EXPLORING LOCAL CIVIC CITIZENSHIP SURROUNDING THE “¡HUNTINGTON PARK NO SE VENDE!” CAMPAIGN ON PASEO BORICUA IN CHICAGO

BY

CHAEBONG NAM

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Susan E. Noffke, Chair
Professor Marilyn Johnston-Parsons
Professor Michael A. Peters
Associate Professor Ann P. Bishop
Professor Bertram C. Bruce
Abstract

This dissertation explores the implications of community activism among minority young people for citizenship education. Citizenship is fundamentally defined by praxis—i.e., engagement in local and diverse forms of civic practices—rather than by a legal status tied to the nation-state (Tully, 2008). This ethnographic case study examined the participatory democracy practices of a community group that was organizing to fight against gentrification in an urban Puerto Rican community, to see how citizenship was contextualized as praxis in a particular setting.

The case of this study, the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” (HPNSV) Campaign, was born from collective experiences with the Puerto Rican diasporic identity, deep-rooted racism, and economic inequity in the U.S. In order to preserve their community and Puerto Rican cultural heritage and identity in the face of gentrification, young activists involved themselves in various community issues, ranging across political, cultural, and educational domains, as well as specific anti-gentrification work. For analytical purposes, I first looked into HPNSV’s community work in the following four domains separately: political, educational, cultural, and anti-gentrification. Each domain had a key theme: “the ‘one foot in and one foot out’ metaphor” for the political involvement domain, “sustaining the leadership pipeline (the ecology of civic learning)” for the educational involvement domain, “a process of identification” for the cultural involvement domain, and “developing collaboration with others based on shared experiences” for the anti-gentrification domain. The distinction between the four domains, however, is not the focus of this study—indeed, HPNSV did not categorize their works as such—and in practice, the four domains were intertwined with one another. At the end of the day, the myriad community
projects of HPNSV together aimed to resist gentrification and build their own unique model of participatory democracy at the local level.

Noticeably, HPNSV involved local teenagers in community events and in the process of information production and distribution, helping them to learn about important community issues, as well as Puerto Rican history and culture, which had not been taught in local public schools. Such intergenerational and holistic educational activities not only produced new young leaders but in fact created a pipeline of community leadership to continue its mission to advance social change. This illuminated the ecology of civic learning, which has long been absent from citizenship education in most schools. However, most participants did not associate their community work with the term “citizenship.” They saw citizenship as being associated with American-ness, or white-ness, which they did not feel a part of.

HPNSV’s community work represented their own way of being “Boricua,” their term for Huntington Park residents; however, the absence of the language of citizenship in HPNSV indicated a wide gap between school-constructed citizenship and the citizenship actually practiced in the community (Knight-Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Further research is needed to restore the civic practices that “exist in everyday relationships long before institutionalization” (Tully, 2008, p. 31) in the current discourse of citizenship education. Community activism is often classified as radical, unconventional, and inappropriate for the classroom, despite its important inspiration to citizenship education. Questioning who defines what is radical and why would be the starting point for revolutionizing citizenship education. This effort, in the long run, will expand and diversify the discourse of citizenship education.
Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This research aims to examine the significance of community organizing among young urban minorities as a form of critical and informal citizenship education in the community. With an understanding of citizenship as a praxis fundamentally concerned with a particular way of “being” in social life, this dissertation research aims at restoring such praxis-based, situated, and diverse forms of citizenship—which from now on will be referred to as local civic citizenship—in current citizenship education. Particularly attending to minority young people’s community activism in discussing issues of local civic citizenship, I conducted a case study of one community organizing group that fought against gentrification and attempted to preserve Puerto Rican cultural heritage and space in the Chicago inner city. The main research question is: What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed surrounding the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” (HPNSV) Campaign on Paseo Boricua in Chicago?"

Community Engagement and Praxis-based Citizenship

I understand citizenship to be fundamentally concerned with a particular way of “being,” in other words, how to be a particular kind of a person and engage in social life. My thoughts on citizenship are primarily inspired by James Tully’s conceptual distinction of two modes of citizenship (Tully, 2008): modern liberal citizenship and local civic citizenship. Modern liberal citizenship assumes one universal and institutionalized form tied to the nation-state, typically referring to a legal status within a governmental authority. Local civic citizenship, on the contrary, is not simply about legal status but concerns seeking situated and diverse forms of

\[1\]This conceptual distinction was devised initially to discuss global citizenship, but I think they speak to the fundamental nature of citizenship and can thus be extended to the idea of citizenship in general.
practice in the local context. It requires an agent’s active engagement—how people engage with other people, make dialogue, understand their selfhoods and collective identities, and negotiate for changes to the system.

Civic engagement has been considered as the main venue for the “ecology of civic learning” (Longo, 2007), where people can harness civic praxis, *civicizing* themselves. Civic engagement encompasses a wide range of places and activities; not only schools but also libraries, community organizations, afterschool programs, festivals, rallies, protests, cafés, and sporting events are recognized as important resources for civic learning where people connect with each other and utilize nonprofessional expertise for democratic community building (Longo, 2007). Volunteerism, voting, campaigning, writing letters to policy makers, political discussion within our everyday lives, community organizing, and taking part in rallies or strikes are examples of civic engagement. It is important to note, however, that the true ecology of civic learning is taking place when community engagement provokes people to critically think about issues of power, political tension and social justice (Longo, 2007). This is the reason that charity or charity-oriented service learning, for instance, is often criticized for its lack of social criticism, in spite of its goodwill to those less unfortunate.

**Minority Young People’s Community Activism**

Among the many different forms of community engagement, I am particularly interested in minority young people’s community activism. Youth of color have been largely ignored in the mainstream literature surrounding youth development and citizenship education. They have often been characterized negatively, portrayed as being vulnerable to crime and social pathology with a primary focus on prevention programs (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Yet, the last decade
has witnessed an increasing movement toward community organizing among young urban minority people, often interchangeably called various names such as youth organizing, youth-led community organizing, community organizing, or community activism. It has been reported that youth participation in community organizing has fostered critical consciousness, social skills, leadership, social responsibility, and community action, referred to as critical civic praxis (Delgado & Staples, 2008; Ginwright, 2003; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006; Ginwright, 2007; Hosang, 2003; Listen, Inc., 2003).

I think highly of minority young people’s community activism, in that it is ground-up/community-driven movement to question the status quo and make a social change in society. Community organizing has been largely influenced by Saul Alinsky’s grassroots community activism (Alinsky, 1971) and Freire’s critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000). This movement highlights that the people of the community voice their issues themselves from the subject position, rather than allowing their issues to be represented by others from the outside. Such a grassroots democracy practice helps participants “see themselves as actors with the potential to resist oppression, see their peers and local community as potential collaborators in collective action, and see their community as a source of resources and a site for building collective power for social change” (Schutz, 2006, p. 725). In spite of its significance, however, this field has rarely been spotlighted in respect to citizenship education, purportedly because it has been considered an unconventional and radical area. Also, having witnessed that most educational research on citizenship education attends to the school setting, I conducted this study to bring new inspiration from these grassroots democracy practices into citizenship education.
Citizenship Education in School and Local Civic Citizenship

Current citizenship education in schools is largely disconnected from students’ real lives. Kincheloe (2001) says that civic knowledge in the curriculum currently taught in schools primarily portrays ideal scenarios, rather than what really happens. He says:

Often, when I observe middle school civics teachers lecturing their students about how a bill becomes a law, never referring to lobbyists and economic power wielders’ role in the process, I wonder about the future of participatory democracy. If students are to learn how power actually operates and how governing takes place in a privatized twenty-first century, they will have to unlearn the fairy-tale civics lessons they learn in many schools. (p. 721)

In such an environment, students could hardly be associated with actual civic and political life. Even more, textbooks and curricula primarily framed with the Eurocentric idea are prone to keep minority students from connecting their lives to learning in the classroom. Arguably, this disconnect at school between learning and real life may be responsible for political apathy, cynicism, and lost bonds between individuals and their communities (Putnam, 1995). The growing gap between school-constructed citizenship and citizenship as actually practiced (Knight, Abowitz, & Harnish, 2006) can also be understood in this context.

As an effort to close the gap, this dissertation attends to minority young people’s community activism and its civic inspiration for engaged and critical citizenship. The idea of local civic citizenship is a useful vehicle to convey such inspiration into the current discourse of citizenship. In Tully (2008), local civic citizenship pursues diverse local forms of civic practice that may consist of particular practices, strategies, values, and ways of engagement in a given local context. Table 1 summarizes the basic traits of Tully’s two modes of citizenship, modern liberal citizenship and local civic citizenship. Whereas modern liberal citizenship assumes one universal and institutional form tied to the nation-state (a legal status given by governmental
authority), local civic citizenship is not necessarily tied to the nation-state but seeks situated and diverse forms of civic practices from the ground up (a practice-based movement).

Table 1

*Modern Liberal Citizenship vs. Local Civic Citizenship (excerpted from Tully, 2008)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modern liberal citizenship</th>
<th>Local civic citizenship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Situated-Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A legal status</td>
<td>Praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil (law-based)</td>
<td>Civic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern constitutional nation-state</td>
<td>Local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top down</td>
<td>Ground up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, I applied the idea of local civic citizenship to a particular case, a grassroots community organizing group called the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign, in order to see how citizenship was contextualized as praxis in a particular setting.

The Case: The “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign

The case of this study is the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” (HPNSV) Campaign in an urban Puerto Rican community known as *Paseo Boricua* in Chicago. I learned about *Paseo Boricua* and HPNSV while working for the Youth Community Informatics (YCI) project of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Working with many community groups, afterschool programs, libraries, and schools, YCI helped the youth participants develop digital media literacy skills, investigated community issues, and created various kinds of media products. *Paseo Boricua* was one of the
YCI’s partner sites. I became gradually interested in the active grassroots community work in
Paseo Boricua, eventually deciding to do my dissertation research there.

Paseo Boricua\(^2\) was a mile-long stretch on Main Street, adjacent to the 107-acre
Huntington Park on the near northwest side of Chicago. Two 59-foot-tall steel sculptures in the
shape of the Puerto Rican flag, one at the west end (Anderson Avenue) and the other at east end
(Prospect Avenue), demarcated Paseo Boricua as a Puerto Rican space. Between the two flags,
small businesses, residences, and community institutions, including the Puerto Rican Community
Center (PRCC), stood along both sides of Main Street. Murals portraying Puerto Rican history,
culture, and people were painted on the walls of along Main Street.

Paseo Boricua (formerly La Division) and the Huntington Park area have been well
known as a Puerto Rican community since the 1950s, when the largest migration of Puerto
Ricans to the U.S.—460,000 in that decade alone\(^3\)—took place. Puerto Ricans migrated to large
cities such as New York and Chicago, seeking jobs in manufacturing and construction (Duany,
2003; Flores-Gonzalez, 2001; Rinaldo, 2002).\(^4\) Several other Puerto Rican communities also
formed near places of employment or where rental fees and housing prices were relatively cheap
in Chicago. In the 1960s and 70s, however, many Puerto Rican communities faced a series of
displacements resulting from urban renewal projects, being forced to move out of their Near
West Side neighborhood and the Lincoln Park area. Universities (the University of Illinois at
Chicago and De Paul University), hospitals, and white professionals moved into those areas, and
many of those who left Lincoln Park moved to the Huntington Park area. Paseo Boricua, though

\(^2\)“Boricua” means “Puerto Rican” in Spanish, originally derived from Taino, the indigenous language.
\(^3\)Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. drastically increased in the 1940s and peaked in the 1950s. Migration was only
12,715 in the 1930s, increasing to 145,010 in the 1940s and reaching 460,826 in the 1950s. (Duany, 2003).
\(^4\)Most HPNSV activists who varied from being in the second through forth generation of immigration said that the
first comers to the U.S in the families of had arrived in 1950s for mostly manual work jobs, too.
surviving these previous displacements, was hit by another city redevelopment plan in the 1990s, which pushed Puerto Ricans to move closer to Huntington Park (Flores-Gonzalez, 2001).

Several people that I met during my fieldwork told me that the Puerto Rican community around Huntington Park (Huntington Park itself having come to mean the Puerto Rican community) used to be much larger than the current size, reaching to Ashland near Wicker Park, at least a 10- to 15-minute drive from Paseo Boricua to the east. Wicker Park was another Puerto Rican community that existed only in people’s memories at the time of this research, after being completely gentrified less than 10 years ago. I often drove through that area during my fieldwork, but it was hard to imagine that it used to be a Puerto Rican community. The Wicker Park area was contemporary and fancy, with no old buildings or cultural vestiges of a Puerto Rican community to be found at all. Instead, the area was full of new bars, fancy restaurants, cafés, malls, new businesses, and new condominiums and townhouses. Also, many more white people were visible in this neighborhood than in Paseo Boricua. When I conducted the fieldwork, the forces of development—or gentrification—that had transformed Wicker Park were now encroaching to within just blocks of Paseo Boricua.

Paseo Boricua faced common urban issues such as gang violence, drug dealing, poverty, health issues, etc. In spite of these challenges, Paseo Boricua could remain as a vibrant and resilient community owing to the long-term commitment of the Puerto Rican Community Center (PRCC) to the community. Ever since it was founded in 1973, the PRCC, HPNSV’s umbrella organization, has worked hard to serve the social and cultural needs of the community for a long time. On the basis of the three principles of self-determination, self-actualization, and self-reliance, the PRCC operated a wide range of community programs: a daycare center, a library and community information center, Barrio Urbano (a youth organizing program), La Opinión
del Paseo Boricua (the local newspaper), La Vida Center (a community health center addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic), the Institute of Culture, Leadership, Art, and Communication (ICLAC, an afterschool program), Rivera High School (an alternative high school for Puerto Rican/Latino youth founded in 1972), a family learning center, Bicicleta Urbano (a bike shop), Co-op Huntington Park (another community health center for reducing obesity among community residents), the Institute for Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, and the Boricua Human Rights Association (working for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners). Most of these names will appear at least more than once throughout this dissertation; in particular, Barrio Urbano and ICLAC will appear consistently because of their close connection to HPNSV.

HPNSV was organized by a group of youth organizers at Barrio Urbano to challenge gentrification and preserve Puerto Rican cultural heritage, under the name “Huntington Park Participatory Democracy Project” (PD) in 2004. The name, Barrio Urbano, often shortened to Barrio, had a dual meaning: first, it referred to the physical space it occupied on Main Street as a venue for youth cultural performances, including hip-hop, poetry, and plays; second, it was the name of the youth organizing group that organized such cultural events and operated youth programs. At Barrio’s many cultural events, youth could freely express their feelings and thoughts through cultural performance, and the older youth shared their creative skills with young people, via internet radio production, murals, theater, skate boarding, etc. (Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez, & Rodriguez-Muñiz, 2006). The youth leaders, called the Barrio collective, were responsible for running the space and organizing events. In 2007, young activists who used to be Barrio collective separated the Participatory Democracy Project from Barrio and made it an independent initiative to specifically work against gentrification. They adopted a new slogan,
“¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” for the new initiative. After the separation, yet, HPNSV still worked closely with Barrio in an effort to get youth involved in their work.

Puerto Rico’s ambiguous political status was an important backdrop for understanding the work of HPNSV (and the PRCC). Puerto Rico was officially a commonwealth of the U.S., but many people in the PRCC saw Puerto Rico as a colony, and had historically supported the nationalist platform of independence for Puerto Rico.\(^5\) Puerto Ricans had been collectively made U.S. citizens by the Jones Act of 1917, but native-born Puerto Ricans were not granted the constitutional rights of U.S citizenship by Downes v. Bidwell declared in 1901. Downes v. Bidwell stated that Puerto Rico “is a territory appurtenant and belonging to the United States, but not a part of the United States within the revenue clauses of the Constitution” (Perez, 2008, p. 1037). This ambiguous political status led to an equally ambiguous and therefore inferior citizenship status for Puerto Ricans, in which Puerto Ricans in the island pay no federal taxes, and are not allowed to vote in U.S. presidential elections until today.

Huntington Park has been claimed by its residents to be a Puerto Rican territory, having served as a symbol of the Puerto Rican diaspora for about 50 years. The PRCC explicitly advocated the three principles—self-determination, self-actualization, and self-reliance in their community work—as a symbolic manifestation of the Puerto Rican independence within the community. Those in the nationalist movement regarded gentrification as another form of U.S. colonialism in the community, which consequently intensified their struggles to preserve the Puerto Rican space, as their perspective was one of resisting U.S. colonial domination as a whole (Rinaldo, 2002). Rinaldo (2002) called Huntington Park a “space of resistance.”

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\(^5\)Some Puerto Ricans want to remain a commonwealth, and others want independence. Rinaldo (2002) said that those who want independence, even though they were a small minority, had strong supporters in Paseo Boricua (p.138).
Against this background, HPNSV specified their mission as raising awareness of gentrification among the community residents, developing educational resources, and engaging community residents in dialogue for long-term community building. I wondered what efforts the young activists would actually make to achieve such purposes, and I also wanted to read their community practices in terms of local civic citizenship. Another compelling matter regarding HPNSV was that several of the young HPNSV activists used to be Barrio leaders, having grown up to become community organizers/activists who were willing to take on another serious role for the community. I thought that this case could also suggest a good model of civic learning in the community, providing important lessons about citizenship education.

**Main Research Question**

The main research question was: What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed in the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign? Several subordinate issues were developed to discuss the main research question, revolving around four aspects: the understanding of gentrification among the adult leaders; the young participants’ experiences in this campaign and their relationships with the adult leaders; developing local strategies/tools; and the tension between being a member of Paseo Boricua and of the larger society. Chapter 4 provides the sub-research questions after a review of the relevant literature; discussion of these sub-research questions can be found in Chapters 5 through 11.

**Researcher’s Background**

“Why did you get involved in this community?” was the most commonly asked question from people I met during my fieldwork. It is true that, at a glance, a Korean graduate student
might not be easily associated with this community. In fact, looking back, when I began my Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I myself could not have imagined that I would end up doing my dissertation research about a Puerto Rican community in the inner city of Chicago.

Initially I had been interested in service learning or something relating to community-based learning, but my focus shifted to community-driven engagement while participating in the Youth Community Informatics (YCI) Project at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. YCI provided the most critical breakthrough for me during my Ph.D. program. Through YCI, I learned about many forms of university-community partnerships, service learning, community-driven engagement, and the power of digital technology in investigating community issues. Paseo Boricua was one of YCI’s partner sites. As I became more familiar with Paseo Boricua, I wanted to know more about how they engaged in their community—setting the agenda, communicating with and educating the people of the community, involving youth, collaborating with other groups, etc. That was the beginning of my relationship with the community.

My interest in citizenship education stems from my dissatisfaction with the citizenship education I received throughout my K-12 school years in Korea. I will not discuss the notorious test-oriented system here because it is already well known, but I want to touch on the strong influence of a 30-year-long military regime (which collapsed in 1987, when I was in 4th grade) on education and society. This was a serious issue for me, a former social studies teacher, because this legacy has survived and still controls how people see the world and block social criticisms. For about 30 years, a military regime took full advantage of the ideological war between North and South Korea in order to continue its seizure of power. Besides physical
violence and harsh policing, they used public policy, education, and media to implant blind fear of and hostility towards North Korea in the minds of the South Korean people, in turn successfully producing compliant nationals.

There is no doubt that my whole family had fallen into this category. I remember that sometime in the late 1980s, college students were protesting almost every day, involving a lot of violence and tear gas. I never saw it myself, but I knew about it because my father, who had to travel through tear gas and traffic jams on his way home, often expressed a deep hatred for the protesting students. My parents always referred to them as “commies,” and blamed North Korea for secretly instigating the students to overthrow the South Korean government. They told me that even Dae-Jung, Kim, who later became President of South Korea in 1997 and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000, was a spy from North Korea. I believed it. In school, teachers avoided bringing up political issues, either because they wanted to avoid trouble or because they believed the same things as my parents. No one posed serious questions about why the students protested. Not until college did I realize that those students were protesting against a military dictatorship and asking for democratization.

University life opened my eyes in many ways. I spent most of my college years struggling to unlearn the prejudices and wrong assumptions that had been instilled in me. Studying education and sociology, I became interested in labor rights, North Korean issues, and economic justice. Many workers were paid a ridiculously small amount of money with which they could not even meet the minimum standard of living. However, advocating for the rights of workers was often falsely accused of being communist or anti-government, and therefore pro-North Korea and dangerous to national security. Such fascist logic—that criticism of government policies equals anti-government sentiment, which equals pro-North Korean sentiment, which
constitutes a dangerous entity that needs to be eliminated—still lingered, suppressing the differing voices that wanted to talk about minority rights and welfare issues.

Later, in my master’s program, I became more interested in political participation and political education. I was specifically interested in how social studies teachers could help students of lower socio-economic status participate in policy decision-making processes. However, since my master’s program curriculum was taught from the perspective of political science, it was hard to extract practical implications for teaching social studies. Then one day, I encountered an article about service learning written by Conrad and Hedin (1982). This was a breakthrough moment. When I finished reading the article, I thought, “This is exactly what I want to do in my teaching!”

When I went back to school to teach middle school social studies, I thought that the schools in South Korea might have changed during my time away, and that they might let me try new things. Before long, I realized the reality: I was still expected to paint a rosy picture of Korean society. Although there are many oppressed groups in Korea, the classroom afforded little opportunity to discuss issues such as labor rights, North Korean refugee issues, women’s rights, issues surrounding immigrant workers from South Asian countries, and stains on modern Korean history from military coups and massacres. I really wanted my students to understand why we should be interested in and speak out about those issues, but in reality this was very tough. Also, bored of teaching the dry content of the textbook, I wanted to encourage students to engage in activities outside of school to connect the classroom with their neighborhoods. Back then, however, I could not find any reference groups, curricula, or guidelines about service learning to support my work. In addition, I could get any administrative support from the school for my small educational experiment. They just wanted me to be silent, but I did not want to
remain dead in the system. These disillusions and a desire to learn more about service-learning led me here to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and then to *Paseo Boricua*.

My ultimate desire is that people in my country would think more critically, freely express their thoughts, engage in social issues without fear of getting arrested, and open themselves up to the voices of minorities. This study is my first step towards achieving this dream.

In Chapter 2, the meaning of local civic citizenship is discussed in more detail; Chapter 3 contains a review of the related empirical research and introduces the sub-research questions; Chapter 4 includes the research methods used for this project; Chapters 5 through 11 contain the major findings; and Chapter 12 links HPNSV’s community engagement to the framework of local civic citizenship, discussing its implications on citizenship education.
Chapter 2

Local Civic Citizenship

In this chapter, I discuss the key features of local civic citizenship, its significance in citizenship education, and its relation to community activism among minority young people. Also, I have included my own interpretation of local civic citizenship, focusing on the three key features based on Tully’s model: the meaning of locality, the foundations for multiple counterpublics, and citizenship as praxis. This view of local civic citizenship ultimately articulates a theory of citizenship as community activism.

Meaning of Locality

What does it mean to be “local”? Does it refer to a certain geographic area? Is its meaning solely geographical? How small is local? What about a connection to a larger context? While the meaning of locality could be open to several different interpretations, in this dissertation, I view “being local” as involving (a) relational connectivity to the larger context, and (b) “untied-ness” from the nation-state. These two aspects come from different readings: one is related to geography and the other to cultural studies. I believe that these perspectives enrich an understanding of “being local,” and in turn, of local civic citizenship.

**The relational connectivity of local and global.** The word “local” is often linked to proximity, a relational category, a physical place, culture, a sense of belonging, a sense of difference from others, etc. (Smith, 1994). Localism has been deeply related to the tradition of local democracy; in particular, John Stuart Mill, in his book, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), emphasized the importance of local democracy in leading people to
participate in local functions and offices and also in developing political skills across a broad range of people, ultimately increasing local autonomy. He said:

But in the case of local bodies, besides the function of electing, many citizens in turn have the chance of being elected, and many, either by selection or by rotation, fill one or other of the numerous local executive offices. . . . It may be added, that these local functions, not being in general sought by the higher ranks, carry down the important political education which they are the means of conferring, to a much lower grade in society. (Mill, [2004]1861, p. 183)

Spatial proximity is regarded as a major advantage, enhancing people’s participation; the neighborhood is identified as the key arena for cultivating active citizenship and building strong communities (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008). Yet, I argue that locality should not be read as parochialism or sectarianism, but as having relational connectivity to the larger society, whether it is a larger region, a nation-state, or the global society. Amin’s (2004) non-territorial reading questioned the assumption of a geographically defined territory in local politics. He saw local politics as still drawing upon “an imaginary of the region as a space of intimacy, shared history or shared identity, and community of interest or fate. These have become the motivating cultural reasons for a politics of local regard and local defense to be delivered through devolution” (p. 37). Because of globalization and transnationalism, local politics and actors are no longer confined to a given geographical area. Rather, local now often refers to a center of transnational networking through which active citizens create new practices of citizenship participation to defy the long taken-for-granted nationalized conception of politics and citizenship. The local space, in other words, is a mix of proximity and relational connectivity to larger contexts. Morgan’s (2007) description, “bounded and porous,” best expresses this mixed nature of local space:

**bounded** because politicians are held to account through the territorially defined ballot box, a prosaic but important reason why one should not be so dismissive of territorial politics; **porous** because people have multiple identities and they are becoming ever more mobile, spawning communities of relational connectivity that transcend territorial boundaries. (p. 1248, emphasis mine)
This change in the nature of the local space influences the nature of being in the space; practices of citizenship participation newly created in the space oftentimes pose a big challenge to the entrenched nationalized conception of politics and citizenship (Sassen, 2002; 2006). Little effort to date, nevertheless, has been made to consider this new way of thinking about locality in the discourse of citizenship/citizenship education.

This local-global potential⁶ would primarily influence the way we think about citizenship regarding our sense of belonging and identity. It is thus necessary to look into how such relational connectivity is actualized in a particular context; more specifically, how people link their local consciousness to the global level; and how people re-locate their nation-ness in the resulting relative tension. And this notion of locality also supports the idea that local civic citizens need to know how to dialogue with different groups of people in other communities, exchanging their knowledge and practices, to fulfill the democratic ideals of society.

**Untied-ness from the nation-state: The margin of the nation.** This aspect of locality is different from the geographic reading described above. Drawing upon the literature of cultural studies, this perspective adds another critical lens to my view of locality as it relates to marginalization and oppression.

While historically, the “state” refers to state possession of both internal and external sovereignty at the spatial level over a clearly delimited terrain (the state territory), the term “nation” connotes a political community shaped by common descent, or at least by a common language, culture, and history. It was in the late 18th century that the ideas of state and nation were merged into the idea of the nation-state, and citizenship was identified as legal membership to the nation-state (Habermas, 1998). It was also around that time that nationalism emerged as a

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⁶I do not want to use the term “glocal,” because it seems to overly simplify the significant nature of each.
strong cultural bond to unite people into one nation-ness, and national identity still exerts “a more potent and durable influence today than other collective cultural identities” (Smith, 1991, p. 175).

Bhabha’s (1994) postcolonial critiques provide interesting insight on this nation-ness. He saw the nation as a cultural artifact, rather than a “polity that exemplifies modernity as an autonomous or sovereign form of political rationality.” His argument is that nation-ness is nothing but “cultural shreds and patches” arbitrarily constituted from the past, as such, identifying an “imagined community,” in Benedict Anderson’s terms (1983). Bhabha described the arbitrariness of nation-ness as follows:

The language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past. Historians transfixed on the event and origins of the nation never ask, and political theorists possessed of the “modern” totalities of the nation—“homogeneity, literacy and anonymity are the key traits”—never pose the essential question of the representation of the nation as a temporal process. (p. 142)

The problem is that the voices of many minorities are oppressed in this homogenization process of producing one nation-ness. However, Bhabha’s (1994) “margin of the nation” is where the homogenization process becomes compromised, as minorities negotiate cultural differences and recognitions, disrupting the colonial discourse to normalize their “other-ness” and create their own identities. The border therefore has an ever-shifting, ambiguous, in-between, hybrid, and contested nature, with the concurrence of domination and resistance. In light of this phenomenon, Bhabha disagreed with the established dichotomy between “us” and “others,” stating, “The ‘other’ is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously ‘between ourselves’” (p. 4). Such dialogic practice often resembles warfare: it does not always yield the harmonious addition of content or context that assures a pre-given disciplinary or symbolic
presence. I believe these traits—on-going negotiation, conflict, and warfare—should be critical components of local civic citizenship. Its situated-diverse forms are not pre-given, but they come into being through the relentless effort to decolonize dominant ways of being and knowing.

The current discourse surrounding citizenship and citizenship education is still strongly limited by the notion of one nation-ness. It has been committed to creating “nationals” who hold onto the creed of national citizenship, and is often not able to consider smaller, diverse narratives among the many different groups. Willinsky employed a postcolonial lens in critiquing the essentialized understanding of culture, nation, and race in education. As an example, social studies curricula in Canada have long used the nation to locate culture and races in a one-to-one correspondence, but nowadays this view often contradicts the diverse features of the lives of students who engaged in (im)migrational experiences in the transnational era (1999). Willinsky argued that schools should stop teaching ready-made nation-culture-race identification, which he regarded as a historical byproduct of European imperialism. Willinsky explained:

Multiculturalism today is struggling to build an alternative curriculum that celebrates the cultural plurality of the nation. This enthusiasm for the tapestry of lives can give rise to its own form of pride and pleasure in a nation that is richly arrayed. I am not asking that we somehow lose our feelings for the nation. What I am asking for here is a considerable loosening of the tie between nation and culture, as we separate church and state, if reluctantly at times, in order to protect the rights of the young. (1999, p. 101).

Willinsky’s critique is particularly significant to the idea of local civic citizenship, in that it provides grounds for dismantling nationalistic tendencies and reconstructing the nature of being in a multicultural society. The issues of how nation-ness is perceived and how it is related to many different voices in local communities directly intersect with issues of “being local.”

In summary, I believe that these two different approaches—geographical and conceptual—enrich our understanding of locality and in turn of local civic citizenship.
Multiple Counterpublics: Plural Personhoods in the Citizenship Position

Postmodern critiques of modern citizenship are vital to understanding local civic citizenship. Fundamentally concerned with the acknowledgement of plural personhoods in the citizenship position, the postmodern view of citizenship challenges the singular identity espoused in the modern liberal tradition, typically symbolized by a white propertied male. Investigating the silence or absence of other perspectives. For instance, poststructural feminist scholars reveal how social norms of otherness (e.g. femininity, homosexuality) are historically reconstituted under the patriarchal system and how this practice labels women as “others” (Weedon, 1997). Their goal is to create multiple subject positions in order to bring those who are marginalized back into the center of society (Cary, 2006; Fraser, 1995; Heilman, 2006; Mansbridge, 1990; Mouffe, 1995; Rosaldo, 1999; Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge, & Chakrabarty, 2000; Popkewitz, 1998). Mouffe (1995) addressed the idea of multiple and diverse forms of the social agent:

We can then conceive the social agent as constituted by an ensemble of “subject positions” that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences, constructed by a diversity of discourses among which there is no necessary relation, but a constant movement of overdetermination and displacement. The “identity” of such a multiple and contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject positions and dependent on specific forms of identification. It is therefore impossible to speak of the social agent as if we were dealing with a unified, homogeneous entity. We have rather to approach it as a plurality, dependent on the various discursive formations. (p. 318)

Postmodern thought is concerned not only with pluralizing the subject position, as described above, but also with pluralizing the identity of “other.” Regarding feminism, Mouffe (1995) and Young (1990) critiqued the essentialization of the category of women into “women-ness,” reducing it to one central quality. Different socio-cultural contexts, races, nationalities, ethnicities, (im)migration patterns and religions constitute different types of oppression over women; therefore, situated and multiple forms of feminism should respond to different socio-
historical requests in a given society. This moral may also be applied to other social struggles for equal rights surrounding race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and so on; a wide range of differences of others cannot be normalized into “one otherness.” This movement is deeply related to producing multiple counterpublics (Fraser, 1997) challenging a pre-given common good for one single public at a collective level. Fraser suggested alternative publics that “are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (p. 291).

In recent times there has been growing interest in multiple readings of experiences and identities that defy traditional conceptions of citizenship in citizenship education, with a consideration of one’s historical and social background. Cary (2006), Heilman (2006), Loutzenheiser (2006), Shinew (2006), and Vinson (2006) questioned the way in which “being normal” is constructed within social studies textbooks and curricula, suppressing the voices of minorities in the discourse of citizenship. In particular, Cary (2006) explicated the way in which female juvenile offenders were placed in an extremely deviant subject positions in citizenship. Similarly, in discussing the silence surrounding queer issues in classrooms, Loutzenheiser (2006) maintained that the term “queer” was not meant to represent gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered identities. Rather, it concerns the way in which normalcy is generated and regulated in social discourse in relation to sex, gender, and race. This perspective helps people to understand many different forms of social oppression. Nonetheless, current K-12 citizenship education is still predominantly framed within the modern liberal tradition, with a lack of

7Female juvenile offenders are spoken of in “the highly sexualized and pathologized medico-scientific discourses and aggressive behavior that has been analyzed as suggestive of masculine tendencies” (p. 54); these outcast/deviant examples are being used to construct and solidify the image of a normal citizen.
concern for these issues. I believe that exploring different notions of citizenship would contribute to addressing the lack of appreciation for diversity in citizenship education.

Citizenship as Praxis

Praxis and community engagement. Praxis is key to the idea of local civic citizenship, which values all possible civic activities in various local contexts. The classical meaning of praxis is rooted in Aristotle’s idea of phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Schwandt, 2006; Smith, 1994), an approach to knowledge that Flyvbjerg emphasized as important to social sciences, in contrast with two other approaches to knowledge: episteme and techne. According to Flyvbjerg, “whereas episteme concerns theoretical know why and techne denotes technical know how, phronesis emphasizes practical knowledge and practical ethics” (p 56). In other words, Episteme that resembles the ideal of scientific knowledge that is universal, invariable, and context-independent. Techne can be translated as “art” in the sense of “craft” and the object of techne is application of technical knowledge and skills to solve a specific problem (p. 56). Phronesis concerns practical knowledge, practical ethics, or value judgment as a departure for action. It thus focuses on what is variable, on that which cannot be encapsulated by universal rules, on specific cases (p. 57). Flyvbjerg explains that “whereas episteme concerns theoretical know why and techne denotes technical know how, phronesis emphasizes practical knowledge and practical ethics” (p. 56). The value judgment such as the answer to the question,

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8He summarizes the three as follows (p. 57):
Episteme—Scientific knowledge. Universal, invariable, context-independent. Based on general analytical rationality. The original concept is known today from the terms “epistemology” and “epistemic.”
Techne—Craft art. Pragmatic, variable, context-dependent. Oriented toward production. Based on practical instrumental rationality governed by a conscious goal. The original concept appears today in terms such as “technique,” technical,” and “technology.”
Phronesis—Ethics. Deliberation about values with reference to praxis. Pragmatic, variable, context dependent. Oriented toward action. Based on practical value-rationality. The original concept has no analogous contemporary term.
“What is good or bad for man?” cannot be derived from a universal rule but should be situated in a particular context where people live. Significantly, the priority of the particular does not mean ignoring the general rule but rather it requires interactions between the general and the concrete (p. 57).

My understanding of citizenship as praxis—a particular way of being—is couched in this idea of *phronesis*. Being or becoming a citizen in a particular context constantly entails the value rational questions like “Where are we going?”; “Is this desirable?”; and “What should be done?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Flyvbjerg originally put forward these questions for thinking about a new direction for social science. I think these questions also speak profoundly to the moral-political choices associated with being a citizen in a certain context.

In the field of education, the idea of praxis is widely known through Freire’s critical pedagogy. Freire (2000) views praxis as a coalition of reflection and action for the purpose of transforming reality in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In his notion, praxis is the source of knowledge, and the foundation on which people create history and historical-social being (pp. 100-101). Freire’s notion of praxis is explicitly political. It arouses people to the realization of unjust phenomena and inspires them to take action for change. This, much like the classical notion of praxis, is a profound moral-political response to the world.

How do people experience praxis, then? They should engage in the world, experiences the real issues, communicate with other people, learn local practices and norms, face conflicts, negotiate, and try to make changes as needed. Hence, praxis encompasses a wide range of social engagement, also involving comparing and contrasting them critically from various points of view by engaging in civic dialogue and interaction among the diverse citizens. In terms of civic education, engaging in such civic dialogue and interaction itself is one of the most important
educational routes people *civicize* themselves to become a citizen. This is the reason that community engagement matters in citizenship education.

**Learning citizenship by doing.** The idea of learning citizenship by participation has been advocated by several scholars, including John Dewey and Jane Addams around the turn of the 20th century, and Carole Pateman in relatively recent years, as well as J. S. Mill in the 19th century.

Dewey made huge contributions to democracy in education in the early twentieth century, and his emphasis on the vitality of connected experiences in citizenship education is exemplified in his famous statement, “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (1916, p. 87). Dewey’s contemporary, Jane Addams, provided a good example of connected and transformative learning in the community at Hull House, where ordinary people—mostly European immigrants—voluntarily engaged in community-building activities and created dialogues and mutual understanding across different cultural backgrounds. Hull House residents investigated sanitation, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, cocaine distribution, infant mortality and other pertinent issues in Chicago (Bruce, 2008). They also created community maps called *Hull House Maps and Papers* about various social issues in their neighborhoods, including the distribution of nationalities, wages, sweat shops, and child labor (homicide.northwestern.edu/pubs/hullhouse). At Hull House’s labor museum, immigrants from different cultural backgrounds learned from one another, shared practical job skills and knowledge, and experienced enhanced self-esteem. Addams (1999/1899) emphasized the natural or ecological way of civic learning through community engagement: “If we admit that in education it is necessary to begin with the experiences which the child already has and to use this
spontaneous and social activity, then the city streets begin this education for him in a more natural way than does the school.” This kind of civic learning has the true transformative power to make a difference both in the community and people.

