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Latina/o Youth Cultural Citizenship: Re-Conceptualizing Dominant Constructions of Citizenship through Membership, Sense of Belonging, Claiming Space and Rights

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LATINA/O YOUTH CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP: RE-CONCEPTUALIZING DOMINANT CONSTRUCTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP THROUGH MEMBERSHIP, SENSE OF BELONGING, CLAIMING SPACE AND RIGHTS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

PSYCHOLOGY

with an emphasis in LATIN AMERICAN & LATINO STUDIES

by

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September 2015

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ABSTRACT

LATINA/O YOUTH CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP:
RE-CONCEPTUALIZING DOMINANT CONSTRUCTIONS OF
CITIZENSHIP THROUGH MEMBERSHIP, SENSE OF BELONGING,
CLAIMING SPACE AND RIGHTS

by

JESICA SIHAM FERNANDEZ

This dissertation is an ethnography of Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship. The goal of this research is to center the voices and lived experiences of Latina/o youth in the conceptualizing and theorizing of citizenship and rights, specifically cultural citizenship. Drawing on data from a school-based youth participatory action research (YPAR) program, with fourth and fifth grade Latina/o youth, this ethnographic case study addresses two interrelated questions. First, how do Latina/o youth define the terms citizen and citizenship? Second, how do Latina/o youth reflect on and enact their cultural citizenship? Data for this research include ethnographic fieldnotes, and semi-structured one on one interviews with youth conducted at two separate time points. The results highlight the voices and experiences of thirteen Latina/o youth, from first and second-generation im/migrant families from Latin America. Specifically, Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship in relation to four processes: membership via positionality and social identities; sense of belonging through meaningful participation and intergenerational friendships; claiming space in the process of de-ideologizing and decolonizing settings; and demanding rights beyond individual self-determination. This research sets the foundation for an intersectional critical approach toward the study of Latina/o youth’s political subjectivities.
DEDICATION

Con amor para mis padres, Rogelio y Yolanda Fernández, mis hermanos,
Rogelio y Saúl, y mi esposo, Hossein Talebi.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*May we do work that matters. Vale la pena.* - Gloria E. Anzaldúa

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development, and for furthering my interests in civic engagement, citizenship and Third World Feminisms. Also thanks to Donna Baldini, Paul Sosbee, Allison Land, Heather Henderson, Sydney Winter, and Grace Parker-Guerrero for your smiles, compliments, resourcefulness, and for keeping it real.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the United States, citizenship, like race, gender, social class status, and other social categories, has been used as a marker of status that affords people certain rights and privileges (Isin & Wood, 1999; Lister, 2007). Conventional meanings of citizenship become institutionalized practices that are then learned and reinforced through a process of socialization, which ultimately serves to categorize and label people apart from one another (e.g., citizens, non-citizens, citizens in the making, good citizens and bad citizens). Hence, notions of citizen and citizenship become especially salient for those whose status is questionable by virtue of their race, gender, social class, and other social statuses (Young, 1989).

In the United States, Latinas/os have been disenfranchised by nativist and racialized ideologies that stem from a history of colonization, segregation and assimilation (García Bedolla, 2009; De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003; Donato, 1997; Oboler, 2006; MacDonald, 2004; Pizarro, 2005; Rocco, 2004). For example, during the annexation of the southwest as a result of the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, post the Mexican-American War that ended in 1848, many Mexican people were displaced to Mexican territory. Historical accounts of racism and displacement of Mexican-heritage people in the U.S. have positioned them as perpetual foreigners (De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003; MacDonald, 2004). During this era, the few Mexicans who were granted U.S. citizenship were those who owned land or property, and were of a lighter skin color.
The disenfranchisement of Mexican-heritage people is not solely historical. Over time U.S. policies and discourses have subjugated the broader Latino communities, specifically those whose phenotypic characteristics are not white, to second-class citizenship. The disempowering narratives that political institutions and mass media have produced and reified about Latino communities have positioned their voices and experiences at the margins of mainstream citizenship discourses. Sociopolitical citizenship practices, characterized by membership, belonging and participation do not constitute part of the dominant social constructions of citizenship in the U.S.; however, people at the margins of citizenship are engaging in relational and community-oriented ways (Oboler, 2006; Rocco, 2004, 2014).

Latinas/os racialized experiences are also embedded in intersectional identities, such as age. Given that the average age of Latinas/os who reside in the U.S. tend to be younger from the average age of whites – with many Latinas/os being children – sociocultural constructions of childhood and citizenship position Latina/o youth as “citizens in the making” and “citizens of the future” (Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Lister, 2003). Consistent with dominant social constructions of citizenship for Latina/o adults, young people must also to learn to perform the social conventions of a “good citizen,” which is most often constructed as someone who is hardworking, law-abiding, compliant to the status quo, and loyal to the nation-state (Carr, 2008; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Marshall, 1950; Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Sociocultural constructions of childhood, which position children as powerless and passive receivers of knowledge, are problematic because young people
are change agents in their communities (Langhout & Thomas, 2010). Excluding the voice and participation of children in the construction of citizenship is problematic, because part of what makes a well-functioning democratic society is its civically and sociopolitically engaged youth. Hegemonic discourses that reify disempowering views of young people are particularly prevalent in institutions, like public schools for example, that seek to socialize young people, especially Latinas/os and other youth of Color\(^1\), into becoming a critical conforming citizens who will work to sustain the status quo and structures of power.

The parallels of social and structural exclusion between Latinas/os and youth within broader contexts of social political life and its institutions requires that we look at how meanings of citizenship are continuously reshaped and challenged by politicized subjects. Also of importance is looking at how disenfranchised groups learn to challenge notions of citizenship, particularly those that are associated with legality, and how this process in turn shapes embodied practices of citizenship – especially cultural citizenship, which is characterized by membership, sense of belonging, claiming space, and rights (Rocco, 2014; Rosaldo, 1994, 1999).

**Research Questions**

\(^1\) In aligning my work with feminists scholars, like Hurtado (1996) and MacKinnon (1982), I choose to capitalize the word Color because it refers to “a heritage, an experience, a cultural and personal identity, the meaning of which becomes specifically stigmatic and/or glorious and/or ordinary under specific social conditions” (MacKinnon, 1982, pg. 516). In a U.S. context, Color is therefore understood to refer to people’s experiences and social positioning as distinct from whiteness and race-based privileges.
Cultural citizenship has contributed greatly to the theorizing and empirical documentation of Latinas/os enfranchisement in the U.S.; yet, to my knowledge, most of the literature has focused on the experiences of adults or college students. In those few studies that include children, their involvement is viewed in relation to adult’s roles and participation. Children’s experiences are not explicitly considered; instead they are made invisible. The invisibility and silence of children’s voices is consistent with dominant constructions of citizenship that are adult-centered, and therefore rooted in how we, as adults, position and interact with children.

In effect, questions of what is citizenship and who is a citizen must be examined from the perspective and experiences of children and young people who are often disenfranchised by social structures. Like the Latina/o and Chicana/o communities in the U.S., and other historically marginalized social groups, children’s citizenship must be studied, deconstructed, and re-conceptualized from the bottom-up and through the experiences of youth, who are the margins of dominant social constructions of citizenship. Given this claim, and the dearth of research on children’s citizenship, particularly from the perspective and experiences of children from disenfranchised communities, my dissertation is a qualitative ethnographic case study of Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship.

My dissertation argues for a reconceptualization of citizenship that includes the voices and experiences of Latina/o youth as cultural citizens, who are agents of change, not simple subjects of change. Latina/o youth are engaged in the deconstruction of citizenship by being active agents in the sociocultural and
sociopolitical activities of their families and communities. To support this claim, this dissertation explores the following research questions:

1) How do Latina/o youth define the terms *citizen* and *citizenship*?

2) How do Latina/o youth reflect on and enact their cultural citizenship?

Informed by a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that brings together historical and contemporary theories, as well as Latina’s/o’s contentious legitimization in the U.S., my dissertation unpacks social constructions of citizenship through a cultural citizenship lens. I then use this theoretical foundation on citizenship to examine the positionality of young people. In doing so, I set the foundation for a critical framework toward understanding children’s citizenship within and beyond the processes and practices associated with cultural citizenship, a phenomenon that emerged to describe the practices of resistance – of being seen, heard and belonging – in the U.S.

The following chapters contain the pieces to the puzzle that make this research invaluable to the disciplines of social and community psychology, childhood studies, citizenship studies, and Latina/o/Chicana/o studies. Chapter two threads a literature review that brings together historical and contemporary theories of citizenship. In weaving these juxtaposing social constructions of citizenship I make the case for cultural citizenship, which I view as a stepping stone to further discourses and frameworks on citizenship processes and practices beyond legal constructions of the term. In chapter two I also discuss children’s citizenship in relation to the sociocultural constructions and power structures that shape childhood, and position
children at the margins. I present some of the relevant literatures on children’s views on rights as a way to discuss the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) – which at the time of its formation did not include the voices of young people – and the need for a broader reconceptualization of citizenship that centers the voices of young people. Cultural citizenship is then discussed as a theoretical framework that can help inform Latina/o youth’s citizenship through a process of forging membership, a sense of belongingness, and claiming spaces, while making demands to rights in society.

Chapter three contains the history of the community and the Change 4 Good YPAR after-school program, as well as the demographics of the youth whose stories and experiences inform my analysis. I also describe my ethnographic approach and the interviews I conducted to further my observations. Lastly, I describe the data analysis process and the codebook that represents the themes discerned from the data.

Chapters four and five correspond to the results that address each research question. Chapter four discusses how children define the terms citizen and citizenship. Specifically it demonstrates how young people held conflicting and contradictory views of citizenship, yet also resisted legal constructions that equated citizenship with the possession of “papers” (e.g., legal documentation). In the process of defining the terms young people re-conceptualized what it means to be a citizen in the U.S. by referencing stories from their family and communities, and how citizenship holds meanings that are much deeper than legal permission to reside in this country.
Chapter five unpacks some of the processes and practices that characterize cultural citizenship. The chapter is broken down into four sections that outline cultural citizenship as a process where people forge membership and sense of belonging with a community, and make claims to space and rights. A large section of this chapter is also dedicated to unpacking children’s views on rights; specifically how children define rights and the types of rights they have and/or would like to have.

Chapter six, the final chapter of this dissertation, discusses some of the implications, limitations, and future directions of this research. For instance, some implications of this research are to challenge the hegemonic and deficit discourses of Latina/o youth, as well as dominant theories of citizenship, particularly children’s citizenship and rights, by demonstrating the complex ways in which Latina/o youth enact cultural citizenship.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Citizenship and the Case for Latina/o Youth Cultural Citizenship

Citizenship is a concept that extends beyond the individual, into the social and political dimensions of everyday life (Isin & Wood, 1999; Oboler, 2006; Rocco, 2014). As such, citizenship must be studied as a structure that shapes identities, relationships and practices in context. Yet, it is also necessary to recognize the performative qualities and markers of citizenship that constitute some people as citizens and others as second-class citizens (Deaux, 2008; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Lister, 1998). Thus, the legitimate forms of recognition that citizenship purports requires unpacking the processes through which citizenship is socially constructed.

In this chapter, I discuss the relevant bodies of literature that inform the central debates my dissertation engages and challenges. These debates include social constructions of citizenship – within the historical and sociopolitical context of Latino communities in the United States – and cultural citizenship as a bottom-up approach toward reconstructing citizenship. At the intersection of social constructions of citizenship and Latinas’/os’ sociopolitical context, is Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship. Thus, I take a critical intersectional approach toward the study of cultural citizenship, in order to make visible the experiences of Latina/o youth and their rights. The goal of this dissertation is to deepen the theorizing of cultural citizenship by centering Latina/o youth’s voices and lived experiences.

To achieve this goal, I begin the chapter by briefly discussing how citizenship is socially constructed in accordance with three political theories. These include
liberal, civic-republican and communitarian citizenship. Each theory conceptualizes citizenship in a different way, yet they all approach citizenship from two standpoints: citizenship as a status and a practice. As a status, citizenship is constructed as a label that defines who is (or is not) legally recognized by the nation-state as a member of the polity (Carens, 1987; Félix, 2013, 2014; Ngai, 2006, 2014). Citizenship as a practice, however, describes a person’s actions and the performative aspects of participation in the nation-state (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin, 2012). Voting, for example, is one of the most salient practices of citizenship in the West (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). Conceptualizing citizenship as a status and a practice, within liberal, civic-republican and communitarian models, demonstrates the complexity of defining citizenship in contemporary Western societies.

The nuances of defining citizenship become even more complex when considering the sociopolitical context of Latinas/os’ relationship to citizenship. Thus, in order to better demonstrate the characteristics and limitations of the three dominant citizenship constructions, I provide historical and contemporary examples of Latinas/os’ sociopolitical experiences. This approach is necessary because social constructions of citizenship for Latinas/os, specifically young people, who are the focus of this dissertation, cannot be explained without a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical context in which they – as members of a broader Latino cultural community – are embedded. This analysis requires a discussion of the sociopolitical context, including the historical factors, which have shaped Latinas/os’ relationship to citizenship. Together, the political foundations on social constructions of
citizenship and the sociopolitical context of Latinas/os in the United States, account for the emergence of Latina/o cultural citizenship, a theoretical framework I discuss and build on in this dissertation.

In the succeeding sections I then provide a thorough review of the emergence and qualities that characterize Latina/o cultural citizenship in the United States. Latina/o cultural citizenship is explicitly grounded in struggles against neoliberal-capitalist agendas (Rocco, 2006, 2014; Rosaldo, 1994, 1997) because it challenges the power of the nation-state in conferring and determining who is a state sanctioned member of society, as well as what constitutes legitimate forms of participation. Unless otherwise noted, I use cultural citizenship or Latina/o cultural citizenship interchangeably, as a framework and concept to describe the phenomena that emerged out of the Latina/o communities’ struggle for social and political enfranchisement, as well as rights, recognition and respect in the United States. Rooted in this conceptual clarity, I define cultural citizenship as a process through which people define themselves via shared membership in a social group, forge a community through a sense of belonging, and claim space and rights in society (Rosaldo, 1994).

Cultural citizenship therefore presents a bottom-up approach toward re-conceptualizing the status and practice of citizenship. Yet, lacking within contemporary constructions of citizenship, including cultural citizenship, is an explicit centering of Latina/o youth, a limitation I discuss and address in this dissertation. Problematizing and deconstructing dominant theories of citizenship, especially children’s citizenship and rights, requires understanding how Latina/o
youth embody, perform, reflect, and resist dominant sociocultural constructions of citizenship and childhood. This analysis of Latina/o youth’s citizenship can also deepen the theorizing of cultural citizenship. Charting the theoretical argument that Latina/o youth are cultural citizens necessitates unpacking how race, ethnicity, age, and other social statues operate to sustain the structures of power over Latina/o youth.

The central premise of my dissertation is to center the voices and lived experiences of Latina/o youth in the theorizing of cultural citizenship. I use the term “voice” to refer to the critical and unique ways through which young people, as a socially constructed group, describe, name, and articulate their diverse perspectives, attitudes, ideas, and opinions to represent themselves and their collective experiences as youth in society (Boudin, 2005; Kirshner, O’Donohue, &McLaughlin, 2005; Zeldin, 2005). To center Latina/o youth’s voice, my dissertation engages the following questions:

1) How do Latina/o youth define the terms citizen and citizenship?

2) How do Latina/o youth reflect on and enact their cultural citizenship?

These questions inform and provide evidence for my argument that Latina/o youth are cultural citizens, whose citizenship must be studied and understood within the context of the sociocultural, as well as sociopolitical, activities of their cultural communities. Additionally, I also posit that Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship is characterized by relational practices that involve building mutuality and communality with adults, or other power-holders. Cultural citizenship, I propose, constitutes the mundane everyday acts of resistance and struggle against social structures that deny Latina/o
youth the right to be seen, be heard and belong, and which renders their voice and lived experiences subordinate to adults.

