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THE CIVIC DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH OF COLOR IN URBAN COMMUNITY-BASED
YOUTH PROGRAMS: UNDERSTANDING PROCESS AND CONTEXT

BY

NATASHA D. WATKINS

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Mark Aber, Chair
Professor Reed Larson, Director of Research
Associate Professor Nicole Allen
Assistant Professor Soo Ah Kwon
Professor Helen Neville

ABSTRACT

Community-based youth organizing programs (CBYOs) have been identified as particularly favorable contexts for youth civic engagement (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Kirshner, 2004). Yet few studies have explored the developmental processes whereby youth become civically engaged through participation in CBYOs. Furthermore, more empirical work is needed that identifies those outcomes associated with youth's participation as well as those contextual features of CBYOs that support youth's civic development. This dissertation employed a longitudinal qualitative interview design in its examination of 20 African American and Latino youth participating in two community-based youth organizing programs, Youth Action and Harambee, located in an urban Midwestern city. Study data included a 137 youth interviews, 21 program leader interviews, and 23 program observations conducted weekly and/or biweekly over a 3 to 4-month period. Data were coded for underlying themes and concepts following grounded theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data analysis suggested a five-stage process of civic development in which youth developed an awareness of civic issues; began to personalize or connect with the issues; engaged in critical social analysis; took action around civic issues; and, in some cases, began to cultivate a commitment to civic justice. Associated with this process of development was youth's enhancement of skills such as working cooperatively, developing a sense of political efficacy, and demonstrating leadership potential. The Harambee and Youth Action programs provided four contextual features that appeared to facilitate youth's civic development. Both programs fostered a culture of youth empowerment, engaged youth in consciousness-raising activities, provided youth opportunities for meaningful community participation, and provided youth with instrumental and emotional support as they engaged in civic actions.

Together, the findings of this dissertation suggest community-based youth organizing programs as viable contexts for youth civic development. Given the disenfranchisement that exists in urban communities, community youth organizing may be an important process whereby youth of color discover their voice, develop critical consciousness, and enact democracy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Youth civic engagement is a top priority for social scientists and policymakers. Evidence of youth's limited knowledge, interest, and participation in civic life has motivated concern about youth's preparation for their citizenry roles and the future of U.S. civil society (Hart & Atkins, 2002; Yates & Youniss, 1999). Engaging youth in civic activities is thought to yield important benefits for youth and their communities. Youth development scholars suggest participation in civic activities to facilitate youth's development of positive, prosocial competencies that facilitate successful transition to adulthood (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). For sociologists, civic engagement represents a vehicle for empowering individuals and communities and enacting social change (Ginwright, & James, 2002; Morrell, 2006). And political scientists, concerned with sustaining the vitality of U.S. democracy, see civic engagement as a way to prepare future leaders (Celestine, n.d.; Flanagan & Gallay, 1995). Enhancing opportunities for youth's civic engagement has broad disciplinary appeal as a means for contributing positively to the development of youth, communities, and society at-large.

While claims about the positive potential of civic engagement abound, empirical investigations in this area have not kept pace. Much of what is known empirically about youth's civic engagement has been derived from quantitative survey methodologies and tends to document the types of civic engagement activities in which youth engage and the rates by which cross-sections of youth participate in such activities (Friedland & Morimoto, 2005; Yates, 1999). While this research has been useful in establishing baseline information, it provides little understanding of *how* youth become civically engaged and the benefits youth accrue through participation in civic activities. If the aim is to identify and enhance activities to better prepare youth for democratic participation, more systematic inquiry is necessary to understand the developmental change processes by which youth become civically engaged and the outcomes associated with this development.

Additionally, more substantive research is needed to understand the civic experiences of youth from diverse and disenfranchised backgrounds. Research indicates that urban youth of color have the lowest rates of civic engagement compared to other groups of youth (Hart & Atkins, 2002; Torney-Purta, 2001). Yet, aside from this comparative data, the civic experiences

of urban youth of color have not been sufficiently located in the literature. It has been hypothesized that civic engagement may take different forms for youth of color in urban communities who have historically been accorded less political power (Ginwright, 2006; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2002). But, without attention to the particular experiences of youth of color, these differential patterns and modes of engagement will not be uncovered. In-depth investigations of urban youth's civic engagement experiences may elucidate those patterns of engagement for youth of color as well as those particularities that account for differential patterns of engagement.

Community-based youth organizations (CBYOs) have been identified as particularly unique contexts for youth's civic development (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; O'Donoghue & Kirshner, 2003). Compared to other community institutions (e.g., schools, religious organizations), CBYOs are thought to possess a confluence of contextual features that support youth's civic development. Some of these features, which also may be found in other community institutions to varying degrees, include activities that respond to youth's interests and developmental needs, a democratic organizational structure, a safe and open space for youth to explore new ideas, connections to supportive adults, and opportunities for youth to be agentic and experience efficacy (Eccles & Appleton-Gootman, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000). A prominent facilitative feature of CBYOs is their basis in communities. With program activities grounded in the communities in which youth live, CBYOs are better able to expose youth to broader community institutions and processes (O'Donoghue & Kirshner, 2003). Altogether, the contextual features and activity bases of CBYOs seem to provide a critical space for youth to enact democracy through opportunities for leadership, collaboration with others, and exercising voice.

Although research on youth's civic engagement has grown substantially over the last decade, much remains to be known. The extant literature provides relatively modest documentation of the developmental processes associated with civic engagement, the individual outcomes related to civic engagement, the contextual features that support youth's civic development, and the civic experiences of youth of color. Inclusion of these areas of inquiry into the current research agenda is critical to the development of richer and more nuanced understandings of youth civic engagement. Qualitative methodologies may be particularly useful tools for studying the developmental processes and contextual factors associated with civic

engagement. Methods such as interviews and observations that allow for thick description facilitate exploration of *how* youth become civically engaged and *in what ways* settings support this development. These methods also allow for the inclusion of youth's voices which, ironically, are often overlooked in research with youth. Instead of presuming what youth's experiences should or might be, qualitative methods provide a means for youth to narrate their own experiences in ways that make sense and have meaning for them. Given the dearth of systematic knowledge about the processes, programmatic features, and particularities of the experiences associated with youth civic engagement, the level of rich description generated by qualitative methods is necessary to advancing current understandings of youth's civic engagement.

The present study investigates the civic development of youth of color participating in urban CBYOs. The broad goals of this study are to advance an understanding of (1) the developmental process whereby youth become civically engaged, (2) the outcomes associated with youth's civic engagement, and (3) the contextual features of CBYOs that facilitate this development. A longitudinal case study design was utilized to study two urban CBYOs different in structure and program activity: Harambee, a school leadership program, and Youth Action, a youth-organizing program. Qualitative interviews with youth and program leaders and observational data of program activities were collected and analyzed consistent with grounded theory methods for building theory from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The use of a longitudinal case study design with qualitative methods is well-suited to the aims of this study given the exploratory nature of this research, the focus on "development in context" (and as it varies across contexts), and the aim of documenting the experiences of urban youth of color.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides a review of the civic engagement literatures and provides the theoretical frame for this dissertation study. Particular attention is paid to clarifying what is meant by civic engagement and positioning civic engagement as a developmental process rather than just an outcome.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although interest in youth civic engagement can be traced back to educational theorists such as John Dewey, systematic attention to the matter began during the late 1950s and 1960s in the field of political science. Since that time, youth civic engagement has become a focal area of study across multiple social science disciplines (e.g., education, political science, psychology). Yet a lack of integration across disciplines has resulted in the field being ensnared by conceptual debates about what constitutes and, consequently, how to evaluate civic engagement. Given the importance of clearly defining and operationalizing youth civic engagement in order to evaluate its value as a process, this literature review begins with a discussion of conceptual issues in an effort toward conceptual clarity.

Defining and Clarifying the Concept

For a concept that has been widely referenced and studied, civic engagement remains a relatively ill-conceptualized term. Civic engagement has been used to refer to a range of civic and/or political activities (volunteering, voting) that occur at a variety of levels (individual, community, institutional) that may be supported by multiple contexts (schools, communities) and that lead to various individual and/or group outcomes (gains in knowledge, behavioral skills, empowerment). Over the years, a number of terms have emerged describing very similar phenomena as civic engagement and sometimes used interchangeably with it. Examples of terms include political action, political participation, civic competence, civic engagement, and sociopolitical development. While the diversity of concepts is encouraging in that it reflects broad interest in youth's civic engagement, failure to fully conceptualize and distinguish concepts from one another will delimit understanding of the very questions researchers seek to examine. An additional consequence is that work that occurs within disciplines may be inaccessible to or may be misused by researchers in other disciplines due to erroneous assumptions about meaning. In order for the field of civic engagement to grow upwards and outwards, research both within and across disciplines must work to better clarify and conceptualize youth civic engagement.

A first point of clarification is whether civic engagement refers to political activity, civic activity, or both. It is not uncommon for studies to focus on one area of activity over another or to employ indicators of political behavior as measures of civic engagement. The conflation of

political activity and civic activity has been the topic of debates about the boundaries between what is political and what is civic and how broadly or narrowly each should be defined. Some scholars distinguish between participation in formal government processes (e.g., voting, lobbying), which has the potential to produce change in social policy, and participation in the public affairs of a community (e.g., volunteering) which provides a service to communities often with no significant attention to structural or policy issues (Delli Carpini, 2000; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005; Walker, 2000). Other scholars argue that construing civic engagement as either political activity or civic activity may not be meaningful for youth (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, & Silbereisen, 2002). Due to age restrictions and a status quo that tends to dismiss youth's citizenship, many youth are locked out from participating in formal political processes. While these barriers to political participation certainly restrict the range of youth's engagement, it is quite plausible that youth are engaging political issues but differently given the modes to which they have access. Community service, which is reported to be at an all time high among youth (Sagawa, 1998), may be one mode through which youth are exposed to political matters. Participation in community-based youth organizations represents another mode of political exposure. By engaging youth in community change efforts, community service programs and youth organizations may facilitate youth's understanding of community matters and how broader political processes impact local, community matters (Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003). The potential of these programs to inspire political engagement are supported by research that suggests community service and participation in youth organizations during adolescence to predict later adult political behavior (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). It then seems that a continuum of political engagement may exist for youth that ranges from formal political acts, moral-political acts (e.g., activism), and service/volunteering (Youniss et al., 2002). If research seeks to better approximate and understand the range of youth's engagement, a broader conceptualization of civic engagement that includes both political and civic activities should be adopted.

A second point of clarification is whether to conceptualize civic engagement as an outcome or a process of development. Civic engagement has been used as an outcome variable in a number of empirical studies. Common across these studies is the measurement of civic engagement using cognitive and/or behavioral indicators, such as how much political knowledge youth possess and the extent to which youth engage political activities, with the intent of

comparing rates of civic engagement across groups (Niemi & Chapman, 1998; Phillips, 2004). While studies of this kind have contributed to our understanding about the rates, forms, and frequency of youth's civic engagement, little is known about how youth develop civic knowledge and behaviors and why youth differ in their rates of civic engagement. There is a need then for research that investigates the processes by which youth become civically engaged over time.

Incorporating a developmental perspective to the study of civic engagement is critical to understanding what civic engagement is, how it develops, and how to best facilitate it. Like many other learning processes, civic engagement occurs over time and is associated with changes in multiple domains of development. Conceptualizing civic engagement developmentally allows attention to the processual and temporal aspects of the phenomenon. As well, a developmental perspective attends to changes in cognition, emotions, and behavior as they relate to civic engagement. The interest is on how youth come to know, feel, and act and the resultant changes rather than what youth know (Ferman, 2005; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995). Embedded in this interest is the perspective that youth are active in their development rather than passive receivers (Youniss & Yates, 1999). This view of youth as constructors of knowledge is a major contribution of the developmental perspective to the study of youth behavior, as is attention to social context. Youth operate within multiple, embedded contexts that may both support and impede development (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Examination of the contexts in which civic engagement occurs (e.g., families, schools) bears significance for understanding the contributions of different contexts on youth's development which may account, in part, for differential rates of engagement (Zaff, Malanchuk, Michelsen, & Eccles, 2003). With attention to process, the active role of youth, and context, the developmental perspective offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding the phenomenon of civic engagement as it occurs across the lifespan.

So far, two main points of clarification have been offered. First, civic engagement should be defined broadly to include a range of activities across both the political and civic realms. Second, civic engagement should be conceptualized as developmental process in which youth grow in regards to cognition, emotions, and behavior. Movement toward conceptualizing civic engagement broadly and as a developmental process has already been documented in the literature. Youniss et al. (2002), for example, defines civic competence as "an understanding of

how government functions, and the acquisition of behaviors that allow citizens to participate in government and permit individuals to meet, discuss, and collaborate to promote their interests within a framework of democratic principles. Similarly, Watts, Williams, and Jagers (2003) have coined and defined the term sociopolitical development to refer to a “process of growth in a person’s knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties, and capacity for action in political and social systems” (p. 185). Both definitions represent a broad understanding of civic engagement as both political and civic, knowledge and behavior, and developmental process. Watts et al. (2003) specifically reference the additional role of emotions in the process of civic engagement. Also present in both definitions is the value that engagement is toward democratic and social justice ideals (Hauptmann, 2005). Although the activity of young people involved in extremist movements (e.g., The Skinheads) are forms of civic and/or political involvement, this type of participation typically is not considered conceptions of civic engagement. The philosophy of supremacy that guides such groups runs counter to the ideals of democracy, justice, and equality that undergird U.S. civil society (Youniss et al., 2002). This does not mean, however, that all radical change efforts are excluded from studies of civic engagement. Youth’s political activism via protests and civil disobedience (e.g., Civil Rights Movement) often are invoked as compelling accounts of youth’s political potential (Ginwright, 2006). And, recent research (Kirshner et al., 2003; Lewis-Charp, Yu, & Soukamneuth, 2006) suggests activism to be a rather important form of engagement for marginalized youth whose social groups historically have been excluded from democratic participation.

Achieving conceptual clarity is an important first step of any research endeavor. It is hoped that the attention given to conceptual issues in the first section of this paper clarifies what is meant by youth civic engagement and suggests it to be a significant phenomenon of interest. At this point, I will introduce a new term to capture the main points highlighted above. Keeping with the focus on development, the term “civic development” will be used from this point forward to refer to the process by which youth develop the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity to engage their civic and political worlds toward democratic and social justice aims. The use of civic engagement will be retained throughout this paper to refer to the broader field of study. However, the two terms may occasionally be used interchangeably.

Having established a conceptual understanding of civic engagement and development, the next section provides an overview of existing theories of civic development. Also discussed

are the development benefits that have been theoretically and empirically associated with youth's civic engagement.

Engagement as Development

Scholarly work in the area of civic engagement has long been concerned with understanding those factors associated with civic participation. Flanagan (2004) described early research as guided by three major theories: political socialization—concerned with how social institutions, such as the family, inculcate civic attitudes and behaviors to youth; cognitive developmental—focused on developmental age changes in how adolescents' views about political matters, and generational—attended to the influence of historical events on youth's political views. A major contribution of these theories was the focus on adolescence as a critical period for the acquisition of civic knowledge and behaviors. Yet, despite the centrality of adolescent civic experiences as developmental precursors to adult civic engagement, the role of development was an underdeveloped aspect of civic engagement theories. Development tended to be conceptualized narrowly as a passive process by which young people acquired knowledge and skills from the adults and institutions in their lives (Rogoff et al., 1995). Missing was attention to the ways in which youth were agents of their own developmental process, actively cognizing about political matters through their relationships with others and their own civic experiences. Also missing, as Flanagan (2004) noted, was research that was “grounded in the everyday lives of adolescents” (p. 724). Most early research focused on what youth thought about civic matters but failed to attend to youth's actual experiences with civic matters. Youth were thus relegated to passive observers of civic life rather than regarded as civic actors in their own right. As a result, research that included youth narrations of their civic experiences was virtually non-existent. Despite these limitations, early civic engagement theories provided an initial springboard and base for contemporary research concerned with civic development.

Contemporary theories of civic engagement have improved substantially on early theories of civic engagement. With fuller attention to developmental theories, youth agency, and youth's day-to-day experiences, recent theories have advanced understanding about how youth civic development occurs. The theoretical works of James Youniss and Miranda Yates have been quite influential in the study of civic engagement within the field youth civic development. Using Erikson's (1968) concept of social identity, Youniss and Yates (1997) studied how young people develop civic identity—a sense of who they are, what they believe, and their relations to others

and society (Winter, 2003). They posit adolescence to be a formative period for the development of civic identity and identified participation in organized groups as a prime venue for this development. Qualitative case study research conducted by the authors, in which they detailed the experiences of African American high school students engaged in community service efforts at a soup kitchen, demonstrated the relationship between participating in civic activities and growth in civic understanding. Data suggested that through their service participation youth became increasingly aware of complex social issues, began to think about their roles in effecting social change, and raised questions about the role of government officials in remediating social problems (Yates, 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1997). In short, youth seemed to develop a stronger sense of their civic identity and responsibility through their service participation.

Youniss and Yates's theorizing provides an initial framework for understanding how youth develop civic competencies through participation. While the authors describe the growth and learning youth experience through their service participation, more work is needed that explicates the specific processes of change associated with youth civic development (Phillips, 2004). One suggestion is for research to adopt a stage learning model to describing the process of civic development. The learning components described by Youniss and Yates seem like they might occur in a sequential order, with certain learning experiences being the building blocks for other experiences. However, the authors do not articulate a specific ordering of the components. The elucidation of a stage model may be useful in understanding the types of learning associated with youth's civic development as well as how youth move from a place of civic unawareness and disengagement to awareness and engagement.

Another future direction associated with Youniss and Yates's work is the application of their model to forms of civic engagement other than service activities. The authors suggest that their theoretical model will hold with other civic engagement activities, yet little research exists that supports this claim. It would be useful to explore the process by which youth develop civically through participating in community activism—those activities in which youth and adults work together to identify community problems and address them through targeted institutional change efforts (Kirshner, 2004). Community activism has emerged as a focal interest of civic engagement researchers because of its potential to yield positive developmental benefits for youth (Irby, Ferber, & Pittman, 2001). Yet specific theorizing about youth's civic development through community activism is limited (Walker, 2002).

Watts, Williams, and Jagers (2003) have proposed a model of how individuals participating in social change efforts move from a place of uninformed inaction to sustained, informed, and strategic action in their theory of sociopolitical development (SPD). SPD describes a five stage process by which individuals “acquire the knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties, and the capacity for action in political and social systems” (p.185). The first stage is the acritical stage in which the individual exhibits an unawareness of social inequities. In the second stage, inequity is acknowledged but there is a sense of not being able to effect change. The third stage, precritical stage, involves questioning about why inequities exist. In the fourth stage, critical, the individual desires to learn more about injustice and engage in social change efforts. The last stage, liberation, is characterized by the emergence of agentic behaviors targeted toward addressing injustice. Contrasted to Youniss and Yates’s theory, Watts et al.’s (2003) theory of SPD facilitates a greater understanding of the civic development that occurs through community activism in its use of a learning stage model that is expressly focused on participation in social change efforts.

Missing, however, from the Watts et al. theory is data to suggest how the theory bears out for young people engaged in activist efforts. The data Watts used to illustrate SPD derived from older youth (16 and older) and adult activists but findings were not separated out by age. Furthermore, participants were involved in a range of activist activities, which precludes understanding of the specific contextual factors associated with SPD. Building off of the strengths of both Youniss and Yates (1997) and Watts et al. (2003) works, future research should seek to build theory about the specific process by which young people involved in community activism grow in their civic understandings and behavior. This research should be grounded in the daily participatory experiences of youth and prioritize their voices. Also of value is attention to not only the process of development, which has been understudied, but also the developmental benefits associated with civic engagement.

Civic engagement activities are thought to yield important positive developmental benefits for youth. While the link between civic engagement and developmental outcomes tends to be more theoretical, there is emerging empirical evidence to support the positive claims. Research suggests that through participation in civic activities youth learn to appreciate human differences, experience increased self-esteem, achieve a sense of social responsibility, enhance their trust in political systems and processes, develop a sense of political efficacy, and engage in

less risk-taking behavior (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Lewis-Charp, Yu, Soukamneuth, & Laco, 2003; Metz & Youniss, 2004; Theisse-Morse & Hibbing, 2005; Yates & Youniss, 1996). Though many of these findings have derived from correlational or case study research, rendering it difficult to rule out selection bias, the potential of civic engagement activities for youth's positive development is encouraging. More compelling is longitudinal research that has found participation in civic activities in adolescence to predict participation in civic and political activities in adulthood (see Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997 for a review).

Because community activism has only recently emerged as an activity with great developmental potential, relatively less is known about the developmental benefits of participation in activism (Rajani, 2001). Activist programs are different from other civic engagement activities in their expressed goal of engaging young people in systems and institutional change efforts (Kirshner, 2004). Thus, activist programs may offer unique benefits not found through participation in other civic activities. One such benefit is the development of *conscientizacao* or critical consciousness, a term coined by Paulo Freire (1970) which refers to the ability to engage in social analysis and critical reflection (Watkins, Larson, & Sullivan, 2007; Watts & Guessous, 2006). Program activities facilitate youth's reflections on local, community issues and larger sociopolitical processes in order to raise awareness of social inequities, injustice, and oppression (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006). Youth not only develop an awareness of the social issue but their role as change agents in society. With this newfound awareness, youth then engage in collective actions to effect social change. Although the research base is limited, there is some evidence that suggests youth experience the following outcomes as a result of participating in community organizing and activism: working with others, increased capacity for decision-making; knowledge/awareness of local issues; the ability to engage in direct action; and a sense of political efficacy (Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003; Larson & Hansen, 2005; O'Donoghue and Kirshner, 2003). Still, research is needed that details the outcomes associated with community activism as a particular form of civic engagement.

Sites of Civic Engagement

Given that development always occurs in a context, it is important to discuss the ways in which civic development is promoted across the range of social contexts in which youth operate. The family and school contexts traditionally have been the focus of empirical investigations into contexts of civic development because of the amount of time youth spend in these contexts.

However, the contemporary world finds youth participating in community institutions (e.g., youth programs) at higher rates, so much so that civic development is now being incorporated into the missions of many community-based programs. This next section discusses the different contexts and the ways in which they support youth's civic development. A review of the family and school contexts is offered by way of contrast to community-based youth organizations (CBYOs) which will be argued to be optimal contexts of youth's civic development.

The family. Families play a significant foundational role in the civic development of young people. It is within the family context that young people first become aware of civic life and their relation to it. Family members, specifically parents, transmit knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding civic life to children through consumption of particular media, discussion of civic affairs, and participation (or not) in civic life. Early theories of parents' political socialization efforts positioned children as passive recipients of civic affections and understandings. However, recent theories have clarified that: one, political values are not deposited into youth; rather youth play an active role in making sense of their social worlds and exercise choice in the values they subscribe to at any given point in time (Flanagan, 2004); two, parents' socialization messages do not reflect clear, authoritative perspectives on civic life that are easily transmitted to children (Youniss & Yates, 1999); and, three, the familial context is aided by schools and other community institutions in socializing youth about civic life. So, while it is critical to recognize the foundational experiences families provide youth, families are but one context of influence on youth's civic development.