The significance of ecological civic learning through community engagement was also addressed by Carole Pateman, a political scientist, in her book Participation and Democratic Theory (1970). Framing her theory of participatory democracy, she focused on the educational impact of participation, drawing on the work of classical thinkers such as Jean-Jacque Rousseau and J.S. Mill, who also emphasized participation in politics for achieving a better democratic ideal and educational impact. She said:

The major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is therefore an educative one, and educative in the very widest sense, including both the psychological aspect and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures. . . . Participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so. Subsidiary hypotheses about participation are that it has an integrative effect and that it aids the acceptance of collective decisions. (Pateman 1988 [1970], 42-43) [emphasis added]

Clearly, the idea of local civic citizenship—civicizing to become a meaningful being in society through participation—is not unprecedented. It is founded in the long-standing idea of praxis and in varied historical forms of civic engagement. The ecology of civic learning (Longo, 2007) and informal citizenship learning (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008; Schugurensky & Myers, 2003) are part of the effort to revitalize the importance of participation in learning citizenship. Local civic citizenship, by and large, parallels this recent trend by providing a more sophisticated understanding of its locale (the meaning of locality), agents (multiple counter publics), and participation.

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9 Although both Rousseau and Mill highlighted the importance of political participation, they had different opinions on the representative system. Rousseau thought that representative democracy was likely to fail to reflect the general will and advocated a more direct participatory system. Mill, on the other hand, defended the representative system.
Youth Activism and Local Civic Citizenship

Thus far I have outlined my own understanding of local civic citizenship based on Tully’s interpretation, defining three main aspects: the meanings of locality, the foundations for multiple counterpublics, and learning about citizenship through participation (praxis-based citizenship).

There are many different forms of participation in local civic citizenship; I focus on community activism among minority young people. The literature surrounding youth development has largely taken a deficit view of minority youth of color as being vulnerable to crimes, violence, and other social illnesses. The past decade, however, witnessed a dramatic arise in community organizing among young urban minority people. It has been reported that youth participation in community organizing has fostered critical consciousness, social skills, leadership, social responsibility, and community action, referred to as critical civic praxis (Delgado & Staples, 2008; Ginwright, 2003; Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006; Hosang, 2003; Listen, Inc., 2003). While questioning the prevailing prejudices of urban minority young people in which they have often been characterized negatively and portrayed as being vulnerable to crime (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002), this kind of activism contributes to creating different images of those youth as capable agents for social change. The key traits of minority youth activism—localized, ground-up activity, engagement in the community by ordinary people, challenges to the status quo, and advocacy of social justice—certainly match those of local civic citizenship.

Community activism among minority young people, however, has rarely been studied in terms of citizenship and citizenship education, despite its important inspiration to citizenship education. This dissertation functions to bridge the gap between the two different fields, while
also broadening the horizon of citizenship education. The next section reviews the related literature about community activism among minority young people.
Chapter 3

Review of Literature

The body of literature on youth activism surrounding minority populations has grown considerably across the fields of youth development (positive youth development, community youth development, social justice youth development), urban education, youth media, social work, and public health. Papers appear with varied keywords, including youth development, community organizing/youth-led community organizing, community research, youth media production, youth voice, youth activism, youth leadership, youth participation, youth-adults allies, and youth civic engagement. To find relevant literature, I primarily used the above keywords to search EBSCO, library catalogues, and Amazon. In this study, I define (urban) youth as young people between the ages of 15 and 25 who come from working-class or poor families in urban communities (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002).

Three Forms of Youth Community Activism: Collective Movement for Social Change

Literature on community activism among minority young people falls primarily into three categories: (a) youth organizing/youth-led community organizing; (b) youth participatory research/youth participatory action research/youth participatory evaluation; and (c) youth media

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10I exclude the literature of service learning, although it has been in the center of student community engagement. Service learning has been drawing increasing attention as an effective pedagogical tool to help students engage in communities, have a better understanding of community issues, and develop academic social skills from elementary school to the college level. Many argue that service learning is not simply about doing good deeds, but is to be designed to promote students’ criticism of social injustice, such as poverty, racism, and other social discrimination (Butin, 2007; Densmore, 2000; Schultz, 2007; Sleeter, 2000; Wade, 2000; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, 2006). Even so, the form of participation encouraged in service learning relies on an unequal power relationship between the “served” people of the community and the “serving” participating students. The participating students often reinforce the deficit view or previously-held prejudices of the community (the service recipient), which is mostly comprised of minority, low-income, and immigrant populations (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Vadeboncoeur, Rahm, Aguilera, & LeCompte, 1996). Moreover, teacher education programs frequently use service learning predominantly as a tool for white female middle class students experiencing their “first exposure” to diversity (Bolye-Baise & Sleeter, 2000). Such use leads the people of the served community to be seen as clients or objects of the white students’ learning (Himley, 2004; Tonkin, 2008). With a few exceptions (Schultz, 2007), young minority people are in the “served” position, rather than being regarded as capable agents of social change.
production. Though employing different labels and forms, these fields seek a common goal: grassroots and collective movement for social change. While school reform/education is the most often discussed issue in the literature, other forms of social oppression relating to deep-rooted racism in contexts such as community health, juvenile justice, and immigration are often introduced as main issues of activism.

Oftentimes no clear-cut boundary exists between youth organizing, youth participatory research, and youth media production, and some forms supplement each other in achieving their original purpose. For instance, youth organizing groups may conduct participatory research as a strategy for enabling other people to better understand their cause, which eventually aids in policy change (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2006; Kwon, 2006; Nygreen, Kwon, & Sánchez, 2006). I discuss the three types of community activism in detail below.

Community activism through youth organizing. The past two decades have witnessed a remarkable increase in community organizing driven by minority youth, alternately called youth organizing, youth-led community organizing, grassroots youth community organizing, or youth-led health promotion.\(^{11}\) School reform is the most often handled issue in youth organizing; indeed, educational justice is one of the critical issues of social justice in the lives of youth. Endo (2002) reported that out of hundreds of youth community organizing groups by the early 2000s, 75% of them dealt with school reform (Endo, 2002).

In addition to its impact on public policy, youth organizing has entered the spotlight in the field of youth development because of its other positive byproducts: the development of youth leadership skills, collaborative capacity, critical consciousness, and civic commitment. An increasing number of reports from related foundations and agencies have introduced cases of

\(^{11}\)The term “youth-led health promotion” appeared in (Delgado & Zhou, 2008) and is less common than other terms including.
youth organizing since early 2000. In particular, the eleven reports that the Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO) published about youth organizing during the past decade deserve attention; they cover a wide range of issues including history, main cases, outcomes, impacts, and possible implications of youth organizing on youth development and educational reform (Ginwright, 2003; Ginwright, 2010a, 2010b; HoSang, 2003; HoSang, 2005; Ishihara, 2007; LISTEN, Inc, 2003; Pintado-Vertner, 2004; Price & Diehl; Spatz, 2005; Shah, 2011). In particular, the latest report, *Building Transformative Youth Leadership: Data on the Impacts of Youth Organizing* (Shah, 2011), discusses the impact of youth organizing on youth development, drawing upon a portion of empirical data collected for a larger study. The data comprised 124 surveys of youth involved in three groups; 88 interviews with youth, school and district administrators, and youth organizing staff; and observations. The findings were: (a) youth organizing groups exemplified a supportive organizational environment in which youth were able to engage in the civic and political life of their communities; (b) youth involved in organizing reported gains in civic efficacy, critical consciousness, and understanding of collective action; (c) youth in organizing groups demonstrated greater commitment to civic engagement than those in a national sample, especially in the long term; and (d) youth in organizing reported increases in educational motivation and aspirations. These findings have been supported by many other case study reports and scholarly articles.

Scholarly books and peer-reviewed articles about youth organizing among urban minority youth have been also increasingly noticeable during the past decade across the disciplines of education, youth development, public health, and social work. Like the aforementioned reports of the FYCO, these articles introduced many cases of youth organizing for education reforms such as reducing drop-out rates, eliminating disproportional race distribution in AP classes, and
improving school conditions and curricular and school policies (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2006; Ginwright & Cammarota 2007; Kirshner, 2009; Shah & Mediratta, 2008; Stoval, 2006); preserving youth space from a commercial company and initiating a tutoring program funded by the local government (Warren, Mira, & Nikundiwe, 2008); organizing a cultural space for Latino(a) and African-American youth (Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez, & Rodriguez-Muniz, 2006); improving juvenile justice (Kwon, 2006); and youth-led health promotion (Delgado & Zhou, 2008). New development models emphasizing critical consciousness development—the social justice youth development model (Cammarota & Ginwright, 2002) and the sociopolitical development model (Watts & Guessous, 2006)—were introduced to reframe the educational significance of youth organizing to the development of critical consciousness and commitment to social justice.

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12A group of minority youth in low-income urban communities organized a two-year campaign to improve school test-taking practices. They conducted a survey about their peers’ opinions of their experiences with testing and held individual meetings with district administrators to express their concerns about adequate yearly progress standards (AYP) associated with state standardized exams. Although the youth faced conflicts with the school system in the negotiation process, the campaign ultimately resulted in the adoption of a set of district-wide standards.

13One high school teacher joined his students in launching a peer-to-peer math tutoring program called the Baltimore Algebra Project, which served four hundred students across the city. Students successfully negotiated a sixty thousand dollar contract with the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) to provide tutoring to middle school students. When a budget crisis hit the BCPSS, the Baltimore Algebra Project organized a series of walkouts and rallies to protest the funding shortage and went on to link their organizing efforts to a demand for quality education. Although the group did not succeed in achieving its ultimate goals, the participants counted their work as a success at proving that young people have potential as agents of school reform.

14Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez, and Rodriguez-Muniz (2006) show how a cultural club becomes a public space for politicizing young people, imbuing them with a critical consciousness and inspiring them to take action for social change. In Batey Urbano, the Puerto Rican youth community club in Chicago, young people can come to enjoy themselves through music, poetry, and plays; discover their talents; speak up; and develop new skills. Through such cultural practices, Batey also aims at helping young Puerto Ricans and Latinos understand who they are as individuals and as a community; to help them cope with their own and their community’s problems, such as gentrification; and to motivate them to take action to transform their lives and their community.

15Public health promotion is also an important issue in youth community activism. Health inequality is deeply intermingled with issues of social and economic justice in urban minority communities and other marginalized groups (Delgado & Zhou, 2008; Lewis-Charp, Yu, & Soukamneth, 2006). In Delgado and Zhou (2008), those who participated in youth-led health promotion created health guidebooks addressing six health areas (diabetes, mental health, substance abuse, sexual health, domestic violence, and cancer) and evaluated their work at the end of the project. The participants reported that they became more aware of the interrelationship between individuals and community and came to have a sense of community and group unity.
The dynamics of youth-adult relationships and apprenticeship learning in youth organizing are drawing attention regarding informal civic learning and youth leadership development; in particular, Kirshner (2006) attended to long-term influence of civic learning on youth participants in youth organizing. He discovered a pattern in which youth first modeled adult perspectives and practices; then adult leaders coached and helped youth develop leadership skills and critical thinking about important issues; and finally, adult leaders gradually faded away from the leadership positions and let youth take initiative and make the main decisions of the group. I will revisit this issue in the discussion section at the end of this chapter.

Community activism through youth participatory research/YPAR. During the past decade, youth participatory research has emerged as an important form of youth activism across the fields of education, social work, youth development, and public health. It is also known by various names, including youth-led research, youth participatory evaluation, and youth participatory action research (YPAR). The term YPAR has been introduced in recent years by a cadre of scholars in what is known as critical youth studies (see Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008), including Michelle Fine, Julio Cammarota, Shawn Ginwright, A.A. Akom, and Earnest Morrell. I consider the activities known by all of these names to fall under the category of youth participatory research. Despite slightly differing labels, they share the common theme of youth conducting research about issues that concern them and sharing their knowledge with the general public to enact change. Henceforth in this paper, I will use the term “youth participatory research/YPAR” to refer to this field.

The roots of youth participatory research/YPAR, as the name suggests, trace back to participatory research. Participatory research breaks down the distinction between the researcher and the researched; the people being studied actively participate in the knowledge production
process themselves, rather than remaining passive objects of research (Hall, 1992, p. 17). This is a fundamental challenge to the traditional epistemological stance in knowledge production predominately legitimized by the researcher’s perspective. Participatory research has particularly appealed to those who were under various forms of social oppression rooted in gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, etc. Participatory research enables people to research the issues of social oppression surrounding them, educate themselves, and bring the knowledge into action for social change. These three phases—research, education, and action—often characterize participatory research as a vehicle for change and action-oriented social practice, more than a research method (Hall, 1992, 17). Participatory research has already been widely practiced in public health under the name community-based participatory research (CBPR) (Horn, McCracken, Dino, & Brayboy, 2008; Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen III, & Guzman, 2003; Minkler, 2004; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Minkler, Vásquez, Warner, Steussey & Facente, 2006; Wallerstein & Duran; 2003).

In recent years, the group of critical youth studies scholars introduced above began paying attention to the pedagogical significance and social influence of participatory research in urban minority youth activism. Fine and Torre (2006) view participatory action research (PAR) conducted by young people as research conducted “with, by, and for,” as opposed to “on,” young people around the issues they find most important in their lives. Through PAR, young people learn how to study problems, understand societal issues from more critical perspectives, and find solutions to obstacles preventing their own well-being and progress. Freire’s critical pedagogy is often espoused in youth participatory research/YPAR.

Youth participatory research/YPAR is often used as a tool of youth organizing to increase awareness about social issues among the people and make a change (Checkoway & Richards-
Youth participatory research/YPAR in itself, however, has been directly responsible for substantial youth activism, as well. It has been used to address issues similar to those common in youth organizing: racism and school reform, including issues of high drop-out rates among minority youth, disproportionate ratios of minority youth in AP classes, school safety, and lack of culturally relevant curricula. When conducting YPAR, youth choose a topic, collect data through surveys and interviews, analyze the data, develop possible solutions based upon their findings, create a final report, and often deliver the final messages to funders, stakeholders, or the general public. It has been repeatedly reported that youth participatory research/YPAR has helped youth cultivate a critical consciousness of social issues and research skills, as well as a view of themselves as agents of social change (Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threatts, 2008; Cammarota & Fine 2008; Cheatham & Shen, 2003; Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2003, 2006; Delgado & Staples, 2008; Delgado & Zhou, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota; 2007; Kwon, 2006; Nygreen, Kwon, & Sánchez, 2006; Morrell, 2006; Romero, Cammarota, Dominguez, Valdez, Ramirez, & Hernandez, 2008; Suleiman, Soleimanpour, & London, 2006; Strobel, Osberg & McLaughlin, 2006; Torre & Fine, 2006; Tuck, Allen, Bacha, Morales, Quinter, Thompson, & Tuck, 2008).

Further discussion of the educational implications of YPAR follows at the end of this section.

**Community activism using digital media production.** With the rapid development of digital media technology, youth media production is progressively gaining ground in the fields of education and youth/community activism. The internet, social network services (SNSs) such as Facebook and MySpace, smart phones, iPods, Wi-Fi, digital cameras/videos, tablets, laptops, and other forms of new information technology are integral to “how people live in the world, how they engage with others, and how they articulate and make sense of experiences” (McCarthy &
Wright, 2004, as cited in Bruce & Bishop, 2008). Such media technology development has expanded the concept of literacy from print media alone to additionally include video/image-based media. Furthermore, the decreasing cost of new media technology has made media production easy and affordable to most people. As active users of this new technology, youth can readily create podcasts, video/radio pieces, and digital visual artwork, while disseminating them with ease through YouTube, SNSs and Twitter.

Goodman (2003) argued that media production, what he calls “critical literacy,” can particularly empower low-income youth to understand how media is manipulated to convey particular messages and how they can use electronic and print technologies themselves to document and publicly voice their ideas and concerns (p. 3). Furthermore, media production allows youth to present different perspectives and interpretations not seen in mainstream media, thereby creating a counter narrative to the portrayal of urban communities and people as apathetic and disengaged (Duncan-Andrade, 2006). Through conducting media projects, young people foster a critical understanding of social issues, improve their problem-solving and technology skills, gain self-confidence and social responsibility, create learning more meaningfully connected with their life experience, and increase social skills by partnering with adults as well as other young colleagues (Bruce & Lin, 2009; Hamilton & Flanagan, 2007; Ndlovu, 2008; Walter, 2008).

It is important to note that the process of creating media products is similar to that of conducting youth participatory research/YPAR (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008; Chavez & Soep, 2005; Duncan-Andrade, 2006; Flicker et al., 2008; Hamilton & Flanagan, 2007); young people raise a critical question, investigate the topic, create video/audio products based on their investigation, share the media product with others, and think critically about their practice.
Digital media technology is already deeply embedded in the way young people create and share knowledge with others, and in recognition of this phenomenon, Flicker et al. (2008) gave youth media production the label of e-participatory action research (e-PAR).

School reform is one of the issues most commonly tackled in youth media production, as it is in youth participatory research/YPAR and youth organizing. Despite the use of different forms of inquiry, action, and media tools, these three areas—youth organizing, youth participatory research/YPAR, and youth media production—are intertwined in the real world, and are all ways in which young people can make a difference in the world. Akom, Cammarota, and Ginwright (2008) discussed the importance of such an intersection between youth participatory research and critical media literacy, with links to critical race theory. Akom et al. viewed this overlap as particularly useful for youth of color, so that they could initiate critical inquiry about race and various forms of social oppression rooted in racism, while also challenging the traditional way of teaching and learning and highlighting the experiential knowledge.

**Discussion**

Several forms of community activism among minority young people—youth organizing, youth participatory research/YPAR, and youth media production—share common ground as collective movements for social change. They have been in the limelight recently because of their potential for youth development in the fields of education, social policy, and public health. I would like to discuss the four main themes found in the literature that are relevant to the issues of local civic citizenship: learning critical civic praxis, utilizing local strategies over global ideologies, achieving solidarity across differences, and effecting long-term civic influence.
Learning critical civic praxis. Youth activism—youth/community organizing, youth participatory research/YPAR, and youth media production—aims to challenge social injustices faced in everyday life, in areas such as school, public health, juvenile justice, and racial discrimination, which particularly affect historically marginalized people. Almost all of the literature introduced above reported that participation in community action helped youth link their everyday life experiences to broader socio-economic issues concerning social discrimination, economic poverty, and other forms of oppression. Freire’s critical pedagogy is espoused by many scholars in approaching this matter, especially in critical youth studies (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Romero, Cammarota, Domínguez, Valdez, Ramirez, & Hernandez, 2008; Torre & Fine, 2006). For instance, Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) referred to the critical consciousness and analytic skills that young people can obtain through critical civic praxis, specifically drawing upon Freire’s (2000) notion of praxis as a coalition of reflection and action for the purpose of transforming reality, to challenge the banking concept of education:

Only human beings are praxis—the praxis which, as the reflection and action which truly transform the reality, is the source of knowledge. It is as transforming and creative beings that humans, in their permanent relations with reality, produce not only material goods—tangible objects—but also social institutions, ideas, and concepts. Through their continuing praxis, men and women simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings. (p. 100-101)

Developing critical literacy (Goodman, 2003) and critical civic literacy (Duncan-Andrade, 2006) through youth media production is also understood in the context of learning critical civic praxis. The development of research skills, familiarity with social issues, and leadership skills is also listed as a significant educational gain (Delgado & Zhou, 2008). In essence, varied forms of community activism among minority young people primarily pursue
social change through collective action, concurrently providing a new educational space where youth develop critical civic skills and knowledge to become agents of social change.

The educational significance of minority youth activism, however, has not yet fully been considered in schools and school curricula. Although the school is not traditionally seen as a part of such activism, the potential still does exist. In Romero et al. (2008), a group of Latina/o students labeled “at risk” conducted YPAR in their social science class, in which they questioned the white European-oriented curriculum and created a new curriculum that was culturally relevant to their lives. The students reported that through this project they developed research skills and critical thinking ability, also excelling academically. This is a prime but rare example of how a school can respond to the needs of diverse groups of students, connect with the community, serve as a holistic learning space for students, and become a part of youth activism.

**Local strategies, global ideologies.** Young activists often realize that these issues—educational justice, juvenile justice, and public health—are not simply local issues but global ones. Pursuing the common global goal of defying any type of social oppression based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, etc., young activists develop different local strategies and engagement tools that suit their social contexts to address those global ideologies (Rios, 2003). These local strategies involve ways to create communal dialogues, interact with people, share information, educate the community, advertise successful work, and so on. Examples of local

16Concerning immigration issues, in Rios (2003), high school students around the Bay Area in California organized a group called “Olin” (meaning “movement” in Nahuatl, an indigenous language of Meso-America). They organized walkouts to protest the anti-immigrant and racist state initiatives Proposition 187 and 184 and clearly played a central role in building a strong coalition among minority youth against a racist, anti-immigrant, anti-youth, anti-poverty state. Olin cared not only about policy change (structural change), but also about participants accomplishing the equally important task of creating a new alternative ideology to dispute the prevailing prejudices regarding race, gender, immigrant status, etc. Participants employed “entangled” strategies, such as hip-hop music, in order to attract other youth and develop an alternative perspective connected to the everyday needs, desires, and politics of the community—“border thinking” (Mignolo, 2000) or “oppositional consciousness.” Participants were encouraged to defy the Euro-centric representation of race, prejudices of gender, and the imposed identity of criminality and irresponsibility, and to take on a leadership role in their community instead.
strategies include community research, media production, service-learning, community mapping, workshops, cultural performance, canvassing, rallies, etc.

In the previous chapter, I argued that the relational connectivity of local and global constitutes a critical feature of locality: locality should not be read as parochialism, being confined to a certain geographic area, but rather as having relational connectivity to the larger society, whether it be a larger region, a nation-state, or the global society. This being the case, the ways in which people connect with the larger society and communicate with other groups of people should be an essential part of local strategies for community activism. A few studies (Flores-Gonzalez, Rodríguez, & Rodríguez-Muñiz, 2006; Kwon, 2006; Rios, 2003) have shown that young activists understood that people in other parts of the world had similar struggles rooted in racism and economic injustice to the ones they were facing. Such consciousness can lead to a common ground on which these groups could build solidarity across differences.

**Solidarity across differences.** While every community has unique social and historical traits for which different local strategies are needed, activists need to share the lessons they learn and the local strategies they use in order to expand their information, support their networks, and enhance their social and political influence in a democratic society (Rios, 2003; Tully, 2008). In some studies (Flores-Gonzalez, Rodríguez, & Rodríguez-Muñiz, 2006; Kwon, 2006; Rios, 2003) young urban participants reported that encountering other minority people experiencing similar oppressions helped them to see the circumstances beyond their local boundaries, and understand and appreciate the magnitude of the social forces that create inequality in the larger society. In Kwon (2006), the young people in Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL) in the California Bay Area took the initiative to ask policy makers for more and better educational resources instead of the expansion of the youth criminal justice
system. As they organized rallies and protest actions for improving juvenile justice, participants not only experienced increased efficiency but also had the opportunity to collaborate with other ethnic groups and develop a pan-ethnic identity in resistance to youth criminalization based on social, political, and economic marginalization.

Flores-Gonzalez, et al. (2006) touched on this issue as it related to Latina/o youth organizing in the urban immigrant community. While the youth concentrated on local issues, particularly fighting gentrification in their community, they were also exposed to social problems beyond their community to the citywide, national, and international level—such as undocumented immigrant rights. Their personal experiences led them to relate to the other issues they encountered and support work toward social justice in other societies. In Rios (2003), young activists in Oakland expanded the meaning of “Xicana/o” to embrace “all those people who have origins in indigenous struggles,” not simply referring to a certain ethnic and racial group. They saw race as a “state of mind,” not as a biologically determined factor. This notion of race offered an important ground where the youth could empathize with people from around the world who have been experiencing marginalization and oppression. In a similar vein, Cervone’s (2002) report about youth activism in the California Bay Area, “Taking Democracy in Hand,” mentioned that youth participants were able to develop a coalition across many different youth groups, issues, strategies, and racial and ethnic boundaries.

A sense of collaboration and solidarity is one of the most essential democratic ideals in a pluralistic society. Yet, creating a collective consensus even within a group is not always easy. Kirshner (2009) maintains that two seemingly conflicting worldviews—atomism and collective agency—can co-exist in the realm of activism; the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. He sees the co-existence of the two different perspectives as evidence that youth can develop
awareness of different perspectives, understand realistic conflicts surrounding them, and negotiate for the construction of better ideological commitments while holding both perspectives.

**The long-term impact and ecology of civic learning.** Civic engagement experiences at young age are believed to help youth become more politically aware and engaged in their adulthood.

While few studies have examined the long-term impact of such experiences, Yates and Youniss’ (1998) longitudinal study found that respondents who participated in a year-long service program often found that their service-learning experiences had a lingering influence on their political identities and roles in society. Although this study concerned the impact of service-learning on civic learning, it does demonstrate that community engagement experience has long-term effects on civic-learning.

In Warren, Mira, and Nikundiwe (2008), young activists who had successfully organized campaigns later came back to their communities as adult community leaders. In Ginwright (2010a), youth who were involved in organizing displayed higher levels of commitment to future activism as adults than did students in a national sample. More than 90% of young people in the survey expressed a desire to stay involved in activism and remain committed to long-term social change efforts. Ginwright ultimately viewed youth organizing as a leadership pipeline for social justice in an ecological sense. Both Warren et al. (2008) and Ginwright (2008) showed that youth activism could extend into community activism in the long term.

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17 The service-learning program was designed to increase students’ social justice awareness at a Catholic High School. The participants in this program were 95% Black.
18 In Warren, Mira, and Nikundiwe (2008), after several years of hard work and dedication to their cause, the young people won the campaign. Encouraged by their victory, those same youth shifted gears to organize campaigns against sexual harassment, especially targeting the Boston Public School system, trying to reform the civics curriculum. These movements have brought about gradual changes in their environments, contributed to the development of youth democratic capacity, and even challenged adult prejudices of these urban minority young people.
The youth-adult partnership is important to the long-term civic learning impact regarding sustained leadership in youth activism. While solely youth-led activism is very rare (Checkoway & Gutiérrez, 2006), there is a broad spectrum of youth-adult partnerships in youth organizing, ranging from more youth-led to more adult-led. Particularly, Kirshner (2006) approaches this issue from the perspective of apprenticeship learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Apprenticeship learning means an informal and ordinary way of teaching and learning between adults and youth. In order to articulate the stages of apprenticeship learning, Kirshner devised the idea of “cycles of modeling,” consisting of modeling, coaching, and fading away. In the cycle, youth first model adult perspectives and practices; then adult leaders coach and give feedback on the practice of the youth; and finally, adult leaders gradually fade away from participation in order for youth to take initiative and make the main decisions of the group. This process leads youth to gradually transform from a “novice” into an activist.

Whereas Kirshner’s cycle of modeling articulates the natural transmission process of leadership from adults to youth, the idea of “pedagogy of collegiality” in Chavez and Soep (2005) puts greater emphasis on mutuality and joint production between youth and adults. Chavez and Soep described this in detail: “Within collegial pedagogy, relationships are distinctly reciprocal and interdependent, in obvious contrast to models based in traditional formats of transmission and acquisition” (p. 420).

It is important to note that respect, trust, and interdependence between youth and adults are key to sustaining the leadership pipeline, because they produce mutually meaningful experiences, which in turn can impact youth and encourage long-term civic commitment. In spite of the importance of this topic, however, few studies have been undertaken examining the long-term impact of civic engagement as youths become adults. Qualitative longitudinal studies about
how or whether youth activism develops into more advanced community activism, and what
efforts are being made to sustain the leadership pipeline would present important insights
towards enriching the discourse of civic learning in the community.

Chapter Summary

Community activism among minority young people is taking place in various forms,
including organizing, conducting research, and creating media products, all of which serve to
raise a voice on social issues, such as educational justice, racism, and poverty, that directly affect
the lives of youth. In the section above, I discussed four significant issues of community activism
among minority young people with regards to civic learning: learning critical civic praxis,
utilizing local strategies over global ideologies, building solidarity across differences, and
bringing about long-term impact through civic learning. The literature provides strong evidence
that engaging in activism has helped youth to cultivate leadership skills, critical consciousness,
social analytical skills, tolerance, and a capacity to collaborate. It has been shown that youth
situated in a particular context can develop different local strategies and engagement tools that
best address their social contexts, with a consciousness of relational connectivity and of
solidarity across differences. This movement is an explicit endeavor for marginalized people to
challenge social oppression and injustice from the ground up. This type of engagement could
serve as informal, situated, engaged, and meaningful civic learning experiences among youth,
which could lead them to be civic leaders for the next generation.

In Chapter 2, I proposed a new theoretical understanding of local civic citizenship
revolving around three themes: locality, multiple counter publics, and citizenship as praxis.
Assorted features of community activism among minority young people discussed in this section
fit well into these themes. In the language of local civic practice, community activism among
minority young people creates contextualized civic practices, or a particular way of being, in a
specific setting to challenge a pre-given common good for one single public at the collective
level. This trait is connected with the themes of multiple counter publics, praxis-based
citizenship, and the different natures of locality conjoined with the social contexts.

Regarding this dissertation research, Kahne and Sporte (2009) is of particular interest.
Kahne and Sporte (2008) conducted a large-scale quantitative study about the impact of civic
learning opportunities on students’ civic outcome, focusing predominantly on low-income
students and students of color in high schools in the Chicago Public School system. The results
of the study showed that the schools’ civic education worked: high school students who
experienced civic learning opportunities showed a significant improvement in their commitment
to civic participation. Out of many civic opportunities, classroom civic learning opportunities
and service-learning had the most sizable and substantial impact on students’ commitment to
civic participation. For the purposes of my research, the more interesting finding was the
statistically significant and substantial impacts that came from neighborhood contexts. Students
were more likely to express higher levels of commitment to civic participation when they
witnessed examples of neighbors dealing with community problems. This finding illustrates the
need for further research into the influence of the community context on youth civic
commitment. This study grew out of concern about the disconnection between the community
context and civic education, and it explores the significance of community activism among
minority young people to citizenship education. I believe that more research in this vein would
contribute to better a better appreciation of its value on civic learning.
Research Questions

This research project studied one community organizing group that fought against gentrification in the city of Chicago, the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign (HPNSV), specifically exploring the local civic citizenship constructed around HPNSV. The main research question of this study was: What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed in the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign? The main issues of community activism among minority young people drawn from the discussion section above—learning critical civic praxis, utilizing local strategies over global ideologies, building solidarity across differences, and impacting civic learning over time—provided an important foundation on which the sub-research questions were developed to substantiate the main research question.

First, given HPNSV’s cause, it was important to be familiar with the multiple understandings that existed among the adult leaders on the issue of gentrification, so examining each was a worthwhile study topic.

Second, it was worthwhile to examine how the adult activists interacted with and involved the youth participants in their activities. Having started as a part of Barrio Urbano, a youth organizing group, HPNSV was interested in developing an effective way to involve youth in their community works. This issue would provide a glimpse of the long-term phenomenon of youth activism developing into a higher level of community activism.

Third, I examined the engagement tools and strategies used to fulfill the purpose of HPNSV—developing educational resources on gentrification and engaging the community residents in dialogue about long-term community building. This included a range of ways in which HPNSV activists communicated with and educated community people, while forming
collaborations with other groups of people inside and outside the community. Understanding these local strategies is key to contextualized civic practice—namely, local civic citizenship.

Fourth, to continue investigating the above topics, I also looked into the tensions participants felt between being members of Paseo Boricua and being members of the larger society while involved in HPNSV. Local civic citizenship entails a tension between the local community and larger society; I saw Paseo Boricua facing such a tension, especially given that Paseo Boricua, as the name implies, was well known for its strong Puerto Rican cultural heritage and vibrant community activism to protect the community from many adverse impacts, particularly gentrification. How the HPNSV activists would navigate the relationship between the community and the larger society was worthwhile to study. This issue concerned the participants’ sense of locality as well as the unique and situated nature of the civic practices they constructed around HPNSV. Table 2 below summarizes the questions.
Table 2

**Research Question**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understandings on gentrification among adult leaders</td>
<td>What multiple understandings exist on the issue of gentrification among adult leaders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Young participants’ experiences &amp; relationship with adult leaders</td>
<td>What, if any, is the gap between the adult leaders’ expectations for the young participants and the young participants’ actual learning experiences in this campaign?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing local strategies/tools</td>
<td>What tools/strategies are being used to educate the community about gentrification?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tension between being a member of PB and being a citizen in the larger societies</td>
<td>What, if any, is the tension between being a member of <em>Paseo Boricua</em> and being a citizen of the larger society?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. I had originally generated three more sub-research questions in the category of developing local strategies and tools: (3-2) What perspectives are projected regarding the educational resources?; (3-3) What conflicts exist between developing local strategies/tools and having limited resources? and What issue gets top priority in this campaign?; and (3-4) What is the boundary of collaboration with other organizations within and outside the community? and How do race, ethnicity, and class intersect with this boundary? I thought these issues were important in understanding HPNSV’s local strategies and tools, but as the data collection proceeded, I found it nearly impossible to handle all these issues because of limited time and resources. I still tried to indirectly address the sub-question: What tools/strategies are being used to educate the community people about gentrification? The three unanswered sub-questions will be saved for further studies.*
Chapter 4

Methodology

I conducted a qualitative case study (Stake, 1988, 1994, 1995) to answer the research question. The case can be an individual, a program, an organization, or a group, and it is a “bounded system,” having some of the unity or totality of a system with boundaries. No one can give a complete account of such a case. The researcher can choose a story about the unity and totality of the bounded system, and its boundaries are demarcated by his or her research issues and questions. The purpose of case study is to address the particularity and complexity of the bounded system, reaching an understanding of what transpired in the case.

The important epistemological question in a case study is: “What can be learned from a single case?” Both what is common and what is particular about the case can be determined, but in the end, the latter—something unique—goes under the spotlight (Stake, 1994). Many social scientists criticize case studies for their poor capacity for generalization, and it is true that some cases are so unique that their findings may not be generalized to other cases. However, even a unique case can in fact help us to understand the more typical cases (p. 261), as the uniqueness of the case inevitably leads people to compare it to other cases. The case study seeks naturalistic generalization, a way of creating knowledge that differs from scientific generalization, which employs experimentation, induction, and hypothesis testing. Stake (1995) said:

Naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as it happened to themselves. It is not clear that generalizations arrived at in two quite different ways are kept apart in any way in the mind. (p. 85)

Naturalistic generalization uses experiential language in order to minimize any distortion or diminishment of meaning that may occur during the translation from experiential language to formal language (p. 86). This provides readers opportunities for vicarious experiences and assists
them in making naturalistic generalizations, which are embedded in the experience the readers bring to their reading of the cases. Such background experience affects the way readers come to conclusions; some readers who are more familiar with the case than the researchers are can add their own parts of the story to reach their naturalistic generalizations.

For this dissertation research, I conducted a case study and tried to provide vicarious experiences for the reader through close observation. Some readers may be more familiar with gentrification than I am; some may have personal experience with it. Some readers who are Puerto Rican may have a better understanding of the complicated nature of the Puerto Rican identity than I do. Thus, different readers may agree or disagree with the assertions that I make at the end, because they may construct different generalizations. Such differences are part of naturalistic generalization. Despite such possible dissonance, I believe that this case study will provide important insights that could carry over to other cases involving significant issues of contextualized citizenship practice.

The “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” (HPNSV) Campaign was the case of this study. As a case, HPNSV (an entity) was a social reaction (community organizing extended from youth organizing) to a social phenomenon (gentrification) in a particular political, cultural, and social context (a Puerto Rican diasporic community in an urban setting, with a legacy of Puerto Rican nationalism and a tradition of strong community activism, physically close to an downtown area under redevelopment). Even the term gentrification itself revealed a critical issue over naming a social phenomenon: one group called it redevelopment while others called it gentrification. That HPNSV perceived the phenomenon as “gentrification” already disclosed their disposition to it.

In my research, I bounded the case with the research questions concerning local civic citizenship, as discussed in the previous chapters. The four sub research questions—the
understanding of gentrification among HPNSV activists, the ways local youth got involved in HPNSV, HPNSV’s strategies and tools for engaging community people, and the tension between being a member of *Paseo Boricua* and being a member of the larger society—were devised to examine the main research question of the case, “What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed surrounding the ‘¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!’ Campaign on *Paseo Boricua*, Chicago?” In the end, both the uniqueness and the common-ness of this case would be instrumental in understanding other cases regarding issues of citizenship in minority young people’s community activism. Figure 1 visualizes the case study of this research.

Figure 1

*The Case Study of the ‘¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!’ Campaign*

**Data Collection**

I collected most data from late January 2010 to June 2010. In the first month, I visited the field during weekends or days when my study community held various events. For the next two
months, I stayed in the PRCC hostel almost half of the time, and for the last month, I actually moved into an apartment of a friend, sharing the community experience daily. Three main resources constitute the data for this research: observation, interviews, and artifacts such as flyers, local newspapers (La Opinión), and other public, multi-media/web resources.

Participants. I originally recruited 10 focal adult participants and seven youth participants. However, four or five of the adult participants were not available during the data collection period. Adult participants were recruited mostly from HPNSV. Youth participants were recruited from an afterschool program, Institute of Culture, Leadership, Art, and Communication (ICLAC). Luis, one of the focal participants, was a coordinator in both HPNSV and ICLAC. Luis, Juana, Quinn, and Karla were the main activists in HPNSV. They were all in their mid-to-late 20s. Luis, Juana, and Karla were Puerto Rican and had become involved in HPNSV through Barrio’s cultural activism about 6 or 7 years ago. Quinn was a Mexican-American and was a relatively new member of HPNSV. He was introduced to Luis and Juana through me and later joined HPNSV.

Richard, a Puerto Rican, was one of the co-founders of Barrio Urbano and also a founder of HPNSV. During the highest period of data collection, he was away from his workplace in his school and was not as actively involved in HPNSV as usual. Elias is a Puerto Rican and an executive director of the Center for Puerto Rican Culture sponsoring HPNSV. Though not directly involved in HPNSV, he had been influential to the young activists in HPNSV, as well as the whole community. Table 3 below displays basic profiles of the adult participants.

