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Political Socialization and Citizenship Education for Queer Youth

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Political Socialization and Citizenship Education for Queer Youth

Although issues of political socialization, education for citizenship, and adolescent sexuality are of great importance in the current era, there has been little empirical research on the intersection of these three phenomena. In this qualitative case study, I examined the youth and adult conceptions of education for citizenship in a community center for queer youth. I drew on political socialization theory to guide my study. Employing document analysis, youth and adult interviews, and community center observations, I investigated: 1) how the youth and adults understood citizenship, belonging, and political participation; 2) the nature of teaching and learning at the center; and 3) the youths' political trust, efficacy, and interest development.

I found a range of understandings about citizenship, belonging, and political participation, both among the participants and within individuals. All participants articulated the lack of full rights afforded to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people living in the United States. Most of the youth participants identified themselves as citizens of more than one entity, citing allegiances to local, state, national, and global communities. Adults engaged in implicit and explicit attempts to teach the youth about citizenship and political issues, and the youth drew connections between their activities at the center and their own political trust, efficacy, and interest.

These findings may help teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, teacher educators, curriculum developers, community-based organization leaders, parents, and youth understand more about how youth are educated for citizenship and socialized politically.

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It is clear to me that we step through our lives as reflections of our ancestors; it is our responsibility to honor the lives they created for us. As such, I thank my Aunt and Uncle, Sandra and Harry Johnson, my paternal grandparents, John and Eugenia Ford, and my maternal grandparents, Sidney and Kathleen Green. I also thank their parents and their parents' parents. May the struggle for justice continue.

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Statement of the Problem

"We need, in every generation, a group of angelic troublemakers."

~ Bayard Rustin

We are currently living – and dying – in the midst of an epidemic in the United States. At unprecedented rates, young people are committing suicide that either they or their families tie directly to anti-gay bullying endured at school. In 2010, the number of teen suicides reported in the national media skyrocketed. Tragically, this phenomenon is not new. In April 2009, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover and Jaheem Herrera killed themselves. Both were 11-year-old boys; both were youth of color. Walker-Hoover lived in Springfield, Massachusetts. Herrera lived in Decatur, Georgia. Though they lived several hundred miles apart, the causes of their deaths were strikingly similar: both boys hanged themselves as a direct result of anti-gay bullying they endured at school. Both youth's mothers contacted their son's schools in the weeks and months prior to their suicides; both schools failed to provide a safe space for these youth and other youth who are or who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or questioning (LGBTQIQ).

In February 2008, a decade after Matthew Shepard was killed in a widely publicized anti-gay hate crime, 15-year-old Lawrence King was shot in the head and killed in a Ventura County, California junior high school. Classmates and teachers at King's junior high school reported that he had recently started wearing mascara and nail

polish to school, frequently donned high heel boots, and had told some of his friends that he was gay. The 14-year-old boy charged with his murder was charged as an adult and faced up to 52 years in prison, if found guilty of a premeditated hate crime and gun possession (Todd, 2009). As of March 2011, the case is still in pre-trial stages and no verdict has been issued. Though popular media covered some of the most sensational cases in the years since Shepard's murder, school place harassment of LGBTQIQ students is commonplace (Kosciw, Diaz, Greytak, & Bartkiewicz, 2010).

Thousands of students suffer daily in schools in the United States due to their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender expression. In 2009, nine out of ten LGBTQIQ students reported harassment in the previous year at school, three out of five students reported that they felt unsafe at school because of aggression toward their real or perceived sexual orientation, and one out of three students skipped a day of school in the previous month as a result of feeling unsafe (Kosciw, et al., 2010).

The verbal and physical aggression toward LGBTQIQ students have negative influences on the students' self efficacy and academic achievement, which often has detrimental affects on their mental and physical health (Bochenek & Brown, 2001). This can lead to isolation, depression, and school attrition rates for LGBTQIQ youth at much higher rates than those of non-LGBTQIQ youth. According to *Hatred in the Hallways*, a seminal report published by Human Rights Watch in 2001 about school climate for LGBTQ youth in U.S. public schools, the majority of LGBTQ students who are "only" victims of verbal abuse (instead of violent physical abuse) are negatively affected in ways that far surpass perpetrator or bystander consciousness (Bochenek & Brown, 2001). Indeed, in a 2001 study, researchers found that 86% of school-aged youth, both boys and

girls, would be very upset if their peers perceived them to be gay or lesbian. Importantly, this percentage was higher than the percentage that would be upset if they were victims even of physical aggression (Axelrod & Markow, 2001).

It is not only the LGBTQIQ students who are negatively affected by anti-gay harassment and violence. This is particularly true when other students, teachers, and administrators do not address bullying. In settings where harassment and bullying are left un-checked, all students – including the perpetrators – are learning that homophobia and heterosexism are acceptable forms of individual and group interaction. The high level of aggression toward youth who are or who are perceived to be gay both indicates and perpetuates the systemic oppression that maintains a social hierarchy and keeps queer youth in the margins.

In this chapter, I discuss social studies and citizenship education in relation to LGBTQIQ youth. Next, I describe the background for the study by drawing upon four somewhat disparate lines of inquiry. I then discuss the theoretical framework, which emerges from the context of ecological development theory. Subsequently, I present the purpose and significance of the study, which is followed by the research questions I used to guide my inquiry. I end this chapter by including the definitions of terms that are important for understanding the study.

Social Studies, Citizenship, and LGBTQIQ Youth

Though one of the major aims of the social studies curriculum in the United States is to prepare students for thoughtful and engaged citizenship (Banks, 2004; Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Hahn, 1998, 2005; Parker, 2003), queer students often do not fit into

'citizenship education' as the concept is traditionally defined. Because LGBTQIQ people do not have full rights as citizens in the United States, students who identify as (or are perceived to be) LGBTQIQ are explicitly and implicitly excluded from education for full citizenship. Limits on full rights for LGBTQIQ people in the United States include inability to marry one another, "partner benefit" packages that claim to give gay couple benefits equal to heterosexual couples but often do not, barriers to child adoption, and a U.S. military policy that, until December 2010, banned openly gay and lesbian citizens from serving, among others.

The barriers for LGBTQIQ youth to learn about citizenship participation and to form their civic identities in the United States are many, but can generally be grouped in two large categories. The first set of barriers is the relation of queer youth to the *body politic*. This is manifested by the denial of first-class citizenship for queer people in the United States socially, economically, and legally. This includes consistent demonization by the Religious Right and other social conservatives, frequent inability to receive partner benefits, and numerous state amendments adopted for the sole purpose of limiting rights.

The second set of barriers entails the explicit *politics of the body* that are particular to queer people in contemporary U.S. society. These include non-normative gender expression, treatment in abstinence-only sex education programs in public schools, and strict enforcement of heteronormative behavior in schools and in society at large. These realities run counter to the rhetoric of citizenship education in U.S. schools, which propagates patriotism upon a false foundation of freedom and justice for "all." In addition to queer people facing myriad challenges to civil rights in the United States, queer students and all other students should learn about a global form of rights that

includes all individuals, namely human rights. To avoid dichotomies and fixed labels, it

is important to recognize that the boundaries between the issues of the *body politic* and

the *politics of the body* are permeable, and that for queer students in particular, there is a

great deal of overlap.

       The logical subject within the school curriculum to examine the ways in which

students are being educated for citizenship and human rights is social studies, generally,

and civics in particular. Ladson-Billings' (2003) anthology titled *Critical Race Theory*

Perspectives on the Social Studies includes several scholars' investigation of the social

studies curriculum using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective. Though not as

common, a few scholars have also investigated the social studies curriculum using a

queer theory lens (Bickmore, 2002; Mayo, 2010; Oesterreich, 2002; Schmidt, 2010;

Schmidt & Mayo, 2008; Thornton, 2003). CRT and queer theory have some similarities:

both are utilized to critique the status quo and both seek to center marginalized

experiences. The theoretical perspectives differ on the specific lines of critique, with the

former employing a racial lens and the latter using a sexuality lens. Schmidt and Mayo

(2008) assert a crucial difference in the projects that employ CRT from those that employ

queer theory. Namely, researchers who have drawn on CRT have found that though there

is much room for improvement within the social studies curriculum regarding racial

issues, there is at least mention of race, both explicitly and implicitly. This is different

from researchers who drew on queer theory to investigate the curriculum; they have

found that there is a complete silence in the curriculum as pertains to LGBTQIQ issues

(Thornton, 2003). This curricular silence is particularly problematic in light of the grim

civic possibilities for LGBTQIQ youth: in addition to facing the limited belief that

adolescents are "citizens-in-waiting," queer youth are also moving toward an adulthood that lacks basic rights (Russell, Toomey, Crockett, & Laub, 2010). This conundrum begs the question, "what is the worth of the citizenship for which queer youth are waiting?"

Numerous scholars have shown that the official, intended, and implemented civics curriculum is taught in an assimilationist framework that favors an Anglo ideal of a "good citizen" (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Schmidt & Mayo, 2008; Thornton, 2003) and omits human rights discourse (Branson & Torney-Purta, 1982; Ford, 2008; Guadelli & Fernekes, 2004; Hahn, 1985). I situated this study in a community center (an out-of-school context) to explore innovative ways in which LGBTQIQ youth might learn about citizenship participation and civic identity formation. At issue is the low-quality citizenship education available to LGBTQIQ youth in public schools. My aim was to focus on a place where there is potential for positive civic identity formation and growth.

Background

One clear post-modern critique of modernity is that modernity was defined by a false and problematic notion of essentialism. The relevant post-modern critique of citizenship education, therefore, calls for a move beyond pre-defined, essentialist, and static notions of "the good citizen." In an attempt to develop a political theory of youth political socialization, McIntosh and Youniss (2010) suggest that a politically-inclined citizen "operates in public, recognizes his or her own interests, can promote them in the face of competing interests, knows his or her place within a larger sphere of ideologies, and identifies with the democratic political system" (p. 24). With those qualities in mind,

I attempt to draw together four seemingly disparate strands of historical and contemporary events and concepts that provide background for my study.

I begin by presenting the 1990 Supreme Court case that set legal precedence for groups that now fight for safe space for LGBTQIQ students in U.S. public schools. I then discuss human rights as a helpful framework to consider the ways in which educators might conceive of citizenship education for queer youth. I do this by discussing both human rights in the context of education and international human rights. Next I outline several issues in citizenship education in the United States today, so that readers can understand where the field stands now and the work necessary to move it forward. Finally, I present Dewey's conceptions of democratic living, as they continue to serve as viable pathways to a more just democratic society. Together, these four strands of thought form the contextual base for my study.

Supreme Court precedent. In 1990, a group of Christian students and parents from Westside School District, in Nebraska, challenged lower courts' rulings that they were not allowed to form a Christian-based group as an extra-curricular activity at their public high school. Asserting that the school's refusal to allow the club at the school was a violation of the Equal Access Act, which requires that groups seeking to express political, religious, or philosophical content messages not be denied the ability to form clubs, the students and parents brought their case to the Supreme Court and won. In an 8-1 ruling, Justice O'Connor, representing the majority opinion, declared:

> The school was subject to the Equal Access Act because it maintained other
> "limited open forums." The *Lemon* test is used to assess the constitutionality of
> the EAA. 1) The Act itself is neutral because its purpose of creating discourse is

secular. Although it endorses both secular and religious speech, it does not either endorse or disapprove of the subjects discussed. 2) The Act does not have the primary effect of endorsing religion for several reasons. First, secondary students are mature enough to recognize that allowing a religious club to exist does not prove endorsement. Also, the public officials have little or no role in the activities of the club. Finally, other groups may be formed to counter the message offered by the religious group. 3) There is no risk of excessive entanglement. Faculty monitors are excluded from participating in the activities of the club, non-students are not permitted to participate, and the school itself is not allowed to sponsor the group (Alexander & Alexander, 2005, p. 230).

The irony of the effects of this Supreme Court ruling is that it has served as the legal precedent for many local and state cases in which students (and sometimes, teachers and parents) fight for the right to establish Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs). In addition to this formal legal precedent in the United States, there exists also a more global – though perhaps less binding – framework that can support a just citizenship education for LGBTQIQ students. That is the human rights framework.

Human rights. Human rights intersects with education at two crucial points. Tarrow (1987) suggests that using a human rights lens to view education "offers a dual perspective – of education *as* a human right and education *about* human rights" (p. 3). Similarly, Lister (1981, as cited in Hahn, 2005) argued that "teaching *about* human rights, *for* the securing and maintenance of these rights, needs to take place *in* schools that are themselves characterized by a respect for human rights." Though the study was situated in a community center for the aforementioned reasons, I suggest that Lister's

assertion remains valid if the term 'community centers' replaces the word 'schools.' The unique position of LGBTQIQ youth in U.S. schools and wider society highlights the usefulness of Tarrow's (1987) dual perspective and Lister's (1981) triple perspective. All students deserve a quality education as a basic human right, and all students should receive an education about human rights frameworks as a means of conceptualizing connections among all people around the world. Importantly, this education can take place in out-of-school settings.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) grants all youth – including LGBTQIQ youth – the right to a quality education. Article 26 asserts all children's right to an education. Article 16 asserts all men and women have the right to marry and found a family. Significantly, there exist a plethora of other normative human rights documents that apply to all youth, including LGBTQIQ youth. The right to an education is enshrined in several articles in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), the Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960), the Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1963), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), among others (Tarrow, 1987). As many scholars have noted, the fact that rights are codified in international law does not necessarily mean that they reflect reality. Indeed, there are multiple instances of explicit and implicit violations in both primary and secondary education, including violations of quality education for LGBTQIQ youth.

This study of citizenship education in an out-of-school context in the United States was carried out in a country that is a signatory to many of the above normative documents, though not all. The United States and Somalia are the only two countries that have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, the right to an education is not mentioned in the United States' Constitution and is, therefore, left to the states to address. In the state where this study was carried out, the right to an adequate education is articulated in Article VIII, Section I of the state's constitution. It is also important to note that there are tensions that exist within the human rights framework particular to gay rights. That is, human rights ensure protection of diverse religious faiths, yet in the name of religion, many fundamentalists in different religions and different parts of the world (including the United States) promote heteronormativity and insist on limiting individual rights. Understanding U.S. legal precedence and national and international concepts of human rights helps to highlight some of the gaps that currently exist in citizenship education.

Citizenship education. One of the fundamental goals of public schools in the United States is to prepare students to be active and informed citizens. The topics of citizenship and civic responsibility most commonly arise within the social studies curriculum for primary and secondary students. Yet the social studies curriculum is silent on LGBTQIQ issues, so the study was conducted in an out-of-school context that can provide valuable insights to social studies educators. In recent years, increased attention has been paid to the multiple ways in which students form their own civic identities. Many studies present citizenship in nested levels, such as local, state, national, and global contexts (Hahn, 2003; Kymlicka, 2004; Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999).

Researchers have found that students' notions of citizenship are influenced through both formal and informal educational channels (Hahn, 1998, 1999). Over the course of this study, I was able to gain insights about both formal and informal processes that affect the citizenship formation of LGBTQIQ youth.

Many researchers have explored education for citizenship as it currently exists in schools in the United States and internationally (Banks, 2004; Bickmore, 1993; Hahn, 1998, 1999; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schulz, 2001; Torney-Purta et al., 1999). In 2005, a Consensus Panel of social studies, multicultural education, and global education scholars developed a framework for citizenship education that is inclusive of multiple perspectives (Banks, Banks, Cortés, Hahn, Merryfield, Moodley, 2005). They posited that inclusive curriculum, culturally responsive pedagogy, and an open classroom climate for discussion foster positive learning environments for students' citizenship education. Importantly, the international group of scholars sought consensus about a framework for improved citizenship education.

Though a few researchers have explored social studies education in relation to issues of sexuality and queer students in U.S. schools, I have not found any studies that focus on education for citizenship of LGBTQIQ youth in out-of-school contexts. It is particularly important to investigate out-of-school contexts as sites of citizenship education for LGBTQIQ youth, as the education that they receive in schools is non-inclusive (Russell, et al., 2010; Schmidt & Mayo, 2008; Thornton, 2003). The community center where the study was housed encourages youth to bring their "whole selves." This means that unlike many public schools in the United States, youth are not expected to leave parts of their identities at the doorstep when they enter the community

center. It becomes necessary, therefore, for those concerned with the youths' political socialization and citizenship education, to consider the role of intersectionality in the youths' identities, in the forces that combine to oppress them, and in the opportunities they have to collaborate with one another.

The three dimensions of citizenship I considered for this study were citizenship as status, practice, and feeling. This conceptual framework, developed by Osler and Starkey (2005), considers the three dimensions of citizenship to help classify the way citizenship is taught and received. The first two are traditionally-theorized dimensions (citizenship as status and citizenship as practice), and the third is newly emerging (citizenship as feeling). Osler and Starkey describe citizenship as status as that which

>…describes the relationship of the individual to the state. The state protects citizens through laws and policing. It provides some collective benefits such as security, a system of justice, education, health care and transport infrastructure. In return, citizens contribute to the costs of collective benefits through taxation and possibly military service (p. 10).

Citizenship as practice, on the other hand, refers to ones' consciousness that one is living in community with other individuals, and that political, social, and economic participation is a crucial element of belonging. According to Osler and Starkey (2005), "[a]ctive citizenship is facilitated by awareness of and access to human rights" (p. 14).

Thirdly, Osler and Starkey (2005) describe citizenship as feeling as "a feeling of belonging to a community of citizens" (p. 11). They assert that individuals and groups possess varying degrees of affiliation to particular nation states, regardless of legal citizenship.

Democracy and civil society. John Dewey (1916) argued that democracy was more than a form of government; it is a way of living. He imagined and promoted a Great Community, consisting of myriad little publics – associations comprised of individuals and groups linked by common interests and goals. Paramount to the concept of the Great Community was Dewey's notion of associated living, which entailed forming civic goals and actions while explicitly considering others' goals and actions in society (Alviar-Martin & Usher, 2010; Dewey, 1916). Recognizing that people learn through experiences with family and other social institutions, Dewey insisted that quality democratic living depended on good communication within and between the little publics. Importantly, Dewey viewed democracy as a way of living, not as an attainable end-point (Alviar-Martin & Usher, 2010). A healthy democracy such as the one Dewey imagined is the foundation for civil society.

There exist many different and somewhat conflicting ideas about how best to describe civil society (Bahmueller, 1997). Though theorists and researchers disagree about the extent to which the concept includes family, economic forces, and non-governmental organizations, the definition of civil society for this study was "the whole range of civic action independent of formal political institutions" (Bahmueller, 1997, p. 13), as this understanding "includes service associations, philanthropic groups, cultural groups, religious organizations, labor unions, athletic organizations, and youth groups, plus many more in every imaginable field of interest or endeavor (Bahmueller, 1997, p. 13). It is the existence of, and participation in, these entities that protect and cultivate healthy democratic societies. Young people, then, need opportunities to learn to live democratically and to participate in civil society.

Together, the four aforementioned lines of inquiry provide the foundation upon which my study was built. Next I present the theory I employed as a lens through which to view my findings.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA) Octagon Model, which I used to create a multi-level analysis of political socialization and citizenship education in a community center created to support and empower LGBTQIQ youth. In this section, I describe how the theory helped to guide the study. Though multiple researchers have conducted citizenship education studies using the Octagon Model, I have not read any studies using the model in which the researcher focused on LGBTQIQ youth.

Colloquially referred to as the Octagon Model, the theory guiding the IEA study draws upon Bronfenbrenner's (1998, as cited in Torney-Purta et al., 1999) psychological theories that entail an ecological approach to studying development. Additionally, the model pulls from Lave and Wenger's (1991, as cited in Torney-Purta et al., 1999) situated cognition theories and incorporates other cognitive development theories, such as that of Conover and Searing (1994, 2000). For a graphic representation of the Octagon Model, see Appendix A.

The model places the individual student (in this case, the LGBTQIQ youth) at the center, and aims to investigate the multiple individual and societal influences on that student's citizenship education and political socialization. The individual student constructs meaning of the civic-political world through interactions with agents of

socialization. These include the family (parents, siblings, extended family), the school (intended curriculum, teachers, opportunities for participation), the peer group (which operates both in in- and out-of-school contexts), the informal community (neighbors, people with whom the central youth works or participates in organizations), and the formal community (elected officials, political climates). Combined, this part of the model is what Bronfenbrenner refers to as the "microsystem."

The "macrosystem," according to Bronfenbrenner and other psychologists who subscribe to ecological development, creates the outer octagon. This is comprised of eight dimensions of society that influence the agents of socialization: processes, values, and institutions in educational, political, economic, and religious domains. In addition, the macrosystem considers international comparisons, societal hierarchies, and local, state, and national symbols and narratives that shape individual and group understanding of citizenship. Importantly, the IEA Octagon Model differs from earlier assumptions about political socialization, in that it emphasizes that young people do not passively receive messages from varied sources. Rather, they mentally process messages as they construct civic and political meaning.

The Octagon Model was helpful for the study for three additional reasons. First, it allowed analysis of individual students, which aided my analysis of how each youth participant was making sense of his or her political socialization and citizenship education. Second, two of the "agents of socialization" highlight the agents that might be most relevant in a study of citizenship education in an out-of-school context: the informal community (youth organizations), and peer group (out-of-class discourse). Third, all of the elements that comprise the macrosystem operate on this particular community youth

center, thus employing this frame allowed me to investigate the multiple and overlapping ways in which the youth were learning about their own socialization and citizenship there.

Purpose Statement and Significance

The broad purpose of this study was to investigate the role of citizenship education and political socialization for queer youth in an out-of-school context dedicated to educating and empowering these youth. LGBTQIQ students' experiences are both varied and unique, in that the youth are members of a group that is denied first-class citizenship in the United States, and thus they represent a special group to be educated for citizenship. This study was an attempt to examine education that is intended to be safe and informative for queer youths' development, through the lens of a governing youth council at a community center dedicated to queer youth. I set out to learn from the youth and adults who work in the center, from program observations, and from center documents.

In the fall of 2008, the movie *Milk* was released in independent and mainstream movie theatres across the United States. The movie was a portrait of Harvey Milk, who was murdered in 1978 for being an out gay politician in San Francisco. Milk showcased the political activism of many LGBT activists in the gay and lesbian liberation movement. The United States also saw political activism demonstrated by LGBT groups leading up to the 2008 presidential election. However, no one seems to have studied what early experiences might contribute to feelings of political trust, efficacy, and interest that might lead to such activism. From the outset, I hoped to gain insights that I would be

able to share with social studies teacher educators about how teachers might more effectively teach about LGBTQIQ citizens' issues, teach to LGBTQIQ students, and teach all students to see citizenship in an inclusive way that includes human rights principles.

The following review of the literature includes several studies about political socialization and citizenship education for youth. However, most of the studies about political socialization and citizenship education do not include consideration of the youths' sexual identity or gender presentation. Importantly, I found no studies linking civic education and political socialization for queer youth in out-of-school contexts. Several leaders of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) have asserted the need for increased research on queer students' in the social studies and in citizenship education (Hahn, 2008; Levstik & Tyson, 2008). This study addresses that need.

Specifically, I investigated a youth governing board housed in an LGBTQIQ youth center, focusing on the ways in which the youth are constructing their individual and group civic identities. In the process, I aimed to advance understandings of civic and political socialization, out-of-school contexts as alternate learning spaces, and queer youth experiences – three strands of research that have remained largely distinct. I brought these three lines of inquiry together as I addressed the research questions for this study.

Research Questions

1. What understandings of citizenship are held/exhibited by the adults and the youth in a community center dedicated to empowerment for LGBTQIQ youth?

2. What is the nature of teaching and learning evident in this community center and how do these educational enactments limit and enable various kinds of education for democratic citizenship?