Schools. Schools are prime contexts for civic development given that young people spend much of their lives there, they represent microcosms of broader society, and historically their mission was to educate and develop socially responsible citizens (Homana, Barber, & Torney-Purta, 2006). Civic education has been the primary mode by which schools have attempted to socialize youth for their roles and responsibilities as citizens. Through civic courses, curricular materials, and field trips, schools educate students about the government, political processes, and political leaders. Research suggests that people most knowledgeable about politics are more likely to participate in it than those with less knowledge; however, knowledge alone is not a sufficient precondition for civic engagement (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Rather, it is through the enactment and engagement of civic processes, dynamics, and relations that civic life has meaning for people's lives (Youniss & Yates, 1999). Student leadership and service-learning

courses offered at schools provide youth with meaningful opportunities to engage in civic processes. Student leadership positions (e.g., on councils or governments) expose youth to the structure, processes, and roles associated with democratic participation and governance. Service-learning with its emphasis on “learning through doing” provides opportunities for students to interface with “real live” community members and processes and reflect on these experiences in light of their classroom learning. Yet, even with opportunities such as civic education, student leadership, and service-learning, schools have experienced challenges with adequately educating youth around civic matters. The hierarchical structure, competitive ethos, and neutral/apolitical orientations to civic engagement may delimit the ability of schools to socialize young people toward democratic participation (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002; O’Donoghue & Kirshner, 2003).

Community-based organizations. Less encumbered by the constraints of the school context, community organizations, such as churches, social clubs, and youth programs, represent promising sites for youth’s civic development (Eccles & Appleton-Gootman, 2002). The aim of community organizations vary in nature, but standard is the provision of structured socialization experiences around the values and goals of the particular organization. Adults, who wish to instill a particular set of values into youth, typically decide the agenda, organize activities with modest input from youth, and act as mediators between young people and community members and institutions. In short, an apprenticeship model, where youth mirror and follow the lead of adults, tends to characterize some community organizations. Despite the limitation of this adult-centered approach, research suggests that youth gain from their involvement in community institutions. Youth involved in community organizations are less likely to engage in antisocial activities, develop a sense of community, and have higher levels of social trust than those youth with no organizational involvement (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles & Lord, 2005; McLaughlin, 2000).

Community-based youth organizations. Community-based youth organizations (CBYOs) have been identified as particularly unique contexts for youth’s positive development, specifically civic development (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Weis & Fine, 2000). In contrast to traditional community organizations which tend to be adult-oriented, CBYOs provide spaces that are more youth-centered—that is, intentionally designed to attend to youth’s interests and support their development. While CBYOs range in their orientations to youth development and

activities, they are thought to offer a number of features over other contexts, for example schools, that are particularly conducive to youth's positive learning and growth.

One such feature is an organizational structure that emphasizes egalitarianism and collaboration. CBYOs facilitate youth's experience of autonomy, voice, and agency through opportunities for youth to make their own decisions, to be in leadership roles, and to freely express themselves and have their perspectives heard (McLaughlin, 2000). In addition, the hierarchy and power dynamics that often characterize youth-adult relations is minimized through the formation of relationships based on mutual interests and trust rather than role expectations (Camino, 2000). Of course the balance of collaboration in CBYOs varies along a continuum of adult-led, youth-adult partnerships, and youth-led (Camino, 2000; Larson, Walker, Pearce, 2005); still, the more democratic organization of CBYOs makes them better able to provide youth with a true portrayal of democracy in action (Evans & Boyte, 1992).

A related feature of CBYOs is the guiding philosophy of youth empowerment, which seeks to enhance youth's sense of efficacy and mastery in their lives through providing youth with opportunities for meaningful participation (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006). In CBYOs guided by this philosophy, youth are seen as assets to the program and the community at large. Program activities are designed to build on youth's existing strengths and provide opportunities for youth to experience agency, voice, and input thus increasing their sense of empowerment (McLaughlin, 2000).

A third feature of CBYOs is their embeddedness in the communities in which youth live. With structural and activity bases in the community, CBYOs provide a nexus between youth, their communities, and the larger social world. Participation in CBYOs affords youth opportunities to learn about their communities—for example, the community landscape and borders as well as historical and contemporary community issues. Additionally, because CBYOs often draw interest from broad sections of the community, youth are exposed to diverse youth and adults from their community (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005). The community-based nature of CBYOs thus facilitates youth's development of social capital, a sense of connection to their community, and a deeper understanding of the broader sociopolitical landscape in which they operate (Kirshner, 2004).

The structural features of CBYOs alone are not facilitative of youth's development. Adult leaders who embody and implement the structure, values, and activities of CBYOs play a

significant supportive role in this process. By providing a structured, safe, and nurturing environment for youth to interact within, adult leaders establish the preconditions necessary for development to occur (Eccles & Appleton-Gootman, 2002). However, of particular interest is what adult leaders do above and beyond these preconditions to facilitate youth's development. Although adult leaders differ in their practices due to program type, personality, and other factors, empirical work suggests some common qualities of adults who have been generally successful in working with youth. McLaughlin, Irby, and Langman (1994), in their longitudinal study of six urban CBYOs, found that adult leaders who were most trusted and respected by youth were passionate about working with youth, believed in the positive capacity of youth, and were authentic or "real" in their relations with youth. Similar qualities, with the addition of the quality "consistent yet flexible", were identified by Yohalem (2003) in a review of existing research about successful youth workers. Adult leaders then, through their practices and their orientations, play a crucial role in providing and supporting an environment in which youth may experience positive developmental outcomes.

A necessary addition to the base of knowledge about the role of adult leaders is research that delineates the practices of program leaders in facilitating youth's development of specific competencies and skills. For example, critical analysis or critical consciousness—the ability to perceive sociopolitical oppression and take action against it—is a major priority in civic activist programs (Watts et al., 2003). The limited research that exists about civic activist programs suggests adult leaders to be intentional about creating learning opportunities that allow youth to explore, express, and challenge their ideas about their social worlds. Watkins et al. (2007), in a study of a civic activist program identified the provision of critical education workshops, structured discussions, informal interactions with others, and direct actions as facilitative of youth's critical analysis of racial/ethnic injustice. In his paper about the pedagogical practices of adult leaders in a youth organizing program, Kirshner (2006) described activities and specific strategies employed by adult leaders to facilitate youth's development of advocacy competencies. Activities included political educational workshops, interactive skits, board games, and structured and informal discussions. Within these activities, leaders facilitated youth's exploration of social issues by encouraging youth's voice, asking critical questions, and sharing their own view points. Together these studies provide preliminary information about the program activities and pedagogical practices that foster youth's political knowledge and capacity

for action. Additional research is warranted that investigates the relationship between adult leader's practices and increases in youth's knowledge or capacity for action.

The Civic Engagement of Youth of Color

Owing to the rich political histories of communities of color (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, Migrant Farmers), the civic participation of youth of color has held particular relevance for civic engagement scholars. Scholars long have retained interest in understanding the emergence of sociopolitical movements, how they alter the political landscape, and how they impact those who participate. Yet it was not until the sociopolitical movements of the 1960s and 1970s that scholars directed attention to youth of color as political actors. The organized collective struggles for identity, equality, and justice brought to the forefront the political vibrancy and consciousness youth of color.

In light of this history, recent reports that youth of color have the lowest rates of civic engagement among youth are disturbing (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Flanagan & Faison, 2001). The activism of the 1960s was significant in establishing the democratic rights of groups of color who historically had been regarded as second-class citizens in the United States. A downturn in engagement among groups of color would have major implications for groups' social and political power as well as their advancement. Yet, closer examination of the civic patterns of youth of color has revealed that while youth of color seem to possess less knowledge of and trust in formal political systems, they are not wholly disaffected from politics. The identification of political consciousness in contemporary modes of youth expression, such as hip-hop music, is one example in support of youth of color's civic engagement (Sullivan, 1996). Recent research also has begun to document the alternative forms of participation, for example community activism and organizing efforts, among youth of color living in urban communities (Irby, Ferber & Pittman, 2001; Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003; Nygreen, Kwon, & Sanchez, 2006). These data suggest youth of color to be engaged in civic life but via modes different from those of the Civil Rights generation. More research is needed that attends to contemporary patterns of engagement about youth of color as well as the particularities of these youth's civic engagement experiences (Cohen, 2006).

Also important to consider is the sociopolitical context in which civic engagement occurs for youth of color. In urban communities of color specifically the sociopolitical context often is defined by racial, socioeconomic, and political injustice. Youth of color must navigate social

conditions such as inadequate educational opportunities, racial segregation, neighborhood violence, and lack of employment opportunities (Ginwright, 2006). Furthermore, the paucity of social institutions in many urban communities limits youth's opportunities for civic participation and connection to larger societal processes (Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003). Given this sociopolitical landscape and the marginalization it engenders, urban youth of color may have early developed a critical consciousness about sociopolitical issues due to their politicized identities (Cohen, 2006; Kwon, 2006). These youth may feel more compelled to engage in actions (e.g., community activism) that directly address the personal and community injustice they encounter (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2002; Yates & Youniss, 1999). Inattention to the ways in which sociocultural, economic, and political realities shape civic engagement patterns is a major limitation of the extant civic engagement literature. Focusing attention on these realities may extend the knowledge base about the civic engagement patterns and modes of urban youth of color.

Youth organizing holds scholarly interest as a promising civic engagement approach for urban youth of color who have been marginalized by mainstream social institutions (Flanagan, 2004; Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006). Participation in community organizing and change efforts is thought to provide urban youth with a critical pathway for effecting change in their own lives as well as in their communities. Although extensive research on youth activist programs has not been conducted, research suggests participation in such action to be related to the development of democratic competencies. Data from O'Donoghue and Kirshner's (2003) qualitative study of five youth programs suggest adolescent's participation in civic action increased their awareness of local community issues and facilitated their learning about how to work collaboratively, participate in decision-making, and engage in community actions. Similarly, Lewis-Charp, Yu, & Soukamneuth (2006), in a qualitative study of eleven activist organizations, found youth programs to support youth's civic activism through creating opportunities for youth's identity exploration and affirmation, critical analysis of social issues, and discovery of voice and social power. Youth organizing seems to be a viable pathway for youth of color to develop democratic competencies and experience individual empowerment. Additional research should be conducted that provides a more in-depth picture of how organizing facilitates youth's development, the outcomes associated with organizing, and how youth programs support the development of activist competencies.

Much empirical attention has been placed on CBYOs as sites for urban youth's civic development (O'Donoghue & Kirshner, 2003). In urban communities experiencing social blight, CBYOs represent one of few institutions that provide youth with meaningful opportunities for community engagement (Flanagan & Faison, 2001). Although other contexts of development, for instance schools, may be available to youth, data suggest urban schools to be poorly educating students around civic matters. CBYOs offer a program structure and ethos that prioritizes youth's development and empowerment as well as civic engagement. Program activities in CBYOs are intentionally designed to provide youth with learning experiences that foster democratic competencies, allow youth to practice democracy in real community contexts, and expose youth to positive adult role models (Ginwright & James, 2002). Additionally, CBYOs provide opportunities for youth to have direct roles in community change processes. The concerns of urban communities often are neglected by broader political and economic systems. By providing a space for youth and other community members to organize around local community issues, CBYOs play an important role in the institutional and sociopolitical landscape of urban communities. With the dual purpose of providing opportunities for youth's civic development and serving as a hub for community change efforts, CBYOs seem to be contexts uniquely situated to urban youth of color's activist and organizing efforts (Kirshner, 2004). Additional investigation should be undertaken to examine the processes and practices by which urban CBYOs support the civic development of youth of color.

In sum, much more empirical work is required to fully understand the civic experiences of youth of color, particularly those living in disenfranchised urban communities. The paucity of systematic research on youth of color reinforces the perception that youth of color are not civically engaged which is a point of contention. There is some research to suggest that urban youth of color are engaged in more contemporary modes of civic engagement, such as organizing, that directly address issues of personal and sociopolitical relevance to them and their community. Furthermore, CBYOs have been identified as especially important sites for youth's engagement with limited empirical evidence highlighting their support and organizing function. Still, a great deal of research attention should be directed to the broader sociopolitical context influencing youth of color's civic engagement, the process by which urban youth of color develop an activist orientation, the role of CBYOs in supporting this development, and the developmental outcomes associated with youth organizing.

Bringing together what's missing in the civic engagement literature broadly and as it relates to youth of color, this dissertation examines the civic development of urban youth of color participating in CBYOs. Specific attention is given to the following questions: (1) what are the developmental processes whereby youth become civically engaged; (2) what are the developmental outcomes associated with civic engagement; and (3) what are the features of CBYOs and the strategies used by program leaders to facilitate youth's civic development. The extant literature provides cursory insight into these questions, especially as it relates to urban youth of color. This dissertation aims to build theory about the processes of change associated with the civic development of urban youth of color. In order to provide rich analysis of the civic experiences and development of these youth, a longitudinal design incorporating qualitative interviews and program observations was employed in the examination of two CBYOs located in an urban Midwestern city. In the following chapter, a description of the aims, questions, and methods employed in this dissertation are presented.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in this dissertation. Before proceeding with a discussion of the research methods, procedures, and data analysis, descriptions of the program contexts on which this study focused are provided.

*Programs*¹

This dissertation focuses on two youth programs located in a large metropolitan Midwest city: Youth Action and Harambee. These programs were selected for study based on three criteria: one, programs were identified as “high quality” in conversations with professionals in the youth development field; two, informal observations of and visits to the programs supported statements about the quality of the programs—youth seemed highly engaged and programs prioritized youth needs and interests (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2006); and three, programs engaged youth in community action work. Given that the focus of the research was on how youth programs “effectively” facilitate youth’s positive development, a purposive sampling method was used to select programs reputed to be successful in facilitating youth development. The study of exemplary programs allows researchers to optimize their knowledge about concepts, processes, and practices that may be novel, unexplored, or understudied. In addition, it provides researchers with a sense of the range of a concept, and permits an understanding of *how* successful programs facilitate youth’s sociopolitical development.

Youth Action. Youth Action is a youth-organizing program housed under the Whites Creek Coalition for Youth (WCCY) Collaborative. The WCCY Collaborative was founded in 1991 as a network of youth and community organizations purposed to “foster community activism around issues affecting children, youth, and families” (<http://www.servicelearning.cps.k12.il.us/agencies.aspx>). WCCY is located in a working class, ethnically diverse neighborhood on the Southwest side of Chicago and pulls its participatory base from five contiguous neighborhoods (Chicago Lawn, West Lawn, West Englewood, Gage Park, and West Elsdon). Data from the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau indicate these neighborhoods to be ethnically diverse with approximately 45% of the population speaking a language other than English.

¹ Pseudonyms are used throughout this document to protect the anonymity of programs and participants.

Youth Action represents the youth activist arm of WCCY and was led by Jason Massad, an Arab-American male in his late twenties who had worked at WCCY for over 8 years. The organization engaged youth aged 13-19 from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds in activism and grassroots organizing around educational reform issues such as equal funding for schools and zero-tolerance policies. Youth Action participants were recruited from local high schools by Jason and veteran youth participants. The opportunity to satisfy the District's community service requirement appeared to be a major draw for participating youth. Due to ongoing recruitment and the natural wax and wane of program activities, the number of actively participating youth fluctuates. However, approximately 20-25 youth formed the participant core, 10 of whom participated in this study.

The core participant group met at least once a week for 2 to 3 hours to participate in educational workshops and discuss organizing strategies. Additional meetings were held as needed depending on the demands of particular projects. Meetings were frequently used as training sessions for youth around issues such as community organizing. Jason and senior youth were the primary facilitators for these trainings. At other times, guest speakers and/or popular media were used to explore issues of diversity, for example bias against LGBTQs and the U.S.-Iraq conflict. Weekly meetings also represented a time for youth to discuss and develop actions plans related to their lobbying efforts around educational reform. Over the course of the 4-month research cycle (Fall 2002), youth organized rallies and other protest actions, attended Chicago Public School (CPS) board meetings to advocate for school policy changes, and conducted research on educational disparities and best practice interventions. A focal activity of Youth Action was the organization and execution of a city-wide Youth Summit in which youth led workshops on educational issues (e.g., school discipline, comprehensive sexuality education, school funding, etc.) for approximately 300 youth attendees from across the city.

Harambee. Harambee Student Development Corporation (HSDC) is a not-for-profit organization housed in Jackson Career Academy High School, a large high school located in the Parklane community on the West side of Chicago. Parklane is comprised of approximately 43,000 residents, 94% of whom are African American, and is one of the poorest communities in Chicago. According to 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income in Parklane is \$18,342 and more than half of the children under 18 live in poverty. It is estimated the 70% of the males aged 18-45 have a criminal record; only 6% of the population is reported to have a

college degree. Parklane has a deep history of activism, with Martin Luther King residing in the community during his 1966 Freedom Campaign (Zielenbach, 2000).

The student enrollment at Jackson Academy is 95% African American students and 98% of students receive free or reduced price lunch. Jackson Academy has a history of low academic performance with less than 10% of graduates in 1997 matriculating to college (Harambee Student Development Corporation, 2009²). HSDC was founded in 1997 by a North Side community activist to “boost student motivation through public service” (Harambee Student Development Corporation, 2009). HSDC offered a number of educational and enrichment programs throughout the school year and the summer that are organized around three cores: college and career development, leadership development and service learning, and holistic student development. Approximately 80% of funding for HSDC programs came from fundraising (Harambee Student Development Corporation, 2009).

This dissertation focuses on Harambee’s 6-week summer leadership program which was described as the “cornerstone” of Harambee’s programming. The summer leadership program was an intensive employment internship that combined leadership development, college and career planning, academic preparation, and civic involvement (Harambee Student Development Corporation, 2009). Kyle Matthews, a European American man in his late-20s who had been with Harambee for over 4 years, led and coordinated the summer leadership program. Four adults (early 20s to mid 30s) served as paid interns/team leaders at Harambee. Out of a pool of approximately 109 applicants, 35 youth were hired for the summer program whose theme focused on inequalities in transit issues. Ten of these youth were selected for participation in this study. During the summer of 2004, youth worked approximately 20-25 hours per week on two central projects: creating a documentary about local transit issues and designing a community mural. Other program activities included structured dialogues and debates, performing a city-wide scavenger hunt, attending meetings with aldermen and other city officials, and participating in college and career activities. To divide the labor on the two major projects and provide a level of balance to youth’s experiences, youth were assembled into four teams that were led by a summer intern. Each group also had a designated youth team leader who was selected by Kyle and the adult team leaders at the outset of the program.

² In an effort to protect the anonymity of the programs, citations that include the name of the programs have been redacted.

Participants

Participants include youth from Youth Action and Harambee who agreed to participate in a larger research study on youth's experiences in youth programs. This dissertation represents a subset of the larger study. Youth were identified by program leaders who had been advised of the researchers' interests in having a representative sample of youth. As requested by the researchers, nominated youth were representative of youth in the programs with regard to gender, race, age, as well as length and level of participation. See Appendix C for summary of participant demographics.

Participants from Youth Action included 10 youth and the adult organizer. Five of the youth were female; five were Latino (4 Mexican American, 1 unspecified); four were African American; and one youth identified as biracial (Latino/European American). Six youth had participated in the program for less than one year (ages 15-17), one for two years (age 17), and three youth had participated in the program for three years (age 18-19). These three youth had the added responsibility of being titled student organizers, a role for which they were compensated. The adult organizer, Jason Massad, was an Arab-American in his late twenties who had worked at the organization for over 8 years.

Participants from Harambee included 10 youth and 5 adult leaders. Six of the youth were female; nine were African American; and one youth identified as biracial (African American/European American). Youth ranged in age from 14-18 years old. While most youth were familiar with or had participated in Harambee programming before the study period (4 youth reported participating for 2 years or more), only three youth had participated in the summer leadership program in previous years. For the remaining seven youth, the Summer 2004 leadership program represented their first time participating in the summer leadership program. Leadership staff included the program director, Kyle, a European American man in his late twenties who had worked at the organization for over 5 years; three team leaders, two European American females in their twenties who were new to the position and an African American male in his twenties who had two years of experience; and a videographer, a European American male in his early to mid-thirties who had four years of experience working with the program.

To maximize participation across the study cycle and as an expression of gratitude for participation, all participants were financially compensated. Youth received \$50 cash incentives;

the principal program leaders received \$250; the 4 adult team leaders in Harambee received \$25 for participating in one interview; and a \$150 honorarium was provided to each program.

Sources of Data

Interviews. Given the goal of understanding the developmental benefits and youth's experiences in youth programs, interviews were the primary sources of data. Semi-structured interview protocols that assessed multiple domains of youth's program experiences (e.g., reasons for participating, learning responsibility, and peer relations) guided the interviews. The selection of interview domains were informed by the positive youth development literature (i.e., what is known and what gaps in knowledge exist) and focus groups with a sample of program leaders and youth participants about how youth programs facilitate positive development. The developmental domain of interest to this dissertation, civic development, did not emerge prominently in the initial phase of protocol development. Rather, it was through the process of studying Youth Action, the first program in the study to focus on community organizing, that a focus on youth's civic development was formally included into subsequent interview protocols, for example the protocol used with Harambee participants. As a result, the questions about civic development included on the interview protocols for Youth Action and Harambee are not directly parallel. While there is a fair amount of overlap between protocols, some questions exist on the protocol that take into account the unique structure and activity base of the respective programs (see Appendix A for list of questions).

There were two versions of the interview protocol: in-depth and phone check-ins. The in-depth interviews were conducted in person at the program site during the beginning, mid-point, and end of the study period. These interviews typically lasted 60-90 minutes and allowed for fuller description and elaboration about the domains of interests. The phone check-ins were conducted every one to two weeks (depending on the length of the study period) and lasted from 15-30 minutes. The purpose of this shorter interview was for interviewees to provide updates on program activities. The phone interviews helped to supplement the major themes from the in-depth interviews and helped maintain continuity and rapport. Because Harambee had a shorter study period, six weeks in the summer of 2004 compared to Youth Action's four months in fall 2002, phone check-ins occurred every week. In addition to interviews being audio-taped, handwritten notes were taken during interviews. All of this data was transcribed and electronically stored.

Interviews were conducted with both youth participants and the adult leaders of the programs. Participants were interviewed by members of the research team which included a post-doctoral fellow and graduate and undergraduate students. All members had a background or interest in youth development, and most had prior interview experience. For reasons of rapport and continuity, research team members interviewed the same youth or adult leader at each point in the interview cycle. Sixty-four youth interviews and 10 adult organizer interviews were conducted at Youth Action. At Harambee, 52 youth interviews and 11 adult leader interviews were completed. Please note that 7 of the adult interviews at Harambee were conducted with Kyle, the program director, with the remaining 4 interviews conducted with each of the 4 team leaders.

Observations. To gain a first-hand sense of what the programs are like and what happens in them, observations were carried out. A participatory approach to observation was chosen because of the interest in understanding not only what happens in programs but those aspects of program culture, for instance norms, roles, and relationships. Within the participatory observation framework, the observer balances their role as insider and outsider to the setting simultaneously (Brewer, 2000). As an insider, the observer forges relationships with program participants and becomes part of the program setting thus privy to the particularities and sociocultural meanings unique to the program. As an outsider, the observer focuses on documenting those aspects of observation, including her/his own feelings and perspectives, relevant to the main question in this case how programs facilitate youth's positive development.