As for youth participants, Chapter 11: What Youth Thought, will provide more details about the youth. Understanding adult participants’ community engagement needs to be viewed as a prior condition to understanding the youth’s perspectives.
### Table 3

**Basic Profiles of the Main Adult Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Beginning of HPNSV</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Residency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Mid 20s</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Youth organizing at <em>Barrio</em></td>
<td>College student Community Journalist (<em>La Opinión</em>)</td>
<td>In the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juana</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>Late 20s</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Youth organizing at <em>Barrio</em></td>
<td>A registrar at the Rivera High school&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>In the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>Mid 20s</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>GSLIS</td>
<td>Graduate student Librarian</td>
<td>In the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>Mid 20s</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Youth organizing at <em>Barrio</em></td>
<td>Emergency Room nurse</td>
<td>Outside the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>Late 20s</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>His college group (Luis)</td>
<td>Graduate student Marine veteran</td>
<td>Neighboring community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>Early 30s</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Co-founder of <em>Barrio/HPNSV</em></td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Outside the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustavo</td>
<td>Mexican Neighborhood</td>
<td>Early 50s</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>The PRCC staff</td>
<td>The PRCC staff</td>
<td>In the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Late 60s</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>The director of the PRCC</td>
<td>The PRCC staff</td>
<td>In the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. HP= Huntington Park, PR= Puerto Rico/Puerto Rican.*

<sup>a</sup>An affiliate of the PRCC, an alternative high school for Puerto Rican and Latino (a) youth.

<sup>b</sup>Having an immediate gentrification experience.

**Observations.** This research is interested in examining more than how people perceived things but in how they actually brought those ideas into action. Observations, in this sense, were very important data to the understanding of this issue. HPNSV’s Ranged community involvement. HPNSV got involved in wide ranged community issues, besides issues of anti-gentrification. I observed HPNSV’s collectives' meetings, electoral campaign works, cultural events, a canvassing activity, and the Institute of Culture, Leadership, Art, and Communication...
(ICLAC) Program. This wide range of community involvement in itself demonstrates the very significant nature of HPNSV.

**HPNSV.** Table 4 displays the major events that HPNSV was involved with during the data collection period. More details about each event will be provided in Chapter 5: 'What Went On'. Domains in the last column to the right including political, anti-gentrification, educational, and social-cultural, were created for an analytic purpose used later part of the study, and the rationale for its creation will be mentioned in the data analysis section.

Table 4

**Observations: Events and Activities HPNSV Became Involved With**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events and activities</th>
<th>Domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January, 2010</td>
<td>Primary election campaign work</td>
<td>Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 2010</td>
<td>Primary election campaign work (Feb. 7, 2010)</td>
<td>Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture event, “Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America”</td>
<td>Anti-gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HPNSV collective meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2010</td>
<td>HPNSV collective meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICLAC-PD classes (Luis)</td>
<td>Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The “30 Years Behind the Bar” event</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Barrio Urbano</em> events</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April, 2010</td>
<td>The culminating event of “30 Years Behind the Bar”</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Door-knocking workshop for college students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participating in diabetes campaign/ <em>La Opinión</em> survey</td>
<td>Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zapatista housing canvassing</td>
<td>Anti-Gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICLAC PD classes</td>
<td>Educational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events and activities</th>
<th>Domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May, 2010</td>
<td>Saint Paul students’ community tour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HPNSV class at the high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 2010</td>
<td>ICLAC</td>
<td>Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community festivals</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community as Intellectual symposium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>Barrio Urbano</em> cultural events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, 2010</td>
<td>“Return of Marcos Castell”</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 2010</td>
<td><em>Fiesta Boricua</em></td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through observations, I tried to see what activities and events HPNSV got involved in and why; how HPNSV communicated with community people; what strategies/tools they used for this communication; how they collaborated with other groups of people within/outside of *Paseo Boricua*; how young people are involved in this campaign and how they interact with leaders; and what activities are they participating in, and so on. I noticed how their interview answers aligned with their practices.

*ICLAC*. Institute of Culture, Leadership, Art, and Communication (ICLAC) was a high school afterschool program, an affiliate of the PRCC. ICLAC, particularly the Participatory Democracy (PD) Classes on Mondays in ICLAC, turned out be an intriguing mini-case to show
youth involvement in HPNSV (Sub-research question 2). Not until the first interview with Luis (March 7, 2010), however, had I realized the connection between ICLAC and HPNSV. In that interview, he first mentioned the ICLAC program where he was teaching the Participatory Democracy class on Mondays. As a coordinator of ICLAC, as well as of HPNSV, Luis said that ICLAC program was aiming at helping youth to: challenge deficit views present in the dominant society and therefore in their community; see the positive aspects or assets of their community; and become actively engaged in community events, including those of HPNSV’s. Thinking that the ICLAC program, particularly the Participatory Democracy (PD) classes, would show youth involvement, whether directly or indirectly, in HPNSV, I began observing the ICLAC program on March 8, 2010. A mini-case of ICLAC became an important axis of this research in terms of a form of intergenerational civic learning.

During the time of data collection, the ICLAC program was devoted to an anti-underage drinking campaign in the form of community-based participatory research. I put a primary focus on the PD class, and the four media classes were minimally involved in this research, introduced only when needed. More details of this part of the data will be provided in Chapter 8: Educational Involvement.

**Interviews.** I conducted interviews with each adult participant one to four times and each youth participant one or two times. As for the adult participants, the original plan had been to conduct four sets of interviews. However, the disparate degrees of involvement to the group or their busy schedules affected the interview frequencies.

**Adult participants.** I had set up semi-structured interview questions about (a) personal experiences with the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign; (b) ideas about

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19More detailed investigation of ICLAC’s underage drinking campaign was reported in a separate paper (Nam & Bishop, 2011).
gentrification; (c) local strategies/tools, collaboration with others within and outside the community; (d) understanding of how they perceived democracy worked in their daily lives; and (e) tension between being members of *Paseo Boricua* and being a members of a larger society.

The first interviews asked questions about personal experiences with the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign, such as motives for becoming engaged in, as well as their understanding of HPNSV’s purposes and the issue of gentrification. Yet, the interviews after the second round varied across the participants, because of the different levels of involvement within the group and possibly, other differences. Active participants had more issues to talk about regarding the community events or works that they recently were involved with. I had three to four interviews with Luis, Juana, and Quinn, who all lived in the community and seemed overall, more active in their participation in HPSNV than the others. Relating to the semi-structured interview questions, I asked questions about other issues; the Puerto Rican identity, youth involvement in HPNSV, and recent community events. With some participants, it became impossible to complete the additional interviews due to their work schedules. One-time interviews with Elias and Richard respectively, provided important philosophical and historical background information about HPBSV. Although both were not immediately involved in HPNSV, they were significant figures in the community- Elias was an executive director of the PRCC for decades, and Richard was one of the newer, young leaders. Adult participant interviews schedules are listed in Table 5.
Table 5

*Interviews with Adult Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juana</td>
<td>HPNSV collective</td>
<td>2/20/10</td>
<td>3/27/10</td>
<td>5/8/10</td>
<td>5/15/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>HPNSV collective</td>
<td>3/7/10</td>
<td>4/4/10</td>
<td>5/23/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>HPNSV collective</td>
<td>1/26/10</td>
<td>2/28/10</td>
<td>5/2/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>HPNSV collective</td>
<td>3/9/10</td>
<td>5/10/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>HPNSV collective</td>
<td>3/27/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Founder of HPNSV/Barrio</td>
<td>6/5/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>Executive Director of</td>
<td>3/14/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the PRCC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Brown</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
<td>02/05/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>The PRCC Librarian</td>
<td>Informal conversation 05/03/10</td>
<td>Informal conversation 09/05/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the interviews, I had casual, informal conversations with the focal participants in various situations (before, during, after meetings, or during community events or activities, etc.). These casual conversations often provided as useful a source of information as the interviews. Informal conversations were included as data, only with the participants’ permission. Interviews were conducted at the participants’ place of choice, the new PRCC building, café, and the hostel, and were audio-recorded and transcribed using pseudonyms. Interview protocol and observation protocol are in the appendix at the end of this paper.

*Youth participants.* I did one or two interviews with ICLAC youth participants. The interview questions included the youths' thoughts about gentrification, HPNSV, the activities

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20I gave a reminder to the focal participant whenever such a thing happens during data collection by asking, “Could I use what you are saying now about [a certain thing] as data?”
they were involved in through the PD classes and their perceptions about participatory
democracy. Chapter 11: What the Youth Thought is devoted to dealing with these issues, and
provide more details about the interviews and participants. This is needed because it is
necessary to first understand what really went on around HPNSV, in order to better understand
the findings of the youth interviews.

**Artifacts.**

*The local newspaper.* *La Opinión*, the local newspaper that HPNSV issued, was the most
important artifact, as the main participants counted *La Opinión* as the most critical educational
tool for community residents. When it was first published in 2004, *La Opinión* was just a two-
sided flyer, but it had about 20 pages in around 2010. *La Opinión* was published monthly in print
and web versions (http://lavoz-prcc.org). 10,000 copies were printed out at one time and door-
to-door distribution was the major routine in HPNSV. Luis was one of the main contributors and
his articles became significant resources to understand his thoughts. I interviewed him only three
times, which might not seem enough, compared to his deep involvement in HPNSV and ICLAC,
but I obtained a lot of helpful information from the articles he wrote in *La Opinión* and other
online magazines such as Gozamos (http://gozamos.com).

**Web resources.** There were several webpages used as data resources—The PRCC
Participatory Democracy Project (www.prcc-chgo.org/pdemocracy), its Facebook page
(www.facebook.com/Huntingtonparknot4sale), its YouTube page
(www.youtube.com/user/Huntingtonpark), the PRCC page (www.prcc-chgo.org), the *La
Opinión* page (lavoz-prcc.org), and Gozamos (gozamos.com).

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21Gozamos introduces itself as “A modern online magazine and community for young Latinos in Chicago and others
passionate about their cultural heritage.”
An important note is that Facebook was the most useful tool for collecting artifacts and getting new information about HPNSV in this research. I became a Facebook friend with most of the adult participants. HPNSV made good use of Facebook for advertising community events, recruiting volunteers, and sharing information. Participants shared the links to online newspaper articles, magazine articles, video clips, or breaking news, etc. The status bar also came to be a helpful indicator in showing how participants thought about certain issues. I only included Facebook sources relating to HPNSV in respect of participants’ privacy.

*Other materials.* Flyers, press releases, papers, presentation materials, magazines, youth reflection notes that were planned to use for the new ICLAC book, and a poetry book (Renacimiento) that *Barrio* activists created were also included as data. Email messages from HPNSV were counted as important data.

**Data Analysis**

I began the data analysis by organizing interview transcriptions and observation notes with use of an Excel data spread sheets. As organizing data progressed, the additional smaller themes emerged such as Puerto Rican identity, the language of colonialism, prejudices over HPNSV, transnationality, in-person contacts, cynicisms, racism/white privilege, collaborating with others, and so on.²² The most difficult issue in analyzing the data was the handling of the wide range of HPNSV’s community involvement. One of the most important findings was “HPNSV was not just about anti-gentrification but about building a different set of politics in the local community” (Luis and Richard). Like this statement says, HPNSV got involved in various

²²Before the data collection, I had set up prespecified codings—Collective movement for social change, Developing local strategies and global ideologies, Solidarity across the difference, and Learning critical civic praxis. But some of them were too big to present details oftentimes and I thus developed those small themes.
community issues and events, not to mention specific anti-gentrification work; I hence designed the data analysis to show how the statement was actualized in the real world.

After struggling with the almost unwieldy data, I created the four domains to analyze HPNSV’s community involvement for an analytic purpose listed in Table 6: Political, Educational, Cultural, and Anti-gentrification.

Table 6

*Data Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HPNSV’s community involvement</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Educational (youth focused)</th>
<th>Cultural—Social</th>
<th>Anti-gentrification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic purposes</td>
<td>Expanding influence into the electoral political realm</td>
<td>Producing leaders for the next generation</td>
<td>A process of an identification</td>
<td>Specific efforts for anti-gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main themes</td>
<td>The “one foot in and one foot out”</td>
<td>Civic Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Reassuring the Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Collaborating with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racism-prejudices over HPNSV</td>
<td>Knowing about the community</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Building a relationship with community residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building a relationship with community residents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trans-nationality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local communication strategies</td>
<td>HPNSV Name (Name in itself is educative)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inter-generational interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La Opinión (Distribution online and offline)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News about local politics</td>
<td>News about ICLAC, Rivera High school, and other opportunities for youth</td>
<td>News about community festivals, cultural events, new PRAM exhibitions, Puerto Rican artists</td>
<td>Housing Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>News about HPNSV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
These four domains target HPNSV’s different strategic purposes and local strategies that eventually gave rise to the long-term community building, as well as the halting of gentrification. The first domain in the table, political involvement, was undertaken in an effort to increase HPNSV’s influence on elected officials. HPNSV activists view electoral participation as necessary to make a real change in the system, even though vestiges of an old legacy still exist in community members' refusals to take part in the U.S. political system. The second domain in the table, educational involvement, was intended to produce new leaders for the next generation who could understand the issues HPNSV dealt with and carry on the task of preserving the community. The Participatory Democracy class in the ICLAC was a main venue for this purpose. The third domain, cultural-social involvement, encompassed a variety of activities not immediately related to gentrification, such as participating in community festivals and cultural events (e.g., “30 Years Behind the Bar”). I see HPNSV’s cultural-social involvement as a part of a larger identification process (Rose, 2000). The fourth domain, anti-gentrification involvement, was the domain in which the most specific effort to produce a particular tangible solution to this issue was made. Because these domains were created for analytic purposes, it was important that they be intertwined with one another.
Each domain revealed the smaller themes mentioned above—Puerto Rican identity, the language of colonialism, prejudices over HPNSV, transnationality, in-person contacts, cynicisms, racism/white privilege, critical civic apprenticeship, collaborating with others, and so on. Some of them are listed in Table 6, which prefigures Chapter 7 (HPNSV’s Political Involvement), Chapter 8 (HPNSV’s Educational Involvement), Chapter 9 (HPNSV’s Cultural-Social Involvement), and Chapter 10 (HPNSV’s Anti-Gentrification Works). Table 7 briefly presents what data resources were used to answer which research questions, and how data source triangulation was made to increase validity of the assertions I made in this dissertation research. Most data presentation for the next four chapters, however, follows the structure of Table 6.

Table 7

Data Configuration by Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Data Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understandings on gentrification among adult leaders</td>
<td>1. What multiple understandings are over the gentrification issue among adult leaders?</td>
<td>Interviews with Juana/Quinn/Luis/Karla/Richard/Elias/Jason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Young participants experience &amp; Adult leaders—young participants relationship</td>
<td>2-1. What, if any, is the gap between the adult leaders’ expectations for the young participants and the young participants’ actual learning experiences in this campaign?</td>
<td>Interviews with Juana/Luis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with youth participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing local strategies/tools</td>
<td>3-1. What tools/strategies are being used to educate the community people about gentrification?</td>
<td>Interviews with Juan/Luis/Karla/Jason/Quinn/Richard/Gustavo/Elias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HPNSV’s Domain involvement: Educational Cultural-social Anti-gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Opinión’s article written by ICLAC youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gozamos articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weppages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 7 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Data Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Tension between being a member of PB and being a citizen in the larger societies</td>
<td>4. What, if any, is the tension between being a member of <em>Paseo Boricua</em> and being a citizen of the larger society?</td>
<td>Interview: Interviews with Juana/Quinn/ Luis/Richard/Elias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Main question: What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed in the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign?

**Connecting Practice to the Theoretical Framework**

The main research question is, “What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed surrounding the ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign in *Paseo Boricua*?” Chapter 12

**Discussion:** Where is Local Civic Citizenship? is devoted to connect the above data analysis to the initial theoretical framework in order to answer the research question.

**Researcher’s Position**

I conducted this study as a participant observer, sometimes helping out HPNSV works (such as passing around *La Opinión* or providing a ride) while collecting data. In the first month, I visited the field during weekends or days when my study community held various events. For the next two months, I stayed in the PRCC hostel almost half of the time, and for the last month, I moved into an apartment of a friend whom I met there, sharing the community experience daily, and hanging out with new friends.

When I first met Luis, the coordinator of HPNSV (at that time, I did not know that he was also a coordinator of ICLAC) to talk about my research, he asked, “What do we get out of participating in your study?” He talked about unpleasant experiences with some researchers who
approached them, did their studies, and left without telling them anything about their research findings. This is a common ethical issue—breaking, entering, and leaving a community of strangers—that takes place in many community-based research settings (Himley, 2004).

ICLAC’s coordinator said that he did not want to have that type of experience again. He and other people in ICLAC wanted me to share data resources, drafts, and reflection notes with them in order to help them reflect on their actions and improve their practice. Basically, they did not want to be just an object but a partner in my research, as it affected their ability to address their own needs and issues. I saw this procedure could be a good way for member-checking to secure high validity and also for participant-focused reflexivity (Riach, 2009). Participants can not only reflect on their practice but also raise important issues about the research agenda, interpretations, or the researcher’s standpoint. This procedure could promote dialogue between the researcher and participants and contribute to a co-construction of knowledge along with increased validity. Concurrently, the aforementioned ethical dilemma that qualitative researchers often face can be to some extend ameliorated through those dialogues.

Respecting this perspective, during my fieldwork I tried to set my role as learning from the community’s knowledge and practices, rather than just picking up the narratives and data that fit only my research questions. Community participants understood my intentions and accepted my partnership in their work. Preparing the ICLAC culminating event in early June, the ICLAC youth included my photos in their presentation along with their own, saying “Why not? Chaebong, you’re a part of us.” It was an exciting moment that I could assure my inclusion in the group. I, however, could not receive feedback on the draft from the participants, supposedly because they were too busy to read this long dissertation.
Chapter 5

What Went on: A Chronological View of HPNSV’s Community Involvement

During the period of data collection, HPNSV was involved in a range of events and activities in addition to anti-gentrification work. Table 8 below briefly summarizes the major events and projects that HPNSV was directly or indirectly involved in.

Table 8

Events and Activities HPNSV Became Involved With (Table 4 Duplicated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events and activities</th>
<th>Domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January, 2010</td>
<td>Primary election campaign work</td>
<td>Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 2010</td>
<td>Primary election campaign work (Feb. 7, 2010)</td>
<td>Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture event, “Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America”</td>
<td>Anti-gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HPNSV collective meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2010</td>
<td>HPNSV collective meeting</td>
<td>Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICLAC-PD classes (Luis)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The “30 Years Behind the Bar” event</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Barrio Urbano</em> events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April, 2010</td>
<td>The culminating event of “30 Years Behind the Bar”</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Door-knocking workshop for college students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participating in diabetes campaign/<em>La Opinión</em> survey</td>
<td>Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zapatista housing canvassing</td>
<td>Anti-Gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Saint Paul students’ community tour</td>
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<td>HPNSV class at the high school</td>
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Table 8 (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>May, 2010</td>
<td>ICLAC class</td>
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<td>Saint Paul students’ involvement</td>
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<td>Lecture event, “Puerto Rico’s Strike: Charla sobre La Huelga Estudiantil en Puerto Rico” (Talk about the student strike in Puerto Rico)</td>
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<td>Barrio Urbano cultural events</td>
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<td>La Opinión distribution</td>
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<td>June, 2010</td>
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<td>July, 2010</td>
<td>“Return of Marcos Castell”</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
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<td>September, 2010</td>
<td>Fiesta Boricua</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
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The categories displayed in the third column—political, educational, cultural, and anti-gentrification—were devised to analyze the nature of HPNSV’s community work. Chapters 7 through 10 examine each category in turn, but HPNSV’s community work should always be understood in a holistic way; the HPNSV activists did not use such discrete categories to classify their community work. This chapter provides a brief natural narrative of what went on in the field during the time of data collection, in chronological order, which will help create a holistic backdrop for the individual discussions of each of the four categories.

At the beginning of the data collection in late January 2010, a primary election was imminent in the community. HPNSV supported 12 Democratic candidates who were running for the offices of governor, senator, representative, commissioner, county assessor, and committeeman; the PRCC, HPNSV’s umbrella organization, had decided which candidates they supported. Quinn told me that the PRCC—particularly Elias, the director of the PRCC—saw the
election as critical, because the results would indicate the extent of the community’s acknowledgement of the work the PRCC had been doing for the residents of the community.

If the candidates that HPNSV and the PRCC endorsed won the election, it would mean that the PRCC’s long-time commitment to the community was still well recognized by many people of the community. The twelve candidates’ photos, names, and punch number information were printed on the last page of the January 2010 issue of La Opinión under the title “Papeleta ‘El Eco del Pueblo’” (“Ballot, ‘The eco-town’”). HPNSV campaigned for the candidates that they endorsed, posting signs on the main street and encouraging people to vote for them on election day.

The primary electoral campaign became a rather rough and dirty game, revealing racial prejudices surrounding HPNSV, including a false accusation—allegedly from the opposition party—claiming that HPNSV was an “anti-white yuppie” group. Most adult participants had been reluctant to involve themselves in such thorny electoral campaign work but they did realize the necessity of doing campaign work to push electoral politicians to make specific efforts to stop gentrification at the policy level. On February 7, 2010, the results of the primary election turned out in favor of HPNSV and the PRCC. Ten out of the twelve candidates that HPNSV and the PRCC had supported won the primary election, much to their relief. A detailed discussion is included in Chapter 7 (Political Involvement).

In the meantime, Luis organized a lecture event, “Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America,” on February 2, 2010. As I would later learn, Luis was quick at organizing and advertising events. The speaker gave a talk about her recently published book on the racial and economic shifts that had taken place in Garden Hill, Chicago during the 1950s, when it changed from all white to all black. The speaker said the true cause of Garden Hill
becoming “ghettoized” was not black pathology or the culture of poverty but a widespread and institutionalized system of legal and financial exploitation. She said such a system had also hit Huntington Park, resulting in gentrification. This was a good chance to view the issue of gentrification from a larger historical and societal perspective across communities. This lecture event took place at Barrio, and over forty people from outside and inside the community participated (most of whom were active in the PRCC). Further discussion on this is included in Chapter 11 (Anti-Gentrification Work: Developing Collaboration with Others Based on Shared Experiences).

After a couple of long weeks of electoral campaign work, in late February, the HPNSV resumed their monthly collective meeting. At this meeting, the HPNSV activists reflected on their electoral campaign work and the next step for the group. On the one hand, the activists were relieved that their candidates had won the election, but on the other hand, they were disillusioned by sordid nature of the electoral work.

While the HPNSV collective meeting was taking place in a small computer lab at the back of Barrio, a group of people from the Boricua Human Rights Association (BHRA), one of several affiliate organizations of the PRCC, were working on decorating the front radio studio of Barrio to look like a jail cell in order to prepare for the one-month-long community event called “30 Years behind the Bar.” One of the main missions of BHRA was to release the two Puerto Rican political activists who had been imprisoned for about 30 years. The “30 Years behind the Bar” event was part of this effort, as well as commemoration of their sacrifice for the independence of Puerto Rico. March marked the beginning of the thirty-day event, representing the 30 years in prison. Volunteers spent 24 hours each in the mock cell, where people could stop

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23The Boricua Human Rights Association (BHRA) manifested its purpose on their Facebook page as “educating and mobilizing the Puerto Rican community, the broader Latin American community and other people of conscience regarding issues of justice, peace and human rights.”
by and talk to the “prisoners.” Originally, 30 people were to be recruited, and 15 people volunteered.

In March, I also began conducting interviews with HPNSV activists, starting with Luis (March 7, 2010). During our first interview, I learned that Luis was the coordinator of the Institute of Culture, Leadership, Art, and Communication (ICLAC), an afterschool program sponsored by the PRCC. He was teaching a class called “Participatory Democracy” on Mondays. Luis said that the ICLAC program aimed to help youth get involved in community issues. Given that HPNSV was also known as the Participatory Democracy Project, the association between “Participatory Democracy Project” (for young adults) and the “Participatory Democracy” class (for youth) seemed relevant to my research about youth involvement in HPNSV. One week later, I began observing the Participatory Democracy class, and later four other classes at ICLAC: Radio, Journalism, Multimedia, and Theater. Because the four classes took place at the same time in different places, an equal level of observation for each class was not possible. The interconnection between HPNSV and ICLAC turned out to be one of the most important findings in this research, specifically with regards to sustaining community leadership. Chapter 8 (Educational Involvement: Generating New Leaders for the Next Generation) will focus on this in more detail.

Having begun the ICLAC observations in March, I adopted a daily routine. Each morning, I left my room at the PRCC hostel and went to the “new building,” where I worked in the library until 3:00 p.m., when ICLAC started. The “new building” was the annex building of the PRCC, but people referred to it simply as “the new building.” It was three stories tall and located two blocks away from Barrio. At the time of data collection, only the first floor was being used to house classrooms, a library, a computer lab, and a baby care room for Rivera High
School. While working at the library, I frequently bumped into and sometimes interacted with members of the PRCC, high school teachers, ICLAC students, and Mark, who was a GSLIS graduate student working at the library. The new building was a natural space for me to experience ordinary life in the community.

On April 3, 2010, there was a big community event—the culminating event of “30 Years Behind the Bar” at Barrio. Chapter 9 (Cultural-Social Involvement: A Process of Identification) analyzes this event in more detail, related to HPNSV’s cultural involvements with PRCC. Many people who were related to the PRCC, including HPNSV, came to the event, supported the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners, shared memories relating to them, and reaffirmed their Puerto Rican identity. This event was one of the most memorable cultural events during the time of data collection.

HPNSV activists—especially Luis, Juana, and Quinn who lived in the neighborhood and had a geographic advantage over other activists who lived farther away—often showed up at other cultural events at Barrio, such as the poetry and hip-hop night and the ICLAC students’ performances. The event size varied from less than 20 to more than 60 or 70 people, including those from other communities as well as Paseo Boricua. It is important to note that HPNSV’s roots traced back to Barrio’s cultural activism. “Without Barrio, we wouldn’t have been able to do all these things,” said Richard, the co-founder of both Barrio and HPNSV. Suffice it to say, the young community leadership at the time of this study grew out of Barrio’s cultural activism.

HPNSV organized several important community events directly targeted at anti-gentrification in April. The main activity was canvassing for signatures of community residents to support the construction of affordable public housing in Lincoln Square. Affordable public housing was considered one of the most realistic options for many community residents who
were facing displacement. This canvassing event was to be in collaboration with the Zapatista Housing Project of Lincoln Square. Lincoln Square was a community adjacent to Huntington Park where many Latino populations lived, including Puerto Ricans, and it was also facing the threat of gentrification. Four affordable public housing developments were planned to be constructed at Bradley Avenue, the imaginary boundary of Huntington Park and Lincoln Square. However, a group of community residents in Lincoln Square were opposed to the plan, for fear that the public affordable housing would cause a decrease in their property values, or “ghettoization” of their neighborhood. Yet, such fear and misunderstanding largely resulted from a lack of accurate information of public affordable housing. Many people who were against the presence of public affordable housing in the community often confused public affordable apartments with low-income apartments. There was a big difference between the two: whereas low-income apartments were for people who live below the poverty line, public affordable apartments were for working class people who have regular jobs and live above the poverty line. Accordingly, providing accurate information of the potential residents for the public affordable apartments and the strict selection process was very important to address these misunderstandings and have more public affordable apartments built in the community.

HPNSV thought that cross-community collaboration with the Zapatista Housing Project would in the long term help HPNSV’s work to preserve Paseo Boricua as well, and they willingly became a partner with the Zapatista Housing Project for this canvassing event in Lincoln Square. The collected signatures from canvassing would be used to push their elected politicians to pass a bill to permit the construction of the public affordable apartments as soon as possible. The canvassing event with Zapatista Housing Project was scheduled for April 24, 2010.
HPNSV, particularly Luis, organized two events beforehand to recruit volunteers for the canvassing event. The first event was a door-knocking workshop on April 10 for freshman students from a class at Saint. Paul University about Puerto Rico’s political, social, and cultural issues. The instructor of the class was an activist closely working with the PRCC, and she was taking her students on a community tour of Paseo Boricua as a part of the fieldwork. A week later, students came back to the community for the class, and HPNSV provided the students with a two-hour workshop to introduce the history of Huntington Park, consequences of gentrification in the community, HPNSV’s work, door-knocking strategy, and the upcoming canvassing event in Lincoln Square. After the workshop, HPNSV tried to recruit volunteers for the upcoming two canvassing events including the one with the Zapatista Housing Project.

On the following Saturday, April 17, HPNSV participated in a community event kicking off a new diabetes campaign, “67 block-by-block,” which had been initiated by another affiliate of the PRCC. HPNSV piggybacked on the canvassing and conducted a quick survey about the La Opinión newspaper, asking if people regularly received the newspaper and what content they looked for. Though the survey was small in scale, the result of the survey was very meaningful especially because it was the first survey HPNSV did about La Opinión.

On the following Saturday, April 24, 2010, HPNSV finally canvassed the Lincoln Square neighborhood to obtain signatures in support of affordable public housing, in collaboration with the Zapatista Housing Project. HPNSV activists worked hard to prepare for the event, recruiting volunteers, grouping teams, and making maps of the area to be canvassed. The event went well and they received 451 signatures, a number which HPNSV considered to be quite successful. Other similar anti-gentrification efforts from HPNSV are discussed in Chapter 11 (Anti-Gentrification Work: Developing Collaborations with Others Based on Shared Experiences).
In the meantime, Juana had planned to teach a class called “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende Campaign!” at Rivera High School for the new term. Although she was not a regular teacher, the principal, who was also a former Barrio/HPNSV activist, saw the potential positive influences on students from the class Juana had proposed. Juana was very excited about the plan, but the class was canceled at the last moment because of a mistake in the class name in the registration system. Her class was listed as “BUYA” in the registration system, which few students could understand, instead of “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende Campaign!” As a result, only two students registered for the class, and the class ended up being cancelled. It was quite disheartening to her, but she planned to try again for a subsequent term.

They were not many events scheduled for HPNSV in May. Saint Paul University students visited the community again as part of their fieldwork, and Luis and Juana explained the imaginary boundary of Huntington Park, letting the Saint Paul students investigate a small piece of information—houses being for rent, rather than for sale. This housing information was provided to the housing section of La Opinión. Luis advertised the ICLAC students’ showcase and invited people through the HPNSV Facebook page.

Luis organized a lecture event about the student strike at the University of Puerto Rico against privatization, because he thought that the mainstream media coverage of this issue was insufficiently critical. He managed to invite the president of the Committee Pro Human Rights in Puerto Rico to be the guest speaker and held a discussion about the strike at Barrio.

In June, an annual week-long community festival and a parade were the major events in which HPNSV participated. HPNSV manned a booth at the community festival in Huntington Park and distributed La Opinión. For the parade, HPNSV created a float with the ICLAC students. ICLAC’s culminating event occurred on June 18 at Barrio, where parents, friends,
school teachers, ICLAC instructors, and community people gathered to celebrate the ICLAC students’ achievements together. Luis, Juana and Quinn from HPNSV joined this celebration.

I wrapped up my intensive data collection in late June 2010, but even after that, I visited a few more community events in which HPNSV was involved, including the “Return of Marcos Castell.” Marcos Castell was one of the political prisoners to whom the “30 Years Behind the Bar” event was dedicated. He was released on July 26, 2010, and the PRCC held a community event on his release day. Along with the PRCC, HPNSV also announced this event through their Facebook page, encouraging people to attend. Hundreds of people convened to celebrate Torres’ return from prison. It was all the more dramatic because “30 Years Behind the Bar,” a one-month-long community event to commemorate his 30-year-long imprisonment, had just taken place only four months before. Chapter 9 (Cultural-Social Involvement: A Process of Identification) discusses this issue in more detail as it relates to the strong Puerto Rican identity inherent in the work of HPNSV’s.

As seen, HPNSV’s work covered a range of community issues, touching on community problems ranging from political, educational, and cultural-social domains. Ultimately, its work centered on building a local model of participatory democracy as it worked against the gentrification of the community. Issues regarding local civic citizenship were apparent across the four domains; Chapter 12 will comprehensively review local civic citizenship by revisiting the initial theoretical framework. Next, before analyzing the community work of HPNSV in terms of those four domains in Chapters 7 through 10, I will present the main reasons why the young activists of HPNSV joined the group, as well as their understanding of the issues the community, including gentrification, in Chapter 6.
Figure 2 shows the four domains of the activities of HPNSV for analytical purposes: political (Chapter 7), educational (Chapter 8), cultural (Chapter 9), and anti-gentrification (Chapter 10). It should be emphasized, though, that in practice the four domains were intertwined with one another as represented in Figure 3.

![Diagram showing the four domains of HPNSV's activities: Political, Cultural, Educational, and Anti-Gentrification.]

**Figure 2.** Data categories for the analytic purpose.

**Figure 3.** HPNSV's community work in the real world.
Gentrification and the Community

This chapter introduces the understandings about gentrification among the adult participants (sub research question 1). Ostensibly, no multiple understandings seemed to exist. “Kicking people out of the community,” or the more sophisticated, “demolishing the Puerto Rican community and its cultural heritage,” was the simplest and most common definition of gentrification given by the participants. Digging deeper beneath this surface-level perception, however, the main adult participants perceived gentrification in slightly different ways according to their own personal experiences and relationships with Paseo Boricua.

“It’s personal. Personal reasons.” Gentrification was a personal issue to two of the participants: Karla and Juana. Karla, a twenty-six-year-old member of the collective who worked as a nurse, had had personal experience with gentrification. She had been born and raised in Wicker Park, east of Huntington Park, which has since become completely gentrified. Her grandfather moved to Chicago from Puerto Rico and bought a large house with a big yard where the whole family including her mother, uncles, and cousins lived together. In the early 2000s, yet, developers wanted to buy his house. They looked around the house and told his grandfather that he needed to fix some minor problems, or they would report him to the city. But those problems were not critical to the building’s safety at all. Karla described how the developers were threatening people:

They [the developers] tell you, “If you do not get this, this, this fixed, we’re gonna report to the city and then you will get kicked out of your property. People get intimidated by them. A lot of people barely speak English. They speak Spanish. They are scared to have
to become confronted by people of authority, like the police, the city. They think then they will be kicked out of their house. (1st interview, 3/9/2010)

The property taxes were increasing as well. Karla’s grandfather could no longer afford to pay them, and he finally reached the conclusion that his only option was to sell. Later, her family found out that selling was not the only option—they could have requested more time to have their house repaired, or negotiated with the developer to get a better price. But no one in his family knew of any other options back then. She described the problem:

You’re basically left with this one option: “Sell to me. I will give you this much and that’s it!” I just feel like people shouldn’t have to be stuck with this ultimatum, like, either you will lose your property or sell it to me now. It shouldn’t be that way. You should be able to say, “O.k., I do want to sell my property to you, but it’s gonna be on my terms. And it should be that way. (1st interview, 3/9/2010)

After her grandfather sold the house, he moved to another neighborhood and bought a smaller house, which was not big enough for the whole family to live in together. Her family has spread out; most of them moved to the suburbs. She lived with her aunt outside of Huntington Park, because it was closer to the hospital where she worked, and she could save money. But she had to drive an hour to visit her mother in the suburbs. Karla said, “I just want to become involved in HPNSV because I wanted to get the word out, not wanting this to happen to anymore other families. It [gentrification] really does separate people.” Karla heard about Barrio about four years ago. While attending Barrio events, she gradually became involved in the work of the Puerto Rican Community Center (PRCC). When she learned about HPNSV, she said, “It sparked my interest and touched close to home because I can related to gentrification, because my family went through it. And I know what the developers tried to do and how they tried to threaten people who own property here.” Also, Karla said, “Kicking people out of the community and spreading them out doesn’t solve the problem either. It just moves the problem to other places.”
Juana was born on the border of the Huntington Park and Lincoln Square and lived in Huntington Park until she was sixteen. After she moved out of Huntington Park, she lived in several different neighborhoods, one of which was the most diverse neighborhood in Chicago. She did not feel an attachment to any of these communities. When she found a job at the high school in Huntington Park, she decided to come back to the community instead of spending so much time commuting. Juana said that she was “just an everyday person” and did not yet have any social-political consciousness, when she reconnected with the Huntington Park community.

She noticed a lot of changes: “Wow, this community is changing. We have a lot of new construction. A lot of new people are coming here.” But when she saw Huntington Park beautifully decorated with plants, flowers, and shrubs, it felt strange to her, because it had not been that way when she was young. She had the suspicion that this beautification was not for them (Puerto Ricans) but for somebody else. She believed, “There should be people that are fighting to preserve the Puerto Rican community, or fighting to stop all these buildings being built, all these people being displaced, . . . and fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico.”

Around that time, she started attending events at Barrio, to which she had been introduced by a friend who had had Elias Torres, the director of the PRCC, as a professor. She was attracted to the passion of the young people, her age or younger, and their ability to run Barrio, paying the rent and organizing events. She joined Barrio, and they helped her connect her personal experience with gentrification to a larger level:

I’ve always been anti-gentrification. I can remember maybe six or seven years ago, going to an affordable housing rally, you know, and it was for B-dike,24 but I didn’t know what to do. I know I wanted to do something, I just didn’t know what or where. And then when I saw this group of people my age, and they were in college, and you know, they’re working together to help construct and build something, I was attracted to that, and I

24A nonprofit community development corporation working for the redevelopment of communities on the northwest side of this city. B-dike is introduced again in Chapter 10: Anti-Gentrification Work.
wanted to be a part of that. And so that’s how I joined PD (Participatory Democracy Project) and the Community Center. (1st interview, 2/20/2010)

Juana soon became immersed in the group and actively participated in the work of PD (which adopted the name HPNSV a few years later), eventually taking a leadership role. The house where her family used to live was completely torn down, and twenty-one eco-friendly condos built in its place. She said it still broke her heart every time she walked by them. Like other HPNSV activists, she regarded gentrification as a societal-structural attack on those without power.