**Social Constructions of Citizenship**

Citizenship in Western societies is a contested concept with a non-definitive meaning (Bosniak, 2008; Bloemraad, et al., 2008; Nyers, 2004); yet social constructions of citizenship are informed by three dominant political theories of citizenship: liberal, civic-republican, and communitarian. Each theory emerged out of the necessity to define and characterize citizenship, and people's relationship to the nation-state. Conceptualizations of citizenship, over time, have thus emphasized state control and sovereignty as the foremost markers of citizenship; however, the conceptual and theoretical meanings attached to citizenship continue to evolve with no consensus as to what constitutes citizenship and its performance (Isin & Wood, 1999; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Sindic, 2011).

The evolution of citizenship, in theory and in practice, holds implications for the rights some social groups are afforded, and for those others who are denied these rights. Drawing from an interdisciplinary body of literature in social and community psychology, legal studies, politics, history, sociology, and Latina/o and Chicana/o studies, in what follows I discuss social constructions of citizenship along three dominant political theories. The defining features, and critiques, of each theoretical model are discussed in order to demonstrate its strengths and limitations.

**Dominant Theories of Citizenship**
**Liberal Citizenship.** Emerging in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, liberalism is often viewed as one of most dominant theories of citizenship (Isin & Turner, 2002). Liberal citizenship is often described in accordance with Marshall’s theorizing of citizenship as the possession of social, political and civil rights (Marshall, 1950/1992). Accordingly, social rights refer to rights of security and welfare, whereas political and civil rights involve voting and engaging in freedom of speech, respectively. These three types of rights, under a liberal perspective, characterize the relationship between the individual and the nation-state as a transaction, where people are granted rights in accordance with their conformity to the state.

Consistent with Marshall’s conceptualizing of citizenship as rights, the liberal perspective presumes that all citizens are of equal standing. Liberal citizenship is characterized by a strong focus on rights, and the power of the nation-state in bestowing rights to individuals (Isin & Turner, 2002, 2007). This emphasis on individual rights presumes that the role of the state is to preserve the freedoms and liberties of the individual. Under the liberal model, a person is presumed to be a citizen upon being recognized and granted rights by the state. A set of predetermined civil rights, such as voting, are established to maintain the social order (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). The individual is therefore expected to exercise those rights that are in accordance with the nation-state.

The assumption that the nation-state will recognize and grant rights to its constituents has not been equally institutionalized for all people, however. One explanation for this stems from the history of racial discrimination, violence and
displacement of people based on social status, including those of Mexican descent. With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, for example, and an end to the Mexican American War of 1848, a significant amount of Mexican territory was annexed by the U.S. Although the treaty sought to end conflict and improve U.S.-Mexico relations, the occupation led to greater disenfranchisement of Mexican peoples. Because the majority of Mexicans in the annexed territories were mestizos – a mixture of European, Indigenous and African ancestry (Vasconcelos, 1966; García Bedolla, 1999; Molina, 2014) – many Mexicans did not look nor were considered white, and therefore not citizens of the nation-state (Molina, 2010). Mexican heritage people who were phenotypically darker and who did not own property, or land, were devoid of U.S. legal citizenship and rights (Acuña, 1988/2010; Molina, 2010, 2014).

The historical account of Mexican heritage people in the U.S. highlights a central critique of the liberal perspective. That is, liberal citizenship purports that all individuals can gain access to rights, and that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities to the nation-state equally. This is often not the case for individuals with marginalized social statuses, like Mexican heritage people or other historically disenfranchised communities, however. The assumption that liberal citizenship presents – all citizens are equal before the state and therefore in possession of undifferentiated rights – is falsely constructed to oppress and maintain social status inequalities (Isin & Wood, 1999; Isin, 2012; Marshall, 1950/1992). Historically, the liberal perspective has worked to protect the power of the nation-state and the privileges of white upper-middle class men (Bloemraad, et al., 2008; Lister, 1998).
Thus, liberal theories of citizenship have worked to sustain systems of power and oppression by the nation-state, whilst subverting the collective rights, freedoms and enfranchisement of members of oppressed groups, such as the working-poor, women, children, and people of Color (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Lister, 2003; Young 1989).

**Civic-republican Citizenship.** The limitations and critiques of liberal citizenship gave rise to civic-republican citizenship. A civic-republican approach to citizenship, unlike the liberal, emphasizes responsibilities and obligations to civil society. The civic-republican citizenship perspective prioritizes the participation of individuals in social, civic and political spheres. Examples often include individual’s participating in faith-based organizations, like churches, or labor unions, as well as serving in the military (Delanty, 2000; Isin & Wood, 1999). The emphasis on civic participation is to uphold ideologies of patriotism, nationalism and loyalty to the nation via service and engagement in the political communities that comprise the state.

Contrary to liberal citizenship, which emphasizes individual rights as bestowed by the state, civic-republican citizenship strives to minimize the power of the nation-state in determining who can access and exercise their rights. In other words, civic-republican citizenship presumes that rights are earned through engagement and commitment to civil society and active participation is enough to constitute someone as a citizen (Isin & wood, 1999; Isin & Nielsen, 2008). This emphasis on civic participation underscores the central premise of civic-
republicanism; that people should come together to establish a community of shared values and ideologies regardless of social status differences (Isin, 2008, 2012).

The communality that civic-republican citizenship purports is problematic however. Given that individuals from subordinated social groups with marginalized statuses, such as children and undocumented people for example, are positioned differently in relation to those with more power, it is naïve to assume that all people can participate and engage equally in civil society. The social structures and systemic factors that determine who is “allowed” to participate, and under what conditions, is tied to a civic-republican ideology that is more concerned with the pursuit of the “common good” rather than transformative socially just change. In fact, what is constructed as the “common good” is often determined by those in positions of power. As evidenced in an historical speech given by U.S. Senator John C. Calhoun: “To incorporate Mexico, would be the very first instance of the kind of incorporating an Indian race; for more than half of the Mexicans are Indians, and the other is composed chiefly of mixed tribes. I protest against such a union at that! Ours sir, is the Government of a white race. The greatest misfortunes of Spanish America are to be traced to the fatal error of placing these colored races on an equality with the white race.” (January, 4, 1848) (García Bedolla, 1999). Calhoun’s statement makes explicit the predominant ideology of the time, as well as an example of how the “common good” would be constructed in accordance with white supremacist values.

Thus, critics of civic-republican citizenship contend the theory is white and male-centered because it was devised by white men for the purpose of creating and
sustaining a white and male-dominated society that recognizes and praises the participation and work of some social groups over others (Heather, 1999). For this reason, feminist scholars have rejected civic-republican citizenship, particularly its emphasis on patriotism and civil fraternity (Lister, 1997; Mouffe, 1992).

**Communitarian Citizenship.** To attend to the limitations of the liberal and civic-republican theories on citizenship, the communitarian perspective was conceptualized. Communitarian citizenship was devised to address the over-emphasis on individual rights proposed by liberalism, and the difference-blind approach to civic participation that characterizes civic-republicanism (Etzioni, 1996, 2011). Although the communitarian approach draws on some principles of civic-republicanism, such as the emphasis on participation and community, communitarian citizenship should not be viewed as an elaboration of the civic-republican perspective (Isin & Wood, 1999). Communitarian citizenship presents an alternative radical form of citizen participation; it prioritizes the community and the obligations individuals and groups have to their respective communities without explicitly relating to the nation-state (Avineri & de Shalit, 1992; Etzioni, 2011; Isin & Nielson, 2008).

Communitarianism emphasizes membership, sense of belonging, and active participation in the community (Delanty, 2003; Isin & Wood, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 2006). A community could be defined as the family, school, neighborhood, or city, and more broadly as a society or nation (Etzioni, 1996, 2011). Because individuals are embedded within particular social locations, or communities, communitarian citizenship posits that rights and responsibilities are intrinsically tied to the
communities individuals belong to and of which they are members (Etzioni, 2011). In others words, it is through being in community with others that relationships and networks are formed to establish a society with shared values and morals that are determined by the group, in this case, a community of like-minded individuals.

Although the communitarian approach presents a compelling reimagining of individual, group, and nation-state relationships, this model also has some limitations. First, communitarian citizenship assumes that for individuals to be citizens they must contribute in some way to the community, or more broadly to the development of society, otherwise they cannot “earn” their rights or access to resources. Rights, in a communitarian model, can therefore be achieved rather than merely granted; but this requires those in power, or the dominant group, recognizing that such rights have been earned (Delanty, 2003).

Second, a communitarian perspective strives toward the preservation and maintenance of specific collective ideologies, often conceptualized by the dominant groups as the “common good,” and the promotion of multiculturalism, with the goal of eliminating ethnopolitical conflicts (Bhatia, 2002, 2010; Kymlicka, 1995). Because communitarian citizenship values the importance of community, and its impact on the individual, some critics of this perspective fear that the nation-state – along with its power – might be reduced to small collective autonomous groups, specifically ethnic/racial groups, which are separate and independent from the state (Isin, 2012; Young, 1989). The autonomy that results from this division poses a challenge to the nation-state in that it minimizes its ability to control and regulate the polity.
Despite these complexities, the communitarian perspective holds some promise for a re-conceptualization of citizenship that takes into account the role of communities in building a participatory democracy where all people can be actively and equally engaged. Thus, under the umbrella of communitarianism, cultural citizenship is one approach within this tradition that de-centers the power of the nation-state over people’s lives and their communities. The need for a more bottom-up and holistic approach toward re-conceptualizing citizenship that centers on the experiences of people’s citizenship performance, while situating these within a broader context of sociocultural and political enfranchisement, led to the development of cultural citizenship.

Taken together, the liberal, civic-republican and communitarian theories of citizenship present significant practical and theoretical implications for the conceptualizing of citizenship. Each model approaches citizenship in a different way; the liberal follows a top-down process, whilst the civic-republican and communitarian strive toward more bottom-up process of practicing citizenship.

**Cultural Citizenship: Re-conceptualizing Citizenship from the Bottom-Up**

The notion of who can claim citizenship and therefore rights in the U.S. has been contested from the beginning of the colonization of this country (Langhout & Fernández, in press). Accordingly, cultural citizenship contests the power of the nation-state by considering the experiences, practices and social positionings of subordinated groups who are affirming their rights not only in legal terms, but also in regards to the social implications of having rights, including the right to be treated
with dignity and respect. Affirming these rights is an intentional and explicit process of cultural citizenship that derives from the need to transform structures and relationships that reify dominant social constructions of citizenship.

Conceptualizing citizenship from a cultural citizenship approach therefore allows for a re-imagining of individual and group subjectivities that transcend the liberal, civic-republican and communitarian models of citizenship. Cultural citizenship emphasizes the importance of moving beyond borders and boundaries toward more transnational, or unbounded, conceptualizations of citizenship, wherein citizens are in solidarity with one another working toward social justice.

To fully explicate cultural citizenship, in the sections that follow I begin with a brief history of the concept followed by its definition. Next, I explain four key cultural citizenship processes, which demonstrate how social groups and individuals perform, practice and claim their citizenship and rights. I conclude this section by discussing some the relevant empirical studies of cultural citizenship, most of which focus on Latina/o families, high school youth, and college students. The theoretical and empirical foundations of cultural citizenship, aside from demonstrating the processes and practices that characterize it, also point to some of its limitations: the de-centering of Latina/o youth’s voices and lived experiences as cultural citizens.

A Brief History

Cultural citizenship began as a model for understanding theories of assimilation and acculturation (Rosaldo, 1988, 1994, 1999). Initially, anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (1988) coined this phenomenon during his ethnographic work with
Ilongots in the Philippines – a group that was believed to be “people without culture.” Motivated to counter the dominant deficit narratives of Filipinos, Rosaldo found that people’s ways of perceiving and organizing their social reality is related to their cultural ways of being and acting in the world. Rosaldo (1988, 1994, 1999) posited that the interaction between culture and the dominant context is what justifies the exclusion, inequality, assimilation and marginalization of social groups.

Hence, Rosaldo’s initial work led him to study assimilation as a form of hegemony; he researched how and why some people assimilate, while others resist. Given his strong interest in cultural socialization, Rosaldo (1988, 1994, 1999) studied the ways in which Latinas/os, and other subordinated group members, like im/migrants in the United States, resisted exclusion and invisibility by forging cultural communities and claiming social rights. Cultural citizenship was therefore created to describe the ways in which people resist, re-claim and re-construct the terms of their citizenship performance, giving strong consideration to the role of culture instead of the legally proscribed definitions by the nation-state. This rejection of legal status and institutionalized structures often created the freedom to perform citizenship in ways consistent with social justice and transformative social change.

Cultural citizenship, despite its relatively new emergence in the discipline of psychology, has been practiced for many decades in the U.S. particularly in response to political forms of exclusion from democratic processes, as well as forms of cultural and social exclusion. Hence, an examination of cultural citizenship is a study of how groups form, define themselves, claim rights, and change society; it is also about how
individuals become public citizens, enter the public sphere, make demands, and change society (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994, 1999).

**Cultural Citizenship Defined**

Cultural citizenship is a process through which groups come to define themselves via shared membership in a collective sociocultural group, form community through a sense of belonging, and claim space and rights in society (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994, 1999). As such, it moves beyond definitions of citizenship as rights based on and determined by the nation-state (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997), and emphasizes the importance of cultural practices and vernacular meanings of citizenship as defined by the people (Rosaldo, 1988, 1994, 1999). In this view, cultural citizenship does not require the state to legitimate the practicing of citizenship. Instead it is the claiming of space and rights, via everyday social cultural practices and actions, which enfranchise people (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Getrich, 2008; Rosaldo, 1999). Cultural citizenship posits that all people have the right to be different, linguistically and culturally, yet equal in a democratic and participatory sense; everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect (Flores, 2003; Rosaldo, 1988, 1994).

Many Latina/o communities in the United States, for example, achieve rights and recognition through an active and continuous process of claiming membership, as well as the right to be different yet equal with regards to rights, treatment and opportunities (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1988, 1994, 1999). When people practice cultural citizenship, they construct a community that seeks
equality, justice and power for their subordinated group, while also defining, defending and affirming their social group identities (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). What makes cultural citizenship unique and necessary to understanding notions of citizenship in the U.S. is that it provides people with the power to name and construct their own ways of being, belonging and performing citizenship (Delanty, 2003).

The cultural repertoires through which Latinas/os claim space and their right to full membership in society may vary. Some examples can include: outright public manifestations, like the 1960’s Chicana/o Movement or the 2006 march for immigration reform (Getrich, 2008); quotidian public celebrations, like El Dia de los Muertos or Puerto Rican Day Parades; public artistic performances, like Teatro Campesino (Flores, 2003); restructuring school curricula to include Latino Heritage Month (Mirón & Inda, 2004); and, remaking public spaces through art as seen in Chicano Park in San Diego (Flores & Benmayor, 1993; García, 2005). Re-conceptualizing mainstream notions of citizenship to include cultural practices and ways of belonging for subjugated groups would allow for a process of decolonization, where each culture would be valued, respected and represented, and where those in power would not dictate the lives of others who are subordinated and different (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). Cultural citizenship therefore is defined as a process of creating community through shared membership and a sense of belonging, while simultaneously claiming space and social rights (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Garcia, 2005; Rosaldo, 1988, 1994). In the next section I discuss each of the four components of cultural citizenship: membership, sense of belonging,
claiming space, and rights.

**Membership.** Cultural citizenship facilitates the creation of community for subjugated group members who are largely excluded from United States civil society. In this regard, membership is characterized by the struggle for inclusion, enfranchisement and belonging. Because of intersectional identities, considerations for membership require moving beyond simple in-group and out-group binaries toward the establishment of equality and solidarity, despite social status differences. In other words, what allows people to become “members” is not a specific identity, but the shared experience of making demands to full citizenship despite cultural differences. It is the act of being-made by power structures and self-making within the sociopolitical context that affords people a shared experience of marginalization; the struggle is what thereby creates the ideological and subjective experience of membership (Bosniak, 2008; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Mirón & Inda, 2004).