Program observations were conducted by members of the research team and occurred either weekly or every two weeks over the course of the study period. At Youth Action, observations occurred approximately every two weeks by two different members of the research team who rotated. This yielded 6 observations. Observations occurred approximately three times a week at Harambee by the same observer yielding 16 observations. Observational field notes were transcribed by the observer and stored electronically for future coding and retrieval.

Data Analyses

This study seeks to build theory about the civic development of urban youth of color. Three questions are of interest to this study: 1) What are the developmental processes whereby youth become civically engaged?; 2) What are the outcomes associated with youth's civic engagement?; and 3) What are the contextual features of CBYOs that facilitate youth's civic

engagement? A longitudinal qualitative interview methodology is employed to examine these questions in the context of two urban CBYOs. The inclusion of these two programs in the study allows for an understanding of those general learning processes associated with youth's civic development as well as those common and unique features of program contexts that support youth's civic development.

Data analysis occurred at two levels of analysis: individual and program. The individual level analysis utilized both youth and adult leader data in building theory about the learning processes involved in youth's civic development. Additionally, this level of analysis was employed in the identification and description of those benefits associated with youth's civic development. Program level analysis focused on how the program structure facilitates youth's civic development and utilized interview data from youth and adult leaders, program observations, and archival data specific to the programs. All interview data were transcribed in preparation for data analysis. Transcripts were printed and submitted to coding by the interviewer who used a coding scheme comprised of the developmental domains identified a priori (e.g., reasons for participating, learning responsibility, peer relations, etc.). This process of coding served to sort the interview data into the broad developmental domains rendering it easily accessed for subsequent stages of coding and analysis. Coded transcripts were entered into NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software package, thus allowing for data related to a particular domain to be stored together across participants and programs in what was called "data silos". The code associated with the focus of this study was labeled "Political ideas/Social action" or PS for short (see Appendix B for a description of this code). To ensure that all relevant data was included in analyses, a review and initial coding of complete transcripts commenced. Complete transcripts were also consulted in cases where it was necessary to situate a particular response within a broader textual context.

Data analysis began with study goal 1: developing a theory about the developmental process by which youth become civically engaged, and study goal 2: identifying and describing those developmental outcomes associated with youth's civic engagement. The first step in the analysis was engaging in open coding of all interview data sorted into the domain of PS: Political ideas/Social action. Open coding is a first attempt to break down, conceptualize, and categorize the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It involved identifying and labeling those themes that emerge as salient or unique through a thorough read of the available data. Open coding occurred

separately for each program using a subsample of the data. The initial, mid-point, and final interviews for three youth and the primary program leader were submitted to the open coding process. The use of this subsample aided in the delineation of codes and their properties and facilitated constant comparison of codes across individuals. Codes were identified, conceptualized, and organized into a provisional coding scheme. Open coding was conducted using hard copy versions of the interviews that were printed from NVIVO.

The second analytic step involved engaging in focus coding of the data using the provisional coding scheme generated. The qualitative data management program, NVIVO, was employed at this stage of coding as it was a more efficient means of coding and organizing interview data allowed for more efficient coding of all interview data. Through the process of focused coding, existing codes were confirmed, revised, collapsed, or deleted, and new codes emerged. Focused coding continued until data saturation, the point at which no new information from the data added to the understanding of the categories (Creswell, 2002) and the coding scheme appeared to fully yet parsimoniously capture the data. During the focused coding process, attention was paid to passages that did not fit with the coding scheme and negative cases— passages that indicate absence or are in the opposite valence of the code. These passages and cases were noted and, consistent with the iterative process of qualitative data analysis, steps 1 and 2 were repeated to assess fit of the coding scheme to the data.

In the third step of the analysis, how the codes relate to one another, a process known as axial coding, was examined (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The objective with axial coding was to construct a core model that explicates the phenomenon of interest, in this case civic development (Moghaddam, 2006). A description of the conditions under which civic developmental processes and the associated developmental outcomes emerged was generated. In the last step of analysis, selective coding, relationships among the codes were validated and a more complete storyline developed about the emerging theory.

Data analysis related to study goal 3: identification of those program features that support youth's civic development employed the use of youth and program leader interview data as well as observational data. The first and second steps of analysis proceeded as described above. Open and focused coding was utilized but attention was paid to the ways in which the programs and adult leaders provided structure, opportunities, and supports facilitative of youth's civic development. The third step of analysis involved creating matrices that list the features of the

programs and adult leader practices for each of the three sources of data (youth, adult, and observational). A matrix of adult roles collapsed across all three data sources was created to facilitate the identification of correspondence and divergence across the data sets.

Throughout all stages of analysis and for each of the study goals, analytic memos were created to systematically chart the process and progress of data analysis. These memos served to stimulate reflection on emerging themes and ideas, presented the key highlights of a code, youth, and/or program, and documented burgeoning theoretical ideas. These memos should not be viewed as simply notes; rather, they played an integral role in the formulation and revision of the emerging theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Given the importance of understanding the sociopolitical context in which youth and programs are operating (Ginwright, 2006), focused attention will be given to the nature of the program and community contexts. The program context refers to the organizational features of the setting, such as structure, processes, and human relations, which facilitate youth's development. A review of program materials (e.g., pamphlets, press releases, advertisements, and websites) and participant observations of program activities occurred. These data were examined and coded for relevant themes using the adult leader coding scheme above. The aim of this step was to document and describe program philosophy, program goals, program rules, and pattern of relations among members of the program. This information supplemented the interview and observational data in shedding light on how the program context facilitated youth's civic development. Demographic, descriptive, and historical information about the neighborhood/community context was gleaned from participant observations, program websites, and 2000 U.S. Census Bureau data.

In that the primary goal of this research is to propose a general theory of civic development, the findings from each program were reviewed together to understand how youth programs in general facilitate the process of civic development. The analytic memos that were created for each program around the three study goals were examined and subsequently synthesized to highlight the similarities and differences in findings.

To respond to concerns about the validity of study data, a number of strategies were put into place to strengthen study methods. One, to ensure that the phenomenon of interest was indeed being identified, youth, adult, and observational data were triangulated or assessed for level of correspondence (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Two, attention to negative cases occurred

which served to challenge this investigator to support, refine, or discard emerging propositions. Three, thinking ahead about questions about selection bias, adult leaders were asked to select young people who were representative of the average program participant in regards to a number of factors (age, length of time in program, etc.). Although these criteria may not deal directly with self-selection based on interest (e.g., orientation to advocacy/organizing), it provides some assurance that there is diversity among the youth. Examination of youth's demographic data suggests that youth were not exemplary with regard to academic achievement and past civic participation. So, while this research recruited exemplary programs, the youth themselves represent the "average" youth for whom civic engagement efforts are targeted.

Before proceeding to study results, it is important that I situate my role as the researcher given that my personal history and experience invariably shape the interpretive frame with which the data were analyzed. I am a middle-class African American woman with a history of civic volunteerism. I have volunteered in a number of contexts, for example homeless and domestic violence shelters, hospital settings, schools, and community-based programs. I have long had a particular interest in working with youth and, alongside my civic service, served as a youth mentor for 4 years and focused my academic studies on adolescent populations. While I do not claim to have formal participation in political activities, I was exposed to sociopolitical ideologies via my family context and was rather outspoken as a adolescent about issues of justice. Taken together, my personal history and academic interests render the topic of youth civic development particularly compelling. While I see this lens as having considerable value, I acknowledge the tendency for myopia. The strategies described in the validity section above thus provided important checks and balances as I engaged data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS OF CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

Although participation in civic activities has been linked to positive outcomes for youth, there is little empirical research that examines the developmental processes from which these outcomes emerge. This dissertation seeks to contribute to the understanding of youth's civic development by identifying and describing the developmental processes by which youth develop the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacities for civic engagement. Two urban community-based youth programs (CBYOs) provided the backdrop for this dissertation: Youth Action and Harambee.

Youth Action

Youth Action is a youth-organizing program located in a working class, ethnically-diverse neighborhood. The primary goals of Youth Action are to build youth's awareness and voice around issues affecting them and to facilitate youth's social change efforts. The participatory base of Youth Action consists of youth ages 13-19, from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, and primarily from neighborhoods on the southwest side of the city. Youth are typically recruited from the local high schools by the adult organizer or veteran youth. The opportunity to acquire forty hours of community service—a requirement for high school graduation—is the selling point that brings many youth to the program; however, enrollment rates are in constant flux as recruitment of youth are ongoing, youth come in and out of the program, and periods of activity wax and wane. During the 4-month study period (Fall 2002), approximately 20-25 youth were regularly attending the program and participating in the organization of a city-wide youth conference and other initiatives targeted at school reform. Interviews were conducted with 10 youth participants and the adult organizer, Jason Massad.

Harambee

Harambee is a school-based leadership program located in a large high school whose student population was predominantly low-income and African American. Harambee provides programming focused on high school youth's social, academic, and leadership development throughout the school year and in the summer. Over the course of a year, Harambee serves over 800 students in programs that include tutoring, college and career workshops, creative arts groups, and leadership development. This dissertation focused on Harambee's paid summer leadership program which engaged 35 youth around the theme of neighborhood inequities in city

transit issues. Youth met five days a week for 5-6 hours to work on two main projects: a documentary about city transit issues and a community mural. Study data (gathered during Summer 2004) included interview data from 10 youth participants, the program leader, Kyle Matthews, and four paid adult team leaders.

Due to their different histories, structure, and foci, the Youth Action and Harambee programs offered youth distinct experiences. Youth Action was a year-round community-based program that engaged youth around educational equity whereas Harambee was a 6-week school-based program that focused on community development. An overarching commonality of the programs, however, was the involvement of youth in community organizing activities that aimed to challenge and address civic inequities. Because the goal of this dissertation is to develop a theory of youth civic development that is grounded in youth's civic experiences, data from the Youth Action and Harambee programs will be considered together rather than separately. Although the differential structure and focus of each program contributed uniquely to youth's civic development experiences, data analysis yielded an overarching theory of developmental process that accommodated both programs. Presented in this chapter is the developmental process theory by which youth acquire civic knowledge, affinities, and behaviors through participation in community organizing activities.

Setting the Stage

Before presenting the theoretical model of youth civic development, it may be helpful to describe the 20 study participants' pre-program experiences with civic issues. A total of 11 youth had previous experience with the programs prior to the start of the research cycle. Eight youth from Youth Action had participated in the program for a year or more. In Harambee, although most youth had interactions with the program during the school year, only 3 had participated in the summer internship program before. In this section, youth's descriptions of their pre-program civic experiences are discussed. Please note that pre-program refers to the point at which youth began participating in the program not the point at which the research cycle began. The data presented below thus reflect youth's retrospective reports about their civic knowledge and experiences prior to program participation.

The majority of youth in the study reported limited to no prior experience with civic action and little knowledge of salient local or national civic issues prior to taking part in the programs. Marvin from Harambee described the paucity of knowledge he had about local civic

issues, “I know who the mayor is, but I didn’t know no alderman or even what alderman meant. I didn’t know nothing about no transit authority or train. I didn’t even really think it affected me.” Donato of Youth Action reported a similar sentiment, “I never really paid attention to politics before. I really didn’t think anything bad was going on.” Thus, at the outset of their program participation, most youth were rather unaware of civic issues and systems.

A few students from Youth Action reported having some awareness of civic issues and exposure to community service activities. Leon described having “a slight interest in current events and politics before joining Youth Action” though he had never formally participated in civic activities. Somewhat similarly, Mateo noted having early developed an interest in civic action but not finding an appropriate venue prior to Youth Action:

When I was seven or eight I went to a protest. [I] actually liked the people, the way they were acting and what they were talking about. I was eight and I really didn’t know what they were talking about; but, I always knew that I wanted to do something like that. I tried to participate in [other youth] programs but I never really found one that fit. [...] I wanted to get out there and actually do an action or something you know?

Going beyond espousing an interest in civic matters, Jamila from Youth Action reported actually participating in community action via a service project focused on enhancing neighborhood ecology:

I used to do this Cleaning Green thing. My mom always used to say, ‘Go help!’ and I would say, ‘For what? Why should I help if [it’s] not going to do anything. It ain’t like other people are going to come out and help us.’ [But] once we all got together and started cleaning up around the neighborhood, everybody automatically came out their houses with brooms and dust pans. Then 30 minutes later the line is super long and everybody is just walking behind us cleaning up and stuff.

Together these data suggest that for some Youth Action participants, involvement in the program fit with their natural proclivities and previous experiences. The program may have been particularly attractive to these youth as it offered them experiences that appeared to be novel compared to what existed in other contexts.

Given youth’s pre-program leanings and experiences with civic activities, a note about possible self-selection bias is warranted. It is difficult to assess how typical study participants are compared to the average youth in their communities and to youth nationally. The civic

experiences youth reference do not appear significantly different from those experiences that youth who are the same age and in similar contexts would describe. Participation in service activities has become increasingly common especially among young people and are widely available through schools, religious institutions, and other community organizations (Faison & Flanagan, 2001; Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002). Furthermore, youth typically are exposed to some level of political thought through classes at school (e.g., social studies). That the majority of youth did not report having prior civic awareness or civic engagement experiences may have more to do with narrow definitions of the concept or memory bias rather than having absolutely no experience with it. Also important to note is that the interview protocol did not pull for the range of youth's civic experiences. Instead, it prompted youth to compare any past participation in youth activities with those experiences they had in the program (e.g., Have you ever participated in a program like [Youth Action] before?). Finally, program leaders were intentional about selecting participants for the study that reflected the balance of youth participating in the programs, not just those on the extreme ends of the participation dimension.

Indeed, Youth Action and Harambee provided youth with the unique opportunity to participate in community organizing activities toward social change. These organizing activities were distinct from community service activities which have the goal of lending assistance rather than advocating for systems or policy-level change. In this chapter, I examine the developmental processes associated with youth's participation in community organizing. Analyses of youth interview data, which includes mostly prospective data but also some retrospective data (i.e., before the research began), revealed a five component process of civic development in which youth move from a relatively uninformed, inert state of civic awareness and activity to a more consciously aware and active state. This dissertation has organized the components in a progressive and graduated order and refers to them as stages throughout (e.g., stage 1: gaining civic awareness, stage 2: personalization, stage 3: engaging in critical thought, stage 4: taking action, and stage 4: cultivating a commitment). While the language of "stage" is used in this dissertation, one should be cautioned in regarding the development process as strict, unchangeable, and/or linear process. The different stages are theorized to build upon one another—that is the learning in one stage seems to facilitate or make way for learning in the next stages. However, this does not preclude youth experiencing the process stages simultaneously or recycling through them.

Stage I: Gaining Civic Awareness

The beginning step of youth's civic development appeared to be gaining an awareness and understanding of civic issues. Analysis of youth's interview data indicated that youth's knowledge about local, national, and global civic issues broadened and deepened over the course of their program participation. All youth in Youth Action and Harambee reported exposure to knowledge that they would not have had access to or been invested in had they not been involved with the program. Leon from Youth Action identified this exposure to new knowledge as the reason why he liked the program, "The program lets me become aware of political issues that normally I might not even care about." Similarly, Monica from Harambee commented, "If I wasn't in Harambee, I wouldn't have known nothing about the transportation [issue]." As a result of their participation in program activities, youth appeared to become more aware and conscious of their communities and the critical issues their communities faced.

The civic and developmental aims of Youth Action and Harambee exposed youth to knowledge of civic issues that held particular relevance for youth and the organizing activities in which they were engaging. In Youth Action, issues of educational disparities were particularly salient as were issues of diversity. For Harambee participants, issues of inequitable access to public transportation and matters of community were prominent. Given these specific differences, the two programs will be discussed separately below.

Youth Action

Learning about issues of educational inequity appeared to be one of two primary domains of learning at Youth Action. Through their educational advocacy, youth gained a better understanding of the inner workings, standards, and inequities plaguing the Chicago Public School System (CPS). Ines described becoming aware of unfair educational policies as a result of the learning she gained from the program, "Youth Action taught me a lot more about the issues that are affecting you like suspending students for cuts and tardies. I didn't know that you weren't supposed to be suspended for that." The unfair nature of school policies and practices was not necessarily apparent to youth prior to joining Youth Action. Although some youth were aware of unfair school practices due their own experiences, the learning youth gained in Youth Action appeared to substantially raise youth's awareness of the pervasive, unjust, and detrimental nature of some school policies and practices. Donato described how his understanding of "school issues" transformed as a result of the knowledge he gained through program activities:

Youth Action got me more into the [problems with schools]. The only problem I had with the schools was the clear book bags. It [was] really embarrassing; we [were] like the laughing stock. Now I actually go deeper than just what's on the outside, and [look at] what's going on in the inside, like all the office stuff [...] Like, I just found out that they couldn't suspend us for a certain reason, and I'm like 'Hey, a bunch of kids got suspended for that!' [...] And now I'm trying to work like to change that.

Being exposed to issues of educational inequity through the Youth Action program seemed to facilitate Donato's awareness of other, perhaps more significant, educational issues. It thus appears that program activities played an important role in extending and strengthening youth's knowledge of civic issues.

Educating youth about the histories of diverse sociocultural groups was the second domain of learning at Youth Action. Consistent with Youth Action's mission of building cross-cultural understanding, youth reported gaining a wealth of information about diverse cultural groups and the inequities they face through program activities. Malcolm commented on the learning he gained from Youth Action's educational programming, "A homosexual woman came [for one workshop] and talked about her experiences, real things, the truth. I'm glad I took it. It cleared all sort of things up for me." By design, Youth Action facilitated youth's exposure to diverse peers and the issues of culturally marginalized groups. Jason, leader of Youth Action, commented, "Our philosophy, especially working with youth of color, is that they need to have a multi-racial space to work on things together and see what the connections are between their different communities." The provision of this multiracial space seemed instrumental to youth uncovering the intersections between culture and civic issues. A few youth, like Leon, articulated a broader awareness of global civic issues:

Youth Action allowed me to see a cosmopolitan view of everything. [Before] being involved with Youth Action, I didn't really consider things that were going on in Puerto Rico or Palestine.

Teaching youth about different cultural groups as well as local and global civic issues was integral to Youth Action's mission. Youth's knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity may have served as a founding experience for youth as they engaged community organizing efforts around educational and social inequities.

Harambee

In the Harambee program youth's acquisition of new knowledge fell into two domains as described by program leader, Kyle, "The students learned a lot about the community and about CTA in particular because that was one of the major issues that they were focusing on this year." Take first the issue of unequal transit access. The majority of youth in Harambee reported having no knowledge of the transportation issues affecting their community prior to their participation. For example, Duane admitted, "I didn't know nothing about the CTA even though I been riding it." The educational and experiential activities provided by Harambee allowed youth to develop and strengthen their understanding of the civic issues surrounding the transit issues. Shay reported gaining increased knowledge about the inner workings of the CTA issue as a result of her program participation:

I learned more about the CTA. I learned that there are three groups of people: there's the mayor, the people who are under the mayor who plan, and then there' the riders. I learned about how the whole transportation thing works.

Similarly, Jackie, reported discovering the impact inequitable access to transportation had on her community, "I learned a lot about my community and the transportation issue. A lot of people who use the CTA base their life around it and really depend on the CTA to be there for them." Through their involvement with the program, youth acquired specific knowledge of the transit issue and gained an understanding of the civic systems and processes associated with the transit issue. This knowledge, coupled with youth's interactions with community members, facilitated youth's consciousness of the impact the transit issue had on their community.

Learning about community represented the second domain of knowledge development for Harambee youth. All youth reported gaining new information about their community of residence, the Parklane community. Duane described learning about the history of the Parklane community and its connection with a prominent civil rights activist:

I learned about who lived in the community and what people did in the past that helped out the community. Like I ain't never know that Martin Luther King used to stay around Parklane. They ain't really never say that in the school books.

Exposure to local community history appeared to be a unique aspect of youth's participation in the Harambee program. Youth acquired new and interesting knowledge of their community that was different from the history lessons they encountered in school.

Harambee's focus on differences in communities' access to public transportation seemed to make salient the racial and economic segregation that existed in the Parklane community and Chicago in general. Vanessa described becoming more aware of the segregation in the Parklane community, "I learned that it's really segregated. Everybody is broke up into different area. It's like all African American [here] but [over there] it's Hispanic. So it's really segregated." The transportation issue seemed to prime youth's thinking about the community as a whole and not just their block of residence. As a result, youth appeared to be more cognizant of the existing segregation that existed in the community. Consideration of the transportation issue also appeared to stimulate youth's awareness of how communities in Chicago more broadly are stratified by economics and race. Shay shared:

I learned more about how Chicago is like one of the more segregated cities. Different races and religions are just all in different areas. That's one thing that I saw when we explored that walking in different neighborhoods and, of course, the social class and income and stuff.

Despite being long-time residents of the city, many youth did not realize the extent of the segregation that existed in Chicago. Opportunities to acquire factual information about the city as well as explore the city broadened youth's awareness of the segregation that existed and its relationship to inequities in access to public transportation.

Gaining awareness and knowledge of civic issues appeared to be the initial process stage of youth's civic development. Through their engagement in program activities, all youth appeared to broaden their awareness of the civic landscape in their communities and the issues their communities faced. Youth Action participants amassed new knowledge of educational inequities and issues of cultural diversity whereas youth in Harambee learned more about transit issues and the communities in which they lived. As youth engaged and evaluated the knowledge they gained, they appeared to draw connections between the issues and their own experiences in a process referred to as personalization.

Stage II: Personalization

The second stage of the civic development is the process of personalization. Personalization involves understanding the ways in which civic issues have personal relevance and developing an affective or moral connection to the issue. Personalization goes beyond simply learning about civic injustices; rather, it reflects one's affective response to new learning

and appeared to be an important link between youth's acquisition of civic knowledge and their actual engagement in civic actions. Study data suggest that the process of personalization was experienced similarly for youth in the two programs; thus, the two programs are discussed together in the section below.

Learning about and observing the impact of civic injustices facilitated the process of personalization for youth. Several youth described gaining insight into how civic issues affected those around them and how they became invested in the civic issue as a result. Marvin from Harambee shared his movement from a place of indifference to a place of genuine concern for those affected by the transit issue:

I didn't care about the [CTA] issue at first until I heard some people who spoke about some real problems and issues that I thought was wrong too. It was actually some real people, people who live in my community.

Hearing the voices of people in his community affected by the transit issues provided Marvin with vivid, real life portrayals that hit close to home and engendered Marvin's connection to the issue. A similar process occurred with Donato from Youth Action who described becoming emotionally affected after hearing about the educational injustices of others:

Going to meetings, seeing what people had to say, and reading all the facts and testimony of what's going on in schools, it really got me interested. It got me *angry*, as a matter of fact, because I saw teachers and administrators taking advantage, I was just really upset. I really wanted to change that.

Learning about the injustices occurring in the schools invoked a strong emotional reaction from Donato. This arousal seemed to facilitate Donato's connection to the issue as demonstrated by his intention to work toward change. Thus, learning about the true life stories of others permitted youth's development of experiential connections to civic injustice for which they had limited first-hand experience.