It is not normal for other people to come in here and buy your homes for really cheap money, tear the house down, build these expensive condos, your property taxes go up, and you have to move out. Hello? This shouldn’t be that way. (2nd interview, 3/27/2010)

In Juana’s view, gentrification cannot be justified by individual rights. She thought that the societal issue of white privilege was in essence. “It’s not, ‘White person, I don’t like you personally,’ No, I don’t like your white privilege and the way you use it and impose it on other people. And I don’t like the way you impose it on poor communities, either.” She mentioned that newcomers, mostly white people, were building their own small communities and supporting their own businesses, rather than interacting with Puerto Ricans. “They don’t even greet you, just walk and pass by you,” she said. That disturbed her because such ignorance made her feel like a stranger in her own community. The disconnection between the two groups was apparent at two local restaurants: Saludos Café and Sauce. Puerto Ricans frequented Saludos Café, reported to be the most popular bakery café in the community, but they seldom patronized Sauce, a restaurant across from the La Opinión office. There was of course no sign saying that it was only for white people, but according to Juana, it really was.

Like Karla, Juana’s personal experiences related to gentrification were a big motivation for her to join HPNSV. When a professor from the University of Notre Dame asked her about
her motivation for joining HPNSV, despite her lack of time and the fact that it didn’t pay anything, she answered,

Honestly, for me, it’s personal. Personal reasons. Did I understand all the theories?—I didn’t even understand that. Mine was very much on an emotional level. This is where I grew up. This is where my family—my mother and my father met. This is where my family, when they first came from Puerto Rico, they came here. All my memories are here. This is where I feel I could be myself. If this community doesn’t exist, I might be dead. (3rd interview, 5/8/2010)

**Puerto Rican collective identity.** *Paseo Boricua* was a pride among many Puerto Ricans for its history and cultural heritage that the community has built up for the last half century. This was a good reason for becoming involved in HPNSV even without immediate experience with gentrification.

If you, the reader, were to look at Main Street and Huntington Park as more than just a ghetto and see how the Puerto Rican community has transformed those spaces into something to be proud of, then you will understand what I mean. Then take it further and think of how we, as Boricuas, with so many obstacles in our way, are able to accomplish so much and how we continue to do so, together, as a community, here, on *Paseo Boricua.* (“Are Puerto Ricans Lazy? *La Opinión*, June 2010)

This is what Luis wrote for *La Opinión*. Luis, a coordinator of HPNSV, was born in New York, and he came to the community with his grandmother, cousins, and other family members when he was 13. His family had to move to another neighborhood because of rising rent when he was 18. After being accepted by Northeastern Illinois University, he began working for *Que Onde Sola*, the university’s publication about Puerto Rican and other Latino/a issues, and he joined the Puerto Rican Student Organization. He met Richard, who was an editor at *Que Onde Sola* at the time and also a founder of *Barrio*. Luis soon became involved in *Barrio* and its community events, such as Hip-Hop Night and Poetry Night. He gradually stepped into a leadership role at *Barrio* and moved back to Huntington Park. He took over the role of editor at
Que Ondee Sola and La Opinión, after Richard left. Luis became a core figure at HPNSV, ICLAC, and La Opinión as well.

For Luis, Paseo Boricua was a symbol of Puerto Rican identity and cultural pride, and he very much identified himself with this Puerto Rican community. He said, “I am more Puerto Rican than any Boricua born on the island because I have had to fight for my identity instead of having it handed on me,” in another article he wrote for La Opinión. Reviving a collective sense of Puerto Rican-ness among the community residents was one of the goals of his community work.

Obviously, we lose a sense of community, sense of identity, other resources, sense of political power—how we can get community residents much more so acknowledging that in kind of understanding, that we need to remain here, if you’re gonna be a Puerto Rican people in Chicago. (1st interview, 3/7/2010)

He saw gentrification as a complicated issue of racism, capitalism, and colonialism (a word used often by Juana and Luis, both of whom were actively involved in the PRCC, which views Puerto Rico as an internal colony of the U.S.). He stressed that gentrification was a complex process, not just black and white, but an unequal social and economic structure often leading to a hostile tension—Puerto Ricans vs. white people. He said that even people who were supportive of HPNSV sometimes oversimplified the situation: “Are you a Puerto Rican or a white person?” Of importance was to understand that in the process of gentrification, social power was distributed less to communities of colors and more to incoming residents, who were predominantly white. Luis reiterated, “I don’t want my students [his ICLAC students] to ever see gentrification as about against white people.”

In brief, Paseo Boricua was a source of pride to many Puerto Ricans. The threat of gentrification to Paseo Boricua was often considered as a threat to Puerto Rican identity. This became an important reason for people to participate in the anti-gentrification movement. Even if
they did not have immediate experience with gentrification like Karla and Juana, in a broader sense, there were affected by gentrification because of rising rents/property taxes, the possibility of having to move, and poor maintenance.

The PRCC, HPNSV’s umbrella organization, advocated the independence of Puerto Rico, as seeing Puerto Rico as an internal colony of the U.S. Richard defined gentrification as “a colonial enterprise that [is] basically taking up the land” from the indigenous population. He often spoke the language of colonialism like other PRCC activists. This gentrification process was “not a benign-neutral process but it was a politically charged, anti-democratic process” initiated by those who had the capital to purchase buildings and market them.

The purpose of resisting gentrification was not only to preserve Puerto Rican identity but also to challenge the larger social system that engenders social oppression of have-nots. Puerto Ricans made up the majority of the membership of HPNSV (and the PRCC), but some active members were Mexicans. The broader goal of fighting gentrification could facilitate collaboration with other groups to address pressing social issues.

Open community to different sexuality. Quinn, a second generation Mexican-American, was born on the other side of Huntington Park and had never experienced gentrification. He even did not know where Huntington Park was until he started high school. He met several friends who had grown up in Huntington Park, and he came to learn about Huntington Park, but he still considered the community to be a dangerous neighborhood, as mostly influenced by his parents’ view of the Huntington Park area framed with news reports of gang violence, drug dealing, alcoholism, or poverty in that area. Long before, he lost the connection to the area for the next several years, as he left Chicago to go to the university in another city.
Quinn was gay. He was actively involved in LGBT issues during his undergraduate years. He was a moderator for a coming out support group in college for two years, as well as president of a campus group for gay people of color. After graduation, he became involved with the Democratic Party, canvassing for Obama during the 2008 presidential election. He worked in low-income African American neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Around this time, Quinn realized that he wanted to become an organizer and work with people who live in poverty and do not have access to information. He was especially interested in working with Latino, bilingual, and LGBTQ communities. He then applied to the information school at a university two and a half hours from Chicago. In the meantime, he heard about Ann Bishop’s work in Huntington Park and visited the community one Saturday to participate in a class. Quinn recalled his impression of the day when he reconnected with the Huntington Park community:

I was walking down Main Street between Prospect and maybe Neil. It was before class. It was the first time I had walked the neighborhood in such a long time and it looked very familiar, like I remember what it looked like when I was younger. But also it looked different as well, as there was a lot more to see, to do than I was younger. And I remember seeing a transgender person walking down the street, feeling proud that she was walking down the street without any worries of being harassed by anyone in the community. It felt like I belonged to this community, not just for being a Latino but for a person being a gay male, and I felt reassured and safe about being in the community and it just gave me a good feeling. (2nd interview, 2/28/2010)

Before he had seen the transgender person, Quinn had not been sure if his sexuality would be accepted in the community, especially considering that Latinos are generally less accepting of gay people. But the transgender woman encouraged him to think that there was room for his sexuality in the Huntington Park community. That is, what drew him to this community was its openness to sexual minorities, rather than the Latino element. After being accepted to the information school, Quinn moved to Huntington Park to work more closely with the community. He began working at the community health center, La Vida Center, to revamp its
webpage. *La Vida Center* was a sub-organization of the PRCC which focused on addressing issues of LGBTQ and AIDS in the community. He then got to know Luis and Juana through a YCI project and joined HPNSV.

Like other HPNSV activists, Quinn was very critical of the social forces pushing residents of the community out and demolishing its long history. He thought that the issue of gentrification was very tricky, because, as Luis (and other HPNSV activists) had noted, being against gentrification could be seen as being against white people. This issue was one of the biggest challenges that HPNSV constantly faced:

> It [Gentrification] could be very threatening to white people, and businesses, developers, because if we are running a campaign that’s talking about gentrification, where do white people fit into it? They [white people] are saying that we [HPNSV] want to get rid of all the white people in community, every white owned business in community, that we want to prevent developing the community. That’s not what we are about. It’s completely a lie. (1st interview, 1/26/2010)

For Quinn, the anti-gentrification movement in *Paseo Borica* was not only about preserving Puerto Rican cultural heritage but also about protecting pluralistic values in a democratic society in the end. He said that the community has been a culturally unique space essentially governed by Puerto Ricans, but at the same time “has always been working class . . . and has had a very ethnic population.” Therefore, a critical issue of the anti-gentrification movement was to make people aware both “that the community is working to preserve its cultural identity” and “that the community can be made up of a very diverse group of people who are not just necessarily Puerto Ricans.” Quinn said that people needed to engage in conversations about what it means to live in a pluralistic community, which was an important issue particularly because of the misunderstanding that HPNSV was anti-white or anti-development. However, creating a cross-dialogue between the two groups with different interests was not easy.
Name changes for an educative purpose. The ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign (HPNSV) was also called the Participatory Democracy (PD) project. I wondered how they were different from each other and if there were any serious theoretical concerns with having two different names. It, yet, turned out to be very simple. “It’s the same thing,” Juana said; Karla put it this way: “Everything in PD is ultimately to fight against gentrification. The PD project is a grocery store and HPNSV is a deli section in it.”

HPNSV came about as a subgroup of Barrio, the Participatory Democracy (PD) Project in 2004. Juana (and other HPNSV activists) found out that the name “Participatory Democracy” was often overwhelming to residents of the community. For example, when they introduced themselves during door-knocking: “Hello, we’re from the Participatory Democracy Project of Huntington Park,” people often replied, “Participatory Democracy? What the hell does that mean?” They then had to explain that the PD project was working to address issues of gentrification. Because of this lack of transparency, PD adopted a more self-explanatory name: “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Juana said that after changing the name, they received more attention from the residents of the community. Most HPNSV activists also viewed that the new name ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” itself was educative and represented the work of HPNSV well to the community residents. Juana said:

It’s [The Participatory Democracy Project] always been about how do we involve ourselves more in this community, take a hold of our own destiny, how we combat gentrification. It’s always been the same mission, same vision. But now it’s ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!, people understand it. They like, ‘¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!’ (2nd interview, 3/27/2010)

To further elucidate the cause for community organizing to the community residents, HPNSV group created a logo with the famous Puerto Rican steel flag in the middle and had it
printed on bumper stickers, buttons, and T-shirts. They sold these bumper stickers, buttons, and
T-shirts during community festivals. The *La Opinión* newspaper was always provided with free
aside from these items.

Jason, a member of the collective who was not around much during the data collection
period, expressed the opinion that he would rather have kept the original title, “Participatory
Democracy.” I replied, “Why? You guys (the HPNSV collectives) are college educated and
know what the term “participatory democracy” means. But the community residents may not
well understand the term. Juana and Luis said that’s why they changed the name.” Jason
answered:

That’s indicative of American society. It’s a societal issue. The education system is
terrible. Especially here in the city, the public school system is terrible. Why don’t
adults—whether Puerto Ricans or any other kind of ethnicity—why don’t they know
what PD means? They should know. With a better education foundation, you can solve a
lot of societal issues, whether it’s crime in the inner city or gentrification. (1\textsuperscript{st} interview,
3/27/2010)

His critique of the education system pointed to a critique of capitalism and the power
accorded to those with money. “In a capitalistic society, people aren’t that educated. They don’t
want to educate people. If the masses are educated, it will cause some problems.”

The purpose of HPNSV. The purpose of HPNSV needs to be understood in light of the
idea of participatory democracy. Luis said that HPNSV was not just about fighting gentrification
but about “building a different sense of democracy and a model of democracy in the
community.” Richard echoed this sentiment: “Behind the HPNSV and PD, there is a philosophy
or politics about democracy and participation. HPNSV is not [merely] about gentrification but
also about building a different set of politics at the community level.” Along similar lines, Karla
said, “Whether it’s electoral politics, whether it’s a parade down the street, whether it’s *La
Opinión*, whether it’s a housing seminar, whether it’s an afterschool program, it all ultimately is
to help to keep the community residents here and give them resources that they need to make the community better.” Luis, Richard, and Karla—as well as other activists—wanted the people of the community to see gentrification from a broader perspective. Put differently, HPNSV wanted the community residents to understand that the best strategy for fighting gentrification was to improve their community on their own. Luis said:

How could you inspire people to be patrons to the businesses here and support businesses here? How can we help and support the murals, and do community tours, and support the museum—all the things that are part of this community and deal with different aspects of it [the community], but are connected to preserve this place as a Puerto Rican space. That’s tough. That’s why I was thinking [of it as] community building—we just call it HPNSV. (2nd interview, 4/4/2010)

Cynicism among the residents of the community was one of the most challenging issues for HPNSV. It was all but impossible to see immediate results from participating in HPNSV in a realistic sense. Many people of the community were not patient enough for the slow process of community work. Luis said that many community residents were concerned about rising rents, but they were scarcely motivated to participate in making a collective effort to change the system. He said that it was hard to help people see that their involvement could in the long run redistribute social resources, which in turn would benefit them.

Quinn emphasized the importance of creating a dialogue across diverse groups about what it means to live in a pluralistic community, while understanding that historically Huntington Park has been a space for Puerto Ricans and working class people. Now that the demographics of Huntington Park were constantly changing, HPNSV was trying to help people accept that the community could be made up of a very diverse group of people.

**Transnational imagination in HPNSV.** From the interview with Richard, I learned that HPNSV initially grew out of a transnational imagination. In the fall of 2003, the young leaders at *Barrio*, including Richard, began having some internal discussions about ways to redefine
politics at the grassroots level. They were impressed with experiments with democracy at the local, direct, and everyday level in Latin America, such as the Zapatista movement in Mexico and a participatory budgeting model in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The objective of the resistance in these movements was not to capture state power but to let people participate more actively in making policies that influence them at the micro-level. Richard talked about the local-global connection between Huntington Park and Latin America that the early PD group had conceived of:

You almost get this connection of what’s happening in Latin America, that’s really inspirational, challenging, and this political practice that we have here. We tried to think about how to bring them together. Together we started dialogue, debate, and from those conversations we established the Huntington Park PD project. (1st interview, 6/5/2010) The young Barrio leaders thought that it would be possible to adopt and implement such alternative models in their own community, based on the PRCC’s long-term relationship to the community. They organized the PD project as a venue where people could see issues of gentrification from a critical perspective and be encouraged to participate in the fight against gentrification.

Richard was a member of the first generation of the PD project and Barrio, along with several more activists, including Julia and Ken, who were both administrators in the Rivera High School at the time of data collection. Juana, Luis, and Karla joined Barrio and PD later. When the PD project separated from Barrio in order to focus on issues of gentrification, Barrio still remained as a space for youth. As time went by, Juana, Luis, and Karla took over leadership roles in the PD project (later HPNSV), actively engaging in community work, while the leaders of the first generation—Richard, Julia, Ken, and others—pulled backed from direct HPNSV work and moved on to other leadership roles in the community.
Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the main motivations of HPNSV young activists in joining the group. These included not only their personal experiences of gentrification but also the Puerto Rican collective identity and different sexualities. Despite some differences, a common understanding was found among adult participants that resisting gentrification ultimately challenged the social injustice and deep-rooted racism in the society.

One of the major findings was that “HPNSV was not simply about anti-gentrification but about creating a different model for democracy in the community.” The slogan “¡Huntington Park NO SE VENDE!” was adopted to better reach out to the community residents, rather than the big phrase “participatory democracy.” Even so, the larger vision of practicing participatory democracy was still an important backdrop of HPNSV’s community work. Another major finding was that HPNSV came out as a transnational experiment to adopt and implement Latin America’s alternative models of democracy at the local level. The transnational tendency is found across the entirety of HPNSV’s community works in varying degrees, particularly in the cultural involvement (Chapter 9). HPNSV young activists often said, “Stop talking, just do something.” The following four chapters detail how these young activists brought their vision to action.
Chapter 7
Political Involvement: “One Foot In and One Foot Out”

The primary election near the beginning of the data collection period provided a good showcase for HPNSV’s philosophy about electoral work, how they were involved in it, and the racial prejudices plaguing HPNSV.

Door-Knocking to Build a Relationship with the Community Residents

Electoral campaign. HPNSV activists often highlighted door-knocking as a critical tool for communication with the community residents, along with La Opinión. Two weeks before the primary election, Juana informed me of an upcoming HPNSV meeting about electoral work. She stressed the importance of the election to the PRCC, because its results would serve as evidence of the PRCC’s influence in the community. She wanted me to come and see the type of electoral work carried out by HPNSV. The meeting would be held at 10:00 on a Saturday morning at Barrio. In addition to the six HPNSV collective members—Pedro, Rico, Jason, Rafael, Luis, and Juana, several other people, including Jose, Juana’s one-and-a-half-year-old son; Megan, a youth leader of Barrio; Julia, a young activist and also a staff member at Rivera High School; Elias’s sister; and a few others came to work on HPNSV’s electoral campaign.

Not long before, I had learned that activists working for the PRCC and its affiliates often participated in the work of HPNSV. Likewise, young activists of HPNSV participated in the work of the PRCC. Volunteers put up campaign signs at businesses, fences, or empty lots along Main Street, which was already full of various electoral advertisements. Quinn, however, told me

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25 As time went by, Quinn, Luis, and Juana turned out to be the main activists during the period of data collection.
that at one point during the campaign, almost 300 signs were removed the night immediately after they had been put up. Quinn said that the election was very dirty.

I also observed the PRCC’s final canvassing on the day of the election, February 2, 2010. At 5:30 in the morning, Luis, Juana with Jose, Gustavo, Quinn, Rico, Julia, Karla, and about ten other volunteers gathered at an apartment of a member of the PRCC on Main Street. The poll booths would be opening at 7:00 a.m. After eating, the volunteers took a bag of campaign flyers and headed out to the polls. Juana had coordinated everything for this final campaign effort, and she gave the volunteers a precinct sheet indicating the places they needed to cover. Throughout the day, she checked who was going to be in which poll space until what time, and who was going to replace the previous volunteer.

Around mid-morning, Juana started visiting the polling places to check on the volunteers and day laborers. I went with her for several hours that day. She checked how many people had voted in each precinct and asked people to knock on doors to get people out to vote if their precincts had low turnouts. Volunteers were assigned precincts to work for. Turnouts varied: some precincts had high turnouts, others very low. When she found out only three out of 40 people had voted in a certain precinct, she said to the person in charge of the precinct, “Why don’t you go out door-knocking to get them out to vote?” The volunteers from the PRCC’s affiliates were familiar with door-knocking, but the day workers were not. Juana said that they had hired people for the electoral work that day, but they had not gone out door-knocking. She viewed their attitudes “unethical” because they had gotten paid, but they had not done the most important work.

In the meantime, the group supporting the opposing candidates had doubled their day workers’ pay, which de-motivated HPNSV’s day workers. This made Juana very uncomfortable.
While awaiting Juana in front of one polling place, I saw her approaching the two men working for the opposing campaign. When she came back, Juana told me what she said to them:

I respect what you do, but how much did you get paid for this? Hey, I do this for free, because I believe that this candidate will do the right thing for us. If [your candidate] pays you for doing this, there is something wrong with him, isn’t there?

This was Juana’s basic thought about political participation. On our way to another polling place, we met a lady in her early 60s, whom Juana greeted. The old lady said to Juana, “Yes, he should be elected! He is working for our community.” Juana said that she had met the woman when she canvassed her precinct during the last election; she had gotten to know many residents of the community this way.

When we went to Megan and Julia’s polling space, I only saw Megan, because Julia was out knocking on doors. Megan, a 19-year-old college student and Barrio’s collective member, was very active in community work. Megan said that every time she and Julia (who worked for the same precinct) did electoral work, they did a lot of door-knocking and got the highest turnout. Not everyone was nice to door-knockers, but she said she did not care. Two and a half months later, when HPNSV canvassed for signatures to support public affordable housing (Chapter 10: Anti-gentrification work), Megan and Julia again got the most signatures. Juana continued to check the polling places, urging people to knock on doors to get people out to vote. That evening, Juana texted me that ten out of twelve candidates they had supported had won the election, which was very exciting.

**Door-knocking to build a solid relationship.** HPNSV always underscored door-knocking as an important local strategy for building a solid relationship with the community residents. Juana said, “I also don’t want to make it seem like we only go door-knocking for elections.” HPNSV was working toward community building that was more on-going and
grounded than just elections, and they wanted to go door-knocking more regularly about other issues important to the community residents.

One of the first things that the PD project (before their name change to HPNSV) did when they organized in 2004 was knock on doors to do a survey. For two months, they asked the residents what services they thought the community needed, such as more street lights, pothole repair, more garbage cans, or rat control; and how the residents perceived the phenomenon of gentrification. *La Opinión* grew out of this door-to-door survey. From door knocking, the PD project discovered that few people knew about many initiatives and projects being undertaken by the PD project. The mainstream press was not concerned with publicizing the positive activities happening in Huntington Park. The PD project thought that they needed a tool for spreading information about local resources and events to the community residents, and *La Opinión* came about to serve such a purpose.

For door knocking, each person could organize the people of that precinct and be intentional about visiting them and making a connection. Juana has been working on the same precinct since they started door-knocking. Her precinct was comprised of about fifty households, which made it a medium-sized precinct. Juana kept broadening her connections through door-knocking. Juana was excited to talk about people she had gotten to know through door-knocking and how people became more responsive to her (and to the efforts of HPNSV). She was very intentional about visiting her precinct, meeting people, and reading *La Opinión* together. Juana talked passionately about a lady she had met through her work in the community:

I know this lady, she sells ice cream, and she’s really nice. She always invites you to her house. She has her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren that live there. So I always went in to talk to her. She—that’s her house. Now, her granddaughter is working at *San Juan*, and—the restaurant—she comes to me yesterday at *San Juan*, and we say, “Hi,” to each other when we see each other. I thought, “Maybe she doesn’t recognize me,” because I’ve been in her house. And she was like—she came to the table, and she gave
me a kiss, and she was like, “How are you? My God, every time I see him, this kid gets bigger!” And then the owner was like, “Oh, you know Juana?” And she was like, “Oh, who doesn’t know her around here?” And she goes, “No, but she knows my grandmother. She’s been to my grandmother’s house, knocking on the door and giving her the newspaper.” And then the owner was like, “Oh, see, Juana, you be out there doing that, too?” And I was like, “Yeah, you know, I’ve known her for a while, we go and read the newspaper and other things.” That’s how I know that lady, every time I see her in the street. I know a lot of personal things about her. Not that personal, but I know things about her. And I was like, “Oh, man, it feels so—good.” (2nd interview, 3/27/2010)

Juana stressed that having consistent precinct captains was very important for making a real connection with the residents, saying, “If we keep switching people up, then there’s a disconnect among community residents and the person that’s working that precinct.”

Also, she said that she had found a lot of disillusionment and cynicism regarding politics among the residents of the community. “[Politicians] don’t do shit, they just want to get paid, but then they don’t do anything for us,” was not an uncommon reaction, according to Juana. Therefore, going door-knocking only for the elections would not be effective at all. She said HPNSV was trying to show people that they really cared about them and their everyday lives, not just during elections. Voting was just one of the many political practices, and HPNSV’s concern was how to engage people in a local, grounded, on-going political process. HPNSV believed that this approach could garner them a solid support base from the people of the community, which would also help persuade people to vote. “It’s our responsibility to hold these elected officials accountable to what they say,” Juana said. Although my focus in this door-knocking section has been Juana, I believe she reasonably represented the opinions of the other HPNSV activists about door-knocking.

Quinn added an additional reason for advocating door-knocking/in-person contact: the fact that many people in the community did not have Internet access at home and were not technically savvy. “If [the people of the community] need help, there is a way to contact
someone else and that person serves as a tool and connects you with the help that you need.” Quinn said.

In late April, HPNSV knocked on doors to get signatures to support public affordable housing. Chapter 10 (Anti-gentrification work) will provide another example of door-knocking. HPNSV, however, was getting smaller; some of its members became busier or experienced changes in their lives, so they were not able to commit to the group as they once had. Recruiting committed members to organize and conduct door-knocking was an important issue for HPNSV.

**HPNSV’s Philosophy on an Electoral Work: “One Foot In and One Foot Out”**

*A thorny but necessary process.* On February 27th, three weeks after the election, Juana, Luis, Karla, Jason, Rafael, and Quinn gathered in the computer lab of Barrio for their regular meeting. They reflected their electoral campaign and were all relieved that they had won the election. Yet, they were not happy with the electoral work itself. Rafael said, “It was dirty, dirty.” Juana said, “I agree with you. Politics is a dirty game. I wish these people who are elected served the people, not their own interests.” They said that the election was tarnished by money, hatred, black propaganda, cynicism, and distrust of politics, and, as a consequence, the turnout rate was low. “Being part of this election is just thorny. But that’s just the way it is. . . . And how do you get involved in something like that to better our community?” Juana said. Jason replied, “That’s why I will do it. I am [participating in the electoral campaign] for the community, not for these assholes. I don’t even like these people [whom the HPNSV/PRCC supported], none of them.” The young activists of HPNSV did not enjoy being a part of the messy and dirty electoral work, but they all realized its necessity in order to have some influence in the community.
**The metaphor of “one foot in, one foot out.”** Luis mentioned about a discouraging message to their electoral campaign. A sign had been posted in the office of *La Opinión* that read (in Spanish), “Everyone Promises, No one Fulfills. Vote for No One.” Another such sign was found on the wall of *La Vida Center*. Luis showed a photo he had taken of the sign to the other members of HPNSV, and Karla translated it into English for me. “Who did that?” Juana and Karla asked. Luis did not know for certain, but he did have some speculations. He said that a long time ago, the PRCC used to boycott the elections, claiming that elections destroyed people, like drugs or gangs.

Juana: Really? Where did you get that?

Luis: Personally, in *Barrio*. Some people around the PRCC still refuse to vote and are saying we shouldn’t vote. That’s why we need to talk about [this sign] because we’re gonna do electoral work. That’s part of the PD project. How can we react to things like this radical thing?

Karla: A lot of people from PRCC used to believe the old philosophy [of refusing to vote]. But if you don’t do anything, you are not helping the situation at all. . . . At least we’re trying to do something, rather than just sitting back and not doing anything at all.

Quinn: As a group, we really tell the community why then we’re voting, why we’re trying to get everyone to vote.

Juana: I think that’s what we do when we’re doing door-knocking.

Quinn: Yes, that’s the name: Participatory Democracy.

This conversation portrayed an interesting clash about political participation that was found between the young and old generations of the PRCC. The young HPNSV activists perceived voting and electoral work as necessary, even though they did not always fit nicely with the liberation movement. Quinn said that there was a persistent assumption that people became less radical once they started participating in conventional politics, but he did not think that was necessarily true. “It could potentially make you more activist and you’d have a larger voice, as
long as you’re always still thinking of both groups of people and the larger movement and breaking it down to how it affects here right now,” Quinn said.

Richard later filled me in on the historical background of the electoral work at HPNSV/the PRCC. In the past, the PRCC publicly espoused the Puerto Rican nationalist movement, which was rooted in Pedro Albizu Campos’s view of Puerto Rico as a colony. In such a situation, voting or participating in any other democratic practice was meaningless. The discouraging message “Everyone Promises, No one Fulfills. Vote for No One,” could have come from this group of people.

Richard said, however, that in the mid-90s, the PRCC members began to see the potential of participating in electoral politics. “You never know about the resources, or what relationships can be built. So, electoral politics is for us one space we might have room to be effective and to secure some of the stuff that is important to the community.” Richard said. Even so, despite such an understanding, “Our heart was not fully there,” he added. I think the metaphor “One foot in and one foot out,” mentioned by Elias describes their situation well:

You have one foot in, one foot out. The one foot in the system and then one foot used for critically looking at the system, but your end is not really that you’re going to stay in the system. The end is to transform the system. (1st interview, 3/14/2010)

For those who supported Puerto Rican independence, participation in electoral work was a strategic way to change the system, though they felt reluctant to do it.

**Internalized cynicism.** The reality surrounding electoral work was not simple. The HPNSV activists had to face people’s cynicism and disillusion with politicians and an internal dissonance over electoral politics. The cynicism among the community residents of the community was a big challenge for HPNSV. Luis said, “Some of the residents thought, ‘it is natural for us to drink and gang bang. It is natural for gentrification to take place. It’s natural for
all these other systems of oppression’ because they have not been taught to see it as otherwise.”

Karla described some of the cynical reactions she had observed: “What’s good for us? Violence, gangs, police harassing us, $800 apartments in bad condition, why do we want to keep this? For what?” In addition, anti-gentrification work takes a long time, and people did not see immediate results.

The core HPNSV activists, Luis, Juana, Karla, and Richard, who were also very active in the PRCC, were conscious of colonialism. They saw Puerto Rico as an internal colony of the U.S. and *Paseo Boricua* as a symbol of the resistance of the Puerto Rican independent movement. For them, gentrification in *Paseo Boricua* was an extension of U.S. colonial dominance. They, however, worried about that many people did not view themselves as being colonized and had no critical awareness of what was happening around the neighborhood at all, whether under the name of “urban renewal” or “gentrification.”

HPNSV’s fight against gentrification was not merely about “us vs. them,” or “Puerto Ricans vs. white people,” as Luis noted. Such views have come about because of some misunderstandings and cynicism among the residents of the community. This is an important issue in discussing the meaning of locality and local civic citizenship. Chapter 12 (Discussion: Where is local civic citizenship?) revisits this issue.

**HPNSV and Racial Prejudices**

The electoral campaign disclosed a critical challenge from the outside faced by HPNSV. During the electoral work, a negative message was left at the *La Opinión* office, attacking Iris Arroyo, one of the main candidates the PRCC and HPNSV supported. I took a quick look at the message, before Juana put it into her pocket. My notes said:
Miguel Reyes

Born in Puerto Rico
Living in the community

Iris Arroyo

Born in Mexico
Living outside community
Anti-Yuppie/Anti-White

In the end, the group of candidates HPNSV and the PRCC endorsed won the election, meaning that the PRCC’s long-time commitment to the community was still recognized. However, during the electoral campaigns, HPNSV (and the PRCC) faced attacks from the opposition, defaming HPNSV (and the PRCC) as anti-white, anti-Yuppie, and anti-development. Quinn showed me a webpage for a candidate running against Iris Arroyo, which said that the words “Huntington Park No Se Vende” were “CODE WORDS FOR YUPPIE WHITE SCUM. THAT GROUP LED BY IRIS ARROYO ARE A BUNCH OF HATERS. LET YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS KNOW WHO THESE HATERS ARE!” Quinn helped me understand the meaning of the word “Yuppie,” and certainly such an attack was fueled by vitriol. Quinn said:

They [the opposing campaign members] are saying that we want to get rid of all the white people in the community, every white owned business in the community, and that we want to prevent developing the community. . . . No! It’s a complete lie. The whole point of the [HPNSV] campaign was to teach people what gentrification is, because in the survey they [the people of the community] were describing gentrification even without us asking them. It all came out of themselves. (1st interview, 1/26/2010)

Regarding the issue of HPNSV being anti-white/yuppie/development, a week before the election, Luis posted a message on the HPNSV Facebook page:

¡Huntington Park NO SE VENDE! is NOT about HATE

We would like to advise you, our supporters, that there has been some slanderous campaign literature going around attempting to mischaracterize State Representative Iris Arroyo and the ¡Huntington Park NO SE VENDE! Campaign. In the campaign literature, ¡Huntington Park NO SE VENDE! is described as a “hate” group and as “anti-white.” It also portrays State Rep. Iris Arroyo as a community outsider because she is Mexican. . . . As stated on our multiple web pages and at our events, we are an organization seeking
to build a better future for the longtime residents of Huntington Park, particularly the Puerto Rican community that has struggled to affirm itself against so many odds. This, we believe, does not mean hate for any other group of human beings. Paseo Boricua and Huntington Park are open to EVERYONE in the “city of neighborhoods,” just like Chinatown, La Villita, Greek Town, Little Italy . . . etc are open to everyone who would like to enjoy and participate in what those ethnic communities have struggled to create (emphasis mine).

Karla,26 Juana, and Quinn were concerned that HPNSV’s efforts to preserve the Puerto Rican culture, identity, history, and people were described as hateful and racist. Juana said, “Especially from white people, all they see us as is a racist organization that only wants Puerto Ricans here and not white people.” One of the participants who did not wanted to be quoted told me about an incident that occurred at the 2009 grand opening of Bicicleta Urbano,27 a non-profit organization/bicycle shop affiliated with the PRCC. The informant said that HPNSV supported this business because that business was aiming at promoting the health of the community residents. The community had a high rate of diabetes and obesity and Bicicleta Urbano was trying to provide the people of the community with inexpensive bicycles and to encourage them to exercise. HPNSV saw this as a good reason to support Bicicleta Urbano, and they planned on attending the grand opening. The informant briefly described the opening day of Bicicleta Urbano:

There’s already a community here that bike—that rides their bikes. We have bike clubs. It’s such a—it’s an old tradition among Puerto Ricans. We have our bikes, and we pimp out our bikes. It’s really nice. We have our little low-riders, we have sounds on our bikes, we got music coming out, and all the old people are in the bicycle club, and they have their old Schwinns. It’s beautiful when you see all these, um, all these Puerto Ricans riding their bikes on the street, there’s like thirty of them, honking their little horns. So

26Karla said:
People say that HPNSV is a campaign that only wants Puerto Ricans to be in Huntington Park and doesn’t want to include anyone else from outside. That’s not the message that we are trying to come across. We love people to come. That’s the thing. Be a part of a community. Not try to take it over, not try to change, not try to kick out people who are already here, be a part of here. Not against us them. Don’t start your own institution that parallels us, don’t go ahead and start a new one, try to shut us down and kick us out.

27Bicicleta Urbano, a bike shop and an affiliate of the PRCC, began its business a year ago to encourage community residents to exercise for a healthy life style.
there’s already a—that culture exists here. You have the younger people with their little low-riders, with their music on, and loud speakers (emphasis mine).

Before the event, the director of Bicicleta Urbano received an email from a local white female journalist, Nancy Collins. She had “friended” HPNSV on Facebook and had read about Bicicleta Urbano’s grand opening there. Her emails stressed that she was white, “though half-hispanic,” and that she did not like being called a “Yuppie gentrifier”:

Many of the people I know who support Puerto Rican culture are also white, but don't agree with being called “yuppie gentrifiers,” and many have had bad experiences with people in this community telling them to their faces that they aren't happy they [the white residents] have moved here.

This woman asked the director of Bicicleta Urbano if he would consider not letting HPNSV and its supporters be present at the opening, saying,

I am going to have a VERY hard time being at the Bicicleta Urbano event if the No Se Vende people are talking about wanting white people to get the hell out in front of my children and waving Puerto Rican flags in our faces.

The director of Bicicleta Urbano was a white man. The informant alleged that Nancy Collins was appealing to his white identity.

A member of the PRCC responded to Nancy Collins, clarifying that HPNSV was not an anti-white campaign, but an anti-gentrification campaign. He pointed out that gentrification has been taking place under the euphemistic terms of “urban renewal” and “urban renaissance,” at the expense of people of color in lower economic conditions. His response was a powerful but calm statement of how HPNSV and the PRCC saw gentrification:

We are not anti-development. What we don’t want is development that displaces people, specifically, Puerto Rican people, which is the storied saga in this city of “Community Development”, “Urban Renewal”, “Urban Renaissance” or any other feel good name one cares to use. Far too many development projects are undertaken at the expense of poor people—people of color. The community undergoes a wonderful transformation. However, the benefits are not for its current residents, but for the new settlers that have yet to arrive. . . . It is in our interest to see businesses that cater to the needs of our community; that employ and train our youth; that provide goods and services to
residents. We want to see the dollars spent here, not elsewhere. That is why we are adamant that as Puerto Ricans, we develop, support and patronize Puerto Rican businesses. **Is it a nationalist platform? Yes! The Jewish, Chinese, Mexican, and the Polish communities, to name a few, do the same. And no one dares question their motivation or intention** (emphasis mine).

Juana said that Nancy Collin’s view of HPNSV was shared by many white people. Although gentrification is an issue complicated by race and class, people were likely to attend to the ostensible—incoming white people were pushing out the Puerto Ricans of the community, and the newcomers did not make a true effort to understand how race and class were intermingled in the issue of gentrification. Many new comers and white people accused HPNSV of being a racist organization or being too exclusively Puerto Rican.\(^{28}\) Juana explained, “You're white. This is not your fault. But you recognize that you have a certain privilege that I don’t have.” She noted that in order to understand the work of the PRCC and HPNSV, people needed to understand white privilege.

They [those who accuse the PRCC of being racist] say, “You guys are just exclusively Puerto Ricans.” **Hey! Let's talk about the real problem! The real problem is that people are getting kicked out. People coming in are making a profit out of it. That's it! They don't care about anyone in the community. That's the bigger problem than fucking “Wow, this community is exclusively Puerto Ricans.”** That's how they try to attack us, they try to say that we are a race organization, or “reverse racism” whatever (emphasis mine).

I think this is an important statement from Juana about gentrification. Likewise, other young HPNSV activists saw racism as the biggest hindrance to their work. This issue was also related to the tension that participants might feel between being a member of *Paseo Boricua* and a being a member of the larger society, which will be discussed again in the last chapter.

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\(^{28}\)Nancy Collins’ other email said:
Why when the bike shop claims that is for “everyone” in the neighborhood, their new logo has a Puerto Rican flag on it? Why is it that any business that wants to move to Huntington Park, and Main Street in particular, has to pretend to be Puerto Rican in order to get permission, zoning, permits etc?
Chapter Summary

The core HPNSV activists Luis, Juana, Karla, Richard, all believed that Puerto Rico was an internal colony of the U.S. and that *Paseo Boricua* was a symbol of resistance for the Puerto Rican independent movement. They often spoke in the language of colonialism; Quinn, a relatively new HPNSV collective member and Mexican, was not very vocal about this issue, however.

