shafer-family-summer-school-scholarships-yale-university-summer-session)

I really found it interesting to meet people of different cultures, different

countries. I thought it was the coolest thing ever. Like I met different people from

different countries and it just blew my mind. And I got along with them so well.

Like I made very good friends with people from like China and and Mexico and

all these places, and it was amazing. (Narrative 9: Interview, Grade 12, June)

She continued by explaining how Magnet had prepared her to take advantage of the

opportunity:

I think that . . I got along with them well because I was open to their ideas and

their backgrounds and their opinions, their experiences even though they came

from places way different than where I come from. And I think that comes from

Magnet . . the appreciation of other cultures and the understanding that there are

different opinions out there, and beliefs and experiences. That comes from here

[Magnet]. (Narrative/Explanation 10: Interview, Grade 12, June)

It may be the case that she found easier acceptance from foreign students than US

students who may have recognized more easily the markers of US social classes.

Nevertheless, it is also important that Gabriela is no longer only seeking to find people

who agree with her and share her views; she is seeking and is developing tolerance for

difference.

One might say that Gabriela's "universe of obligation" broadened to include her

school, Magnet, and that she was gaining knowledge about the broader global world, with

Magnet serving as a conduit to that world. One of the findings from the larger study was

that young people from wealthy homes, who attended more elite schools, in all three

societies, oriented to global civic action projects, but did not necessarily have a clear understanding of civic needs or societal divisions near home. The also did not necessarily have a deep global outlook or a good sense of global needs. Gabriela was not in danger of losing sight of the civic needs of the Latino community, of which she was a part, but she was moving in the direction of developing global interests, not in the direction of deepening her understandings of US societal divisions.

Constructing realistic civic and personal action in a 12th grade social action project. Magnet's culminating Social Action Project (SAP) brought her back to her commitments to her local community and perhaps in some ways laid a foundation for expanding her local civic understandings. Gabriela recruited her friend and classmate Julian, another Mexican American, who also had been bullied as a youngster, to collaborate on her project. Together they developed a program for middle schoolers who had been bullied and who attended Gabriela's old middle school. Gabriela's goal was to help these youngsters cope with the effects of bullying.

Through this project Gabriela first learned to mount a successful social action project. After floating several overly-ambitious plans, the teacher-advisor for the project helped Gabriela and Julian shape ideas that would be useful but also manageable in the available time. Initially, they wanted to make a film about bullying, but as their advisor pointed out, they had no experience with filmmaking and not enough time to learn the craft. They next proposed an in-school action project and again started with grandiose plans. Ultimately, with additional guidance, they settled on something manageable: a week-long workshop for bullying victims. Gabriela explained that they named the project

"HELP week which is Happiness Empowerment Love and Peace," so when the kids say they need help," they are actually saying "I need happiness, empowerment, love and peace" (Interview, Grade 12, June). The project ended successfully, with Gabriela's former fifth-grade teacher moved to write a letter to her civics teacher at Magnet, praising the impact of Gabriela's and Julian's efforts:

> I thought that each student learned a lot in a short period of time and made them think about what was going on in their own lives. A few of students in particular really opened up and this experience really changed their lives.

By completing this project, Gabriela found a way to bring the past world of her middle school experience into the present and also to bring it into her current high school world in a positive and meaningful way.

Other possible influences on Gabriela's capacity to expand her "universe of obligation." It is worth mentioning that Gabriela claimed that a 10th grade, volunteer civic action project changed her outlooks on life in that she learned that she could focus her attention on benefiting others in her very diverse local community rather than just herself. She also had an opportunity to work closely with a Yale student. She made these claims as part of a self-assessment for her Gateway Project[10] at the end of 10th grade where she knew her presentation of self as a learner would be to her benefit. The project, a charity walk for battered women and children, however, was poorly planned and failed to raise much money, and overall was a disappointment. It remains unclear how much and in what ways it influenced her civic development.

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[10]The Gateway was a major project at the end of 10th grade when students explained what they had learned in their first two years of high school and set their course for the next two years. It functioned as a mid-course progress evaluation.

Gabriela also gained relevant academic knowledge about how to take the perspective of varied others, especially during her 10th grade study of the divided societies of Northern Ireland and South Africa. She reacted strongly to the film, *Bloody Sunday*, saying it left her wanting to work for world peace:

> Well I'm like really emotional right now, I am so upset, sad, angered, and frustrated. I know it is just a film, but it is based on something real, that actually happened in the world and many youths, young people, voicing their opinion as young humans, people should do, died that day. And it upsets me, when as humans, I have the right to say whatever I want, and when we are denied that, especially as young people, It just sucks. and many misunderstandings lead to much death, and it just got to me. That is what motivates me to try to find a way to help keep peace in the world. (Narrative 11, Interview, US Grade 10, May)

Her focus on peace is one that she picked up when she named her senior year Social Action Project, HELP, which stood for Happiness, Empowerment, Love, and Peace.