As youth's awareness and knowledge of civic injustices grew, a few youth seemed to become more adept at identifying the ways in which they had been or were currently affected by civic issues. Recognition of their own marginalization appeared to invigorate these youth's personal connection to civic issues. Jamario shared how his racial group membership connected him to the civic issue discussed in the Harambee program, "[Issues of unequal treatment], like the CTA, apply to me 'cause they bring blacks down and I'm black. My friends and my parents'

are black; so they're affected." Having learned about how the transit issue disproportionately affects the black community, Jamario was able to recast the transit issue as one that particularly affected his racial group and thus was able to see it as an issue of personal significance. Program activities, specifically discussions about race and racism, appeared to contribute to Kreisha's increased awareness of the racism she encountered in her daily life:

[Harambee] has made me more aware. We talk about different groups and how they are affected by racism. Like when it is just me and my girlfriends, we never get stopped by the cops. But, if we hangin' with our boys we get stopped. I feel like it's not right. I believe that I should do something.

The consciousness-raising that occurred in Harambee seemed to foster Kreisha's attentiveness to the role racial bias played in her social experiences. The unfavorable consequences that racial bias yielded for her life instigated Kreisha's outrage and potential for action.

In a few cases, previous experiences with unfair treatment aided youth's connections to issues. At Youth Action, Aisha explained how her personal experiences led her to facilitate a workshop on overcrowding at the Youth Summit that they planned:

I specifically requested overcrowding in [schools] because I experienced that. Last year I got suspended for too many tardies, and that was because I never could get to class on time because there were too many students in the halls. So I got suspended twice for that, and I missed six days total. So [overcrowding] is something that I relate to personally.

Working on issues of school overcrowding appealed to Aisha as it enabled her to engage with an issue that personally impacted her. Having already experienced sanctions due to school overcrowding, Aisha was able to draw connections between her personal experiences and school problems that have a broader impact.

Youth's consideration of the associations between the knowledge they gained from the program and their personal experiences and values reflected the process of personalization, the affective stage of civic development. As they reflected on the knowledge they were gaining through program activities, several youth appeared to discover the relevance of civic issues to their lives. This discovery seemed to invoke strong emotions, deeper connections to civic issues, and the will to make change. Even further, this personalization appeared to provide the motivational foundation for youth's social action. The work of Pearce Dawes (e.g., Pearce Dawes, 2008; Pearce & Larson, 2006) provides support for this hypothesis. In analysis of 11

youth programs, which included the Youth Action program, a personal connection with the program and its activities was concluded to be a key factor in youth's sustained engagement in the program. In the case of youth's civic development, personal connection to civic issues appeared to stimulate or be accompanied by youth's engagement of critical thought around the existence and maintenance of sociopolitical injustices.

Stage III: Engaging Critical Thought

The third stage of civic development was engaging critical thought. A majority of youth in both programs described engaging in more critical and sophisticated in their thinking about civic matters over the course of their participation. The process of personalization, in that it fostered youth's emotional and cognitive engagement around a civic issue, may have facilitated youth's critical thought. Youth described examining opposing or different perspectives as well as questioning and overcoming their personal biases. Moreover, some youth appeared to develop a critical consciousness, identifying how sociocultural, historical, economic, and systemic factors contribute to civic problems.

Perspective-Taking

Exposure to multiple and often contrasting perspectives on civic issues appeared to facilitate youth's ability to consider the various standpoints on an issue. A number of youth reported moving from a place of myopic thinking about social issues to considering multiple, diverse perspectives. For Marvin at Youth Action, perspective-taking appeared to be a newly acquired skill, "It was something new for me to actually put myself in somebody else's shoes and see where they coming from." A parallel process was experienced by Donato from Youth Action who initially described lending little consideration to the viewpoints of others:

If you talk[ed] to me like a year ago I'd probably be a little more hard-headed. I'd be like, 'Yeah, that's what I believe in. Screw you!' But now I've learned to hear people out more. If you have a valid point, I'll be like, 'Alright. That makes sense. Maybe I was wrong.'

By suspending their judgment and listening to the perspectives of others, Marvin and Donato were able to see the validity in vantage points other than their own which subsequently challenged their perspectives on civic matters. This was especially the case for Aisha from Youth Action who overcame her own negative feelings about the September 11th attacks and was able to put its impact into a broader perspective:

We had a meeting after the September 11th [attack]. It was basically telling us that we shouldn't blame Arabs for what Osama Bin Laden did. I kind of saw that viewpoint. At the time, I was kind of mad because I did know someone who died in the World Trade center. So [the meeting] kind of made me see a different point of view instead of my anger.

While not minimizing her strong affective response, Aisha appeared able to identify the impact that the September 11th attacks had on those who were subsequently and unfairly cast as the aggressor. Recognizing that civic issues had implications for multiple parties was important for youth to consider as they worked toward social justice. Duane from Harambee commented on how it was important to understand both sides of an issue rather than being prematurely beholden to one side:

You don't just look at an [issue] from your own point of view. [You] try to look at it from all sides. Instead of just looking at the bad side about it try to look at the good side so you can understand both views.

The ability to override mental habits, specifically the tendency to dismiss dissimilar information, demonstrates significant growth in youth's ability to perspective take. Interestingly, a couple of youth described being intellectually stimulated by the diverse perspectives they encountered in the program. Gabrielle from Youth Action described the enlightenment she experienced as a result of being exposed to multiple perspectives:

Instead of looking at an issue in just one direction, here [at Youth Action] you got so many people with different opinions. Say I am looking at an issue, my arrow is going in one direction but after speaking with everyone else it is like in five different directions; they all make sense but within my mind I never really thought of anything like that. I love that!

Exposure to different perspectives allowed Gabrielle to try on different ways of thinking about an issue that she may not have come up with on her own. This opportunity to interface with different perspectives served not only to broaden youth's understanding of civic issues but appeared to stimulate youth's own cognizing around civic issues.

Observed in this domain of learning is youth's capacity to take into account and extract meaning from the perspectives of others while maintaining the integrity of their own

perspectives. Study data suggest that many youth developed new or modified ways of thinking about social issues as a result of learning from the experiences and perspectives of others.

Developing Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is a concept that emerged from Freire (1970) who described it as process whereby individuals increase awareness of socioeconomic and cultural circumstances that shape their lives. In this study, critical consciousness, put simply, refers to critical thinking applied to the societal realm (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998). Youth's critical consciousness manifested in youth's ability to overcome bias and acknowledge their privilege, recognize the multiple levels of oppression, develop critical theories of civic issues, and understand the systemic nature of oppression. Whereas Youth Action participants appeared to experience all aspects of critical consciousness, this was not the case for Harambee youth. Only a few Harambee youth appeared to demonstrate critical consciousness development. In particular, data related to overcoming sociocultural bias was extremely thin for Harambee youth likely because opportunities for direct learning and interaction were not a primary focus of the programming as was the case in Youth Action.

Overcoming bias. Examination of study data did not indicate overcoming bias to be an area of growth for Harambee youth. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of Youth Action participants (9/10) encountered significant changes in their thinking about sociocultural groups (see also Watkins, Larson, & Sullivan, 2007). Youth described moving past their stereotypes of different sociocultural groups and civic issues. Malcolm, for example, credited the program with helping him dismantle stereotypes about ethnic groups from the Middle East:

I've changed my thinking of like Middle Eastern people. [Before] I would look at a Middle Eastern person and say that they have some sort of affiliation with terrorism. The [workshops] taught me that that is not true; not all Middle Eastern people out there are affiliated with terrorism.

Given the political context during the study cycle—which was defined by a particularly prominent war in Iraq and the recent September 11th attacks—it is significant that Malcolm appeared to individuate and not associate the horrific acts of a few terrorists with the vast number of individuals who may appear phenotypically similar or have similar geographic origins. The capacity to perspective-take may have contributed to youth's ability to understand the experiences of others and subsequently challenge their assumptions of different others. For

example, Xiomara described how, in discussing the experiences of those who were less fortunate, she was able to recognize the ways in which she was privileged:

On Tuesday, I went with one of my best friends to her class. [As] I sat there and I listened to different people talk about their experiences with welfare and social class, I really started thinking about how I've never really thought about being upper middle class or lower class or hardly having money to even buy food. And just being at Youth Action, I've seen that a lot of people have a lot of advantages as well as myself. I've probably been better off than a lot of people I know.

Prompted by the class conversation and in reflecting on her Youth Action experiences, Xiomara came into an awareness of social class inequalities and her own economic privilege relative to others.

Critical theories. Another aspect of youth's critical consciousness that was identified in the data was the development of deeper and more nuanced thinking about civic issues. Almost all youth across the programs offered theories about the causes of educational disparities or unequal access to public transit and how these issues might be remedied. In trying to make sense of the inequities in public transit, Kreisha from Harambee expressed her befuddlement:

How is the CTA going to cut the blue line off? How you gonna go through a neighborhood where almost everybody can afford cars? Can't nobody down here afford a car? That's where you need to be, where people can't afford cars. I mean it just makes sense.

Applying her own logic to the transit issue, Kreisha was incredulous about the CTA's decision to limit her community's access to the train.

Duane from Harambee offered perspective on the issue in the following statement about the CTA, "Shoot, money make the world go around! They need money. That's what it's really towards—money." Indeed Duane put it simply when he implicated the role of money in the transit issue. Elaborating further on this hypothesis Duane articulated, "They say they don't got money for us, but they got money for rebuilding stuff in the city. They just putting money aside for other things they think is more important than what the people need like transportation." While his community endured cuts in access to resources, Duane was aware of the improvements and enhancement that other communities were receiving. Consequently, Duane came to see how

his community's needs were minimized in favor of what appeared to be the goal of turning a profit.

At Youth Action, explanatory theories that centered on economics also were popular. Leon from Youth Action articulated his view of the role economics played in issues of school funding:

[I] wonder why it is certain schools, like in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, have nicer things than schools on the Southwest side. Well, it all comes down to the wealth of the individuals that reside in the area. [But] it really shouldn't be that. It should be equal funding for all the schools since CPS covers the whole city and all our tax dollars go to fund the schools.

Leon appeared to have an accurate understanding of how public schools are funded. However, realizing that there is an uneven appropriation of public funds, Leon offered objections to the current method of funding schools. Similarly, Marvin from Harambee articulated his objections about the city's unequal investment in neighborhoods across the city:

I think they just using the community money wrong cause in all the White neighborhoods ain't nothing going wrong. All our transportation getting messed up. They cutting businesses, jobs; and there's a lot of vacant lots and stuff. None of our money that we spend is going back into our community.

Both Leon and Marvin perceived the city's decision to allocate additional resources to well resourced schools and communities rather than investing in lower-resourced areas as reflecting poor and perhaps even discriminatory practice. The role of economic factors in sustaining disparities seemed to become clearer for youth and, for some youth, the connection between race, class, and inequity became more salient.

By way of deepening their understanding of civic issues and developing theories about why civic injustices are maintained, a few youth reported gaining the ability to identify the interlocking nature of the sociopolitical systems (e.g., city government, CPS, etc.) and their connections with different civic issues. Vanessa, a Harambee participant, commented on her newly developing understanding of sociopolitical "system", "I didn't know everybody has a hand in something. Like everybody is helping somebody and in order to get something done you need to help somebody." Many youth, like Vanessa, were unaware of how complex and intersecting sociopolitical systems were. Awareness of this fact had implications for youth's

ability to understand their place in the system. Marvin from Harambee articulated his understanding of how sociopolitical systems are supposed to work, “It’s like the food chain. It seems like we’re at the bottom, but we’re actually at the top because they do whatever we tell them to. The mayor and alderman and all them, they’re like puppets, and we pull their strings.” Marvin’s quote provides a perfect example of youth’s critical consciousness developed. Despite having previously accepted the public misperception about the role of “the people” in democracy, Marvin demonstrated an evolving understanding of the system of democracy and the role of the different players.

Seeing the universality of oppression was one domain of growth that appeared unique to Youth Action participants. A few Youth Action participants appeared to recognize the broader scope and impact of civic issues likely due to their work on issues of educational equity for which there is national concern. Aisha spoke about how she came to recognize that inequities in education were not local to CPS but existed in other parts of the U.S.:

I just thought that CPS was all messed up and then when the kids from Detroit came and talked about their schools I was like what, ‘I can’t believe this’. And then when they actually rallied against the case exams in California I was just like ‘Wow, it’s not just happening in Chicago, this is a big problem worldwide.’

Learning about the work of youth in other cities facilitated Aisha’s understanding of how pervasive issues of educational inequity were. Similarly, Mateo came to discover that inequities not only existed in the U.S. but occurred across the globe:

I’ve met Palestinian people and heard what they go through in their country, and I see a lot of things that relate to what my people go through in Mexico. When the people from South Africa came and we interviewed them about [their views] on education, they gave us almost the exact same answers that the students over here gave us.

Incorporating the experiences of others into their understanding of civic issues allowed these youth to see a bigger picture than they had previously. Youth began to recognize the scope of educational inequities and likely how parallel systems of oppression exist across the globe

Through working on civic issues, youth gained insight into the dynamics that existed between the city and their community. Youth became aware of the lack of resources available in their community and/or school and the inequitable distribution of resources that contributed to

this inequity. Furthermore, youth discovered the ways in which their communities were denied resources so that those same resources could be invested elsewhere.

Because youth were exposed to a number of perspectives through program activities, one might question whether youth's theories about civic issues were their own or a function of imitation. Study data suggests that youth were not simply parroting the perspectives of others. Rather, youth demonstrated the ability to critically analyze new information and craft arguments to support their views. Jackie from Harambee reported "critical thinking" to be an important skill she was gaining from the program. Analyzing information before accepting it was a relatively new or different skill for many youth. Ines from Youth Action shared how her involvement in the program contributed to her being a more active and critical consumer of information, "Before I'd kind of accept other people's opinions. But now I'm more [likely] to challenge what they're talking about. I respect what they're saying, but now it's more like what about this scenario." Similarly, Xiomara from Youth Action expressed becoming more analytic in her thinking, "Sometimes I question things a lot. I'll be like, "Why? Why is this?" I think that's because we're used to questioning things." Encouraged by the program, youth appeared to develop their own standard for knowing and actively pursued information to satisfy this standard. This suggests that youth's critical understandings were not simply a result of indoctrination by program leaders but reflected youth's active engagement with the civic issues at hand.

In stage 3, developing critical thought, youth appeared to gain the capacity for perspective-taking and developed aspects of critical consciousness. Consistent with Hopper's (1999) definition of critical consciousness which includes thinking critically about accepted ways of thinking and discerning hidden interests in systems, a few youth described overcoming bias, recognizing their privilege, becoming more aware of systems of civic oppression, and engaging in critical analysis. The development of these competencies may have a transformative value for urban youth of color as they empower them with a sense of insight about their social worlds. Donato provided a powerful description of how he became 'enlightened' through the program:

Going to Youth Action is like getting taken out of a hole that you've been living in your whole life. It's kinda like being in [a] box for fifteen years and then finally just being able to burst out and see what's happening. Youth Action pretty much showed me a lot of stuff that was going on. And now I really understand and see what's happening.

Thus, beyond simply learning about civic issues, youth gained a more enlightened and conscious perspective on civic issues through participating in the programs. The next stage, taking action, describes how youth translated their critical thought and consciousness into actual civic action.

Stage IV: Taking Action

Having gained knowledge, established the personal significance of, and critically engaged civic issues, some youth seemed to be moving toward taking action to address civic injustices. The community organizing skills and direct experiences with lobbying and other forms of political action that youth gained from the programs equipped them with the tools to address injustice thus further compelling youth's orientation to action. In this fourth stage, taking to action, youth actively involved themselves in social change efforts that surpassed program expectations as well as their own. Working on community organizing tasks sponsored by the two programs allowed youth to gain facility with social change efforts and appeared to motivate their sense that they could impact civic issues. Associated with this development of civic efficacy was youth's increased civic participation whether it be speaking out or engaging in actions as described by Leon from Youth Action, "I'm more active politically in my community [now]. When there's a problem I don't just sit back. If I see that there's a solution to it, then I'll work with [others] on it."

Engagement in the organizing activities sponsored by the programs helped you learn social change strategies as well as see the efficacy of social change efforts. As a result, youth seemed more likely to utilize their community organizing skills through self-initiating actions both within and outside of the program context. Several youth described actively engaging in advocacy efforts in a manner that went beyond their prescribed roles as program participants. Marvin from Harambee described how he and his peers became so impassioned observing a protest that they became actively involved:

We went to the protest for service learning hours and just to see. There were people protesting about what they were gonna do. We stepped out of our job description for a second, and we got really involved. We was at the table, signing our names, writing down our phone numbers, and everything.

The relevance of the transit issue coupled with the energy of the protest enraptured Marvin to the point that he was volunteering his personal time and resources to the transit issue.

In a couple of cases, youth were inspired and supported by the program to organize and execute their own actions. For example, Mateo held a fundraising event on behalf of a cause that he learned about through a fellow organizer in Arizona:

I had a lot of support from Youth Action around my collaboration with a girl in Arizona who is working on border issues. They have a group out there that they help out people so they won't die in the desert. [She's been] sending me emails all the time, like ten people found dead in desert. It got to me, you know? So I said, 'I gotta help these people out. What should I do?' I have a lot of friends in rock and roll bands, and I put on a little show. I had like six bands and charged five bucks. I made five hundred bucks and sent it to them.

Mateo seemed to be emotionally affected by the deaths of Mexican immigrants who were trying to cross the U.S. border in search of better opportunities. Instead of simply sympathizing with the issue, Mateo utilized his organizing skills and peer network to coordinate an event to raise money for those who were affected. The impetus for action was quite different, but no less illustrative, for Kreisha of Harambee who enlisted her advocacy skills to garner support for publishing a yearbook at her school:

I feel like one voice can do something and I believe that I should do something. Like I won't be here my senior year. I am going back to Ohio. I want a yearbook so I went and spoke with the principal about making a yearbook and he said that I need to show that there is an interest. So, I got my friends to look at it and say that they want a yearbook. So, even if I have to work on it from Ohio, I will make sure that it will happen.

The desire to have a keepsake to represent her senior year was so important for Kreisha that she employed the organizing skills she gained via the program to this end. The transfer of organizing skills to contexts and issues other than the program suggests youth confidence in their individual capacity to enact change.

Youth's development of the capacity to engage in social change efforts represented the fourth stage of civic development. Owing to the community organizing skills and experiences provided by the program, a few youth described becoming more engaged in civic action and advocacy. Kyle, the adult leader for Harambee, commented on the transformation in youth's civic interest from lackluster to highly engaged:

When we first brought the [transit issues] to the table and told the students, “Okay, this is what you guys are focusing on this year”, they were like, “What? We don’t want to see this.” [But] they really got into it. We had students volunteer on weekends to go out to protests, and really be gutly involved in the process.

Study data supports Kyle’s comments about youth becoming involved in civic action beyond program expectations and on their own volition. Propelled by their knowledge of and emotional connection to civic issues and bolstered by their community organizing skills, youth identified and initiated civic action thus becoming social actors in their own right. Through their activity, some youth appeared to cultivate a commitment to social change work.

Stage V: Cultivating a Commitment

Participation and the belief in civic change efforts appeared to facilitate some youth’s cultivation of a commitment to sociopolitical justice. A majority of youth, 8 out of 10, in Youth Action articulated and demonstrated a dedication to civic action and/or identified themselves as community activists. While many of the youth in Harambee developed an orientation to action, only 3 youth appeared to affirm a commitment to civic justice at an existential level (i.e., incorporating activism into their life plan or sense of self). This low number may reflect structural differences in the programs; for example, Harambee’s participation cycle was 6-weeks whereas Youth Action offered a continuous participation cycle which allowed for more civic experiences and participation. Additionally, most Youth Action participants had longer tenures in the programs (8 youth had participated for a year or more) compared to Harambee youth (3 youth had participated in the summer program before).

Working for social change

At a most basic level, youth who articulated commitment to civic action expressed their intention to continue working for social change. Vanessa from Harambee conveyed her willingness to continue working on transit issues beyond the program’s scheduled end date:

I already told Kyle that we wanna do the things we doing now with the CTA and Douglas Park through the school year. But we can’t because they not funded. I told him I’d do it for free.

Regardless of whether she would receive monetary compensation, Vanessa was committed to maintaining her engagement on the transit issue. It appears then that youth’s program

participation served to spark youth's long-term investment in civic issues. Youth Action participant, Aisha, demonstrated this in the following quote:

If they [start] a student board at my school I would be the first one on the list. I would just be like, 'Yeah, I know what you are talking about. I remember when I went through that problem when I was a sophomore and I had that problem.' Knowing that that happened to me last year, I can help somebody who it happened to this year. So if it was something like a board of students at my school I would gladly participate in that.

Aisha's personal and program experiences with educational inequity seemed to solidify her commitment to working on the issue in venues outside of the program (i.e., at school).

Investment in civic issues as well as an affinity for community organizing appeared to strengthen youth's dedication to social change. Malcolm stated his intention to continue working with Youth Action around making civic change, "[I plan to continue participating] cause I love everybody here and I love changing society." Malcolm's strong affinity for changing society was shared by Xiomara who articulated, "If I feel strongly about a cause, I will most definitely get involved with it. I'm really into organizing. I love it." Both Malcolm and Xiomara expressed a passion for engaging in social change work. The opportunity to work on social issues that were pertinent to them seemed to sustain their commitment to community organizing.

As the quotes above evince, belief in the power of social change appeared to be an important prerequisite for youth's civic involvement. Marvin from Harambee illustrates this in the following quote:

I'm gonna try to live my life and help other people. One person can make change if they are a big enough impact. So I'm gonna try to have a big impact. Maybe some of the stuff I do could pass on to other people.

For Marvin, commitment to future action appeared to be primed, in part, by his belief in social change more generally and his sense of personal efficacy. Overall, youth's personal experiences with injustice, their experiences with community organizing, and their sense of efficacy appeared critical to youth affirming future commitments to working for social change.

Considering College and Career

Looking toward the future, some youth articulated growing interest in civic careers. The civic engagement experiences that the programs afforded youth seemed to stimulate their ideas about how they might incorporate community action and advocacy into their long-term career

goals. Duane from Harambee surmised that he might want to work in the social services field, “Harambee made me think about something I might want to do with the community. I might want to be a social worker since I like talking.” Desiring to help his community and recognizing his communicatory strength, Duane appeared to be considering a career in social work. Other careers youth reported interest in were law and politics. Leon from Youth Action described how his program participation contributed to his ideas about future career options:

After volunteering here for three years, I really like lobbying and campaigning around community issues. Dealing with these different universal issues makes me want to learn more about other people and other political climates. I think that’s why I’m leaning to[ward] international studies. I would want to be a lawyer and, if not, get involved in some level of politics.

Similar to Leon, Ines of Youth Action indicated her interest in law as well as a burgeoning interest in politics:

I want to be a lawyer. I would like to be able to defend youth. I just want to do that kind of stuff, something that involves helping people. I’ve kind of wanted to even be a politician only because I want to listen. I don’t actually want to stand up there and say I’ll do [something] just to get the money. I want to be able to make changes that are effective.

Working on issues of inequities and injustice may have added to Leon and Ines’s existing interests in law or politics, both of which are fields concerned with justice and equity. In contrast, for Luis from Youth Action, working on inequities appeared to rattle his ideas about what he would be doing in his future career:

At first I wanted to go to Army or the Marines. I do want to go but I really want to go into college. The research we did [showed] that there are more ethnic people than any other groups in the [Armed Forces]. And I’m like why don’t they put more white cultures in it. That’s what changed my mind. I want to be my own person.”