The “one foot in and one foot out” metaphor, as Elias and Richard noted, illustrates the basic perspective of HPNSV on political involvement. Voting was officially the most important means by which young activists could express opinions and push electoral officers in a representative political system. Young activists, including those who espoused the independence of Puerto Rico, realized the necessity of participating in electoral politics in order to make changes to the system, notwithstanding the orthodox nationalist tenet used to consider participating in the U.S. government undesirable, because the U.S. government was not technically theirs.

HPNSV young activists were active in door-knocking for electoral works. They believed that door-knocking was the most important method to build a relationship with community residents and obtain solid support. As will be shown in Chapter 10 (Anti-Gentrification Works), HPNSV activists tried to go door-knocking not only during election times, but also during ordinary times for the community.

Electoral works acutely disclosed the major hurdles that HPNSV had to overcome: deep-rooted racism and white privilege, as well as internal cynicism among community residents.
The “one foot in and one foot out” metaphor in fact encapsulates not just HPNSV’s political involvement, but their work as a whole. The next chapter presents HPNSV’s educational involvement to generate new leaders for the next generation.
Chapter 8  

Educational Involvement: Sustaining the Leadership Pipe line

Luis was one of the founding members of ICLAC, when the PRCC started a pilot program for youth providing other local youth with more learning opportunities and a safe space after school in 2007. In the beginning, they helped students with their homework, provided mentoring, and taught journal writing. This went well, and subsequently ICLAC received more funding from the State Department of Human Services and the Advocate of Siloam Hospital Community Health Fund to promote their anti-underage drinking campaign, also partially supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services through the inter-institutional relationship between the PRCC and GSLIS.

The ICLAC Facebook page introduced ICLAC as a program for teaching youth digital media skills, offering intergenerational learning experiences, and helping the youth become community organizers. It said:

ICLAC is the High School after school program of the Puerto Rican Community Center that serves the youth of the Puerto Rican community in Huntington Park, Chicago. **Utilizing a range of media**, this innovation program encourages participants to transform their community and share their skills and knowledge across generations. Community youth become the creators of media, rather than passively allowing media to shape their identities. . . All students also participate in a class called Participatory Democracy, which is the civic engagement component of the program where youth are trained as community organizers (emphasis mine).

ICLAC was offering five classes: the Participatory Democracy (PD) class, Journalism, Radio, Multimedia (a combination of photography and graphic design), and Theater (Appendix II shows the ICLAC schedule at the time). Students arrived at Barrio by 3:30 p.m., signed the attendance sheet, and ate a healthy snack usually purchased from Saludos Café. Beginning in April, students went out on Mondays and Tuesdays to ride bikes with Bicicleta Urbano, the local bike shop and an affiliate organization of the PRCC, as part of a community health initiative. The
classes started at 4:30 p.m. and ended at 6:30 p.m. Students were busy during the ICLAC program; Luis said he purposefully kept students busy so that they did not have time to get into trouble during the program. On Fridays and Saturdays, ICLAC students were often invited to community events organized by Barrio or other affiliates of the PRCC. About twenty students were enrolled in the program, two thirds of whom attended Rivera High School, two blocks away from Barrio, while the rest of them were from schools in neighboring communities. Students were given a stipend of $200 every two weeks.

Luis created his own curriculum for the PD classes over the course of three or four years based upon his community organizing experiences and workshops he had attended. The PD classes included a range of activities: local information distribution (e.g. anti-underage drinking campaign postcards/posters created by themselves and La Opinión), participating in community events, organizing cultural events, riding bikes, painting murals, and administering community surveys. The PD classes covered Puerto Rican history, gentrification, community health, community engagement, homophobia, and sexism. Luis also tried to get students involved in other cultural events and anti-gentrification work, which will be discussed in later chapters. These efforts aimed to help youth practicing the participatory democracy in the community.

Although this dissertation mostly focuses on the PD class in the ICLAC program, in actuality the PD classes cannot be separated from the other media classes or the anti-underage drinking campaign. Table 9 summarizes the main activities (Some dates are missing due to my absence from the PD class observation).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Main activities in the PD class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 8</td>
<td>Group A: Research on internationally well-known Puerto Rican Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int'l Women’s day</td>
<td>Group B: A quick community tour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Puerto Rican Art Museum (PRAM) Tour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Participating in the opening event of an exhibition about Puerto Rican Women’s Fabric Arts at PRAM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 15</td>
<td>Community survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research on Puerto Rican history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 22</td>
<td><em>La Opinión</em> distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collective reading of <em>La Opinión</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Writing an article about anti-underage drinking (journalism class students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reading an article about “30 years behind the Bar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>Community Health Lecture I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 5</td>
<td>Community Health Lecture I</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Diabetes, Eating Healthy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Announcing bike riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distributing their anti-drinking campaign postcards on Main Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 12</td>
<td>Anti-underage drinking campaign poster and card distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collective reading of <em>La Opinión</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visiting PRAM exhibition of Puerto Rican artists’ works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Continued)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 19</td>
<td>Announcing Saturday HPNSV event (Door-knocking for public affordable housing)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing their mid-term presentation of the past week</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Health Lecture II: Healthy Food</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-underage drinking campaign poster distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 26</td>
<td>Intertwining ICLAC-<em>Barrio</em> activities: Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggesting ideas for <em>Barrio</em> events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Throughout the observation, my impression remained that ICLAC was sort of a miniature of HPNSV. Out of the many activities listed in the table above, I provide some descriptions of activities that I think show how ICLAC students really engaged in and learned about their community: Community survey and discussion, *La Opinión* distribution and reading, discussion of the intertwining *Barrio*-ICLAC activities, community health information distribution (about their anti-underage drinking campaign), community health, and painting a mural.

**Mini Cases**

**Community survey.** On March 25, 2010, the front radio studio was changed into a mock cell for a community event called “30 years Behind the Bar.” At *Barrio*, students sat in small groups, eating sandwiches from *Saludos Café*, texting, listening to music, joking around, and
chatting until the PD class started Around 4:35 p.m., Luis asked students to sit in a big circle.²⁹ Students were paired off and received the ICLAC Community Survey form. Not everyone knew each other and one girl complained to Luis, “I have never met him [her research partner] at Rivera!” Luis replied, “You have to learn to collaborate with new people,” and led her back to her partner. Their assignment was to go out into the community and ask questions in person to fill out the survey form, acquiring at least three survey answers. Luis gave basic tips for conducting surveys, and students dispersed to fulfill their assignment.

**Conducting the survey.** I joined a pair of students named Cynthia and Iago as they conducted the survey. Cynthia and Iago approached a street vendor in front of the Family Dollar store. The vendor could not speak English. Iago spoke Spanish and translated answers to English for Cynthia, who could not speak Spanish. Luis approached and advised Cynthia and Iago, “You should ask ‘why.’ Ask more in-depth questions.” At that moment, a man in his early forties (whom Cynthia and Iago later described as looking “like a homeless guy”) approached us and asked, “What are you doing?” Cynthia explained the community survey project in English very well, but the man started speaking Spanish, so Iago interviewed him in Spanish, with Cynthia writing down the answers below.

Name: Juan Age: 39 Ethnicity: Puerto Rican

1. **What does “Community” mean to you?**

No bad guys, good full of people that don’t fight and stay together

2. **What are the “good” things about Paseo Boricua/Huntington Park: What needs improvements?**

Lily’s record shop, more good places, more money

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²⁹Originally, Luis split students into two teams: a research team and a community survey team. The research team was going to research Puerto Rican history, specifically “When and where was the Puerto Rican flag made?” The research team was also interesting, but here I only introduce the community survey team.
3. Do you believe there are a lot of alternatives/resources for youth in Huntington Park? Why/why not?

No, we need more. They grown and go in the wrong path, we need more to keep them in the right track.

Cynthia, a 17-year-old student at Westwood High School, was not from the Huntington Park area and was new to the program. Iago, a 15-year-old student at Rivera High School, was from this community and knew it better than Cynthia or I did. He led our group to a record shop and a driving school on Main Street for the survey. In both places, he spoke Spanish and translated answers into English. We returned to Barrio at 5:20 p.m.

Several students were already done with their survey and waiting for the other students to come back. When we entered, Benito shouted proudly to us, “We got six!” Then Gonzalo entered and said, “We went to our school! We got our principal!” also proudly. Gonzalo’s team met Ken, and I took a quick look at their survey form. It was filled in with richly detailed answers (provided in the next section).

Survey discussion. The other students came back, and Luis compared their performances to select the winners. The winning pair would be treated to ice cream by other two teams. Luis looked at Benito and Ginny’s form and said, “You got six but you didn’t get a high score in terms of thoroughness.” Benito defended himself: “We didn’t get a clipboard!” “That’s a poor excuse,” Luis said, and everyone laughed. Luis started a discussion with the students, sitting in the center of where the students were sitting in a relaxed manner. They exchanged some survey answers, and Luis raised the question, “Did you get any response that you can completely disagree with?” “Yes, I got one answer,” replied Marcella, a 17-year-old student from Rivera High School. She read, “It sucks and the whole community is problem.” Luis asked, “Why do

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30Unfortunately I did not take notes about which team had the highest score and which team treated them to ice cream.
you think they gave you those answers? Is the person a Puerto Rican or not?” Marcella replied, “She is a Puerto Rican. Probably, they just don’t want to be bothered.” Luis told the students that facing such attitudes would not be uncommon when door-knocking, and that they needed to be more careful of interpreting the answers. He asked, “Do you have similar things?” but nobody answered.

Next, Gonzalo’s team provided their answers. Their team had gone to their high school and met their principal and some teachers. When Sabina, Gonzalo’s team partner, was about to read their answers, a small group of students became distracted and made some noise, which made her voice difficult to hear. Sabina stopped reading and said in good humor, looking at Benito, “Hey, just listen! This is really good!” The students laughed again and refocused on Sabina. She began reading the answer again from one of her teachers (or maybe a counselor) at Rivera High School. The text in italics below is what she shared with the other students during their discussion.

2. What are the “good” things about Paseo Boricua/Huntington Park: What needs improvements? Paseo Boricua is a space, a positive space where Puerto Rican identity, language and culture is freely expressed. It is also a safe place where other people who are not Puerto Rican can come and participate. I love the No Se Vende Campaign & I think it has brought awareness to the entire community. I think even more community involvement from the people who live in the neighborhood needs improvement.

3. Do you believe there are a lot of alternatives/resources for youth in Huntington Park? Why/why not? I do believe there are many alternatives/resources. I love that we have a place for the LGBTQ community. We address the issue of AIDS/HIV. I love that Barrio is available for the youth and I think it could be united even more. I think the high school is a great resource for the youth to be educated and resist against colonialism.

One student asked, “What does LGBTQ mean?” Luis told students that it meant lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and provided more explanation about it. He mentioned that

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31 After the session, Luis allowed me to see the surveys and type them in an electronic file.
an important value at *Barrio* was its firm stance against homophobia and sexism, and that this community had many LGBTQ resources, including *La Vida Center*.

In response to Sabina’s survey answers underscoring the positive aspects of the community, Luis asked the students, “Do you believe that?” The students nodded their heads. “What are the other things interested you?” Luis asked. Cynthia said that she met man who “looked like a homeless guy” while doing the survey, and he looked like he needed help. She also noted that people really did have different ideas and opinions about the community, some seeing more positive sides of the community while others did not. Marcella replied, “[But] we have a good sense of unity, like a community icon, No Se Vende.”

Luis kept this discussion going, asking, “What do you think about this idea? Do you see that there are a lot of resources in this community? Yes or the opposite?” “The opposite,” Cynthia answered. “I mean, not yet. Still a lot of kids are on the street. We need more resources to keep them on the right track.” Cynthia was not hesitant to share her ideas, even if they might not be pleasing to her audience. Luis and the students then continued the discussion, touching on the issues of inequity and racism in society, and why a certain group of people does not enjoy the same opportunities that other groups of people do. Luis was careful to say that he did not mean to be against all white people, but in reality, more white people and white students had more resources in general than any other minority group, including Puerto Ricans. Luis stressed that in that sense what Cynthia said was not completely wrong, but that it was important to be aware of the many resources already available in the community: *Barrio, La Vida Center, Rivera High School, Bicicleta Urbano, Puerto Rican Art Museum (PRAM), the day care center, and so on.*

*Author’s commentary note.* I think this was a very effective community learning class. The students went out into the community and asked people questions in person, talking to
many different people in the process. Cynthia and Iago valued the perspective of the man whom they thought might have been homeless. Gonzalo and Sabina recognized the significance of their school in the community and valued their teachers’ perspectives. All this, and it took only about thirty minutes. After the students returned, they discussed the survey results, thinking about what this community really was like. Luis did not resort to romanticizing the community, and the youth did not report only good stories. When the students’ opinion reflected the community’s deficits, Luis pointed out the positive sides of the community. It was a good chance to think about the resources of the community resources including HPNSV.

**La Opinión distribution and reading.** When I arrived at Barrio for the PD class on Monday, March 22, I saw a young woman in the mock cell, participating in the community event, “30 Years Behind the Bar.” Students were in and out, seeing what was happening in the cell. The mission of the day was to distribute the community newspaper, *La Opinión*. *La Opinión* was HPNSV’s most important tool for communicating with the residents of the community, so it was good for students to learn more about it. The class went to the *La Opinión* office. Luis explained that *La Opinión* handled the local news in the Huntington Park area concerning business, housing, education, local resources, and so on. *La Opinión* came out eight or nine times per year and 10,000 copies of each issue were printed. Luis stressed that distributing *La Opinión* was a good way to distribute information to the residents of the community about ICLAC’s name and their anti-underage drinking campaign. In fact, the current issue of *La Opinión* had an article about the ICLAC’s anti-underage drinking campaign written by students in the journalism class in ICLAC.

Luis taught some important tips for delivery, such as “Do not leave the newspaper on the floor,” and “Leave only copy per house.” I tagged along with a group of students, after Luis
shared his last tip: “Be respectful!” Most of the seven students I accompanied knew what to do and finished their job very smoothly. On the way back to Barrio, Gonzalo, an 18-year-old student at Rivera High School, asked Luis, “How much does it cost to make one copy of the newspaper, or how much total?” Luis, answered, “It depends how many pages or how many color pages it has, but usually it costs about $2000 or $3000 for one round.” Gonzalo asked, “Where does the money come from?” Luis answered, “It’s from local community business commercials. Since La Opinión is a local newspaper, it has to get money from local businesses.” Later, Gonzalo said in an interview that distributing La Opinión was the most interesting thing to him at ICLAC. He said, “I like spreading the word about the community, keeping the good word about the community out there, not saying that Huntington Park is bad because of the gangbangers; rather Huntington Park is good because we have opportunities for people.”

**Reading and discussion.** Students came back to Barrio to read La Opinión together. Luis told them, “This is not just an exercise,” and asked, “Why did we pass around this paper?” following with, “You should know why.” The students sat around the table together and took turns reading the articles. The first article was the one written by the ICLAC journalism students about underage drinking. Luis began a discussion about the large number of young people, nearly 14,000, dying from driving under influence every year in Chicago. The number shocked the students. One student asked, “Why isn’t that news on the television?” They talked about many possible reasons that such issues did not get enough attention from the mainstream media. Lobbying by beer companies, capitalism, financial issues, and political issues were discussed.

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32 When I participated in distribution, Luis purposefully let me go with students who had distribution experience, so that I would feel more comfortable. If the storm door was unlocked, the students opened the storm door and put the newspaper between the storm door and the inside door. If it was locked, they tucked the newspaper into the bars of the storm door.
The students also talked about the peer pressure to drink, “trying to fit in or look cool.” They had a lengthy and honest conversation about underage drinking, because it was a real issue for them. They continued to read other articles, including one about a theater event that had taken place at Barrio the previous week. When it was his turn to read, one student was embarrassed at not being able to pronounce a word, saying, “I am illiterate.” Luis immediately and gently responded to him, “No, you’re not!” He helped the student pronounce the word and encouraged him to keep reading the article about “30 Years behind the Bar.” Luis always stressed the importance of La Opinión, once introducing it as “the best newspaper in the world, and the only newspaper actively allowing youth contribution in Chicago.” He was very serious about helping students to see the value of La Opinión and taking advantage of its ability to amplify their voices in the community.

In addition to La Opinión, the ICLAC youth regularly went out in the community and passed around the posters and flyers that they created in the PD class. They periodically left batches of postcards, and put their posters on the windows, at a grocery store, a liquor store, a barbershop, Saludos Café, restaurants, community health centers, schools, and the local bike shop—all on the main street in the community. These small businesses often functioned as kind of an information space for community residents. For example, Saludos Café, a small café on the main street was always at the top of the youths’ delivery list, because they already knew that most community residents, including their parents, obtained a lot of local news from this small café, such as community events calendars issued by the PRCC, flyers about community programs, and La Opinión.

Author’s Commentary note. La Opinión was the most important tool for HPNSV to educate community residents. Luis stressed the importance of La Opinión in ICLAC class,
leading them to participate in door-to-door distribution. He also provoked students to be more interested in local issues, see positive sides of their community, and critically think about social issues. They also read the newspaper together including an article that their peers wrote about anti-underage drinking campaign, having honest conversations about under-age drinking and their community health campaign. I think it was a very good combination of action and learning in regard to citizenship education in the community.

**Intertwining Barrio and ICLAC together.** The PD class on April 26, 2010 was called “Intertwining Barrio and ICLAC together.” Megan, a 19-year-old college student and collective member of Barrio, led the session. She had graduated from Rivera High School and had been active in Barrio since then. Megan had lived through many difficulties, having grown up surrounded by drugs, gangs, and family problems. She was very rebellious to teachers and not interested in schoolwork. But one teacher at Rivera High School noticed her talent for writing poetry and helped her develop it, which changed her life. Megan learned to express her feelings through poetry, and people highly spoke of her talents. She won first place in a state poetry competition two years ago, and she successfully graduated from high school and went on to college. As collective members of Barrio, she also joined the ICLAC program as a coordinator alongside Luis.

“Listen up!” Megan began. “Today we are going to discuss ‘How do we connect and intertwine ICLAC and Barrio?’” The two were different groups: ICLAC was an afterschool program, while Barrio was both a physical space and a youth organizing group. Most students used the names Barrio and ICLAC interchangeably, however, because most ICLAC classes were held at Barrio, and ICLAC students often invited to Barrio’s cultural events. Some students, like Adam and Cynthia, performed hip-hop music at Barrio, and ICLAC had their own cultural
events on Friday nights at Barrio. The mission of Megan’s class was to further promote the
synergy between the two groups, leading youth to become leaders at Barrio.

Megan first explained that Barrio was “a Puerto Rican space run by youth, a legacy of his
community, youth activism.” Barrio’s mission, its collective decision making system, its main
policies (no sexism, no homophobia), and its central philosophy (self-reliance, self-actualization,
and self-determination) were briefly introduced, and then the students broke into four small
groups to discuss exactly what these things meant. Each group took one topic: mission, decision
making system, central policies, and philosophy. Each member of the group had a role—leader,
note taker, or speaker—so that everyone was engaged. I joined the group discussing the
collective decision making system, who were sitting closest to me. The students asked questions
and made comments such as:

Student A: What does collective mean?

Student B: Without having a higher position than any one else

Student C: Sometimes we can’t come to a conclusion.

Me: What is the negative side of collective?

Student A: Even if one makes a mistake, does it affect all other people?

Me: But, why do we go for collective?

Student B: Because we share equal power and authority.

Me: Why wouldn’t our government have a collective form?

Student A: Collective works with smaller groups. A board (they used this term for
referring to a bureaucratic system) works for larger group in terms of
efficiency. That’s why our government can’t have a collective form. Barrio
is place to feel comfortable. But outside is about money, greed, power—
something like that.
After the youths finished their small group discussions, they reassembled to a large group and shared their discussions. Luis asked some questions and added comments on his students’ answers to help them better understand issues such as LGBTQ and Barrio’s policies—no homophobia, no sexism, and collective. He also emphasized that Barrio was not just for Puerto Ricans, but also African Americans, other Latino youth, and those of different sexual orientations. After the discussion, Megan led students to plan Barrio events for the near future. Having already organized Barrio events, many of the youths began coming together and contributing numerous brilliant ideas, including hosting open mikes, movie nights, fundraising events, poetry & hip-hop nights, inviting young artists, decorating Barrio space, and advertising events through Facebook and Myspace to educate people outside the community.

The discussion provided a good glimpse of the beginning of a pipeline for community leadership in ICLAC youth to intentionally and gradually become interwoven with Barrio. Given that Barrio has been a root for HPNSV and community activism among the young generation in the community, this was a really important effort to sustain the leadership pipeline, eventually reaching HPNSV.

**Painting a mural and the figurative imagination of civic engagement.** To me, the most interesting project that they did was painting an indoor mural. The second week of May, I found an unfinished mural about thirteen by nine feet big on an inside wall of Barrio. The entire background of the mural was a Puerto Rican flag, with the images in the foreground ranging from traditional Puerto Rican houses and palm trees to the Willis Tower (formerly Sears Tower) and other high rise Chicago buildings to images from Paseo Boricua, such as La Estancia (a public affordable apartment on the corner of Prospect and Main streets) and the famous Puerto Rican steel flags. In short, there was a transnational flow from Puerto Rico to iconic Chicago to
Paseo Boricua. At the far right end of the mural, the words, “Institute of Culture, Leadership, Art, and Communication,” were painted in beautiful, curvy letters, followed by “¡Huntington Park NO SE VENDE!” At the bottom, the mural read, “This is the Real Me,” which was one of the slogans used for their anti-underage drinking campaign.

Luis told me that the mural had been designed and created by the ICLA students while I was away. The students painted the mural while having snack time, cleaning, writing reflection notes, and waiting for classes. No one was assigned to paint a certain section with a certain color within a certain period of time; those who wanted to simply picked up a brush and painted. Sometimes I also joined in the painting. Over the next month and a half, I watched the mural become more and more colorful: yellow, green, pink, and white in the Puerto Rico section; shades of grey in the Chicago section; and more vibrant colors again in the Paseo Boricua section. The original outline had become a beautiful and exciting work of art, and the youth were very happy with it. I was deeply impressed with their artistic sense and the transnational imagery of Puerto Rico-Chicago-Paseo Boricua-ICLAC.

Witnessing this project inspired me to think about the figurative relationship between the process of painting a mural and participating in a community. Both start with a draft and a vision. Both largely rely on volunteerism: people participated when they feel willing to provide their time and energy. There is no definite end. They learn and teach each other. Anyone can do it—in the case of the mural, even if a student doesn’t directly participate in the painting, he or she can still help in other ways, such as entertaining and assisting the painters or cleaning up. The outcome is not immediately visible, and it is often hard to recognize changes. In the end, however, there is a beautiful outcome to enjoy together. This may be a romantic view, but it was a strong impression that I had at the moment.
Discussion

“We need a role model.” Luis and Juana both emphasized this. Juana, a mother of one and a half year-old son, was particularly interested in the future of the youth. “What if you only saw gang bangers and drug dealers around you? Who do you think they are going to be? We need a role model like Elias Torres in our community.” This was exactly what Luis said in his class: coming back to the community after achieving success was important for the community to prosper for the long term (Elias Torres had been supposedly the most influential figure in the community, ever since he founded the Rivera High School, an alternative high school for Puerto Rican youth in 1971 and the PRCC in the subsequent year).

The community has produced many professionals such as doctors and lawyers, but they have not come back. Instead they moved out to the suburbs, because they wanted to have a better educational and residential environment. Returning to the community demands personal commitment and this was where collectivism (participating in achieving a collective goal) and individualism (seeking personal interests) clashed with each other. HPNSV’s efforts were to a community to a place where people want to come back and be role models for the youth. Luis’ commitment to ICLAC needed to be understood in this context.

Although it is hard to fully understand ICLAC youth community engagement without being familiar with their anti-underage drinking campaign, the above brief glimpses into the PD class represent what the youth experience at ICLAC. Besides the activities described above, ICLAC youth were encouraged to participate in cultural events and anti-gentrification work, which are introduced in Chapters 9 (Cultural-Social Involvement) and 10 (Anti-Gentrification Work) respectively, alongside the work of HPNSV.
It seems to me that HPNSV was a participatory project for young adult activists, setting gentrification as its top agenda; while the ICLAC program was a participatory project for youth, setting underage drinking as its top agenda. Ultimately they could be described as united under the umbrella concept of participatory democracy for long-term community building; Luis agreed with this perspective. I particularly draw out two significant issues in terms of civic learning in the community: learning about community issues and resources and civic apprenticeship.

**Learning about community issues and resources.** As seen above, PD classes covered a variety of issues, such as community history, underage drinking, *La Opinión* and its coverage of important community events, the relationship between ICLAC and *Barrio*, planning/organizing events, and health issues. During the time of data collection, the PD classes did not directly mention gentrification. Issues of gentrification were not immediately highlighted in ICLAC while I was in the field. (Later, yet, when I interviewed the youth participants, those who had been in the program for more than two years said that they had learned about gentrification the first year.) Through a range of activities, the PD classes taught students about several community organizations on *Paseo Boricua: Barrio, Bicicleta Urbano*, West Town Bike, Huntington Park Co-op, PRAM, and *La Opinión*. In addition to these affiliates of the PRCC, the students in the PD class had a chance to interact with Claridad, the oldest newspaper in the Puerto Rico, and Vocalo, a public radio station airing user-created materials (audio, text, and video). Vocalo particularly interested the youth in the radio program at ICLAC, and students in the radio program submitted a radio public service announcement about their anti-underage drinking campaign to Vocalo.

The youth were asked to participate in several community events. My overall impression of the PD class was that rather than directly pushing the idea of anti-gentrification at ICLAC,
Luis exerted a lot of effort to teach the youth about the community’s history, positive energy, resources, and cultural heritage. This knowledge could in the long run help the youth better understand the cause of preserving the community: “¡Huntington Park NO SE VENDE!”

**Civic apprenticeship.** Luis incorporated a HPNSV community engagement component into the PD class, including the community survey, *La Opinión* distribution, and event organizing. These activities fostered in-person contact and involved organizing cultural events. Luis intended these activities to be the students’ first steps toward becoming youth organizers and later community organizers.

Luis’s efforts have much significance in providing youth with opportunities to “civic-ize” themselves in the holistic context of the community, possibly leading them to become active members of the community. In particular, I think the community survey was an interesting example of this. The youth asked random community people survey questions and received various answers. Some reported positive aspects of the community, but others received negative feedback. Instead of taking with one side, Luis led the youth to think about why people gave them negative answers, while explaining that their community did have many resources to counterbalance the negative forces.

His emphasis on *La Opinión* was another opportunity for students to recognize the importance of local information distribution: *La Opinión* was an important venue through which HPNSV (and the PRCC) could tell the other side of the story that was not covered in the mainstream media. It also purposefully set aside a section for youth and encouraged their contribution. The *Barrio*-ICLAC discussion allowed the youth to think through the important values of *Barrio* together, and it was another a good example of a gradual and ordinary way in which ICLAC youth could connect themselves to youth community activism.
I do not intend to make the claim that the activities undertaken in the PD class automatically instilled particular capacities in the students who participated. To what extent the students retained the knowledge and practices they were exposed to was open to question, and dependent partly on their individual attitudes. Some youth, like Lita, saw the ICLAC program as more than just an afterschool program. They viewed it as an opportunity to become more engaged in the community. Others, like Marcella, however, saw the program as just job, because they were given a $200 per week stipend that they needed to pay their bills. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 11: What the Youth Thought.

Chapter Summary

This chapter laid out how Luis tried to get the youth more involved in the community including HPNSV’s events (Research Question 2). I saw the PD class at ICLAC as a microcosm of HPNSV. As mentioned, Luis played a key role in mediating HPNSV’s educational involvement; often Luis was HPNSV and HPNSV was Luis. The PD class at ICLAC was the start of the pipeline leading the students to becoming community activists. I think the variety of ways in which Luis got youth involved in the community issues could be inspirational to redesigning civic education, although the PD classes never specifically mention “civic learning” or “citizenship education.” Luis never used the term “citizen” in his classes; rather, he used the terms “borinqueño” and “boricua,” both meaning “Puerto Rican” in Spanish, originally derived from Taino, the indigenous language. I revisit this issue in Chapter 12 (Discussion: Where is the Local Civic Citizenship?) because it is one of the most important issues in this research.
Chapter 9

Cultural Involvement: A Process of Identification

HPNSV organized or was involved several cultural-social events, such as community festivals; PRCC, ICLAC and Barrio events; and lectures about pressing social issues. This was important to the process of identification necessary for community building (Rose, 2000): the events reaffirmed the Puerto Rican identity among the people of the community. Rose said that community is not a given, but must be built, made real, and brought into being by campaigns of consciousness raising, pressure groups, and community activists. The other domains covered in this paper (political involvement, educational involvement, and anti-gentrification work) were fundamentally linked to this process of identification as well, but cultural-social involvement exhibited the most explicit connection.

Reassuring Puerto Rican Identity

Raising awareness of the nationalist movement. Two events exemplified the political prisoner issue: “30 Years Behind the Bar,” and “The Return of Marcos Castell.” For the first of these, the front radio studio of Barrio was transformed into a mock cell for a community-wide event called “30 Years Behind the Bar.” This was a month-long community event held in March, 2010 to recognize the ongoing imprisonment of two Puerto Rican political prisoners: Antonio Castell and Manuel Torres, both of whom had been in prison for 30 years. The event was organized by the Boricua Human Rights Association (BHRA), an affiliate of the PRCC.

\[^{33}\text{In 1980, Antonio Castell, was convicted and sentenced to 78 years in prison for seditious conspiracy, attempting to overthrow the government of the United States in Puerto Rico by force, for his role with a Puerto Rican national movement know as the FALN (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional: Armed Forces of National Liberation), which claimed responsibility for numerous bombings (which had led to six deaths). But, Torres himself was not accused of participating in the bombings, or himself causing any deaths. In 1981, Manuel Torres, another FALM activist, was convicted and sentenced to 70 years on the same charge. Manuel Torres was a brother of Elias who was the executive director of the PRCC.}\]

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specifically working for the release of the remaining Puerto Rican political prisoners. Outside of Huntington Park, however, people regarded these two imprisoned Puerto Rican nationalists as terrorists instead of patriots (Chicago Tribune, July 26, 2010).

The mock cell was equipped with a hard, wooden bed 18 inches wide and less than six feet long, a mock toilet, and a couple of books, binders, and letters. People volunteered to experience being in the cell for 24 hours from 6:00 p.m. through 6:00 a.m. the next day. The front of the cell was glass, so that people walking by on they street could see what was happening inside. A large poster titled, “30 Years Behind the Bar,” was hung next to the window, displaying photos and information about Antonio Castell and Manuel Torres. Visitors could stop by the studio and talk to the volunteers. Initially, the plan was for 30 people to volunteer for the one-day imprisonment to symbolize the 30 years of imprisonment but in the end, 15 people participated. The ICLAC students were familiar with this event, because their ICLAC classes took place right next to the mock cell. Luis also read an article about this event with the students during the PD class, although he never directly taught about Puerto Rican independence. Elvira, the instructor of ICLAC’s journalism class, volunteered to be a one-day prisoner and let her students interview an ex-political prisoner. Many students from Rivera High school had already learned about the political prisoners at school. Juana, who taught a “unity class” at Rivera High School, also took her students to see the mock prison. But Elvira was a little bit skeptical about how much students from outside of Huntington Park would understand about the issue of political prisoners.

The culminating event: A climax of identity assurance. The culminating event of “30 Years Behind the Bar” was held on April 3. Members of the Boricua Human Rights Associations had beautifully decorated the inside of Barrio with Puerto Rican flags, photos,
posters, newspapers, old Puerto Rican journals, and books about the Puerto Rican liberation movement. Paintings Antonio Castell and Manuel Torres created in prison were hung on the wall. Barrio. Barrio was packed with people, with perhaps 100 in attendance. Most of them were people working with the PRCC and its affiliates—Rivera High School, La Vida Center, HPNSV, ICLAC, Barrio, the Boricua Human Rights Association, the Diabetes Center, etc. Juana, Jose, Luis, Jason, Quinn, Elvira, Gustavo, Elias, Megan, Chris, Julia, John, Eric, and Edward were all there, along with three ICLAC students: Alicia, Lita, and Richard.

The festivities began when Diego, an ex-political prisoner who had spent 20 years in prison, emerged from the cell smiling wide, his hands tied together with a handkerchief. He was the last volunteer of the month-long event. His symbolic release from the handkerchief raised hearty cheers from the people gathered at Barrio. The event went on to last almost three hours, consisting of honoring the many people who worked hard for the community, the political prisoners, and the PRCC with the gifts of gratitude, two political activists’ family members’ tearful and proud testimonies, and performances of poetry, hip-hop, rap, and other music by talented young Puerto Ricans from the community. The speakers repeatedly called for the release of the two political prisoners. The event ended with the singing of La Borinqueña, the Puerto Rican national anthem. Someone told me that there were two versions of La Borinqueña, and what they sang that night was the revolutionary version.

This event encapsulated the orientation of the PRCC, which strongly advocated Puerto Rican independence and identity. The testimonies of the political prisoners’ families and the speeches were evocative, making people empathize with their pain and pride. Such empathy might have made people feel more cohesive as a part of the nationalist movement. But not everyone agreed with the PRCC’s support of Puerto Rican independence. For example, Quinn, a
Mexican-American, was not very enthusiastic about the issue. His motivation for joining the PRCC and HPNSV was to preserve the community’s open-mindedness to LGBTQs. In addition, Luis said that although his grandmother was very proud to be a Puerto Rican, she disagreed with Luis’s support of Puerto Rican liberation.\textsuperscript{34} Still, despite these disparities in opinion, I think this kind of ritual functioned as a tool to reinforce the group identity and build a sense of community among participants.

The event organizers sold T-shirt to raise funds, and after the event, as I was looking at the exhibits, I was surprised to see some Korean words on a 3 x 3 foot red flag. The Korean words read, “프에르토리코의 독립, 조국의 통일, 재일 교포의 인권 확득, 제 3 세계 인민들의 해방을 위하여, 양키 제국주의 타도,” which means “Defeat Yankee Imperialism, for the sake of Puerto Rico independence, the reunion of our country, the improvement of the civil rights of Korean residents in Japan, and the liberation of the people of the Third World.” There were also Chinese, Japanese, and English words surrounding, “連帯,” in the center. 連帯 means “solidarity.” Such propaganda is not common in South Korea, so I guessed that the creators of this flag were from the Cho-Sun People’s Federation in Japan. This group has a far stronger connection to North Korea than South Korea, pursuing a nationalist and socialist line. Juana told me that Gustavo got the flag on a trip he had taken around 1990. Gustavo did not recall the details, but he said that a long time ago, when he was invited to an event at San Francisco, a group of people had given him the red flag. Suddenly, I recognized a parallel between the Puerto Rican and North Korean liberation movements: North Korea argues that U.S. imperialism over the South Korean Government prevents the two Koreas from reunion. Therefore, according to this mindset, liberation from U.S. imperialism is necessary to reunite the

\textsuperscript{34}Giani Perez’s book about Puerto Rican immigrants in Chicago said only a small portion of Puerto Ricans in the Huntington Park area sided with the independence of Puerto Rico.
two Koreas and achieve true independence on the Korean Peninsula. Although HPNSV had
distanced itself from the old nationalist philosophy of the PRCC, this small, red flag indicated a
dim transnational connection. Even with my Korean background, that red flag was an
unexpected encounter.

“The Return of Marcos Castell,” with a broader public. In mid-May, I learned that
Antonio Castell was going to be released on July 26, 2010. Many of my Chicago contacts
posted updates about his release on Facebook, expressing excitement and changing their profile
photos to images relating to him. They also sent out a Facebook invitation to an event they were
planning to welcome him back, called “The Return of Marcos Castell.” I returned to Paseo
Boricua to attend this historical event, which took place about one month after I had finished
my intensive data collection. It was a big day, but at a glance I did not detect many differences.
The event would be held at at 4:00 p.m. at La Casita, which was located directly across from
Barrio. La Casita (meaning “the little house”) was a small, traditional Puerto Rican style house
with a long yard. A statue of Pedro Albizu Campos stood. By 4:00, La Casita was packed with
people\textsuperscript{35} and cameras waiting for Torres to arrive. By this time, I had come to recognize the
faces of many of the PRCC members, and I saw them there, including Juana, Luis, and Quinn of
HPNSV. In addition, there were several hundred people of the community in attendance, many
of whom brought their children. People even watched the event from the surrounding rooftops,
some people hanging on fences to better see Torres’ and the performances.

At the gate of La Casita, Megan was cheering with about ten ICLAC-Barrio youth,
including Marcella and her sister, Lita. Torres slowly approached La Casita, escorted by Elias,
the director of the PRCC, to the chants of numerous supporters. A group of young kids from the

\textsuperscript{35} The Chicago Tribune reported about 500 hundred people gathered for this event (Chicago Tribune, July 26, 2010).
Mexican community (identified later in the ceremony) were thumping plastic buckets in front of Torres, leading the way. There were a number of performances to celebrate Torres’ release, including poetry, song (including La Borinqueña), a scene from Barrio’s play about political prisoners, and speeches. The attendees regarded Torres’ release as their victory. It's my victory,” Torres told the crowd, “but it's really your victory.”

What particularly interested me were speeches from two women—one Palestinian and one Japanese—and one young male Mexican activist in the community. The two women expressed their congratulations to the community’s victory on behalf of the community, and they very briefly talked about the social oppressions that they were facing. Consciousness of being oppressed, even in different forms, was a common ground for joy and hope. The young Mexican poet and activist who had co-founded Barrio said, “I am a Mexican. People say that we Mexicans do not get along with Puerto Ricans, but I don’t think that’s true.”

Reminding people that the kids who were thumping the plastic buckets to welcome Torres were from the Mexican neighborhood, he denounced the often-rumored strained relationship between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. It was clear that a broad audience from both within and outside the community participated in this community’s historic and joyful moment of Puerto Rican–ness.

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36 A group of theater people at Barrio created a play about the two political prisoners in 2008. It has been performed not only at Barrio in Paseo Boricua but also in Puerto Rico as well as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Hartford.