3. How do youth develop three political attitudes – political trust, efficacy, and interest – in this context?

Definition of Terms

Several definitions are central to understanding the research questions, literature review, and study. Unless otherwise noted, the definitions below are from *Hatred in the Hallways* (Bochenek & Brown, 2001).

Bisexual. Attracted to persons of both sexes.

Democracy. A form of associative living in which people make the decisions that affect their lives (Ayers, Kumashiro, Meiners, Quinn, & Stovall, 2010).

Gay. Attracted to a person of the same sex. This term is sometimes used to refer only to males who are attracted to other males, but it may also be used as a synonym for the more clinical (and problematic) term homosexual.

Gay-Straight Alliance. A student club for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, [queer, intersex, and questioning] and straight (heterosexual) youth.

Gender expression. All of the external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as masculine or feminine, including dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.

Gender identity. A person's internal, deeply felt sense of being male or female (or something other than or in between male and female).

Heterosexual. Attracted exclusively to the opposite sex (also referred to as being "straight").

Homosexual. Attracted to a person of the same sex. Most lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons in the United States prefer more contemporary terms, as "homosexual" is a medicalized, pathologized, and over-sexualized description of sexual identity.

Human rights. The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law (Human Rights Education Association, www.hrea.org).

Intersex. The term used for the approximately one in two thousand peoples who are born with sexual anatomy that mixes male and female characteristics or is otherwise atypical.

Lesbian. A female who is attracted to other females.

LGBTQIQ. A common abbreviation for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and questioning."

Omnisexual. Person attracted to all sexes and to all forms of sexuality, in distinction to bisexual (attracted to two sexes) and monosexual (attracted to one sex).

Out. The experience of living openly as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or questioning individual. There are many degrees of being "out"; for example, one may tell one's friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, or the public.

Pan-sexual. Attracted to members of all genders.

Political attitudes. A relatively enduring organization of beliefs [about political institutions and processes], which predispose one to respond in a particular manner (Rokeach, 1968). Often measured by political efficacy, interest, and trust.

Political efficacy. Confidence in one's ability to comprehend the political sphere and to participate effectively within it, and the belief that these understandings and actions are meaningful and worthwhile. Psychologists consider political efficacy a form of self-efficacy expressed in the public domain, such as the belief that one can make change through political action (Bandura, 1997; Beaumont, 2010).

Political interest. A general interest in political matters (Hahn, 1998, p. 20).

Political socialization. How a society transmits its political values and norms to young people, and how youth interpret and give meaning to those values and norms to develop their civic identity (Avery, 2002).

Political trust. A feeling of confidence, that develops toward officials (Massialas, as cited in Hahn, 1998, p. 20) and toward government institutions (Torney-Purta, et al., 2001).

Queer. Often used as a slur to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or questioning persons, the term "queer" has been re-claimed by many LGBTIQ individuals and communities as an expression of pride in one's sexual orientation and gender identity.

Questioning. Uncertain of one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sexual orientation. One's attraction to the same sex, the opposite sex, or multiple sexes.

Straight. Attracted exclusively to the opposite sex (also termed "heterosexual").

Transgender. A term used to describe people whose gender identity and/or expression does not conform to societal expectations of what it means to be female or male, meaning sex assigned at birth. Transgender is often interpreted as an umbrella term to include crossdressers, transsexuals, genderqueers, drag kings and drag queens. Often shortened to "trans" (Kosciw, et al., 2010).

Transsexual. One who has undergone sex reassignment surgery so that one's physical sex corresponds to one's gender identity. Female-to-male transsexual (FTM) people were born with female bodies but have a predominantly male gender identity; male-to-female transsexual (MTF) people were born with male bodies but have a predominantly female gender identity.

I use the acronym LGBTQIQ as a broad – though admittedly inaccurate – term for sexualities. That is, some *transgender* and *intersex* youth identify as *straight*, and *questioning* youth may be questioning their gender, not their sexuality. Though the word *queer* is often used to connote these nuances, not all sexually marginalized youth identify as *queer*. Additionally, much previous research on related topics is limited strictly to *gay* and/or *lesbian*. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the youth in this study continually developed new words and phrases to describe themselves: in this community, language and identities morph as new understandings are reached.

Summary

In this era of anti-gay legislation and need for social studies reform, it is important to explore how queer youth are being educated for citizenship in out-of-school contexts. Using the IEA Octagon Model as a theoretical guide, I investigated how such education

for citizenship is being enacted in one community center in an urban setting in the southeastern United States. In the next section, I discuss previous research upon which I built this study.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

I organized my literature review thematically, sorting existing research into the following categories: 1) Youth Political Socialization and Identity Development, 2) LGBTQIQ Youth Experiences in U.S. Schools, 3) LGBTQIQ Youth Experiences with Bullying, 4) Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Youth Civic Engagement, and 5) LGBTQIQ Youths' Agents of Socialization and Civic Development.

Included in this review are articles about youth political socialization and citizenship education. Though my study focused on political socialization of LGBTQIQ youth in out-of-school contexts, I included research on political socialization of all youth, both in- and out-of-school, as the existing literature on queer youth in out-of-school contexts is sparse. Additionally, I included research on more general social development of LGBTQIQ youth, as there is little existing literature specifically about political socialization of queer youth. In 1990, the aforementioned U.S. Supreme Court case set a legal precedent for equal access to extra-curricular activities in *Westside Community Schools v. Mergens*. Thus, I excluded research conducted before 1990 from this literature review.

Youth Political Socialization and Identity Development

Scholars agree that youth are socialized politically from a number of different sources: family, school, extra-curricular activities, involvement with community organizations, religious groups, and peers. The review of the following empirical studies begins with the foundational studies that set the stage for this and other current empirical studies about youth political socialization (Baldi, Perie, Skidmore, Greenberg, & Hahn,

2001; Conover & Searing, 1994, 2000; Hahn, 1998, 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1997).

Next, I present the relevant studies related to youth political identity development by

highlighting the vast disparities that exist in civic education opportunities in U.S. public

schools (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008), the ways in which ethnicity and other allegiance

groups intersect with civic participation (Conover & Searing, 1994; Flanagan, Syvertsen,

Gill, Gallay, & Cumsille, 2009; Rubin, 2007), and how youth may be socialized

politically in new and different ways at the start of the 21st century than in decades past

(Mitchell & Parker, 2008; Zaff, Malanchuck, Michelsen, & Eccles, 2003).

Phase 1 of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational

Achievement's (IEA) Civic Education study was comprised of national case studies of

citizenship education in 24 countries. For the U.S. national study, Hahn (1999) and her

colleagues found that although there is widespread agreement that formal education in the

United States should play a major role in educating youth for citizenship, there is some

variation among states, districts, and individuals about the most effective way to carry

this out. However, from a textbook analysis, the researchers found that the textbooks

investigated were similar in that U.S. history books told a grand narrative of United

States history, and civics books described the three branches of government and

emphasized individual rights. In terms of national identity, Hahn and her colleagues

found that there was a strong sense of nationalism (Hahn, 1999). Hahn's findings

provide important context for my proposed study. Because the focus of her study was

explicitly focused on formal school settings, this project extended her research into out-

of-school contexts, and adds necessary research about citizenship education in another

important venue.

Phase 2 of the IEA study took place in 1999, and was conducted to assess the comparative civic knowledge and experiences of 14 year-olds in 28 countries (Torney-Purta, et al., 2001). The results from Phase 2 for the United States help provide further context for this current study (Baldi, et al., 2001). Baldi and his colleagues found that race, country of origin, and school-level socio-economic status (SES) were significant factors relating to civic knowledge. Gender was not. They also found that home literacy (a proxy for socio-economic status) was positively correlated with students' civic knowledge, and that students who had parents with higher levels of education and who had higher educational expectations for themselves did better on the test than their peers. Their findings regarding students' involvement in extra-curricular activities were most relevant for this proposed study. The researchers found that "students who participated in meetings or activities sponsored by any type of organization, even if they participated only a few times a month" (Baldi, et al., 2001, p. 45), scored higher on the assessment of civic knowledge than students without such participation. Researchers who used data from the National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEP) similarly found that SES, race, and ethnicity were related to student civic knowledge (NCES, 1999, 2007; Niemi & Junn, 1998). None of the researchers, however, looked at whether or how sexual identity or out-of-school contexts might influence civic knowledge and attitudes. I investigated a group of youth who participate regularly in an organization outside of school that serves LGBTQIQ youth.

In a mixed method, cross-national study of citizenship education in five Western democracies, Hahn (1998) examined the social studies content, pedagogy, and class atmosphere, as well as student political attitudes, in a sample of schools in Denmark,

England, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States. By gathering data from teacher and student interviews, surveys, and classroom observations, Hahn explored the relationship between school experiences and student political attitudes. Classroom observations reinforced student interview and survey data about the extent to which classroom climates were open to exploration of controversial issues and disagreement with the teachers and other students in the class. Hahn found that open classroom climates were beneficial but not sufficient for students' participatory citizenship attitudes. She speculated that other factors, such as school environment, family, and the cultural context outside of school all influence students' concepts of becoming political. Hahn's study is one upon which I drew, particularly with respect to the development of youth's political interest, efficacy, and trust, as well as attention to issues discussed.

Two other small-scale studies conducted in the metropolitan area where I conducted my study also yielded insights into students' political attitudes of trust, efficacy, and interest (Dilworth, 2000; Harwood, 1991). In the first of these two studies, the researcher explored students' political attitudes in three civic classrooms (Harwood, 1991). Based on the understanding that social studies students were learning political knowledge, but not necessarily developing positive political attitudes, Harwood cited the need for increased research on what occurs inside classrooms. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, she examined the classrooms to distinguish elements of open and closed climates. Specifically, she examined how students' attitudes changed during the course of formal civics instruction, how students' perceptions of their civics classroom climates related to their political attitudes, and how classes that students perceived as open differed from those students perceived as closed. Broadly, she sought

to find students' basic attitudes toward politics and government. Quantitatively, Harwood found that there was no statistically significant difference in changed political attitudes between students who perceived their classroom climate to be open or closed. She did find, however, a statistically significant relationship between teacher characteristics and students' political efficacy and interest. Qualitatively, she found that most of the students in her study had negative views of politicians, while some of her participants expressed that politicians should be evaluated individually. Also, she found that the students who asserted that they were interested in politics often demonstrated their interest by actively engaging in political activities (e.g. actively followed political news, discussed politics with friends, participated in student government). Her findings helped set the stage for this study, as I also investigated levels of youth political trust and interest.

In the second study conducted in the same metropolitan area as this study, the researcher investigated the extent to which multicultural content, reflective decision-making, and controversial issues discussions are integrated in secondary social studies classrooms in certain schools with diverse student populations (Dilworth, 2000). By centering the issue of diversity, Dilworth aimed to explore how different youth learn social studies within the ongoing quest for the U.S. balance between unity and diversity; a central element of the present study as well. Like Harwood, Dilworth used mixed methods. She found that multicultural content integration was limited in the implemented curriculum, and that it was difficult to differentiate classroom climates from individual teacher style. Because both Harwood and Dilworth focused on classroom experiences in schools and did not consider young people's sexual identity, I modeled my

investigation upon similar questions, but extended my research into these other important areas.

In a study about the psychological and social context of political socialization, Conover and Searing (2000) assert that in the United States, "our shared understanding of the practice of citizenship focuses on those actions and predispositions essential to sustain a representative, liberal democracy in our multicultural society" (p. 3). The researchers argued that political socialization cannot be studied in a vacuum, and that contextual factors are essential to understanding how people learn to be citizens. By conducting interviews in four distinct regions of the United States, Conover and Searing demonstrated how people living in different communities learn about being "American" in different ways. They also found that despite the youth participants' seemingly strong citizen identities, the youth had vague ideas of what it means to be a good citizen. This study informed my study, as I attempted to understand the behaviors, if any, that participants in my study connect with their ideas of "good citizenship." In fact, several researchers have empirically illustrated that youth of differing socio-economic levels, genders, places of origin, and race have different experiences with civic education, and they acquire civic knowledge and attitudes differently (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Rubin, 2007).

Conover, Crewe, and Searing (1991) also conducted a comparative study about citizenship in the United States and Britain. The researchers examined citizens' conceptions of rights, duties, and civic identities. By drawing on cognitive psychology theory, Conover and her colleagues identified two lines of inquiry to explore both what and how citizens think about their rights, duties, and identities. Regarding the latter

consideration – how citizens think about these things – the researchers found that most individuals develop a civic schema. This means that most people construct cognitive organizational structures to help make sense of the civic content that they learn. The researchers' first line of inquiry, then, focused on the particular schema that participants had constructed. The emphasis of their second line of inquiry was on the identity development of participants in the study: how did participants form their own civic identity, and what was that identity?

Through a series of focus group interviews in the two countries, the researchers found that citizens have a complex understanding of themselves as citizens and of their own civic schema. In general, they found that participants in the United States had a citizenship identity that was closely aligned with traditional liberal views: highly individualistic, focused on personal rights instead of public or communal duties, and responsibilities to the polity were largely legalistic (e.g. paying taxes, serving on jury duty, serving in the armed forces). Participants in Great Britain, however, had more communitarian views of citizenship. That is, their ideas of public participation often included concern for the common welfare. This study helped set the context for my study, in that the researchers' search for participants' citizenship identity served as a guide for my own research. Specifically, much of the interview protocol I used to interview the youth in the study was adapted from the interview protocol in Conover, Crewe, and Searing's study.

In another influential study about civic identity formation, Youniss and Yates (1997) explored the extent to which adolescent participation in community service leads to engaged citizenship in adulthood. The researchers used a theoretical lens that posits

the existence of developmental processes that guide youths' investments in civic activities and their civic trajectories into adulthood. They then presented a case study to illustrate the developmental theory. Students participated in a school-based service-learning program during the data collection phase of the study. Students served meals at a local soup kitchen for homeless people. The researchers also sent out the surveys to students who had participated in the same service-learning program three, five, and 10 years prior, to assess relationships between adolescence and adulthood. The researchers found that there was a positive, significant correlation between youth and adult service participation. Two major themes emerged from the school-aged participants and the adult alumni of the program. Specifically, participants noted increased empathy toward people who were different, and increased efficacy related to helping people who were less fortunate.

This study extends Youniss and Yates' study (1997) in two important ways. First, my study took place in an out-of-school setting, to highlight another important arena for youth political socialization and citizenship education. Second, although the youth in my study were not participating in a service project to help those "less fortunate" than themselves, they were engaged in another type of important service: voluntary leadership in a community organization.

One large, diverse, longitudinal study, carried out in a mid-Atlantic state, explored the relationship between informal interactions in young peoples' lives and their citizenship behaviors. Specifically, Zaff, Malanchuck, Michelsen, and Eccles (2003) explored the extent to which youth interactions with their parents and peers, in addition to the culture in which the students were raised, "primed" youth to develop values and

motivation that might lead to positive citizenship behaviors. The researchers theorized that values and motivation are constructs that can serve as bridges between familial relationships embedded in a particular culture and positive citizenship behavior. Using survey data from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context (MADIC) study, the researchers sought to investigate how social and cultural contexts affect behavioral choices, and how developmental trajectories vary among youth. Zaff and his colleagues from The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Education (CIRCLE) found that early parental, sibling, and peer relationships have more of an influence on citizenship engagement than previous citizenship engagement, level of parental education, ethnicity, gender, and religious beliefs. They also found that there is a positive correlation between early and late adolescents' level of motivation to improve society. For the Black students in the study, level and quality of ethnic and racial pride and knowledge influenced positive civic engagement in later years.

Certain elements of the methodology, focus, and participant selection in Zaff et al.'s study (2003) lent themselves to this study, in that the civic event chosen for their study was the 1996 Million Man March in Washington DC. The event was a large gathering of people historically and contemporarily marginalized in U.S. society. Similarly, I examined political socialization and citizenship education of a historically and contemporarily marginalized group. Many, but not all, of the students in my sample attend schools with many low SES students.

Another large, statewide study examined the availability of high school-based civic learning opportunities as pertains to students' race, socioeconomic status (SES), and academic track (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). This study included survey data from more

than 2,500 high school juniors and seniors from six schools in one state. Additionally, the researchers compared their findings to those from the IEA Civic Education Study, the aforementioned study of a nationally representative sample of 9th graders. At the outset of the study, the researchers compiled a set of "Best Practices" (p. 10) for civic educational strategies, including creating classroom and community experiences in which students: discuss current events in an open climate, study issues that matter to them, study government, history, and other social sciences, interact with civic role models, engage in after-school activities, and learn about community problems and ways to respond. Comparing the survey data to the existing literature regarding civic learning best practices, Kahne and Middaugh assessed the extent to which various groups of students' experiences aligned with the best practices. The researchers found that the White, college-bound students who attend higher SES schools have more positive civic opportunities than those students of color tracked in low-level classes who attend lower SES schools.

In one small-scale qualitative study conducted in a metropolitan area in the northwestern United States, Mitchell and Parker (2008) investigated the validity of the scholarly debate fueled by Nussbaum and her critics in their 2002 book *For Love of Country?*. In this volume, Nussbaum had presented cosmopolitanism as a preferred aim of citizenship education efforts compared with a nationally-based patriotism. Her essay was followed by more than a dozen scholarly responses, either supporting or critiquing her push for cosmopolitanism. Mitchell and Parker (2008) challenged the validity of that dichotomy altogether, and suggested instead that youth may have shifting scales of affinity and a more flexible understanding of citizenship that defies rigid demarcation. In

a series of focus group interviews in early 2003, just over a year after the events of September 11, 2001, Mitchell and Parker sought to learn how a sample of middle and high school students conceived of citizenship and patriotism in light of the terrorist attacks and the cultural, political, and militaristic aftermath. They found that students' conceptions of citizenship were much more flexible than the scholarly debates reveal. Also, the students' scales of allegiance (e.g. national or global) were less static than Nussbaum and her respondents suggested. I similarly explored youth's scales of allegiance and concepts of citizenship.

Collectively, these studies about youth political socialization and civic identity development illustrate the many influences upon the way youth individually and collectively construct their political knowledge and identity. They provided important background for the current study. They also show that subgroups of youth have differing political socialization experiences, and that conceptions of citizenship are complex, nuanced, and flexible. Furthermore, most political socialization studies focus on schools. Less is known about out-of-school settings, and I found no studies that have focused on political socialization of and citizenship education for queer youth. In the next sections, I will discuss research on LGBTQIQ youth.

Sexualities within the Social Studies

The spring 2002 issue of *Theory and Research in Social Education* was a special issue, titled *Social Education and Sexual Identity*. This silence-breaking collection of empirical and theoretical articles framed the connection between social studies, sexuality, and queer students in U.S. schools at the start of the 21st century (Avery, 2002; Bickmore,

2002; Crocco, 2002, Franck, 2002; Levstik & Groth, 2002; Marchman, 2002; McCrary, 2002; Oesterreich, 2002; Thornton, 2002). The scholars cited widespread negativity about and a lack of respect for gender and sexual diversity –"from slight discomfort and silence to moral outrage and vocal opposition" (Yeager, 2002, p. 176) – as one impetus for the special issue. The scholars' other concern was teachers' tendency to ignore issues of bullying and harassment toward LGBT students.

Asserting the crucial role of teacher education programs in preparing new teachers for gender and sexual diversity, Crocco (2002) collected data over the course of five years from students enrolled in the requisite diversity class within the social studies master's degree program. She linked the well-documented silence on gender and sexual diversity issues within the official social studies curriculum to more general hostility within secondary schools, and she emphasized the role of teacher educators in improving the situation.

The data for Crocco's (2002) study consisted of the master's students' written responses to prompts regarding their memories of gender and sexual diversity issues in their schooling, in-depth interviews with 20 alumni of the program after their first year of teaching, Crocco's field notes produced while teaching the course, and semi-structured interviews of others at the same institution who had taught similar courses. She analyzed the data using a constant comparative method.

Crocco (2002) organized her findings into five themes, which were present across nearly all 150 participants (with the exception of two internationally-educated students whose experiences were quite different). In written recollections of their own secondary school experiences, the students cited the following commonalities: compulsory

heterosexuality, silence in the formal curriculum, harassment in the hallways toward those students who were perceived to be gay or lesbian, and teacher and administrators' unwillingness to address bullying. About 10% of the student participants wrote about increased acceptance of sexual diversity as a result of getting to know someone who was gay or lesbian. Understanding the commonalities among participants in Crocco's study helped me gage the extent to which school climates had changed (or, not changed, as the case turned out) over the roughly eight to ten years since her participants and the participants in the current study attended high school.

In Levstik and Groth's (2002) study, the scholars examined the nuanced intersection between adolescents' social worlds, contemporary issues, and historical study. Their research was conducted at School for the Arts (SOTA), which was located in a midsize city in the upper south. Out of the 50 eighth grade student participants in two social studies classes, 41 of them were female. Teachers attributed the small number of boys in the school's middle school program to a lack of intramural sports opportunities, but the eighth graders cited another factor in boys' decision to leave the school between fifth and sixth grade. That was the negative peer pressure directed toward early adolescent boys who are interested in the arts; often they were labeled as gay and accordingly taunted.

Over the course of a month, Levstik and Groth (2002) taught the students about three topics in U.S. history that are virtually always included in the formal curriculum: westward expansion, industrialization, and reform movements. Instead of the commonly tapped male perspectives on these areas, however, the researchers used primary and secondary source documents that centered women's experiences. The researchers then

collected data about student-generated questions that arose from learning history in this way. They found that although there was enthusiasm among the students for learning more about women, many of the students also expressed concern that in studying women, they were omitting important information about men. Several of the students also worried about being labeled a feminist. Though their study was primarily focused on issues of gender, the subsequent student discussion explored issues of contemporary and historical sexual identity. Troubling areas within the social studies curriculum that were formerly thought of as one-dimensional and static is an ongoing process.

Building upon the oft-cited necessity for social studies curricula and social studies teachers to incorporate multiple perspectives, Mayo (2010) conducted a study in which he drew upon the rich history of Two Spirit Native American traditions. By conducting archival research and semi-structured interviews with a current Ojibwe leader about conceptions of gender identity and social acceptance, he called for this important element of history and culture to be incorporated into contemporary social studies curricula.

In an intentional move away from conducting a study regarding LGBT issues, Schmidt (2010) conducted a study in which she "queered" the intended curricula and the field of social studies. That is, instead of reifying commonly understood categories produced by the heteronormative society in which we live – and thereby calling for special attention to be paid to issues and groups of people outside of the "norm" – Schmidt situated her study within queer theory, which allowed her to challenge the categories themselves. By analyzing the Vision Statement of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the *NCSS Curriculum Standards for the Social Studies*, she critiqued the absence of LGBT persons and issues within the documents, and suggested

ways that those documents – and the field of social studies in general – might expand to better educate all students about inclusive citizenship and sexuality writ large.

Schmidt (2010) found that the most recent iteration of the NCSS Vision Statement, published in 2008, drew attention away from the concept of "diversity" in an earlier iteration being connected to students' identities, and toward a discourse of "diversity" in terms of the diverse social studies disciplines. Furthermore, the 2008 Vision Statement suggested that the most "powerful" social studies teaching and learning occurs when all of the disciplines are integrated. Schmidt asserted that the authors therefore imply that strength in diversity emerges from similarities. This does not set the stage for an inclusive school environment that celebrates difference. Schmidt also critiqued the static notion of "social" in social understanding, and the pre-defined values that students are expected to learn, which do not allow room for the values students bring into schools and classrooms.