Learning about ethnic patterns in Armed Forces enlistment appeared to rouse a curiosity and cautiousness in Luis about his initial career plan of enlisting in the Armed Force. Luis did not completely abandon his interest in a military career, but seemed to open up to the possibility of other career options such as college.

Working as a community organizer appeared to be a career of interest to a few youth. Mateo shared his future vision of starting a community organizing program in his home community, “My dream has always been to stay in my neighborhood that has affected me and start my own chapter of Youth Action.” Similar aspirations were shared by Shay, “I think I want to have my own thing and be an organizer with little kids and stuff—something like the people do with us through Harambee.” The programs appeared to provide a positive model of advocacy that youth admired and wished to emulate. Xiomara directly credited her future aspirations to her participation in Youth Action:

[Youth Action] has most definitely [influenced my career path]. Right now I’m majoring in sociology and political science but I think I definitely wanna work in my community as an organizer and definitely work with youth.

Often youth espouse interest in particular career paths only to later change their minds. What is convincing about Xiomara’s statement is the alignment between her community organizing goals and her college majors. Such evidence was not available for other youth in the program given their status as high school students. However, participants such as Xiomara and Ines who were attending college may have served as role models for other youth participations.

As a function of their growth in the previous stages, youth were motivated to find ways to integrate the work of community organizing into their future goals. Some youth planned to pursue careers that would allow them to work toward changing civic inequities; some youth expressed desires to start their own organizing groups; and, other youth began considering higher education as an alternative or supplement to already existing career plans.

Developing an activist identity

Monumental about this final stage of commitment is youth’s identification and experience of themselves as agents of change. Forging an identity is a critical development process for adolescents. Foreclosure on political identity in adolescence provides a reasonable assurance that youth will grow up to be informed and engaged citizens as adults. A few youth reported being labeled by others or seeing themselves as activists in their own right. Marvin from Harambee described his identity using the program language of “community builder”, “The name of the group is Community Builder. I’m actually doing that on and off work. I’m helping my community—cleaning up stuff, carrying groceries, holding doors for people, and all types of stuff.” Luis self-identified as an activist and credits Youth Action for his growth:

Actually yeah [I see myself as an activist]. Back then I [was] like, ‘Nah, that ain’t for me’, but now I’m more like that’s what I want to do. I wanna keep going towards that. [...]And you could say [Youth Action] is my school for [learning] how to put actions together. And Jason’s my teacher.

Luis’s reference to Youth Action as the training ground for his activism is a moving testament to the power of the program and the leader in facilitating youth’s change. Mateo offers his story about his transformation into an activist:

[Youth Action] turned me a little bit into a preacher type, type of guy. With my friends, I’m like, ‘Hey dog. You know about this? Yeah, you should do this. [...] I do talk about [political stuff] a lot now, try to get my friends into it. [...] It gives them a reason to tease me, ‘Oh, you outlaw, you rebel; but, it’s all good. They know what I’m doing is good.

Mateo’s carryover of the knowledge and skills developed through Youth Action was not lost on his friends who engaged in good-natured ribbing about his newfound posture. Peers are a major source of influence in adolescence. That Mateo could forge a new part of his identity and still experience a set of fit with his friends outside of the program is encouraging.

Donato from Youth Action reported discovering a new, more politically oriented peer group because of the program:

I had no clue there were activists at Curie cause everyone’s like, ‘Shut-up or you’re gonna get suspended.’ I’ve been having like a lot of political talks a bunch of other kids in school lately, and it’s just really cool. One kid leant me this book called The Communist Manifesto. It’s really [pause] Wow! It’s a pretty good book. We’re talking more about politics and what political party we’re behind. At first I was like, ‘Democrat.’ Then they’re telling me about Communist and Socialist, and I got to learn about that. It’s really great.

Through organizing political actions at school, Donato discovered peers who shared similar interests in political action and were exposing him to new political ideologies and thought. Although it appeared this group of activist peers was not new to the school, Donato likely would not have become aware or chosen to interact with them had it not been for the identity he developed through the program.

The fifth stage of civic development, cultivating a commitment, is characterized by youth’s dedication to continuing the work of community organizing as evidenced by their

predictions about being agentic in the future, their college and career aspirations or choices, and their newfound political identity. Youth look very different from their previously unaware, apathetic, and passive selves. Youth appear emboldened about participating in their civic worlds and identified themselves as capable agents of change.

Conclusion

This chapter chronicled the civic development processes of youth involved in the Youth Action and Harambee programs. Despite the differences in program structure and focus, youth appeared to experience five stages of civic growth. The first stage, gaining awareness, was characterized by youth's growing awareness and knowledge of civic issues. Youth developed better understanding of the nature of civic issues, be it educational inequities or city transit issue, and advanced their knowledge of cultural diversity and their community. In the second stage, personalization, youth began to apply this new knowledge to their own lives and uncovered the significance of the issues for themselves and those they know. Youth encountered strong emotions such as outrage which spurred stronger connections with civic issues and the will to enact social change. The moral imperative invoked in personalization combined with youth's learning reflected the third stage, engaging in critical thought. Youth exhibited more perspective-taking abilities, actively challenged their personal biases, and, in some cases, became more conscious of civic oppression. In the fourth stage, taking action, as a result of being provided with the skills and outlet to engage in change activities, youth evinced greater belief in the potency of social action and were observed engaging in self-initiated actions. Although by no means a developmental endpoint, the fifth stage of the civic development process was cultivating a commitment. In this stage, youth articulated their desires and plans to incorporate social action into their careers and demonstrated efforts to address inequities through their own life choices, for example deciding to attend college. Additionally some youth came to incorporate activism into how they identify themselves and were witnessed pursuing new and different peer groups or opportunities for involvement.

The stages identified in this dissertation are consistent with past research that has examined youth's civic engagement. Research has highlighted how through participation in civic activities, youth become more aware of civic issues (Kirshner, 2006; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997); come to recognize the connection between their lives and civic issues (Lewis-Charp et al., 2001; Youniss & Yates, 1997); and incorporate a civic identity into their broader

sense of identity (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). What this study adds to the extant literature is that the learning experiences associated with youth's civic development have been organized into a stage process model that speaks to how youth's development occurs. Also of value was the elaboration on youth's critical consciousness development. Watts and Flanagan (2007) have theorized that youth must achieve critical consciousness in order to engage in social change. While youth organizing programs have been credited with raising youth's critical consciousness, the process by which youth develop critical consciousness has not been sufficiently unpacked. Thus, this dissertation reflects a contribution to the growing understanding of the nature and importance of critical consciousness for youth's civic development.

Before proceeding, a point of clarification is needed. Note that the stages described in the previous chapter and the outcomes discussed in this chapter both represent developmental processes. This similarity may render it difficult to distinguish between the civic developmental processes and outcomes associated with civic development. A helpful way to think about the distinction is to keep in mind that the civic development stage model is comprised of developmental processes that reflect *how* youth experience growth in their civic knowledge, affinities, and behavior. In contrast, the developmental outcomes presented in this chapter appear to result from or are associated with youth's civic growth; they are not able to answer the question of how youth develop civically but do answer the question of what benefit youth reap as a result of participating in civic activities. Put simply, the developmental model answers the question of how and the developmental outcomes are a response to the question of what secondary developmental gains youth experience as a result of experiencing the civic development stages.

CHAPTER 5

CIVIC DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

Chapter Introduction

A second aim of this study was to document the developmental outcomes associated with the process of civic development. There is a growing empirical understanding of the developmental benefits youth derive from participating in youth programs (O'Donoghue & Kirshner, 2003). However, much more research is needed that identifies the domains of growth for youth participating in community organizing. The longitudinal case study analyses that this study employed allows for systematic examination of the developmental outcomes associated with youth civic growth. Findings from this chapter are based on analyses of youth and program leader data.

Jackie summarizes the benefits she gained from her program participation in Harambee, “[I've gained] responsibility, teamwork, interviewing abilities, networking, getting to know like different people, what you want to do in life and who you want to be, and making a difference.” Analyses of youth data indicated that youth experienced many of the positive developmental outcomes Jackie identified through their program participation. Many of these outcomes, for example teamwork, skill development, and identity development, were consistent with those outcomes found in the literature on youth programs more broadly. Yet, qualitative differences existed in the way these outcomes were demonstrated for youth given the community-based structure and activist orientation of the programs. Moreover, youth experienced developmental outcomes, such as political efficacy and achievement motivation, that appeared to be uniquely associated with their participation in community organizing and activism. In the sections below, I identify and describe the developmental benefits yielded from the analysis. They are presented in approximate ascending order from general outcomes to program specific outcomes.

Cooperation

The development of cooperative skills or teamwork was a primary outcome associated with youth's participation in community organizing activities. This finding was expected given the association between youth's participation in youth programs and the development of teamwork skills that has been consistently documented in the youth development literature (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Woyach & Cox, 1997). Additionally, the very nature of community organizing work requires that certain level of collaboration and interdependence

exist among community members. Through their community organizing efforts, the majority of youth reported acquiring the capacity to work cooperatively with others toward common goals. These youth developed openness to the perspectives of others, supported each other's ideas and actions, found common ground amid the diversity of backgrounds and ideas, and learned how to engage in joint action with others toward community organizing goals.

Openness to the ideas and contributions of others was an orientation that several youth reported developing through their program participating. Accustomed to working somewhat independently and relying on their own internal resources, some youth found it difficult to consider the opinions of others. Marvin from Harambee admitted:

The first time [we worked on the mural] I actually wanted it to be my way. I ain't really care what everybody else [thought]. But now I listen to all these opinions. I'm not gonna make the picture like it's mine.

Marvin, who described himself as an artist, was initially annoyed by the collective process of designing the mural. However, as the mural process proceeded, Marvin developed a more collaborative orientation to the project and became more receptive to the ideas of others.

Malcolm of Youth Action also came to recognize the importance of listening to the opinions of others when working toward shared goals, "I learned from experience that if you're working in a group you can't be a dictator. You can't make all the decisions. You gotta allow people to [voice] their opinion too." Learning from the experiences of others, Malcolm seemed to recognize that soliciting the input of others and employing collective decision-making skills were important strategies for fostering collective ownership.

Through working together in groups, youth extracted important lessons about how to work cooperatively with others. Jackie from Harambee commented, "You [learn] how to read people and how to act and talk to them on different levels. Sometimes the person can get aggressive but you just talk it out." Through her work with other youth, Jackie enhanced her ability to work effectively with others in light of any conflicts that might arise. Aisha of Youth Action also reported learning how to mitigate conflict that might be encountered when engaging in cooperative efforts, "You always have to make sure to communicate with your partner and understand where each other is coming from [so] that there is not any tension going on." Conflict among group members had the potential of derailing the direction and effectiveness of

community organizing efforts. Youth attempted to mitigate the threat conflict posed by employing conflict resolutions skills such as open communication and compromise.

Coming to the aid of a fellow group member was another way in which youth demonstrated cooperation. Although this outcome cannot fully be attributed to youth's development through the program—that is, youth seemed to have had cooperative experiences prior to the program—youth's program participation may have exposed them to more frequent and intense cooperative experiences. As youth faced daunting individual tasks, their peers were right there with them providing emotional support and lending a hand. Donato recalled his peers providing him with pep talks as he delivered public speeches at the city-wide Youth Summit, "The [group] helped me out because I would talk to them in between breaks. They'd be like, 'Hang in there dude, I know it's really hard, but keep on trying, don't freak out.'" Motivational statements and praise were consistently employed by youth as they supported and affirmed one another. Youth appeared to become cheerleaders for one another demonstrating a level of camaraderie as well as collective investment and esteem.

A particular feature of the Youth Action program was the multiracial composition of program participants. Working together with diverse peers appeared to be a novel experience for youth, some of whom had limited contact with peers who were of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Malcolm shared:

We never really came together with so many different races and diversity. Getting everyone together, coming up with a plan, and working together for a certain goal, it was an experience for me.

Engaging in joint action with racially or ethnically different peers appeared to be an uncommon experience for youth. Program activities provided youth the opportunity to work jointly across racial/ethnic differences and demonstrated how cooperative efforts could be employed toward a common goal. Luis commented, "A lot of ethnic groups come together [at Youth Action]. Certain people you're going to like, certain people you're not going to like. [But] you always come together [around] a certain issue." Despite their differences, youth gained the capacity to work cooperatively in order to accomplish common goals. These common goals seemed to serve as a rallying point for youth and facilitated youth's sense of connection.

Cooperative effort is an important element if not a keystone of effective community organizing. Youth across both programs seemed to strengthen their capacity to engage

cooperatively with others. Data suggested that youth developed a more collaborative and less individualistic orientation to program activities. Youth became more open to the ideas and contributions of others, motivated and assisted their peers in times of need, developed the capacity to contain or resolve conflict, and learned to work with diverse others.

Decision-Making

Learning how to make decisions was an important skill set youth gained through their program participation. The emphasis that Harambee and Youth Action placed on youth voice and ownership afforded youth ongoing opportunities for participation in decision-making processes. It thus seems to follow that the majority of youth reported strengthening their capacity for decision-making through their program participation. Monica from Harambee described youth's role in decision-making as "We make the decisions. [The adult leaders] had a role, but we had like 90% of it." Similarly, Mateo from Youth Action affirmed, "Youth make almost every decision at Youth Action." The high level of decision-making power granted to youth may have been especially consequential for youth in strengthening their capacity for decision-making. As will be discussed below, youth developed the ability to make decisions that had implications for their work as a group and for the lives more personally.

The development of collective decision-making skills was a salient area of growth for youth in this study. Because youth worked as a collective body around community organizing goals, any decisions made with regard to organizing efforts had implications for the group as a whole. Majority rule seemed to be the primary method by which youth made decisions as a group. Jackie of Harambee described, "We put in our ideas, talk it out, and see what the best solution is for the problem." An identical process seemed to exist for Youth Action as Jamila delineated, "[We] put out a lot of issues, pick the main issues that people are interested in, we vote, and the majority of the people get it." Majority rule appeared to be the preferred method for making collective decisions. An issue was identified or brought to the table, solutions or ideas were generated and evaluated, and then the best solution was identified through discussion and/or a majority vote. A few youth seemed to prefer the collective process over making decisions alone. Duane from Harambee, for example, shared, "[Other youth] helped make decisions that were kind of difficult more easy." Having the support and knowledge of other group members made deciding on actions easier than if one were relying on their own resources.

Thus, as a result of the norm around decision-making, youth appeared to learn new strategies as well as the value of working with others to make collective decisions.

The growth youth experienced in their decision-making abilities through the program appeared to have applicability to the decisions they made in their personal lives. A few youth reported making more informed decisions as a result of what they learned in the program. Luis of Youth Action shared, “I make better decisions now. I think more about the way I make my decisions.” Expanding on this, Kreisha reported thinking more critically about potential decisions, “[Harambee] helped me to think critically about everything that I do, all the choices I make. Like staying out all night—I might still do it, but I’m going to think about it.” Although identification of the pros and cons of an action may not have prohibited Kreisha from making a less than ideal decision, Kreisha was at least conscious of the cons and could engage in further problem-solving around any problems that arose. By allowing their decisions to be guided by relevant knowledge, personal goals, and the like, youth demonstrated an improved capacity to make well-informed decisions. Moreover, youth’s careful attention to the decisions they made as well as the associated benefits and drawbacks represented a more thoughtful and intentional approach to making personal decisions.

Overall, youth’s ability to make decisions and engage in problem solving appeared to strengthen through their participation. Youth reported gaining increased facility with problem-solving as evidenced by their capacity for analytic thinking and research. Also gained by youth were new strategies for making collective and personal decisions. Collective-decision making was guided by group input and the majority rule confirmed final decisions. Youth also appeared to see the value of having the support and input of others when making decisions. With regard to making personal decisions, youth seemed more intentional in their decision-making taking care to base decisions on sound knowledge and evaluations of the pros and cons of potential actions. Enhancement of the capacity to make collective and personal decisions represented a significant area of growth for youth who would be responsible for making decisions throughout the course of their life.

Communication Skills

A major area of learning and growth for youth was the development of communication skills. All youth in the Harambee and Youth Action programs reported improving their ability to communicate effectively with others. Youth identified becoming more outspoken; developing

public speaking abilities; and learning how to adapt their communication to fit the needs of the situation. The culture of the program and the strong communicatory basis of organizing activities promoted youth's self expression.

The development of voice, or "speaking up" as youth referred to it, was an important way by which youth grew in their communication abilities as a result of program participation. The programs' encouragement of youth voice provided youth with genuine opportunities for free expression. Aisha commented, "One thing that they do at Youth Action a lot is ask your opinion. I always speak my point of view across with anything. I can always voice my opinion no matter what." Latoya also referenced the program's role in helping her develop her voice, "I learned [from Harambee] that I should stand up and say what I believe. I have a lot more confidence [now]. I express how I feel." As a result of program expectations that encouraged and validated youth voice, youth appeared to develop increased capacity for and comfort with expressing their feelings and perspectives in an open and honest way.

Public speaking represented another communication skill that youth developed through their program participation. Initially viewed by youth as a daunting task, a majority of youth reported gaining the confidence to speak in public settings. Latoya from Harambee described a newfound comfort with public speaking, "When I first started I was a little shy. When I used to stand up in front of a crowd I'd get nervous; but, now I don't. I'm more outgoing and get my point across." Similarly, Leon of Youth Action described becoming more secure in his public speaking as a result of engagement in particular program activities:

At first I was unsure talking to people, and I would struggle for words. After doing these interviews and speaking at rallies, I feel that my self esteem has somewhat increased.

Now if I have to talk to anybody I won't freak out. I can just maintain my composure and talk [to] them regularly as if I know 'em.

Formal and informal interactions with the public provided youth with real life opportunities for public speaking. As a result, youth appeared to increase their capacity for and comfort with communicating in public settings. Kyle, program leader from Harambee, conveyed how impressed he was at youth's growth in their public speaking abilities, "When one of participants got up and spoke at a city hearing, I was almost crying. It was really rewarding to see students overcome their own personal fears of speaking out." Youth's improved public speaking was a

testament to how through opportunities and support youth could actualize previously untapped potential.

The third communication skill youth developed was the ability to adapt communication to the audience or situation at hand. As a result of their interactions with diverse groups and settings, youth appeared to become more adept at modulating their communication to match the needs and norms of the situation. Duane from Harambee commented, “I’m growing [in] my communication skills—learning how to say things, when to say things, and why you should say [things] that way or this way.” Understanding how tone, timing, and phrasing impact communication was important as youth developed the capacity to adapt communication to meet the needs of a group or situations. Recognizing that communication norms differ and matter by group and context was critical as youth encountered important adults, such as political officials, whom they sought to influence. Adopting a professional communication style was identified by youth as the only effective way of being heard and seriously considered by adults. Xiomara of Youth Action provided recommendations for how one should adapt their communication when interacting with adults:

You can’t sit there and talk to them like you would talk to your friends because they’re not your friends. They’ll listen to you [but you have to speak their] language. [...] You have to do research and be able to tell them when they ask you where you got that information.

The employment of a different vernacular and adopting a posture that conveyed knowledge and preparation were two ways that youth modified their communication when interacting with adults. By adopting a language and posture that was more consistent with adult communication norms, youth appeared to bridge the communication gap that often impedes youth-adult relations. Adults were reported to be more receptive to youth and their concerns and, as a result, seemed more willing to dialogue with youth around their community organizing goals.

To summarize, the development of effective communications skills was a primary domain of growth for youth in this study. Youth reported becoming more outspoken or aware of their voice, increasing their comfort with public speaking, and learning how to adapt their communication in order to be effective. Youth also described becoming more professional and effective in their communications, especially with adults, through the use of formal language and empirical knowledge.

Professional Responsibility

Demonstrating professional responsibility through adopting a “professional” posture and taking on professional responsibilities was a skill cited frequently by youth. Almost all youth reported gaining time management skills, learning to focus and sustain their attention, and growing in their professional comportment. Youth’s development of professional responsibility is illustrated by the following quote by Jackie from Harambee, “I feel that the [program] has made us take on adult responsibility as far as being on time and conducting [ourselves].” Because youth’s participation in the Harambee program was viewed as analogous to working a job, youth developed many of the professional development skills found in the typical work environment. The acquisition of these skills demonstrated to youth their ability to manage adult responsibilities not only at the level of the program but in their lives more generally. In the sections below, I elaborate on youth’s development of professional responsibility in the domains of time management and professional comportment.

Youth across both programs reported improving in their ability to manage time as a result of their organizing. Working under conditions that involved the coordination of multiple schedules and looming deadlines, the ability to maximize and use time efficiently seemed integral to youth accomplishing their organizing goals. Gabrielle of Youth Action identified time management as one way in which she was becoming responsible, “Responsibility is another thing I am picking up here. Like I said I was super early coming [to the program today]. They are on time [here].” As a result of program expectations, Gabrielle viewed timeliness as one of her responsibilities and developed it as a part of her skill repertoire. One strategy that youth employed in regard to being on time was to arrive early for program events. In youth’s opinion, being on time barely met the expectation for timeliness. Arriving early for program activities, however, seemed to be the optimal way to demonstrate timelines especially in Harambee where tardiness had implications for youth’s salary.

The ability to engage program activities in a focused and serious manner was another example of youth’s development of professional responsibility. This was more so the case in Harambee than Youth Action. Latoya from Harambee explained, “At work I have to act professional. I can’t be all goofy and stuff.” Recognizing that playfulness did not facilitate professionalism, youth developed and demonstrated a level of decorum more suited for the program context. Presenting oneself in a respectable manner was another way in which youth

exemplified professional comportment. Several youth reported discovering the importance of selecting the right apparel and adopting a professional demeanor to convey maturity, proficiency, and authority. Marvin from Harambee described, “Now I speak to people not like I’m somebody off the street, but like I have home training and am well established. I dress a little different. I’m still me, but I dress like business casual.” As a result of program experiences that exposed him to professional adults and settings, Marvin developed the ability to modify his communication, manners, and personal appearance in line with professional expectations. Youth’s adoption of a professional demeanor during program-sanctioned activities suggested that youth understood the significance of self-presentation to how they were perceived and treated by others. Some youth also recognized that a professional appearance not only said something about them personally but about the program as a whole. Shay shared, “A lot of times when [I] go places I’m not just representing myself, but I’m representing Harambee as well. So I got to be presentable.” The desire to present oneself and the program in a positive light appeared to motivate youth’s cultivation of professional posture. Youth seemed to become more thoughtful about how to convey maturity, stature, and respectability through their dress, appearance, and mannerisms.

As a result of their program participation, youth grew in their sense of professional responsibility. Study data indicated that youth recognized the importance of and improved their ability to manage time; increased their ability to concentrate and behave maturely when engaged in program activities; and adopted a more respectable and professional demeanor when representing the program.

Adult Connections

Community organizing efforts afforded youth increased contact with adults in the community. Aside from building relationships with program leaders, youth reported meeting and connecting with adults outside of the program. These adults occupied a range of positions from community member to public officials to a well-known Hollywood actor. Marvin from Harambee reported, “I’ve met people in higher places. I met and shook hands with some of the aldermen.” Similarly, Donato of Youth Action commented, “I talked to the superintendent of CPS, Gerald Miller, a lot of the members of the board, and I was in the van with Danny Glover when we were going to Comiskey Park.” Program participation allowed youth closer proximity to adults whom they may have never encountered on their own. Youth’s relationships with adult

leaders and their experiences in the community facilitated the development of new connections with adults in their communities.