37 An article in the Chicago Tribune was against his release, reporting:

Many see Torres and the FALN as terrorists instead of patriots, but the 57-year-old former Chicago resident did not address the group's history at Monday's rally. Rather, he offered thanks to activists who pushed for his release. . . . The FALN, a Spanish acronym for Armed Forces of National Liberation, pressed for Puerto Rico's independence with bombs and other violent acts, primarily in Chicago and New York, from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s. Their actions resulted in six deaths, authorities say. Torres was not charged with any bombings, but was convicted for being part of the group. In pushing for parole, his supporters labeled him a “political prisoner” who had served an adequate sentence. In an article published in the op-ed section of the Los Angeles Times last year, Joseph Connor, the son of a man killed by an FALN blast in New York, called the early releases “a disrespectful affront to all Americans” (Chicago Tribune, July 26, 2010).
Barrio and ICLAC cultural events: An incubator for future activism. Barrio was an incubator for future activism. “Barrio has a symbolic meaning. Without Barrio as sort of the anchor, we wouldn’t have been able to do all of things,” said Richard, one of the co-founders of Barrio and HPNSV. HPNSV’s roots traced back to this cultural activism at Barrio. The core young activists of HPNSV—Richard, Juana, Luis, and Karla—as well as other young leaders of the community had grown out of Barrio. Barrio was also producing new young community activists like Megan and Chris, the radio class instructor. Luis tried to connect the ICLAC students to Barrio, and some youth were actively engaged in organizing events and performing.

During my data collection, Barrio held an event almost every Friday, especially after late March. The event size varied, starting out small, with around eighteen people. As time went by, the events got bigger, and more ICLAC youth took part. The event in mid-May was big enough that more than twenty talented young hip-hop musicians from other communities came to perform to an audience of seventy people. Because of its close connection to ICLAC (with more than half of the ICLAC classes held at Barrio), Barrio was trying to connect ICLAC students to its events and projects. This was an important step in continuing the pipeline from youth to youth organizers to community organizers/activists. Young people were the main audience of Barrio events, but everyone was welcome. The culminating ICLAC event was open to the youth’s friends, family, teachers, and people of the community, to celebrate the students’ achievements. Facebook was the most often used advertising tool. Below, I describe one of many events that were organized by the ICLAC students. This event grew out of the effort to intertwining Barrio and ICLAC.

Scene #1: Preparation. Barrio’s Friday night event on May 21 was the ICLAC Showcase. When I arrived at Barrio just before 7:00 p.m., some of the youth were working on
computers in the front studio, and several students were painting the ongoing mural (described in the previous chapter). Lita was struggling with cables around the computer table on the main stage. Another student was on a ladder working on lights on a ladder. The day’s event was titled “ICLAC Showcase,” and ICLAC students had organized and advertised it. Marcella, Cynthia, Adam, Megan, and another girl were going to perform hip-hop, poetry, and songs; most of them had already performed at Barrio several times before. Richard was checking the sound. Marcella and Lita were carrying some picture frames from downstairs to the room in the back. Megan, a new ICLAC coordinator and Barrio member, was walking around, directing this or that. Yolanda and some other GSLIS graduate students came to the show as well. (Yolanda was working for the PRCC library and had helped in the multimedia class.) Someone from the Boricua Human Rights Association visited the event too. The show started almost 40 minutes late, as often happens, but no one complained, entertaining themselves in their own ways.

Scene #2: Barrio – ICLAC youth performances. As the show opened, a strong beat and the sound of hip-hop music began to play. Richard was introduced to great applause and performed some hip-hop music, which was a rare treat for youth, because he had moved to a different city to school and came back to the community Richard was one of several great role models for the youth in the community, having come from this community, founded Barrio, become a leading community activist, and then went to develop his academic career at an Ivy League school.

One ICLAC student played the role of MC. He did a very good job at entertaining people and making good transitions. He proclaimed, “This is Barrio Urbano, and this grassro—t . . . ? How do I pronounce it?” breaking off laughing, as someone told him how to pronounce the word. “It’s basically run by people’s donations,” he continued. “You donate, we can buy toilet paper.”
Everyone laughed. The ICLAC youth and the other youth involved in Barrio began their performances. Megan, read her poem, “Why I don’t cry blood?” (See Appendix III.) Her voice conveyed the bitter and poignant message of her poetry. “Why I don’t cry blood?” was written based on her experiences with drug dealing, her mom’s drug addiction, and her brother’s gang-related death. Overcome by such a tough reality, she reinvented herself as a new Barrio-ICLAC leader, a young activist, a poet, and a role model for other youth. She performed this poem a few more times at other events, and it was published in Renacimiento, (Rebirth) a book of poetry created by Barrio activists.

Cynthia performed a rap about her sexuality. She thought that a girl at her school was cute, but the lyric said, “She was straight, haha. My sexuality is crazy.” It was the first time she had talked about her sexuality and struggles in public at ICLAC or Barrio. No sexism and no homophobia were important policies at Barrio. ICLAC students gave her great cheers after her performance. One girl who had never performed before at Barrio was so nervous that her voice shook. The others encouraged her with shouts of “Go baby, it’s ok!” or “Chaebong!” The youth appreciated the performances of others, cared about their peers, respected the rules, and enjoyed being at Barrio at that moment. Ken and Julia, the high school principal and a Dean of Student Affairs, respectively, also attended the event.

Scene #3: Performances of former Barrio Leaders. “Luis, Hurry up!” The youth pushed Luis onto the stage. “What, do you want me to dance?” Luis asked. “Luis, we don’t like the way you dance,” the MC replied in a serious tone. A huge laugh burst out at Barrio. Luis did not dance, but rather read his poem, “Resisting Oblivion,” which expressed his transnational

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38Some youth randomly said my name, Chaebong, very fast in a high tone for an unknown reason in many situations during the data collection; I guess my name sounded funny to them. It was never offensive. Rather, it was a token of their accepting me as a part of ICLAC-Barrio. “Why not? Chaebong, you’re a part of us,” said Alicia, a youth participant, one day.
Puerto Rican-Chicago identity and resistance to social oppression on Puerto Rican/Latiao population. He had performed this poem at another event, and it was also published in *Renacimiento*. Next, the youth wanted to see Ken’s performance. Ken eagerly mounted the stage and performed a rap, while the MC made motions corresponding to Ken’s rap message. The MC did quite well with wit and humor. It was a good coordination between student and principal, or between a *Barrio* youth and a former *Barrio* leader. Ken performed his own poetry from *Renacimiento*: “We want to see the face of Manuel Torres.” Ken and the students were tossed back and forth the rhythmic phrase, “We want to see the face of Manuel Torres.” Many of the ICLAC students attended to Rivera High School and already knew the poem. It was a very memorable moment. The students, principal, and *Barrio* leaders became one at *Barrio*, with everyone on equal ground.

It was a very interesting intergenerational interaction among the first generation *Barrio* leaders (Richard, Ken, Julia), the current leaders (Luis, Megan), and the future leaders. Then the students wanted to see Julia’s performance, too. She also read her poem from *Renacimiento*. Her poem was written in Spanish. After her performance, the MC said, “I don’t understand because I couldn’t speak Spanish at all, but it sounds well, haha!” The show ended with a visit to the back room of *Barrio*, which Lita and Marcella had decorated before the event. Marcella said that they had spent about an hour decorating the room with the newspapers, journals, flyers, and paintings that had been used for previous exhibits about Puerto Rican independence and political prisoners.

**Discussion: Unconventional political space for youth.** This event was one of the several *Barrio* events that took varied forms, but the ICLAC Showcase exemplified the important aspects of *Barrio*. First, it functioned as an unconventional educational space (Flores-

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39Manuel Torres was one of the two Puerto Rican political prisoners whose release the PRCC advocated.
Gonzalez and Rodriguez-Muniz, 2006). ICLAC students gradually got more involved in and familiar with Barrio and youth organizing. Many of them learned about important policies (no sexism, no homophobia, collective decision making), the grassroots/self-sustaining nature of the space, and how to collaborate with and care about peers.

“There is a rule in Barrio events when it comes to hip-hop/poetry nights. No sexism, homophobia, racism, all that stuff. . . . It’s pretty much like that we learn how not to be sexist like that,” said Lita, a ICLAC student who had been in the program more than two years. “Do you think that those rules are well respected at Barrio?” I asked. She answered without hesitation, “Yes, it is. They [other youth] do really respect all that stuff.” Gonzalo, a new ICLAC student, talked about the social skills he could learn from Barrio:

You gotta learn how to communicate. You can’t sit there and be a mean kid all the time: “I don’t need you, you don’t need me.” No. You’ve got to learn how to communicate with other people. Even though some people might look weird to you, that’s just how they are. You’ve got to accept them. Then, they accept you who you are. Me personally, I get along with gay people, but I am not gay. I am telling it straight up. If you’re cool to me, I am cool to you. But if you cross the line, that’s it. Those are things that I learned from [ICLAC and Barrio]. You’ve got to be accepting other people. You can’t be just like, “I don’t know, they’re gay. I don’t want to talk to them.” No! There are a lot of people that are gay. There are a lot of people who are cracked. There are a lot of people who are prostitutes. They are the same thing as you. They just told you in a different way. You can’t just necessarily block them out of there.

Second, I think that this event was a good example of informal intergenerational teaching and learning in the community. The current young community leaders grew out of Barrio. Flores-Gonzalez and Rodriguez-Muniz (2006) talked about the early appearance of Barrio before ICLAC and HPNSV came about. As of 2010, Barrio worked closely with its two offspring bodies, ICLAC and HPNSV, and the former Barrio leaders valued its potential. Their presence at Barrio events may have inspired the youth to value Barrio and the community.
Third, Barrio events were part of the identification process to reaffirm the Puerto Rican identity. Like other PRCC cultural events, Barrio events emphasized Latino/a cultural identity and the significance of Paseo Boricua. More importantly, Barrio (and ICLAC) provided the youth a safe space and producing positive energies, as standing against negative environments. Many of the youth were going through very tough realities, relating to gang violence, family issues, drug-issues, under-age drinking, and school issues. At Barrio, the youth could express their feelings and emotions, defying social prejudices and oppressions imposed on Puerto Rican/Latino youth.

Barrio was also a main venue for youth to engage in many community issues and events, including HPNSV. Below is Richard’s vision that he and his friends had had of Barrio in the very early days. In essence, Barrio’s cultural activism was expected to be “a springboard” to an unconventional political space. Main ideas were added in brackets.

We wanted it (Barrio) to be a collective space, as the [book chapter] described. We had on the surface cultural stuff, which is important. . . . We knew we wanted to create a political space that people could have a different set of politics, like one we debated early on is that we didn’t want to have any speeches in the event.

. . . We wanted the space to be political but not in a traditional way, as if someone’s going up and giving a speech. We didn’t want that. We didn’t want like a slogan. We wanted a place that the whole environment was such that it called for critical thinking, reflection, debate, dialogue, that kind of stuff. [Cultural- Unconventional political aspect]

. . . We do education, learn, dialogue and it would be like an alternative and all ways that we could’ve imagined space for young people, as we rent, we funded it, that we were self-sufficient to the degree possible. [Educational aspect] (1st interview, 6/5/2010)

Although the initial vision was not yet realized exactly as they had imagined, Richard saw it a very successful experiment. Barrio was combining cultural, political, and educational

practices, producing an unconventional political space and incubating future activists. It cannot be overemphasized that HPNSV originated from such a movement. *Barrio* was the critical starting point of the pipeline leading to today’s HPNSV.

**Reaching out to Broader Audiences: Using Community Festivals to Advertise HPNSV and Distribute Information**

HPNSV participated in other big community events. The community festival was a great chance for advertising HPNSV to broader audience and distributing housing information and *La Opinión*. In mid-June, Huntington Park was transformed to accommodate numerous small booths and rides for a week-long community festival. HPNSV set up a booth at the festival, and Luis sent out an email asking people to sign up to man the booth.

The HPNSV booth was in the middle of Huntington Park, about six by six feet. Luis, Karla (whom I had not seen in a while), and I set up the tables and set out T-shirts, buttons, bumper stickers, and the *La Opinión* newspaper. T-shirts were sold for $12, and buttons and bumper stickers for $1; they all displayed the HPNSV logo, with the steel Puerto Rican flags (which were symbolic of the community). We attached the big HPNSV banner to the front of the booth, and soon people began stopping by to buy T-shirts and buttons. We also got signatures to support HPNSV projects. Some people asked, “What is the cause? What is this about?” Karla, and sometimes I briefly explained the main purpose of HPNSV. Quinn joined us at the booth, and Luis suggested that we distribute *La Opinión*, so Quinn and I ventured beyond the booth to do so. It was very hot and humid, but the whole park was crowded with people young and old, as well as police, rides, and booths selling food, drinks, music, and various other items. Hip-hop and Bomba music was playing here and there, and Singers were performing live music on the central stage in the park. I passed out more than 70 copies of *La Opinión*. Older people accepted
the newspaper readily, but young people were not as interested and refused to receive. Quinn strategically included a condom, when Quinn handed La Opinión to younger people (He worked at La Vida Center, and he was always interested in preventing HIV and sexually transmitted diseases). His strategy worked.

The previous day, ICLAC students had visited the HPNSV booth instead of riding bicycles before their class started, and they had passed out anti-underage drinking postcards. They split up into several groups, giving postcards to youth, older people, police officers, and people in the booths.

Another day community festival took place on September 5th, called Fiesta Boricua. Main Street was blocked off between the two steel flags, and small booths selling food, drinks, clothing, accessories, and Puerto Rican cultural items occupied both sides of the road. Just like the summer festival, HPNSV set up a booth, put up the big HPNSV banners, and laid out the HPNSV T-shirts, bumper stickers, buttons, and local information about housing & rent. Several volunteers manned the booth, including Luis, Jason, and Juana, but they did not stay long. Instead, Nilda took care of organizing the booth. She was a freshman who had gotten involved in HPNSV through Rosa’ service learning class at Saint Paul University. As time went by, more and more visitors came to Fiesta Boricua, and the road was full of people. People stopped at the booth, picked up copies of La Opinión, bought T-shirts and bumper stickers and buttons, and picked up information about housing and rent in Huntington Park.

A group of three or four people approached the booth, and I heard them saying to one another, “White people are building condos in this area. People were being kicked out from Wicker Park and now it’s hitting here.” Luis brought almost twelve 50-copy bundles of La Opinión, and we started distributing the newspapers on the street. I was no longer shy about
handed newspapers out to strangers. Before handing over the newspaper, I told them, “This is La Opinión.” Most young people turned the newspaper down, but I estimated that seven out of ten older people accepted the paper, sometimes remarking, “Oh, La Opinión!” If I passed an older person without giving them a copy, some of them came back to ask for one. The traditional way of information distribution seemed to be still appreciated by the older generation.

I bumped into several white people, but they did not accept copies of La Opinión. Meanwhile, Mark, a GSLIS graduate student who worked at the PRCC library, visited the HPNSV booth; he had also been distributing La Opinión. Mark was a white graduate student in the GSLIS program who had been working with the PRCC. He said that he purposefully tried to distribute La Opinión to white people, and he had succeeded in getting two white people to accept copies. He said that the fact that he was white might have been appealing to them.

Festivals became a good opportunity for HPNSV to gain exposure to the public and disseminate local information including La Opinión newspaper, the HPNSV’s major tool for communication with the residents of the community.

Chapter Summary

HPNSV’s cultural-social involvement seemed to be primarily concerned with solidifying and reaffirming Puerto Rican identity, which I think is part of the process of community building (Rose, 2000). Such a consciousness became an important ground on which the residents of the Puerto Rican community could claim cultural ownership of the Huntington Park area.

The transnationality between Paseo Boricua and the island of Puerto Rico was embedded in several cultural events that HPNSV involved. A transnational connection to other cultures, though less obvious, surfaced as well, including Palestine, Japan, the North Korean diaspora, and
Latin America's grassroots movements to create alternative democratic practices. (Richard said that HPNSV started as an experiment to implement the alternative democratic movements appearing in Brazil and Mexico).

HPNSV’s (or, the PRCC’s) had a good term with the Mexican group. I had heard rumors about the strained relationship between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans before this study. I once asked Luis about this. Luis said that although people say that, he did not see such an uneasy relationship existing between the two groups. Actually, Gustavo (one of the main leaders of the PRCC), Quinn, and the other co-founder of Barrio were all Mexican; they were wonderful co-workers and friends to the PRCC and HPNSV.

When I asked the same question to Quinn, he provided me an interesting answer. Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship, whereas Mexicans do not, although both groups are classified as Latino in the U.S. This means that Puerto Ricans can benefit from the social welfare system if they do not work, but many Mexicans are undocumented and have to work very hard. This difference concerning the citizenship status might have made Mexicans view Puerto Ricans as “lazy.” Quinn said that Puerto Ricans viewed Mexicans as taking their jobs from them, which made them poor. But in his opinion, the mainstream media was responsible for creating such an image. As an example, he talked about two large gangs in Chicago. The Puerto Rican gang was in the north side, and the Mexican gang was in the south side. When clashes happened between the two, Quinn said that the white-controlled, mainstream media focused on ethnicity, rather than the gang issue per se, which might have deepened the prejudice over the relationships between the two groups.

Another important point in this domain is HPNSV’s connection to Barrio. Barrio was combining cultural, political, and educational practices, producing an unconventional political
space and incubating future activists. *Barrio’s* cultural activism provided the current young leadership of the community (or more specifically the PRCC), also becoming the root of HPNSV. Luis, who often represented HPNSV, tried to connect his ICLAC students to *Barrio* through cultural events, which was a key effort to keep the leadership pipeline of ICLAC-*Barrio*-community activism going.

The community festival provided HPNSV with a chance of reaching out broader audience, making in-person contacts, distributing local information, and fundraising. Note that the traditional way of information distribution, particularly, *La Opinión*, was still appreciated by many people, especially among the older generation.

The next chapter discusses the final domain of HPNSV’s community involvement: Anti-Gentrification Works.
Chapter 10

Anti-Gentrification Works:
Developing Collaboration with Others Based on the Shared Experiences

Though all HPNSV was eventually working toward anti-gentrification, this chapter provides another chance to look at what specific efforts young HPNSV activists made to cope with gentrification as presenting important issues—collaboration with others, door-knocking as a core strategy, youth involvement, its organizational capacity, and internal struggles.

Common Experiences in Different Times

Gentrification was not solely taking place in Huntington Park but has been occurring to other areas for a long time. Luis organized a lecture event, “Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America,” to which he invited an author who wrote a book about ghettoization of Garden Hill in Chicago during the 1950s. On February 2, 2010, several PRCC people including the HPNSV group (Juana, Luis, Pedro, Quinn), Gustavo, Rafael, Quinn, gathered at Barrio for the lecture event. Around 20 people from outside the community came to listen to her lecture, too. Introducing her newly released book, the speaker talked about how the institutionalized legal and financial system, not black pathology or the culture of poverty, caused a racial and economic shift from black to white in Garden Hill during the 1950s, i.e., “ghettoization.” The speaker highlighted out that what was taking place in Huntington Park was what had already taken place in Garden Hill 50 years ago, as such an unjust social system still remained the same. She ended her speech with stressing the importance of forming collaboration across the groups that had already gone through or now being going through the process.

I thought this was a good chance to see the issue of gentrification from a larger historical and societal perspective across communities (I met Lita, a ICLAC student, for the first time on
this day. She said that she was told that something interesting was taking place at *Barrio* and then stopped by. A couple months later, the canvassing event with Zapatista Housing Project was one example of this collaboration across communities that were facing the same fate.

**Forming Collaboration with Zapatista Housing Project beyond Huntington Park**

Affordable apartment was one of the most realistic ways for community residents to stay in the community, as facing against rising rent and property tax. There were two affordable apartment buildings in the community on Main Street: One is on Prospect and the other was Neil. However, as the threat of gentrification was escalating, the need for affordable housing buildings became greater than ever.

The affordable housing issue became a main agenda for April. Luis brought this issue to a table, as exploring possible collaboration with Zapatista Housing Project, in the HPNSV’s collective meeting on March 20, 2010 at Juana’s place. Zapatista Housing Project was a development initiative to build affordable housing for working class people led by B-dike Redevelopment Corporation in the Lincoln Square neighborhood. B-dike (People just called “B-dike”) was a nonprofit community development corporation working for the redevelopment of communities on the northwest side of this city. The two affordable apartments in the community were provided by B-dike.

Adjacent to Huntington Park, Lincoln Square had a large Latino population, not only Puerto Ricans, but also Guatemalans, Dominicans, Mexicans, etc. Just like in Huntington Park, gentrification was a really tough issue to those who were in low-income minority groups in Lincoln Square. Zapatista Housing Project had a plan to build four affordable housing apartments on scattered parcel in the corridor of Bradley Avenue. Bradley Avenue was perceived
as the imaginary boundary of Lincoln Square and Huntington Park among the residents. The
distinction was local and social history-based; Luis said that both Lincoln Square and Huntington
Park were clustered and named West Town in the city planning.

Zapatista Housing Project was entangled with many problems—zoning issue (the
boundary was ever changing, very controversial), funding, and objection to Zapatista Housing
from some homeowners and businesses in the Lincoln Square. According to Luis and Juana, a
group of white people in Lincoln Square sued the mayor of the city of Chicago over the
legislation regarding public affordable housing and zoning. “They are the minority but they have
money to hire lawyers,” Luis said. They feared that the public affordable housing would
cause a decrease in their property values, or “ghettoization” of their neighborhood. Yet, such fear
largely resulted from misconceptions about public affordable housing, and giving the community
residents the right information on the public affordable housing project—especially regarding the
strict selection process of the potential residents—was urgently needed in order to address those
misconceptions.

Zapatista Housing Project was trying to fix the misconception and get signatures to
support affordable housing from the community residents. Quinn asked, “Does that supporting
(getting signatures) have a symbolic or political meaning?” “To be honest, well . . . both,” Juana
answered. Those signatures, if they got a considerably large number of it, would be used to push
an alderman/woman to support the affordable housing in the area, besides symbolic meaning.

HPNSV collective members continued the discussion to plan out specific things in the
next meetings. In the long term, collaboration with B-dike for Zapatista Housing Project was
very important to HPNSV, in that both parties shared a common purpose of providing more
affordable apartments in the communities. Luis said that HPNSV was a relatively new activist
group in the area and that they needed to prove their own capacity as a community organization in order to build cross-community partnership with Zapatista Housing Project. Juana asked to Luis, “How does B-dike feel about it?” “They will doubt it.” Luis answered. They certainly had to prove their organizational capacity of to them.

Luis led a discussion and suggested the main action agenda in relating to canvassing with Zapatista Housing project. On Saturday April 24, HPNSV would go to Lincoln Square and work with Zapatista Housing to door knocking to get the signatures from residents. Prior to that, on April 17, HPNSV decided to participate in the kick-off event for the new community-health promotion, the “67 block-by-Block” campaign.

The “67 block-by-Block” campaign, affiliated with the PRCC, aimed at decreasing high diabetes rate in the community. Many volunteers were going out on the neighborhoods to distribute information about the “67 block-by-Block” campaign. Luis suggested that HPNSV piggyback this opportunity to conduct a brief survey about La Opinión, such as asking people if they received La Opinión regularly, what information they looked into at La Opinión, and what housing resources they needed, etc.

After the rough decisions were made, details were filled later by inner group communication among collective members, mostly between Luis and Juana.

**Recruiting volunteers and effective advertising tools.** Recruiting volunteers was always a very important one in community organizing. Facebook message was the most useful to spread word out.\(^4\) Juana, Luis, and Quinn did not trust emails or E-vite. They thought no one would ever carefully read E-vite messages or the group email messages; those messages were mostly considered as spam mails or sent the trash unread. From their experiences, they preferred

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\(^4\)The HPNSV Facebook page had about 1,100 friends around that time.
using the Facebook message. The tip for attracting people to participate was to make their message sound personal and casual, such as starting with “How are you doing? What are you usually doing on Saturdays? Do you want to come to our event?”

Luis sent out a series of Facebook messages to supporters to ask for volunteer. HPNSV also opened a workshop about HPNSV and door-knocking for fifteen freshman students from Rosa’s class at the Saint Paul University. Rosa, who was closely working with the PRCC, was teaching a class about Puerto Rico’s political, social, and cultural issues at one university in Chicago. She was taking her students to a community Tour to *Paseo Boricua* on April 10th as a part of the fieldwork. After the community tour, HPNSV provided the workshop and tried to recruit volunteers for 17th (the “67 block-by-block”).

**Door-knocking, again: The essence of local strategies.** HPNSV counted door-knocking as the most important local strategies to reach out to the people. HPNSV’s emphasis on door-knocking was already discussed with the electoral campaign in the Chapter 7 (Political involvement), especially regarding building a solid relationship with community residents. Also, door-knocking became an important means to provide the community residents with information about housing resources, because most of them had neither individual access to the Internet nor digital literacy skills to search right information.

**“I want to do my own precinct.”** On April 17th Saturday, I went to the diabetes center on the first floor of *La Estancia* around noon. There were around thirty people in the center and more people continued to arrive. A large-map displaying the neighborhood to be canvassed for

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42Her class required 10 hours of fieldwork in *Paseo Boricua*. Students visited *Paseo Boricua* for a community tour, a lecture about the student strike at the University of Puerto Rico, to find information on houses for rent in the community, etc. HPNSV helped some of the students with their fieldwork. I met a couple students and talked about their experiences, but it is not included in this research.

43*La Estancia*, located at the corner of Prospect and Main Streets, is one of the two public affordable housing buildings in the community.
the “67 block-by-block” campaign was laid on the stand. The director of the community diabetes center gave me a brief explanation about the health campaign and the volunteer’s job was to pass around the flyer of advertising the new project, the “68, block by block campaign,” of the community health center door-to-door that was going to take off a week later.

I looked around see if any ICLAC students came. A few days ago, Luis invited his ICLAC students to come to this event. He said that those who would show up to and participate in canvassing would get the make-up hours. For ICLAC students, it is important to meet the required hours every month to get paid. While waiting, I met one first year college student who volunteered. I assumed she might have been a Saint Paul student, Rosa’s students. Interestingly, she was not related to this community at all but just came.

Juana came with her son, Jose. Luis came but no ICLAC students showed up. Volunteers split into several small teams consisting four or five people. HPNSV had two groups, 10 people altogether including Luis, Juana-Jose, two college students, and two GSLIS students working for the PRCC, and me. We stopped by La Opinión office to pick up several bundles of La Opinión and conduct a quick orientation for door-knocking to ask people’s opinion about La Opinión. One of the college students was surprised by the unexpected door-knocking job, but they soon agreed upon their new job. While walking to the target area, I had a chance to talk to the two college students. Cindy and her friend, both attending a university in Chicago, had taken Elias Torres’s class, History of Puerto Rico. They still kept in touch with him after the class and participated in the event. The survey questions are below:

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44The director of this community health promotion project said that many community residents suffered diabetes, but there was a lack of resources for prevention and treatment. The community diabetes center received about $200 million in funding to provide direct outreach services to community residents living in the 68 blocks of the Huntington Park Neighborhood. The phrase “68 block by block” expressed their strong will to reach out to each and every resident of the community residents.
1) Do you read *La Opinión*?

2) If yes, what articles or information published interests you the most?

3) If no, would you like to receive the newspaper?

   Y N

4) Which of the following issues interest you the most? (You can pick multiple issues): Housing, Ed. Health, Arts & Culture, Business, Sports & Reception, Crime

   Contacting information.

   Name:

   Email:

   Address:

   “I want to do my own precinct.” Juana said as we divided up to smaller groups for the sake of efficiency. In the HPNSV’ political involvement section, she already showed her emphasis on building a personal relationship with community residents through door-knocking. I followed Luis’s door-knocking in the other precinct. Below is what our door-knocking was like.

   He knocked the door. If there was no answer, he put the *La Opinión* and the “68 block-by-block” campaign flyer into the mailbox. Luis said many people did not answer simply because they did not wanted to be bothered or considered it soliciting. After skipping several houses, a middle-aged man (Puerto Rican) wearing veteran army cap opened the door for us. Luis said hi first and then explained first to him the “68 block by block” campaign. The man answered he suffered diabetes, too, appearing to be quite interested in this campaign. Luis started speaking Spanish with him more about the “68 block by block” campaign. Subsequently, Luis asked survey questions. Although not speaking Spanish, I could understand when he spoke, “Si,” he regularly received *La Opinión*. He willingly answered the other questions. I took a peep into Luis’s survey note, saying the man wanted to continue to receive *La Opinión*, be interested in the
section of education, even though they did not have any kids, and housing issues. He was 73 years old and did not have email. He said he did not know anything about computer.

Luis said that if door-knocker did not get few responses, to keep moving forward was important. Many volunteers felt frustrated when they did not get answers, and then soon quit. It took more than 1 hour and 20 minutes; Luis and I completed five surveys from three men and two women aged between late 40s to early 70s.

Except for one man who identified himself as Creole, the other four were Puerto Ricans. Four of them have received quite regularly *La Opinión*, and one who haven’t gotten *La Opinión* said he would like to get it when Luis gave him a brief explanation of *La Opinión*, local newspaper. They were interested in the sections about a variety of topics such as health, business development, crime, education, and housing. All five picked up the issue of housing in common.

**Preparing for a door-knocking event and an internal issue.** That canvassing needed many volunteers. Luis has sent out several emails regarding advertising the event and recruiting volunteers to supporters through Facebook. Quinn also sent links to an online volunteer application form, canvassing procedures, and a script for door-knocking. He was really excited by the canvassing time. One day, Quinn told me through Google Chat, “I really like to canvass, especially when it doesn't involve asking for money. I hated that part of when I canvassed for Democrats and Obama.” This canvassing did not involve asking for money; obviously that made Quinn more excited.

At Juana’s kitchen at night the day before the canvassing day, Juana, Luis, and Quinn were busy with preparing for the next day’s event. Quinn was drawing maps for canvassing. The boundary of Lincoln Square and Huntington Park was not clear. Bradley was regarded as the
boundary of Huntington Park to north. Four public affordable buildings were suggested to be built on the corridor of Bradley.

Luis put a large paper sheet on the wall of kitchen and started writing on the about “What is door-knocking?” “Why is it important?” “How to do door-knocking?” and etc. They were used for tomorrow’s small workshop about door-knocking. While taking my notes sitting on the kitchen table, I partly helped Quinn draw the neighborhood maps for the groups. Jose was watching Shrek in the living room, regularly coming back and forth between kitchen and the living room. Juana finalized 54 volunteers list chiefly recruited through Facebook. Their goal was for each participant to get average 20 signatures (15 to 25 signatures) per one person.

Quinn talked about some tips for door-knocking he learned from the canvassing the African American neighborhoods for Democrats and Obama, such as setting the goals, being serious (at achieving goals), pumping people up, working as a unit, encouraging volunteers to talk to people, not spending time between the doors, and keeping moving forward. He said historically the Democrat Party did not go out for door-knocking in the ghetto (he used this term). Obama was the first Presidential candidate who did a lot of out reach to the groups of color. Then, all of sudden, Luis, looked at me and reminded me of my job, “Here you go! Chaebong, why do you involve here? Tell the story to people! “ Luis added, “This is the most important one.”

Luis and Juana recommended me to go with Roberto’s group that had Megan and Julia. They got the most people out to vote in their precinct at the last primary election. “They always got the most.” Juana said. Luis told me, “They are really committed people. You can see how these people internalized the HPNSV’s ideas.” At the end of preparation, I asked Luis and Juana,
“What's the purpose of petition? Would they have actual power?” “It’s more symbolic power, pushing for local politicians.” Juniata answered.

Door-knocking workshop: An educational opportunity. Around 9:20 a.m., I picked up Juana and Quinn. We then loaded La Opinión in my car, which were going to be distributed during the canvassing. The event was supposed to start at 10 a.m. by providing a door-knocking orientation. On our way driving to Roberto’s church (Roberto was a director of ICLAC) on Bradley, a base of today’s canvassing, Juana all of sudden said to us, “Over there! that’s where I grew up. But the house where I grew up has been completely torn down. It’s now 28 eco-friendly condos there.” It was near around Bradley Avenue, close to Lincoln Square. I glimpsed the building and it was a nice new building. Juana said that it was still heart-breaking to see the new building replacing the old building where she grew up.

Roberto’s storefront church looked like two classrooms sized. Luis, Quinn, and Juana, as a bit feeling behind the schedule, rushed to set up the table and organized things for the workshop and canvassing, La Opinión, clipboards, volunteers lists, and so on. Two B-dike people showed up and around nearly fifty volunteers including Rafael, Megan, Julia, Roberto, and Rosa. I saw many familiar faces from the PRCC—Megan, Julia, Joan, Will (Joan and Will were high school teachers), Elijah (a college student, he was a new comer in the hostel building), Yolanda, Rafael (HPNSV collective), and Rosa (an instructor at Saint Paul University. She regularly opened a service learning course in Paseo Boricua, and was an active member of the PRCC). Seven ICLAC students including Marcella showed up on time at 10 a.m. In the PD class, Luis had asked students to come to this canvassing event. He suggested make-up hours as an incentive for their participation, so that they could get the full stipend.
Around 10:20 a.m., Juana and Quinn started the workshop. Most seats were taken. Roughly over 60 people were present in the room. Juana introduced HPNSV as community action for increasing awareness about gentrification and community issues. “We do have a regular job and are busy, why do we this job?” Juana asked. She answered herself that her motivation was mostly coming from personal things. She told people that the house where she had lived was torn down and 28 eco-friendly condos replaced the place. “We can choose where we live,” she said.

Followed by B-dike people’s short introduction about B-Dike, the history of Zapatista Housing Project history, and the current challenging issues, Luis began his door-knocking workshop. “How many of you have not done door knocking?” Some people including a couple ICLAC students raised hands. “Hey, you did!” Marcella told Iago, as nudging him his head from the behind. Iago had not raised his hand. “Did I?” (Iago) “Yes, you did in ICLAC!” (Marcella). The room was rattled with laughter.

In the workshop, Luis highlighted a core philosophy of community organizing. He emphasized the phrase, “live and help live.” This phrase was one written on the wall of La Vida Center, representing the core idea of the PRCC, collective social ethics. He said, “We have responsibility about our neighborhood.”

During the workshop, he also mentioned his students, “Here are my students. My students, what does ‘systematic’ (organizing) mean?” “Oh, no.” Marcella grumbled (probably she might feel a bit embarrassed) but she quickly answered, “being efficient,” or “making an efficient process.” I found Luis’s interaction with his students, even not intensive, interesting and significant in youth involvement in the community work.
Luis said that door-knocking was a critical strategy to build up long-term relationship with community residents beyond simply getting signatures. The most helpful part to the audience was the actual demonstrations of door-knocking. Most of the participants have not done canvassing before. Luis, Quinn, Megan, Julia created three different situations of door-knocking: one common situation and two unpleasant situations. For example, Luis purposefully pretended to be a mean old man, scaring the door-knockers by bluntly asking several questions about who they were and what they were doing. “Don’t be afraid of answering and try to get back to the script,” Quinn said to the volunteers. The other two cases helped people to understand generally what would happen at the door and how they adapt the manual to different situations.

In the Q & A time at the end of the workshop, Mark asked a question about a screening process for the public affordable housing. He wanted to know how he could answer if people expressed concern about crimes or gang issues relating to the new comers for public affordable apartments. The misconception over public affordable buildings was prevailing, such as that public affordable buildings would make the community ghettoized by bringing more black and brown people into the community. A B-dike representative talked about their own thorough screening system about finances, jobs, and crime records to select residents. She made sure that only people who passed all of the strict selection criteria would be eligible to live in the public affordable apartments. In addition to getting signatures, spreading such right information about public affordable housing was another important mission of the day.

**Youth community engagement.** Juana and Luis originally suggested me to go with the group of Megan and Julia. However, I switched to the other group that ICLAC students joined. I wanted to see what youth experienced in this community event. My group consisted of four adults (including me) and three ICLAC students, Marcella, Igo, and another boy. Four adults
were Yolanda who was a GSLIS student working at the PRCC library (She came to the 67 block-by-block campaign, too), Will was a teacher at the Rivera High School, and another would-be graduate student. She got recruited from the Facebook message one HPNSV collective sent. She was from Lincoln Square.

Walking toward our target area together, Marcella said, “I hate this side of community.” I asked, “Why?” “It just has a lot of problems. I mean, I would not want to live here.” Marcella had some contradictory sides: she did not quite like the community but, on the canvassing day, she worked most actively among the group. Marcella mostly went ahead and knocked the door. “I am volunteering for the ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign. We are getting signatures to support the public affordable housing.” She introduced herself and our job very fluently without any hesitation. She said she has done door-knocking several times through ICLAC.

We saw an old woman in her early seven gardening far inside the front yard. The house was 1.5 storied and had an old style with a long yard, which made a good contrast with the two new houses on each side. We called her from the fence. She slowly stood up and approached to us. Marcella spoke English to her. But she could not speak English. Will spoke to her in Spanish. She asked us to come closer to her, and we walked through the garden and reached where she was sitting. Will explained to her about Zapatista housing in Spanish. As listening to his explanation, she nodded and then entered her house. Will said to us that she went to wash her hands and would come back to sign. After about 5 minutes, she came out from the front door and gave her sign on our form, leaving us with a warm smile and good-bye. Turning back to our way, Will said to me, “She said such a sweet thing to us. ‘What she said in English was, ‘Hope you have a great success and I can live long enough to see those houses constructed.’”
Right after coming out of her house, we ran into a white man in his late 30s. He was unloading large luggage from the van. His two young kids were with him. Will approached him, introducing himself and HPNSV and asking for a signature.

Man: What’s the signature for?
Will: It’s for pushing local politicians.
Man: Where does the apartment go?
Will: It’s on the Bradley corridor.
Man: How many buildings are gonna . . . ? I mean, I am against a bunch of low-income apartments.
Will: This is not for the low-income people, for working class.
Man: I don’t want to see too many low-income people in one section. They should be spread out, not concentrated.
Will: [As highlighting] It’s for working class members of community, not for low-income apartment.
Man: Good cause.