LGBTQIQ Youth Experiences in U.S. Public Schools

As presented in the preceding Statement of the Problem section, many public schools in the United States fail to provide a safe context for LGBTQIQ youth to learn and excel (Kosciw, et al, 2010). In this section, I present five studies that empirically illustrate the myriad ways in which safety and positive academic opportunities are systematically and routinely denied to thousands of students in the United States who are either queer or perceived to be queer. This is related to citizenship education in two important ways. First, LGBTQIQ students often receive both explicit and implicit messages that they are excluded from the curriculum and not welcome in their schools.

Because one element of citizenship is the delineation of who belongs and who does not, this exclusion may have detrimental effects upon LGBTQIQ youths' citizenship identity formation. Second, the individuals and groups of people (both other youth and adults in schools) who perpetrate and/or stand by while others perpetrate hostility based on actual or perceived sexual orientation learn problematic lessons about what it means to be a member of a community when bigotry is tolerated and/or citizens remain silent. As I created and conducted this study, I explored ways in which the LGBTQIQ youth participants made sense of this duel/dual citizenship education. That is, the youth were learning the official citizenship education rhetoric in school, which insists that all [American] citizens are treated fairly and equally, while they were simultaneously experiencing a different kind of "lived-experience education," which demonstrated daily that they are not treated fairly nor equally.

The first two studies in this section were carried out by researchers at the national Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), which is an organization dedicated to creating safe schools for all students (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009; Kosciw, et al., 2010). The third study was conducted by researchers at the National Education Association (NEA), and is another large-scale study that supports the findings from GLSEN's studies (Kim, 2009). The fourth study focuses directly on the role social studies curriculum plays in constructing and maintaining citizenship and sexuality norms (Schmidt, 2010). The fifth study is a smaller-scale study that investigates the existence of GSAs in relation to LGBTQIQ students' experiences at school (Fetner & Kush, 2007).

Every other year for the past 11 years, GLSEN has carried out a national survey to assess the school experiences of and school climate for LGBT youth. The latest study

(Kosciw et al., 2010) reported on data collected in 2009. The researchers employed two methods to gather the participants for the survey: contacting youth via community centers and programs that serve LGBT youth, and Internet advertisement and outreach. From a list of over 300 community programs, GLSEN randomly selected 50 programs through which to disseminate the survey. The Internet outreach entailed MySpace, Facebook, and other websites that receive high numbers of teen traffic. More specifically, youth who indicated that they were lesbian or gay were targeted for specific advertisement and invitations to participate in the study. Participants came from every state in the union and from the District of Columbia and were in grades 6-12. Youth were between the ages of 13 and 21. The sample was 67% White, 57% female, and 61% gay or lesbian.

The researchers found that for the majority of students who were or who were perceived to be LGBT, public schools in the United States were unsafe environments in regards to bullying and physical intimidation and aggression. Two of the most salient problems associated with the pervasive conditions of schools that fail to provide safe environments were high absenteeism and lowered educational aspirations for LGBT youth. The researchers found that LGBT students who cited feeling "uncomfortable or unsafe" had truancy rates that were more than four times higher than rates for all students for the same reasons. In particular, 30% of LGBT students missed a day of school because of feeling unsafe, compared to only 6.7% of a national sample. Similarly, the percentage of LGBT students who intended to curtail post-secondary educational experiences was nearly twice as high as that of all students. Although 9.9% percent of LGBT students did not plan to pursue post-secondary education, only 6.6% of all students did not plan to pursue it. The researchers asserted that the two most promising

mechanisms to create positive change were the formation of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and the presence of supportive educators.

In an extension of the *2007 National School Climate Survey* (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008), in which the researchers found results not statistically different from the 2009 study described above (Kosciw, et al., 2010), researchers at GLSEN investigated the experiences of LGBT students of color experiences in U.S. schools. Published in a report called *Shared Differences* (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009), the researchers found that race and ethnicity play a significant role in creating unique experiences for queer youth of color. The researchers found that though youth of color share some experiences with White youth, there are also distinctions that have important implications for educators and policy makers. The researchers in this mixed-method study analyzed data from the aforementioned 2008 GLSEN study (Kosciw et al., 2008). Investigating the experiences of youth of color, the researchers disaggregated the data based on race, and then examined racial groups individually and collectively. Out of 6,209 participants in the original study, there were 2,130 LGBT students of color: 253 were Asian/Pacific Islander, 356 were Black, 805 were Hispanic, 385 were Native American or Alaska Native, and 331 were multiracial. As in the previous study, participants were between the ages of 13 and 21. The qualitative component of the study was conducted through individual and focus group interviews with youth aged 15-19.

Much like the responses to the general survey of LGBT students, the majority of LGBT students of color in this study reported feeling unsafe at school as a result of homophobic and sexist language (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009). In addition, many of the students of color reported feeling threatened as a result of racist remarks: nearly 50% of

each group in this study reported hearing racist language frequently at school. The

researchers call on educators to pay particular attention to the intersectionality of

identities that often create fertile space for multiple forms of prejudice. Both GLSEN

studies provide a great deal of statistical information about how LGBT students are

experiencing public schools in the United States. Neither study, however, examines

educational experiences that may be ongoing in out-of-school contexts. With this study, I

aimed to extend the research by considering feelings of safety within a community center

that serves LGBTQIQ youth.

In addition to the large-scale studies conducted by GLSEN, another organization

with national reach published a report about multiple facets of GLBT people within

education that helps illustrate the context in which queer youth are situated in U.S. public

schools. This report, titled *A Report on the Status of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and*

Transgender People in Education: Stepping Out of the Closet, into the Light, emerged as

a collection of studies from a summit held in 2008, hosted by the NEA, to address issues

related to GLBT students in public schools in the United States and Canada (Kim,

Sheridan, & Holcomb, 2009). The report is part of a larger series of reports issued by

NEA from similar summits that have convened to address certain populations of students

who are continually underserved in public education. The report was divided into the

following five sections: GLBT Issues in Society and Education; GLBT Youth Identities

and Experiences; Homelessness, Truancy, and Dropping Out among GLBT Youth; The

Role and Experience of Adults on GLBT Issues; and Intervention Strategies and

Recommendations. Researchers who contributed to the report shared an array of

findings, which the authors then organized thematically.

In regard to the first section, the authors cited empirical data to illustrate that despite relative advances in social and political life for "GLBT" (authors' preferred acronym) persons over the past few decades, schools remain hostile and dangerous places for GLBT youth and adults, as well as those who are perceived to be GLBT (Kim, Sheridan, & Holcomb, 2009). About GLBT youth identities and experiences, the authors presented data from previous studies that indicated that students of all sexual orientations and genders are negatively affected by homophobic policies and actions. Furthermore, students with multiple oppressed identities – racial, socioeconomic, geographic, or ability level – are affected in exponential ways. Importantly, the authors asserted that transgender youth are at elevated risk of physical aggression and school attrition. The report highlighted the strong relationship between family acceptance and youth GLBT identity, related particularly to truancy and attrition. There is a drastically higher percentage of queer youth who are "kicked out" of their homes as a result of their identity than those of non-queer youth, which often makes staying in school and doing well in school a more challenging feat for the former group. Importantly, the report highlighted two distinct, yet related issues for adults in school communities regarding GLBT issues. One issue is that GLBT educators and other school personnel often feel pressured not to disclose their own sexual orientation, which may lead to lowered sense of safety, isolation, and difficulty serving as mentors for GLBT and straight students. The other issue is that an overwhelming majority of educators and other school personnel stand by while homophobic aggression is taking place. The last portion of the report included myriad assertions and suggestions for creating safer places for all people in school settings. The report strongly asserts that the presence of one single, supportive adult in

the life of a GLBT student at school is the most salient factor in that student's academic achievement. Furthermore, policies that explicitly define and prohibit homophobic and gender-biased bullying are much stronger indicators of improved climate than generic anti-discrimination or anti-bullying policies. These findings, which supported the findings from the aforementioned GLSEN studies, pointed to factors that might also be important in out-of-school settings.

The existence of GSAs in public high school settings is often cited as an important step toward creating safer schools for LGBTQIQ and straight students. One quantitative study was conducted to investigate the commonalities among public high schools in the United States that have GSAs. By employing logistic regression and linear regressions analyses, Fetner and Kush (2007) analyzed data from state anti-discrimination laws, a range of public high schools with various demographic characteristics, and documents from an array of GSAs. They found that several factors play into the likelihood that particular schools will be sites of GSAs. Specifically, the researchers found that school location (both local and regional context), number of students, and connection with community and federal support groups were the most salient social forces that determined early establishment of GSAs. They found that there were 3,000 GSAs nationwide, but that schools in the south were the least likely to have them: 2.3% of high schools in the south had GSAs, 3.8% in the midwest, 11.4% in the northeast, and 14.5% in the west. Additionally, schools with fewer low-income students were more likely to have GSAs (Fetner & Kush, 2007).

Because the youth center where I conducted my study provides support and programming for youth from various parts of the metropolitan area, students attend the

center from a wide range of schools. Fetner and Kush's (2007) study was particularly

helpful to this study, as it directed me to include questions on the youth interview

protocol that assess the existence and level of support for a GSA in the youths' high

schools.

Clearly, most public schools in the United States still have a great deal of work to

do before they can be safe and welcoming to all students. In the next section, I take a

closer look at empirical studies that hone in on the bullying that makes schools such

unwelcoming places for LGBTQIQ youth.

LGBTQIQ Youth Experiences with Bullying

As illuminated in the preceding section, LGBTQIQ youths' experiences in school

are problematically and consistently conflated with experiences of bullying and

harassment. As such, in this section of the literature review I highlight empirical studies

regarding this problem. First, I present the findings from another large-scale study co-

funded by GLSEN and the National Association of Secondary School Principals

(NASSP), and conducted by researchers from Harris Interactive, Inc. (GLSEN & Harris

Interactive, 2008). The second and third studies contribute empirical data to our

understanding of the correlation between LGBTQIQ-targeted bullying and negative

learning outcomes (Birkett & Espelage, 2009; Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi,

Ardon, & Howell, 2009).

Similar to the finding that one supportive adult can make a critical difference in

social and academic achievement for LGBTQIQ youth, in a study of principals'

perceptions of creating safe schools (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008), researchers

found that a supportive principal can have a positive influence on teachers' ability to create safe classrooms and hallways. This survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,580 K-12 public high school principals was conducted on-line between June and August, 2007. Principals were recruited via listservs from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and another membership-based national education association.

The researchers found that principals cite harassment and bullying as a serious problem at their school even more than they report that alcohol, drugs, or other disciplinary incidents create serious problems. Indeed, only one in three high school principals reported that an LGB student or an effeminate male would feel safe at their school. Only one in four high school principals reported that a transgender student would feel very safe. Although the majority of principals viewed professional development workshops as beneficial learning spaces for teachers, less than one in 20 held professional development workshops on issues related to LGB students and safer schools. Though there has been a recent increase in principals' attention to harassment and bullying, in the form of professional development and school-wide policies, few of these initiatives have focused on harassment and bullying related specifically to sexual orientation or gender expression. These results point to the importance of situating my study in a space that is explicitly dedicated to LGBT youth.

In response to the high rates of bullying for LGB middle school students, in addition to middle school students who question their sexuality, Birkett, Espelage, and Koeing (2009) conducted a quantitative study comprised of an 189 item survey in one Midwestern city. As expected, the researchers found that schools with low rates of

homophobic harassment and bullying demonstrated more positive social and academic outcomes for LGB and heterosexual youth. Interestingly, students who were questioning their sexuality reported more dire consequences than either LGB or heterosexual youth. This finding allowed me to sharpen my senses during my data collection related to students who are questioning their sexual identity.

Instances of school violence against LGBT youth also were investigated in a smaller-scale qualitative study, carried out by Grossman et al. (2009). The researchers conducted five focus groups of LGBT youth at public high schools to determine if these youth experienced violence and how it affected their academic and social experiences in school. Using a constant comparative method, the researchers developed categories to re-imagine social interactions and processes between and among individuals and groups. This study expanded the previously existing literature regarding school violence for queer students in four significant ways. First, the researchers included analysis on transgender youth, which few researchers had done. Second, the researchers sought to include a more ethnically and racially diverse sample than many previous researchers. Third, the researchers recognized that they may better be able to hear about youths' positive and negative experiences if they conducted focus group interviews instead of the more common individual interviews. And lastly, the qualitative nature of this study allowed the researchers to support their findings and discussions with direct words from the youth.

Youth were recruited from a racially diverse community center for LGBT youth located in New York City, and organized into five focus groups (Grossman et al, 2009). Two major themes emerged from the focus groups. First, the LGBT youth said that there

was a lack of community for them at school, and second, the youth indicated a lack of empowerment and sense of agency. In their suggestions for future research and substantive change, the researchers called for increasing LGBT youths' feelings of membership in a particular community and providing multiple opportunities for youth to gain agency. This is relevant to the current study, because the community center in which the study was housed has an explicit mission to foster empowerment and community. Though researchers from GLSEN and others have demonstrated the dire conditions in many schools for LGBTQIQ students, in addition to some solutions, schools remain dangerous places for many students who fall outside the mainstream. As such, I conducted my study in a community center dedicated to queer youth, with the idea that education for citizenship may reveal itself differently in a space that feels safe to youth.

Youth Civic Engagement in Community Organizations

As demonstrated by the extensive literature on youth civic engagement, and graphically illustrated by the Octagon Model, young people are socialized politically and educated for citizenship in myriad ways, through multiple agents. Community centers and other out-of-school contexts are increasingly becoming the focus of research on youth and adolescent development. And although researchers have tended to focus on schools, they acknowledge that much political socialization occurs in out-of-school contexts. In this section, I present four studies that focus on political socialization and citizenship education in out-of-school contexts.

In a qualitative case study conducted by Bixby (2008), the researcher focused on an out-of-school program for youth in Chicago. The youth in this study were participants in a community-based program dedicated to education for democratic citizenship, called Mikva. Many of the students interned in state and federal elected officials' offices. Bixby explored what young adults said about their understandings of and experiences with civic engagement prior to their work with Mikva, and how involvement with Mikva influenced their understandings of and experiences with civic engagement. In a series of telephone and in-person interviews of Mikva alumni, 80% of whom identified as youth of color and 60% of whom identified as female, Bixby found that the democratic citizenship education programs at Mikva influenced the majority of the alumni in similar ways. First, their sense of themselves as civic actors was transformed by the "intensely social nature of their experiences, both with high status adults and with youth peers from across the city" and the "highly active, engaging, and authentic work that they did within the programs" (p. 254). Like my current study, the focus was citizenship education in an out-of-school context. Though it was a relatively small sample, the participants' experiences were so similar that Bixby called for other researchers to study different out-of-school contexts for sites of citizenship education. According to Bixby,

> While this group of youth cannot be seen as truly representative of urban youth in general, the consistency of their experiences suggest that further research examining the ways in which youth become apprenticed into the role of active citizen is worth pursuing. If further research reaches similar conclusions about the processes through which youth, and especially urban youth, develop strong

civic identities and patterns of action, the implications for civic education are

significant (p. 277).

The current study responds to her call for more research along this trajectory.

Borden and Serido's (2009) comprehensive review of the literature about the

benefits of participation for youth in community youth programs highlights several

studies that provide empirical evidence about how youths' identity development,

decision-making skills, empowerment, and social skills can be positively influenced by

their participation in community-based youth programs. The researchers extended this

literature review into an empirical qualitative study to investigate patterns of youth

development.

In Borden and Serido's (2009) qualitative study, youth took part in focus groups

to discuss their experiences as members of a community center dedicated to providing a

safe space for low-income youth, some of whom were living independently. The

researchers' analysis led them to develop a three-phased process model of adolescent

development: program participation, connection, and expansion. In the expansion phase,

Borden and Serido (2009) assert that youth have developed into engaged citizens around

meaningful topics. By using sociopolitical development theory (SPD), which takes into

account political and cultural forces that construct individual and group status in society,

the researchers sought to investigate how program participation influences youths'

positive contributions over time to themselves, their families, and their communities.

The study participants were all members of a community center that provided services for

over 15,000 youth annually between the ages of 13-21. Youth involvement in the center

included attending performances and forums, as well as after-school enrichment

programs and drop-in services. By conducting focus group interviews with youth at the center, 50% of whom identified as White and 43% of whom identified as Hispanic, the researchers were able to draw themes that lay the foundation for a model of progression over time for youth who remained involved with the center. During the first, or participation phase, young people begin coming to the center to interact socially with other youth with similar experiences and interests. During the second, or connection phase, youth develop relationships with peers and adults at the center. And in the third, expansion phase, youth explore connections between what is going on in the center and what is going on in the larger community. The researchers concluded that "What began as an interest in alternative music or time spent with friends, developed into a sense of belonging to a youth community in a rich and complex sense" (p. 431). Borden and Serido call for more research like this in different community centers. The study that I conducted followed that call and drew on empirical data from a different center, in a different part of the country, with a different mission, to add to the existing literature about citizenship education in out-of-school contexts.

Since the rise of explicit service learning opportunities for youth, there has been a debate within the social studies community about the extent to which community volunteerism relates to political engagement (Ball, 2005). Using two national longitudinal data sets about youth volunteerism and political engagement, McFarland and Thomas (2006) explored the possible influence of youth involvement with voluntary associations on adult political participation. The researchers situated the need for their study within a critical paradigm, one that acknowledges inequity in the political electorate and seeks new ways to connect citizens with their full rights as citizens.

McFarland and Thomas (2006) analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Education's 1996 National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) and the 2003 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to investigate what types of youth volunteer experiences lead to political involvement later in life. Using multivariate regression to avoid the assumption that variables are static, they found that the type of voluntary organization has a statistically significant effect upon likelihood of political participation in adulthood. Specifically, groups that focus on identity representation and equity, fostering communal identities, and public speaking had positive effects on adult political participation. These findings lent themselves to my study, as particular activities at the community center are politically inclined, whereas others are more social. Understanding that the youths' experiences are varied helped me examine the interview and observation data with a nuanced notion of how adolescent participation may lead to adult political participation.

In another quantitative study, Frisco, Muller, and Dodson (2004) investigated similar correlations between youth participation and adult political involvement. In this study, the researchers chose early adult voting behavior as an indicator of adult political participation. Like the researchers in the previous study, these researchers used data from the NELS survey of 1988-1994. Unlike McFarland and Thomas (2006), however, Frisco et al. (2004) focused on race and SES as independent variables for adolescent and adult political engagement. The researchers employed weighted logistic regression modeling to examine youth participation in voluntary associations and early adult voting behavior. They found that although a large number of youth participate in childhood and adolescent community-based programs, many of which positively influence civic participation in

adulthood, race and SES have a statistically significant effect upon the strength of correlation between early and later involvement. Namely, race and class influence the type of community-based programs that youth participate in, and this in turn influences the extent of political involvement in adulthood.

Frisco and her colleagues' (2004) research questions and findings shed important light on this current study. Because the community center where the study was carried out serves youth from a wide range of economic levels, and it serves large numbers of both Black and White youth, it was important to analyze my data paying attention to the extent to which race and class characteristics influence the level or quality of participation in and outside of the community organization.

Though the aforementioned studies provide educators and policy makers with indicators for how out-of-school contexts may be rich sites for quality citizenship education, I did not find any studies that focused on civic learning in community centers that serve LGBTQIQ youth. However, because queer students face a range of challenges in traditionally taught social studies courses, it is particularly important to investigate the sites where alternative citizenship education is being employed; curriculum writers, policy makers, and educators may be able to learn valuable lessons from this and other out-of-school contexts.

LGBTQIQ Youths' Agents of Socialization and Civic Development

As demonstrated by the previous studies in this literature review, agents of socialization and positive civic development for LGBTQIQ youth might be unique and do deserve educators' attention. Recognizing that youth develop their civic identities

from several sources, that schools are often unsafe for queer youth, and that out-of-school contexts can help to provide optimum settings for civic development of youth in general, it is important to include empirical studies that have focused specifically on queer youth. In this section, I present two such studies (Adams, Cahill, & Ackerlind, 2005; Schneider & Witherspoon, 2000).

Citing extensive previous empirical research that asserts the multiple challenges that many LGBT youth face regarding social support, Schneider and Witherspoon (2000) conducted a quantitative study focused on friendship patterns among lesbian and gay youth, with the intentions of discovering meaningful ways that schools and communities can expand their forms of support to these youth. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 21 years old, including 22 lesbian and gay youth and 29 heterosexual youth. Using social network theory to ground the work, the researchers analyzed interview data by mapping out the youths' friendship patterns to better determine sources of support. The researchers found that, on average, the lesbian and gay youth had not known their friends for as long as had their heterosexual counterparts known their friends, and that the lesbian and gay youth lived farther away from their friends than did their heterosexual counterparts. They also found that gay males were the least likely group to have friendships with people of the same sexual orientation, and the most likely group to develop friendships with individuals of the opposite sex. Lesbians and heterosexual males talked on the phone less with their friends than did gay males and heterosexual females. Lastly, lesbians in the study were the most likely group to engage sexually with people they considered friends.

This study informed my study in two distinct ways. First, the findings indicated the need to investigate the friendship patterns and characteristics of youth in my study to

get a fuller picture of their networks of support (in addition to the role friends play as agents of political socialization). Further, a weakness of Schneider and Witherspoon's (2000) study was explicitly addressed in this study. That is, I incorporated a more diverse set of queer youth in my study, including those who identify as bi- and pan-sexual, as well as trans youth who were not visible in Schneider and Witherspoon's study. More than just a sampling difference, my incorporation of this gender and sexual fluidity is a crucial dynamic in the lives of young queer people.

Adams, Cahill, and Ackerland (2005) conducted a study focused on lesbian and gay youth development that explored ways in which discrimination effects individual and group career goals. In their descriptive qualitative study, the researchers paid particular attention to intersectionality of multiple identities and career development. All of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 20, and there were three female participants and five male participants. The researchers found that knowing one was different from peers, challenges of within-group prejudice, feeling free to chose any career option, intersecting developmental tasks, resilience in the face of heterosexism, and uncertainty about how "out" to be in the workplace were related to career development. During my data analysis, I used these findings to check for similar and divergent themes from my data, regarding civic-political identity development.

Summary

Though much research has been conducted on youth political socialization and citizenship education, little has been conducted in out-of-school settings, and I could find no studies that examined political socialization of LGBTQIQ youth. On the other hand,

studies of LGBTQIQ youth found that social bonds and learning tools to work against heterosexism are positive developmental indicators, but no researchers examined the political socialization or civic education experiences of their samples. For that reason, the existing literature suggested a need to identify understandings of citizenship, the processes of teaching and learning, and youth political attitudes in a community center serving LGBTQIQ youth.

Chapter 3:

Methodology

The questions I sought to answer in this study were: 1) What understandings of citizenship are held/exhibited by the adults and the youth in a community center dedicated to empowerment for LGBTQIQ youth?; 2) What is the nature of teaching and learning evident in this community center and how do these educational enactments limit and enable various kinds of education for democratic citizenship?; and 3) How do youth develop three political attitudes – political trust, efficacy, and interest – in this context?

Because the aim of the study was to explore political attitudes and civic identity formation among queer youth, I employed an ethnographic case study methodology. According to Merriam (1998), "concern with the cultural context is what sets this type of study apart from other types of qualitative research" (p. 14). I utilized ethnographic techniques, as I contend that youths' political attitudes and civic identity formation must be considered within the context in which they are situated.

Though not mutually exclusive, there is a crucial distinction between research methods and research methodologies. Smith (1999) describes research methodologies as those approaches that consider the theoretical and analytical approaches to a project, in light of a moral claim about how research should be carried out. Research methods, on the other hand, are those techniques employed as a means by which the central questions are approached and answered. Methodologies thus inform methods by creating the theoretical frame that serves as a foundation from which questions, access, instruments, and analysis emerge. Drawing from this relation between the two, I selected methods based on the methodological approaches to research I espouse.