Furthermore, when a person recognizes the oppression and struggle of a social group, and chooses to engage in the ideological and material struggle to challenge the *status quo*, the person is engaging in a process of cultural citizenship that is bound by a desire to change the social structures of domination (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Membership therefore entails people having an awareness of shared categories or social identities; this awareness therefore binds the group together and allows for collective action (Flores, 2003; Rosaldo, 1994). For example, Latinas/os as a group have found that the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences from the white-majority that bind them as a social group, also mark them as homogenous and outsiders from
the broader U.S. society. In this view, racism constructs impassable social and institutionalized boundaries that label and mark people’s differences (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Oboler, 2006).

To demonstrate, for Latinas/os in California, the state where I grew up and have lived for most of my life, the hyphen between Mexican and American becomes a space sometimes of denial and other times of affirmation. It is a border that both separates and links my two worlds as both Mexican and American, yet I am often viewed as un-American by virtue of my ethnicity, culture and over-use of the Spanish language in public spaces. On the one hand, society defines me as Mexican and Latina, yet I also consider myself as a member of the United Statesian community because this is where I have spent most of my life and where I have established new commitments. Hence, it is the doubling of a social identity and shared experiences of subjugation and othering that allow for my social membership in the Chicana/o communities. This process stands at the core of cultural citizenship; the right to be different, yet still be an equal member of multiple cultural communities.

Sense of Belonging. Although membership focuses on the construction of a group identity through social membership, it is not enough for belonging. Sense of belonging focuses on the emotional and affective ties that allow a person to feel “at home” or connected to others (Coll, 2004; 2010; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Oboler, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For instance, a person can experience membership in a social group, yet have a limited sense of belonging with that group. Sense of belonging is therefore defined as the forging of community. This process of forming a
community involves having emotional connections to a social group, as well as a sense of community. Also, it involves actions and interactions that shape one’s feelings of acceptance and inclusion within the group (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 2006). These feelings are consistent with authentic caring, defined as positive interactions that are supportive, respectful, and validating (Valenzuela, 1999). The practice of creating a sense of belonging through authentic caring relations is often shaped by Latinas’/os’ cultural capital, which involves engaging in traditions or customs of everyday social interaction that invoke cultural values, such as respeto (i.e., respect, see Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Valdes, 1996) and educación (i.e., academic and moral values, see Valenzuela, 1999).

In a cultural citizenship framework, claiming space and rights, often through authentic caring relations and/or affirming a person’s cultural capital, is part of the process of belonging to a community (Flores, 2003). The focus is on how subjugated group members conceive of community, where they do and do not feel a sense of belonging (Getrich, 2008; Oboler, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For example, the expression “la raza cosmica” (i.e., the cosmic race), which became a powerful way of reaffirming Chicana/o and/or mestizo identity, is in part shaped by social constructions of race and by collective efforts to achieve respect, unity, dignity and recognition as human beings, deserving of equal and just treatment. Hence, cultural citizenship is a process that involves facilitating feelings of entitlement to rights, including the right to be treated with dignity and respect (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Thus, the process of claiming space and rights both defines
communities and comprises their sense of being in and belonging to a community belonging.

**Claiming Space.** Claiming space is a powerful way to demand recognition and rights. Examples include public parks, recreation areas, neighborhoods, community centers, and streets. Space is not limited to physical places, but can include social spaces, such as community groups, classroom sessions, or other interactional settings (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Gottdiener, 1985). Space provides individuals and groups with opportunities for critical creative modes of expression, self-representation and affirmation (Gottdiener, 1985). Opportunities like these can then facilitate self-directed, collaborative, and intentional actions toward change.

One example of claiming space includes the restructuring of school curricula to include culture and culturally relevant material. Several studies on cultural citizenship have explored the ways in which Latina/o students restructure their school curricula to include their voices, lived experiences, language, history and culture. In this regard, Latina/o youth take action to reclaim not only the physical and public space of the classroom setting, but also the intellectual space within the learning environment of the classroom (Benmayor, 2002; Sepúlveda, 2011). Although dominant group members might perceive such spaces to be threatening – as in the case of the 2011 ban on ethnic studies (State of Arizona H.S. 2281) in the Tucson Unified School District – the transformative space is not intended to be threatening by subjugated group members. Instead, such spaces are considered as valuable and empowering because these spaces provide individuals and groups with the social
networks and support, as well as sense of belonging and membership, that other spaces might not provide (Coll, 2004; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Fuentes, 2011; Benmayor, 2002; Mirón & Inda, 2004).

Although cultural citizenship makes explicit the importance of claiming space, in my work I prefer to use the term decolonizing space. By using the term decolonizing, I am making a conscious connection to power and the colonizing forces that shape the spaces and places people occupy. Additionally, the term decolonizing space is characterized by a horizontal power structure where all members are treated equally and where hierarchies do not dictate the dynamics of the space. Because citizenship constructions have been so heavily shaped by the power of the nation-state, the work of decolonizing seeks to precisely de-power or colonize the power of the state over the people. One of my theoretical contributions to the development of cultural citizenship is the centering of decolonizing spaces for transformative collective social change from the bottom-up.

**Claiming Rights.** The enactment of rights constitutes a person as citizen in the United States (Rosaldo, 1994). In this view, struggles for rights are then associated with broader struggles for social justice, equality and enfranchisement, and more specifically the right to be treated as a human being (Rocco, 2006). Cultural citizenship therefore acknowledges that all people have the right to have rights, and make claims to rights. In other words, cultural citizenship affirms that people have the right to take actions to demand equality, justice and respect, as well as human and civil rights, regardless of ethnic, gender, age, and other social status differences (Coll,
The struggle for rights, and the right to make claims to rights, constitutes the foundation for the forming of a new meaning of citizenship (Dagnino, 1998). Cultural citizenship goes beyond nation-state definitions of citizenship as a legal status, with privileges and responsibilities, to the creation of new rights that value and respect cultural diversity. In other words, cultural citizenship implies the right to be different, and that difference will not serve to justify structural and social inequalities (Dagnino, 1998; Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Accordingly, rights are thus defined as having the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to belong, participate and have opportunities in civil society amidst differences (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). The awareness of both individual and collective needs, and the demands to rights, social or otherwise, is what allows for cultural citizenship to happen. By advocating for and claiming rights, subjugated group members are defining their own communities and democratic practices. In this regard, cultural citizenship is characterized by the everyday practices through which people reaffirm their right to participate, belong and be treated with dignity and respect.

**Cultural Citizenship in Practice**

Cultural citizenship has been used to describe the ways in which politicized and disenfranchised subjects reclaim the terms and conditions of their belonging and participation. As a framework, cultural citizenship involves identifying one’s self in relation to others through a process of forming a community, via membership and sense of belonging, and claiming space and rights (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor,
Also, it highlights the importance of membership and having the right to participate in the decision-making that affects one’s life, while maintaining one’s own sociocultural identity (Flores, 2003; Fuentes, 2011; Rosaldo, 1994, 1999). Creating opportunities for cultural citizenship would imply what Flores (2003) calls an ethic of love, where all people would acknowledge the interdependence among each other as members of a democratic society. As such, cultural citizenship presents a holistic and humane form of embodied citizenship.

The following section provides a succinct review of the empirical literature on cultural citizenship among Latino communities. Through these studies I demonstrate the processes and practices that characterize cultural citizenship. Given that cultural citizenship has been predominantly studied through the experiences of adults, the question remains regarding applicability of each process to Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship. Understanding how Latina/o young people perform cultural citizenship is essential toward challenging and broadening notions of citizenship to include their voices and lived experiences. This is especially important given that Latina/o youth, as a social group, are often conceived of as second-class citizens (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). The following examples help demonstrate some aspects of a cultural citizenship process.

**Cultural Citizenship Examples.** In exploring citizenship from a cultural citizenship perspective of claiming space Rosaldo (1994), as well as Flores and Benmayor (1997), emphasize the importance of creating spaces that affirm the right to power for subordinated group members. Taking action in making claims to equal
treatment and participation within the space in some cases requires critically examining power, and how it operates to delegitimize members within the subordinated group. In a study of Puerto Rican working-class men in the U.S., their identity as Latino men was constructed in relation to masculinity (Weis, Centrie, Valentin-Juarbe, & Fine, 2002). This construction of masculinity affirmed their cultural identity as Puerto Rican men, yet it reinforced an oppressive structure of power and violence against women. Realizing the tensions between these two identities, participants reflected on and renegotiated their relationship to masculinity, while they simultaneously redefined their cultural identity as Puerto Rican men in the U.S. As is evident in this example, engaging in a practice of cultural citizenship requires social group members to assert their rights, as well as dignity and respect in ways that do not oppress others, while also creating conditions that facilitate the equal participation of all members of the group.

Working toward cultural citizenship is a collective commitment to social justice that requires multi-racial and multi-ethnic groups coming together. In one case, for example, Mexican women workers and community allies, including white farm owners and other community stakeholders, organized a cannery strike in California’s Central Valley (Flores, 1997). Membership, sense of belonging, and rights claiming were documented through the group’s strike participation and leadership. The group claimed social rights such as dignity and respect for women workers. Material gains were also claimed, including more fair pay and benefits, and greater participation and representation in the union (Flores, 1997). The group’s
continuous involvement and day-to-day commitment to the strike led many other women, including Latina/o and non-Latina/o community members, to stand in solidarity and unify for a cause (Flores, 1997). Through this process, the group, but especially the Mexican members, established a sense of community and affirmed their right to participate civically in local affairs, despite the linguistic and institutional challenges they experienced as working class women of color. The strike served as a catalyst to mobilize women workers into action with the intent of affirming their identities as workers deserving of rights, recognition and respeto (respect) and dignity.

Within the context of organizing and making claims to rights is the struggle for social justice, including the claiming of space, membership and sense of belongingness as Flores (2003) demonstrates this process with Latina/o parents and their children. In this study, Latina/o families performed skits on their experiences of migration; the skits enabled the performers, adults and youth alike, to become political subjects of their own migration experiences. Through their performances, they reflected and retold their stories, as well as the stories of many Latina/o families in the United States. This public performance led many audience members to identify with the stories, and become collective members of a shared experience. By relating their experiences, audience members identified and related to the performers, and created a space where stories of migration and being Latina/o in the U.S. were shared. Through this cultural citizenship process Latina/o parents and their children were forging a community space and creating a sense of belonging by reaffirming their
cultural identities and experiences as Latinas/os. Through this process they were also constructing, and making visible their right to self-definition by temporarily claiming a social space to make public their performances.

Although Latina/o youth and adults collaborated in the performance, the experiences of the children are cast in relation to their parents. The performances focused on the immigrant Latina/o family experience as a whole, which included children but primarily focused on the parents’ struggles, and their needs and dreams for their children. In fact, the role of children in the cultural citizenship process is not made explicit, even though the study demonstrates cultural citizenship as a collective phenomenon that happens in relation to and in community with others. Nevertheless, claiming space was important for creating opportunities to be seen and be heard; yet some were more heard than others.

The claiming of space can also facilitate the demanding of rights, and thereby a sense of belonging for those who often feel excluded or marginalized, such as immigrant and/or language minority youth (i.e., people whose language of heritage, or the language spoken at home, is not the institutionalized dominant language, e.g., English) (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). For example, among a group of transmigrant Mexican high school students, the classroom setting was restructured to include what mattered to the students and related to their lived experiences (Sepúlveda, 2011). The students in this classroom were transmigrant youth who, through the use of Chicana/o poetry, as well as other writings on migration and borderlands, were able to discover, interpret and construct their experiences in a new land. Transmigrant is a term used to
describe the ongoing patterns of migrations and mobility from one location (e.g.,
boarder, state, region etc.) to another (Sepúlveda, 2011). By creating opportunities to
reflect upon their migration experiences, the transmigrant students were able to
validate and reaffirm their identities, membership and sense of belonging within the
classroom space, and more broadly the school community.

In the classroom, for example, transmigrant students produced different
modes of public expression and performance, like poetry, which served to re-
construct a collective experience of migration that motivated their cultural citizenship
process. Equally important for creating a sense of belonging was the claiming of
space, and in this particular study the classroom provided students with a decolonial
space that was intellectually stimulating and supportive because students were
learning in collaboration, while also being critical of their schooling experiences and
the broader context in which these were embedded.

Membership, sense of belonging, and claiming space are important cultural
citizenship processes; however, making demands to rights, such as critical and
culturally grounded learning, is also important. One particular group made explicit
claims to rights to equal and quality education were a group of first-generation
Mexican-heritage college students who were asked to share their testimonios (e.g.,
life histories) as college students in an institution that was designed to serve
historically underrepresented students in higher education from working-class and
im/migrant backgrounds (Benmayor, 2002). The students used their testimonios to
make demands to affordable and quality education, access to material resources and
support, as well as equal treatment on their college campus. Through a cultural
citizenship process of rights claiming, via public gathering and social actions, the
students demonstrated how current education contexts excluded and marginalized
their Latina/o heritage and culture.

Although the college campus was designed to be inclusive of
underrepresented students, especially those of Latina/o descent, the campus climate
was becoming removed from that vision. Seeking to transform and give meaning to
their educational experiences, the students resisted their experiences of oppression by
forging community and claiming a collective identity as first-generation Mexican-
heritage college students.

Taken together, these studies serve as examples of cultural citizenship in
practice. Also, these studies demonstrate a different way of performing citizenship by
grounding it in people’s lived experiences of struggle, and using culture as a resource
and tool toward social action. Additionally, the evidence provided in these studies
highlight the importance of belonging to community, and having the right to
participate in the decision-making that affects one’s life (Flores, 2003; Rosaldo, 1988,
1994). In this way, cultural citizenship is enacted to empower and reaffirm claims to
justice and equality with the intent of creating a transformative change in people’s
lives and their communities. Cultural citizenship therefore presents itself as a form of
cultural empowerment that involves having groups collectively define themselves and
their issues in accordance with their struggles and needs, and to critically deconstruct
and transform their social reality.
Cultural citizenship has the potential for making visible concrete processes toward the deconstruction of the *status quo* and the relationships that maintain systems of power. These processes, however, should also be considered through the experiences of Latina/o youth because they are often actively participating with their cultural communities in sociopolitical activities of collective resistance and struggle. Thus, in the next section I discuss some of the dominant perspectives toward the theorizing of Latina/o youth’s citizenship. Each perspective makes unique contributions to contemporary social constructions of citizenship and rights; however, the limitations within each one also help inform and deepen a more critical approach toward Latina/o youth’s citizenship.

**Where are the Children? Deepening Cultural Citizenship Theorizing**

Cultural citizenship is a transformative process that allows for a re-imagining of citizenship that centers the experiences of people who are at the margins or outside the dominant social constructions of citizenship. As a framework, cultural citizenship attempts to re-conceptualize the statuses and practices that get recognized as constituting legitimate citizenship. In doing so, it challenges the sociocultural constructions of who is (or is not) a citizen, or who demonstrates the potential for becoming one (e.g., youth under the age of 18).

Cultural citizenship, however, presents one critical limitation: the exclusion of Latina/o youth’s voice and experiences. As Latina/o adults make claims to rights, enfranchisement and inclusion in society, they are simultaneously excluding and delegitimizing the contributions, participation, and voice of children who are often
present and actively engaging in practices of cultural citizenship. The exclusion of Latina/o youth therefore requires understanding the theories that inform children’s citizenship and rights, which subsequently shape the lens through which adults view them. In line with this argument, in the following sections I discuss two dominant theories on children’s citizenship; children as future citizens and children as citizens. Next, I discuss children’s views on their rights, and how their conceptualizing of rights is informed by their subjective experiences as active citizens. In making the case for children’s enfranchisement, I provide some evidence in support of intergenerational partnerships among youth and adults.

**Dominant Theories on Children’s Citizenship**

Over the past decade, theorizing on children’s citizenship has increased in response to greater concerns over the sustainability of democratic values in Western societies. The presumed decline of youth participation in democratic activities, such as community service, has led to increased studies on youth civic engagement and civic identity development (Crick Report, 1998; Hart, 2009; Putnam, 2000; Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002; Torney-Purta, 2002; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Youniss & Yates, 1997). Across various studies the results demonstrate that young people are actively participating in their communities in ways that differ from traditional notions of civic engagement, such as community service. Among undocumented Latina/o high school and college students, for example, civic engagement included students providing educational support, or tutoring, to their peers, helping the family, either through financial means or social support, and participating in activism. Considering
these differences in what constitutes civic engagement among Latina/o youth, the issue is not the decline of young people’s civic engagement, but rather the use of inadequate measures and theories to describe their citizenship performance, especially when they may not be recognized as legal citizens of the state (Flanagan, 2009; García Bedolla, 2012; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010).