He signed on the form. He was respectful and understood this housing project. Yet, this guy’s lukewarm attitude presented a striking contrast with the old lady’s optimism.

What confused me in this conversation was Will’s saying, “This is for working class people, not for the low-income people.” I asked Marcella and Will about the difference between a low-income apartment and a working class apartment. Marcella answered that a low-income people apartment was for those people below poverty line, belonging to the section 8 (she used the term section 8. Will later said to me that the section 8 was a term used in the urban planning), and people didn’t like the low-income apartments coming to their neighborhoods. Public affordable housing was for working class people making a better income. She said the difference was very important and that was the reason she emphasized we were supporting apartments for
working class people, not for low-income people. It was surprising to me that she knew the term, “section 8” and the difference between apartments for working class people and apartments for low-income people. She was the one who worked the canvassing work most actively in my team.

Around 1 p.m., we obtained 25 signatures. It fell short of Juana’s goal. My note on this day said, “Efficiency is not necessarily the purpose of youth group.” This ant-gentrification effort was interwoven with HPNSV’s efforts, chiefly through Luis, to get youth involved in the community.

What did you learn today? “It’s good. I met people, talk to people. I learned about community. And it’s a good exercise.” Other students answered briefly. And they received the make-up hours. About a week later, an article that Luis wrote in La Opinión about this canvassing event included a quote from one of the students who was in my team, “I do support affordable housing. There are some people, like minorities, who need it because of the [bad] economy.

Four hundred fifty one supportive signatures and the next? In that evening, Juana told me that nearly 70 people participated in the canvassing and collected 451 supportive signatures. HPNSV team got majority about 400. Juana said that Megan and Julia’s team got the most signatures, reaching the original goal, 20 signatures per each person and 120 signatures in one group. Their team was always very proactive in door-knocking, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 7 (Political involvement).

This canvassing event has identified two important issues in HPNSV. The first was how to push electoral officers with those signatures. Juana expected that community leaders like Elias or someone else who had a higher reputation in the community would use these signatures to
push electoral politicians for the bill of the public affordable housing building to be passed as soon as possible.

The other was the internal dynamics within the group. It was seen that Juana, Luis, and Quinn did most of the organizing work and were practically the most active people in HPNSV during the period of data collection. At the beginning of the research period around late January, there were more collective members, but as time went by, several members became inactive for various reasons including schoolwork, jobs, family issues, and scheduling conflicts. Furthermore, except for Juana, Luis, and Quinn, the other collective members lived outside the community and consequently were not as readily available.

After the successful canvassing result, Juana pointed out the internal group dynamic as one of the challenging issues in HPNSV’s work. Being an active member requires personal time and energy, but not everyone can show the same level of commitment. Luis and Quinn also pointed out the difficulty of recruiting activists who would be consistently committed.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter focused on describing HPNSV’s specific efforts to halt gentrification, centering on collaboration with others, door-knocking as a core strategy, youth involvement, their organizational capacity, and their internal struggles.

First, HPNSV was aware that gentrification is a global issue and not just one of Huntington Park, and so made efforts to collaborate with others who were facing similar issues. Luis made an interesting comment on the local-global issue connection in the context of gentrification:

Although, the ¡Huntington Park NO SE VENDE! Campaign focuses primarily in the Huntington Park community through the organizing of residents to support the
development of *Paseo Boricua*, the organization holds onto the idea that an **attack on affordable housing anywhere is an attack on affordable housing everywhere** (April 29, 2010, *La Opinión*; emphasis mine).

The idea, “An attack on affordable housing anywhere is an attack on affordable housing everywhere,” was the key to the collaboration between the communities. In Chapter 12, I further discuss this issue concerning the relational connectivity of local and global, which was discussed as one of the vital features of local civic citizenship in Chapter 2.

Door-knocking was confirmed as a main strategy, again. Although door-knocking required significant time and energy, HPNSV saw it as the most critical way to obtain solid support from community residents by building in-person relationships with them. In particular, the Zapatista Housing Canvassing demonstrated to the people that HPNSV did not go door-knocking only during election period but worked also during the ordinary times for the community.

Sometime after the canvassing day, Quinn and Juana realized that the workshop was a very educative tool for people to learn about door-knocking and collaboration between groups facing the same issues. This kind of collaboration involved sharing information on pressing issues about public affordable housing, mutually understanding each party’s work. In light of the workshop’s educative potential, Quinn and Juana started writing a manual for further workshops, which they hoped would also increase community interest in participating in HPNSV.

Luis’ effort in attempting to get the youth involved in community issues was very evident. This was another example of providing civic apprenticeship for youth. He offered an incentive for their participation (make-up hours). Although youth participation was not wholeheartedly voluntary, I believe the incentive was a reasonable idea to promote youth
engagement. The next chapter will discuss what youth thought about their learning experience with ICLAC.
Chapter 11

What the Youth Thought

I was interested in any possible youth engagement in HPNSV. The related research question was, “What, if any, is the gap between the adult leaders’ expectations for the young participants and the young participants’ actual learning experiences in this campaign?” (Research question 2). This chapter describes the ICLAC youth’s interviews, including their thoughts about gentrification and the PD classes. Before I started my fieldwork, I did not know of the work Luis did for the ICLAC program. As the data collection proceeded, this youth engagement section became more significant than originally planned.

In the earlier interviews with Gonzalo, Alicia, and Lita, I asked, “Have you heard of gentrification? If you have heard of this term, can you tell me what you think about it?” As more observations on ICLAC were made, however, I discovered that gentrification was not directly handled in its curriculum, and some students had hard time understanding my questions about gentrification. Thus, for the later interviews after mid-April, I began giving that question less priority and asked more questions about the youth’s experiences in the ICLAC program with the Participatory Democracy (PD) classes and the anti-underage drinking campaign.

Accordingly, in this chapter, I briefly describe how the youth participants understood the issue of gentrification and how they perceived the term “participatory democracy” in connection with the PD class and their community engagement. Table 10 presents the basic profiles of the youth participants. I usually started the interviews by asking about their interest in ICLAC, rather than getting straight to the hard questions about gentrification or participatory democracy. Because of limitations in space and time, I did one or two interviews with each of the youth.
Table 10  
Profiles of Youth Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Gonzalo</th>
<th>Alicia</th>
<th>Lita</th>
<th>Marcella</th>
<th>Cynthia</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Sofia</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year in ICLAC</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; (Joined in Feb)</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; (Joined in Feb)</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; (joined in April)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>French</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guatemalan</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Puerto Rican</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Reported by Lita)</td>
<td>(Reported by a lady from church)</td>
<td>(Reported by a lady from church)</td>
<td>(Reported by a lady from church)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Westwood</td>
<td>Rivera</td>
<td>Rivera</td>
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<td>Rivera</td>
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<td>Lincoln Square</td>
<td>Huntington Park</td>
<td>Northeast of Huntington Park</td>
<td>Not Huntington Park (Black Neighborhood)</td>
<td>Not Huntington Park (Mexican Neighborhood)</td>
<td>Huntington Park</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>The U.S.</td>
<td>The U.S.</td>
<td>The U.S.</td>
<td>The U.S.</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Large Disparities in Puerto Rican Identity and Understandings of Gentrification

A sense of belonging to the Puerto Rican community was an important factor to understand youth’s perception of gentrification, as it was among the adult participants. Yet, more disparities were found among the youth participants than among the adult participants in their understanding of gentrification, their sense of belonging to the community, and their Puerto Rican identity. I would like to briefly describe the two contrasting perspectives on gentrification that surfaced among the youth participants: (a) a strong Puerto Rican identity, characterized by the young HPNSV activists, and (b) a very individualistic, non-Puerto Rican identity.

Strong Puerto Rican identity and sense of belonging. Alicia, Lita, Gonzalo, and Marcella had a relatively clear understanding of gentrification. Having been in the ICLAC program for the longest time, Alicia and Lita had had the chance to learn more about gentrification in ICLAC during its first year, when gentrification had been a focal topic. Gonzalo had heard about gentrification from his principal at Rivera High School. Alicia, Lita, and Gonzalo all viewed gentrification as upper class or white people pushing people out of their homes and taking their space. Gonzalo explicitly mentioned that “white people” pushed them out of the community. Lita said, “I don’t want to say ‘white people,’ but that’s basically what you see. There’s basically more condos, more white people, more white restaurants.”

Alicia, a 17-year-old student at Westwood High School, said, “It [gentrification] is totally wrong. I think it’s bad to push other cultures out of their own community and environment, just for building condos or something like that.” Yet, another day, she said that gentrification could be both good and bad for the community: “It can help the community, bringing in money and stuff. It could help the community’s economy, but I don’t think that it’s that great, because you’re pushing other people out of their home, just for stores.”
Alicia expressed strong consciousness of Puerto Rican identity: “We are proud to be who we are. We really don’t let other people tell us what we can and cannot do.” She also had a clear understanding of the purpose of the ICLAC program, describing it as “producing something positive to the community.”

We’re trying to make a positive outcome to the community. I like the community. This is who I am, I am a Puerto Rican. I am born in Puerto Rico. I want to make a positive contribution to the community. I rarely care about pay or anything. I really like the graphic stuff and doing photography stuff. (March 23, 2010)

Lita, a 17-year-old student at Rivera High School, was one of a couple of students who had been in ICLAC from its beginning. She was very committed to the ICLA radio program with the role of leadership.

Lita had not known what the gentrification meant until she started the ICLAC program 2 years ago. At that time Luis was the instructor, and he taught the students about gentrification and the history of the community. Lita said, “They [the developers] are saying they are trying to make the community a better place, meaning no violence or gangs or anything like that. But they’re not, they’re not fixing problems but just pushing it away.” When she was young, Lita witnessed her grandmother’s church being pushed out of its building because it could not afford the high rising rent. The building became a sushi bar 4 years later. And she viewed the new businesses and condos as being mostly for white people, not for minorities.

Until this day now . . . and [it’s] a sushi bar. It’s located on Bradley. It took almost four years for the place to open. It’s pretty much everywhere. I see condos being built. There’s more, I don’t want to say “white people,” but that’s basically what you see. There’s basically more condos, more white people, more white restaurants, basically more places where the minorities can’t afford to be at. (March 21, 2010)

Lita believed that the people in the community had the power to stop gentrification. She identified herself as Guatemalan-Mexican, but she still considered herself a part of the Puerto Rican community, Paseo Boricua. “I would like to be a part of [the community]. Because, of
course, I am now a part of the community, I really don’t think that they are able to take away from here.”

Gonzalo, an 18-year-old student at Rivera High School, expressed an articulate and strong opinion of gentrification. He was born in Huntington Park, moved to Florida when he was eight, and the came back to Huntington Park three years ago. He said that he heard about gentrification from his principal, Ken, when he first attended Rivera High School. He saw gentrification as “bullying.” He said:

Basically, what they [Rivera High School] say is white people are trying to push the lower classes out of their space and make their own community out of there. I see that as really being bullies. That's not fair, because just because you got more money, you can’t push people out of the community. Let them live and be happy. Don’t try to take somebody else’s community.

He said he was proud to be a Puerto Rican as well, seeing gentrification as a threat to his Puerto Rican identity.

This is our community. We got two big old flags. Why are you knocking down our community? I remember when these flags were put up when I was little before I left. Every Puerto Rican was proud. This is our community, called “Paseo Boricua” for a reason! This is the only part we got in Chicago. There is no part like that in Florida and Iowa [where he has been]. . . . Since we come from a little island, we’re really proud of having at least one part out of this huge city of ours. Why are you going to take that from us? Is that fair? You’ve got a whole other country that you take care of, that you have control over. Why are you going to do that? That’s not fair. (March 28, 2010)

Interestingly, he suggested an alternative idea that he thought both community residents and developers would benefit from.

Why don’t they just come, “Look, how about I offer you a partnership and, you know, I upgrade your place, and the more business you make, you share that with,” instead of having a broke down place like that building right there, you see the paint falling off, why don’t they just upgrade that building, make it nicer, still part of Paseo Boricua, still a Puerto Rican owner, whatever, just that they share it? That’s what they should do. (March 28, 2010)
His suggestion might be idealistic, but I think it is important because it shows that he did not approach the issue of gentrification with a narrow mind.

**Individualism and distancing from the Puerto Rican identity.** Marcella, a 17-year-old student at Rivera High School, has been in the radio program at ICLAC for one year. She was close to Lita in the radio program, having a lot of familiarity with the program. Unlike Lita, Alicia, and Gonzalo, however, Marcella did not associate herself with the community and refused to join in their “Puerto Rican-hood.” Identifying herself as part French and Italian, as well as Puerto Rican, she said, “I’m multi-racial, and I choose not to assimilate to the Puerto Rican culture [just] because it’s the majority in my bloodline. I enjoy being a mixture. I think it’s more interesting.” In this respect, Marcella said that she was really upset when ICLAC and her school consistently pushed her to choose a side, either being Puerto Rican or non-Puerto Rican.

Like Marcella, Cynthia, a 17-year-old student, also resisted being automatically classified as Puerto Rican just because one of her parents was Puerto Rican. Cynthia newly joined ICLAC in February, and she barely knew of the community, because grew up in an African American community several blocks away from *Paseo Boricua*. Cynthia said, “I like white music . . . I am a Puerto Rican, but that doesn’t mean that I am connected to the community.”

She said she neither knew how to dance nor spoke Spanish, which Cynthia said were stereotypical characteristics of Puerto Ricans: “Every Puerto Rican knows how to dance Salsa and speak Spanish.” Cynthia identified herself as a “Puerto Rican-American.” Marcella, who was sitting next to Cynthia, also said, “We live in the America, and we are all Americans.”

Marcella talked more about her individualist attitude:

I’m very individualistic. I’m a techie. I was born in the techie era. This day and age, this society is teaching everyone to be more individualistic. That’s why there’s ten-year-olds with cellular phones texting and everything. And it’s teaching you to want the technology to be more individualistic, but in a sense that’s just the capitalist society we live in. It’s
me, me, me, more money for me, me, me. So it’s really hard for someone to attempt to implement that sense of brotherhood and community within people. Because, like I said, I’m Latina, but that doesn’t mean I’m actually going to be able to relate to other Latinos. (May 2, 2010)

Marcella’s individualistic mindset showed in her opinion of gentrification as well.

Marcella said, “I feel like it [gentrification] is taken as more personal than it’s supposed to be.

It’s like, [My friend says] “Oh, you didn’t know Doña Blah-Blah was living in that house.” It’s like, [I say] “Whoa. Don’t be mad at the new resident.” If you see a cheap house at a good price, and it’s a really good home, aren’t you going to take it? If it’s close to your job, you can commute to work faster, and you have the money? Aren’t you going to take the opportunity? I ask that question to everyone, and the answer’s always yes. If it’s affordable, if it’s in the area, if it’s convenient—what’s the problem with taking it? If you don’t know the background of your house, boo-hoo. Who cares? (May 2, 2010)

Obviously, her perspective was very different from that of the other participants. She even asked me, “Why do we have to care about the community?” I answered that individual welfare was inseparable from the community’s welfare, but she said that she did not belong to the community, and that there was no reason for her to care about the community.

Marcella’s individualistic perspective, however, sometimes seemed contradictory to her actual behavior. From my observation, she was an active member of ICLAC and Barrio. She was quite close to Lita, and both of them often worked together organizing Barrio events, Marcella herself sometimes performing poetry at the Barrio events. At the Zapatista Housing Project canvassing, it was Marcella who, taking a leadership role in the group, explained to people that we were supporting the apartments for “working class people,” not the ones for low-income people. Yet, as seen at the same time, she was very cynical about the focus on collectivism and Puerto Rican identity at ICLAC, Barrio, and her school.

I personally became close to Marcella over the course of the data collection. She said that, like many of the youth in the community, she had not had an easy life, sometimes working
three other jobs to make ends meet. She thus perceived the ICLAC program as a job that she had to do to pay the bills.

All in all, racial/ethnic identity and belonging physically to the community were decisive elements in how people saw the issue of gentrification. Half of the youth participants that I interviewed did not clearly understand what gentrification meant, especially if they were not from the Huntington Park area or newly joined ICLAC. But even so many of them knew the phenomena of gentrification, new buildings rising up, more white people coming in, and people who lived in the community of a long time being pushed out.

Some had a very clear and critical understanding of gentrification, specifically based on their past experiences of seeing poor people pushed out of the community. Gonzalo, was a strong advocate of *Paseo Boricua* and saw gentrification as social “bullying.” Alicia, Lita, and Gonzalo all expressed a strong Puerto Rican identity and a sense of belonging to the community, and that was one of the main causes that they wanted to preserve community in the face of gentrification. Nevertheless, there was an individualistic perspective denying the collective Puerto Rican-ness and legitimizing gentrification in Marcella.

**Community Engagement and Participatory Democracy**

During the time of data collection, ICLAC was devoted to anti-underage drinking campaign. Students in the four different media programs in ICLAC created varied forms of media projects for this campaign, such as posters, radio public service announcements, photo images, videos, and a play. Many of ICLAC youth agreed in their reflection note for the new ICLAC book that they learned much about the community and multi-media skills, as well as anti-underage drinking, from ICLAC.
As discussed in Chapter 8, the Participatory Democracy (PD) class on Mondays was an anchor where students in four different media classes met together and exercise grassroots democratic practices. I asked the youth participants how they understood the meaning of participatory democracy in regard to their activities at ICLAC.

**Some clear descriptions of participatory democracy.** Alicia, one of the most committed youth at ICLAC, connected participatory democracy to the activities in which ICLAC students participated in the community—at what she called “community stuff,”—such as community surveys and anti-underage drinking advertisements with multi-media technology. Although she struggled to make a clear connection between what they did at ICLAC and the term participatory democracy, she said:

I don’t know (laugh), I guess, [participatory democracy means] people participate in democracy and we put into the community, like, by doing the survey. We’re letting people know real things. What we do here was, like, when we go out to the community, I like . . . how we reach out to people. Huntington Park, some people think it’s a bad neighborhood or a horrible neighborhood, but really it’s not. It’s just how people perceive it. I don’t want to say that’s right. This isn’t a bad community. Not every Latino drinks or do drugs or all the other stuff. Some people do it, some people don’t. (April 16, 2010)

Lita, another devoted student in ICLAC, understood participatory democracy in connection with community engagement. She thought that the emphasis on community engagement in ICLAC made ICLAC distinctive from a typical afterschool program:

The reason why we have PD is because ICLAC is not just an after school program that they just tell you, “Do this, do that,” and that’s it. They [ICLAC] actually want to involve in community, that’s why we have participatory democracy [class], because it teaches about the community, what’s going on, gentrification, all that stuff, political prisoners. (April 6, 2010)

Like several other youth, she used the names Barrio and ICLAC interchangeably because they were tied so closely to each other. She valued the lessons that the youth could learn by organizing Barrio events, such as the rules at Barrio: no homophobia, no racism, and collective
decision making, which she did not learn in school. “I really didn’t learn anything about it [democracy]” Lita answered, when I asked her to tell me anything that she could recall from her school years about democracy. Other youth participants gave me similar answers displaying disillusions on school education. I revisit this issue in the later part of this chapter.

Marcella also had a clear understanding of participatory democracy in connection with the learning activities in ICLAC: “We already know what it [participatory democracy] means. We do community stuff. We participate in our community, where is democracy? So we all decide what we do.” She added, “Basically [to know] what’s going in community, and how to give [something] back to community. This is a community-based program. So, we go out to Paseo Boricua and basically, like, [a girl sitting next to her said, “Try to make it better”], try to make it better, pass out flyers, community events, things like that.”

An ambiguous idea of participatory democracy. Cynthia, the 17-year-old student at Westwood mentioned before, and Adam, a 15-year-old student at Rivera High School, joined ICLAC out of their passion for music. Being able to use radio studio at ICLAC was a big incentive for them, because they could the use the sound equipment to create their own hip-hop music. In addition, Adam wanted to have a safe space to keep away from gangs after school, and ICLAC was a perfect fit. Cynthia and Adam were best friends and had newly joined the program in February.

Neither Adam nor Cynthia was from the community; Cynthia lived in an African American neighborhood and Adam lived in a Mexican neighborhood. They knew little about the community or the issue of gentrification. Adam said he had heard about the term gentrification but had no idea what it meant. In retrospect, I realize that if I had explained the phenomenon of
gentrification using concrete examples, I might have been able to get better answers to the interview questions.

Below is an interview about how Adam and Cynthia perceived participatory democracy. This interview was almost like a casual conversation between Adam and me, with Cynthia joining us about halfway through the interview. I include a lengthy chunk of conversation below to show what our conversation was really like. Adam did not like the PD class but he attended in order to continue in the radio program. He said, “But I understand it why they [the PD class] are trying to get. . . . They’re trying to—they’re talking about food stuff [the community health class], staying healthy, uh . . . [pause].” I asked:

Me: Can you think of anything relating to democracy that you learned from your schools? Elementary or junior high school?

Adam: Like what?

Me: Like vote, it could be a part of democracy.

Adam: O.k. Voting. (Pause) They haven’t told me anything about democracy.

Me: Have you ever heard that “democracy is by the people, for the people, of the people”?

Adam: For the people, of the people. Yeah. I have heard about it.

Me: What would you think about it?

Adam: “Of the people, by the people, for the people.” I don’t truly believe that. I don’t think that our government is trying to be that way today. I think that one, let’s say, “by the people or for the people” Some cases, definitely not. For some people, towards rich people—I am not going to say white people, because some white people are as poor as me—for rich people . . .

(At this point, Cynthia came in and greeted us)

Me: You can join us. We’re taking about democracy. Can you think of anything related to democracy that you learned from school?

Cynthia: What did Adam say? (laughs)
Adam: I don’t know about democracy. I don’t even know how to spell it.

Cynthia: Tell me what it [democracy] means.

Adam: Have you heard about “democracy is by the people, for the people, of the people”?

Cynthia: That’s what democracy means?

Me: Mm-hm. It generally captures the meaning of democracy.

Cynthia: For everybody? Basically for everybody? (Inaudible mumbles through a mouthful of food.) Why are you asking me about democracy?

Me: Because, you know, the Monday class is Participatory Democracy. Do you know what that means?

Cynthia: I participate in the community, because we’re all one. That’s what it means, right?

Me: Is that your definition of participatory democracy?

(Cynthia and Adam joke; Adam looks bored)

Adam: I don’t understand anything about that class (in a very bored tone, completely different from when he talked about music)

Me: PD class might be difficult and boring to you [Adam]. But does it help you better understand this community?

Cynthia: It helps. I am just the same as him. He just . . . (laughs) The only thing that actually I learned is actually obese people in Huntington Park—

Adam: Not obese, but “unhealthy.”

Cynthia: They need affordable housing. I learned about the history of Puerto Rican people, some Puerto Rican people, famous, influential people in Puerto Rico (emphasis mine). (April 28, 2010)

In the beginning, Adam did not recall anything related to democracy from what he learned in school. I had to give him some hints, such as “voting,” or Lincoln’s famous quote, to draw out more answers. He, like Lita, was very cynical about the education that he received about democracy, saying, “They haven't told me anything,” or “I don’t even know how to spell
An interesting point for me was when Cynthia and Adam both replied, “Tell me what it [democracy] means,” rather than answering the question. I scrambled to think of something to help them to think about democracy, so I brought up the famous quote, “Of the people, by the people, for the people.” Then, Adam was able to express his disenchantment with the government: “I don’t think that our government is trying to be that way today.” Cynthia recalled what she had recently learned in the PD class, but neither Cynthia nor Adam made a clear connection between the activities at ICLAC and participatory democracy.

Two months later after this interview, I had another chance to talk with them about their understanding of participatory democracy in connection with ICLAC. By that time, they were completely immersed in ICLAC and Barrio Urbano. I asked Adam and Cynthia, “Do you think that ICLAC and Barrio events are relating to some doing real democracy in this community, especially for youth?” Cynthia replied, “What’s democracy again?” I gave Lincoln’s quote again, and Cynthia answered, “I guess, maybe, a little bit, just because it’s trying to get all people together as one. Besides that, like, try to get people together, and be as one and support as one. Cool!” Adam said, “Huntington Park, we’re about the people. We let people perform. You say, ‘I want to perform,’ and we let you perform, yeah!”

Cynthia’s and Adam’s answers were affected by the quote I had given them; if I had provided them with a different or better definition of democracy, they may have given me different answers. In any case, in spite of a little progress in their thoughts, it is hard to say that they made a clear connection between participatory democracy and the activities at ICLAC.

Sofia, a 15-year-old student at Rivera High School, was the newest student at ICLAC. She was interested in becoming a journalist, so she joined the journalism class in April. Sofia was born in Puerto Rico, having moved back and forth between an island and the U.S. several
times, and finally came back to Chicago six months ago. Three years ago, she had stayed in the Huntington Park area for a whole school year. Like Cynthia and Adam, Sofia did not know much about the community, having barely heard of the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign or the term gentrification. But she did notice differences from 3 years ago. “[Three years ago], when I passed by here, I didn’t see so many posters, or I didn’t see that many activities. But now I see all these organizations. People are helping each other out. They’re really together.” Sofia said that the community made her proud to be a Puerto Rican, which she had never thought about when she was in Puerto Rico.

When I lived in Puerto Rico, I viewed the U.S. as the best place ever, because all the free stuff they have and everything. But being here and having people describe how beautiful Puerto Rico is, how independent it is, how it went through so much—it made me proud of being a Puerto Rican. Before, in Puerto Rico, I didn’t care about that. (May 16, 2010)

I wondered how she understood democracy regarding the PD class on Mondays. “Can you think of anything related to democracy that you have learned from your school years?” She replied, “Can you define democracy first? Then I can give you a good answer.” This was the same reaction that I had gotten from Cynthia and Adam. “I don’t know what it means,” Sofia said. “I know I hear it and understand it, but the real definition, I don’t know.” I asked her, “Did you take any government classes?” She replied, “Yes, I took a government class. They mentioned democracy, but they didn’t explain what democracy means. It was just like, go over it, just a word, and just use it.” I did not want to stop there, so I used Lincoln’s quote again. Although her ensuing answer was vague, Sofia tried to find the meaning of democracy in the community work:

Democracy means for the people, participating for the people, so maybe it’s like participating in activities and that helps the whole community. For the people, as if it helps yourself, like helps people, its activities are done by people to help that help for the people, sort of. (May 16, 2010)
Sofia said that the ICLAC program, PD class, radio, journalism, showcase, and community events helped people better understand the community in different ways.

Radio, you can hear a voice of the community telling about what’s happening. And the graphics part, posters help you become aware of what’s happening in the community. Or journalism class helps you read about what’s happening in the community in different ways. Yes, I think this program is really good for the community (emphasis mine). (May 16, 2010)

**Discussion and Chapter Summary**

Alicia and Lita, who had been at ICLAC for the longest time, heard about gentrification through Luis, when gentrification was a focal issue in the program. Gonzalo and Marcella had heard of gentrification at their high school, Rivera High School. Gonzalo specifically mentioned his principal, Ken, one of founding members of the HPNSV—PD project, as the main source for the information. Alicia, Gonzalo, and Sofia were very proud to be Puerto Ricans, and their community, *Paseo Boricua*, was a critical source of their pride. Although Lita was Mexican-Guatemalan, she had a strong passion for the community and particularly the ICLAC program. She wanted to come back and teach art students in the community after studying art in college.

Lita, Alicia, and Gonzalo were all against people being pushed out of their community and losing their cultural roots. Gonzalo showed the deepest attachment to this community. They were careful not to simply blame “white people” for gentrification, but, as Lita said, that was what they saw in the neighborhood. Lita thought that the developers’ rationale for developing the community was not sincere. “They don’t fix the problem. They’re just pushing it away.” Gonzalo compared gentrification to bullying. Noticeably, he suggested his own win-win solution between the local businesses and developers. Although it may have been idealistic, it demonstrated that he was not merely saying “No, don’t come to our community.”
Not everyone agreed with this view of gentrification; it was complicated. New students who did not come from the community, like Adam, Cynthia, and Sofia, had not heard of the term gentrification and they did not have a clear understanding of it. (They might have understood the phenomenon of gentrification per se, but unfortunately I did not ask a question about that.) In particular, Marcella had a very different, individualistic perspective that legitimized gentrification.

In brief, the youth’s understanding of gentrification was deeply related to their Puerto Rican identity, as it had been among the adult participants; the disparities in Puerto Rican identity correlated with the different understandings of gentrification. Marcella often did not share her thoughts with the other members of ICLAC, because she knew what the cultural environment in ICLAC was like and probably did not want to cause unnecessary conflict. And Marcella’s opinion about gentrification showed that there was a gap between the young activists at HPNSV and youth participants.

Adam, Cynthia, and Sofia were relatively new to the program and did not live in the community, so they had little idea of gentrification. Adam lived in a Mexican neighborhood, and Cynthia lived in an African-American neighborhood. Neither felt that they belonged to the Huntington Park community. Cynthia, like Marcella, did not feel a part of the “Puerto Rican-ness.” But at the end of the semester, she said that she knew more about the history and culture of the community.

Second, whereas some of the youth had a general understanding of participatory democracy and saw the ICLAC activities from such a perspective, others did not. Sometimes, they asked me for a definition of democracy. To me, it seemed that the range of activities at ICLAC—the community survey, the community health lectures, bike-riding, creating and
disseminating health information, organizing cultural events, fund-raising, the anti-underage drinking campaign, participating community events—all pointed to practicing participatory democracy. Yet, some of the youth participants could not associate those activities with participatory democracy, supposedly because a definition of participatory democracy might have not been fully addressed in the PD class. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 8, I still view ICLAC as a good venue for ecological civic learning in the community, a starting point of the pipeline to producing community leadership, which was what Luis, on behalf of HPNSV, was aiming for.

I, however, found youth answers like, “I haven’t learned anything about democracy at school” discouraging. It could be that, although their school had taught them about democracy, they just could not remember. Another possibility is that my interview questions did not elicit good responses on the subject. Whatever the case, their school education was barely acknowledged in this context, and it made me wonder where the school’s democracy education is and how we can make it better. This is a hard question to answer, but I think it is necessary to think about it more seriously.
Chapter 12

Discussion: Where Is Local Civic Citizenship

Chapters 7 through 10 dissected HPNSV’s communal practices into four domains: politics, education, cultural-social involvement, and anti-gentrification. Each chapter presented events and discussion relevant to the domain of interest, namely: an electoral campaign for the political domain; the ICLAC afterschool program for the educational domain; cultural events and festivals for the cultural-social domain; and canvassing and petitioning for public affordable housing for the anti-gentrification domain. Importantly, in practice, these four areas are intertwined. In this chapter, I put the domains back together and discuss, from a holistic perspective, the main research question: “What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed surrounding the ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign on Paseo Boricua, Chicago?” To answer this question, I focus on four key findings: (a) the ecology of civic learning and the community leadership pipeline, (b) praxis as a tool for transforming the world, (c) the relational connectivity between local and global, and (e) the absence of the language of citizenship. Though not in a one-to-one correspondence, these four findings address the four sub-research question topics: (a) the HPNSV activists’ understanding of gentrification, (b) the young participants’ experiences in this campaign and their relationships with the adult leaders, (c) the development of local strategies/tools, and (d) the tension between being a member of Paseo Boricua and of the larger society.

The Ecology of Civic Learning: The Community Leadership Pipeline

Although valuable to the analysis of the data, the segmentation I created in Chapters 7 through 11 is not the point of this study. The work of the HPNSV community should be
understood as one whole piece; for example, the electoral campaign work was handled primarily in the political involvement category, but it also provided the HPNSV activists with opportunities for collective reflection of their reasons for participating in the campaign, and how those reasons related to the overall goal of HPNSV. This also constituted an educational component. Likewise, HPNSV’s involvement in cultural events and festivals took place not only in appreciation of Puerto Rican culture and identity (cultural) but also as a manifestation of their support for the independence of Puerto Rico (political), an assertion of their social ownership of the land (anti-gentrification), and a means of passing on their Puerto Rican cultural identity to the younger-generation (educational). Zapatista canvassing (anti-gentrification) could serve as a good field experience for youth to learn about canvassing and the issues surrounding public affordable housing in the community (educational); it was also a very immediate and direct form of political involvement, as the signatures were solicited for the purpose of bringing about relevant legislation. Finally, Luis’ work at ICLAC (educational) certainly intersected the three other domains; he taught students about community resources that they otherwise would not have learned from regular schools (educational/political), provided chances to enjoy community festivals and cultural events (cultural-social), and also helped them to participate in the work of HPNSV (anti-gentrification).

Most of all, HPNSV’s connection with Barrio was critical in understanding its community work. As Richard said, had it not been for Barrio, none of the work done in the community, including HPNSV, would have come about; Barrio’s youth activism led to a higher level of community activism. I see HPNSV’s community work as an extension of community activism among minority young people, in spite of the fact that the HPNSV activists were a bit old to be called “youth.” Also, it is notable that HPNSV, Barrio, and ICLAC were
interconnected, together constructing a civic space for both youth and adults. Briefly, I will outline the role of Barrio as the center of HPNSV, youth community activism, and the ecology of civic learning in the community.

**Barrio as the foundation of HPNSV.** Barrio supported all of the current young leadership of the community (or more specifically the PRCC), including HPNSV. Luis always exerted an effort to connect his ICLAC students to Barrio and thus keep the leadership pipeline (Ginwright, 2010b) of ICLAC-Barrio-community activism going. Although Barrio has thus far been discussed primarily in regard to the category of HPNSV’s cultural involvement, Barrio’s actual influence was not limited to the cultural domain. Rather, Barrio was an anchor for educational, social, and political activism in the community. At their cultural events, youth expressed their thoughts and feelings through hip-hop, spoken word, poetry, song, painting, etc. They could develop and discover their artistic talents, possibly enhancing their collective self-esteem and confidence, challenging prejudices about youth of color. These cultural performances were, in the words of Flores-Gonzales, et al., “not only a catalyst of individual experiences but also a forum where youth become aware of community problems and understand the political, economic, and social forces that create these problems” (2006).

Megan’s poem, “Why don’t I cry blood?” and Luis’ “Resisting Oblivion,” were written from their own personal challenges being Puerto Rican/Latino in U.S. society. These stories evoked real empathy among the audience, possibly even awakening the younger members politically, cultivating a consciousness of solidarity, and forming a collective power for a change. HPNSV grew out of such a movement. What Luis always stressed at ICLAC was the importance of connecting the ICLAC youth to Barrio in order to continue Barrio’s legacy.
Barrio’s youth activism spoke to the issue of holistic and ecological civic learning for youth. Barrio’s cultural events that ICLAC students organized and performed, introduced in Chapter 8, provided a glimpse of holistic and ecological civic learning; ICLAC students organized and advertised the event, performing poetry, hip-hop music, motions, and a song. During the cultural performances, the youth vented their emotions—anger, bitterness, grief, frustration, joy, pride, confidence, etc., in a constructive and positive way, as always emphasized in the group. Arousing empathy among their peers and participants, they also appreciated one another’s artistic talents; respected each other; abided by Barrio’s rules against homophobia, sexism, and racism; encouraged each other; and intermingled with the first generation Barrio leaders (Richard, Ken, and Julia) and the current leaders (Luis and Megan).

Efforts to keep close connections across Barrio, ICLAC, and HPNSV. Luis’ effort to sustain the pipeline for community leadership across Barrio, ICLAC, and HPNSV was certainly remarkable. In his PD classes (and the rest of the ICLAC program), Luis taught the youth about important community issues, history, and resources, also conducting an anti-underage drinking campaign, and trying to get youth involved in community events and Barrio.

In particular, I believe the activities that the youth completed for the PD class were all very good examples of civic learning connected with lived experiences in the community: a community survey, discussion, distribution and reading of La Opinión, and painting a mural. For instance, in the community survey, the youth went out on the street, asked random community people survey questions, and received various answers, both negative and positive, about the community. Luis led youth to think about why people gave them negative answers, also helping them to realize the many resources in the community and to develop a positive perspective of it. The month-long process of creating a mural also presented an interesting way for youth to
display their artistic sense of their transnational imaginations, encourage each other, collaborate, and value their community resources and Puerto Rican identity.

Distribution and reading of La Opinión also led the youth to understand the importance of local information in response to the twisted coverage of the community in the mainstream media. The youth were encouraged to contribute their articles to La Opinión, and the students in the journalism class sometimes wrote articles about anti-underage drinking campaign. The intertwining Barrio-ICLAC discussion in Chapter 8 portrayed the gradual and ordinary way that the ICLAC youth became connected to Barrio. They discussed the meaning of the core rules of Barrio: fostering a collective mentality and eschewing homophobia, sexism, and racism. In addition, most classes in ICLAC, including PD, took place at Barrio, which might have helped ICLAC youth to become more familiar with Barrio. They also began organizing Barrio events, performing, and having more meetings with Barrio leaders. Indeed, most ICLAC youth often used the terms ICLAC and Barrio interchangeably.

Although thus far not fully emphasized in this paper, Megan’s role in connecting Barrio and ICLAC alongside Luis was very important. One of her high school teachers discovered her talent for poetry, which allowed Megan to sublimate her anger and other negative emotions rooted in her tough personal life into an artistic form, bringing her praise and acknowledgement. This changed her life, leading her to graduate from high school, go on to college, and in time become one of the leaders at Barrio. She also actively participated in other community work, emerging as another young role model for youth and an agent for change in the community. Megan followed the pipeline of community leadership, in the wake of predecessors like Luis, Juana, Julia, Ken, and Richard. There were several other youth leaders like Megan at Barrio; in ICLAC, youth like Lita and Adriana, who displayed a special enthusiasm for ICLAC, said that
they wanted to keep working for ICLAC and Barrio, serving other youth after graduating from high school.

Considering that civic education aims at producing citizens that can think critically, care about the public good, and act responsibly for social change, Barrio and ICLAC performed very well. The activities of the PD class—the community survey, distribution of La Opinión, event organization, canvassing for signatures, creating a mural, and bike riding—were all great examples of civic learning in the community (Long, 2007). Civic apprenticeship (Kirshner, 2006), holistic learning about the community, and emphasis on raising critical consciousness were key attributes of these activities. Luis always tried to connect his ICLAC students to the energy of Barrio’s young leadership in the community.