Methodologically, my research emerges from a perspective that seeks to transform the dimensions of education that institutionalize oppression, and to amplify the aspects of education that serve as libratory mechanisms for all learners. Importantly, several researchers have shown that traditional, mainstream public schools in the United States tend to be hostile and unsafe places for LGBTQIQ youth (Bickmore, 2002; Crocco, 2002; Franck, 2002; Thornton, 2002), whereas other researchers have found that there are positive places and programs in out-of-school contexts for these youth (Fisher, 2007). My decision to situate the proposed study within the youth program of a non-profit community center for queer youth materialized from these common understandings.

I created this study with concern for equity and aims of dismantling hierarchies at the same time I incorporated well-defined methods for data collection and analysis; I attempted to blend structured methods within a larger social justice methodology. A substantive element of my designing this study was the incorporation of womanism, which I explain below. In the following sections, I describe the setting of the study and the research methods I employed. This includes site and participant selection, data collection and analysis, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and limitations of the case study. All proper nouns in this study are pseudonyms.

Setting

FLAME is a non-profit community center located in a large metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. FLAME's mission is to be a site of empowerment for LGBTQ youth through outreach, community activities, support services, advocacy, and

education (organization website, 2009). It was founded in 1995 in reaction to the large number of LGBTQ youth seeking guidance from the city's mental health system. The need for a supportive, safe environment for these youth was evident. Since its first location, FLAME has moved twice (2000 and 2005) to accommodate larger numbers of youth who continually seek a safe and welcoming space dedicated completely to LGBTQ youth. At the center, young people plan youth-led workshops, participate in creating and attending social gatherings, investigate career opportunities, and use the library and computer facilities. Some of the youth also participate in a youth council, which is analogous to the student council in many high schools.

Participants

When the study was conducted, FLAME had on record approximately 1,600 youth members, and averaged a total of 5,300 youth visits per year. FLAME's mission statement classified "youth" as individuals from the age of 13 to 24. Of the 1,600 youth members, 56% identified as male, 39% identified as female, and 5% identified as transgender individuals. Racially, 58% of the youth were African American, 38% were White, 3% were Hispanic, and 1% were Asian American or other. There were 151 volunteers.

This study focused primarily on the ten youth who were members of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) housed within FLAME. Additionally, I interviewed the current Executive Director, the president of the Board of Directors, and the on-site mental health coordinator to gain insight into the larger institutional issues facing FLAME.

Data Sources and Collection

Both time and structure bound this case study (Merriam, 1998). During the fall of 2009 and the spring of 2010, I collected data from documents, interviews, observations of YAC meetings and other activities at the center. FLAME served as the structural boundary for the study. In this section, I describe each of the sources I utilized in the study.

Documents. Prior (2003) asserts that documents should be collected and analyzed both for their content and for the ways in which they are used. That is, as a social scientist, I investigated both the actual words, the organization of such words, and the illustrations and photographs, as well as the context in which they were produced and the ways in which they are utilized.

Using FLAME documents, as created by FLAME staff and YAC members, I collected materials that illustrate the vision, mission, and activities of the YAC and other organized groups at FLAME. I obtained the documents from the Internet and from the FLAME staff and YAC meetings and events. From the FLAME Website, I obtained the organization's Mission Statement, policies, and procedures. From the YAC members, I obtained petitions and event materials. I stored the data in secure physical and electronic storage locations, including a private file cabinet and USB drive. From the start of the study, pseudonyms were utilized for locations and participants, which entailed changing identifying information on all documents to the names I used in the study.

Interviews. My initial contact with potential participants – including YAC members, the Executive Director, the Board of Directors officers, and the mental health coordinator – was a Letter of Invitation to the study. In this letter, I informed possible

participants of the research purpose and what was expected of them. Once I selected the participants, I conducted semi-structured interviews with them to determine their conceptions of political/civic teaching and learning. During the initial interview, I reiterated the purpose of the study and my expectations of the participants. Also, I allowed ample opportunity for the participants to ask me any questions and/or voice concerns related to the study. I followed the process for informed consent, as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

After receiving consent from the participants, I recorded interviews using a digital voice recorder (See Appendix B for interview protocols). Each interview was labeled with the pseudonym for the participant, date, time, and location. I then transcribed the interviews.

I conducted two individual interviews with each of the ten YAC members over the course of the study. I also conducted two focus group interviews with the group as a whole. I conducted one interview with the Executive Director, one interview with the president of the Board of Directors, and one interview with the mental health coordinator. In addition, I conducted individual interviews with ten adult volunteers at FLAME. Interviews lasted 30-60 minutes each, and took place at the FLAME office and at nearby cafes and restaurants. Thus, I conducted 33 individual interviews and two focus group interviews.

The purpose of the youth interviews was to examine the young peoples' understandings of citizenship and political participation, with particular attention to the ways in which they have been influenced thus far. The purpose of the interview with the Executive Director was to investigate his background experiences, his perspectives of

societal aims, and the extent to which he thought the YAC prepares youth for actualizing

these societal aims. During my interview with the Board of Directors President, I

investigated her conceptions of FLAME's governance, including what role the YAC

plays in decisions at FLAME. During my interview with the mental health coordinator, I

explored her ideas about the connection between FLAME's mission statement and the

programs offered at the center.

Observations. According to Dewalt and Dewalt (2002), participant observation

should accompany other forms of qualitative or quantitative methodology to be most

beneficial. In this ethnographic case study, observations were necessary as a means of

triangulating the data from the documents and interviews. Over the course of five

months, I observed bi-weekly YAC meetings and all YAC-created FLAME events. I

also observed weekly sessions of WomynTalk, Boy Lounge, and Roots, the groups at

FLAME dedicated to those who identify as girls/women (regardless of their assigned

sex), those who identify as boys/men (regardless of their assigned sex), and youth of

color, respectively. I explored the extent to which the youth actions reflect their stated

perceptions and beliefs. In sum, I observed 18 sessions from mid-November 2009

through mid-April, 2010.

I recorded field notes from each observation to capture observable events. I used

a pen and a notebook to be as unobtrusive as possible. Immediately after the meeting and

event observations, I left and typed the longhand version of my field "jottings" to

minimize distortion of memory. For an overview of research questions, data sources, and

methods, see Table 1.

Table 1
Research Questions, Data Sources, and Methods

Question	Data Source(s)	Methods
1. What understandings of citizenship are held/exhibited by the adults and the youth in a community center dedicated to empowerment for LGBTQIQ youth?	• FLAME materials: · Mission statement · Official documents · Documents from events, publicity, correspondence · FLAME youth · FLAME adults	• Document analysis • Interviews
2. What is the nature of teaching and learning evident in this community center and how do these educational enactments limit and enable various kinds of education for democratic citizenship?	• FLAME materials: · Mission statement · Official documents · Documents from events, publicity, correspondence · FLAME youth · FLAME adults	• Document analysis • Interviews • Observations
3. How do youth develop three political attitudes – political trust, efficacy, and interest – in this context?	• FLAME materials: · Documents from events, publicity, correspondence · FLAME youth	• Document analysis • Interviews • Observations

I collected data from documents, interviews, and FLAME observations (the YAC, WomynTalk, Boys Lounge, and Roots) to investigate the study's research questions. I followed Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines as detailed by my university. These guidelines structured participant recruitment, informed consent, interview procedures, and field observation protocols throughout the course of the study. As

suggested by Merriam (1998) and Dewalt and Dewalt (2002), I maintained a researcher's log to keep a written account of the processes as they unfolded.

Data Analysis

The research questions and the study's theoretical framework guided the analysis. As described above, the Octagon Model formed the most basic unit of analysis for the study. Thus, I coded all documents, interviews, and observation notes first for the agents of socialization that influence individual youth: family, school, peer group, informal community and formal community. I also coded all documents, interviews, and observation notes for the macrosystem elements that influence the youth. Throughout the first level coding process, I coded for instances of public discourse about goals and values, as the drafters of the Octagon Model assert is essential. I also coded for instances of human rights and political attitudes. In addition, I employed open coding, to uncover themes that the Octagon Model might not reveal.

To investigate political socialization and citizenship education at FLAME, the document, interview, and observation data analysis was a multiple-step process that commenced with creating a code matrix to guide the first level of analysis. This matrix included concepts, labels, definitions, and significance based on the Octagon Model, which allowed me to code systematically (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In this section, I describe several measures I employed to increase the trustworthiness of the study. These include an explanation of the researcher's orientation, and methods to address credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Researcher's orientation. As a student in middle and high school social studies classes, I became increasingly aware of – and progressively bothered by – the "grand narrative" tradition that celebrated a pro-(mainstream)-"American" tale. Informed in large part by my identity as a female student of color, I sought extra-curricular ways to learn a more complete and accurate depiction of history and civic engagement than presented in my social studies classes. Though I did not have the language for it then, my family experiences made hybridity and complexity my norm. As such, I have always had low tolerance for the simplistically dichotomous nature of the social studies curriculum in the United States (e.g., heroes and villains, right and wrong, and Black and White). My life experiences did not match up with the historical narrative I encountered in most of my social studies classes. My three years teaching social studies at a predominantly Black high school and my seven years of volunteer work within the LGBTQIQ community allowed me to see that many students battle a "disconnect" between their lives and the social studies curriculum.

In addition to my experiential background, my perspective as a researcher was deeply influenced by womanist theory. In 1983, Alice Walker presented the notion of womanism to the world, in her book titled *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. The book is a collection of essays, reviews, and articles written between 1966 and 1982 addressing issues of scholarship, political activism, love, and justice. Walker defines the term "womanist" as "the opposite of 'girlish,' i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious," and offers instead that a womanist is "responsible. In charge. Serious" (p. xi).

Central to Walker's ideas about womanism was the idea that though it works in conjunction with feminism, it is decidedly distinct from feminism in a few fundamental ways. Whereas feminism focuses most specifically on issues of gender and sexism, womanism calls for an end to all forms of oppression equally, be they based on sexuality, gender, class, race, ability, age, nationality, or other characteristic. And whereas feminism is a theoretical and action-oriented position that has been embraced by Women's and Ethnic Studies programs in institutions of higher education in the United States and abroad, womanism remains a framework that espouses common-sense, and is more often utilized than it is theorized. Thirdly, whereas there exists a fundamental "feminist ideology," womanism is different in that it is explicitly non-ideological. Instead of boundaries that create "insiders" and "outsiders," womanism affirms the notion that power/dialogue/meaning-making happens most beneficially when in a decentralized manner (Phillips, 2006). Because disagreement is built into the model, negotiation and communication are fundamental components to womanism.

Phillips (2006) asserted five central conditions of womanism, that allow it to stand on its own, separate from feminism, and separate even from Black feminism. These are that womanism is: 1) anti-oppressionist, 2) vernacular, 3) non-ideological, 4) communitarian, and 5) spiritualized. Third world feminists and others have critiqued the exclusivity and elitism that characterized much of Second-wave feminism, in ways that made sense to me. As a queer woman of color, I believed these five characteristics for human interaction address the areas that feminism did not. Additionally, I believe that moving queer people in the United States from second to first class citizenship would be

made easier if mainstream society embraced several of the five characteristics of womanism.

I employed womanism at two major junctures in this project. The first was at the outset, as I conceptualized the type of study I wanted to create, and in the formation of the research questions. The second was close to the end, as I thought (and continue to think) about what kind of social action will emerge from this study.

These experiences undoubtedly shaped the design of this study in that I examined activities of an out-of-school youth organization, within a framework that calls for a nuanced discussion of history and civic engagement. My use of civic/political development theory and a womanist perspective, as well as my systematic analysis helped to prevent my own academic and other experiences from blinding me to some aspects of teaching and learning and enabled me to use those prior experiences as an asset in conducting this particular study.

Credibility. Because researchers serve as "translators" for data, presentation of data is not reality itself, but the researcher's construction of such (Smith, 1999). Credibility is a measure of this truth value, which addresses the extent to which the description appropriately represents the context under study. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I followed a series of strategies to improve credibility. First, I triangulated the emerging findings based on the multiple data sources in the study. Second, I conducted the study over the course of four months. This allowed me to observe the FLAME staff and YAC members' consistency over time. Third, I employed peer examination throughout the data collection and data analysis stages of the study, to check the consistency of my coding and emergent themes. Fourth, I employed member

checks by inviting the participants to review my findings. Finally, by my reflecting upon my aforementioned orientation, I was able to understand my findings through the lens of my own "assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 205).

Dependability. Because replication of procedures and findings is impossible in qualitative research, scholars suggest that researchers should aim for consistency in the findings. In this way, the focus moves from one's ability to replicate the study to one's consistency between the results and the data. I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines to increase the study's consistency. First, by presenting my theoretical and experiential orientations above, I demonstrated that I am considering my subjectivity as an investigator of other peoples' realities. Second, the triangulation of data sources enhanced the study's consistency, and thus dependability. And third, I maintained an audit trail.

Applicability. Applicability is a measure of the extent to which findings are generalizable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggests three tactics for augmenting a study's applicability, two of which I utilized. First, I included rich, thick description of the site, my sample, and my findings, so that readers can assess the extent to which their settings are similar to those in the research. This will help readers determine whether the findings are applicable in their own contexts. Second, my description of the typicality of the research setting will allow readers to compare their contextual factors with those in the study.

Reciprocity

One crucial component of my determination to use this study as a tool for social justice were the measures I took – and plan to take in the future – to give back to the FLAME community. To date, this reciprocity took the form of training sessions I developed and facilitated for adult volunteers at the center to learn more about cultural responsiveness in their volunteer efforts at FLAME. Because I am still a member of the FLAME community as a volunteer and an academic scholar, I plan to facilitate subsequent workshops in which I will share the findings from this study and facilitate necessary progress based on these findings.

Summary

In the Statement of the Problem, I argued for the urgency of this study. As social studies and other researchers continue to demonstrate empirically the need for new and improved models of citizenship education for all youth, LGBTQIQ youth may be excluded from an education for citizenship that addresses their particular needs. Although political socialization researchers have found that race, gender, ethnicity, and class are related to youth political development, to date no researchers have shed light on the political socialization and citizenship education of LGBTQIQ youth. Thus, this study was needed and my findings might contribute in the long run to helping all young people feel included as citizens of a pluralistic democracy. I seek to explore connections between my findings and the work of other citizenship education scholars, scholars who conduct research with LGBTQIQ youth, teachers and teacher educators, administrators, and LGBTQIQ youth and their families.

Chapter 4:

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the citizenship education and political socialization for LGBTQIQ youth that takes place at a community center dedicated to educating and empowering these youth. The research questions were: 1) What understandings of citizenship are held/exhibited by the adults and the youth in a community center dedicated to empowerment for LGBTQIQ youth?, 2) What is the nature of teaching and learning evident in this community center and how do these educational enactments limit and enable various kinds of education for democratic citizenship?, and 3) How do youth develop three political attitudes – political trust, efficacy, and interest – in this context?

In this section, I answer these questions using data from interviews with youth and adults at FLAME, field observation notes of YAC meetings and events, and FLAME documents. First, I present findings that directly answer each of the questions. I then discuss the additional themes that emerged from the data sources. To supplement and contextualize data from the three sources, I begin by describing FLAME's physical space.

The FLAME Community Center

Intentionally located just one block from a stop on the city's mass-transit train system, FLAME was easily accessible for teens with or without their own cars. It was tucked away, down an alley, between a one-story row of brick store-front small businesses and a large two-story stone church. Due to its position down the alley, it was

partially hidden from the street. Once halfway down the alley, however, the large green

FLAME sign became visible, as did a basketball hoop and an array of youth-generated

art: painted wooden doors, waist-high sculptures, and other colorful pieces of art that

conveyed the sentiment of youth-centeredness at FLAME. Though it was hard to know

how big it was from the outside, FLAME was actually a 4,100 square foot community

center, which provided ample space for programming.

A 2008 Home Depot grant and a great deal of volunteer help had refurbished

FLAME's interior and, at the time of the study, the center was a trendy and colorful

hangout spot for LGBTQIQ teens from around the Metro Area. The lobby, painted bright

lime green, was decorated with framed black and white photos of many of the youth,

volunteers, and staff. The photos were hung artistically, alternating in a checkerboard

design with square mirrors of the same size. Funky floor and ceiling lamps provided

shining blasts of orange, red, yellow, and blue. A plush black leather couch in the lobby

was a popular hangout for the youth, and several youth could often be found lounging on

the two oversized leather armchairs located across from the couch. There was a large

welcome counter, behind which youth and adult volunteers sat to greet those entering

FLAME. There was a flat-screen computer on the counter, which housed the electronic

database of youth attendees, and was the place youth were expected to sign in and out of

the center. Atop the welcome counter was a large piece of rectangular plexi-glass, cut to

the size of the top of the counter, under which lay dozens of colorful photographs and

flyers.

FLAME's 14-unit computer lab was also located on the ground floor, and was

situated down a hallway off the main lobby that was covered with flyers for events, and

posters that encourage safer sex and community medical social services relevant to youth at FLAME. Off the main lobby were also two other offices – one that was vacant during the time of data collection, and the other that was the Executive Director's office. Directly outside the Executive Director's office was an approximately eight foot high set of wooden cubby holes, each with a space for a different basketball, soccer ball, or kickball. Directly across from the ball container was a space to hang flyers for upcoming events and opportunities, many of them civic opportunities.

Upstairs at FLAME, there were several large rooms, including an office for volunteers, the HIV testing room, two large all-purpose rooms, the counselor's office, two individual gender-neutral restrooms, and one room that served collectively as the lending library, counselor-in-training office space, and lounge. The walls in the rooms and on the hallways were decorated with youth-made art and black and white photographs. Built in 1900 as barracks for soldiers housed at a military base in the state – then moved to its current location in 1920 – the building had four foot windows in the all-purpose rooms. The windows provided a great deal of light in the rooms, all of which had 13-foot high ceilings. It was in this setting that I collected the data for this research project.

Youth Participants

The ten youth participants in this study ranged in age from 18 to 23. This included five youth who identified as men, two who identified as women, and one who identified as each transgender woman, dual spirit, and gender queer. The participants' sexual orientation fell into five general categories: gay, lesbian, queer, pan-sexual, and

"homosexual." Six of the ten identified as White, two as Black, one as Latina, and one as "Mulatto" (for more detail, see Appendix C).

Youth Memories of High School Civics Course

Although the focus of my research questions was not high school civics courses, I did ask the youth to describe their high school civics experiences during our first interview sessions to understand the wider context for their political socialization at FLAME. Due to the strikingly similar theme that emerged from the youths' responses to this inquiry, I include excerpts from the interviews to illustrate the common theme: students reported that their high school civics classes were repetitive, static, and taught by teachers who showed little interest in the topic.

According to Alex, the curriculum in zir[1] ninth grade government class was the same as the curriculum from six years prior. Ze said,

> It was required for freshmen to take American government. We didn't learn a whole lot. We would learn, you know, the same stuff you learned in third grade like three branches of government, president, Supreme Court, legislature, you know. I do not know how we spent the semester on that, but we did. It was impressive. Although considering that we talked about – we were having a quiz test and we called a quest – we talked about Monte Python for 15 minutes, so that might have been how we did that for the whole semester. I do not know (Alex, February 26, 2010).

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[1] Zir is a gender-neutral word that holds a parallel meaning to "him" and "her." Ze is the gender-neutral pronoun that holds a parallel meaning to "he" and "she." Because this youth, Alex, identifies as genderqueer, ze is the best way to refer to zir.

Though Alex and Seth attended schools in school districts on opposite ends of the state,

Seth described learning similar material in his civics course:

> [My civics course] was split up into four sections. One was an overview of the
>
> three branches and then the other three parts were the three branches in more
>
> detail. And we also had to do a book report on any kind of political book that we
>
> got approved by the teacher (Seth, February 2, 2010).

Alex was not the only youth who described a civics teacher as someone who tended not

to take teaching seriously. Kenneth explained,

> …sometimes you really couldn't learn anything in class, because [my teacher]
>
> would make up, crack jokes on people. But, we mostly just - he really didn't
>
> teach that much, he mostly just told us to turn to a page, and take notes. He did a
>
> notebook check on Fridays though (Kenneth, March 11, 2010).

Here, Kenneth seemed to remember his teacher's notebook checks as one of the few

ways that the teacher assessed the students' progress. In addition to recollections of

teachers not teaching "that much," other youth recalled teachers who taught civics

through a partisan lens. Lawrence recalled,

> For civics, my teacher was a very strong Republican, and so everything that we
>
> learned was in the viewpoint of Republicans…There were certain things you
>
> couldn't say. Like abortion, you couldn't say abortion actually, or you couldn't
>
> call somebody a Black person, he would have to be an African American person.
>
> So, it felt like it was more censorship (Lawrence, February 3, 2010).

The youths' recollections illustrate that they remember learning about governmental structure in high school civics class, but not about participatory forms of civic engagement.

Understandings of Citizenship at FLAME

The first research question was an attempt to explore the broad conceptions of citizenship held by the people at FLAME. By analyzing interview, observation, and document data, I found that citizenship was not a clear-cut concept, but instead it was multifaceted and complex. Although all of the youth said they thought of themselves as U.S. citizens (albeit most of them additionally stated allegiance to other entities), the programming at the center focused mainly on citizenship as tied to the FLAME community and the local LGBTQIQ community.

Interviews with the youth revealed that their notions of citizenship could be divided into three central themes. The first is the scale of affinity with which the youth identified. The second and third themes, respectively, are the youths' thoughts about rights and duties of citizens.

I found that there were three main scales of citizenship allegiance for the youth. Five youth reported that they were primarily citizens of the world, two youth reported that they were primarily citizens of the United States, and two youth reported that they were primarily citizens of their local LGBTQIQ community.

The tenth and final youth participant did not identify a primary allegiance to any one entity. Instead, ze reported identifying simultaneously with the world, the United States, the southeastern city where the study was conducted, the larger metropolitan area

surrounding the city, music, and geek communities. None of the youth mentioned the

FLAME community explicitly as one of which they were citizens.

Lawrence, the president of the YAC, shared the following about his global civic

identity:

> You know, I think of myself as a citizen of the world… My mom is [White]
>
> German and my dad is [Black] American… I was born in Germany. When I first
>
> moved here, I was like 'I am a citizen of Germany,' and according to the law, I
>
> had to have citizenship. But, I see that it is more than that, like I'd rather not
>
> belong to America or to Germany or to both, I would rather just belong to the
>
> world, and you know be able to like travel and do things around the world, rather
>
> than just, you know, in our own country (Lawrence, February 3, 2010).

Perhaps due to the fact that Lawrence was born and raised until he was 14 in a different

country, he ascribed to a citizenship that was broader than his allegiance to the United

States.

Of these nine youth who identified a primary allegiance to one entity, seven of

them also listed other entities to which they felt connected – other communities to which

they felt they belonged as citizens. The two youth who mentioned only one citizenship tie

were those two who identified as citizens of the United States, Kenneth and Strawberry.

They were also the only two youth who identified as African American in the study; they

were both African American gay males. Kenneth asserted, "I am a citizen of the United

States. And, you know, I do feel like I'm a citizen of the United States" (Kenneth, March

11, 2010). When I asked him what events or experiences make him feel like a citizen of

the United States, he explained,

Wow, it's just a lot of things. Like now, the President that we have [Obama], that makes me proud to be an American. And also it's just the rights and when I hear and read up about different laws and things in other countries, although America's not one of the best countries, we are by far – compared to other countries, we are better than them. You know, not to boast about it, but it's just that when it comes to their laws and our laws, we have much more freedom than they do (Kenneth, March 11, 2010).