Gaps in Gabriela's Understanding of Civic Mutuality

By the end of 12th grade Gabriela knew that she wanted to participate; and she knew how to participate in and organize a civic action project, including how to collaborate with her peers in meaningful activity. She saw herself as someone who could make a difference and even wrote about civic action on her 12th grade identity chart, saying "I want to make a difference in the world and contribute something for others," and "I want to do something that combines my love of other cultures and writing. Maybe human rights journalism?"

However, when we left Gabriela, she had difficulty understanding the full complexity of her divided society near home. She particularly had difficulty taking the perspective of African Americans and expanding her "universe of obligation" around issues of race in the US. Her difficulties show some of the complexity of dealing with legacies of oppression in divided societies and of combatting powerful ways of thinking that permeate the society itself.

In our data collection during both focus groups and interviews we used a technique that proved extremely helpful in making clear how young people were responding to divisions in their worlds and how those responses were evolving in relation to their understandings. We presented the critical incidents from current events with which we opened this article, looking for students' response both at the end of their 10th grade year and the end of their 12th grade year. In the US, that incident was Trayvon Martin's killing. We developed a set of prompts to help us understand the students' knowledge about, understandings of, and responses to the incidents. These interviews shed a clear light on students' reasoning about issues of division, in the US particularly about their reasoning related to divisions of race in the United States.

For the most part, students responded to Martin's killing and the acquittal of George Zimmerman through the lens of their racial/ethnic group. Their responses reflected the divided responses of the wider society. Gabriela's response is illuminating. Like most of the non-African American students, she knew little about the case. Even though she knew race mattered, she wished it would go away, saying "I wish race didn't affect anything at all. In life. But . . I guess it does" (Interview, Grade 10, May). When

asked what she knew about "the talk" that African Americans give their male children about the police, she was critical of the practice because she thought it was both unnecessary and potentially harmful to the children:

> I don't know why they give their kids that talk. It's like why would you tell your kid "Oh watch out for the cops." Or you know– or "Let me prepare you for the police." It's like you're telling the kid, "You're gonna end up talking to the police at some point in your life." Which you shouldn't do. You should motivate them. And that kid grows up, and he's like, "Well, my mom taught me to be like– how to talk so cops, so I'm like ready to talk to cops." (Narrative 12: Interview, Grade 10, May)

To Gabriela, "the talk" was an indicator that African American parents were setting expectations for their children to get in trouble, and so the children did.

Though she had discussed structural inequalities in school, she did not believe they were the reason so many African American males were victims of police brutality and incarceration. Her sense of cause was based on her belief that Latinos faced more barriers than African Americans who were "born here" and on her anger that her struggles were not sufficiently recognized in the larger US culture:

> If you were born here you have the same rights as everybody else who was born here, the same rights as every citizen so there's– you can make it, you can like move out of you know a broken down home. You can move and make it big and be well off. (Narrative 13: Interview, Grade 10, May)

She contrasted their life-chances with the life-chances of non-Americans who do not have "the same– like rights to move up in the world" (Interview, Grade 10, May). Gabriela establishes a hierarchy of victimization and fears that resources for victim groups, such as media attention, political will and compassion, are finite. This reveals a troubling loop— when historically unacknowledged or under acknowledged actors become in competition with each other for legitimate attention and resources.

By the end of 12th grade, Gabriela still showed a lack of interest in and lack of empathy for African Americans and issues of racism toward African Americans in the US. When we asked her what she thought about Zimmerman's trial, she admitted, "I didn't really think about it much, to be honest." During this final interview, in order to understand in more depth students' views on issues of race, we gave all students a copy of President Obama's speech reflecting on the acquittal, read it aloud to them, and stopped at the end of each paragraph to ask them to share their thoughts on each point he made. Having learned to read critically, she, like all of the students at Magnet, took her pencil to the text. She said she distrusted Obama's claims that African Americans were "disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system, that they're disproportionately both victims and perpetrators of violence." She asked, "Where does he get this information from?" She made excuses for her own ignorance of the facts, blaming her confusion on the media, which she claimed offered so many opinions that she didn't know what to believe. Her conclusion was harsh; when Obama referred to African Americans' "very difficult history" in the US, she asked:

Are they talking about racial times? Like are they still not over that. And I want to

know why they're not over that. Like could the African American community use

some sort of closure? And if so, would that help them out? (Interview, Grade 12,

June)

Gabriela also reiterated her 10th-grade claims that other groups, like her own, were more

victimized than African Americans and remained angry that her group was not receiving

as much attention as African Americans. She asked directly, "Why talk about only

African Americans? Why not talk about the other races?" Indeed, this sticking point

made it hard for Gabriela to sympathize with African American's struggles. Gabriela's

responses present an important complexity when thinking about the development of

ethical civic actors in divided societies. Where collaboration or coalition building could

be seen as an opportunity, she asks a fair question, "What about my group?"