I think that the variety of ways that the youth were involved in community issues through Barrio, ICLAC, and HPNSV could serve as an inspiration to current citizenship education. Interestingly enough, however, Luis never used the term “citizen” in his PD class. Rather, he used the terms “Borinqueño” and “boricua,” highlighting the ethnic identity and pride of his community. This issue leads to the last main finding of this research, no language of citizenship, which will be saved for last.

The “One Foot In and One Foot Out” Metaphor: The Tension between Inside and Outside

In understanding the work of HPNSV in the community, I ascribe to the “one foot in and one foot out” metaphor. Reflecting Freire’s notion of praxis, people in such a position stay in the system, while critically viewing the system from the outside and making an effort toward change. This metaphor encompasses many important issues across the four domains, including transnationality, building relationships with community residents, collaborating with others, and
intergenerational learning, as presented in Chapters 7 through 11. This inside/outside position was also strongly related to any tension the participants felt between being a member of *Paseo Boricua* and being a member of the larger society, because such a tension assumes a conceptual imaginary boundary dividing the margin from the core of society.

I asked participants directly what tension they felt, if any, between being a member of *Paseo Boricua* and being a member of a larger society. This was an abstract question, but the adult participants from both younger and older generations—Luis, Juana, Quinn, Elias, Richard, and Gustavo—gave interesting answers, and though there were slight differences in the way they expressed it, racism was singled out as the major source of the tension.

**Racism.** “The tension is racism. Really, that’s what it is (2nd interview, 3/27/2010),” Juana said without hesitation. I had similar reactions from Luis, Gustavo, Quinn, and Elias with slight variations. Juana said:

> I’m here. I feel free. I’m myself. If this community doesn’t exist, where would they be able to feel free and be themselves in their own skin, where would you be able to express your Puerto Rican-ness? . . . Because really, it’s capitalism, racism—how do we fit into that structure? How do we maneuver our way and be successful in that arena? (2nd interview, 3/27/2010)

Regarding racial tension, Juana thought that Malcolm X’s anti-integration stance was more reasonable in her community’s current situation. Citing Malcolm X, she said that Martin Luther King’s advocacy for integration hurt the black community more than it helped it. King’s vision was that the ability of black professionals to live in “white” areas signaled a decrease in segregation, but the real effect was that black professionals removed themselves from the ghettos, leaving no role models in their former communities. Seeing this phenomenon taking place in her community as well, Juana said that the PRCC was trying to make the community a home base for young people to prepare to be successful outside of the community and then to
come back to the community to become new role models, just like several PRCC leaders had done, including Elias, the director of the PRCC.

Luis shared a similar view. He wanted his ICLAC students to overcome the consistent negative pulls—drinking, gang violence, family issues, etc.—that they faced every day and to become better prepared for the outside world. He said, “We’re breaking the paradigm of what it means to be a professional—you can be a Puerto Rican and a professional and work in your community.” (2nd interview, 4/4/2010)

Luis talked about the tension in terms of political efficacy: feeling more empowered in the community and less so in the larger society, even though he said that he himself did not feel a very strong tension between the two different groups:

I see my role as—in this community—as a citizen who is actively engaged in reworking and influencing how the community is going to look. So, we make the analogy that this is a little country. Me being a citizen of the greater U.S. society, I see it almost as less empowered, because this society empowers people less. But we’ve been working actively to try to empower people here. So that’s the tension how I see. (2nd interview, 4/4/2010)

**Lack of understanding of differences.** Quinn said that the tensions came mostly from those on the outside looking in who could not fully understand the cultural differences. Quinn interpreted my research question about the tension between the two groups (*Paseo Boricua* and the larger society) as insinuating, “You’re not a part of the larger society.” I did not mean that, but his explanation revealed something I had not anticipated:

The tensions are mostly coming from the outside group looking in not understanding that there’s cultural difference, not respecting culture differences, trying to get involved and say you’re not a part of a larger society, when in reality America is supposed to be a place for everyone, a place for different identities. In a democracy, people should live anywhere they want and form any type of communities they want, and respect our culture and our cultural differences (emphasis mine). (3rd interview, 5/2/2010)

Quinn viewed the question itself as representative of an outsider’s perspective. He said that historically many minority groups of people have been criticized for “being on the fringe,
and being outsiders, and not truly being Americans, when all they are doing is for the rights that they have, which is a very American thing to do.” In this situation, the pressing issue to the insiders in coping with such criticisms is, “How do we get people from the outside to understand what we’re doing?” This was exactly what the PRCC and also HPNSV were experiencing.

Although HPNSV’s work to claim the rights that they deserved was “a very American thing,” as Quinn noted, people outside of their community often criticized the PRCC/HPNSV for being exclusive or insular, chiefly because the PRCC and HPNSV were so closely tied to their Puerto Rican identity. Quinn said, “You're a minority, you're a person of color, and you always have to reassure your identity in a very white world,” but people who are part of the majority group in society often do not fully understand why minority groups take such actions, often accusing such groups of being insular or exclusive. HPNSV was often accused of being anti-white or anti-development resulting for the same reason. HPNSV activists emphasized that their main purpose was to preserve and develop a Puerto Rican community, standing against an unjust socio-economic system. But people inside as well as outside the community oftentimes overlooked the structural issues intertwined with racism and economic injustice, seeing only the superficial phenomenon of “Puerto Ricans vs. white people” in the process of gentrification. Nancy Collins’s accusation and the slanderous message about HPNSV from an opposing group during the election (Chapter 7) arose from this issue, as well.

According to Quinn, PRCC/HPNSV was reaching out to people with non-Puerto Rican experiences by being vocal in immigration movements, LGBTQ issues, women’s issues, education, and other grassroots movements, but this activity did not get much of a spotlight.

In brief, the “one foot in and one foot out” metaphor represents the efforts of the PRCC/HPNSV to critically understand the world and try to make a difference in it, drawing upon
Freire’s idea of praxis. Deep-rooted racism was the main reason that participants felt tension between being a member of Paseo Boricua and being a member of the larger society.

**The Relational Connectivity of Local and Global**

In this research, I have explored the meaning of locality in terms of relational connectivity. Locality is linked both to spatial proximity in a geographic sense and also to a relational type of connection. The latter is necessary to better understand the nature of locality where citizenship practice occurs, especially given the ever-increasing interconnectivity of the digital and global era. HPNSV’s community work reflected both natures. Above all, they were addressing the concrete local issue of gentrification in Huntington Park; but the issue of gentrification was not limited to Huntington Park, but connected with the larger societal system. Also, HPNSV’s work to preserve Paseo Boricua could be hardly separated from the transnational imagination across Paso Boricua, Puerto Rico, and Latin America.

**Building a concrete relationship with the people of community: Door-knocking.** The community work of HPNSV was geographically bounded in the Huntington Park area. Juana, Luis, and Quinn often emphasized the importance of building relationships with residents of the community, and this was why they utilized traditional means of communication, such as door-knocking or canvassing precincts. As seen in their electoral campaign work and the Zapatista Housing canvassing event, HPNSV put a lot of energy into door-knocking, as they believed it was the most important way to garner solid support for long term community building. Assigning a precinct captain per precinct was part of such an effort.

The door-to-door distribution of the *La Opinión* newspaper, which most HPNSV activists regarded as the most important tool for educating people about their community, should be
understood in this context, too. *La Opinión* handled not only housing information but also various kinds of local news about health, culture & art, education, events, resources, business, and local politics, thus filling the gap in mainstream media coverage. Because many community members did not have access to the internet, off-line *La Opinión* distribution was important. Not only HPNSV supporters but also ICLAC students regularly participated in *La Opinión* distribution. Their efforts to reach out to the people of the community extended to community festivals; this traditional method of information distribution was still valued by many people, especially the older generation.

The name change from Huntington Park Participatory Democracy to ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign was also relevant to its local nature. The change came about for the sake of making the group’s cause more easily understood. The name “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign” is self-explanatory: their purpose is, clearly, to address an issue geographically bounded to Huntington Park.

**Relational connectivity to the larger society: Beyond Huntington Park.** The work of HPNSV in the community did not take place in a vacuum. It had connections to larger contexts as well. First of all, it is notable that HPNSV originated in experiments with alternative democratic models at the local level in Latin America, such as Porto Alegre’s Participatory Budget in Brazil. In addition, gentrification was a global issue taking place in other areas. “No Se Vende” names, according to Karla, were becoming increasingly recognized among groups of people who faced similar issues of gentrification, including “Pilsen No Se Vende” and “Little Village No Se Vende.” Young HPNSV activists recognized the necessity of collaborating with others experiencing similar housing issues in their communities. The Zapatista Housing canvassing event exemplified this issue. In his article contributed to *La Opinión* about the event,
Luis wrote, “Although the ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign focuses primarily on the Huntington Park community . . . the organization holds onto the idea that an attack on affordable housing anywhere is an attack on affordable housing everywhere” (April 29, 2010, *La Opinión*; emphasis mine). A lecture about Garden Hill also resonated with HPNSV, because in both cases, unequal social and economic systems operated to the detriment of the have-nots and justified it under the name of capitalism.

As an initiative of the PRCC associated with the nationalist movement, HPNSV’s work was largely imbued with the transnational imagination between *Paseo Boricua* and Puerto Rico. Such a tendency was visible particularly in cultural events, while detected in the other three domains (political, educational, cultural-social, and anti-gentrification) to various degrees as well. The month-long community event “30 years Behind the Bar” and its dramatic culmination, “Return of Marcos Castell,” introduced in Chapter 9 (Cultural-social involvement), are good examples of this. Luis’s poem, “Resisting Oblivion,” and the youth-created mural were also part of a transnational motif, which I saw as transnational civic praxis.

Significantly, although Puerto Rican identity was the basis of HPNSV, young activists expanded their interests into other issues of minority rights such as immigration, LGBTQ, and pan-Latino solidarity beyond the boundaries of *Paseo Boricua*. Quinn’s motivation to join in this group—his desire to preserve a community accepting of LGBTQ—was particularly impressive. Guests from Palestinian, Japanese, and Mexican communities who came to celebrate Marcos Castell’s return should not be overlooked in thinking about the ways in which the work of HPNSV reached beyond *Paseo Boricua* and Huntington Park to the larger society.

In sum, HPNSV was chiefly bounded to Huntington Park, but its imagination reached beyond its geographic boundary to the larger society, including Puerto Rico and Latin America.
This phenomenon serves as a good illustration from the real world of the “bounded and porous” nature of new political spaces (Morgan, 2007), which was introduced in Chapter 2:

Bounded because politicians are held to account through the territorially defined ballot box, a prosaic but important reason why one should not be so dismissive of territorial politics; porous because people have multiple identities and they are becoming ever more mobile, spawning communities of relational connectivity that transcend territorial boundaries. (p. 1248)

No Language of Citizenship

The main research question of this study is “What particular type of citizenship is being constructed surrounding the ¡Huntington Park No Se Vende! Campaign on Paseo Boricua?” However, most of the adult participants did not associate the term “citizenship” with their community work. They never used the term “citizenship” in our interviews unless I brought it up first. I found this an interesting gap in our language use, which I had not anticipated before doing fieldwork. I brought the term citizenship into the field with the thought that HPNSV’s civic practice would be an exemplary case through which to explore divergent meanings of citizenship. The field, nonetheless, did not have the language of citizenship. Instead, participants used the term “Boricua” or “Borinqueño” to highlight their Puerto Rican identity in regard to their community work.

“I’d never use the language “citizenship” (laugh) describing anything. . . . We don’t even use the language of citizenship because the realization of citizenship is not the objective,” Richard said (1st interview, 6/5/2010). He also said, “[Citizenship is] so associated with American-ness. And when people talk about American, they really mean white.” Other participants voiced similar opinions: “Who is entitled to be Americans are white people” (Juana); “Puerto Ricans are not treated as U.S. citizens, even though legally they’ve been U.S. citizens
since 1917” (Gustavo); “We’re technically U.S. citizens, but I’m a second-class, third-class citizen of the U.S.” (Luis); and “By mixing into becoming an American society, you’re letting go of your own unique identities. People of color including you [the interviewer] have to do so much more to become an American under the system” (Quinn). Given these perceptions that citizenship is associated with American-ness and whiteness, it may not be so surprising that these activists did not connect the idea of citizenship with their community work that was, after all, questioning an unequal social system permeated with white privilege. In addition, the fact that HPNSV’s work was strongly tied to Puerto Rican identity and advocacy of Puerto Rican independence further substantiated the activists’ avoidance of the term “citizenship,” or, put another way, American-ness. The HPNSV activists simply did not see themselves as part of the “nation.”

Untied from the nation-state. HPNSV’s work was strongly tied to Puerto Rican identity. Luis said, “I am more Puerto Rican than any Boricua born on the island because I have had to fight for my identity instead of having it handed to me.” Luis’s case epitomized the identity struggle surrounding HPNSV.

Luis, Juana, and Richard—who were actively involved in the PRCC (explicitly advocating for the independence of Puerto Rico)—were vocal about their support of Puerto Rico’s independence. Often speaking the language of colonialism, they viewed fighting against gentrification as an extension of the resistance to U.S. colonialism.

Puerto Rico’s ambiguous political status—neither a state nor an independent nation-state—is an important context in understanding the work of HPNSV/PRCC. The main activists in HPNSV/PRCC, Luis, Richard, Juana, Gustavo, and Elias—who all aligned with the Puerto Rican independence movement—were vocal about their support of Puerto Rico’s independence. Often speaking the language of colonialism, they viewed fighting against gentrification as an extension of the resistance to U.S. colonialism.

I did not ask participants if they supported the independence of Puerto Rico. I only counted answers when the participants first expressed their thought about this issue.
Rican nationalist movement—viewed U.S. citizenship as a byproduct of U.S. colonialism. They believed that the U.S. government imposed citizenship in order to draft Puerto Ricans into War World I in 1917. What is worse was that the U. S. citizenship given to Puerto Ricans was not even perfect; Puerto Ricans on the island cannot vote in U.S. presidential elections; they could vote only after becoming residents of a U.S. state. This means that Puerto Ricans do not have the most critical element of citizenship, the right to be part of a sovereignty to rule themselves. “This is a colony. They [the U.S. government] don’t go as far as saying, ‘This is our colony.’ But they say, ‘Puerto Rico belongs to, but not a part of [the U.S.]. Something belongs to you, it means a colonial possession,” said Elias, the director of the PRCC. He also talked about the two meanings of citizenship for Puerto Ricans, “One, you can be drafted to the U.S. Army, and two, you can travel to the U.S. without a paper. That’s it!” (1st interview, 3/14/2010).

Although HPNSV activists did not initially associate their community work with the term “citizenship,” after understanding my intention to explore situated and diverse meanings of citizenship, some of them gave me interestingly different answers about citizenship. Quinn embraced the sense of “civic” citizenship in connection with HPNSV’s community work. He said:

What type of citizen are you? Are you a citizen [who] just sits back just assisting what they are? Or a citizen who feels compelled to act on the realities and tries to improve it and make it better realities for themselves and future generations? You can't just sit down and complain about it. You have to actively work toward changing it. [It] all starts at the very small level, eventually to change things around you. (3rd interview, 5/2/2010)

Luis, Juana, and Karla basically agreed with this standpoint as well; Luis’s thoughts about Puerto Rican citizenship were introduced earlier. “Don’t just sit and talk. Do something,” was the simplest statement that they made regarding this.
Elias interpreted citizenship in regard to universal basic human rights, while opposing citizenship set within the contours of the nation-state or the U.S constitution. “If you define citizenship as something defined exclusively by a state, by a constitution, that’s quite problematic. At the end of the day, all people have basic human rights. Citizenship must be about a whole person,” he said. Three major concepts—self-actualization, self-reliance, and self-determination—embodied his philosophy of citizenship. Largely drawing upon Paulo Freire’s thoughts as expressed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, this philosophy of autonomy and independence was the foundation of the PRCC and of the eventual liberation of Puerto Rico. It is important to note that Elias’s three “self-” concepts connoted collectivism, not individualism, in the context of the community. He said, “We are talking about the context of community being self-reliant. The community will have the means at its disposal to be able to realize itself as a full people. That means the right of self-actualization and ultimately, the right of self-realization.” In brief, he conceptualized citizenship as encompassing universal human rights and collectivism, which was also the philosophical foundation of the PRCC.

**Multiple counterpublics.** Richard felt awkward using the term “citizenship.” He perceived citizenship primarily as modern liberal citizenship, introduced in Chapters 1 and 2. He said, “I vote usually, I perform the state level citizenship things and these [HPNSV’s community works] sort of are oppositional practices, somehow felt at odds with the language citizenship (laugh).” State-level citizenship, in his terms, involved the conventional participation that corresponds with modern liberal citizenship. I explained to him how I differentiated local civic citizenship from modern liberal citizenship, and why I thought HPNSV was important in discussing local civic citizenship. He then asked, “What’s the common denominator [of state-level citizenship and local civic citizenship]? Is it a whole different thing? Or just different types
of the same thing?” I think his question implied a valid critique of the issue of citizenship. While focusing on the differences between these two types of citizenship, I might not have paid enough attention to what Richard called their “common denominator.” After responding promptly, “I think citizenship is about being a member of a certain society, whether that’s local, community, the nation-state, or the global society,” I asked him, “If you don’t want to use the term, ‘citizenship,’ what would you recommend me to use [instead]?” “That’s a tough one,” Richard said, and then he pointed out that the fact that people usually did not relate grassroots, contextualized, and community praxis to citizenship might indicate bigger socio-political issues in the U.S., which goes back to the people’s perception of associating citizenship with whiteness.

HPNSV’s community work was creating a new voice to challenge the given norm and social order in a particular context. Their resistance was born from a mixture of Puerto Rican diasporic experiences, the deep-rooted racism and economic inequity in U.S. society, and the direct threat of gentrification. In addition, although HPNSV was strongly tied to Puerto Rican identity, it also represented the interests of Mexican and other Latino groups who were facing the same fate around the Huntington Park area. Although the people of HPNSV did not accept the term “citizenship” per se, HPNSV’s community work demonstrated “a particular way of being” in Huntington Park. In Fraser’s term, it was constituting one of the multiple counterpublics that formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs, while challenging a pre-given common good or norm for one single public (Fraser, 1997, p. 291). This is the type of the citizenship that I am concerned with in this study.
Ongoing Negotiation and Conflict: Internal Dissonances and External Criticisms

Revolving around a strong Puerto Rican identity. HPNSV’s range of community involvement took place amid many conflicts between collectivism and individualism, between pro-capitalism and anti-capitalism, and between Puerto Rican identity and U.S. authority, alongside other racial struggles. Their work was not simply a struggle of “us vs. them.” The border between “us” and “them” became blurry because of internal dissonance and cynicism, as well as external criticism. This aspect specifically speaks to the hybrid, contested, and ambiguous side of locality expressed by Bhabha (1994) when he wrote about “the margin of the nation.”

HPNSV had to face internal dissonance and cynicism from the residents of the community. HPNSV’s young activists counted community residents’ cynicism as the biggest challenge in their community work (Chapter 7). People were easily disillusioned by the long-term process of the anti-gentrification movement. Juana said, “This whole process of gentrification or the anti-gentrification campaign, it’s a slow process. You don’t see immediate results. People are tired of hearing about gentrification already.” External attacks were generally met with internal cohesion within HPNSV, but cynicism from the residents of the community complicated the work of HPNSV in the community.

The message posted on the wall of the La Opinión office during the electoral campaign work, “Everyone promises, no one fulfills. Vote for No one,” showed internal dissonance over the electoral politics surrounding HPNSV (and the PRCC). It was presumed that a group of people who adhered to the orthodox nationalist movement of days gone by had written the note in order to discourage HPNSV’s electoral work. HPNSV’s young activists, some of whom were
even strong advocates of Puerto Rico’s independence, however, saw the necessity of electoral participation to make changes to the system.

Not everyone in HPNSV seemed to see the issue of Puerto Rico’s independence, a core creed of the PRCC, in the same way. For example, Quinn, a Mexican-American and a new HPNSV collective member, was not that enthusiastic about the issue of Puerto Rican independence in HPNSV. What committed him to HPNSV was *Paseo Boricua*’s open-mindedness to LGBTQ issues, rather than Puerto Rican identity. Luis said, “Not everyone in the Participatory Democracy Project [another name for HPNSV] agrees on PD [Participatory Democracy] in the same way.” He noted that HPNSV (and the PRCC) were not a homogeneous group, seeking collaboration with other groups who did not have any interest in Puerto Rican independence. “We do, we have to [collaborate with others],” Luis said. Their collaboration with Zapatista Housing, for example, was based on their common interest in public housing, not on the issues of Puerto Rico. However, Luis said that what he termed “a fear of an ideology,” related to the legacy of the socialist and nationalist movements in the PRCC from the past, sometimes led community members to view the efforts of HPNSV with suspicion.

A dissonance between collectivism and individualism was another notable issue. This chasm was not noticeable to me at first because I was surrounded by members of HPNSV, all of whom were passionate about their community work (collectivism). I did detect a small chasm in one aspect of HPNSV’s educational involvement section [Luis/HPNSV’s involvement in ICLAC]. Luis made many efforts to teach students about Puerto Rican history, culture, and identity, also trying to get them involved in HPNSV and community projects. (He did not directly teach about the independence of Puerto Rico.) Most youth participants reported that they had learned about many positive aspects and resources of their community, Puerto Rican cultural
heritage, and digital media technology skills in the after school program. Not every youth participant, however, sided with this perspective. Some resisted the collective ethnic identity imposed on them for various known and unknown reasons, such as different ethnic/racial self-identification and different perceptions of the environment. Marcela, a 17-year-old student at Rivera High School, said, “I’m multi-racial, and I choose not to assimilate to the Puerto Rican culture.” Cynthia, a 17-year-old student at Rivera High School, agreed with Marcela, saying, “I am not in the ‘PR hood.’ I don’t still feel I fit in the community.” Both identified themselves as Americans, not Puerto Ricans, and did not want to be asked to choose a side, either being Puerto Rican or non-Puerto Rican.”

Marcela’s individualist idea is reflected in her question, “Why do we have to care about the community?” and her comment, “Don’t be mad at the new resident. If it’s close to your job, you can commute to work faster, and you have the money, aren’t you going to take the opportunity?” (Introduced in Chapter 11). This was opposite to HPNSV’s stance.

In summary, HPNSV’s work was being done in a fuzzy and contested area, not just between “us” and “them.” Underlying their fight against gentrification was the sense of fighting against U.S. colonialism, and the threat of gentrification exposed conflicts that would have been less visible otherwise, between collectivism and individualism, between laissez-faire capitalist power and its critics, between the mainstream and disfranchised groups, between Puerto Rican identity and U.S. authority, and so. These issues were all intertwined in a very complicated way, with no clear-cut boundaries.

PRCC’s (and also HPNSV’s) work involved a constant awareness of the struggle against white privilege, individualism, capitalistic order, racism, and other social oppressions. It also involved a constant tug of war between the insiders’ perspective, “How do we get people from
outside to understand what we're doing?” (Quinn) and the outsiders’ claim, “You’re not a part of a larger society,” the implication being that each is constitutive of the other’s features: “The ‘other’ is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously ‘between ourselves’” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4).

With the “one foot in, one foot out” metaphor representing the nature of HPNSV’s community practices, I found that their work—resistance to the dominant power—inherently involved ongoing and intense negotiating processes over internal dissonance and cynicism, as well as external criticism. This aspect specifically speaks to the hybrid, contested, and ambiguous side of a locality at “the margin of the nation,” an important backdrops of resistance. Put differently, the work of HPNSV revealed that the situated and diverse forms of civic practice are not pre-given, but rather they come into being through ongoing negotiation and conflict out of the persistent effort to decolonize themselves and counteract dominant ways of being and knowing (Bhabha, 1994).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the major findings of this study that made up HPNSV’s contextualized civic practice: the ecology of civic learning (the community leadership pipeline), the “one foot in and one foot out” metaphor (praxis to transform the world), the relational connectivity of local and global, and the absence of the language of citizenship. Internal dissonances and external criticisms against HPNSV were important in understanding the complexity of HPNSV, too. The next and final chapter draws upon these major findings to answer the main research question, “What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed surrounding the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign on Paseo Boricua, Chicago?”
Chapter 13

Conclusion

This dissertation discussed the significance of community activism among minority young people as a form of critical and informal citizenship education in the community. This effort is geared towards expanding the discourse of citizenship education and bridging the gap between informal and formal citizenship education. It should again be emphasized that citizenship concerns a way of becoming a particular being in a certain context, which I see as the essential idea behind local civic citizenship.

HPNSV’s community work was born from collective experiences with the Puerto Rican diasporic identity, deep-rooted racism, and economic inequity in the U.S. HPNSV actively involved themselves in a wide range of community work. For analytical purposes, I first looked into HPNSV’s community practices in the following four domains separately: political, educational, cultural, and anti-gentrification. Each domain had a key theme: “the ‘one foot in and one foot out’ metaphor” for the political involvement domain, “sustaining the leadership pipeline” for the educational involvement domain, “a process of identification” for the cultural involvement domain, and “developing collaboration with others based on shared experiences” for the anti-gentrification domain.

The distinction between the four domains, however, is not the focus of this study—it is indeed, HPNSV did not categorize their works as such—and in practice, the four domains were intertwined with one another. At the end of the day, the myriad community projects of HPNSV together aimed to resist gentrification and build their own unique model of participatory democracy at the local level.
The major findings about HPNSV’s community work were: the “one foot in and one foot out” metaphor (praxis to transform the world), the relational connectivity of local and global, the internal dissonances within and external criticisms of HPNSV, the ecology of civic learning (the community leadership pipeline), and an absence of a language of citizenship. These findings contribute an important foundation towards answering the main research question: What particular sense of citizenship is being constructed surrounding the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign on Paseo Boricua in Chicago?”

The “one foot in and one foot out” metaphor was an overarching theme representing HPNSV’s efforts to challenge the status quo. Gentrification was one of the many different forms of social oppression; resisting gentrification meant resisting the structural forces to reproduce such social oppression.

While HPNSV’s community work was primarily bounded in the Huntington Park area, they also assumed connections to larger contexts with a transnational imagination across Huntington Park, Chicago, Puerto Rico, and Latin America. For many people in HPNSV and the PRCC, Paseo Boricua was a symbol of resistance to U.S. colonialism and of Puerto Rican independence. This represents another important feature of HPNSV’s work: the relational connectivity of local and global. The impact of their local community activism was not confined to a certain geographic area, but was linked the larger society. HPNSV was well aware that gentrification was a global issue taking place in other areas, not only in Huntington Park. The HPNSV activists recognized the necessity of collaborating with other communities experiencing the same issue. Luis’ statement, “An attack on affordable housing is an attack on affordable housing everywhere,” described a foundation for possible collaboration across differences.
HPNSV’s community work inherently took on a transnational relationship between *Paseo Boricua* and Puerto Rico, as well. HPNSV originally started as an experiment to implement an alternative participatory democracy model, Porto Alegre’s Participatory Budget in Brazil, which further broadened the scope of the transnational imagination in their community work. Noticeably, although Puerto Rican identity was the basis of HPNSV, young activists expanded their interests into other issues of minority rights, such as immigration, LGBTQ issues, and pan-Latino solidarity beyond the boundaries of their community.

HPNSV and the PRCC might not have represented the interests of the whole community; in particular, there was a large disparity in opinions about the issue of Puerto Rican independence. Still, HPNSV could accommodate such difference of opinion, as long as people supported the purpose of HPNSV to preserve the community. The more difficult challenge to HPNSV was the cynicism and disinterest pervading the community. Inspiring people to become interested in community issues and take part in building a strong community for “Boricua” entailed constant internal and external negotiations.

It is important to note that HPNSV portrayed a prolonged impact of youth activism on the participants and the community. They involved local teenagers in community events and in the process of information production and distribution, helping them to learn about important community issues, as well as Puerto Rican history and culture, which had not been taught in local public schools. This illuminated the ecology of civic learning, which has long been absent from citizenship education in most schools. This study discusses how community activism among minority young people can contribute to broadening the horizon of education for active citizenship.
An absence of the language of citizenship surrounding HPNSV was another very important finding. Most of the participants did not associate their community work with the term “citizenship.” They saw citizenship as being associated with American-ness, or white-ness, which they did not feel a part of. Richard asked a provoking question to challenge the whole notion of citizenship: “How would this [accepting a different notion of citizenship] be different to us? How would it impact our work and practices that we performed here?” Unfortunately, during the interview with Richard, I could not answer these questions, and have yet to come up with satisfying answers (for me, as well as for him). The interview with Richard was conducted at the end of data collection, and I did not fully consider this issue until the later stages of data analysis.

HPNSV’s community work represented their own way of being “Boricua,” their term for Huntington Park residents; however, the absence of the language of citizenship in HPNSV epitomized a growing gap between school-constructed citizenship and the citizenship actually practiced in the community (Knight-Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Richard’s questions should be directed to all educators and researchers in citizenship education; we really need to think about how we would answer Richard’s questions about the usability, usefulness, and meanings of citizenship in community activism.

Community activism is inspirational to re-envisioning citizenship education, however, it is often classified as radical, unconventional, and inappropriate for the classroom. Questioning who defines what is radical and why would be the starting point for revolutionizing citizenship education. This dissertation research took one of the first steps toward achieving such a purpose and contributing to broadening the boundary of citizenship education. Further research is needed
to restore the ground-up civic practices that “exist in everyday relationships long before institutionalization” (Tully, 2008, p. 31) in the current discourse of citizenship.

I would like to end this research by mentioning two of the many lessons that I personally learned from this community. I was very impressed with its openness. The inter-institutional relationship between GSLIS and the HPNSV community provided a significant advantage to my being easily accepted into the community in the initial stages. Proceeding with my research work, however, I met many new people who had no idea of the inter-institutional relationship between GSLIS and the PRCC, but most of them were still very friendly and open-minded, showing curiosity about the reason for my presence in the community, allegedly because of my Asian appearance and accent.

Their strong passion and commitment to the community was humbling. The people of HPNSV and the PRCC were the agents for change who were really fighting on the front lines for social justice in their everyday lives. Most participants neither romanticized their work nor denied the existence of the tough realities they had to face daily; they knew that it would be a long and tough race, and that no immediate results would be seen. But they kept moving forward, just like they had for door-knocking: refusing to be discouraged by negative answers, working as a unit, pumping people up, wasting no time between doors, and always moving forward.

The people of HPNSV taught me a great deal about the assorted parts of social life that encompass engaging in community affairs, working for social justice, and creating dialogues across differences. During my fieldwork, I sought to assume the role of an open learner, trying to understand the community’s knowledge and practices, rather than just picking up the narratives and data that fit only my research questions. For me, the fieldwork became a meaningful and
vibrant form of daily citizenship education, and I thought, “Why wouldn’t this be the same for others?” I hope this dissertation research provides some initial steps towards seriously connecting community activism among minority young people to the issues of citizenship education.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions

I. Experience with the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign

• [To both leaders & young participants] How long have you been working for the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign?

• [To both] Please describe what you usually do for the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign.

• [To both] What made you get involved in this group?

• [To both] What is your best experience with this group? What kinds of successes have you experienced with the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” campaign?

• [To both] What kinds of difficulties, if any, have you experienced while participating in it? How have you dealt with these difficulties?

• [To both] What would you tell other people about the “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign? Why?

• [To leaders] What goals, if any, would you want to accomplish through participating in “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign?

• Have you had any moments that you felt you DID make a change or COULD make a change in your community, while participating in the “Huntington Park No Se Vende!” Campaign or any other community events/activities? If yes, please describe them.
II. Ideas on Gentrification

• [To both] There may be different positions regarding the gentrification issue in this community. Gentrification may be a chance for some people to increase their property value, and may not side with this campaign. How can you deal with this conflicting situation?

• [To both] Did you grow up here? Have you ever experienced gentrification in your community? Tell me about your experience in your community. How is it different from or similar to gentrification in Paseo Boricua?

• [To leaders] What kind of ideas and understanding of gentrification would you want the young participants (whether within or outside of community) to have?

• [To both] Did your participation in this campaign develop or change your previously held ideas about gentrification?

III. Local Strategies/tools and collaboration with others

• [To Leaders] What mission gets the top priority in this campaign? Why?

• [To Leaders] What strategies do you use to fulfill that mission?

• [To Leaders] What major tool(s) do you usually use to communicate with and to educate people?

• [To Leaders] Are you satisfied with the current approach of communication and education surrounding gentrification?

- What element do you want to improve if you can? What resources do you need the most now?

• It seems that this campaign largely depends on personal commitment particularly among the leaders. I guess that this campaign may have some know-how/strategies to sustain the community organizing within limited resources. Please tell me about them.
Collaboration

• *[To Leaders]* What partners are you working within this community?

• *[To Leaders]* Why did this group separate from Barrio?

- How do you work with Barrio now? What is the difference between now (after separation) and then (before separation)

- How is your relationship with other organizations under the PRCC? I heard that this campaign often holds a meeting at Vida/Sida (community health organization) office; do you just borrow a space or collaborate with them in this campaign? If you collaborate with them, how do you work with them?

- Does this campaign have any interaction with the Dr. Pedro Rivera High school under the PRCC? If yes, how?

- Do you collaborate with other community groups not in the PRCC in this community?

  • *[To Leaders]* Within my knowledge, the PRCC and other organizations under the PRCC had collaborated with other institutions outside Paseo Boricua. Probably, U of I is one of them. Does this campaign have such partners outside of this community, too?

  • *[To Leaders]* This question might be a bit sensitive but I heard that there are some tensions between the Puerto Ricans and the Mexicans or African Americans around this area. Can you tell me some social- historical background of these tensions?

  • *[To Leaders]* If they experience the gentrification issue in their community, is there any opportunity for you to collaborate with them to change the policy over city planning?

IV. Understanding of how democracy works in everyday lives.

• *[To both]* What are the assets of your community? Tell me at least three, please.
• [To both] What issues are most important in your community? Tell me at least three, please.

Why are they important?

• [To both] Have you made any effort to address community issues with other people?

• [To both] Please describe the moments in your life when you felt that democracy really works.

• [To both] Please tell me anything that you can recall from what you’ve learned about democracy from school (elementary, junior-high, high school).

-How relevant do you think those things are to your actual life?

-If you had a chance to write a new textbook about democracy or teach democracy to your friends and people in your neighborhood, what would you want to tell them about democracy?

What do you think would be the most effective way to learn about “real” democracy?

- Can you use your experiences in “¡Huntington Park No Se Vende!” in explaining your own ideas of democracy? If yes, please explain more.

- What is participatory democracy? Why do you think it is important in your community?

V. Citizenship (membership) in local and larger societies

• [To both] Can you tell me any moments in your life when you have really felt that you’re a member of Paseo Boricua?

• [To both] If you think that there is something unique that Paseo Boricua has but other communities may not have, please tell me what it is.

• [To both] If you have a chance to talk about your community, what would want to tell people about it and why?

• [To both] Please tell me at least three things that you can recall from what you’ve learned about citizenship from school (elementary, junior-high, high school).
- What do you think about it? How relevant do you think those things are to your actual life?
- If you have ever a chance to teach citizenship to your friends and other people, what would you want to put in the first place?

- [To both] I am not a member of Paseo Boricua. Where, how, and what should I learn to become a true member of Paseo Boricua?
- [To Leaders] In what ways, if any, have you worked with other groups of people who have similar community issues as Paseo Boricua (eg. gentrification, public health, violence, etc.) to solve those issues?

- What kind of success have you experienced from such collaboration?
- What kind of problems have you experienced from such experiences?

- Did this experience help you to better understand your own community as well as the other community? If so, how?
- [To Leaders] Do you think that it is possible to work with people who do not share same struggles or issues to address social issues? (solidarity)

- What do you think would be the most important issue in working with those who do not share your circumstances (for example, me)?
## Appendix B

### ICLAC Daily Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>Eating healthy snack</td>
<td>Eating healthy snack</td>
<td>Eating healthy Snack</td>
<td>Eating Healthy Snack</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>Participating in community events hosted by HPNSV or others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>Bike Riding (Started at mid-April)</td>
<td>Bike Riding (Started at mid-April)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. 30 years behind the Bar, Door-knocking, Parade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>PD class</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>At Barrio Urbano</td>
<td>Barrio Urbano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>At Bate-y Radio</td>
<td>At Barrio Urbano</td>
<td>At Barrio Urbano</td>
<td>At Bate-y Radio</td>
<td>At Barrio Urbano</td>
<td>At Barrio Urbano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>At Main building</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>At main building</td>
<td>Multimedia Class</td>
<td>Multimedia Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multmedia Class</td>
<td>At New Building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At new Building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ICLAC Events

Barrio Urbano Cultural Event: Poetry, Hip-hop, dance
Appendix C

Why I Don’t Cry Blood?

Someone once told me to be lucky you don’t cry blood
But I never understood that analogy cause back then I was like a teacup next to a mug, to young
But as I got older I understood then pain,
And how to live in struggle and hw to live in vein.
And I ask myself why don’t I cry blood,

For all the times, I seen my mom inject needles in her arms,
And when my sister will grab a blade and cut her wrist and tell me she would mean no harm.
I ask myself why don’t I cry blood

For the mornings I used to go to school with belt welches on my legs and back,
Cause my mom would beat me; take my money just to control her drug attacks
And I ask my self why don’t I cry blood

For the day me and my brother went to go do a dancing gig and I seen two nine millimeters come out of a car,
I heard bullets come out of the chambers, white tee turn red, goddamn it that day my brother died in my arms.
And I ask my self why don’t I cry blood.

For all the times I had to hustle drugs just to get my sister a plate of food,
For watching you unwrap crack cocaine and taking lighter to a spoon,
I ask my self why don’t I cry blood

For waking up in the morning to deal with this white privilege, colonialism, color people oppressed bullshits.
When I was born in to a family that has no knowledge of it.
And I ask myself why don’t I cry blood.

Because no one see’s the things that I see.
And no one has a fucking clue on what it is to be me,
And now I know exactly why my tears don’t bleed.
Cause all my struggles and heartaches is in the color of my ink.