Kenneth went on to cite freedom of speech and movement as rights he appreciated in the United States, and he pointed out that,

female and male genital mutilation, over here that's not allowed, but in other countries, because it's their culture, and you know, not saying that you can go to another country and just stop them, but at least show them the safe way of doing it (Kenneth, March 11, 2010).

Although he recognized that people from the United States should not go abroad and make people in other countries follow U.S. cultural norms, his strong ties to the United States indicated a sense of American superiority.

Isabella recognized that although she participates in many of the common measures of being a U.S. citizen, she said she feels most connected to her local LGBT community:

I am more of a community citizen than like, I vote and I do my research when it comes to voting, you know, for the president, and I was involved with getting people to vote and to register to vote, and I went to different rallies and stuff like that, but I am big on social justice, and when I see injustice that is when I want to

get involved and like see how I could call a representative or how I could just pass the word along like, 'hey, this is what they are saying about this bill, and we need to change it. We need to voice our opinion.' I like doing that (Isabella, February 27, 2010).

Importantly, Isabella differentiated between her political engagement with the presidential campaign, including encouraging and helping people to register to vote and attending political rallies, and her activist engagement within the struggle for justice for people who identify as LGBTQI or Q.

When I asked her to talk about the community to which she felt most connected, she elaborated that,

There are multiple communities but the one I am most closely attached to is the LGBT community because it changed radically who I am, and before I was easy to go with the status quo but then coming out as a lesbian, I started seeing all the injustice, so I do a lot, for example, on campus. I started getting involved in writing papers and I helped [organize] a Gay-Straight Alliance retreat for Gay-Straight Alliance advisors, because I felt that we needed a change in [this state] because it is so conservative (Isabella, February 27, 2010).

In this response, Isabella connected her "coming out as a lesbian" with her new lens of acknowledgement of social injustices. She described a sort of political awakening as one part of her re-imagining her own sexual identity, as she shifted her allegiance to a politically and socially marginalized community. She continued by describing the types of activism with which she was involved as a result of her political awakening. She began to carry out projects, using skills that are necessary for participatory democratic

engagement in the 21st century.

Instead of asking the adults about how they thought of themselves as citizens or what citizenship meant to them as I had asked the youth, I asked them to describe the elements of their identities that were most important to them. Their responses opened a window into their identities which allowed me to learn a great deal about what political influences are at work through the adults at FLAME. Eli's "two biggest [identity markers were] queer and Southern." Lance shared that he "definitely would like to be always thought of first as a youth advocate or a feminist youth advocate, and also as an artist." Though Eli and Lance were both able to quickly identify the two identities with which they felt most linked, the other eight adult participants had more elaborate answers to the question. Frances, FLAME's Executive Director, explained that he was really trying to use the term "African American" to describe his racial identity instead of "Black." Jane struggled with defining her socio-economic class, and evaded the question about her race altogether. Suzie, the only straight participant in the study, described a time she had to "come out as straight" to others at FLAME. In these and all adult interviews, a major theme is the experience of multiple identities resonating with individuals in a variety of ways.

To further elicit understandings of citizenship, I asked the youth participants what they thought comprised citizens' rights (of whatever entity/ies with which they identified). Youth gave a range of responses. Most common among these was the rights that are enumerated in the Bill of Rights, with four of the youth articulating these as their rights. Each of the four youth, Jane, Kenneth, Strawberry, and Seth specifically mentioned the First Amendment as one of the – if not the – most important set of rights

associated with their citizenship. My exchange with Seth about citizens' rights illustrated

two themes. In addition to declaring his love for the First Amendment, he also embedded

a sense of critique of rights into the discussion:

> JF: Okay. It is often said that citizens have certain rights. What do you think
>
>   these rights are in the context of either the U.S. or the world, as you said?
>
> SA: Rights? Are or should be?
>
> JF: I think let's answer both. What do you think they are or should be?
>
> SA: I believe they're limited. And they – on paper we have a lot of rights, but
>
>   in fact we often don't have a lot of rights. And they should. It should be
>
>   equal.
>
> JF: Okay. So can you give any examples of what an actual right either is or
>
>   what it should be?
>
> SA: I mainly think of the ones in the Constitution, the right of religion, speech,
>
>   and to protest.
>
> JF: Mm-hmm.
>
> SA: The first one is a good one. The First Amendment.
>
> JF: Did you say the First and the Second?
>
> SA: The First Amendment is [probably] my favorite (Seth, February 2, 2010).

Though Seth explained that the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights were appropriate

ideals, he pointed out that they are applied differently to different people within the

United States based on race, class, and sexual orientation.

In addition to Seth, three of the other youth also embedded a negative critique of

rights in their response about what constitutes rights and whether they thought those

rights applied to them. Isabella, Alex, and Lawrence each declared that the rights that

exist do not protect them, as people who identify with being part of the LGBTQ

community. In this exchange, Isabella shared her perception of rights in the United

States and their influence on her reality:

JF: It is often said that citizens have certain rights. What do you think these

rights are in the context of the United States and do they apply to you?

IG: Oh, I don't think they apply to me. I think citizens like everybody

deserves equality, you know, all the freedoms that are supposedly offered

in the Constitution. You know, the right to speak your mind, even the Bill

of Rights. They don't apply to me because since I identify as a lesbian,

first of all, marriage is a laugh in the face of a lot of conservative people

because right now currently in the US, this is just between a man and a

woman, and so I lose all my rights (Isabella, February 27, 2010).

It is clear that there are a set of rights that Isabella was certain existed, but did not

see herself as a person who was afforded the protection of those rights. Likewise,

Autumn asserted the lack of protection for herself and other gay people. In fact, when

asked what she thought about citizens' rights and the extent to which they apply to her,

the two rights she immediately cited are rights to which she as a gay person is not

entitled. She said, "the right to get married. The right for an adoption, you know, so on

and so forth. There's a lot of rights that gay people can't have" (Autumn, February 16,

2010).

Both Seth and Lawrence articulated a concern for all those who were not

protected by U.S. claims of equality and justice. In both cases, the participants insisted

that members of the gay community were not the only individuals and groups of people who suffer from discrimination and unfair political, legal, social, and economic treatment by the U.S. government.

Six of the youth mentioned that showing respect, kindness, and/or care for others was the primary duty of citizens. Kenneth's succinct answer to my query about duties was, "The duty is to be a respectful citizen" (Kenneth, March 11, 2010). Autumn suggested that "a duty I think would be to respect everybody and not give them funny stares, but that's not up to the government" (Autumn, February 16, 2010). Lawrence offered,

> I think pretty much the only obligation that we have as human beings is that we treat each other with respect and kindness. Anything else, I think, is above and beyond. So you know, serving your country, that is above and beyond…. If you show kindness to somebody – you enrich somebody's life – that is an obligation (Lawrence, February 3, 2010).

For these youth, showing respect was a tangible civic duty. Two youth said that staying informed and voting was a duty. According to Hannah,

> Being informed [is a duty], educating yourself about what is going on like, your government, your country, where you live. If you are not politically knowledgeable then you are not going to necessarily know what choices to make or know how things are happening, and I think that is the biggest responsibility of mine… The other thing is to vote for your representatives or whatever. That's what I think (Hannah, February 23, 2010).

Also, Jane claimed that, "having faith in our leader, because we put him there" was a

duty (Jane, February 11, 2010). Like Hannah, Jane said that "it is our duty to educate ourselves" (Jane, February 11, 2010). Regarding U.S. foreign affairs, Jane suggested "it is our duty to be altruistic to the rest of the world but not when it puts us at risk" (Jane, February 11, 2010).

Strawberry and Autumn both mentioned paying taxes as a duty, as did Seth, who also added having a job as a duty of a citizen. With the exception of Jane's comment about international altruism, all of the duties that the youth mentioned in response to my question about citizens' duties seemed to be duties associated with national level citizenship, though perhaps in the instances where youth were not specific (about respect and staying informed, for example) the youth were thinking about their membership of the local LGBT community or the global community. Though none of the youth or adults cited FLAME itself as a community of which they were citizens, it is possible that the youth were referring to their civic membership at FLAME in their generalized comments. This was particularly interesting in light of the fact that several of the youth identified with entities other than solely the United States.

In observations of YAC meetings and other events at FLAME, I found that FLAME community citizenship was, in theory, conceived of in a participatory way and that there was youth and adult rhetoric about the value of youth collaboration to make change. The reality, however, differed: over the course of the study, as FLAME underwent a financial crisis, the youth indicated they felt excluded from helping to solve the problem. This occurred even as people within FLAME began to wonder if the doors of the organization would remain open.

Most of the YAC meetings began with Lawrence, the YAC president, delivering

an update about FLAME's financial status and an explanation that the YAC was a crucial

component of FLAME's survival. Lawrence had selected Brenda – another YAC

member – as "[his] assistant," and she was responsible for electronically communicating

with the rest of the YAC and for taking minutes during the bi-weekly meetings. On

January 11, 2010, Brenda began the YAC meeting this way:

> We don't know what next month is gonna bring, and we don't know what the next
>
> six months is gonna bring. All we know is that the YAC is gonna be here. We, as
>
> YAC members, need to decide who's in and who's out. Obviously, what we
>
> thought was our foundation has been shaken. We need to step up and be that
>
> foundation (YAC observation, February 3, 2010).

Brenda's sentiments were commonly shared throughout YAC meetings, and demonstrate

the responsibility that the youth felt for keeping FLAME open and maintaining its

mission to be a place of empowerment for queer youth. At each YAC meeting, the youth

agreed on the importance of Lawrence being present at the Board of Directors' meetings,

so that he could represent the YAC and advocate on their behalf, revealing both a sense

of their civic rights and responsibilities. However, although the youth participated in

myriad civic actions within the larger metropolitan community as members of FLAME –

such as letter writing campaigns, marches, and protests – they did not employ any of

these strategies to advocate for themselves within the community center through the

financial crisis.

The documents I analyzed focused on citizenship in two major spheres: the

FLAME community, and the wider LGBTQIQ community outside of FLAME. Because

the adults created the majority of the documents, I was able to ascertain some of the adult

understandings of citizenship during this part of the analysis. Embedded within the discourse of citizenship of the FLAME community, there was an emphasis on economic and social issues. The documents highlighted the leadership's focus on raising money for the center; this theme emerged from each document in the study. This focus was elucidated by the announcements of corporate partnerships, in addition to the frequent updates about new monies coming to FLAME via corporate donations. Over the course of the study, it became clear that economic belonging – a certain type of citizenship participation – was paramount for the FLAME staff. This relationship was made clear by Suzie, the Board President, when she remarked, "I mean, this economic environment is the biggest challenge. This is the challenge I think that any organization faces, especially in the non-profit world." She also explained that, "achieving [the Board of Directors'] mission puts us out of business, and that's what we want to do." When I asked her to explain what she meant by that, she said,

> If we can reach a point where our youth do not feel that they have to separate
> themselves from the rest of society, their community, their peers, to be
> themselves, we have accomplished several points. We want our youth to be
> integrated into society, authentically. Who they are, loved and accepted and
> respected (Suzie, March 6, 2010).

FLAME's existence was contingent upon securing funds from multiple sponsorships and donations; its economic viability became its civic destiny. That is, FLAME's existence was contingent upon having enough money. Additionally, FLAME's existence was dependent upon adult civic skills – effective communication within and among staff and volunteers.

The second theme of civic participation within the FLAME community emerged, therefore, out of a civic concern for improved communication and volunteer efficacy and effectiveness. This became most clear by the implementation of an on-line volunteer-managing database and frequent requests for time and ideas from the volunteers. In addition to these examples of FLAME as a site of civic belonging, the documents also revealed the emphasis on the world outside the center.

Connecting the youth with the wider LGBTQIQ community, outside of FLAME, was the second major sphere of citizenship illustrated by the documents. Youth were encouraged to become civically active in the LGBTQIQ community in the Metro area. This was presented in the myriad invitations for youth and adult volunteers to participate in community-wide events, such as the annual citywide Martin Luther King, Jr. March and the National Public Radio (NPR) opportunity to engage in a conversation as part of the Story Corps project. Though I have categorized the data from the documents into indications of civic engagement, I did not see the words citizen, citizenship, or civic participation in any of the documents. Importantly, the level of citizenship that was very salient for the youth during their interviews, national citizenship, did not emerge as a theme in my observations of YAC and other FLAME events or in the documents I analyzed.

During the interviews with the adults, I learned about their understandings of citizenship. In addition to a verbal reiteration of the economic citizenship that emerged from the documents, all of the adults said they thought of FLAME itself as a community of which the youth were a part. This was especially interesting, as none of the youth cited FLAME as a civic entity of which they were citizens. Furthermore, the adult

participants demonstrated their belief in the value of volunteerism as a civic duty, which was not surprising because seven of the adult participants were volunteers themselves. One volunteer also suggested that the youth engaged in a "queer citizenship." Below, I provide examples of these four themes.

Supporting the evidence of economic citizenship I found in the documents, the Executive Director, Frances, explained that:

I would like for LGBTQ [people] to understand the importance of economic empowerment. Political empowerment is one part of it, but the people who actually pull in the strings are the people who have the economic empowerment. So, if you want to have something done and you want people to listen, it may sound, you know, shallow, but it is really the people who have money are the ones who make the decisions.   [The LGBTQIQ community] talked about [marriage rights] from an emotional relationship standpoint: 'I should be allowed to have a marriage and love the person I am with.' Yes. But we also know that wealth is made by couples, that is where wealth comes from, from individuals building resources together … and that is where the largest majority of wealth actually comes from. That is actually the stronger position. Because then people are willing to listen to you because you live in this neighborhood or because you have a lot of other friends that they know vote because people with money vote. And so when you come to the party and you start talking and [elected officials] look at your network, they understand that you are someone that they should be listening to because also people with money follow through… (Frances, March 2, 2010).

The values Frances expressed in this portion of his interview allowed me to understand

that the focus on finances that emerged from the documents was aligned with the Executive Director's beliefs.

Unlike the youth, who did not mention FLAME directly as one of the entities to which they felt citizenship allegiance, several of the adults viewed FLAME as a community for the youth; often, a community they said they had longed for as youth. Eli explained:

> The reality is of this city and of those surrounding areas in the world at large is that it's a hostile place for queer folks. So to have an organization where the leadership basically are queer or has a family member or a loved one that's queer is invaluable. And to have a safe place for the youth to go, if there were no leadership but a protected building, that is invaluable (Eli, March 9, 2010).

Eli, who had grown up in a neighboring southern state, had not been afforded the safe space and myriad resources that FLAME offered. It mattered to Eli that FLAME's leaders were personally invested, as opposed to philanthropic individuals who were removed from the realities of indentifying as LGBTQI or Q in the United States.

Kevin described how he began volunteering at FLAME to illustrate one of the ways he enacted his U.S. citizenship. He explained:

> I was a member of AmeriCorps in 2008, and I started a one-year term … and I became very … civic minded and conscious of volunteerism because I'd been a part of AmeriCorps … I thought to myself, wow, what a better way to invest your time [than] in a program that I know something about, being alternative lifestyles, if you will, and so I discovered FLAME (Kevin, March 12, 2010).

Kevin continued by positing how the value he and others placed on volunteering might be implicitly passed on to the youth at FLAME. He predicted that the youth who attended FLAME may internalize the importance of institutional volunteers, and may already or in the future volunteer in community centers or other civic endeavors.

London, another volunteer, shared his thoughts about how he experienced the youth considering their own citizenship. He argued that the citizenship to which many of the youth ascribe is a "queer citizenship." In response to my question regarding his perception of the existence of explicit or implicit citizenship education at FLAME, he explained:

Absolutely. I think they're engaged in a queer citizenship though, because it's –
they definitely talk about how to be queer youth. It's very interesting. … I asked
them questions about dress and attire and sort of what that means. You know,
what kind of people are they interested in, in terms of dating? You know, … what
role will their sexuality play in a future job? And so I think that they're seeing
that their sexuality and their life fit together. They're not looking at it as separate
in that instance. They're thinking, 'I'm here. This is how I am. I'm gonna get a
job. I am a queer youth.' [I think] it's a little bit different for the men and the
women though, because the men I feel more identify with the top, bottom thing.
One of the youth talked about only wanting to date a top [boy], only wanting to
date a bottom, and so to me that sounds a lot like they're defining themselves as a
sexual position, and they see that as the way that they belong to the community.
Like, 'I am a top in the gay, Black community. I am a bottom in the gay, Black
community.' Whereas the young ladies, maybe they do identify in those same

ways, but the way in which they talk about it is very different. They don't

necessarily say or define themselves by sex (London, April 2, 2010).

London then wondered about the causes and implications of this type of queer

citizenship.

Civic Teaching and Learning at FLAME

Findings related to my second research question, about the nature of civic

teaching and learning evident at FLAME and the extent to which these educational

enactments limit and/or enable various kinds of education for democratic citizenship,

provide insights about what youth can learn about citizenship and civic participation if

given the opportunity in a safe space. The themes revealed through document, interview,

and observation data analysis provide a complex picture of how "citizenship" is taught

and learned at FLAME. I found that participating in the YAC helped the youth develop

an understanding of how to become involved in a representative democracy, as they were

expected to engage in discussions and make decisions for the public good at FLAME.

The FLAME initiatives in the larger Metro-area LGBTQIQ community were seen as

pathways to influence local and state policies. Although the youth paid little attention to

specific national political issues and events, they did discuss Obama's presidency and

generally supported his personal position regarding LGBTQIQ individuals in the United

States, while acknowledging that a conservative national climate served as an obstacle for

enacting progressive federal policies.

My analysis of documents showed that teaching at FLAME happened most

explicitly through the weekly forums and through opportunities for youth to engage in

activities in the larger Metro gay community and the larger Metro community as a whole. Often described as the core of the youth programming at FLAME, the February 24, 2010 newsletter described the forums in this way:

Discussion Forums: Still Here. Still Yours.

Transitions – Transitions is a forum to facilitate open dialogue and activism around social issues encouraging a beloved community in a transient world. Gender issues are also discussed.

Roots – LGBTQ People of Color come together for an evening of dialogue.

Womyn Talk – A social/support group to foster additional support and community for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning womyn.

Boy's Lounge – A social/support group to foster additional support and community for gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning young men.

Teens-R-Us – A time for teens to discuss personal issues, ask questions, and find support [ages 13-19].

Young Adult Discussion Group – A group for young adults offering support and discussion [ages 20-24].

T-party – This group is for transgender youth and young adults ages 13-24 and provides a safe space for trans people to share experiences.

These forums, which occurred Monday-Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:00pm, were facilitated by adult volunteers and attended by the youth. Though the specific discussion topics varied for different groups, the format of all forums was similar. Each forum began with a reading of the "ROPES," which was an acronym for the ground rules at

forum. ROPES stands for Respect, Openness, Participation, Escuchar, and Safe Zone (for more detail, see Appendix D).

Forums began by youth and facilitators passing around the laminated ROPES description, and having one youth read each of the five expectations. The facilitators then asked a check-in question, and youth introduced themselves by sharing their name, age, and the answer to the check-in question. Forums were left intentionally open-ended, such that youth could talk about what was on their minds. There was a wide range of discussion topics; during my forum observations, I witnessed discussions about intimate relationships, family relationships, school, gender identity, gender presentation, homophobia, transphobia, music, music videos, upcoming events at FLAME and in the local community, and local, state, and national political issues. At a local level, discussion in several of the forums focused on school experiences: peers' levels of acceptance of diverse sexualities, teachers' levels of protection from bullying, and FLAME as a site for youth from different schools to meet and become friends. At the Young Adult discussion group, I observed a conversation about HB 927 and HB 940: two state House Bills that together comprised Anti-Bullying Legislation. On three occasions, I observed youth in the Roots forum discuss President Obama's less than ideal support of gay Americans. In these discussions, there was an acknowledgement that although Obama supported gay people, he had to please "Republicans, who hate gay people" (youth in Roots forum, February 8, 2010), and thus could not single-handedly make the United States a better place for gay people. Each time, those who participated in the conversations about Obama expressed their support of his presidency.

My observations of the YAC meetings yielded fewer discussions about political

issues than the forums; though paradoxically the existence of the YAC was political itself. That is, the YAC was developed so that the youth could have a voice within FLAME. Most of the dialogue at the meetings was program related, rather than explicitly "political" in nature. The members' of the YAC regularly engaged in collectively making decisions for the common good for FLAME as a whole – the public space they shared as community members.

In early January 2010, the youth at YAC talked about re-implementing a monthly service project, but over the course of the study, I did not witness that take shape. Discussions focused on the logistics of planning upcoming events at FLAME: the winter ball in February, a movie-night lock-in at FLAME in March, and a fashion show in April. Two exceptions to the generally non-political nature of the discussions at YAC meetings were the YAC's co-sponsorship of an event that brought a newly elected openly gay state legislator to FLAME and the manner in which re-elections would be handled for the leaders of the YAC.

When Camille Gaines, the first out lesbian Black woman elected to the state House of Representatives, came to speak to the youth at FLAME, she started her talk to a room full with 28 youth and 13 adults by proclaiming "My name is [Camille Gaines], and I'm a dyke!" At that, the room exploded with cheers, applause, and laughter. Gaines spoke about coming out at age 13 in her hometown, which was a northern, urban, predominantly Black city. She used the FLAME venue to share her personal and political story, which were inextricably linked. She spoke about her admiration of a local politician in her hometown who was "the first black lesbian [she] had seen living 'out loud,'" and the thrill that she got when it dawned on her that, "Wait. Is Sandra a

professional dyke?" She said she made a commitment to herself then, as an early teen, that she, too, was going to live "out loud," and fight for justice in everything she did. Gaines explained that she never thought she would hold an elected position, and that she faced adversity as a young person. "I got rejected from [a state university in the city where the study took place] five times, then graduated from [a prestigious private college in the city where the study took place] with honors." She used this as a motivating example of endurance. She encouraged the youth to get involved with social justice campaigns, and shared her experiences working on movements to save the local public hospital, to abolish the death penalty in the state, and to improve education. Frustrated that the reoccurring political issue within the LGBTQ community was a focus on marriage rights, Gaines said she asked herself, "How can I fuse my LGBTQ activism with my quest for social justice…[pause]… I can run for public office!" Gaines closed her talk by saying that in order to advance the issues that are relevant to the members of the LGBTQ community, activists should "convince people that gay and lesbian rights are not about perverted sexual acts, but about human rights and civic rights." Gaines' talk at FLAME was an example of a positive civic experience for the youth, as she enabled the youth to imagine themselves as elected officials. However, none of the students referred to her example when I later asked about their attitudes toward political leaders.

The discussion about re-elections within the YAC six days after Gaines' visit offered a different kind of civic lesson. Because the financial crisis at FLAME created a tumultuous setting – with staff being furloughed and programs being cancelled – the YAC president decided that elections should be postponed to create a sense of stability. Near the end of the January 11th YAC meeting, Lawrence declared:

One more thing that we have to talk about is elections. Elections are supposed to be going on right now [several members of the YAC laugh]. One of the ideas we have is that we keep the current administration. I have already asked Brenda to be my personal secretary [several members of the YAC laugh again]. I have also asked Jane and Tola to help. The reason for this is that I have been impressed with them (YAC observation, February 17, 2010).

At Lawrence's indication that this would be best for the YAC right now, members of the YAC sitting around the table nodded quietly, and no one indicated that they wanted to be a part of the leadership. Next, Lawrence asked Brenda, Jane, and Tola to leave the room, and he asked the remaining YAC members if anyone had an objection to their being a new part of the YAC executive board. Again, no one voiced objection. A few people mumbled their approval, and the three youth in question were let back in the room. "Congratulations, new exec board!" Lawrence said excitedly, and the "re-elections" were complete. This non-democratic process may have taught the YAC members that in times of stress, there can be a tendency to suspend democracy in the name of stability.