Recognizing the broader sociocultural constructions of childhood that situate young people at the margins of contemporary democracy, two theoretical traditions on children’s citizenship are presented in the literature (Cohen, 2005; Invernizzi & Williams, 2007). These approaches attempt to address the problematic view of children as neither seen nor heard by focusing on youth’s development and community experiences as a way to conceptualize their citizenship. The first views children as citizens of the future, with the capacity to become and develop into good citizens (Callan, 1997; James, 2011; Lockyer, Crick, & Annette, 2003). The second approach advocates for a positioning of children as citizens in the present by recognizing that children are citizens in their own practices, which are different from those of adults, yet equally meaningful (Invernizzi & Williams, 2007; Liebel, 2007). Also, this approach argues that young people have a right to be respected and recognized as legitimate members by adults and institutions (Jans, 2004; Lister, 2003, 2008). Both approaches are an attempt to move away from conventional debates that centered on children being or not being citizens. Instead, these traditions on children’s citizenships focus on the practices that constitute children as future citizens in the making or as actively present citizens. Below I discuss these two theories on
children’s citizenship in more depth.

**Children as Citizens of the Future.** Historically dominant theories on children’s citizenship have approached the topic from a future-oriented perspective that positions children as citizens of the future (Lister, 2003; Lockyer, et al., 2003; Lockyer, 2008). This positioning implies that children are not yet citizens, but will become citizens once they transition into adulthood. In the U.S. this means turning the age of eighteen, and taking on rights and responsibilities associated with being an adult-citizen. Examples of some responsibilities include working, paying taxes, voting, or serving in the military (Lister, 2003, 2008). Thus, citizenship is equated with being an adult and enacting practices of responsibility to the nation-state.

Within a British context, which is where most the theorizing on children’s citizenship has taken place, the citizen of the future perspective stresses political literacy, community engagement, and social and moral responsibility with the intent of balancing the rights and responsibilities of youth who will eventually become citizens (Cockburn, 1998; Invernizzi & Williams, 2007; Lockyer, et al., 2003). Centered on developing the citizens of tomorrow, the citizen of the future approach prioritizes the role of education in socializing young people into citizenship (Lockyer, et al., 2003). This process of socialization focuses on developing youth’s sense of moral obligation and commitment to the “common good,” as well as their political literacy (Lockyer, 2008). Political literacy centers on educating for adult citizenship; it is described as a practice of learning by doing, of having knowledge of political concepts and the ability to become civically engaged. This approach toward
children’s citizenship values education as a necessary means toward fostering citizenship practices that endorse autonomy, freedom, and rights, as well as loyalty to the nation-state (Haydon, 2003; Lockyer, 2008).

In the United States citizen education programs, promoted in K-12th grade public schools, often include characteristics of moral or character development where young people are taught to be “good citizens” (Davies, Gorard, & McGuinn, 2005; Revell, 2002; Robbins & Kovalchuk, 2012; Thornberg, 2009). Character Education (e.g., Character Counts), for example, emphasizes the development of good citizen behavior through the promotion of six values: citizenship, caring, fairness, respect, responsibility and trustworthiness. Through these values, Character Education, consistent with citizenship education, seeks to teach young people how to become actively involved in their community, as well as how to tell right from wrong, what is morally acceptable, or good and bad (Davies, et al., 2005; Revell, 2002).

Another program institutionalized in schools to support the citizenship development of students is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These have encouraged the development of what is called “digital citizenship.” Given the increase in technology, “digital citizenship” suggests that young people should develop the skills, knowledge and mastery to engage in a digital age in ways that are safe, yet productive for developing multimodal forms of communication and participation in society (California Department of Education, 2015; Common Sense Media, 2009; Ribble, 2010). Within CCSS, digital citizenship is characterized by the development and mastery of certain technology skills and literacies. In the context of
schooling and learning, children’s citizenship is constructed in relation to 21st century technologies, which encourage young people to consume and interact with technology in responsible ways (Ribble, 2010).

Despite the emphasis on character education and digital literacies, the construction of children as future citizens poses several limitations. The first critique lies in the assumption that children are viewed as mere objects of socialization, who must develop good moral character and skills in technology that consequently comply with the status quo. The practices of socialization are often determined by adults, or power-holders, who are often reproducing the structures of power within the nation-state. In other words, children are treated as “blank slates” that can be molded into citizenship; the shaping of children’s citizenship is driven by power structures that sustain the status quo and conceptualize children’s citizenship as “in the making” (Thorne, 1987; Moosa-Mitha, 2005).

A second significant limitation is the failure to recognize children as full citizens. This is problematic because it denies children their right to make claims to citizenship, while simultaneously rendering their subjective experiences as complete and full citizens (Cohen, 2005; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Related to this is acknowledging the multiple and varying roles youth take on in their everyday lives, which constitute them as legitimate and active citizens. In Latin American and Latino-heritage communities, for example, the citizens of the future approach is often at odds with the everyday practices and roles young people take as active citizens. Some example of these roles can range from helping out around the home (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003;
Orellana, 2001; Ramírez Sánchez, 2007), to organizing social movements (Corona & Pérez-Zavala, 2000), to generating income from work (Ennew, 2003, 2008; Invernizzi, 2003; Liebel, 2004) with the intent of contributing to and being accountable to the community or the family. These are some forms of legitimate participation in active endeavors, which constitute children as citizens who are active members and contributors to their communities.

Lastly, viewing children as not-yet-citizens is rooted in Western ideologies that reify the deficit narratives that position youth as reliant on adults. Rather than changing structures and adults’ roles in constraining youth’s rights and agency, the citizen of the future approach positions youth as dependent on adults for knowledge and resources on becoming citizens (Lister, 1997, 2007). Given these critiques, the children as present citizens perspective is discussed.

**Children as Present Citizens.** An approach toward recognizing children’s citizenship in the present makes two interrelated claims. The first addresses children’s rights, specifically their right to full participation, and the second focuses on children’s bottom-up citizenship, or active citizenship from below, and outside the margins of conventional forms of civic participation (Invernizzi & Williams, 2007; Jans, 2004; Liebel, 2007). Together these claims argue for a difference-centered perspective on children’s citizenship. A difference-centered approach acknowledges children’s differences in relation to adults, yet emphasizes their equal status regardless of the differences (Lister, 2007; Mayall, 2000, 2002; Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Qvortrup, 1995; Smith, Lister, Middleton, & Cox, 2005). Essentially this perspective
does not argue for an extension of adult’s citizenship and rights to children, but rather an explicit and sociopolitically conscious recognition of children as citizens, who despite their young age, possess rights.

An approach to citizenship that is enacted from the bottom-up often views children as social actors. This perspective conceptualizes citizenship from the ground-up through young people’s lived experiences and practices of embodied acts of citizenship (Liebel, 2007). Several international grassroots organizations focused on children’s issues, such as the Movement of Working Children and Youth in Africa (Ennew, 2003, 2008) and the Movimiento Nacional de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores (MNNAT, National Movement of Child and Adolescent Workers) in Latin America (Taft, 2014; Taft & Gordon, 2011; Liebel, 2004), are examples of bottom-up social movements that support and recognize children’s rights as citizens of the present. The Movement of Working Children in South Africa, for example, involved young people advocating for the implementation of 12 rights for working children. These rights – such as the right to security when working, access to legal aid and appropriate working conditions, among other rights – went beyond those stated in the UNCRC (i.e., nurturance and self-determination rights), because these were created by young people actively involved within the working children’s movement. The 12 rights proposed by the Movement of Working Children in South Africa addressed the particular challenges youth face in the context of poverty and limited legal protections for working children. Similarly, the MNNAT purports that the labor and financial contributions of working children must be recognized as legitimate
forms of young people participating in the economic and social landscapes of, not only their families, but society as well. Central to these movements and organizations is an explicit recognition of children’s agency and right to contribute to their families, while being treated with dignity and respect.

Children’s participation in their cultural communities can take many forms, and might differ for youth across their social contexts, or the living conditions that affect them and their cultural communities. One example of children as citizens in their cultural communities includes youth social movements. In one study, for example, Indigenous children from the Tepoztlán (México) community, organized actions to address community displacement (Corona & Pérez-Zavala, 2000; Corona, & Fernández, 2000). As political actors and agents of social change young people organized with their cultural communities a social movement to make heard their concerns and resistance to the building of a golf club in their community and its surrounding geographic region. Through public manifestations, such as protests, and action-oriented activities, like disseminating information to community constituents, children were involved in practices that supported their leadership, critical thinking, decision-making and rights (Corona & Linarez, 2007; Corona & Pérez-Zavala, 2000). In this context children were viewed as activists instead of developing-citizens or passive-citizens; youth were recognized as active agents of social change. Thus, within the children as present citizens approach, citizenship is conceptualized as an ongoing relational process that develops from youth’s experiences of participation in social actions, where they in advocate for their rights to preserve their community.
Although these examples do not use a cultural citizenship framework to discuss children’s embodied practices of resistance and social action, the processes and practices that characterize children’s social movements exemplify cultural citizenship. As present and active subjects who embody a citizenship in resistance to the institutions that do not recognize them, young people have the capacity to make claims to rights that are consistent with a cultural citizenship approach. Children’s rights to participate and belong as different, yet equal members of society, requires taking a more holistic and critical approach to the theorizing of children’s citizenship.

Recognizing children as citizens in the present, however, does not necessarily imply a change in the structures and institutions that have relegated young people to the status of second-class citizenship. In effect, what is needed, and what this approach to children’s citizenship provides, is a provocative change in the dominant narratives or deficit discourses that disenfranchise children. Consistent with this goal of recognizing children as full citizens, a discussion on children’s rights is warranted.

Children’s Rights

Consistent with future-oriented perspective, cultural citizenship has conceived rights and rights claiming within the domain of adult experiences, yet the growing body of literature on children’s views of rights demonstrates how children are thinking deeply and critically about their rights (Cherney & Perry, 1996; Lister, 2007; Lister, et al., 2010; Mayall, 2002, 2008; Melton, 1980; Melton & Limber, 1992; Morrow, 1999; Morton, Dubanoski, & Blaine, 1982; Ruck, Abramovitch, & Keating, 1998; Ruck, Keating, Abramovitch, & Koegl, 1998). Situating the literature on
children’s rights within a cultural citizenship framework demonstrates how children are defining and making claims to rights to be heard and equal participation in an adult-centered society. This theorizing moves toward a bottom-up citizenship approach, that aligns with the children as present citizens perspective. Thus, it seems appropriate to further explore how youth are making claims to rights, and how their rights might differ, and in some cases challenge adult’s perspectives on rights for and about children, which are typically constructed without children’s involvement.

Understanding how children conceptualize their rights is important for several reasons. First, it can provide researchers, as well as others involved with children, valuable information on what children view as important and of concern to their lives with respect to their rights. For instance the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) was created with good intentions to address children’s needs. The UN-CRC treaty contains of list of forty-one articles on children’s rights, most of which fall under two broad categories: nurturance and self-determination rights. Nurturance rights are made to ensure that children are safe, cared for, and legally protected, whereas self-determination rights emphasize children’s active role in the decision-making that affect their lives (United Nations, 1989). Yet in the creation of the UN-CRC, children were not explicitly involved.

The second reason for understanding children’s conceptualizing of their rights concerns the situating of their voices and experiences in the construction of rights, as well as their citizenship. Asking children about their rights validates their experiences and needs, and situates them as experts on their citizenship embodiment (Morrow,
In knowing how and what children view as their rights, researchers and educators, alongside with children, can develop structures to better meet children’s needs. Yet, most institutions, like the UN-CRC, are not necessarily structured to include the voices and experiences of children, much less to involve them in decision-making processes (Ruck, et al., 1998; Mayall, 2008). The marginalization of children’s experiences is problematic because if children’s rights are to be institutionalized, it would be most beneficial for children to have a say in the process.

In a study explicitly asking children about their rights, for example, Melton (1980) found that children’s conceptualization of their rights were shaped by developmental factors, such as their age, as well as the family’s socio-economic status. This study hypothesized that older children (e.g., seventh grade) and of a higher socio-economic status would have more positive attitudes toward children’s rights, compared to younger children from lower-income families. About eighty young people in the first, third, fifth and seventh grades participated in this study. Half of the participants were in the fifth and seventh grades. The majority of the youth were from families with a higher socio-economic status (85%,) and white. Only thirteen children identified as African American and one as Asian American; no demographics were provided for Latinas/os, however 40% of the participants in the lower-socio-economic group were labeled bilingual in Spanish or Portuguese. The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of two parts. The first part included the four questions stated in the Children’s Rights Interview (e.g., What is a right? Who has rights? Do children have rights? Should children have rights?). The second part
included twelve situation vignettes that involved a child having a conflict with an adult (e.g., teacher, parent) or an older youth. Youth participants were then asked to discuss their judgments about the conflict-laden scenarios where children might exercise their rights. Results from this study supported the claim that older youth were more likely to have positive attitudes toward children’s rights. Yet most children, regardless of their socio-economic status, had some abstract notion about the meaning and function of rights.

These results on children’s understanding of rights are consistent with other studies that have explored children’s attitudes and knowledge about rights (Astuto & Ruck, 2010; Cherney & Perry, 1996; Lister, 2007; Lister, et al., 2010; Morrow, 1999; Ruck & Horn, 2008; Ruck, et al., 1998). For example, in an international study of eighty-seven young people between the ages of eleven and thirteen, rights to self-determination – children having a right to participate in decision-making, expressing their needs and what matters to them, and being treated with respect and dignity – were identified as being most salient and important to youth in their conceptualizing of rights (Cherney & Perry, 1996). The study, which involved youth in U.S., Canada and Switzerland, extended Melton’s (1980) results to consider the broader globalized context that informs children’s rights, and how, as children age, they develop more abstract universal conceptualizations about rights to freedom, agency and power. In effect, the rights to self-determination appeared to be more important to young people than nurturance rights, perhaps because self-determination rights supported their agency, whereas nurturance rights emphasized the paternalistic/maternalistic values
that reinforce dominant social constructions of childhood (Cherney & Perry, 1996).

Most of studies on children’s rights often center on examining youth’s conceptual understandings about rights, instead of what they think about rights and how they conceptualize rights in their lives (Astuto & Ruck, 2010; Cherney & Perry, 1996; Lister, et al., 2010; Morrow, 1999; Ruck & Horn, 2008; Ruck, et al., 1998; Smith, et al., 2005; Sherood, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). Additionally, most of these studies continue to focus on white populations, often outside of the U.S. context, and with populations who are of middle or upper-middle class status. The lack of research on Latina/o youth’s rights, and the connections children make between rights, citizenship and their social contexts, is problematic because it assumes that Latina/o youth are unaware of these concepts, or immune to the ways in which citizenship and rights manifest in their lives (see Solis, 2003 and Solis et al., 2013 for exceptions). Understanding how children from disenfranchised social groups view their rights can help make visible the sociopolitical conditions that affect them and their cultural communities. Earlier in this chapter I discussed dominant theories of citizenship and the sociopolitical context of Latinas/os in the U.S., charting these accounts is useful for arguing that the disenfranchisement of Latino communities affects Latina/o youth.

Understanding the sociopolitical context that shapes Latinas’/os’ relationships to one another and to the nation-state emerges through the capacity to take on and exercise rights; Latina/o youth have predominantly remained at the margins of this theoretical discussion. When Latina/o youth’s rights and citizenship is discussed however, it is done within the context of intergenerational partnerships, which have
been identified as important relationships for facilitating youth voice in ways that make visible their citizen subjectivities.

**Relationships of Solidarity: Intergenerational Partnerships**

The literature on children’s citizenship and rights has consistently emphasized children’s participation. Toward this end, the participation of children has been described in the abstract as something that children can do. Yet it is often the case that children cannot participate because the structures and institutions, which shape their relationships with others, especially adults, are not set up to meaningfully include their participation. Young people must therefore often engage in practices of resistance to the *status quo* in order to have their voices heard and their experiences recognized by adults. Hence, it is through this process that youth often develop partnerships and collaborations with adults who act as allies and supporters.