Program-facilitated opportunities to build relationships with adults seemed to increase youth's comfort with adults. Several youth reported becoming less apprehensive about interacting with adults. Duane, for example, stated, [Harambee] made me feel a little bit comfortable with adults." Similarly, Donato of Youth Action shared becoming less intimidated around adults as a result of his frequent contact with them, "Back then I was really shy and nervous around adults 'cause it always seems like they're higher up. Because I know a bunch of adults, I now approach them like regular people." As interactions with adults became more commonplace, youth developed increasing comfort in their relationships with adults. Youth appeared to become more self-assured and at ease interacting with adults.

Frequent, proximal interactions with adults also allowed youth to develop understandings of adults that ran contrary to their expectations or stereotypes of adults. Some youth, like Luis from Youth Action, discovered that high profile adults were regular people just like them:

It's cool when you're meeting with a supposedly big person. When you're right there, it's just a regular other person. It changed like the way I think about a person. He's the CEO.

I'm a high school student. We're the same person, but we do different jobs.

Despite the different roles adults occupied, youth gained understanding of adults as ordinary people with whom they might share goals, interests, or perspective. Interacting with adults allowed youth to humanize adults and perceive them in more multidimensional ways. Jackie of Harambee remarked, "I still look at some adults like they don't know what they are talking about. [But] I would say there is a lot of adults out there that are concerned about how we feel." The interactions youth had with adults via program activities appeared to have a normalizing effect on youth's perceptions of adults. Through their positive interactions with adults, youth appeared to dismantle their negative perceptions of adults and adopted a perspective that was more variegated and included seeing adults as allies.

Youth's ability to move past their stereotypes of adults and see them as real people appeared to facilitate a sense of empathy for adults. A few youth described developing compassion for the roles and responsibilities with which adults were charged. Aisha of Youth Action, who was attending high school alongside advocating for changes in the CPS system, described a new sensitivity to the experiences of teachers, "I see what my teachers face teaching

60 students a day. So I try to not get an attitude as quickly. I try to work with the teacher and the crazy rules they got.” In a similar way, Latoya’s exposure to the responsibilities associated with holding a public position facilitated her empathy for the aldermen whom she met through Harambee:

I learned that the alderman have a hard job. They have to worry about keeping their words—what they said they’ll do for the community. And if you don’t, people will be mad at you. So I think that’s kind of hard.

Interacting with adults played a critical role in sensitizing youth to the challenges adults faced. Youth discovered that adults were susceptible to the pressures and fallibilities of the world just as they were. Consequently, youth expressed a level of understanding of and empathy for adults that they did not have prior to participating in the program.

Youth’s recognition of the importance of adult connections appeared to increase as youth became familiar with adult roles and responsibilities. Several youth identified adults as potentially valuable resources to their community organizing and personal pursuits. Leon described the benefits yielded from his adult contacts:

Because of Youth Action, I come into contact with [adults]. I find out about community networking, organizations, and things that I normally wouldn’t have found out. If I have an idea about something, I can talk to them about it.

Adult connections seemed to provide youth with the knowledge base, networking opportunities, and support facilitative of their community organizing efforts. A few youth, particularly those from Harambee, surmised that the information and networking capabilities adults possessed could be helpful to them as they sought employment. Marvin of Harambee commented:

It’s good to have a good network. The more people you know, you can get better jobs and stuff. It’s all [about] who you know that can plug you in, like, ‘Well I knew this guy. He’s real [good]. You should hire him.’

Looking to the future, youth considered the ways in they could capitalize on the information and networks adults had at their disposal. The salience of securing employment, especially for Harambee participants, prompted youth’s thinking about how adults might be helpful to them in this domain.

Participation in community organizing efforts put youth in contact with an array of adults from whom youth derived important benefits. As a result of having frequent, proximal contact

with adults, youth reported increased comfort relating to adults. This comfort facilitated youth's openness to adults with many youth dismantling previously held stereotypes of adults, discovering the humanity in adults, and developing a sense of empathy for adults and their roles. Finally, youth recognized the ways in which adults might serve as resources to them personally and as they pursued their community organizing efforts. Together these findings indicate that program participation strengthened the connection between youth and adults thus serving to bridge the gap that often exists between youth and adults.

Sense of Community

The development of a sense of community, defined as a sense of connection to and investment in one's community, was an outcome that both program leaders believed to be enhanced as a result of youth's civic development. Contrary to program leaders' perceptions and empirical data, analysis of youth data indicate that only 6 youth across both programs developed a sense of community. The majority of youth reported learning new knowledge about their community (Duane of Harambee: "I ain't never know that Martin Luther King used to stay around Parklane.") and interacting with new people in their community (Gabrielle of Youth Action: "I love meeting new people through the program. I have lived here for how many years and I don't even know who lives on the next block."); however, these experiences did not translate into a deeper sense of connection or investment to the community.

The limited findings of sense of community may be due to the sense of community being conceptualized too narrowly in this study so as not to include youth learning about their community. Also, direct questions about changes in youth's perceptions of the community were not included on the interview protocol for Youth Action. Because Youth Action recruited youth from across the city and was not connected to one community per se, querying about sense of community may not have been salient to the research team at the time of protocol development. Thus, represented below are those few youth who appeared to go beyond learning about their community to developing a sense of connection to it.

Immersion in the day-to-day life of the community allowed youth increased contact with community members and richer understandings of community needs. The frequency and quality of these community experiences appeared to engender youth's sense of community in three ways. A few youth (6/20) came to identify more with the community, expressed increased levels of care and concern for the community, and became more invested in the life of the community.

Vanessa reported becoming understanding of and connected to community issues through the community organizing work at Harambee:

I never actually thought about [Branford] Park and [didn't] know so much stuff went on in the park. Now that I do, it's like I actually [see] a lot of stuff in the park that we talked about, like [needing] better equipment and stuff like that. Even though I don't hang out there it's, there's a lot of people that do, and to have a messed up park ain't cool.

The disrepair of the community park initially appeared to be a non-issue for Vanessa who had limited knowledge and use of the park. However, through working on community campaigns, Vanessa came to recognize and feel that something must be done about the condition and upkeep of the community park

Witnessing and/or experiencing the reality of community life through attempts to change seemed to be a powerful facilitator of youth's connection to and concern for community members. Luis, who at the start of the Youth Action program had little connection to his community, described gaining a level of care for the people in his community:

Back then I really didn't care about the community. I was just with friends. Now I'm more like, I care about what the people are going through. I care about the things they go through 'cause I know it's affecting me too.

Over the course of his participation in the program, Luis seemed to forge a deeper connection to his community. The community appeared to be humanized allowing Luis to see himself as a community member and not simply an inhabitant.

Accompanying youth's sense of connection to and care for their community were feelings of investment in their community. Many youth described feelings, plans, or actions that suggested their desire to contribute to and improve their communities. For example, Marvin's care for his community appeared to give rise to a desire to contribute to his community in a positive way:

After interviewing people [through Harambee], I feel more involved in the community. I care more about the neighborhood. You've got people every day that litter, all types of stuff. They just don't care 'cause they don't know about their community. But when you start looking at the big picture, you feel more like cleaning up, planting trees, and helping more in your community.

Community organizing activities seemed to play an important role in raising Marvin's awareness of community ills and their impact on community members. Once a disaffected member of his community, Marvin appeared more invested in the well-being of his community and identified ways in which he might contribute positively to community life.

Another way in which youth demonstrated investment in their community was through a willingness to initiate or assist with community action campaigns. Latoya described feeling motivated to elevate the voice of her community, "[Harambee] has made me want to give back to the community and stand up for my people." The connection Latoya developed with her community through her program participation appeared to stimulate her passion for improving her community. Youth's recognition of the broad applicability of community organizing skills seemed to facilitate their employment of these skills to issues and contexts beyond that of the program. Xiomara from Youth Action articulated, "If something that affected my community came up, I would be more than willing to organize if my help was needed." Equipped with the capacity to organize for change, Xiomara seemed more inclined to advocate on behalf of her community. Youth's application of their organizing skills to issues facing their communities demonstrates an investment in the livelihood and standing of their community.

Overall, participation in community organizing activities appeared to promote youth's sense of connection with their community. Through their experiences in the community, youth developed a fuller awareness of their communities and the issues confronting them. Youth's observations of their community's disadvantaged state relative to other communities stimulated youth's investment in advocating for improvements. Finally, youth appeared to become more identified with their community, seeing themselves as members of the community rather than just inhabitants.

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy, defined by Zimmerman, Valles, and Maton (1999) as "the belief in the capacity to understand and influence political matters as well as be effective when participating in politics", was reported by the majority of youth across the two programs. Political efficacy appeared to manifest at two levels: an individual level and a collective level. At the individual level, youth expressed belief in their personal capacity make a difference in their social worlds. At the collective level, youth espoused belief in the capacity of groups of people to enact social

change. This section provides illustrations of youth's development of political efficacy beginning at the level of individual or personal efficacy.

Having acquired community organizing knowledge, skills, and opportunities through their program participation, youth appeared more confident in their abilities to address civic matters. Malcolm reported:

Before I got involved with Youth Action I used to see things and they would be a problem, but I wouldn't know where to start. I couldn't like do nothing about it. But in Youth Action we actually do things to like change it. [...] [Changing society] seems easier now because like I'm more informed about what needs to be done.

Initially overcome with paralysis about how to address civic issues, Malcolm credits his newfound sense of political efficacy to the awareness and skills he acquired through Youth Action. For some youth like Steven from Harambee, confidence in one's ability to influence political matters emerged from actual participation in organizing efforts, " [The protest], the surveys, and all the interviews we did with people—it shows me what I can do." Participation in program activities allowed youth to derive a sense of mastery and accomplishment that appeared to facilitate youth's recognition of their capacity to engage in change activities. The programs as a whole also served as a model for youth about the ways in which they might bear influence on civic issues. Leon described how Youth Action exposed him to more constructive means of addressing civic inequalities:

Programs like this help people realize that if there's something bothering you, you can do something to change it instead of plain out rebelling and having nothing come of it but trouble.

The model of community organizing espoused by the programs provided youth with a more productive option for addressing civic issues. As a result of this model and the opportunities for skill development and organizing activities that existed within it, youth appeared to develop a strengthened belief in their ability to positively impact their civic worlds.

Youth's sense that they could influence the opinions, decisions, or lives of others was another level at which experienced efficacy. Jackie of Harambee reported gaining a belief in her capacity in to impact the lives of others despite her age:

When we [were] shooting the video, it's the first time I've ever been able to, as a young person, work independently and put ideas to make something that can be very effective

on the community. It shows me that as a young person you can do a lot. It shows that young people can make a difference to make an impact on people's lives.

Having always observed adults in position of authority and influence, youth did not appear to consider the influence they might yield. However, their community organizing efforts allowed them to realize the power they have to influence peers, community members, and adults.

Community organizing activities appeared to provide an important context for youth to develop and experience personal efficacy around civic issues. The knowledge and skills youth gained as well as opportunities for action provided youth with evidence of their capacity to understand and be effective around civic matters both individually and, as will be discussed below, collectively.

Belief in the power of collective action to effect social change, also known as collective efficacy, was a newfound belief espoused by youth. Because almost all youth had no experience with collective action prior to the program, they had no basis on which to adjudge the viability of collective change efforts. Aisha of Youth Action recalled questioning the purpose of collective organizing when she first learned about it:

At first it's like, 'What's the purpose of doing this (organizing)? Why even bother if the problem is not going to get solved?' Putting in an effort will make you feel better and you will be like 'Well, I did try.' instead of just sitting around doing nothing, because you never know if you do put in the effort your problem can get solved, and if you don't you are just going to sit there with that problem when it could have been solved 20 years ago.

Similarly, Monica of Harambee concluded that her community would benefit more from engaging in direct action versus complaining, "This community needs to speak out more. Instead of people complaining, we need to get out and try to make a change—like go protest."

Both Aisha and Monica appeared to discern that while engaging in change efforts may not guarantee change, it is a far better approach than passivity or complaining which only serves to maintain the problem.

The enactment of community change efforts, and the resultant success, appeared to figure prominently into youth's belief in the capacity of collective organizing to influence civic processes. For Leon it was an early Youth Action success that convinced him of the effectiveness of organizing efforts:

There used to be a policy in the CPS where you couldn't have a cell-phone. At first I was like, 'Well this is a school policy. How do we want to change it?' They wrote letters and petitions to people on the board. I didn't really believe it would have an effect. But then a man called and said that cell phones are permissible with parent permission. So after that happened I don't doubt at all.

School policies, like any other rule or code of conduct, appear to unchangeable facts of life. The modification of school policy demonstrated the value and impact of collective change efforts.

Achieving change certainly reinforces the power of one's action. However, in the absence of overall success, youth recognized the potential of collective action via their participation in it and other indicators of effectiveness. Mateo referenced the visibility and reputability of Youth Action as indicators of forward movement:

I've seen good results with Youth Action. We get media attention; we get positive attention; we get meetings with Richie Kelly, the CEO of the public schools. So that's dope. That shows me that we're actually doing something that's effective.

Witnessing the incremental progress, broad appeal, and effectiveness of collective efforts contributed to youth's belief in the power of collective change efforts. Initially unconvinced about the potential of collective action to enact change, youth later recognized collective action as an important vehicle for social change and identified their role within it.

Altogether, the data suggest that youth experienced increases in their levels of political efficacy as a result of participating in community organizing activities. Specifically, knowledge of the issues, direct action efforts, and experiences of successful change figured integrally into youth's individual and collective belief that they can address civic inequities. Over the course of their participation, youth discovered their capacity to effect social change as individuals. Additionally, youth witnessed how together with others they could enact social change. This study's observation of youth's higher level of efficacy is consistent with past research on the outcomes associated with social participation (Kwon, 2008; Kirshner, 2004) and suggests the critical role youth programs play in affording youth opportunities for meaningful community participation.

Leadership

Integral to youth's effectiveness as community organizers was their ability to direct and influence actions that led to the accomplishment of goals. Study data indicate leadership to be a

major area of growth and accomplishment for youth. Without exception, youth reported growing in their abilities to speak up in public forums, step up and assume responsibility, delegate tasks to others, orchestrate activities, and manage the work and behavior of others.

Speaking one's mind in public discussions was highly cited by Harambee youth as the ways in which evidenced their new leadership skills. Jamario commented, "I learned leadership skills through Harambee—stepping up, not being so quiet, saying what I want to say, and giving my opinion." Shay, also from Harambee, referenced the capacity for expressing herself as an example of the leadership qualities she acquired, "When we first talked I didn't think I was much of a leader. But towards the end I'm becoming more of a leader. I don't mind speaking up and wanting to do whatever." Expressing oneself was identified by youth in Harambee as a prime demonstration of leadership. As discussed in the section on communication, youth became more outspoken and gained a comfort with their voice as a result of their program participation.

Alongside becoming more vocal, youth identified demonstrating leadership capacity through displaying initiative or "stepping up". Gabrielle from Youth Action provided an example of how she stepped up into a leadership role at the Youth Summit:

I ended up greeting the students, standing in front of the whole crowd saying thank you to our sponsors and the congress people that came. I wasn't really supposed to do that, but I volunteered because the people that were supposed to do got a little nervous so I just kind of stood up to the plate.

Responsibilities that involved public speaking or being on the forefront challenged youth to flex their leadership muscles by stepping up and meeting challenges head on. As youth gained more comfort with their roles in the programs, they appeared more inclined to take on new and more difficult leadership roles such as managing and directing the behavior of group members. Several youth reported growing in their ability to be effective leaders through the program. Vanessa, a team leader in Harambee, discussed her role in keeping her group focused and on task:

When we go out and talk to people about CTA, doing interviews, and just having conversations with people, it's like you have those people that wanna act a fool. But I actually tell 'em this is real, this is something really important. You can't do this here. We [are] only gonna be here for a while; you can chill when you get out. They look at me like 'Who are you?' I say, 'I'm the team leader fool!'

Managing group members was not only reserved for youth with dedicated leadership roles. Marvin of Harambee reported developing the capacity to assume responsibility and direct others when needed, “[I’ve learned] leadership, taking charge, having the ability to stand up and ask people what they want, sometimes tell ‘em what to do. (laughs)” Malcolm of Youth Action also mentioned learning how to take control in times of need, “I learned leadership skills, you know the ability like to take control of the situation.” While some youth had appointed roles as team leaders, leadership appeared to be a skill that all youth developed regardless of their role. Working together with others toward goals of significance allowed youth experience with leading and directing others in an effort to accomplish stated goals.

A notable aspect of youth’s leadership development was the focus on being a leader in positive and productive ways. Mateo, who admitted being at the helm of activities that were not toward productive ends, commented, “Youth Action has taught me how to use my leadership skills in a positive way.” Having been identified as a leader for much of his life, the program provided Mateo with the opportunity to hone his leadership skills in a context that promoted positivity and justice rather than negativity and conflict. Youth’s productive employment of their leadership skills appeared to transfer to other contexts. Several youth reported using their leadership skills effectively in school. Leon provides an example of how the leadership skills he gained through the program were useful to him at school:

Because of being involved [at Youth Action]— like helping to facilitate workshops and everything—I’m more active and willing to be a leader. Like if I’m in a group at school, usually I’ll be the one that will go, ‘Oh ok, well how about this? What do you think of this and that?’

Capitalizing on the leadership skills he gleaned from Youth Action, Leon appeared to better facilitate dialogue and decision-making processes with his peers in school. Data suggests that youth’s participation in the programs were associated with learning and growth processes, for example leadership, that youth had limited opportunities to experience in the school context.

Altogether, learning how to lead was a significant and potentially unique skill youth gained through their community organizing work. The opportunities for leadership provided by the programs facilitated youth, particularly those in Harambee, speaking up and vocalizing their thoughts and opinions. Youth also reported developing more initiative and volunteering to take on new or more significant responsibilities. A most significant leadership skill that youth

developed was the ability to lead others. Youth described learning how to direct and manage others in a way that was positive and effective. The development of such leadership skill appeared to have implications for youth beyond the programs as some youth reported the benefits of utilizing their new skills outside the program context.

As youth transition into adult roles and responsibilities, leadership skills are important for youth as they direct and manage their lives and as they work together with others toward common goals. However, research suggests that youth have few opportunities to practice meaningful leadership. Data from this study indicate that community organizing activities afford youth with multiple opportunities to engage in leadership as they decide upon, manage, and carry out actions of real world significance.

Achievement Motivation

Notable across youth's interviews was the increased value accorded to educational achievement and advancement. Almost all youth articulated a renewed or strengthened investment in their education that seemed to emerge as a result of their participation in the program. An example of this investment is illustrated by Monica of Harambee, "At first it was like cool to get 'Ds' and 'Fs' on the report card. Now if you get a 'D' on your report card they (other peers) will laugh at you. Now people be getting straight 'As' and 'Bs'". Monica's quote demonstrates the power that peer accountability may yield on youth behavior. Although social embarrassment may not be the best motivator, youth were patently clear about academic underachievement not being 'cool'.

Youth's perception that they can achieve was evinced by Kreisha of Harambee, whose lack of class credits put her at risk for delayed graduation, "Trying to make up all those credits... I was like, 'I'm not going to graduate on time.' But me finishing this program lets me know that I can finish high school. So, I'm going to finish high school." Similarly, Ines derived motivation toward pursuing her career goals from the successes she experienced in Youth Action:

I've always wanted to be a defense lawyer. But, I didn't think I could be a lawyer.

[Youth Action], it's really made me [see] that you can make anything happen. We started out as a really dinky organization, but now a lot of people are looking to us. So I believe anything's possible.

The community organizing efforts youth engaged in offered lots of opportunity for youth to experience achievement. As Kreisha's quote illustrates, the accomplishment of goals or even the

completion of tasks may have provided youth with mastery experiences that contributed to their motivation to achieve.

Youth's lack of knowledge about college and career options seemed to delimit their sense of future possibilities. However, the college and career activities offered by the programs seemed to play a key role in broadening youth's awareness of postsecondary opportunities and how to pursue them. Steven recalled:

I thought I wasn't going to get into a college. I found different ways to get into a college [through Harambee]. That's good 'cause I did want to go to college, but didn't know if I had a chance to go.

While Steven reported interest in attending college, he had little sense of what was required to gain admission prior to his experience in the program. College and career activities allowed Steven to determine the viability of college in his future. This was also the case for Aisha of Youth Action who initially had no interest in attending college:

I really wasn't thinking about going to college, but now I think that I may want to go to college. Doing this college tour has me thinking that it might just help me in the long run in case my music career don't go the way want. I'll always have a college back ground. I can do nursing or be a teacher.

Participation in the college tour seemed to provoke Aisha to consider how a college education might be of some benefit to her. Although she had pretty definite career plans, Aisha seemed able to make room for college in her future plans.

College and career activities were but one source of information and motivation for youth. Informal interactions with community-members and peers also encouraged youth's motivation to achieve. Luis of Youth Action reported gaining knowledge about college options from university students who visited the program, "When the people from University of Illinois at Chicago were here, I was able to ask them about going to that college. It helped me get more options for college and stuff." Donato referenced conversations with peers and staff as persuading her interest in attending college, "Talking to some people in Youth Action about going to college got me into going to college. I really wasn't planning on going to school after high school [but] they motivated me to go." Because some of the youth in Youth Action were already enrolled in college, they served as an accessible resource for peers who had not or would soon be exploring their college options.

Overall, youth's interest in achieving educationally and, in particular, attending college appeared to be an intended consequence of participation in Youth Action and Harambee. The programs took great care to expose youth to college and trade school options through college tours and interactions with local college students. Additionally, in the case of Youth Action, those members already attending college appeared to be role models for those youth contemplating college and career options. The stress on youth continuing their education makes sense given Youth Action and Harambee's recruitment of youth from local public schools. Yet, it is very likely that the push toward higher education had more to do with social justice aims of empowering and liberating urban African American and Latino youth, many of whom may not have envisioned college as a viable option. Moreover, as some youth began to cultivate a commitment to civic action, college and career appeared to become an important component of their plan to fulfill their desire to enact civic change.

Conclusion

This dissertation contributes to the literature on youth's civic activism by documenting and delineating the positive developmental outcomes associated with participation in community organizing activities. Study findings indicate that youth developed competencies consistent with those associated with participation in youth programs more broadly. Youth learned to work cooperatively with others; enhanced their capacity to problem-solve and make decisions at a collective and an individual level; developed more effective communication skills; and demonstrated the ability to take on more professional responsibilities. Additional developmental competencies were observed that appeared particularly associated with youth's engagement in community organizing. Specifically, youth increased and deepened their connection to adults and adult worlds; expressed an enriched sense of connection and investment in their community; articulated a belief in their own and the collective ability to be effective in civic domains; developed leadership skills; and became more oriented to achieve educationally. The overall quality of the programming at Harambee and Youth Action alongside the provision of opportunities for youth to authentically enact civic change seemed to stimulate youth's growth across a variety of developmental domains. These findings add to the growing evidence of the viability of community youth programs, especially those in urban environments, to effectively promote youth's positive development.