My analysis of the interviews with the youth revealed complex understandings of how "citizenship" is being learned at FLAME. Although all of the youth participants suggested that they were learning about what it means to be a citizen and experiencing multiple ways of engaging in civic activities, the specific elements of citizenship and civic participation they said they were learning varied. The questions that I asked the youth about what they do at FLAME and about their experiences as part of the YAC yielded the best indication of how civic teaching and learning is taking place at FLAME.

Because the focus of this research project was on the youth who are active

members of the YAC, their participation in YAC meetings and events was a common experience. Thus, I was able to learn about how they were similarly and differently making sense of what they were learning at FLAME. The most frequently cited youth perception of their experiences at FLAME was a feeling of warmth, camaraderie, and welcoming vibes of the organization. All ten of the youth commented on the positive way in which they were welcomed at FLAME, and attributed that warm welcome for their increasing and lasting involvement. According to Autumn, she came to FLAME because:

> It feels like home… here, this is the one place that has been constant now for over a year. I can come to FLAME and be myself. I can goof around with everybody… you don't have to worry about holding another girl's hand, or kissing another girl here. You know, it's a normal thing to do here. You don't feel outcasted or stared at (Autumn, February 16, 2010).

In addition to the warm and welcoming environment that helped the youth feel included in the community, however, several of the youth also reported frustrations with the leadership of the YAC and the ways in which the adult members of the Board of Directors of the FLAME did and did not communicate with the youth on the YAC. When I asked the youth what they had learned from being a part of the YAC, four of them replied with what they deemed negative but necessary lessons about how people work together in groups. They were frustrated either with the leadership style of the YAC president, Lawrence, or with the ways in which people were selected to work on events and the lack of follow through by some of the other YAC members. Strawberry, who had been an active member of the YAC, but who had stopped coming to meetings

over the course of the last year, shared this when I asked him why he did not come to

FLAME or to YAC as much as I had seen him there in previous years:

> Well one, finances, being able to get from my house to here. Two, like the
>
> structure of the YAC and the way that things are handled. It's different from
>
> when I first started, and sometimes it's not as agreeable, and I witnessed the
>
> whole power struggle, and no one wants to be caught up in the middle of that
>
> (Strawberry, March 11, 2010).

The "power struggle" to which Strawberry referred in this exchange involved the recent

staff furloughs. Because the adult staff member who worked with the YAC and two of

the youth members of the YAC (who were also youth employees) were furloughed, there

was much disillusionment and dismay on the part of the YAC members. This left the

YAC members scrambling for order and direction. Most members of the YAC stayed on,

and participated in civic action to regain that order, via the YAC officer "re-election" and

requests for youth presence at Board of Directors meetings. For Strawberry, however,

the power struggles and his transportation difficulties were enough to push him away. In

addition to talking about why he no longer participated as actively as he had before, he

then shared the way he chose to handle the changes. He said, "So I stick to the special

events and I come in and spread some happiness and then go" (Strawberry, March 11,

2010). Though Strawberry maintained an upbeat attitude about continuing to "spread

some happiness," his withdrawal from the YAC when confronted with obstacles might

have been an indication of a civic lesson that does not bode well for future participation.

Four youth also indicated their frustration with the way in which the adult

members of FLAME's Board of Directors interacted with the youth regarding the

financial crisis. During a YAC meeting, two Board of Directors officers explained that

FLAME was in this crisis due to the national recession and the previous Executive

Director's failure to adequately apply for grants and loans. Therefore, there was much

attention focused on the possibility that FLAME might have to close its doors or cut

some of its programs. During the months I was collecting data, members of both the

YAC and the Board of Directors met twice to discuss possible ways to move forward as

an organization. It was this exchange that led several of the youth to critique the ways

the adult members of the Board of Directors did not engage them as responsible

stakeholders – or full FLAME citizens – during the financially difficult times. Some of

the youth also expressed frustration that the way that some members of the Board of

Directors talked to them was condescending and dishonest. According to Autumn, she

had been "a little discouraged by the way the Board [of Directors had] been running

things." As an officer in the YAC, Isabella reflected:

> I have learned that we find out a lot more about an organization by being in a
>
> youth forum. I have learned that like all youth, there are highs and lows where
>
> you are really committed and then you leave or you lose interest, and there was
>
> tension when we were creating the by-laws for the youth, a lot of people do not
>
> want to make it so business-like but it was important because it kind of
>
> determined how we ran as a youth forum and how many years should the
>
> president be there, the vice president and the roles we should have. Because, if
>
> we do not have that structure, we wouldn't really follow through, so there was
>
> tension there. But I also found that we started getting closer with those who were
>
> members of the YAC, because we would have these meetings and we would see

our changes coming into place and lately with the FLAME having different

organizational issues changing, it's been able to find a safe place within these

members to voice our frustration with certain changes and know that it is safe and

it stays there, and you know how can we challenge the Board of Directors because

they are never there or we as youth never see them and how can we make them

more responsible and kind of demand change from the higher beings from the

organization and so I feel like that has really helped me being a part of the YAC

(Isabella, March 6, 2010).

In this segment of the interview, Isabella alluded to the tension at YAC meetings about

by-laws, and articulated the YAC's general perception of the Board of Directors. In

response to my next question, regarding the tension that arose as a reaction to the process

by which the by-laws were written, she explained that a relatively small number of

people were involved in re-creating the by-laws, and that some of the YAC members who

did not take part felt excluded from the process. Though none of the youth participants

knew who had drafted the original set of YAC by-laws, some explained that they hoped it

was a more inclusive process than this iteration of revising them. Perhaps this was

another example of suspended democracy in times of stress.

In summary, the youth described several positive civic lessons and one negative

civic lesson learned. Many skills practiced in forum sessions, YAC meetings, and other

FLAME projects could be associated with increased civic and political engagement from

adolescence and on to adulthood: discussing controversial issues, making decisions for

the public good, forming relationships and understandings of identity along lines of

commonalities and differences, considering current state and federal legislation, and

interacting with an openly-gay elected official. The most salient negative lesson learned was the suspension of democratic processes in difficult times.

In response to my inquiry with the adult volunteers and staff at FLAME regarding the nature of the teaching about citizenship and civic participation, I learned that seven of the ten adults saw an intentional effort to teach about civic participation, and the other three said that they were certain there were at least unintentional lessons about citizenship being conveyed through the activities at FLAME. Suzie and Eli emerged at opposite ends of the spectrum, in terms of their understanding of intentionally-designed citizenship lessons being taught. According to Suzie,

> Citizenship is an underlying component of everything we do. We encourage volunteer work, not only at FLAME, but outside in the community. Some of our youth volunteer with the ASPCA [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals], you know, the youth who like to be around animals. They [the youth] have done the AIDS run, and the bike ride. I mean they have a unique peer pressure amongst themselves to go out and do for the community, which has not been accidental. We have fostered that. We have harnessed their… belief that being cool is being a good citizen" (Suzie, March 6, 2010).

Eli, on the other hand, answered, "I'm going to have to think hard on [whether there are intentional citizenship efforts at FLAME]" (Eli, March 9, 2010).

Youth Political Attitudes at FLAME

In investigating my third research question, about the ways youth develop particular political attitudes – interest, efficacy, and trust – I relied on my analyses of the

youth interviews and observations of the YAC meetings and other events at FLAME. I

found that although FLAME was a site for positive growth of the youths' political

interest and efficacy, the lack of quality communication with adult members of the Board

of Directors challenged some of the youths' political trust. There were several physical

and experiential places at FLAME in which the youth reported developing political

interest and efficacy.

      Political interest. The instances in which youth were able to speak in public on

behalf of other queer youth for the purpose of educating people about queer youth

seemed to lead directly to political interest. My questions to the youth about what they

would like to see changed about society, and about what activities they were engaged

with through their connection with FLAME allowed the youth to share the thoughts that I

analyzed to gauge their political interest. In general, the youth expressed high interest in

political issues, and their participation in FLAME activities emerged as a central

component in their developing these interests.

      The youth responses about what they would like to see changed about society

spanned social, political, economic, and educational dimensions of society. The element

of society that was most commonly discussed as what the youth would like to see

changed were the restrictions on people who identify as members of the LGBTQIQ

community. Autumn answered that she is interested in political issues, "especially with

the gay rights movement, military domestic abuse, and the [Don't Ask, Don't Tell]

Policy," which, at that time, barred openly gay service people from serving in the U.S.

Military (Autumn, February 16, 2010).   She went on to explain that these issues were of

importance to her due to her individual experience, and the experiences she had just

recently started having since starting a relationship with an older woman, who is married

to a U.S. Army soldier, and with whom she has two children. Like Autumn, the other

youth spoke of interests born of their own experiences as LGBTQIQ youth.

One of the YAC-initiated projects that was going on during the time of this study

was a fundraiser for the victims of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Although

Hannah said that she felt "pretty detached," from political activism, she followed that

statement quickly with "okay, well I do some personal things like recycle and try to use

public transit" (Hannah, March 3, 2010). Though she did not explicitly connect "political

activism" and the individual ways that she tries to be an environmentally-conscious

citizen, it seemed to me she was making a cognitive connection between the two. Other

examples of youth expressing political interest were their stated concern about

discrimination against poor people, concerns about healthcare, big government, lack of

sex education in public schools, and the general unwillingness of society to accept

relationships that are non-monogamous.

Political efficacy. Political efficacy, as defined for this study, is the confidence in

one's ability to comprehend the political sphere and to participate effectively within it,

and the belief that one can make change through political action (see p. 20). In terms of

the youths' development of their political efficacy, I draw most heavily on answers to my

questions to the youth about what kind of activities they have engaged in through their

involvement at FLAME, and what they would like to be different in society. Every youth

I interviewed talked about at least one opportunity in which they had participated that

was a positive experience linked directly to participating in a community organization.

Often, the connection was even specifically drawn to the political nature of the activity in

which the youth was engaged, as examples of how to participate in public life. I found

that the youth participated in the Gay Pride parade, had an opportunity to attend and

speak publicly at a fancy Human Rights Campaign dinner fundraiser, organized a large

Thanksgiving potluck dinner, and actively attended the LGBT day at the state capitol.

  The youth responses to my inquiry about how the youth envisioned their desired

societal changes occurring provides additional indicators of political efficacy, because

embedded in their discussion about political issues were their suggestions for how they

might improve the problems. All ten of the youth asserted at least one thing they would

like to see changed about society, and all of the ten youth included themselves in their

vision of the solution to those problems. By including themselves in their plans to

improve society, the youth demonstrated a high level of political efficacy. Their high

levels of efficacy regarding issues outside of FLAME, however, was different from their

feelings of frustration within the organization; the youth did not sense that the adults were

listening to their demand for greater inclusion. Despite their shared frustration, their

belief that they had the power to improve FLAME's financial woes remained strong.

Perhaps their overall political efficacy helped them remain efficacious within FLAME,

notwithstanding the negative civic lesson they were learning during the time I collected

data.

  Though each of the youth participants mentioned at least one other aspect of

society they would like to see changed, for the most part they did not say what they could

do about it. The common societal ill they identified was feeling there is a second-class

citizenship for people in the United States who identify as LGBTQI or Q. For this issue,

the youth said that they had already or that they planned to engage in letter writing

campaigns and protests at the state capitol to bring about change for LGBTQIQ people. Interestingly, none of the youth suggested that they might run for office, despite Camille Gaines' visit to FLAME.

All of these events – both positive and negative civic lessons being learned – potentiated the increase in youth political efficacy. Seth's reflection, that it "does not take much effort to get a lot of things done" (Seth, February 7, 2010) was a perception held by several of the youth. All of the youth participants had been a part of at least one panel of LGBTQ youth who spoke to a group of people to educate them about their experiences. Lawrence indicated his increasing efficacy by saying that he felt very empowered on the occasions where he could represent FLAME and educate others about his experiences. He said, "Just by educating somebody, I feel that I am changing the world. It only takes one person" (Lawrence, February 3, 2010). Four other youth described similar beliefs in their own ability to change society. During an interview with Seth, we had the following exchange:

> SA: I believe as long as you're active in your local [community], you can make a whole lot of difference. I've written many letters to representatives, and I've always gotten a response.
>
> JF: Oh yea?
>
> SA: Even from the people who disagree with me completely. Even they will respond to me. People who are opposed don't respond very well, but at least they're hearing me. If they hear it enough, they might change.
>
> JF: What are some examples of letters you've written? To whom and about what?

> SA: When the Matthew Shepard Act passed the Senate, the two Senators from
>
> [this state] – they voted no on it, and I wrote to them saying that was
>
> disgusting. That it was very hateful and that it hurt. And I also wrote when
>
> there was some kind of rape law coming in. I forget the details, but I was
>
> opposed to the Senators' votes.
>
> JF: Right. And you said that you received feedback. How did they respond?
>
> SA: Thank you for writing. We disagree with you, but thank you for writing
>
> (Seth, February 7, 2010).

In this exchange, Seth illustrated his positive experience with politicians, even though
they did not share political views. This exchange with Seth illustrated his political
efficacy and his increased political trust. Isabella, Kenneth, and Strawberry also shared
examples of their respective high political efficacy.

Isabella had taken part in meaningful participatory civic action through FLAME
that included:

> Marches [on the capitol] where you would have a sign …when it comes to issues
>
> like Prop 8 and the whole debate on that. I went to certain high schools and
>
> represented YAC. ... We represented YAC, but we also represented FLAME in
>
> general, just spreading the word that there is an organization that exists. …
>
> Putting posters up or giving [out the] little cards with FLAME [information],
>
> promoting FLAME and YAC (Isabella, February 27, 2010).

In response to my question regarding her and her friends' and family's ability to
influence political leaders or the political process, she was certain that they did have the
ability to do so. She answered:

I feel like a lot of the times there is this opinion that as people you can't make changes, and that you have to have a specific title or it takes "x" amount of people to change, but I think being persistent, and – Marion Wright Edelman, I went to one of her presentations once – and she said that we all have to be like fleas attacking a dog, for example, and even though a flea might seem so small and unimportant, it can make a huge change and it could bother the dog. It is a metaphor that she used … I want to be a flea, where I just want to be annoyingly persistent and vocalizing injustice and so getting people on board, and educating people so that they can be like, 'this is not fair, let us do something about it,' like from writing a letter to, you know, making a point, making a statement. I think everybody should be involved. Once you see more of us out there, and more faces attached to it, I think it will make a change, because they will know that there are those types of people out there, I think visibility is key. [We should] get in their faces so that they can't deny it anymore (Isabella, February 27, 2010).

Like Isabella, Kenneth shared the civic opportunities he had experienced through FLAME before talking about a new role he taken at his church. He said:

I've learned that you can't complain about something if you didn't put your input. And, being here at FLAME it taught me how to, like, anytime there is an opening for your input, and it's valuable, you should go ahead and take that opportunity. Like, we have GLBTQ at the capital day. This is your time where you can go to the capital and sit with our state - state lawmakers and talk about the issues that goes on within the community. And, with all aspects of the community as far as black, white community, Hispanic, gay community and all aspects of the

communities you have an opportunity to sit down and talk to them. I take

advantage of that. The Census, taking advantage of that. And, also voting when

it comes to local, state, or national voting, I always take part of that. … You are

valuable, each person in the US is valuable to the US. And, you're a very

valuable person so your opinion matters whether you think so or the other person

thinks so, or don't think so. But, your opinion matters in the end (Kenneth,

March 11, 2010).

At his church, Kenneth had recently taken on a new role. His passion for HIV prevention

and awareness was clear when he said,

And, I always let people know that even in my circle of friends, even at home, I

tell … you got to get tested. And … I constantly remind people how to get tested.

And, right now I have taken on a big role in my church. We have a new pastor

and he has issued for [there] to be an HIV and AIDS ministry of the church. And,

so I have taken upon that role to [lead] that (Kenneth, March 11, 2010).

When I asked Strawberry about what civic experiences he had had, he shared:

I've been a page for the [state] Senate and the [state] House [of Representatives]

more than once. It was a lot of fun. Basically I got to run all over the building, I

ran errands, I pulled copies of proposals and bills that were being discussed. I got

to meet a couple of senators and two representatives and take pictures and be

noted. Hopefully I did a good enough job to be invited back eventually

(Strawberry, March 11, 2010).

In summary, several of the youth had participated in civic action in diverse contexts, and

their positive reflections on their experiences were indications of high political efficacy.

Political trust. For this study, I defined political trust as a feeling of confidence that develops toward officials and toward government institutions (see p. 26). I inferred the youths' level of political trust from their responses to my asking directly if they trusted politicians. Additionally, I gained insights to their level of trust toward officials and government institutions by asking the youth to describe their experiences as being a member of the YAC.

The best indicator of the youths' level of political trust was their answers to my intentionally dichotomous question, "do you trust politicians?" I chose to ask the question in that way because of the popular mainstream discourse that is simplistically dichotomous about whether people trust government and politicians. Five of the youth answered the question in a nuanced manner, and acknowledged that they were not able to make a generalization, but that they trusted some political leaders and not others. Four of the youth said that they did not trust politicians. One youth said that he did trust politicians and that "government is totally necessary." Interestingly, only two elected politicians were named in the youth responses: Presidents Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama. Hannah, who explained that she trusted some and not others expressed her admiration of President Carter. She said, "like even though [Carter] is not President anymore, hasn't been for a long time, he's trying to do other things, like promote peace and work on things like anti-virus and disease prevention stuff in Africa. So yea, I trust him." During an interview with Jane, she described the source of her inspiration:

> Well, it's probably a tie between Eleanor Roosevelt and Beyonce… Both women
>
> were so like empowered. Beyonce is just like the epitome… She is professionally
>
> aware. Then Eleanor Roosevelt said, 'No one can make you feel inferior without

your consent,' and that is just something that I have latched onto and has helped

me through the years and I like how politically strong she was and I kind of

identify with her... well with her personal life. Wasn't she a lesbian (Jane, March

11, 2010)?

Though neither Eleanor Roosevelt nor Beyonce were elected politicians, Jane considered

both women strong leaders. For her, they exemplified civic activism.

In response to my inquiries about experiences as part of the YAC, six of the youth

talked about the interpersonal problems between members of the YAC, and specific

instances that occurred with the current president. When I asked what they had learned

from being a member of the YAC, the youth cited lessons they had learned from negative

experiences. Although some youth regarded the lessons as essential knowledge, they

noted the lessons were not fun to learn. For example, Jane responded that she had

learned "how to keep [her] mouth shut" (Jane, February 11, 2010). Autumn revealed that

she learned "that everybody has different leadership skills" (Autumn, February 16, 2010)

then she proceeded to talk about her exemplary leadership skills as a captain of her

school's marching band. She did not find the same quality leadership within the YAC or

at FLAME. Though Autumn was not impressed with the YAC leadership, she referred to

a lesson learned at school - another central element of Bronfenbrenner's microsystem.

The negative civic lessons learned were an important indicator of the youths'

level of political trust, because the experiences they had engaging in political action – at

YAC meetings and events – could transfer to their overall level of trust for political

entities and processes. Attitudes toward political leaders in their immediate community

might predispose them toward negative or positive attitudes towards political leaders they

encounter in the future. The cynicism cited by most of the youth about FLAME's Board

of Directors during the year I observed was an indication that at the most local level, the

youth developed distrust of those in power. I wondered if future experiences would

reinforce or contradict that year's negative lessons.

Emergent Themes

In addition to the themes that answered the research questions that guided this

study, I identified two other prevalent themes. The first theme is helpful because it

provides a window into an important source of empowerment and, in this case, political

empowerment for the youth in this study. This theme is best encapsulated by Lawrence's

reflection that "words do have power" (Lawrence, February 3, 2010). It incorporates the

frequent assertion by the youth about the power of their own voice and the ways in which

their time at FLAME had allowed them to use that voice in myriad places. Of the ten

youth participants, nine of them told me about positive public speaking experiences

through FLAME. Kenneth shared an experience he had when he "did a speech at the

[Human Rights Campaign] HRC dinner and from that point on I have been on the YAC,

and represented FLAME at various events" (Kenneth, March 11, 2010). After explaining

that FLAME's Executive Director had selected him to give a speech about his

experiences as a youth at FLAME to the attendees at a high-price formal dinner

sponsored by the HRC, he said,

> Actually the former ED, he asked me to…and at that time I didn't know what the
>
> HRC was. So, when I looked it up and I saw it and I was just like, wow. And
>
> then when he told me how many people would be at the dinner I was like, oh

wow. That was a really extraordinary night. The only thing that [I] was really

nervous about that night was, mind you, I was just finding out about my HIV

status in 2005, and until then, the HRC dinner was the biggest audience I ever

disclosed to. So, that whole day, you know, I'm excited because it's at the

Marriott Marquee downtown, and I'm at the hotel. I'm like, oh my gosh, this is

nice, but at the same time I'm like really, I got like a gazillion butterflies inside,

because I'm like these people are going to know. And, there was [a prominent

regional newspaper for the LGBTQIQ community] there…But I overcame it and I

did it and it was a big extraordinary night. And, ever since then I have just been

very active within FLAME (Kenneth, March 11, 2010).

Here, Kenneth clearly articulated that the opportunity afforded him due to his

participation with FLAME was a "big extraordinary" experience. The other eight youth

who shared their public speaking experiences conveyed similar levels of influence on

their participation in FLAME and their broader, more political participation, even if the

events at which they spoke were not as big or grand.

Another theme that emerged was youth recommendations for schools as another

community where youth experience political socialization and citizenship. Regarding my

interview question about what the youth would have wanted their teachers to know to

create better experiences for them as queer youth in school, seven of the ten youth

responded that they wished their teachers had interrupted verbal abuse and other forms of

bullying they suffered from their peers. According to Seth,

[Teachers] need to speak up. When they see something wrong, they need to speak

up. They need to fix it. So much bullying went on at my school, and a lot of

teachers went the other way. And that's not right at all (Seth, February 7, 2010).

Similarly, Kenneth shared that although he was "pretty sure" the teachers knew his

sexuality, they never acknowledged it and did not help him out when other kids were

harassing him. He said,

I'm pretty sure my teachers probably knew my sexuality. But one of the things I

just wished they would have done – I wanted them to notice it, like you know,

they could at least stop the name-calling, or stop the bullying when it comes to

homosexuality (Kenneth, March 11, 2010).

Jane, Autumn, Alex, Strawberry, and Anthony had nearly identical advice for teachers, as

they had suffered similar bullying in their school experiences, with no help from teachers.

The other recommendation that emerged regarding advice for educators was the

need to include LGBTQIQ content in the curriculum. Four of the youth mentioned

specific classes in which they would have liked to learn more about themselves and other

queer youth: two in social studies, one in language arts, and the other in health. Isabella

said she would like for educators to know,

That people might be internally struggling with coming out or being out and if

teachers were more cognizant about this issue, they could be more inclusive in the

terminology that they use in their practices of teaching. They would not assume

every relationship is a heterosexual relationship, and when they are talking about

art or literature or history, include people who are lesbian and gay (Isabella,

March 6, 2010).

Though there were the slight variations that accompany unique experiences, the youths'
advice to teachers was strikingly clear and similar.

Both the youth and adults gave many suggestions for how FLAME might be
improved to better meet their needs. From the youth, the most frequent response was that
of improved relations between the adult Board of Directors and the YAC. Among the
adults, the most frequent response was the need to recruit and retain volunteers more
effectively. Although most of the responses fell into these categories, there were a couple
other important suggestions as well, described below.