Facilitating opportunities where children’s voices can be heard and their active engagement can happen requires adults recognizing children as citizens on their own terms and treating them with dignity and respect regardless of their age or social positioning. This process of recognition cannot be easily conceived without a critical understanding of adultism and how, similar to racism, it structures institutions and relationships in ways that justify the disempowerment and subordination of a social group. One approach toward recognizing youth’s agency in ways that do not essentialize or tokenize their contributions are intergenerational partnerships.

Intergenerational partnerships emphasize collaboration among people of different ages, especially among children and adults (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers,
The emphasis on shared power and decision-making between young people and adults positions them not as subordinate to adults, but as equals. Egalitarian relationships, founded upon values of respect and authentic caring, are reinforced when adults and youth engage in activities that center reciprocal learning and action (Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005). That is, where knowledge and practices are co-constructed and performed in ways that do not tokenize young people, but rather make their contributions meaningfully visible.

One context for developing intergenerational partnerships is youth community organizing (YCO) (Camino, 2005; Ginwright, 2005; Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2005; Kirshner, 2009; Noguera, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2006; Zeldin, et al., 2005, 2013). Within YCO, young people, often of high school age, and adults strive for collaborating and treating each other as equals. Both adults and youth share the responsibility of institutionalizing or setting up a structure, and co-developing practices that reinforce youth’s agency, power and voice. In an ethnographic case study of urban youth in YCO the organizing agenda, for example, was youth-led and youth-centered (Kirshner, 2009). Youth determined their goals and the focus of their campaign, which was to address the disproportionate high school dropout rate, and they directed their actions and strategies to mobilize constitutes and resources to address the issue youth were facing in their public school. Thus, the issue raised by youth took priority over those raised by adults because the organizing that drove forth the campaign centered on addressing youth’s concerns, rather than adult’s perceptions on youth’s issues (Kirshner, 2009). The organizing therefore happens with the
support of adult-allies who provide emotional, social and material support to youth who are leading campaigns on issues that matter to them and are central to their lives (Kirshner, 2009; Camino, 2005; Zeldin, et al., 2005, 2013).

In YCO, intergenerational partnerships strive toward creating horizontal power relations and structures that strive to promote several outcomes for youth, among these are: critical consciousness, leadership, sense of community, sociopolitical awareness, solidarity, and social action (Ginwright, et al., 2005; Noguera, et al., 2006; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Youth-adult relationships in YCO are thus structured in ways that intentionally amplify and center youth voice, while simultaneously facilitating the engagement of youth in social action.

Partnerships characterized by an explicit and conscious privileging of youth’s voice can also occur in other settings, such as after-school programs focused on facilitating youth empowerment (Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2013; Mitra, 2008, 2009; Ozer & Wright, 2012; Zeldin, et al., 2005). For example in an after-school program, young people between the ages of nine and eleven were involved in a problem-posing activity, called the *Five Whys* (Kohfeldt & Langhout, 2012). Through this activity young people were asked to reflect on their schooling experiences in order to get at the structural cause of a problem they had identified at their school. The adults guided and facilitated the youth’s process of identifying and articulating a problem (e.g., Why is there writing on the bathroom walls?), in order to unpack a deeper structural issue at their school (e.g., Student don’t have a spaces to express themselves at school). In this study, the adult guided and facilitated youth’s
possibilities to engage in critically thinking and reflecting on their experiences. The 
adult did not impose a response upon the youth; instead questions were structured in a 
way that helped deepen young people’s critical analysis of the problem. 

Intergenerational partnerships, as the above examples demonstrate, are 
characterized by opportunities for reflection and dialogue, which can help deconstruct 
adult’s deficit views of children and youth. The theorizing on children’s citizenship 
necessitates a centering of and critical analysis of the importance of intergenerational 
partnerships, because these relationships exemplify aspects of a cultural citizenship 
process that emphasizes people being treated with dignity and respect, and coming 
together to work toward equality. In effect, youth-adult partnerships are essential for 
developing positive intergenerational relationships, but most importantly for 
fomenting a sense of mutuality and communality with others – especially those in 
positions of power, like adults, who can acts as allies in the struggle for social justice. 

**Latina/o Youth Deepening Cultural Citizenship** 

In the United States, sociopolitical discourses on citizenship and rights have 
often been constructed in relation to race. This has been especially the case for racial 
and ethnic minority group members, such as Mexican heritage people for example 
(Acuña, 1988/2010; García Bedolla, 2009; Molina, 2010). Among Latino 
communities in the U.S. ethnicity has been a salient marker in determining their 
citizenship, as well as their rights. This positioning of Latinas/os in relation to 
citizenship is particularly more complex when considering their changing 
demographics, especially given that fact that one child out of four in the United States
is of Latino heritage (Hispanic Pew Research, 2012). This means that 24% of all youth nation-wide who are under the age of seventeen identify as Latina/o or of Latino heritage (American Hispanic Children, 2014).

Latina/o youth’s demographics are important considering the history and sociopolitical context of Latino communities in the United States. For Latina/o youth, similar to other young people of Color, some discourses often describe them as being civically disengaged and/or “at-risk” (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Perez, et al., 2010; Solis, et al., 2013; Yosso, 2006). These dominant sociocultural constructions of childhood therefore work to disenfranchise Latina/o young people by rendering them to second-class citizenship (Mayall, 2000; Lister, 2007), in ways that parallel, yet differ from the experiences of Latina/o adults.

Although children’s positioning in relation to citizenship is distinct from that of Latinas/os in the U.S., the structures and systems of power that delegitimize their rights, membership and participation are quite similar. For Latina/o adults, citizenship is constructed in relation to race, and practices – like segregation and anti-immigration policies – that further their marginalization, whereas for young people, age determines the parameters of their participation and their legitimate recognition as full citizens. For youth of Latino descent these experiences are further exacerbated on account of their race and ethnicity, as well as their age.

Indeed, for Latino communities, race is a salient social status that constructs their relationship to citizenship, but for children of Latino descent, ethnicity and age intersect in meaningful ways that further their disenfranchisement. In effect, power
structures operate in an uneven field where the *status quo* is maintained and perpetuated by the more powerful “Other” (e.g., adults, white people) who then reproduces the structure by determining the boundaries of participation of the less-powerful subject (i.e., Latina/o youth).

Given this analysis of power, Latina/o youth’s citizenship cannot be studied without an intersectional approach that centers ethnicity and age in relation to childhood and the broader sociopolitical context of Latinas’/os’ experiences in the United States. By taking an intersectional approach that centers ethnicity and age more explicitly, my dissertation provides a more nuanced re-conceptualizing of Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship, including their experiences of disenfranchisement and their power to enact and make demands to citizenship and rights. Approaching citizenship from the perspectives of those who are disenfranchised from the category of citizen can allow for a deeper and more critical theorizing of citizenship, specifically cultural citizenship. Hence, as a reminder, my dissertation addresses the following research questions:

1) How do Latina/o youth define the terms *citizen* and *citizenship*?

2) How do Latina/o youth reflect on and enact their cultural citizenship?

To address these questions I draw from the work of Rosaldo (1988, 1994, 1999), Flores (1997, 2003), and Benmayor (1997, 2002) who developed the concept of Latina/o cultural citizenship. I use a cultural citizenship framework to explore and make visible the ways in which Latina/o youth enact cultural citizenship. I posit that Latina/o youth must participate in the deconstruction, problematization and re-
conceptualizing of their citizenship positionalities and rights, in order to define the terms and conditions of their cultural citizenship.
Chapter 3: Method

Setting

**Maplewood**: An Unincorporated Community. Maplewood is an unincorporated area located along California’s central coast. As a growing unincorporated region, Maplewood lacks infrastructure and many necessary community resources, such as health centers, post offices, a police department, and public parks or recreation areas. The lack of resources found within this community is often typical in unincorporated areas (King, Snipes, Herrera, & Jones, 2009), which are generally administered by the county as part of a larger territorial division. At the time of this research, five council members served on the County Board of Supervisors, but only one represented Maplewood, and second unincorporated area. Because the centralized county manages Maplewood, community members’ concerns are often overlooked, and the availability of resources and services are frequently restricted. Such conditions further limit the community’s democratic representation and possibilities for engaging in decision-making to improve their community.

The local challenges that surround Maplewood are further exacerbated by its growing demographics. Over the past years Maplewood has expanded to become a receiving community for im/migrant families working in the Central Coast’s agricultural labor and service economies. This im/migration trend has led to its geographic expansion to the northern region that borders a neighboring unincorporated area. Based on local community reports, Maplewood is one of the

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2 All proper names have been changed.
most populated areas in the County (Schilling & Hearon, 2008). At the time of this dissertation Maplewood had a population of approximately 17,000 (Census, 2010); however, many of its residents are unaccounted for because of the region’s growing transmigrant community, many of whom are undocumented. In 2010 seventy-three percent of the total population identified as white, 28% identified as Hispanic or Latina/o, 14% identified as Pacific Islander, and 4% as African American. Given these demographics, Maplewood was classified as having one of the largest Latina/o communities in the county.

Through informal conversations with community members, I was made aware of Maplewood’s large Oaxacan community, as well as a growing Salvadorean presence. In fact, several stakeholders of the annual Guelaguetza festival, which is a Oaxacan celebration of indigenous traditions, folklore, music and cuisine, organize in Maplewood. Similarly, Salvadoreans have shown their community engagement by organizing colectivas, where they sell pupusas and Salvadorean foods, to help raise funds for their students to attend Science Camp. Over the past decade the Salvadorean and Oaxacan communities have been viewed as emerging Latinas/os in the United States, especially in the state of California, that are growing and surpassing other Latina/o groups, such as Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans from southwestern states of Michoacán and Jalisco (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Perla, 2008).

With regard to other demographics, the unemployment rate in Maplewood is among the highest in the county (34%) (American Community Survey, 2010). For those who are employed (66%) the median household income is approximately
$60,000. A majority of Maplewood’s residents are homeowners (56%), whereas the remaining are renters or living in low-income housing (44%). Families consist of two parent households with children under the age of eighteen (32%). These demographics characterize the diverse community of Maplewood, which is located between two relatively prosperous cities (Fernández & Langhout, 2014).

**Maplewood Elementary School.** Founded in the late 1800’s, Maplewood Elementary School (MES) is one of the oldest public schools in the county. Over the past several years, the student demographics at MES have changed to predominantly Latino. At the time of this dissertation student demographics were comprised of Latina/o (75%) students, as well as white (15%), African American (2%), and Asian/Asian American (0.5%) students. Many of the students at MES are from first and second-generation immigrant families from indigenous parts of Mexico, such as Oaxaca, and Central America. Some students are also living in mixed-status families, which are characterized as families where one or both parents, or some family member(s), are undocumented or do not possess the legal documentation to reside in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2011).

MES is one of the most populated elementary schools in the district with approximately 355 students enrolled in transitional kindergarten through the fifth grades. In a fourth and fifth grade class the average number of students per teacher was about twenty-seven. Some fifth grade teachers had as many as thirty students per class and no teaching assistant. The lack of resources and forms of institutional support within the school are representative of issues within the broader community.
At MES 86% of the students were identified as “socioeconomically disadvantaged” and qualified for free and reduced lunch (California Department of Education, Educational Demographic Units, 2011-2012).

MES has a total of twenty-two teachers, all of whom have full credentials to teach and have taught for a number of years. Many of the teachers are white and have relatively little fluency or knowledge of the Spanish language, yet the majority of the students identify English as their second language. Sixty-eight percent of the students were identified as “English Learners” by school teachers and standardized measures. According to statewide school reports 50%, 62% and 65% of the students respectively, reached proficiency in subject areas, such as English-language arts, math and science (California School Accountability Report Card, 2011-2012).

Change 4 Good YPAR program: A university-community partnership

History of Change 4 Good. The Change 4 Good youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) program began as a university-community collaboration between the Community Psychology Research & Action Team (CPRAT) at UC Santa Cruz, and a group of stakeholders at MES, which consisted of the school principal (deceased), a literacy specialist (who is no longer at the school) and a fifth grade teacher (who is our school collaborator). MES stakeholders and Dr. Regina Langhout, the faculty supervisor of CPRAT, met in 2006 to discuss the possibility of developing a program at MES that could serve students’ needs. Based on their common values and their desire to see greater school-based student participation, they agreed to create a program that would help young people develop their leadership skills, as well as
their opportunities to engage in social change. As a result of this meeting a university-community collaboration was formed and the Change 4 Good YPAR after-school program was established. Change 4 Good has been running for the past eight years, and given the community and school support it has received, despite some of the challenges, I believe the program will continue to exist in the years to come.

Change 4 Good is a school-based program that meets during the academic year. Meetings are held once a week after-school for about seventy minutes. The program serves fourth and fifth grade students, who join Change 4 Good typically in the fall of their fourth grade year. Students then remain in the program for two years, throughout the end of their fifth grade year.

Change 4 Good meetings often begin with young people leading an ice-breaker or check-in question. Afterwards young people help distribute a small snack and juice to group. During weekly meetings young people learn how to conduct social science research by following a participatory action research (PAR) process, which involves young people/co-researchers and adults/co-researchers collaborating on identifying a problem they would like to change, collecting and analyzing data about the problem, developing a solution or action to rectify the problem, and assessing, or evaluating, the outcomes of their action. Each session is structured on the lesson plan, or designed activities and tasks, from the preceding session. For example, if youth learned about focus groups during one session, for the following session they might practice how to co-facilitate a focus group. Sessions typically end with a prompt that young people respond to in their journals.
In addition to running an after-school program during the academic year, Change 4 Good also organizes a three to five week summer program where youth collect data to help inform or implement their action. After collecting and analyzing data, youth design a mural draft and mural. Once a draft is approved by their school and community stakeholders, young people can begin the mural making process at their school. For a timeline of Change 4 Good actions see Appendix A.

I began my participation in Change 4 Good in summer 2009, after Dr. Regina D. Langhout and Danielle Kohfeldt, a graduate student and coordinator of the program at that time, invited me to join the team. Before joining Change 4 Good I was previously involved in a community-based photovoice project and a two-year community assessment of Maplewood. These previous experiences allowed me to familiarize myself with the community.

For three years, from July 2009 through August 2012, I served as coordinator/co-coordinator of Change 4 Good. During this time I developed positive relationships with MES teachers, administrators and school staff. Also, I formed friendships with Change 4 Good youth and their families. The connections and relationships I formed with some of the youth and their families afforded me the opportunity to learn more about Maplewood’s diversity, the challenges students and their families experienced, and parents’ hopes and dreams for their children’s future. Given my commitment to low-income communities and social change, I viewed my participation in Change 4 Good as an opportunity to uphold my values to social justice, as well as further my research interests.
Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). The Change 4 Good after-school program follows a youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) process. YPAR is an epistemology that challenges conventional research approaches by facilitating collaboration between researchers and youth (co-researchers) in the process of conducting action research. From a methodological standpoint YPAR, like other forms of community-based action research (Montero, 2009), allows for the democratization of knowledge by facilitating opportunities for youth to make a change and have a say in the decision-making that affects their lives. Specifically, YPAR provides young people with empowering opportunities to engage in praxis, which can facilitate social change. Praxis is a process of critical inquiry that puts theory into action by situating, in this case, youth’s lives and experiences within power structures (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Through this praxis process, YPAR facilitates opportunities for youth to examine the how they are socially positioned, in order to develop structural solutions to improve their lives. Hence, YPAR is a critical approach to doing research because it privileges and legitimates the voices and experiences of those who are most affected by social issues.

YPAR presents itself as revolutionizing and unconventional approach to research that involves several processes, which can be summarized in four phases. The first phase involves researchers and youth (co-researchers) identifying a social problem or issue that demands structural change. Once the problem definition has been identified and agreed upon by researches and youth, the second phase of data collection and analysis begins. In this second phase an agreed upon method is used by
researchers and youth to further analyze the problem. Through this analysis, potential structural solutions are discerned to inform the third phase, which is the implementation of an action or solution. The third phase involves changing social structures via actions. Lastly, the fourth phase is the evaluation, which involves assessing the impact of the action on the initial problem, and whether it addressed the initially identified problem. Once all four phases in the YPAR process are completed, the cycle begins again with identifying a problem. In essence, YPAR is an iterative and continuous process of reflection-action-transformation that involves the identifying a problem and the structural conditions that allow for the problem to exist.