Gabriela's question indexes a common challenge facing schools in divided

societies—when multiple groups in a culture have experienced oppression and when

some groups or people within those groups feel that their history and their experiences

have not been acknowledged or have not been acknowledged sufficiently: the role of

education and the significant role that teachers and schools play in the process of redress,

repair and social reconstruction. How do teachers address the violent past of one group,

for example, without sending the message that other groups are excluded? How do they

avoid a mile wide and inch deep approach to exploring these histories by lightly touching

on all groups in an effort to be inclusive but, in the process, saying little and perhaps

showing patterns or obscuring them because of the lack of depth? How do teachers help

students like Gabriela articulate their views respectfully and negotiate their differences with their peers of different identity groups? How can teachers also help Gabriela to think about her own thinking, to be challenged to hear her own lack of empathy and anger and to explore it?

At the end of our study, Gabriela and her school were still developing in this area. Importantly, Magnet staff responded by working in the ensuing years to create new paths of growth for students like Gabriela—by reshaping the curriculum to focus students on making deeper connections between history and events today, showing how varied groups' legacies affect us all, and how everyone's well-being is tied to these ongoing identity-based struggles, no matter whose struggles they are.

Conclusion

We return to our research questions about how ethical civic actors develop during the secondary school years when they grow up in divided societies. Through Gabriela's case, we uncovered critical ways the school was dynamically intertwined with her development. As we synthesize our findings, we add two theoretical concepts to our understanding of how social worlds, particularly those related to the institution of the school, are part of civic development for individuals who comprise those worlds: "*macro-supports*" and "*micro-supports*."

Macro-supports are the large structures within the school (or potentially any institution) that make ethical civic development possible. In Gabriela's case they included an intentionally structured whole school community, with specific programs and activities that led to integration across ethnic/racial groups; a culture among the staff of

being available to help students with individual struggles, both in school and outside of class time; a strong civics and civics-action curriculum that provided an intellectual foundation for understanding societal conflicts and a pedagogical emphasis on voicing and listening to different perspectives; and community civic action activities. All of these macro-supports were dynamic, threading through all four years of a student's schooling and themselves changing and developing in relation to the individuals developing within the institution.

Micro-supports, in contrast, accompany and help realize the promise of the macro-supports. The micro-supports are often small acts that we think of as the opposite of the repeated small assaults on people related to their identity and commonly called "micro-agressions" [e.g., Sue, 2010]. But just as micro-aggressions add up and influence the way the learner functions, so do micro-supports. In Vygotksian and Bakhtinian terms, micro-supports would be embedded in everyday "collective practices," to use Saxe's (2012) concept, where the seeds of development lie. They also are where multiple and different voices come together and lead to what Bakhtin (1973) called "ideololgical discourse" and Bakhtin (1981; Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1991) called "ideological becoming."

Given our study design, we observed many of the macro-supports. However, we rarely observed micro-supports directly. What we could see were their traces in Gabriela's talk—in how she reported her struggles and in how she explicitly valued them. They further were embedded in evidence of Gabriela's developmental progress. For example, when she reported facing conflicts between her home and school worlds, her counselor had conversations with her and her family that she told us made a difference

and that we observed result in a cascade of positive outcomes. In future research, it would be useful to examine the interactions themselves (e.g., teaching-learning events in the classroom or even when feasible and not intrusive conversations like the one with Gabriela, her parents, and the counselor).

Also, we found within the micro-supports how the school's values and Gabriela's values met [Daiute, 2006, 2014]. Across time, these values, sometimes diverged and sometimes merged. This dynamic flow provided additional evidence of the course of both her development and the school's development. For example, the school valued caring for others, even those different from oneself. Gabriela came to see the value of caring for others beyond her immediate world, but she faced barriers when it came to caring for others whom she saw as threatening her group, particularly African Americans, who from her viewpoint got more attention than they deserved. Once school leaders understood her struggles with perceived lack of attention to the hardships of Latino immigrants, the school began to adjust its curriculum for future students.

Gabriela's case shows how multifaceted the civic world of the United States is, with its divided populations struggling in different ways. Different groups' varied historical legacies affect the US population today, and seem all too easily to work against a sense of civic mutuality. Her case further shows how needed the school is to mediate young people's interactions with their worlds. Finally, her struggles and the school's struggles offer a window into tensions within the larger society that make developing as a prosocial civic actor so complicated and so important.

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