Four of the youth commented that they were disappointed with the
communication between the Board of Directors and the YAC. This was particularly
bothersome to these youth, because of the rhetoric that they were important stakeholders
in the sustainability of the entire organization. According to Jane,

> I think there needs to be a better connection and communication between the
> people who make decisions… I think it would be better if we could really
> communicate with the adults at FLAME as in, 'these are what our needs are.' I
> understand that money plays a lot in keeping FLAME going, but at the same time
> to improve it for youth is to do what the youth want, within reason (Jane, March
> 11, 2010).

It was clear that these youth did not feel as though their concerns were being heard by the
Board of Directors. Though they did not use the term "second class citizens," they
indicated that they did not feel like a valued part of the institution.

Another suggestion from Hannah, a young, white, transgender woman was that
the people who work and volunteer at FLAME, as well as her fellow youth attendees,

should learn "a little more class and race consciousness" (Hannah, March 23, 2010).

After recounting an on-going reality about FLAME – that the computer lab was almost

always being utilized by Black youth, and that most of the forums are attended by White

youth – she urged me to understand that she did not agree with what she said other white

youth deduced from that. Instead of critiquing the Black youth who come "only" to use

the computers, Hannah reported, "I just want to say that everybody has a legitimate

reason for coming here and it would be nice if people wouldn't judge based on why

they're here" (Hannah, March 23, 2010).

 Three of the adult participants in the study – all volunteers at FLAME –

mentioned that the area that needed the most attention was communication and

correspondence with volunteers. All three of the adults who said this should be the main

focus for improvements at FLAME had experienced a difficult time becoming a

volunteer there. They had similar stories, about having inquired with staff at FLAME

about volunteer opportunities on more than one occasion, and having had to persist to

finally have the opportunity to volunteer there. They said they were frustrated because

they were offering their own free time, and that FLAME should develop a better

volunteer recruitment and retention system, so that good volunteers do not leave before

they ever actually have an opportunity to volunteer there. Communication with

volunteers was not the only adult-recommended improvement for FLAME.

 London, a volunteer forum facilitator, suggested that there be training and

intentionality around different sets of youth interacting with one another, and also that

more attention should be paid to ensuring that folks are warmly welcomed when they

enter FLAME. This was particularly interesting in light of the youth declaration that

FLAME was very welcoming. He said,

> I feel like the youth don't pay attention to each other. They pay attention to their
>
> friends, and I feel like there should be some ways – like when you walk in the
>
> door, I think the person at the desk should be looking, "Hello, how you doing?"
>
> and sometimes I find them on the computer, and so that to me is against what
>
> we're trying to do at FLAME. We're trying to have it so that you walk in the
>
> door and someone's like, 'You made it. You made it. You made it off the train.
>
> You made it out the car. I'm glad you're here. Take a seat. This is what's
>
> happening today,' those sort of things, because I got – I'm new and I can walk in
>
> there and not speak to anybody. You know what I mean (London, April 2, 2010)?

During my years of volunteer work at FLAME, I have heard this comment made by

several volunteers.

Kevin, another Black gay male forum facilitator, pointed out the value that would

be added if the forums changed slightly from weekly discussion groups, based on

whatever the youth present wanted to talk about, to workshops and skill-shares, where

youth could walk away with something tangible, such as information on how to fill out a

Free Application for Federal Students Aid (FAFSA) form, or knowledge about finances

and credit. He suggested these as examples of a broad range of skills and insights that he

wished he had had at their age, and thought FLAME forums was an ideal place to spread

that kind of knowledge. After he described some of his ideas, he wrapped it up with "I

would like to see people leave more empowered" (Kevin, March 21, 2010).

By analyzing document, interview, and observation data from one year at a community center for LGBTQIQ youth, I was able to answer the research questions for this study. Overall, it is clear that participatory citizenship was being taught and learned at FLAME, and that the youth participation there had a positive effect on the young people's political interest. Regarding political efficacy and trust, the youths' experiences were both positive and negative.

Chapter 5:

Discussion

Public schools in the United States are often unsafe places for LGBTQIQ youth. As a result of the hostility that these youth face at school and from many people, places, institutions, systems, and laws in and outside of schools, LGBTQIQ youth skip classes, drop out of school, and attempt or commit suicide at higher rates than those of straight youth. At the same time that LGBTQIQ youth are experiencing school negatively, they, along with all youth, are undergoing civic and political socialization.

The current era necessitates new and innovative education for informed and participatory citizenship, and calls into question the ways in which youth have traditionally been socialized politically. As such, I conducted an ethnographic case study in a community center created and maintained to empower LGBT youth, FLAME, to investigate how queer youth were being politically socialized and educated for citizenship in an environment specifically designed for their development and success.

I collected and analyzed data from documents, interviews, and observations to help answer the following questions:

1. What understandings of citizenship are held/exhibited by the adults and the youth in a community center dedicated to empowerment for LGBTQIQ youth?

2. What is the nature of teaching and learning evident in this community center and how do these educational enactments limit and enable various kinds of education for democratic citizenship?

3. How do youth develop three political attitudes – political trust, efficacy, and interest – in this context?

Regarding question one, I found that youth conceptions of citizenship spanned global, national, and local scales of allegiance, and that most of the youth held multiple and overlapping understandings of belonging. Half of the youth participants cited the world as the entity to which they felt the strongest ties of allegiance, which was more youth than those who cited a strong allegiance to the United States and the local community combined. This stated feeling of primary allegiance to the world, however, was different from the national-level allegiance with which most of the youth associated their rights and duties. The idea of national expectations for rights and duties was, in turn, different from the majority of the youth explanations of their own political engagement, which was within the local LGBTQIQ community. Additionally, most of the programs at FLAME were aimed at local-level participation.

I found that unlike the youth, the adults cited FLAME as one of the youths' main civic communities, and that many of the adults had longed for a place like FLAME in their own adolescence. I also found that the adults viewed volunteerism as a civic virtue, and that one adult perceived what he called a "queer citizenship."

In regard to research question two, I found that the bulk of civic learning at FLAME occurred at the weekly discussion forums and bi-weekly YAC meetings. In these venues, youth discussed politics, issues of belonging, and current events. They also engaged in making decisions for the common good, writing letters to elected officials about state and federal policies, and protesting at the state capitol. Collectively, they attributed their own political socialization to experiences at FLAME to a much greater degree than their experiences in their public schools and social studies classes.

Regarding the second part of research question two, about the ways in which the civic educational enactments at FLAME limited and enabled various kinds of education for democratic citizenship, I found that participatory civic engagement was both enabled (through the aforementioned activities) and discouraged when the YAC elections were suspended and the youth were excluded from discussions about how to save the center.

Concerning research question three, I found that the youths' involvement at FLAME had a positive influence on their political interest. Their experiences at FLAME had both positive and negative influence on the youths' levels of political efficacy and trust.

I found that the YAC participants were engaged in activities at the center that previous scholars have cited as effective methods for learning political skills, knowledge, and attitudes: attending meetings, writing letters to elected officials, planning civic events, and serving on an internal decision-making committee. This participatory engagement was noteworthy, especially in light of the reported lack of such education the youth received in their high school social studies courses. The youths' dismal descriptions of their high school civics experiences supports Kahne and Middaugh's (2010) assertion that the role of the common citizen is paid much less attention in public social studies courses than is the factual knowledge of American government.

I begin by discussing my findings in relation to previous research. I subsequently consider the findings through a human rights framework, and then through Osler and Starkey's (2005) model for understanding citizenship as status, practice, and feeling. Then, I discuss the IEA Octagon Model in relation to this study.

Next, I consider the five particular findings that have the farthest-reaching implications for educators and community members who are interested in youth political socialization. The first two are findings regarding research question one: the distinction between electoral politics and social justice, and the idea that FLAME's Board was working to "put itself out of business." The next two findings addressed research question two: the focus on community at FLAME being reflective of Dewey's (1916) call for attention toward associated living, and the enduring tendency to suspend democratic processes in times of stress. The fifth finding I discuss in this section emerged as I analyzed research question three: the unexpected relationship between negative civic lessons learned and high political efficacy for some students. I subsequently present the study's limitations, and conclude by presenting implications for future research and practice.

Findings as Related to Previous Research

Similar to findings from earlier studies, the youth at FLAME held flexible and overlapping ties of allegiance, and strong convictions about citizens' rights and duties. Unlike previous researchers, I found that the YAC members' ideas about duties were broader and less legalistic than with other U.S. youth. Additionally, respect was the most frequently cited duty at FLAME. Only one YAC member demonstrated strong adherence to a sense of American superiority, a disposition that other researchers found more frequently. Regarding the nature of teaching and learning at FLAME, my findings support previous scholars' findings about activities and contextual factors that support positive civic growth. My findings related to youth participants' political interest,

efficacy, and trust support some previous studies and contradict others. Below, I address specific findings in light of the literature reviewed for this study.

Understandings of citizenship. The youth participants in this study held similar flexible notions of citizenship – with multiple scales of allegiance – as the youth participants in Mitchell and Parker's (2008) study. Instead of expressing rigid understandings of their own citizenship, the majority of the youth in this study claimed more than one entity to which they belong. Because the youth were being politically socialized through many experiences, I do not claim that their experiences at FLAME were the sole impetus for their flexible citizenship identities. Furthermore, I found that the activities in which the youth were involved exposed them to myriad civic skills. This positive growth is beneficial for all of the communities of which the YAC members were a part, in addition to the individual youth.

In this era of globalization, the ability to understand and possess flexible understandings of citizenship is undoubtedly an asset. Unprecedented levels of communication, information production, and migration necessitate multi-dimensional citizens: citizens that are not limited to the narrow view of belonging only to one's nation state. Unlike Hahn (1999), who found a widespread sense of American superiority, only one of my ten youth participants expressed a similar sentiment. The youth who articulated his belief in American superiority, Kenneth, was one of two youth who identified as African American in the study. Both Kenneth and Strawberry – the other self-identified African American in the study – were also the only two youth participants who attended predominantly African American primary and secondary schools.

Although based on only two individuals, this finding does support those of Baldi and his colleagues (2001), who found in Phase 2 of the IEA study that race and school-level SES were significant factors relating to civic knowledge, and that students of color and students from lower SES backgrounds had less civic knowledge than White students and those from higher SES backgrounds. Additionally, as Kahne and Middaugh (2008) found, White high school students from a high SES who plan to attend college receive a more comprehensive civic education in their social studies classes than do students of color from a low SES with no post-secondary educational aspirations. Because learning about nuanced conceptions of citizenship is associated with more comprehensive civic education programs, I suggest that it was also not a coincidence that the two youth participants who cited citizenship within only the United States were also the only two African American participants.

Kahne and Middaugh's (2008) compiled list of "Best Practices" (p. 10) provide a tool that can be used to help evaluate the quality of the civic opportunities offered at FLAME. They were proponents of environments in which youth are encouraged to discuss current events in an open climate, study issues that matter to them, interact with civic role models, engage in after-school activities, and learn about community problems and ways to respond. I found that all of these strategies were being enacted at FLAME. The out-of-school venue was a place where some of the educational disparities identified in schools by Baldi and his colleagues, and Kahne and Middaugh were overcome.

In contrast to Conover, Crewe, and Searing's (1991) findings in their comparative study of U.S. and British youth concepts of rights and duties, the youth in my study held beliefs that more closely resembled the British youths' beliefs than the U.S. youths'

beliefs. Whereas the U.S. youth in their study demonstrated strong influences from the traditional liberalism that informs mainstream social studies curriculum in the United States, the youth in my study adhered more to communitarian views of citizenship. Specifically, the YAC members' ideas about political participation included their feelings of responsibility and desire to struggle for collective progress, instead of a focus on personal rights and individual progress (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Hahn, 2008).

That the majority of the YAC members referred to respect as a civic duty underscores Conover and Searing's (2000) findings that political socialization can only be understood by taking into account the contextual factors surrounding the individuals being socialized. All of the youth participants described times when they had been disrespected – by parents, teachers, peers, and/or strangers – based on their sexual orientation. Within their FLAME community, these youth were greeted with respect and treated with dignity, except when they felt excluded by adults when the center's future was under threat. This indicates a possible extension of what the youth were learning as citizens at FLAME to what they desired of their other civic communities.

The adults' shared value placed on volunteerism is a helpful finding, particularly as an extension of McFarland and Thomas' (2006) study about youth volunteerism and consequent adult political participation. They found that youth groups that promote equity for marginalized youth, those that foster communal identities, and those that encourage public speaking, had positive effects on later adult political participation. The activities that the youth participants reported engaging in at FLAME, based on McFarland and Thomas' study, might lead to future political engagement.

Frisco, Muller, and Dodson's study (2004) extended McFarland and Thomas'
study by controlling for youth participants' race and SES. They found that these factors
were significant in determining the type of youth groups to which the youth had access,
and thus the strength of correlation between youth volunteerism and adult political
engagement. In my investigation of another demographic subgroup, I found that these
LGBTQIQ youth were engaged in the type of experiences that were predictors of later
political participation in other research.

Nature of teaching and learning at FLAME. Several youth linked public
speaking experiences, letter writing projects, and lobbying at the state capitol, which they
had as members of the YAC, to their broader understanding of civic participation. These
are similar findings to those of Youniss and Yates (1997) in their study that explored the
connection between adolescent community service and trajectories of engaged citizenship
in adulthood. Because the YAC members indicated that they would continue to engage
themselves civically based on what they had done within and outside the walls of
FLAME, I posit that the nature of much of the teaching and learning at FLAME was
participatory and that the lessons learned may be long lasting. Importantly, the negative
lesson that emerged both in the way the adults dealt with the YAC members regarding
the financial problems, and the way the YAC president suspended officer elections may
also be long lasting. Further research with these or other youth should be conducted to
collect longitudinal data about whether the youth remain engaged, or disengaged, in these
ways.

The Board intended to ground civic preparation "in everything we do," as the
board president Suzie communicated. Additionally, her description of the "civic peer

pressure" that exists at the center – and my subsequent observation of that phenomenon – supports the Zaff, Malanchuck, Michelsen, and Eccles (2003) study in which the researchers found that peer interactions influence the level of civic participation. The safe space that was created by FLAME's welcoming and affirming environment can be used as a model for other community centers and for schools. Also, the YAC members and the adults at FLAME could be educated to understand the danger of suspending democratic processes in times of stress, as that may be an invaluable civic lesson for everyone at FLAME. As leaders or participants in democratic ventures (be they explicitly "political," employment and or volunteer situations, interpersonal and familial relationships, or other), safeguarding against this threat may result in democratic sustainability or a move toward tyranny. It is difficult to develop democratic skills, knowledge, and attitudes in arenas that are themselves anti-democratic. The exclusion that many LGBTQIQ youth face in schools make schools anti-democratic by definition, so educators can learn from the environment at FLAME to improve both formal and informal civic education endeavors.

The youths' negative experiences with the adults on the Board of Directors seemed to both limit and enable their growth, though for different individuals, the balance was different. That the conflict with the Board of Directors was one factor in Strawberry's decision not to stay an active member is an example of negative experiences leading to disengagement. The majority of the youth on the YAC, however, remained engaged. They organized around the disillusionment they experienced and successfully made their voice heard: the Board of Directors agreed to engage in more open dialogue with the YAC as a whole. This was best illustrated by the appointed YAC secretary's

empowering "pep talk" that the YAC would continue to exist and continue to hold a central role in FLAME's success.

Although Strawberry stopped attending YAC meetings, he pursued other avenues for civic engagement. He talked with excitement about serving as a page at the state House of Representatives. The enthusiasm with which he recalled his time there supports Bixby's (2008) study, which investigated the Mikva program for urban youth in Chicago. In both instances, the youth began to see themselves as civic actors as a result of authentically engaging in state elected officials' offices.

Political attitudes: Political interest, trust, and efficacy. Measuring adolescent attitudes has come in and out of vogue within the fields of educational psychology, political science, and sociology over the past half century (Richardson, 1996). I measured three political attitudes in this study – political interest, trust, and efficacy – to evaluate the meaning making for individual youth I situated at the center of the Octagon Model.

Similar to the youth participants in Borden and Serido's (2009) study about youth participation at a community center, some of the youth in this study described their increased participation within FLAME over time, and their internalization of some of the civic lessons learned at FLAME to issues and events outside of FLAME. The youths' lack of civic action taken during the financial crisis, however, suggests that there is more work to be done.

YAC member Strawberry's distance from the YAC due to the disorganization over a struggle for power indicate that there was not always an open climate within which different opinions were honored at FLAME. This supports Harwood's (1991), Hahn's

(1998), Dilworth's (2000), and Kahne and Middaugh's (2008) studies about the extent to which openness correlates with political trust and efficacy, and Ehman's (1980) finding that a negative climate can lead to negative attitudes.

Youth and schools. One of the salient emergent findings was the collection of youth insights about what teachers and other educators can do to potentially help create safer environments for LGBTQIQ youth in classrooms and schools. The youths' vivid descriptions of their own experiences in high school supported the findings of many of the researchers whose studies I included in the literature review. According to my participants, the schools that the youth attended were characterized by hostile environments (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009; Kosciw, et al., 2010), there was no mention of LGBTQIQ issues or history in the formal curriculum (Schmidt, 2010), and bullying based on sexual orientation and gender presentation was common (Birkett & Espelage, 2009; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008, Grossman, et al., 2009; Kim, 2009). As with the study that Fetner and Kush (2007) conducted, the students who attended schools with GSAs talked about the increased feeling of safety the GSA afforded them.

Human Rights: A Viable Anchor for Institutionalized Respect?

Previous researchers have considered whether concern for others should be viewed as an element of citizenship (Avery, 2002; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, Flanagan, 2010). The finding that most of the youth participants articulated "respect" as both a citizen's right and duty stood out for two main reasons. First, the participants' position ran counter to Avery's (2002) assertion that "although most adolescents (and adults) are

quick to assert their rights, particularly the right to freedom of expression, they typically show much less understanding of how those rights are accorded to everyone" (p. 193).

Second, the FLAME youths' belief that respect was central to citizenship was unlike the other rights and duties mentioned, in that their call for respect was an act of imagination, not memorization and recitation. Whereas the youth drew on their civic knowledge (Bill of Rights and citizens' responsibilities) to talk about the majority of their rights and duties, they may not have learned about respect as a right or duty in the same way, as it is not stated in the U.S. Constitution, which is the basis for much formal civic education in the United States. Rather, most elementary and secondary teachers exhort students to respect the teacher and each other in the context of classroom rules, such as requiring students to raise their hands and disallowing students to shout out.

However, the respect about which the youth in this study talked is the central-most foundational tenet of human rights documents. Thus, the youth may benefit from learning about international human rights documents. As they use the documents that support their imaginative visions of respect, they might learn that some of their dreams already exist at the level of international aspirations. Because researchers have noted that international human rights are missing from the official social studies curriculum in the United States, perhaps FLAME and other community centers could begin teaching youth about these vital concepts and documents to compensate for what youth are not learning in school.

Citizenship Understandings as Status, Practice, and Feeling

Osler and Starkey's (2005) model, described in the Statement of the Problem, of citizenship as status, practice, and feeling, is a useful tool in understanding the findings in this study. That the youth could simultaneously express their ties to world citizenship, discuss their rights and duties to the nation, and portray their engagement within the local community, supports Osler and Starkey's ideas about these three dimensions of citizenship.

Specifically, the youth connected the status dimension of citizenship – which Osler and Starkey define as "the relationship of the individual to the state" – with their rights and duties within the state. All of the youth were aware of their legal status as citizens of the United States.

The youth demonstrated their political engagement primarily through the dimension that Osler and Starkey refer to as citizenship as practice. The consciousness that they were members of a political and social community, and their decision to engage with that community exemplifies that the youth understood their citizenship as practice, and that for most of them, that practice occurred within their local LGBTQIQ communities. The youth who referred to the importance of human rights – both in the way they were treated and the way that they chose to treat other people – may also have been connecting their understandings of citizenship as practice to their global citizenship. Likewise, Hannah's mention of her dedication to recycling was an example of her understanding of citizenship as practice existing at the global level.

Citizenship as feeling, perhaps the dimension of Osler and Starkey's framework that is least quantifiable, also emerged as an element of the youths' citizenship

understanding. When they talked about themselves as citizens of the world, they were not describing a legal status. Instead, as described above, they talked about their connection to the world in terms of practice, and they also talked about the way they "felt." By drawing on their own experiences of oppression – as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth – several of the participants talked about their feelings of connection to other oppressed people in the world. One youth wished away the reality of his citizenship status (as a dual-citizen of Germany and the United States), in favor of his desire for world citizenship, pointing out that world relations and international travel would improve as a result of world citizenship.

These examples of citizenship understandings help to illustrate Osler and Starkey's (2005) model, and thus the current study supports a key assertion: understandings of citizenship are complex, multilayered, and dynamic and may conjure different associations when conceptualized differently (Osler & Starkey, 2005). Further, the youths' ability to express multiple dimensions simultaneously supports the claim that youth understandings are multiple and overlapping.

Political Socialization Theory

I utilized the Octagon Model of political socialization and civic education by theoretically situating each queer youth at the center, and considering the multiple agents of socialization from which they were constructing their understandings of citizenship and political engagement. Indeed, each microsystem agent in the model – school, peer group, family, formal community, and informal community – emerged as an opportunity for civic agency for the youth in this study. The public discourse about goals and values

in the model was also a salient part of these LGBTQIQ youths' civic identity

construction. Finally, the eight elements of the macrosystem also served as helpful

categories to organize the youths' civic experiences.

Proponents of situated cognition theory argue that the best learning occurs when

people enact what they are trying to learn in an authentic context, and that mentors play

an important role in scaffolding learners' experiences. In these cases, learners often

"acquire habits and identities when they become meaningfully involved in a community

of practice" regarding public issues (McIntosh & Youniss, 2010, p. 30). The people at

FLAME clearly demonstrated these elements of learning deemed essential to the Octagon

Model theory and similar theories of development.

Although the Octagon Model served as a helpful model to analyze and organize

the data for this study, I found that there is an implied assumption of struggle in the

macrosystem element related to gender, ethnicity, language group, and immigrant status.

Additionally, this finite and seemingly arbitrary list of four identity elements falls short of

providing guidance for other identity markers.

The assumption of struggle is indicated by the words that the model creators used

in the description of this particular part of the outer octagon: "Socio-economic

Stratification and Opportunity Structure by…" and then a list of the four aforementioned

identity markers. I remain puzzled about the creators' justification for contextualizing

any discussion that arises from the data regarding gender, ethnicity, language group, or

immigrant status in this decidedly different way from each of the other seven elements of

the macrosystem. That is, religious, educational, and political values and institutions are

not explicitly considered in terms of the way they fit into a pre-defined structure of

stratification and opportunity. I found that this limited my analysis in some ways, in that there were instances when participants talked about these (and other) identity markers, in a manner that did not necessarily connect to the structure of power. I posit that the elements of the macrosystem should be parallel, and consideration of the power structure for all elements may yield findings that are inherently more political than if the power structure were not considered.

Electoral Politics vs. Social Justice Activism

Isabella's distinction between the work she did on behalf of Obama's presidential campaign, and her "true" passion – social justice activism – was an interesting finding in light of current concerns about adolescent civic engagement. This echoes findings from Phases I and II of the IEA Study, in which Torney-Purta and her colleagues (1999, 2001) found that internationally, youth are more likely to support social movement forms of political engagement (e.g. attending rallies, participating in non-violent change) than conventional forms of political engagement (e.g. joining a political party, running for political office). The scholars who conducted the study created one scale to measure the youths' conceptions of conventional political engagement, and a separate scale to measure their conceptions of social movement related political engagement. Likewise, the researchers measured the ways in which the youth expected they would engage in politics in the future using two scales: one for conventional political engagement and one for social movement political engagement. In both instances, youth from the United States scored above the international mean.