For this dissertation I focused on two phases of Change 4 Good’s YPAR process: 1) data collection and analysis phase, and 2) action phase. In the sections that follow I will provide an overview of the young people’s activities to better illustrate what took place during these two YPAR phases.

*Data collection and analysis phase.* In summer 2011 Change 4 Good youth developed and agreed upon a research design to collect data from their school and community members that would serve as a foundation for a second school-based mural. During this time young people learned about focus groups (i.e., What are focus groups? How and why are focus groups conducted?). In addition to learning about focus groups they also developed a prompt to guide their focus group sessions. Their prompt was: “*Tell me a story about the time you felt you had the power/did not have the power to make a change in Maplewood.*” The prompt was used as a guide to help initiate focus group discussions or stories about power among students, teachers,
parents, as well as youth and adult community members. Change 4 Good youth co- 
facilitated the focus groups and took notes on the stories participants shared. Over a 
period of six months a total of eight focus groups were conducted.

Subsequently, in winter and spring 2012, Change 4 Good youth analyzed their 
focus group stories to discern themes and symbols to incorporate into their school 
mural. Many of the stories told by the focus group participants were grounded in 
several themes including family, culture, identity, community, education and 
language, as well as services, resources, opportunities, rights and power.

**Action phase.** In spring 2012, following the discerning and grouping of 
several themes, Change 4 Good youth began to draft and brainstorm symbols for their 
school mural. The youth participated in several art-based workshops, including 
collaging and sketching, to help them develop their ideas for what to represent in the 
mural. After several weeks of creating art and sharing with one another how each of 
their art symbols represented the themes, Shile, an experienced muralist and affiliate 
of art4change (an art program based in the Art Department in a nearby community 
college), collaborated with Change 4 Good on the creation of a mural draft.

For my dissertation I focused on Latina/o youth’s process of collecting and 
analyzing their own data on a problem, and the discerning of possible symbols and 
images to include in their second school-based mural, which would constitute their 
action. I focus on these two YPAR phases – data collection and analysis, and action – 
because these demonstrate youth’s process of reflection, critical analysis, and 
engagement with stories from their school and community. Through this process
Latina/o youth situated their social identities, voices, and lived experiences within the context of their communities, thereby making their cultural citizenship salient.

The opportunities and conditions these YPAR phases facilitated for Change 4 Good youth demonstrate how they were able to reflect on and situate their lived experiences within broader community narratives, including social structures. This critical and dialogical process of reflection is important because it allowed young people to share more about themselves, their families and community. It also allowed them to unpack structures of power, particularly in regards to having access to limited resources and opportunities in their community. By focusing on these two YPAR phases I highlight how young people engaged in a process of cultural citizenship, where they collectively created opportunities to be seen, be heard and belong, as they reflected upon systems of oppression that were most salient in their lives.

**Recruitment of Participants**

Change 4 Good young people were recruited by current or former Change 4 Good participants. Sometime between October and January of every academic school year, returning Change 4 Good youth recruit new fourth and fifth grade members. They do this by organizing a large school assembly to share their ongoing and previous work, such a mural, or by giving a small presentation in the fourth grade classes. Students who are interested in participating in Change 4 Good are then provided with an application, which their parents must complete and submit to our teacher-collaborator. Only those applications that are completely filled out and submitted in due time are considered. Approximately fifteen to twenty students are
involved in the program per year, and we strive to have an equal number of participating boys and girls. See table 1 for a summary of participant demographics.

The recruitment process for Change 4 Good involves the following process. Students who are in the fourth grade when they apply are given priority to participate in Change 4 Good. Then, those who have applied in the previous academic year, and are listed on the waiting list, are invited to participate. If 10 students apply to participate, we accept all students. If, however, we have more than 10 applicants, we group them into different categories according to gender and ethnicity, and we randomly select them in ways that are representative of the school’s demographics. This process therefore constitutes a stratified random sample of those who wish to be considered for participation.

**Participant Demographics**

Participants for this dissertation were comprised of thirteen Change 4 Good youth who were involved in the data collection and analysis phase, as well as the action phase of the YPAR process. These phases represent one academic year and a summer (e.g., ten months) of involvement for most of the youth in Change 4 Good. During this time most of the youth were between the ages of nine and eleven, and transitioning to the fifth grade. The gender demographics of the participants in Change 4 Good consisted of more girls than boys; eight of the participants for this dissertation are girls, whereas five are boys.

The youth in this cohort are predominantly from first and second-generation immigrant families from El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico, specifically the
southwestern region of Oaxaca. Two youth identified as biracial; one as Filipino and Cuban American, and the other as Mexican and African American. Three out of thirteen youth were foreign born and had migrated with their families at a very young age. Some youth also lived in mixed-status families, where one, both, or some family member(s) is/are undocumented. Most of the students lived in two parent households, often with extended family members (e.g., uncle, aunt, cousins, and grandparents). All of the young people self-identified as bilingual in English and Spanish, however they also stated variability in their writing and speaking proficiency. Several of them expressed the ability to understand and comprehend spoken Spanish but not feeling comfortable speaking Spanish inside the school.

**Data Collection**

This dissertation is a critical ethnography of Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship. Data consists of ethnographic fieldnotes and semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at two separate time periods. Below I describe each method and procedure in more detail.

**Ethnography.** Given that I was interested in gaining a deeper understanding of Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship, I choose ethnography as my method. Ethnography is an approach suited for the study of socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meanings within cultural systems, and how these phenomena are experienced and understood among people within those systems. In other words, ethnography is defined as a qualitative research method that involves documenting observed processes, products and relations within a sociocultural context (Geertz, 1973). A
participant-observation approach is one form of ethnography that go beyond merely observing events and experiences; rather it involves active and engaged participation with those whom we observe and interact as ethnographers. The conscious act of observation requires reflexivity, and a critical awareness of the social phenomena that shape people’s identities, relationships, and repertoires (Behar, 1999).

As an orientation toward critical and empirical qualitative inquiry, an ethnographic case study is an appropriate methodology for addressing my research questions because I am interested in gaining a deeper understanding of cultural citizenship among Latina/o youth. Qualitative ethnographic methods are useful when the phenomena – in this particular case Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship – cannot be studied in a controlled or manipulated environment, as well as when an in depth and thick understanding of the social phenomena needs further theorizing. Ethnography allows me to investigate cultural citizenship within a real life context and through children’s lived experiences. Via participant observations and fieldnotes of Change 4 Good, I have documented how fourth and fifth grade Latina/o youth practice cultural citizenship, as well as how they conceptualize the terms citizen and citizenship in relation to their rights and the rights of their cultural communities.

The fieldnotes document instances where youth made their voices heard, and their social identities and lived experiences visible in the YPAR process. Fieldnotes also provide a narrative that describes youth’s agency, participation, and critical thinking, and the experiences that were most salient for them.
Fieldnotes include over one thousand, single-spaced typed pages of participant observation notes. Fieldnotes were written by Change 4 Good program coordinators, including a faculty member and two graduate students, and a team of trained undergraduate research assistants (i.e., CPRAT). All fieldnotes during the ten-month period, which included the two phases of the YPAR process, were collected and written in accordance with Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw’s (1995) ethnographic fieldnote guidelines. All fieldnotes written by me, and the faculty member and/or graduate student co-coordinator, were coded. In cases where there was no fieldnote from the faculty member or graduate student, a fieldnote from the most experienced or senior research assistant was selected for coding. On occasion there were instances where Change 4 Good youth were involved in small group activities; when this was the case all fieldnotes were coded for that session in order to more fully understand the context and interactions that took place in the after-school program.

**Interviews.** To complement the fieldnotes, interviews with the youth in Change 4 Good were also conducted. Each youth was interviewed twice (with the exception of one youth who did not participate in the end-of-year interview). The first round of interviews took place at the end of the second year – once the youth concluded their participation in the program. The follow-up interview was conducted two years after, once the interview protocol was developed and approved by the dissertation committee. A CPRAT Change 4 Good program coordinator or a trained undergraduate research assistant conducted the first round of interviews, which were conducted typically at the end of the summer program, or at the end of the academic
year, in this case summer 2012. All follow-up interviews, carried out in winter 2014, were conducted by me.

The end-of-year interview protocol consisted of four sections: 1) characteristics of the Change 4 Good program (e.g., *How did adults and students work together in this program?*), 2) activities within the program (e.g., *How was this program different from other programs you have been in?*), 3) focus groups or mural reflections (e.g., *What did you learn about focus groups? / What was your experience in making the mural?*), and 4) future hopes for program (e.g., *what are your hopes and dreams for the program?*). The end-of-year interviews allow young people to reflect upon their participation in Change 4 Good. This process of self-reflection is important because it can help discern themes within the fieldnote data, such as the development of supportive and positive intergenerational relations that are based on an ethic of authentic care and cultural capital; practices that are central to fomenting cultural citizenship processes, such as membership and a sense of belonging.

The follow-up interviews included a new set of questions, which were divided into three sections: 1) culture, identity and citizenship (e.g., What does the word *citizenship* mean to you?), 2) reflections on the Change 4 Good program (e.g., How would you describe your participation in the Change 4 Good program?), and 3) children’s views on rights (e.g., What are *rights*? Who has *rights*?). See Appendix B for Cultural Citizenship Interview Protocol.

Both end-of-year and follow-up interviews involved all thirteen Change 4 Good youth with the exception of one participant (e.g., Luz) who was not able to
participate in the end-of-year interview due to family travels. The follow-up interviews provide specific examples or responses that reflect and extend cultural citizenship and rights discourses. Furthermore, responses to these questions also represent youth’s identity and culture, how they view their multiple and intersecting identities within and outside of the program, and how these, if at all, were both incorporated and performed in Change 4 Good.

Given that I am interested in understanding the cultural citizenship process of Latina/o youth, only those interviews that were done with self-identified Latina/o youth were selected for analysis. A total of twenty-five interviews and more than 1,200 single-spaced pages of fieldnotes serve as data for this dissertation. All interviews were transcribed and double-checked by a trained team of undergraduate student research assistants. Once all interviews were transcribed and fieldnotes were selected, the research assistants and I collaborated on the creation of a codebook to help us analyze all of the data comprised of fieldnotes and transcribed interviews.

The ethnographic fieldnotes and semi-structured interviews provide an in-depth portrait, or thick description (Geertz, 1973), of young people’s practices within a framework of cultural citizenship. Both sources of data are central in addressing my research questions, which are important for further understanding children’s cultural citizenship, as well as their views on citizenship and rights.

**Data Analysis**

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3 All interviews were audio recorded, and securely saved with an encrypted password on the university server, as well as the computers in the CPRAT lab in the Psychology Department at UC Santa Cruz. Only the research assistants had access to the audio file and a key to enter the CPRAT lab.
**Codebook.** The codebook was created through a process of inductive and deductive coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Inductive coding involves line by line grouping of themes in the data. For example, identifying and grouping together instances where young people expressed a need for change. Deductive coding consists of discerning themes from relevant literatures. Some literatures that informed the creation the codebook included cultural citizenship, sense of belonging, membership and children’s rights. The final codebook consists of fourteen codes, which are organized into three parts: cultural citizenship processes and practices, youth-adult interactions, and children’s rights.

The first part of the codebook contains codes 1 through 4, which are cultural citizenship processes. These include the following codes: 1) membership, 2) sense of belonging, 3) claiming space, and 4) claiming rights. These four processes characterize cultural citizenship, and are described in detail in the literature review. Yet, what is often not made visible in the literature are the practices through which each process takes place. Hence, we identified five practices within cultural citizenship processes. These include the following sub-codes: A) cultural capital, B) translanguaging, C) taking action, D) facilitating visibility, and E) authentic caring. Codes 1 through 4 are processes within cultural citizenship, and each code corresponds to one or more of sub-codes A through E, which are practices that facilitate cultural citizenship.

All codes and sub-codes, with the exception of B and D, were based on the theoretical framework of cultural citizenship, including literatures on membership,
sense of belonging, children’s rights, cultural capital (e.g., respeto, educación), and authentic caring (e.g., Benmayor, 2002; Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Fuentes, 2011; Getrich, 2008; Mirón & Inda, 2004; Rosaldo, 1994, 1999). Translanguaging (i.e., sub-code B) and facilitating visibility (i.e., sub-code D) were created through a process of inductive coding, which involved reading through the ethnographic fieldnote data in search of themes, or recurrent experiences, that could serve as possible codes to describe processes that facilitate cultural citizenship.

For example, translanguaging, unlike other bilingual terms like code-switching, is used to define instances where there is an exchange or back-and-forth use of languages (e.g., Spanish and English) and cultural forms of expression to create a translingual/transcultural space where people converse and through that process enact the right to multiculturalism (Crese & Blackledge, 2010; Garcia, Makar, Starcevic, & Terry, 2011). Additionally, facilitating visibility refers to instances where the youth proactively engages in a self-directed and intentional action toward creating opportunities to be seen and heard. Examples of this may include leading an activity, such as an ice-breaker, or encouraging other youth to express themselves through the sharing of their stories, creative projects (e.g., collages), and/or other forms of public performance. Activities such as these could therefore allow for and facilitate membership, as well as sense of belonging through the process of sharing, engaging and collaborating.

The second part of the codebook contains two codes that describe the types of intergenerational interaction that took place during youth’s enactment of cultural
citizenship processes and practices. These codes consist of youth-adult interactions (i.e., ▲), and peer, or youth-youth, interactions (i.e., ●). The purpose of these codes is to demonstrate whether and how youth enacted their cultural citizenship in relation to an adult and/or peer. Understanding the dynamics of youth-adult relationships can help inform the process through which intergenerational partnerships emerge, and whether these practices of shared power align with some aspects of cultural citizenship. These sets of codes allow for a deeper analysis of the process of claiming rights in relation to other sub-codes, such as taking action (i.e., sub-code C), facilitating visibility (i.e., sub-code D), and authentic caring (i.e., sub-code E) between youth and adults, as well as among other youth in Change 4 Good.

The third, and last section of the codebook is on the cultural citizenship process of claiming rights (i.e., code 4), which is comprised of the following sub-codes: right to respect (i.e., #), right to equal opportunities (i.e., *) and right to voice (e.g., ✓). For more details on the codebook see Appendix C.

**Coding Process.** Over the course of one academic year, a team of five trained undergraduate student research assistants and I met weekly to discuss patterns and discerning themes in the data, as well as readings of relevant literatures that could help inform our codes and code definitions. After reaching consensus on a codebook draft that we felt best represented the discerned themes, we independently coded five pages of fieldnote data. Then, we met to discuss any disagreements in our codes and debrief on the coding process, including the wording of a code and it definition. After agreeing on a set of codes we met with Dr. Regina D. Langhout to discuss the codes
and their definition. We again coded five pages of fieldnote data independently, and checked our codes to determine if there was consensus in our coding process.

To code all of the data, the research assistants and I worked in pairs. Each pair had an equal number of assigned fieldnotes and transcript interviews. Upon independently coding our respective data, each of us met with our coding partner to discuss any discrepancies in our coding process. If there were any disagreements we discussed it and reached consensus on a code.

Over the course of the coding processes we continued to revise and elaborate on our codes, adding more nuanced definitions to describe what was discerned in the data. Several codebook drafts and iterations of coding took place before we agreed on a set of codes and definitions. Throughout the coding process, I randomly selected a subset, about one-third, of the data for each pair of coders to check inter-rater reliability. Cohen’s kappa was at or above 80% for each pair of coders.
Chapter 4: Results

Latina/o Youth Defining Citizenship

Citizenship is experienced as a social category that is often constructed through sociopolitical discourses that work to uphold the power of the state (Isin & Wood, 1999). Considering the mundane, yet salient meanings of citizenship is important in order to democratize the concept. In other words, in the deconstruction of citizenship lies the transformative potential to democratize who we, as a society, recognize as citizens, as well as what we mean by term citizenship. Counter-hegemonic discourses that situate the historical, economic, political and sociocultural dimensions of citizenship are therefore necessary toward re-conceptualizing the term and the practices that constitute its performance.