CHAPTER 6

PROGRAM FEATURES FACILITATIVE OF CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

Chapter Introduction

The third aim of this study was to examine the ways in which the Harambee and Youth Action programs were facilitative of youth's civic development. Of particular interest is the identification of those programmatic features and specific leader behaviors that facilitated youth's civic awareness, process of personalization, development of critical consciousness, and active engagement in civic activities. Research suggests that, in contrast to school and traditional community-based programs, community-based youth programs may be particularly unique contexts for civic development (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; O'Donoghue & Kirshner, 2003). This chapter delineates those features of Harambee and Youth Action that appeared to contribute to youth's growth and development. Analysis focused on data from both youth and adult leaders and was supplemented by program observations. Overall, the reports of youth and adult leaders converged, and the programs, though different in focus, appeared to share similar facilitative features.

Four facilitative features of the Youth Action and Harambee programs were identified through analyses of the interview and observational data. The programs nurtured a culture of youth empowerment, offered consciousness-raising trainings and didactics, engaged youth in meaningful and authentic participation in their communities, and provided youth with scaffolding and support as they engaged in civic activities. Below I describe each one of these features and the specific contributory actions of the program leaders. Please note that the term program leaders will be used herein to refer to the primary leaders. In Harambee, Kyle was the overall program leader. However, four paid adult team leaders also interacted with youth and their efforts may be referenced in youth's descriptions of leader behavior. In Youth Action, Jason was the main program leader. It appears, though, that youth's statements sometimes reflected the behavior of ancillary WCCY leaders with whom they had contact.

Culture of Youth Empowerment

Empowering youth was a guiding philosophy at Harambee and Youth Action, and represents the first programmatic feature identified as supportive of youth's civic development. The programs provided youth with an encouraging context in which they could develop and share their thoughts on a variety of issues as well as engage in meaningful actions toward social

change. This cultural element appeared to be a particularly striking characteristic of the programs. Jason from Youth Action described his program's mission in the following way:

Our mission is to build power for young people. There's not a lot of spaces where young people are actually taken seriously and people really believe that they can be agents to change things in their own lives.

Several youth corroborated Jason's statement about the limitation placed on youth voice in other contexts. Aisha of Youth Action shared, "A lot of people don't like to put youth first. They like to put adults first. Youth Action puts youth first. They like youth opinions and always ask what your opinions are on things." This same sentiment was shared by Monica from Harambee, "Some adults don't listen to kids 'cause they think they know everything. People up in here they say what they think and they listen to what you think. Additionally, Xiomara from Youth Action commented, "There's some things that you can easily talk about here. We have people coming in here talking about their experiences and problems. At school or at a job, you [can't] focus on that. They don't really care." These quotes suggest that both Harambee and Youth Action provided youth with a unique space to engage topics that were of civic and personal relevance to them. Moreover, the programs were one of few contexts in which youth perceived that their perspectives would be heard, seriously considered, and, in some cases, acted upon.

Consciousness-Raising Activities

A second facilitative programmatic feature was the provision of consciousness-raising activities. Both Harambee and Youth Action offered activities that raised youth's awareness of civic issues and facilitated their critical consciousness development. Kyle from Harambee described the learning model used as "a combination of journaling and self-reflection and then group-reflection." Youth referenced the didactic trainings, group dialogues, field trips, and other activities as important to their learning and growth. Monica from the Harambee program commented, "I got to know information about transportation and the history of it [through] the conversations and the trips to the Chicago Tribune." Similarly, at Youth Action, participating in program workshops increased youth's awareness of civic issues. Malcolm reported, "We learn [informative] things [from the workshops]. Jason will teach us about the history of Puerto Rico, the Black Panthers, and the rights of homosexual people." While program leaders were responsible for structuring and leading many of the didactics, they often incorporated other sources such as guest speakers and popular media into their programming. A notable experience

for Youth Action participants was learning about LGBT issues from a speaker who held a workshop with youth. In Harambee, viewing the movie *Fahrenheit 9/11* appeared to be pivotal for some youth. Duane, for example, described how the movie motivated his consciousness, “That movie (*Fahrenheit 9/11*) made me really think. Even though I ain’t really like Bush it made me think deeper about it. It made me see the truth.” Seeing real images of those affected by injustices, whether face-to-face or through documentaries, appeared to increase the salience of civic issues. The programs’ incorporation of these exposure activities with didactic training seemed to stimulate youth’s broader awareness and knowledge of civic issues.

Alongside in-house activities, the Harambee and Youth Action programs sponsored activities that immersed youth in the communities in which they were working. At Harambee, youth participated in a city-wide scavenger hunt where, as Duane reported, “We went on different el lines, see different neighborhoods, and do a compare and contrast to see what’s different.” The scavenger hunt served the purpose of allowing youth to observe first-hand the disparities in public transit access that existed in Chicago; as well, the scavenger hunt facilitated youth venturing out past their neighborhood borders and gaining exposure to different communities. This opportunity appeared to be an uncommon experience for Marvin who stated, “Going downtown, I don’t do that every day. I just stay around the house. I never really go downtown to Navy Pier or nothing like that. I’ve been once in 5 years.” Had it not been for his Harambee participation, Marvin may have remained relatively unaware of the vastness of the city in which he lived. Gabrielle from Youth Action described a similar experience, “When we go door knocking around our community, it’s like, “Wow! I have lived here for how many years and I don’t even know who lives on the next block.” Although youth worked in or near their communities of residence, they appeared to have limited community awareness. Participation in the programs provided youth with a reason to explore their community and the city more broadly. As a result, youth became more knowledgeable of their community and city landscape and were able to observe how civic issues impacted communities differently.

As evidenced in chapter 5, many youth developed the ability to critically think about civic issues with some youth developing a heightened critical consciousness. These developments can be attributed to the programs’ encouragement of youth’s critical analysis. The Harambee and Youth Action programs seemed to have different goals as it related to critical analysis. In Harambee, the goal was for youth to reflect on civic issues and practice expressing

their perspective. Kyle, program leader of Harambee, commented, “Our students’ opinions often aren’t valued or respected, and our students often have a hard time expressing them. So, we have a dual responsibility to listen and teach them how to express their opinion.” Dialogue and reflection sessions were the two primary modes through which Harambee encouraged youth’s critical thought. A structured activity often referenced by youth, and described in program observations, was Stand and Declare. The Stand and Declare activity consisted of youth being provided with discussion prompts related to controversial subject matter that they discuss in small groups. Kreisha elaborated on the activity in the following quote:

They give us like little quotes that people say, and we just write about how we think about it. Yesterday they gave us a quote about [whether] Notre Dame should lower the standards for Black people so they can get Black athletes.

Stand and Declare appeared to facilitate youth’s expression and defense of a standpoint. Jackie described the activity in the following terms, “It feels like a debate. You are trying to get your point across, but they make it comfortable to talk about it.” The Stand and Declare activity thus appeared to be a specific means by which youth could practice their voice, engage in critical reflection, and exercise perspective-taking. Kreisha commented on how the activity pushed her to take the perspective of another, “They’ll put some ideas out there like, “Do you think the KKK should be able to protest?” And, that was like...we was puttin’ ourselves in their shoes.” Through the Stand and Declare activity, youth were challenged to identify their standpoint, provide a rationale for their views, and defend their position.

In contrast to Harambee, the promotion of critical analysis in Youth Action involved pushing youth to challenge their assumptions and developing explanatory theories for civic problems. Jason commented on how he felt the program offered youth a particularly unique space to exercise their critical thinking, “I think that all of them are pretty perceptive young people, and I don’t think a lot of them are being challenged to think critically at school, so they come here.” Jason’s hypothesis about youth not being challenged at school was supported by a few youth. Xiomara of Youth Action commented on how the program facilitated her ability to question her civic experiences:

At home or in school people want you to view things a certain way; you’re never really given an option to like question things. When I got here I noticed that a lot of people questioned so it made it easy for me; it just gave me the opportunity to do it.

Salient in Xiomara's quote was the role of the program in giving her the opportunity to engage in critical analysis compared to the home and school contexts. Following up on this, Ines of Youth Action identified specific leader behavior that contributed to her increased level of critical analysis:

It's weird how working with Youth Action has me more interested in how things work. I think I analyze more. Jason's always like, "Why do you think this happens and why do you think that happens?" So, I find myself questioning myself "Why does this happen? Why does that happen?" You know, just kind of trying to figure things out.

Program observations of Youth Action activities demonstrated Jason's frequent use why, what, and how questions, or put simply the Socratic Method, to prompt and deepen youth's thinking about civic issues. Opportunities for analysis were woven throughout all aspects of the work at Youth Action, and youth were encouraged if not expected to question the most basic of assumptions. In this way, youth became more critical consumers of information and expanded their perspective and consciousness about civic issues.

Altogether, the Harambee and Youth Action programs provided youth with a variety of educational experiences that appeared to contribute to their development of civic consciousness. Didactic trainings, field trips, and other such activities raised youth's civic awareness and enhanced their understanding of civic issues. Structured community immersion activities, such as a scavenger hunt, allowed youth to learn more about their communities as well as observe for themselves the different ways in which civic issues are borne out. This first-hand knowledge appeared to provide youth with experiential understanding and connection with civic issues. Finally, critical thinking activities and other opportunities for critical reflection strengthened youth's ability to articulate their viewpoints and critically analyze civic information. While both programs provided some level of the aspects described above, it is worth noting that there appeared to be some differences between the programs in terms of modality and end goal. For example, immersion in the community seemed to be more a focus in Harambee than Youth Action. Harambee's efforts were concentrated in a specific community and were toward the goal of community development. For Youth Action, on the other hand, community referred to the city as the goal was to lobby for change in the Chicago Public School System. Another difference between the programs was how critical analysis was conceptualized. In Harambee, where youth tended to be newer and have shorter program experiences, program activities focused on

supporting youth in speaking up and expressing themselves. Contrastingly, Youth Action, which had a continuous activity cycle and a more experienced participant base, was concerned with fostering youth's conscious awareness of unchallenged assumptions as well as their ideas about why civic sociopolitical inequalities exist.

Opportunities for Meaningful Community Participation

Another program feature that facilitated youth's civic development were opportunities for youth to participate meaningfully in their communities. Different from the community education activities described above (e.g., the scavenger hunt), meaningful community participation involved youth working in and/or with the community toward particular ends (e.g., conducting survey research, participating in community meetings, engaging in protest action). By providing youth with authentic opportunities to work in the community, both Youth Action and Harambee facilitated youth connecting civic issues with "real" faces and contexts. The specific activities youth participated in varied as a result of the program. However, above and beyond the activity type, the opportunity to actively and meaningfully participate in civic matters seemed to be a key to youth's civic development. Jason from Youth Action remarked, "A lot of things with organizing and outreach, you can't teach; you have to experience it. You have to go and knock on people's doors, or you have to go to a rally or a protest to see." Engagement in program activities provided youth with experiences that were of evidentiary value. As Duane of Harambee commented, the programs "[make] you see it as a visual and experiencing it on your own instead of just telling you." Thus, programmatic opportunities to actively participate in civic life seemed to stimulate youth's comprehension of civic issues at both an experiential and cognitive level. These experiences also allowed youth the opportunity to develop and practice those skills needed for civic participation. Jason from Youth Action evinced the belief that:

The first most important piece is providing opportunities for youth actually to use their talents in a real-life setting. [By] pushing them a little bit out of their safety zone they can test out their skills and see, 'Oh, this wasn't that hard' or 'This is what I have a problem with it.'

Certainly youth had experience with using their skills and talents in other settings. However, as Marvin from Harambee remarked after speaking on live television, "[There's] a difference between talking to people that you know from your school and going downtown with a whole bunch of television reporters." Unlike practicing a skill for the sake of learning, in the programs,

youth applied their skills with the goal of enacting community change. Through what Kyle of Harambee described as the process of “learn by doing”, in which his role was to “facilitate”, youth experienced the natural consequences associated with real action and were able to further develop and hone their civic skills. A program observation from Harambee demonstrated how, despite feeling tentative about charging youth with certain levels of responsibility, program leaders were intentional about structuring activities in which youth took the lead engaging in community change processes.

Participation in the programs provided most youth with their first community engagement experience and, in some cases, their first experience of civic agency. Harambee leader, Kyle, surmised that, “These projects, for a lot of youth, could be their first experience actually doing something in the community.” Indeed, the opportunity to interface with civic systems and community members was certainly a unique experience for youth. In reflecting on his program participation, Marvin from Harambee commented, “I felt like we went out and did something. I don’t do that every day.” Working to effect community change was not an everyday occurrence for youth. However, through the Harambee and Youth Action programs, youth worked continuously on matters of civic relevance. Malcolm from Youth Action reported the opportunity to work collaboratively with others toward social change goals to be new for him, “Getting everyone together, coming up with a plan, and working together for a certain goal—we’ve never really done it before this, and it was an experience for me.” More so than the mere opportunity to work in the community, the chance to work meaningfully with others to effect social change appeared to yield a powerful impact on youth. For example, Kreisha of Harambee described her participation in a protest as a particularly moving experience for her, “The day that we protested, it was like seeing somewhat what Martin Luther King did. It made me feel really important.” Bearing witness to how her efforts contributed to a protest movement seemed to contribute to a sense of pride and efficacy for Kreisha. Other youth in the programs used words such as “amazing” and “exciting” to describe their participation in community change processes. Were it not for the concrete opportunities for active participation that the programs provided, youth may not have discovered their connection to civic issues. Moreover, the opportunities to engage in their own civic actions may have reinforced youth’s belief in their own capacity to effect civic change.

Among the experiences offered by the programs, opportunities for youth leadership seemed core. The Harambee program organized opportunities for youth to exercise leadership through the selection of team leaders who were responsible for directing a small group of peers. For Duane, leading others was a new experience and not an exact fit for his more relaxed personality, “It is kinda unusual being a leader ‘cause I’m more a laid back type of leader; but, I am going to get used to it. I have to keep people motivated and on point.” Because he possessed a limited skill set in the area of leadership, Duane likely represented the perfect candidate for the team leader position. The program offered Duane a role and the associated support needed to fulfill this new responsibility. These leadership opportunities also existed for those youth who were not team leaders. Shay, for example, reported that the “program gives us things we could do [to develop leadership skills] such as having to speak out and meet new people”. Such experiences seemed critical to youth’s leadership development.

In Youth Action, opportunities for leadership were offered via organizing roles. Gabrielle described how organizing a meeting with the school board provided her with an inimitable leadership experience:

I didn't know that I was capable of doing some of the activities that we do here, like setting up meetings with the Board of Education. That's big! I have never been a part of anything like that.

To be involved in organizing a public meeting with the school board was a big deal to Gabrielle who had experienced few opportunities for leadership outside of Youth Action. By taking on new roles and responsibilities as part of their program participation, youth were able to discover just how much they were capable of and further develop their skills. Aisha, for instance, credited her program participation for allowing her to develop and refine her organizing skills:

I think that the most important skill that I learned from being in Youth Action is how to organize people. They do a lot of political organizing and rallying and sometimes they put us as group leaders at a community meeting.

Unlike other contexts where skills are acquired but infrequently utilized, Youth Action provided youth with opportunities in which they could directly apply their skills. As a result of being responsible for organizing meetings or directing actions, youth were able to strengthen their leadership skill sets and appeared to become more confident in their abilities.

The opportunity for meaningful participation in community processes was the third facilitative feature of the Harambee and Youth Action programs. Through activities such as conducting survey research and organizing community members for action, the programs provided youth authentic interactions within their communities and with community members. Youth's participation in town hall meetings, protest action, and other community events put them in direct contact with the community and community processes. Moreover, youth were able to "learn by doing" through real community actions that they led and directed. Together, these study findings suggest opportunities for meaningful community participation to be a distinct feature associated with community-based youth organizing programs.

Instrumental and Motivational Support

The last program feature that emerged from the analysis of data was the instrumental and motivational/emotional support provided by the program leaders. Instrumental support refers to the tangible assistance or scaffolding the program leaders provided to youth as they engaged in civic activities. Examples from the data included program leaders reviewing youth's work, providing youth with information, and offering resource support. Motivational/emotional support refers to those actions that provide youth with a sense of support, encouragement, and care (Taylor & Seeman, 1999). This included program leaders lending youth a listening ear, providing positive feedback, and encouraging trusting relationships.

Youth identified a number of ways in which the program leaders provided them with instrumental support as they engaged in social change efforts. Jackie from Harambee shared how the leaders provided structure and linkages for youth's community organizing work, "They introduced us to a lot of people who could help us. They gave us different responsibilities. They showed us what we have to do. They were there to make sure that we got the job done right." Because youth were taking on new and more challenging tasks, it was important that they could rely on the program leaders for structure and guidance. Indeed, program leaders seemed to be available and accessible for youth as they approached their community organizing efforts. For instance, during the Youth Summit, Jason was described by Gabrielle as providing the resources necessary for the smooth facilitation of the workshops, "At the Youth Summit, he was popping up in our workshops to make sure we had all the materials we needed. He made sure that the food was on time, everything like that." The Youth Summit was organized by and for youth, and Jason was intent on retaining youth as the face of the Summit. In program observations of the

Youth Summit, Jason was observed doing a lot of behind the scenes and supportive work to facilitate youth's leadership of the Summit. In another example of instrumental support, Malcolm relayed how Jason helped him draft a letter to a high-ranking school official:

We had to write a letter to the president of the school board inviting him to our Youth Summit. It was kind of hard for me starting off. I didn't know how to word it. So I wrote the first draft and Jason pointed out what I should change or think about rewording.

Having taken a first pass at writing the letter, Malcolm looked to Jason for guidance on how to communicate his message effectively. Whereas in some situations, a youth may not have ever been in a position to write a letter to a high-profile public figure, Jason provided youth with a scaffold whereby they could take on challenges and receive assistance to see even big tasks to fruition.

Program leaders also provided youth with motivational and emotional support. As youth engaged in and encountered obstacles in their community organizing efforts, the program leaders were there to provide them with encouragement and advice. Ines from Youth Action described program leader Jason as "very supportive" and "always there to tell you that you can do anything". The program leaders at Harambee were similarly described as being supportive and available. Jackie of Harambee commented that the program leaders were "right there when you needed them" and motivated her during program activities by "telling me to get more involved or to speak up". Jamila from Youth Action provided a concrete example of how Jason motivated her during program activities, "When I was getting ready for the Youth Summit I was nervous but he would say, 'You can do it—just act like you're talking to your friends.'" In situations where youth were questioning their abilities, uneasy about performing, or procrastinating, the program leaders availed their belief in youth's abilities by offering encouraging statements and helpful advice. This motivational support was not simply words without action. Program leaders evinced their belief that youth could accomplish most anything by providing them with real opportunities for leadership and motivating them along their way.

Another type of support provided by the program leaders was emotional support around personal issues that may have arisen. Although this support is not directly related to youth's civic activities, it is highlighted here because it speaks to the connection between youth and adult leaders which likely facilitated youth's civic engagement. Jason from Youth Action asserted the importance of this connection in his description of his relationship with youth:

It's a friendship. The lines get blurred because we're an organization, and there are professional standards we have to stick to; but, it's definitely a friendship. I think that's why the young people come. It's not just for the issues.

Kyle from Harambee had a similar description of his role and the need to balance friendship with authority:

Mentor would be how I describe myself. It has that friend element of someone that's interested in what's going on with you outside of the program, but also can pull some weight and be firm if needed.

Whereas the typical relationship between youth and adults is hierarchical and asymmetrical with regard to power and authority, the program leaders at Harambee and Youth Action seemed able to traverse their roles as authority figures in order to relate collegially and positively with youth. In describing the program leaders at Harambee, Shay commented, "They are always open. They laugh and talk with us like we are their age but then we knew where to stop it or they know." Likewise, Malcolm from Youth Action described Jason as being able to meet youth where they are, "He's like a peer. He can come down to my age and relate." The program leaders' ability and willingness to interact with youth around their concerns and interests represented a form of emotional support in that it served to validate youth's sense of being and mattering.

Program leaders' ability to relate to youth at their level appeared to be a significant component of leaders' effectiveness with youth. Youth seemed to appreciate that program leaders connected with them on their terms and around matters of interest to youth. For example, Donato described spending time with Jason after program activities, "After meetings, he bought us pizza and we just talked and chilled. It was pretty cool." After a hard day's work, youth liked that they could spend time with the program leaders in a casual manner. Vanessa from Harambee commented, "If I was to call Kyle at any point, he would help me out. Actually, he gave out his number to everybody that needed it. Whenever we need him, we can call." Dissimilar from many of the other relationships youth had with adults, the program leaders chose not to erect firm interpersonal boundaries with youth. They availed themselves to youth on a programmatic and personal level which seemed to strengthen youth's bond to the program and to the work.

Together, the program leaders' provision of instrumental support and motivational support seemed to provide youth with both an anchor and a launch pad as they engaged in civic activities. Instrumentally, program leaders provided youth with a scaffold as they engaged in

civic activities, offered youth feedback on permanent products such as speeches and letters, and connected youth with informational sources such as job connections. In the motivational and emotional domains, program leaders encouraged youth as they carried out their civic actions, offered youth supportive advice around interpersonal matters, and forged genuine interpersonal connections with youth.

Conclusion

This chapter delineated the four features of the Harambee and Youth Action programs that appeared to facilitate youth's civic development. One, the program cultures emphasized youth empowerment. Across both programs, youth were encouraged to share their ideas and opinions and were regarded as worthy contributors to program efforts. Two, the programs offered educational activities, such as guest speakers, dialogue activities, and field trips, through which youth's civic consciousness was raised. Whereas in Harambee, activities were focused on encouraging youth voice and expression, in Youth Action the goal of activities was to help youth unpack their assumptions and generate critical ideas about why civic problems exist. This difference in how and at what level consciousness raising activities were focused may be reflective of Harambee's time-limited participation cycle. Participation in Youth Action was not bounded to a particular time frame and youth engaged civic activities continuously. As a result, these youth may have been further along in their development thus requiring different and more advanced levels of consciousness raising activities. Three, the programs structured meaningful opportunities for youth to participate in community processes and apply their civic skills to real problems. Through these experiences, youth demonstrated their agency and further developed their capacity for leadership. Youth and program leaders from both programs identified these authentic opportunities for participation to be critical to youth's civic development. Four, program leaders provided youth with the instrumental scaffolding and motivational support needed to carry out the challenging work of community organizing and activism. Almost all youth across the programs provided examples of how the tangible and intangible support from adults sustained them as they engaged in civic action.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

Although youth's civic engagement has received increasing attention in the developmental literature, little research has explicated the developmental process whereby youth become civically engaged through participation in community-based civic activities. Taking up this issue, this dissertation investigated the process of civic development as it occurred for youth participating in two urban, community-based youth organizing programs. Three primary questions guided study inquiry: one, what are the learning stages associated with youth's civic development; two, what developmental benefits are associated with youth's civic development; and three, in what ways does the structure of the programs and the program leaders contribute to youth's civic development. Employing data from youth interviews, adult leader interviews, and participant observations, this dissertation advances understanding of civic development as it unfolds for urban African American and Latino youth. The discussion below presents study findings organized by the three questions of interest to the study.