Isabella's experiences, therefore, supported findings from the IEA study. That is, as a young person living in the United States, she had participated in both conventional political activities and social movement related political activities, as other youth from the United States indicated in the study. Her inclination toward participating in social movement related political activities to a greater extent than conventional participation reaffirmed the international findings.

Another finding related to electoral politics was the general consensus within the Roots discussion forum that "Republicans hate gay people" (youth in Roots forum, February 8, 2010). The comment, which was met with quiet nods of agreement from other members of the Roots forum, illustrates a potential missed opportunity for civic education. That is, had someone brought up the Log Cabin Republicans, the youth may have developed a more nuanced understanding of the Republican party. Specifically, the youths' generalization may have been challenged upon learning that there are people who are proud, gay, and Republican simultaneously. According to that organization's website, the Log Cabin Republicans are gay and lesbian Americans who aim to promote the core Republican values of personal responsibility, free market capitalism, limited government, and strong national defense, while working from within to build a stronger and more diverse party (Log Cabin Republicans, 2011).

Institutional Erasure upon Achieving "Equality"

When the FLAME Board president, Suzie, explained that the members of the Board would like to "put itself out of business," she conveyed a particular social and political message of note. Specifically, she implied that FLAME as an institution existed

because of the many challenges that people who identify as LGBTQI or Q face, and that she would like to see the day when those obstacles no longer exist. Though her desire is both altruistic and understandable, that position raises the question of the usefulness of institutions once "equality" is achieved. Are ethnic studies programs, for example, still necessary considering the vast strides that have been made since their inceptions in the 1960s and 1970s? How is equality measured? Who measures it? Further, on the condition that equality is achieved for people and groups who are marginalized due to their sexuality or gender, should institutions that once served as resources disappear? Might it be more beneficial for their mission statements to change, but for the institution to remain? Finally, was Suzie's assertion literal, or was she just trying to convey an idealistic dream?

Effective action in the political sphere involves positioning oneself publicly in relation to one's political, social, and economic interests. The *public* element of political action ensures interaction with people who have similar and opposing interests (McIntosh & Youniss, 2010). One role of FLAME and like institutions today is their utility as public meeting places for members of the LGBTQIQ community to form alliances, share resources, and devise strategies to fight for LGBTQIQ equality, as McIntosh and Youniss (2010) argue is vital. I argue that if "equality" were ever to be achieved, FLAME and similar institutions would continue to serve the public in critical ways. Most notably, the primary role of these institutions may be for individuals within an affinity group to recognize and work through the vast diversity that exists inside communities; LGBTQIQ and other marginalized communities are not monolithic.

The functions of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) have changed since their inception in 1909 and 1957, respectively. In a similar way, FLAME – and like organizations that are formed to address problems in the public spaces – may adapt over time to changing political circumstances, continually providing opportunities for civic engagement. This trajectory for an institution in the public space exemplifies the idea of democracy as a path, instead of a static destination, as suggested by Parker (2003) as a critical force within healthy democracies.

Contemporary Reflections of Historical Ideals: Little Publics in Civil Society

Previous theory and research about education in a democratic society indicates that civic identities are multiple and overlapping (Banks, 2004; Kymlicka, 2004; Ong, 2004), and that education that blends "efficacious democratic praxis and vigorous public engagement" (Dewey, in Asen, 2003, p. 174) is the cornerstone of a strong democracy. In conducting this study at FLAME, I found that the youth thought of themselves as citizens of the local, national, and global LGBTQIQ communities, the state where this study took place, the United States, and the world. Although none of the youth or adults in the study cited FLAME as an entity of which they were citizens, their experiences as participants in this face-to-face community may have enabled them to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to citizenship that may be useful to them in their other civic-political encounters.

In addition to their schools, clubs, team, religious and ethnic groups, and LGBTQIQ communities, the members of the YAC existed within FLAME as one of the

many little publics of which they were a part. The concept of "little publics" can best be understood in the context of civil society, which I defined for this study as "the whole range of civic action independent of formal political institutions" (Bahmueller, 1997, p. 13). This is another crucial democratic societal concept that helps to situate my findings at FLAME.

Suspended Democracy in Troubled Times

The financial stress that characterized FLAME during the data collection phase of this study may have contributed to the strained democratic processes I witnessed. When Lawrence decided to suspend YAC elections, citing the financial turmoil as justification, he enacted a practice that periodically challenges democracies. That is, he chose consistency – for the sake of stability – rather than previously agreed upon democratic processes. To what extent did Lawrence learn this behavior by virtue of being a young citizen of the United States? Had he learned in social studies classes of the Alien and Sedition Acts, of Japanese internment during WWII, of McCarthyism, or of the Patriot Act? These were several instances in U.S. history when democratic processes were suspended or obliterated (Etzioni, 2004; Hayashi, 2004; Schmidt, 2000). Also, if Lawrence and his peers had been taught about these instances, how and what elements had they learned? Had the YAC participants had opportunities to weigh the conflicting values of liberty and security as they developed their own value positions toward enduring issues? From what perspectives had their teachers drawn?

The historical content of the aforementioned instances of suspended democracy is less important than students' potential experiences of analyzing multiple values and

developing their own positions. That is, if the youth had experienced an issue-centered curriculum or had the opportunity to engage in structured conversations about controversial issues, they might have had the tools to maintain democratic processes despite the economic strain (Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999; Hess, 2009). Further, if the adults at the center had used the suspended election as a teachable moment, they might have given the youth necessary tools to help them maintain democratic processes even during difficult times.

As a volunteer at FLAME for several years before conducting this study, I had witnessed the rhetoric about youth involvement in institutional decisions to be accurate, when institutional finances were stable. The adults' decision to exclude the youth from helping to solve the financial problem - no matter how altruistic - became a negative civic lesson for the YAC members who wanted to help FLAME remain open.

Sustaining Political Efficacy in the Face of Power

Scholars agree that political efficacy can be conceived of in two distinct yet related ways (Bandura, 1997; Beaumont, 2010; Hahn, 1998). The first can be thought of as personal or internal efficacy, which refers to citizens' belief that they can understand how the government works, are confident expressing their views, and have a voice in government through voting. The second category, external political efficacy, considers the extent to which citizens believe they can influence elected officials' decisions. Four decades ago, Ehman (1970) argued, "Political efficacy refers only partly to the political system (the system does not listen to people like me), while another component is personally oriented (I am powerful – I can affect the system)" (p. 83). This distinction

might help explain the unpredictable nature of efficacy in the face of negative lessons, and again demonstrates the usefulness of the Octagon Model.

Strawberry's decision to stop attending YAC meetings was predicated upon the undemocratic processes he witnessed as a member. However, another agent of socialization within the Octagon Model's microsystem is "Formal Community," which includes "Political Leaders" and a "Climate of Optimism" as components. Strawberry recalled his experience volunteering as a page in the State House of Representatives enthusiastically; he indicated that he learned a lot and would like to return. Whereas he faced undemocratic power structures from one agent of change within the microsystem ("Informal Community: Youth Centers; Work Places"), his efficacy may have been buoyed by his successful experiences from another agent of change. Likewise, Strawberry and other youth may be differently affected by family, peers, and school; the other agents of change within the microsystem.

Developing and sustaining political efficacy in the face of power is challenging. In the 1969 Stonewall Riots, for example, when the police targeted a gay bar in Greenwich Village, the patrons fought back. "Stonewall," as the incident has come to be known after the name of the bar where the incident took place, is the widely agreed upon start of the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement in the United States, and thus adequately shows the relationship between negative civic lessons and increased efficacy in society. In general, high political efficacy combined with moderately low trust may lead to increased motivation to make political change, as was also demonstrated by the actions of Black youth during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s through the 1970s (Beaumont, 2010).

Social studies teachers could help youth in schools identify local issues about which the youth feel passionate, and teach them the participatory civic skills necessary to make social change. Likewise, youth in community centers can be guided through direct action that may lead to social change. Schools and youth programs in out-of-school contexts that aim to develop civically and politically engaged citizens for the future need to create and sustain climates that foster such efficacy and agency.

Limitations

Because this study is an ethnographic case study in one place at one point in time, the results are not generalizable. However, I attempted to address this by purposefully selecting a non-profit organization that may be like others in different communities so that readers might gain insights to civic and political learning in other sites. Additionally, the participants may have given me answers they thought I sought or that they thought were socially acceptable. I addressed this limitation by making numerous observations and getting to know the participants over the course of a year.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

I suggest several paths for future research and practice, based on this study's findings. First, a replication or extension is needed, to ascertain teaching and learning at times when FLAME is not under financial stress. More research is needed in youth centers that serve similar populations in different geographic regions. Because specific civic and political experiences are largely dependant on the region in which individuals are located, similar studies in different U.S. and global regions would yield helpful

information. Additionally, studies conducted in suburban and rural communities might help researchers and educators better understand the shared and unique experiences of LGBTQIQ youth, a broader conception of citizenship, and more effective ways to educate for participatory democratic citizenship.

Second, longitudinal studies of political socialization and citizenship education are necessary to explore how specific experiences lend themselves to future democratic engagement. Third, research is needed on the current status of teacher education programs regarding the ways in which pre-service teachers are being trained to work with LGBTQIQ students and LGBTQIQ issues. Additionally, studies should be conducted on in-service opportunities available to current teachers for increased competence with issues that face LGBTQIQ students in schools.

Finally, there is a need for studies about political socialization and citizenship education in public schools; specifically within GSAs and classrooms that intentionally broaden the official social studies curriculum to include issues of LGBTQIQ students and citizens. As this study illustrates, a safe and affirming environment makes possible positive civic experiences for LGBTQIQ youth. Can these experiences occur in environments that are not safe or affirming? More importantly, can public schools become safe and affirming places for all youth? Can the level of community engagement at FLAME serve as a model for social studies curriculum development? These are some of the questions that remain for future researchers and practitioners to explore.

If future researchers obtain findings similar to mine, our collective findings will yield crucial implications for practice. First, teacher education program curricula will need to be expanded to include LGBTQIQ issues, for pre-service teachers to learn about

both curricular and humanistic concerns as they exist in school today, and the work necessary to improve. Additionally, professional development opportunities for in-service classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators should be developed and made available, which focus on LGBTQIQ history, activism, and contemporary struggles and successes.

Also, educational scholars, practitioners, families, and youth should work together to systematically analyze the official, intended, implemented, received, and hidden curricula across the subjects. Consider, for example, the omission of racial injustice in social studies textbooks until the late 20th century, along with contemporary understanding about the importance of this topic. Issues of gender and sexual oppression, though currently unrecognized in the formal curriculum, leave a similarly glaring hole.

The dialectic curricula analysis should consider the extent to which any of the curriculum should remain as it is today, or if a complete overhaul would be more beneficial for educating youth in U.S. schools. Those groups who find that there are beneficial components of the contemporary curricula should then assess how it might be widened and deepened to incorporate LGBTQIQ issues. If schools were welcoming and affirming of gender and sexual diversity, and if there was effective school, district, state, and national legislation that protected LGBTQIQ youth, then perhaps these youth would stay in school instead of dropping out at such high rates, relative to non-LGBTQIQ youth. Further, if the youth stayed in schools characterized by higher-quality civic curricula, they would likely have more opportunities to develop their civic empowerment from adolescence through adulthood.

Most expansively, and undoubtedly most importantly, straight and LGBTQIQ youth – all youth – need to learn in an atmosphere that is designed and maintained upon the foundational principles of human dignity and worth. This emphasis may yield the knowledge, skills, and dispositions about and toward human diversity that are vital for inclusive democratic processes in the society as a whole. This work is a necessary element of any school program that seeks social justice and educational equality; a systematic change in school climate that would resist the multiple stresses on LGBTQIQ youth as they exist in contemporary society.

The climate and curriculum in U.S. schools and out-of-school learning spaces must be inclusive and safe. More than that, U.S. schools should be places where youth and adults engage in understanding what it means to be a participatory citizen in the 21st century. The current national climate for LGBTQIQ youth is dire, and society is being robbed of talented youth as a result of suicides and hate crimes. Educators must create opportunities for all youth to experience civic engagement for empowerment – the vibrancy of the U.S. democracy depends on it.

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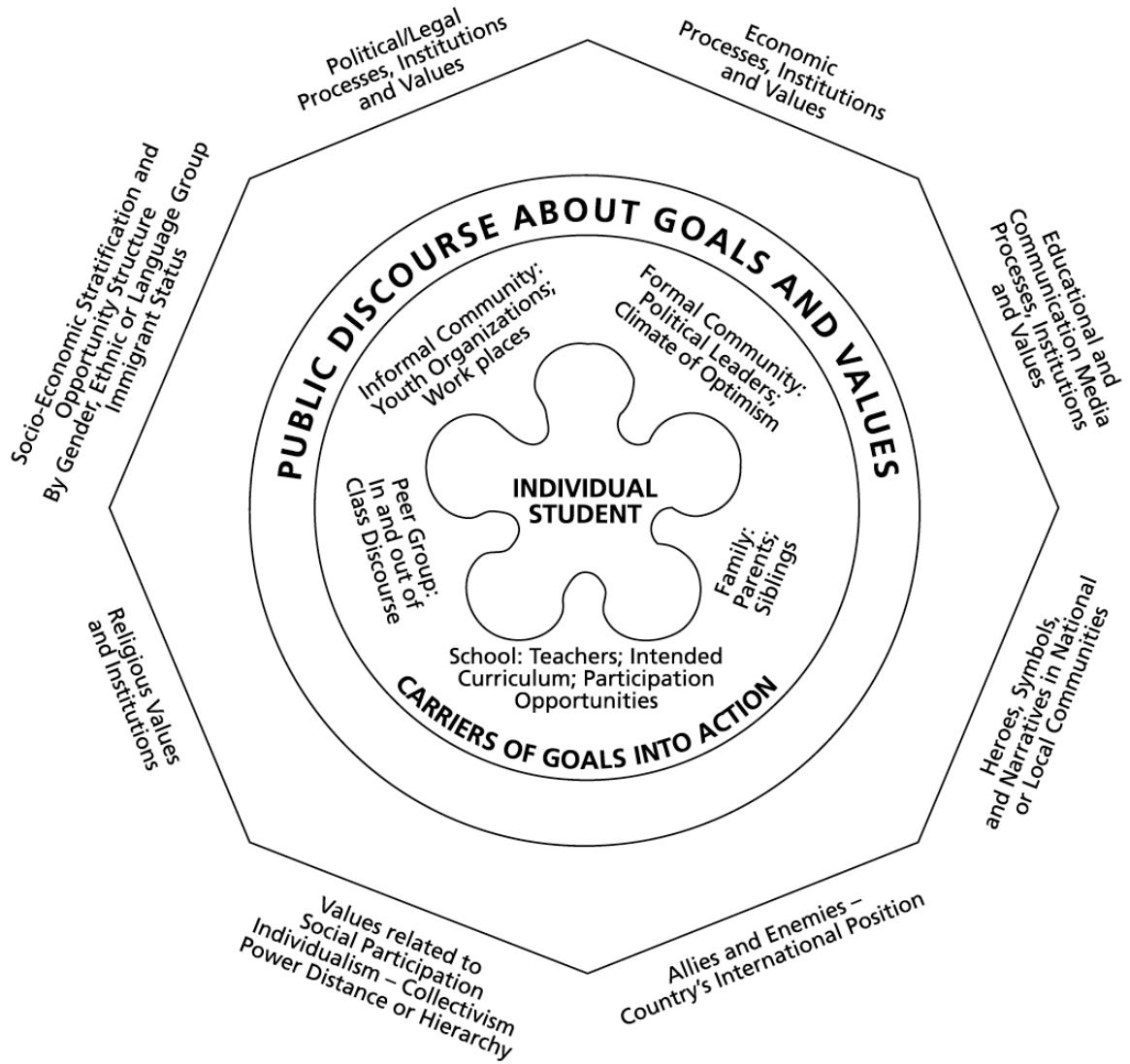Nussbaum, M. C. (2002). *For love of country?* Boston: Beacon Press.

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Appendix A – IEA Octagon Model

PUBLIC DISCOURSE ABOUT GOALS AND VALUES

Informal Community: Youth Organizations; Work places

Formal Community: Political Leaders; Climate of Optimism

Peer Group: In and out of Class Discourse

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

Family: Parents; Siblings

School: Teachers; Intended Curriculum; Participation Opportunities

CARRIERS OF GOALS INTO ACTION

Political/Legal Processes, Institutions and Values

Economic Processes, Institutions and Values

Socio-Economic Stratification and Opportunity Structure By Gender, Ethnic or Language Group Immigrant Status

Educational and Communication Media Processes, Institutions and Values

Religious Values and Institutions

Heroes, Symbols, and Narratives in National or Local Communities

Values related to Social Participation Individualism – Collectivism Power Distance or Hierarchy

Allies and Enemies – Country's International Position

(Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999)

Appendix B – Interview Protocols

<u>YAC Member Interview</u>

1. Have you taken a civics course in high school? If so, please describe it.

2. Do you think of yourself as a citizen (intentionally left open-ended)? Of what entity/ies?

3. What events or experiences make you feel like a citizen? What ideas or characteristics make you feel like a citizen?

4. When people say they are "citizens" of a nation, what do you think they mean? That is, what makes someone a citizen of a nation?

5. It is often said that citizens have certain rights. What do you think these rights are? Do they apply to you? Why or why not?

6. It is often said that citizens have certain duties. What do you think these duties are? Do they apply to you? Why or why not?

7. Why do you come to FLAME?

8. How did you get involved in the YAC?

9. What have you learned from being a part of the YAC?

10. Are there elements of society that you would like to change? If so, how might you go about doing so?

11. What have you been taught directly, if anything, about citizenship and civic participation from your time at FLAME?

12. What have you learned indirectly, if anything, about citizenship and civic participation from your time at FLAME?

13. Are you interested in political issues? If so, what/which issues? Why?

14. Do you think you and people like you and your family can influence political leaders and/or the political process?

15. Do you trust politicians? Do you think political leaders are honest, and work hard for the good of everyone?

FLAME – Volunteer Interview

1. Where were you born? Where did you live and go to school as a child and adolescent?

2. Did you participate in an after school program at a community center or other out-of-school context? If so, please describe your experience there.

3. How did you get involved with FLAME?

4. What are your responsibilities?

5. Are there specific citizenship education efforts at FLAME? If so, how are these coordinated?

6. What are the elements, if any, of society that you would like to be different?

7. In what ways, if any, do you think FLAME is a place for direct citizenship education?

8. What do you think the youth at FLAME learn – directly or indirectly – about becoming engaged citizens?

FLAME Executive Director Interview

1. Where were you born? Where did you live and go to school as a child and adolescent?

2. Did you participate in an after school program at a community center or other out-of-school context? If so, please describe your experience there.

9. For what reason did you become the executive director of a non-profit organization with a mission to help empower LGBT youth?

10. What are some particular challenges about working at FLAME? What are some particular benefits about working at FLAME?

11. With what sexual orientation do you identify? Do you find that your sexual orientation identity has influenced your work at FLAME? If so, how?

12. Are there particular issues/concerns/strategies that emerge from your work at FLAME that are distinct from those that might arise if you worked at a community center with predominantly heterosexual youth? If so, how would you describe those?

13. Do you think that changes should be made to society in general? If so, what changes?

14. Do you consider FLAME as a place to educate students to work toward those changes?

15. What is your notion of a good citizen? Does this include particular rights and/or duties?

16. How did you construct your idea of a good citizen (probe for different agents of socialization and messages about citizen participation from the Octagon Model)?

17. Do you see your role as the Executive Director of FLAME inclusive of education for citizenship?

18. Do you think of citizenship education in the same way for queer and heterosexual youth? If not, in what ways is it different?

19. How would you describe the youth that are members of the Youth Advisory Committee? Do they have particular qualities that lend themselves to being a part of a youth governing body?

20. Part of the mission statement of FLAME asserts the space is one for LGBT youth empowerment. How do you think this is done here?

21. Are issues of international human rights talked about in the YAC or in other parts of FLAME? Are there discussions about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

22. What challenges do the FLAME youth face in society? What might be done in US society to lower these barriers?

23. Do your own beliefs about citizenship education influence the ways in which you understand and/or interact with youth at FLAME? If so, how?

24. Do your own beliefs about human rights education influence the ways in which you understand and/or interact with youth at FLAME? If so, how?

25. From where does FLAME receive the bulk of its funding? Do any of these funding sources direct the ways in which citizenship is discussed or taught at the center? If so, in what ways is the topic "citizenship" approached? If not, do you believe there is a place in FLAME for this?

26. Over the decade, there has been much grassroots and political debate over gay rights. Did these current events find their way into discussions at FLAME? If so, how was the issue addressed? If not, why not?

27. There are differing views of good citizenship education. While some people believe that citizenship education should socialize youth to U.S. history, customs and norms, others believe that citizenship education is an area to teach students how to be critical of the status quo and to work for improvement in society. What do you think? Is this an issue for YAC members, for schools, or for both? Please explain.

28. Have there been any ways in which youths' political interest, trust in political leaders, and beliefs about influencing political decisions have come up at the center? If so, how?

29. If you could change the available opportunities for youth participants in any way as relates to citizenship education, would you? If so how?

Appendix C – Participants

	Name	Age	Gender	Sexual orientation	Race/ethnicity
1.	Alex	20	Gender-queer	Pan-sexual	White
2.	Anthony	19	Man	Gay	White
3.	Autumn	20	Dual spirit/female pronouns	Lesbian ("kind of")	White
4.	Hannah	21	Transgender woman	"I like girls"	White
5.	Isabella	23	Woman	Lesbian	Latina
6.	Jane	18	Woman	Lesbian	White
7.	Kenneth	21	Man	Gay	Black
8.	Lawrence	22	Man	"Homosexual"	"Mulatto" – Black & White
9.	Seth	20	Man	Queer	White
10.	Strawberry	20	Man	Gay	Black
11.	Eli	Adult	Gender-queer	Queer	White
12.	Francis *	Adult	Man	Gay	Black
13.	Jenny	Adult	Woman	Bisexual	White
14.	Kevin	Adult	Man	Gay	Black
15.	Lani	Adult	Woman	Lesbian	Black
16.	London	Adult	Man	Gay	Black
17.	Mandy **	Adult	Woman	Lesbian	White
18.	Roberta	Adult	Woman	Gay	Black
19.	Suzie ***	Adult	Woman	Straight	White
20.	Victor	Adult	Transgender man	Queer	White

* Executive Director
** On-site Mental Health Coordinator
*** Board of Directors President

Welcome to:

███████████████████████████

This forum is for youth of color who are ages 16 to 24.

Know the **ROPES**:

Respect- for yourself, fellow members, and facilitators.
   Turn off your cell phone.
   Please come on time and stay for the entire forum.
Openness- to honor new ideas and everyone's opinion.
   Honor diversity.
Participation- to be part of the forum, whether activity or quietly.
   You have the choice to participate or pass.
Escuchar- which is Spanish for "to listen"
   Only talk one at a time please.
   Refrain from side conversations out of respect for the
   person speaking.
Safe Zone- for all members and facilitators.
   Do not attend forum under the influence.
   Everything talked about will remain confidential.
   It's up to you to keep our "safe zone" safe.

Also, don't forget about **"ouch"** and **"snaps"**…
"Ouch"- If you are offended or bothered by comments made by other members of the forum say "OUCH". We will allow that person to complete their statement. Once completed, the offended member can respond.
"Snaps"- If you agree with something a member is saying support them by snapping your fingers. Refrain from verbally agreeing with them as not to interrupt them.

I will be the facilitator today:
As the facilitator my role will be to ensure that the ROPES are followed. I will be mindful of time and ensure that everyone has a chance to talk. I may remind you of the ROPES throughout the forum. I may cut you off or ask you to refrain from side conversation at times. I am here today because I choose to be and I care about your well-being.