In the U.S. progress toward the re-envisioning of citizenship is emerging. Yet the canonical body of literature on citizenship has often focused on its theoretical and philosophical foundations, as well as its relationship to social class (Bloemraad, et al., 2008; Marshall, 1950; Young, 1989). Specifically, the few empirical studies that have explored how people define, experience, and practice citizenship have been done with adults in predominantly middle-class white communities. Most of these studies have also taken place outside of the U.S. context, and do not fully represent the sociopolitical dynamics that shape people’s citizenship. U.S. based studies that have explored citizenship among Latinas/os and other communities of color, despite their great contribution to the field, have remained focused on the experiences of adults.

The theorizing of citizenship has continued to exclude the voices and experiences of
young people, especially from communities of color. Thus, research on Latina/o youth’s citizenship – how they define, embody, and enact citizenship – is warranted.

Research on Latina/o youth’s constructions of citizenship is important for several reasons. First, current demographic trends in the U.S. point to Latinas/os as the largest and fastest growing demographic group, yet little is known about their sociopolitical development. In the 2012 presidential election, Latina/o young adults constituted a powerful decision-making group (Gárcia Bedolla, 2000). Recent statistics demonstrate that one in four students in the K-12th grades nation-wide is of Latina/o descent (National Council of La Raza, 2012). Hence several political scientists suggest that Latinas’/os’ political power will only increase in the years to come (Hispanic Pew Research, 2012). Understanding Latina/o youth’s sociopolitical development, including their relationship to citizenship and the nation-state, can help create more opportunities to facilitate their civic engagement.

Second, as a social group Latinas/os are often at the center of political debates surrounding topics in immigration reform and citizenship. These discourses can disempower and disenfranchise Latina/o youth, leading them to feel as “perpetual foreigners” (Oboler, 2006; Rocco, 2014). Centering the voices of Latina/o youth in the construction of citizenship, particularly in terms of how they make sense of and understand the concept in relation to their lives, would provide a counter-hegemonic narrative of Latinas/os and children, two social categories often relegated to second-class citizenship.
Given the nascent research on Latina/o youth’s citizenship, especially their understanding of the term in relation to their lives, their family, and community, this chapter prioritizes Latina/o youth’s voice in defining and re-conceptualizing the terms citizen and citizenship. The following chapter discusses how Latina/o youth conceive of and articulate their views on citizenship. The chapter is organized into two sections that discuss young people’s response to questions about the construction of the terms citizen and citizenship (e.g., “What do the terms citizen and citizenship mean to you?”).

The first section focuses on Latina/o youth’s definition of citizenship as status and practice in accordance with dominant social constructions of citizenship (Isin & Wood, 1999; Lister, 1997. Citizenship as status refers to the legal meanings associated with the term. These include birthright citizenship and the naturalization process, which grants a person the documentation to reside in the nation as a legal citizen. Citizenship as civic practice refers to the behaviors and actions that sustain the status quo. Examples of these include voting, working, and abiding by the laws of the state.

The second section discusses Latina/o youth’s conceptualizing of citizenship as a bottom-up process that involves building relationships with others, as well as membership and belonging in a collective community. Citizenship is viewed as a universal status that all people possess regardless of legal status or responsibilities to the nation-state. Several excerpts that support these claims also highlight the contentious and contradictory meanings youth associate with the terms citizen and
citizenship. For example, young people presented citizenship as a rights-bearing status with implications for the types of opportunities their families and their communities can access. At times, youth’s definitions communicated resistance to nation-state imposed definitions. In other words, young people’s conceptualizing of citizenship moved beyond legal notions of citizenship, as constructed by the nation-state, toward a re-centering of people’s experiences as citizens beyond borders – a perspective that aligns well with a cultural citizenship framework. The varied perspectives Latina/o youth provide in their conceptualizing of citizenship serves to contextualize their enactment of cultural citizenship.

**Citizenship as a Status and a Practice**

As a socially constructed phenomenon that defines an individual’s and social group’s relationship to the nation-state, citizenship has meanings that are critical and subtle. Most theories of citizenship conceptualize the term as either a status or practice (Bloemraad, et al., 2008; Delanty, 2003; Isin & Turner, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2006). As a status, citizenship is often equated with legal documentation, or permission to reside in the nation. In this way, citizenship is constructed by the power of the nation-state to determine who is a citizen and who is not. Citizenship as a practice, specifically civic practice, refers to the ways in which “good citizenship” is performed to sustain the structures of domination and control by the nation-state (Lister, 2003). Examples include voting, working, paying taxes, engaging in consumerism, abiding the laws, and having loyalties to the nation (Isin & Wood,
As a civic practice citizenship is conceptualized as individual rights and responsibilities that are determined by and in relation to the nation-state.

Although these constructions of citizenship as a status and a practice are heavily rooted in the theoretical foundations of citizenship, young people’s definitions often echoed and challenged these perspectives. Latina/o youth in this study conceptualized citizenship as a status and practice. Specifically, they described citizenship in relation to legal documentation, voting and behaviors associated with being a good (citizen) student.

**Citizenship with/out “Papers” (legal documents).** The possession of legal documentation, or “papers,” as criteria for citizenship permeates the United State’s social and political discourse. One example of this is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an immigration policy put forth by the Obama administration in 2012, that would allow some undocumented immigrants (those under the age of 16 and who arrived before June 2007) to apply for a two-year work permit and be exempt from deportation. Although DACA does not provide a pathway to citizenship, it does confer permission to temporarily reside and work in the U.S. legally (Passel & Lopez, 2012). Among the Latina/o youth interviewed for this dissertation, several of them made references to the possession of legal documents or papers in relation to the nation-state. One possible explanation for this could be that the majority of the Latina/o youth interviewed were legal U.S.-born citizens of foreign-born im/migrant parents. The juxtaposition of their legal status in comparison to that of their family members, some of whom were green-card holders (e.g.,
resident status) or undocumented, made their identity as legal U.S. citizens more palpable, and their definition of the term complex.

The associations between legal status and citizenship were particularly salient among the first-generation Latina/o youth in this study. Young people like Bruno, for example, often made causal statements between length of residence in a country and legal documentation. Bruno’s response demonstrates these connections:

Jesica: Have you heard the words citizen and citizenship?
Bruno: Yeah, but I can't like, I can't describe it. It's hard for me, I think-
Wait what's citizen in Spanish?
Jesica: Ciudadano.
Bruno: Ciudadania? Oh SER CUIDADANO. [Oh TO BE CITIZEN].
Jesica: Yeah.
Bruno: Umm yeah, I heard it on TV. I heard that you- like, you could get citizenship. Like you need to be, like in the Unites States for like- a certain amount of time and then you could be a citizen, like you could- like you could go get a visa and yeah- and like go to Mexico and do other things.

(Interview 2)

Despite initially struggling to define the term, Bruno described citizenship as the status of being a citizen. He viewed citizenship as something “you could get.” In his response citizenship is constructed in relation to time, yet he did not specify what counts as a “certain amount of time.” Bruno made a causal assumption between length of residence and legal status that highlights a common association made when
discussing citizenship. Such an assumption furthers the dominant discourse that citizenship can be acquired over time. This perspective implies that the status of citizen is non-static, but rather shaped by the rules and procedures set forth by a legal system that will ultimately determine the person’s (legal) status. The status of being a legal citizen also implies that one can travel across borders, or as Bruno suggested that a person can “go to Mexico and do other things” if they have a visa. The visa represents the state’s legitimate recognition and acceptance of person’s desire to enter a country.

A legal document, such as a visa, can hold the state’s power over the people to freely move between borders. The possession of papers is equated with citizenship because it affords a person the security to live without fear of deportation, a statement that is illustrated in Shawn’s response.

Jesica: What does it mean to be a U.S. citizen?

Shawn: To live in the United States I guess.

Jesica: Is everybody a citizen?

Shawn: Mmmm uh yeah, sure. Hmm, wait, wait don’t you have to like get your papers to be a citizen? Or something like that?

Jesica: Yeah, but what if people don’t have papers?

Shawn: I guess if you don’t have papers you get deported.

Jesica: Do you think that’s right?

Shawn: No.

Jesica: What can be done about that?
Shawn: Mm, just let people LIVE HERE.

Jesica: Why do you think people get deported?

Shawn: I don’t know. Cause of the GOVERNMENT, DUN DUN DUN ((laughs)):: I don’t know. LET PEOPLE LIVE IN THE U.S. (Interview 2)

Shawn’s statement underscored the importance of legal documentation. Although Shawn initially suggested that being a citizen means “To live in the U.S.”, he later added that to be a citizen a person must possess papers. Over the course of our conversation, he came to realize the power of the state in conferring papers to some people, and he problematized the role of the government by stating “LET PEOPLE LIVE IN THE U.S.” This claim is rooted in his belief that all people should have a right to live wherever they want regardless of legal documentation, a sentiment that was expressed among several other young people in this study. Shawn’s claims are consistent with those of other youth from im/migrant families who advocate for immigration reform and a pathway to citizenship for undocumented people (Bloemraad & Trost, 2008; Getrich, 2008; Solis, 2003; Solis, et al., 2013). As the conversation unfolded, Shawn mentioned that people should live as citizens wherever they want to live, and he implied that the government should support people’s opportunities to be citizens in the U.S.

Shawn’s statement, like Bruno’s, made visible the privilege that comes with the possession of papers (e.g., legal documents) stating that a person is a legal citizen of a nation and therefore eligible to (re)enter a country. The privilege of crossing the border without repercussion made visible the links between legal status and
citizenship. These connections were then furthered by the privilege that comes with possessing legal documents. The interconnections that emerged in Shawn’s definition were also salient in Yesenia’s statement.

Jesica: So you were explaining the process for getting citizenship. Can you tell me a little bit more of what that process is like?

Yesenia: Well they ask for a lot of papers. They need your passport. They need your birth certificate. They need to know, like they need, they need to have proof that you’ve been here for a certain time and they need a lot of papers, like not even my mom could get all of those papers that they’re asking her for. It’s a long process.

Jesica: For getting citizenship yeah.

Yesenia: Uh I think the U Visa status- I think it’s that one I’m not sure though.

Jesica: It’s like a temporary-

Yesenia: Yeah a temporary one, and then um after three years, after you have that, you can fill out papers again and this time you get the citizenship. Yeah um, you also have to fill out- you have to make an essay explaining why you should get, why you should get the thing [citizenship] and you have to explain what happened to you for them to give you the citizen rights.

Jesica: So like an explanation?
Yesenia: A statement, like a statement—like what happened to me, I had to write and I had to explain why I should get the citizen thing.

Jesica: So why should you get it?

Yesenia: Um well pretty much I just wrote that I should get it because that way I could help my mom more with the payment and bills, I could actually, like when I’m legal, like you know I can have a job, I could help my mom with that— I could go to college and get a good education.

(IInterview 2)

Yesenia described citizenship as a legal status, which is characterized by a process that is shaped by a number of factors, including the length of time a person has lived in the U.S., the economic capital, or financial stability, of the applicant, and the motivation for seeking permanent legal residence in the U.S. (Coll, 2010; Molina, 2014). To be a legal citizen in the U.S. a person must express loyalty to the nation-state, in addition to providing the required documentation and proof of eligibility. In some cases this might mean renouncing other national affiliations, or dual citizenship statuses in foreign countries. In other situations this might also mean that the person seeking legal citizenship must make the case that obtaining legal status will grant some protections. Yesenia, for example, mentioned U-Visa, which is a visa that grants temporary legal status to foreign people who have a victim of a crime (Hanson, 2010). Although Yesenia did not elaborate on this remark, she implied that the U-Visa is perhaps a step toward acquiring citizenship.
Despite often confounding residency (e.g., permanent residence, “green card”) with citizenship, Yesenia’s response demonstrated her knowledge of the naturalization process. In doing so, it resonated with the lived experiences of many im/migrant people in the U.S., who are affected by anti-immigration policies. Her familiarity with the naturalization process, along with her motivation to attain legal citizenship in the U.S., reflects her aspirations, as well as those of other undocumented youth, including DREAMers, and DACA recipients, who are disenfranchised by U.S. anti-immigration policies (Valdivia & Valdivia, 2014). In her statement, Yesenia described citizenship in relation to her hopes and dreams for a better life, one with greater opportunities for herself and her mother. Yet opportunities associated with employment or the ability to work further reinforce dominant discourses of citizenship that construct im/migrant people as “citizen-workers” who will contribute to the economic growth of the nation-state (Lister, 2003). Im/migrant people, who are younger in age and healthy or physically fit, are likely to be conceptualized as “citizen workers of the future” (Lister, 2007; Molina, 2006).

Yesenia’s conceptualizing of citizenship, despite emphasizing legality and the possession of documents as necessary for acquiring employment opportunities, also highlights the meaningful role young people have in informing their parents and communities about the naturalization process. This is consistent with other research that suggests that children and youth of im/migrant parents can act as socializing
agents, who engage with their parents in conversations about legal or political matters (Bloemraad & Trost, 2008; Wong, 2000; Wong & Tseng, 2008).

Yesenia’s statement is also significant because it confirms recent claims that undocumented im/migrants are also children. In the past few years, there has been an emerging and growing interest in the experiences of unaccompanied minors, or im/migrant children. Children and youth however have been im/migrating since the time of Ellis Island (Moreno, 2005). Yesenia’s immigration experience is not new; rather it is one of the many untold stories of im/migrant youth in the United States.

Conceptualizing citizenship as a status that is conferred and determined by the nation-state via the possession of legal documents was a common theme among several of the young people I interviewed. The statements by Bruno, Shawn and Yesenia make visible their familiarity with the legal systems regarding citizenship, as well as system connections this has accessing resources. Latina/o youth also problematized the legal constructions of citizenship by contesting the power of the state. Among the Latina/o youth, citizenship was often described as a status, or a legally recognized social category, that could be achieved over time and through specific procedures. Their responses underscored the value of legal documentation, and how citizenship is socially constructed in relation to a binary: having or not having papers, being a citizen or undocumented. The complexities of defining citizenship were more pronounced when conceptualized as a practice. Two themes emerged: a citizen is someone who votes and a good person (student).
**Voting as a Marker of Citizenship.** In the United States citizenship is often viewed as a social category that comes with a set of rights and responsibilities. The set of actions that characterize citizenship present it as more than just a status, but rather as a practice that involves people participating in the state. One way of practicing citizenship, and therefore upholding the relationship between individuals and the state, is voting. Voting is perceived as a hallmark of citizenship because it is both a right and a responsibility that legal citizens are encouraged to take on. Among the young people in this study voting was mentioned several times in relation to legal status, the possession of papers, and residency in the U.S. The following interview statements by Bruno and Diego suggest that voting is a marker of citizenship:

Bruno: A citizen is someone that votes.

Diego: You can’t vote if you don’t have citizenship- if you’re not from here [United States]. (Interview 2)

Bruno and Diego made explicit the relationship between being a citizen, or practicing citizenship, and voting. Their conceptualizing of citizenship in relation to voting demonstrated the relationship between the people and the state. That is, the interconnectedness of residency, or birth in a nation, and voting, as conditions for being a citizen. Voting, among the Latina/o youth, was therefore viewed as a practice of being a citizen. The practice of voting constitutes, and reinforces, a person’s identity as a citizen. In the process of articulating their meanings of citizenship, young people, like Bruno and Diego, made links and connections between voting and legal residence, a connection that Yesenia furthered in the following reply:
Citizenship is when you’re like legally allowed to be here [U.S.] and you have more rights, I think you kind of have equal rights as people that live here, who can vote and have papers. (Interview 2)

Yesenia’s response brings to the forefront several connections, which might be perceived as the trinity of citizenship: having residency in the U.S., papers (legal documents), and voting rights. Although citizenship was associated with legal documents and residence, it also implied voting. Relatedly, equating citizenship with residency in some cases meant the right to vote. Place of birth, or residency, seemed to be a common theme that emerged in youth’s construction of citizenship, but this was often mentioned in relation to the possession of legal documents. Voting as a practice that characterizes citizenship was viewed in relation to a person’s legal status, including the person’s place of residence.