The Process of Civic Development

A first goal of this dissertation was to elucidate those processes by which youth develop civically. Examination of study data yielded a five stage process of youth civic development in which youth acquired the cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills for participating in civic life. The first stage of the process was gaining civic awareness in which youth broadened their understanding of civic issues specific to their organizing projects and in general. Civic knowledge is a necessary precondition for civic engagement (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002). Yet, at the outset of the program, most youth had little knowledge of civic processes. The programs' provision of direct education and training around civic issues served to enhance youth's civic knowledge. While youth were exposed to national and global issues, they were also exposed to local issues that had relevance for their personal spheres of influence. The second stage was personalization, in which youth developed recognition of the personal relevance of civic issues. The personalization stage represents an emotional/motivational learning phase that has been neglected in studies of civic engagement which prioritize cognitive learning. Civic knowledge is hardly sufficient to motivate engagement; a level of connection to or care about the issues is necessary to inspire action. Study findings suggested that as youth contextualized the knowledge they were gaining, they began to develop an emotional connection with the issues which in turn

engendered sustained attention to and motivation around civic issues. Youth began to reflect on questions about why certain conditions existed and why particular groups were differentially affected. This emotional and cognitive learning seemed to instigate the next stage of civic development, engaging critical thought.

Much of the interest in civic development has focused on how to improve youth's critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as these skills are of educational value. Indeed, there is a societal advantage to having citizens who can think critically about civic matters and engage in social problem-solving. In the third stage, engaging critical thought, youth were observed developing critical theories and ideas about why social injustices exist, exposing systemic bias and assumptions, and recognizing their relative privileges and disadvantages. A key finding here was youth's development of critical consciousness in which youth displayed higher order and flexible cognitive processes such as perspective-taking, critical analysis, and overcoming biases. Critical consciousness has arisen in the literature as a concept of particular interest. Questions have abounded about how to facilitate youth's critical consciousness as well as whether it is a process or outcome of civic development. Several theorists have identified critical consciousness as a prerequisite for political empowerment and social change as it provides youth with a moral foundation (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). This seemed to be borne out in this dissertation as youth who displayed critical consciousness seemed to experience additional stages of the civic development process (i.e., self-initiated action and commitment to civic action). What is remarkable about youth's critical consciousness development is that youth acquired reflective and analytic capacities that became embedded social-cognitive processes subject to future priming.

With the necessary conditions of civic knowledge and critical consciousness satisfied, the fourth stage of civic development involved youth taking actions. Youth were witnessed engaging in civic actions that included speaking up at rallies, advocating at school, or organizing peers. These actions went beyond those prescribed by the program and included actions that youth initiated often with the support of program leaders. For example, after being denied a meeting with the mayor, youth in Harambee started their own rally and became quite emotionally and actively engaged in advocating for their rights. That youth themselves initiated civic action is significant in light of research that suggests urban ethnic minority youth to be less engaged in civic action compared to their White and more economically advantaged counterparts (Atkins &

Hart, 2003; Flanagan & Faison, 2001). This research suggests that urban youth of color may engage in less formal, more locally based activities that are easily overlooked due to limited scope, impact, and/or relevance. It is these activities that may serve to reinforce youth's learning and will to act when they perceive injustice. These experiences, had they resulted poorly or had no effect, could also turn youth away from the power of advocacy. However, because youth had a balance of experiences with advocacy, they may not have been so quick to turn away from it as a viable method for enacting change.

The final stage, cultivating commitment, was defined by youth voicing their intentions to continue working on change efforts, incorporating civic change into their career or future life interests, and developing an activist identity. Youth's civic participation was no longer maintained by external motivators; youth appeared to have a vested, personal interest in participating in change efforts and were taking efforts to structure their life accordingly. For example, some youth articulated their intentions for pursuing careers in law, politics, or community organizing and developing social networks of peers who had similar interests and values. While this dissertation is limited in its ability to know whether youth would continue their civic activities beyond the program, evidence of youth's transformation from inactive and uninformed to active and passionate participants in democracy provides reasonable assurance. Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1997) remarked that participation in civic activities during the formative period of adolescence allows youth to incorporate it into their identity with positive implications for adult participation. Certainly, data for this stage suggest a level of identity development as youth came to see themselves as activists and structured their lives to accommodate their newfound civic identity.

Developmental Outcomes

A second goal of this dissertation was to identify those developmental outcomes associated with youth's civic participation. The focus on outcomes represents a contribution to literature in that the empirical base for the developmental benefits youth derive from community participation is sparse (Pritzker, 2006; Winter, 2003). Moreover, this attention allows for an examination of those specific civic outcomes—such as civic efficacy, sense of community, and increased community participation—that may be uniquely associated with community participation (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Lewis-Charp et al., 2003). The outcomes described here are domains of learning thought to be associated with the civic development process. They

are distinct from the five civic developmental stages which address how youth grow and change in their civic knowledge, affinities, and behavior. In contrast, the developmental outcomes capture what youth gain as a result of participating in civic action more broadly. In many cases, the outcomes may map onto the stages; however, I do not hypothesize a strict correspondence between the developmental stages and the outcomes.

Findings from this dissertation indicate that through their participation in the programs youth acquired a number of general skills such as working cooperatively with others, enhanced decision-making/problem-solving, and the capacity for leadership. It is not wholly surprising that this dissertation yielded these findings as research suggests them to be common outcomes associated with participation in youth programs (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000). What is notable, however, is that the emergence of these skills provides evidence that participation in community organizing may yield developmental benefits similar to those associated with other forms of youth participation. While the nature of youth's work focused on issues of civic relevance, the programs afforded youth experiences in which they could work cooperatively with peers, be primarily responsible for solving problems and making important decisions, actualize their voice, and be regarded as competent professionals and colleagues. Additionally, youth developed significant capacity in the domain of leadership. Without exception, youth identified growing in their ability to direct and influence actions whether through speaking in public forums or directing and managing others. There is some research to suggest that organizing programs offer youth increased opportunities for leadership compared to traditional youth programs (Stoneman, 2002). Although study findings cannot address this comparison, they do suggest the potential of youth programs to prepare youth for future leadership and citizenship as adults.

Notwithstanding the skills discussed above, study findings suggested there to be additional developmental benefits that youth derive from their community participation. Youth across both programs reported developing political efficacy, achievement motivation, connection with adults, and a sense of community. These outcomes have been theorized to be uniquely associated with community participation given that they represent elements often encountered when engaging in community life. For example, given this dissertation's focus, it seems to follow that increased political efficacy would be an outcome associated with youth's participation. Indeed, consistent with previous theorizing and empirical work (e.g., Eccles &

Gootman, 2002; Shah, McAlister, & Mediratta, 2007), findings indicated that the majority of youth developed belief in their capacity to influence civic matters. Youth's efficacy beliefs represent a significant finding in that these beliefs are reflective of empowerment processes that will lead to future civic participation and action. A related outcome identified by this study was youth's increased motivation toward future achievement. This finding was unanticipated as it had not been found or examined in previous research. It makes sense, however, that youth would commit themselves to pursuing postsecondary education or careers given the programs' emphasis on educational achievement. It is also plausible that youth's newfound efficacy generalized to other areas of their life. For those youth for whom graduating from high school or attending college seemed unattainable, the successes they experienced through the programs may have encouraged their motivation toward academic goals.

Youth's program participation also seemed to engender bonds with adults in the community as well as the community itself. Through their community organizing efforts, youth interacted with an array of adults whom they would not have interacted with otherwise (e.g., the district alderman, the school board superintendent, and residents of adjacent residential blocks). These relationships were of positive value in that they extended youth's existing social networks and represented a source of social capital that youth may draw upon later (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994; Sullivan, 2007). Alongside connecting with adults, previous research has demonstrated that youth form stronger bonds with their community through community participation (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; McBride, Sherraden, & Pritzker, 2006). While several youth reported developing a sense of community, the majority of youth in the current study reported nothing more than increasing their knowledge about the community (Sullivan, 2007). This limited finding may be due to in part or in combination to a) questions about community not being asked of Youth Action participants; b) the neighborhood or city ward being a smaller, more relevant unit of analysis than "community" for Harambee participants; and the city at large or the program having more relevance for Youth Action participants and c) the program cycle and/or research cycle being too short in duration to allow connections to the community to be forged or examined. It is also possible that youth simply did not experience connection to the community. A qualitative interview study of youth sense of community conducted by Evans (2007) suggests that youth feel a stronger sense of community in contexts where they experience voice, power, and adult support. Case analysis of

participants indicated that those youth who did not experience a sense of community also did not experience the commitment stage of civic development. Thus, while these youth certainly appeared connected to the youth programs, this connection did not transfer to the broader communities in which they were engaged.

In all, this dissertation provides empirical support for the positive developmental benefits of civic participation. Youth experienced developmental outcomes that were more generally associated with youth participation, for example decision-making skills, to those that appeared specifically connected with civic participation such as political efficacy. Additional research is needed that documents and replicates the findings of this study in other community-based civic action programs.

Program and Leader Contributions

The third goal of this research was to delineate those contextual factors facilitative of civic development and associated developmental outcomes. Four contextual features emerged from the data analysis: culture of youth empowerment, consciousness-raising activities, opportunities for meaningful participation, and instrumental and motivational support. A defining feature of community-based youth organizing programs in contrast to other youth activities is the focus on “empowering youth to have a voice in community issues and to engage in collective action for social change” (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003). Both the Harambee and Youth Action programs structured a space where youth could exercise their voice, share in decision-making, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. In short, the programs represented an empowering context for youth. The emphasis on youth empowerment appeared to be facilitative of youth’s development of decision-making skills, political efficacy, and leadership abilities.

The second facilitative feature of the programs was the provision of consciousness-raising activities. Both Harambee and Youth Action engaged youth in didactic trainings, group dialogues, and experiential exercises that increased their awareness and knowledge of civic matters (a stage 1 process) and developed critical consciousness (a stage 3 process). For example, Harambee participants visited a local newspaper that was covering the transit issue, watched anti-war documentaries, and engaged in Stand and Deliver, a reflective standpoint exercise. In Youth Action, participants became more aware of civic issues through engaging in diversity trainings as well as informal and structured dialogues. These activities incorporated deliberation and reflection thus allowing youth to learn how social systems work and develop

critical thinking around civic matters—a process Hamilton and Flanagan (2007) described as the reframing phase of activism. Through these consciousness-raising activities, youth enhanced their capacity for deliberation and decision-making and employing effective communication skills. In conjunction with the consciousness-raising activities, opportunities for meaningful community participation, the third feature, appeared to engender youth's connection to civic issues (stage 2 personalization) and critical consciousness (stage 3). Participation in community action such as organizing meetings, protest action, and survey research allowed youth up close interactions with their communities. These experiences helped youth to discover the relevance of civic issues and increase their awareness of the nature and impact of the issues. Thus, as Rogoff et al. (1995) posits, it is through actual participation that a person transforms their understanding of and responsibility for civic actions. Moreover, youth's meaningful participation prepared them for future participation as was demonstrated in stage 4 of the civic development process. Youth appeared more confident and efficacious in their ability to act and were observed initiating actions. In view of the developmental benefits of such participation, study data suggest that youth gained cooperative skills, enhanced their connections with adults, learned professional responsibility, evinced leadership, and developed civic efficacy.

The fourth feature of the programs was the instrumental and motivational support from leaders. Program leaders' tangible assistance and motivational statements were critical facilitative features for youth as they encountered new tasks and challenges. By balancing youth ownership with an appropriate level of scaffolding (Larson & Hansen, 2005; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005), program leaders were able to facilitate youth's meaningful community participation which consequently engendered youth's sense of civic efficacy. Complementing this scaffolding was the motivational support program leaders provided. Program leaders demonstrated their care and concern for youth as people which aided in the development of a trusting bond. Furthermore, program leaders availed themselves to youth through forging personal connections with by employing "youth modes of socializing" (Nygreen, Kwon, & Sanchez, 2006). Youth described how program leaders supported them around personal affairs, interacted with them personally and informally, and demonstrated a level of relatability or the "cool" factor. A related and final point about the program leaders is the role they played in modeling for youth what a civically engaged adult looks like. Youth living in disenfranchised, urban communities typically do not have adult models who are civically engaged (Hart &

Atkins, 2002). Program leaders, and the adults they put youth into contact with, thus served as many youth's first model of civically active adults. The model that the program leaders offered likely gave youth a sense of their possible selves and motivated their own drive to achieve.

Conclusion

Implications

Youth's civic engagement is important to sustaining the vitality of democracy in the U.S. Yet opportunities for urban youth to meaningfully contribute to civic processes is lacking or hardly sufficient (Atkins & Hart, 2003). This dissertation suggests that youth's participation in community-based youth programs that involve them in civic activities is one way by which youth's civic development and participation may be fostered. Study findings suggest a five-stage process whereby youth develop the cognitive, motivational, and behavioral skills for civic participation. The development of these skills appeared to grant youth a number of developmental benefits from increasing their cooperative learning skills to develop political efficacy. Finally, the programs' emphasis on youth empowerment, provision of enlightenment and direct action experiences, and adult support appeared to provide the necessary conditions for youth's development. Given the political disenfranchisement experienced by urban youth of color, it is important to identify those processes and contexts that support youth's democratic participation. Engaging youth in community-based civic activities may be an important avenue by which youth develop critical consciousness, discover their voice, and enact democracy.

Study Limitations

This dissertation was not without its limitations. In discussing study limitations, I will highlight, when applicable, how the strengths of the study helped to balance the acknowledged limitations. One limitation of this dissertation is that some assessments of reliability and validity, for example inter-coder reliability and member checking, were not adequately employed. Although a second coder was involved in the early constructions of the coding scheme, refinement of the coding scheme and decisions about the representativeness and selection of quotes was carried out by this author alone. The inclusion of a second, independent coder would have allowed for an assessment of inter-coder reliability and enhanced the validity of the study. Additionally, while member-checks were performed with the adult leaders of the programs, study findings were not cross-referenced with youth participants. Nonetheless, the use of triangulated methods (i.e., youth and adult interview data and program observations), the

longitudinal qualitative design (which allowed for multiple assessments of emerging concepts), and the use of the same interviewer across time points (thus facilitating a level of interpersonal familiarity and trust) were means employed to strengthen the reliability and validity of study findings.

Another methodological limitation of this study was the difference in the civic line of questioning for the programs on the interview protocols. Harambee participants were asked questions about their civic thinking that were not posed to or were articulated for Youth Action participants. For example, it was previously acknowledged that Youth Action participants were not queried about what they learned about their community, how it works, and whether their view of their neighborhood changed over the course of their participation. Of additional note, however, is that Harambee interview protocol incorporated refinements of questions previously asked of Youth Action participants. Whereas the protocol for Youth Action contained some general civic questions (e.g., How has participation changed what you value and how you view the world?), the questions on the Harambee protocol were specific to the focal issues and activities of Harambee (Through the work you have done in [program], how have your views about the unfair treatment of different groups changed?). The differences in questions reflect the iterative nature of the qualitative research process. As the research progressed and the team reflected on the quality and richness of data that was being acquired, refinements were made to the interview protocols. New or revised questions were utilized with subsequent programs with Harambee being one such program in this case. Despite the relative differences in the questions, the richness of the data procured from Youth Action participants suggests that the quality of the data was not significantly compromised.

A third limitation of this study was the incongruity in the participation cycles for the programs. Youth Action participants were engaged in civic activities all year long while Harambee participants were involved only in a 6-week summer component. Although the research cycles were three to four months for each program, the increased dosage that Youth Action participants received (especially for those youth who had longer participation histories) may account for differences in study findings across the programs. That the majority of Youth Action participants appeared to experience a number of the higher-level stages associated with civic development compared to their counterparts in Harambee could be due to differences in dosage. A last limitation of this study is the inherent limitation on generalizability posted by the

implementation of a qualitative case study methodology. While this methodology is indeed a strength in that it allows for an examination of process and produces rich, thick description that is contextually based, for these same reasons study findings may not generalize past the two programs employed in the study. Still, the emergence of a working theory that encompassed the experiences of youth in two different community-based organizing programs is promising and suggests the applicability of the theory, or parts of it, to other organizing programs.

Future Directions

The findings of this dissertation suggest a number of future research directions. One, additional research should be conducted that examines the process of civic development for youth engaged in community action efforts. Given the goal of building and advancing a theory of civic development, future research will be needed to ascertain if, in what ways, and under what circumstances the proposed theory applies to youth participating in other community-based youth programs. Relatedly, another useful direction would be to examine how civic development occurs for ethnic minority youth from middle-income environments as well as for White youth. Of specific interest would be how the process of civic development, especially the aspect of critical consciousness, unfolds for these youth given the relative privileges they experience due to their social locations.

A third future direction would be the development of a prospective longitudinal quantitative study which would allow for examination of how civic development continues and yields impact for youth as they transition into adulthood. Research suggests that early involvement in civic action is associated with participation in adulthood (Ladewig & Thomas, 1987; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999; Zaff, Malancuk, Michelsen, & Eccles, 2003). Yet, this research tends to be retrospective. A prospective longitudinal design offers perspective into youth's continued growth, learning and participation in civic life. Another interesting line of research is the role of civic action in promoting psychological healing. Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) have theorized about how civic action can bring about psychological healing for urban ethnic minority youth who have experienced personal hardship and societal oppression. It would be worth operationalizing this idea of healing and engaging in a systematic examination of youth's civic engagement and its association with psychological healing and functioning.

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APPENDIX A
POLITICAL IDEAS/SOCIAL ACTION QUESTIONS INCLUDED ON INTERVIEW
PROTOCOLS

Initial Interview

- How has your participation in [the program] or other programs affected your views on how fairly different groups are treated?
Probe: How did this happen?
AW (Alternative Wording): What led you to change how you think?
- What role, if any, do you believe you have in doing something about unfair treatment?
- In what ways did the leaders at [program name] make it comfortable to talk about these issues?
- In what ways did the leaders challenge you to think about these issues?

Phone Interview

- Is there anything you have learned this week about how [city] works, or relationships between different groups in the city? How did you learn that?

Mid-Interview

- Now I want to ask about how participation in [name of program] has changed your attitudes and ideas about “trying to change the world.” Thinking back over the time you’ve been in [name of program], how has participation influenced your motivation to do things to change or improve society?
Probe: What were your attitudes like when you started, how have they changed, and what caused them to change?
- What have you learned about what it takes to bring about change?
Probes: Can you give me an example?
How did you learn that?
Does changing society seem easier or harder to you now than when you first started? Explain.
Do you think you are more likely to get involved in new causes, now that you’ve had the experience?
- I understand that issues of race, social class and social inequality come up in the work that you are doing in the program. What have you been learning so far?
- How have issues of unfair treatment or inequality between different groups in society been discussed in the program?
- Can you give me some examples of what you have done in the first half of the program that addresses issues of unfair treatment of groups?
- What have you learned about unfair treatment through your work in the program?

Probe: How did you learn this?

- How does this unfair treatment affect you or people you know?
- How is your racial/ethnic identity meaningful to the work that you are doing in the program?
AW: How does your racial/ethnic identity relate to the work you do, or your interest in, the program?
 - These aren't always easy things to talk about. In what ways do the adult leaders make it comfortable to talk about these issues?
 - In what ways did the leaders challenge you to think about these issues?

Final Interview

- Now I want to ask about how participation in [name of program] has changed your attitudes and ideas about "trying to change the world." Thinking back over the time you've been in [name of program], how has participation influenced your motivation to do things to change or improve society?

Probe: What were your attitudes like when you started, how have they changed, and what caused them to change?

- What have you learned about what it takes to bring about change?

Probes: Can you give me an example?

How did you learn that?

Does changing society seem easier or harder to you now than when you first started? Explain.

Do you think you are more likely to get involved in new causes, now that you've had the experience?

Now I want to talk to you about issues of unfair treatment based on race and social class in [city].

- Through the work you have done in [program], how have your views about the treatment of different groups changed?

Probe: How did this happen? Give me an example.

- Have you come to think differently about why some communities have access to transportation while others do not? Do you have an idea about why that is the case?
- What did the program do that was effective in helping you think about issues of unfair treatment?

AW: In what ways did the leaders challenge you to think about these issues?

- How will the work you have done through the program influence what you do in the future (e.g., career, community action, politics, etc.)?
- Do you feel you have made a contribution to the transportation issue?

AW: What did you gain from working on the transportation issue?

How do you think the work you have done impacts the community?

Probe: Do you plan to continue working on this issue after the program ends?

- How has the work you have done through the program changed how you think about your neighborhood?³
- In this program you've interacted with community residents, CTA representatives, government officials, journalists, community activist, and others. What have you learned about how your community works?

Follow up: How did you learn this? – Give me some examples.

- You've collected some information through your surveys and by talking with people around the community. What have you learned about your community?

Probe: What did the results of the survey tell you?

Probe: What did you learn from talking with people?

- How has participation changed what you value and how you view the world?⁴

Probe: How did this happen?

- How do you think [name of program] will affect your future?
AW: Do you think it will affect your career path, what you want from life?
- What do you believe you will be doing as a career when you are an adult?

³ This question and the two that follow were specific to Harambee and were not included on the protocol for Youth Action.

⁴ This question and the two that follow were included on the Youth Action interview protocol but not on the Harambee protocol.

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF POLITICAL IDEAS/SOCIAL ACTION CODING CATEGORY

PS: Political Ideas/Social Action: Passages dealing with helping others in the community; motivation to act on social and political issues; understanding political issues; meeting with external political players, etc. Code any issues in which youth mention themselves in relation to community and social issues.

Examples:

- Youth involvement in social change efforts (protests, sit-ins, rallies, voting)
- Taking a stand against oppressive circumstances/inequalities
- Engaging in individual or group advocacy/social change efforts on behalf of a disenfranchised social group
- Feelings of personal responsibility to effect change (“I owe it to my people to...”)
- Feelings of empowerment or control to effect change (“I feel like I can make a difference...”)
- “Giving back” to community through volunteerism, engagement in social/political movements
- Awareness of how individuals and institutions contribute to social inequities
- Expression of a need to transform societal/political processes and institutions
- Discussions about privilege, unfair advantages, power relationships, etc.
- Conspiracy theories; theories about why social problems exist

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Name	Program	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Time in program	Number of interviews
Gabrielle	Youth Action	Female	Latino	17	4 months	3
Jamila	Youth Action	Female	Black	16	1 year	6
Xiamara	Youth Action	Female	Latino	18	4 years	8
Ines	Youth Action	Female	Latino/White	19	3 years	8
Aisha	Youth Action	Female	Black	16	1 year	8
Luis	Youth Action	Male	Latino	15	1 year	6
Malcolm	Youth Action	Male	Black	15	1 year	3
Donato	Youth Action	Male	Latino	16	5 months	9
Leon	Youth Action	Male	Black	17	3 years	6
Mateo	Youth Action	Male	Latino	19	3 years	5
Jason	Youth Action	Male	Arab Amer.	Late 20s	8 years	10
Vanessa	Harambee	Female	Black	17	2 nd summer	3
Latoya	Harambee	Female	Black	16	1 st summer	5
Shay	Harambee	Female	Black	17	1 st summer	4
Jackie	Harambee	Female	Black	16	1 st summer	6
Kreisha	Harambee	Female	Black/White	16	1 st summer	6
Monica	Harambee	Female	Black	17	2 nd summer	6
Jamario	Harambee	Male	Black	15	1 st summer	5
Marvin	Harambee	Male	Black	16	1 st summer	6
Steven	Harambee	Male	Black	18	1 st summer	6
Duane	Harambee	Male	Black	17	2 nd summer	5
Kyle	Harambee	Male	White	Late 20s	5 years	7

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Natasha D. Watkins graduated from Tennessee State University in May 2000 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. In 2003, she earned a Master's of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Natasha is currently a postdoctoral fellow at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.