The connection between voting and citizenship that was highlighted by Bruno, Diego and Yesenia is consistent with other studies of young people’s views on citizenship (Lister 2007; Melton & Limber, 1992; Morrow, 1999; Ruck, et a., 1998). Although studies were done with predominantly white middle-class youth, it is worth noting that voting is a particularly salient marker of citizenship, perhaps because young people, who are under the age of 18 in the U.S., do not have the right to vote. Hence, voting becomes a significant practice associated with being a citizen. The following conversation with Feliz demonstrates some of these associations.

Feliz: Citizen- I think it's like, for example- a citizen to me means a person that was born here [U.S.] and they have citizen rights, so that means since
that person was born here they have the rights that the rest of the people who live here have. Like citizens have rights, like the right to vote. They have the right to, I don't know, have a house I guess, and the right to adopt kids.

Jesica: So do you think all people are citizens? Everybody?

Feliz: YEAH- well:: just people who were born in that country or place. They are citizens of that specific country or area.

Jesica: So, for example, I was born in Mexico, so I'm not a citizen of the U.S.?

Feliz: Umm I don't know- Maybe by getting specific permit or paper from this country. (Interview 2)

Feliz describes a citizen in two ways: someone who was born in the U.S. and someone who has citizen rights, such as voting. She then draws the connections between these two when she explains that citizens have rights, such as voting, but these are only reserved for those who were born or legally reside in the United States. The links between legal citizenship and voting are further explicated in Feliz’s response, especially as she discusses that people living in a particular region are citizens of that region by virtue of where they were born and where they live, yet they can gain access to the legal documentation that would constitute them as citizens.

Over the course of the interview, Feliz’s explanation becomes more elaborate and explicit as she discusses how citizenship can be acquired by engaging in various practices. To demonstrate this, she begins to unpack the construction of citizenship by
juxtaposing the material resources and privileges that U.S.-born legal citizenship affords.

Jesica: Ok well what does that mean? What kinds of things can people who were not born here have?

Feliz: I think what they could do is rent a house and work in specific places, like maybe in the farmland [agriculture] or something like that. They could put their children in public schools. They could have, I think, a bank- like a banking account. They could have cell phones. They could have almost everything that a regular [legal] citizen has, except they don't have the right to vote I think, or to buy properties, and have better opportunities, like go to college, and other things. (Interview 2)

Feliz made visible the material resources undocumented people and green card holders can and cannot access, yet she highlighted voting as a right that undocumented citizens cannot have. Her response also demonstrates how permanent residents and undocumented people live their lives as “regular citizens,” however there are certain privileges and opportunities, such as education, that they cannot take, or have difficulty accessing.

The construction of citizenship as a practice becomes more complex as she unpacks the term in relation to a broader discourse that moves her conceptualizing toward cultural citizenship.

Jesica: What else do you feel or think about that?
Feliz: To be honest, I don't think it’s [the construction of legal citizenship] very fair because umm some people come here to have better opportunities:: and a better life style than they had where they were originally from. Umm:: and that's why I don't think it’s very fair ‘cause it’s- it’s okay, like they [im/migrant people] are not exactly from here [U.S.] and they don’t have the same culture- and maybe they don't speak the language [English], but they could learn and be able to do that, and they could still have their culture. (Interview 2)

In this elaborated response Feliz moves away from her initial construction of citizenship as a practice of voting, to re-construct a notion of citizenship that recognizes the struggle for recognition without assimilation. Feliz provided a nuanced conceptualization of citizenship that problematized the term as a practice, as well as a status. She constructed citizenship apart from the nation-state to make visible the experiences of people who do not possess legal citizenship. Feliz presented a narrative of citizenship that recognized the underlying motivations and structural factors that lead people to im/migrate. In doing so, she recognized the possibilities for a more inclusive and just construction of citizenship – a re-construction of citizenship that is further discussed toward the end of the chapter – and proposed a rethinking of citizenship beyond the nation-state, including practices like voting.

Voting is a civic and political act that implicates the state, as well as a person’s responsibilities and relationship to the nation. The Latina/o youth in this study viewed voting as a marker of citizenship, and they discussed voting in relation
to legal documents, residency, and opportunities. The emergence of voting, in relation to citizenship, highlights the value and power that young people associate with the right to vote. Previous research suggests that young people living in immigrant/migrant and/or mixed status families are exposed to discourses that view citizenship as the possession of legal documents and the right to vote (Solis, et al., 2013). Conceptualizations of citizenship as a legal status and a practice of voting are too narrow, and hence problematic because these exclude the political, bureaucratic and economic challenges of “getting” citizenship through a means of naturalization.

Social constructions of citizenship that ignore the actions and community dynamics of how it is embodied and performed are limited in scope (Condor, 2010; Gibson & Hamilton, 2011). Such constructions are also adult-centered because these focus on voting behaviors that young people cannot engage in by virtue of being under the age of voting (under the age of eighteen in the U.S.) (Lister, 2003, 2007; Mayall, 2001; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Consequently, the assumption is that citizenship begins in adulthood, when the right to vote is exercised and/or when an adult person is granted legal authorization to reside in the United States. Associating citizenship with legal documents and voting were a common response among the youth, yet citizenship was often also equated with “good behaviors” in the classroom. The following section highlights the connections Latina/o youth made to good classroom behaviors and the “good citizen” discourses.

The “Good”(student) Citizen. In the United States, citizenship is often conceptualized in relation to individual acts and behaviors. A citizen, for examples is
someone who, in addition to voting, also follows the law, as well as the roles and responsibilities set forth by the nation-state. Accordingly, the construction of the law-abiding citizen is typified as the ideal “good citizen” (Bloemraad, et al., 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Constructions of citizenship such as these are thus heavily focused on upholding the rules and regulations imposed by the state. In doing so the nation-state maintains its structure of power to determine who is a state-sanctioned member of society (Molina, 2010). The following statement by Celine illustrates this point:

I’ve heard it [citizen] like-, I’ve heard like citizen, like citizen of the state. And there’s laws that a citizen- that we should follow, but I don’t know much about it [citizenship], other than like citizens must follow the laws.

(Interview 2)

Celine’s response made explicit the connection between the term citizen and the state, as she remarked that she has heard the expression “citizen of the state.” She elaborated on this statement by mentioning the existence of laws, particularly emphasizing that, “citizens must follow the laws.” Celine’s response reflected her understanding of the relationship between the terms citizen, laws, and the state. Celine viewed these concepts as interconnected, such that a citizen of the state is expected to follow the laws set forth by it in order for the person’s citizen status to be considered legitimate – this is especially this case if the person is trying to gain legal documents. Citizenship is thus constructed in relation to the state and its laws. This conceptualizing is consistent with dominant social constructions of citizenship where the boundaries of citizenship can be re-drawn by those in positions of power with the
intent to disenfranchise members of subordinate social groups (Isin, 2008). For example, a formerly incarcerated person can possess the status of being a legal citizen, but the person cannot have the right to vote. In this case, the practice of citizenship is restricted and determined by a set of rules and conditions set forth by the nation-state.

Conceptualizations of citizenship in relation to the law provide a more nuanced understanding of the term, yet they also reify individual-state relationships. That is, the state has a set of laws that maintain the status quo, or the social order, for its citizens (Molina, 2010; Ngai, 2004). This dynamic of power within a structure, such as the state, is not unique; structures of power are so embedded in our systems that often go unnoticed. Schools, for example, are a setting where these structures of power, along the construction of the “good citizen,” become significant.

One particular curriculum that has been instituted within schools nationwide to reinforce the good behavior of students is Character Education (e.g., Citizenship Education, Character Counts!). The curriculum strives to promote the positive moral development and values of young people in kindergarten through high school (Brooks & Goble, 1997; Chamberlin, 2010; Revell, 2002; Rowe, 2006), and it is characterized by six core values: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. The values that Character Education promotes, socializes students to think of themselves as individuals with the capacity to engage in certain desirable behaviors, such as caring and respect. Within this curriculum students are viewed as
individual actors, engaged in practices predominantly characterized by complacency and conformity to the structure of schooling (Revell, 2002).

At the Maplewood Unified School District all schools follow the Character Education curriculum. In fact, four-foot tall posters of the six pillars of Character Education were often displayed inside some of the classrooms at Maplewood Elementary School, including the classroom where the Change 4 Good program sessions took place. In this study, excerpts from the Latina/o youth I interviewed demonstrate how the “good student” was constructed as the “good citizen.” That is, as a person who follows the rules (e.g., laws) of the classroom setting. The following dialogue with Diego, for example, describes “good student” practices in relation to the “Citizenship Award.”

Jesica: Where did you hear the words citizen and citizenship?

Diego: I got three awards for it [citizenship], and that’s where I heard it.

Jesica: Three awards, where?

Diego: At school, for being a good citizen, and having citizenship.

Jesica: CONGRATULATIONS. What did they tell you about that?

Diego: Nothing. They [stakeholders at school] just gave it to me.

Jesica: What did you do for it?

Diego: I don’t know; I had to be a good person.

Jesica: What do you mean by a good person? Did you do certain things?

Diego: Yeah, I had to be kind. Um, share- Be polite.

Jesica: Be polite to who?
Diego: Everybody. (Interview 2)

Diego referenced the “Citizenship Award” to describe the context where he first heard the term citizen. In the course of him describing the award and why it was awarded to him, he talked about his behaviors and how he engaged in the classroom. Specifically he talked about being a good person by being kind and polite to everyone. Good behaviors, as evidenced by Diego’s remarks, were described in relation to individual actions that were community-oriented, such as sharing, yet focused on maintaining the order of the classroom setting (e.g., being polite). The “Citizenship Award” was given to students, like Diego, who would engage in actions that were deemed appropriate within the context of schooling.

Young people, like Diego, often made associations between good behaviors and citizenship because “good students” were often recognized and praised with the award. The “Citizenship Award” was a way for young people to describe the terms citizen and citizenship because it referenced the practices associated with these concepts. Diego, however, was no the only youth who made reference to the award in his conceptualizing of citizenship. In fact, other youth who were also recognized with the award made this connection after being encouraged to reflect on what the “Citizenship Award” meant to them. Daniela, for example, was another young person who discussed citizenship in relation to the award.

Daniela: In my second grade class, I think I got a certificate of [for] citizenship, and I never- I never got what that meant though. I think I got the certificate because I read, I helped- I helped like in the classroom. My
class was a combo class, so it was second grade and third grade, and like sometimes the third graders wouldn’t, wouldn’t get the instructions and I would always listen, and then- so when the third graders wouldn’t listen, they’d ask me if I could help them with the addition, multiplication, the math. And- I think that’s why I got the citizenship [award]. I don’t remember- I think ‘cause I was helpful and I always listen, I always- I always read aloud. I think that’s why I got it. (Interview 2)

Initially, when asked about the “Citizenship Award,” Daniela and Diego mentioned that they did not know why they were given the award. For example Diego claims, “I don’t know, I had to be a good person,” while Daniela exclaims, “I never got what it meant.” Upon further reflection, however, Diego and Daniela begin to make associations between good classroom behaviors, including being kind and helpful toward others, and the “Citizenship Award.” Both of their responses highlight some of features of the six core values of Character Education. Caring, in the way of sharing, being helpful, polite and kind to others, was among the most common practice youth associated with “good student” behaviors, and consequently citizenship. Unlike Diego’s response, Daniela’s experiences, specifically her behaviors, are more community-oriented because she provided guidance and support to students who were struggling with the course subject, such as math. Daniela engaged in individual acts of good student behaviors that were oriented toward helping her peers learn. Yet these actions, despite their community-oriented approach, work to perpetuate the standardization of student’s learning, wherein students must
acquire competence in certain skills and knowledge that are determined by those in positions of power. The emphasis of Character Education is thus to facilitate positive youth development and good moral character among youth; critical thinking and sociopolitical engagement are not explicitly facilitated or encouraged within the curriculum, yet are central for active citizen participation (Revell, 2002).

The associations between citizenship and “good student” behavior are consistent with other studies that have focused on Character Education. In a study of children’s and youth’s assessments of Character Education, being a kind and good person to others was referenced in relation to citizenship (Revell, 2002). Older youth, in pre-adolescence and of middle-school age, had more complex views on citizenship. For example, they viewed citizenship as something that is acquired at birth or through a process that requires practicing certain behaviors, like showing respect and following the law. These patterns of associating citizenship with good behaviors, specifically conceptualizing citizenship as a status that can be acquired by engaging in individual actions and/or through abiding by some rules and regulations, were also present among the Latina/o youth in Change 4 Good. One possible explanation for this could be that values promoted in Character Education were strongly embedded in their schooling experiences, and these interactions were thus reflected on and praised through the “Citizenship Award.”

The associations young people make between their behaviors and citizenship, or practices that are rewarded when perceived to be “good” in the context of schooling, are not surprising given the citizenship socialization practices that are
reinforced in schools for students of Color (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008; Thornberg, 2009). The assumption is that “good students” will thus become “good citizens” when they conform to the sociocultural norms and conventions of the classroom environment (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Foucault, 1977; Giroux & McLaren, 1989). The rules and expectations that students must follow are predetermined and set forth by people in power, such as adults, with little opportunities for young people to engage in more participatory forms of citizenship practices, such as critical thinking and decision-making.

Viewing citizenship as a set of good behaviors, characterized by conforming and passive practices in the classroom, is problematic because it goes against the critical social engagement that is needed to support a healthy democracy (Dewey, 1916/2009). Several studies have discussed the problem of instituting complacency and obedience in the classroom, including how these practices are associated with sustaining the status quo (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Giroux & McLaren, 1989). Citizenship is more than an individual engaging in good actions that are community-oriented. Instead, it is about people coming together, building community, and working toward collective action for a more just society that disrupts the status quo (Rocco, 2014). A healthy democracy is characterized by social justice-oriented citizenship behaviors that center equality the voices and participation of all people, especially those who are members of subordinated social groups, such as Latina/o youth.
The excerpts in this section illustrate young people’s views on citizenship, and how they understand this concept within the context of their lives and experiences. The Latina/o youth conceptualized citizenship in ways that echoed dominant social discourses. Several youth, for example, made referenced dominant notions, such as citizenship as having papers, living in the U.S., being a member of the state, and voting, as well as being a good student. Yet, the Latina/o youth I interviewed also pushed back against these notions. This was especially the case when they were describing the process for acquiring citizenship legally, or when their lived experiences and those of their cultural communities reflected a different process.

In effect, Latina/o youth described citizenship as a status and a practice, established by a nation-state that de-legitimized their family and communities, and limited their ability to participate as active citizens. Despite echoing some dominant aspects of citizenship as status and practice, such as possessing papers (legal documents), being a “good” person, and following the law, Latina/o youth also problematized these meanings by arguing that citizenship is, and should be, governed by the social relational aspects and activities of one’s active participation in a sociocultural community, as demonstrated in the next section.

**Citizenship Beyond the Nation-State**

Social constructions of citizenship that extend beyond the nation-state are necessary for two reasons. Considering the term as more than a status and a practice opens up new possibilities for social action and change. Narrow definitions do not account for the multiple and varied ways through which people enact citizenship.
Second, as societies change and become more diverse, citizenship discourses should also change to reflect the diversity. Deconstructing citizenship with the goal of re-conceptualizing it to be more socially just and critical of status quo, or how it operates to disenfranchise others, is necessary in moving toward social change.

Viewing citizenship as relational acts of membership and belonging, of solidarity and mutuality with one another, aligns with a cultural citizenship framework that works from the bottom-up. The following excerpts from interviews with Latina/o youth in Change 4 Good make the case for a citizenship beyond the nation-state; a conceptualizing of citizenship that transcends physical and imagined borders.

**Citizenship as Membership and Belonging.** In the United States, social categories, like race, class, gender and age have often shaped how citizenship is defined, and who is considered a citizen (Coll, 2004; Molina, 2014). In their responses, Latina/o youth often made references to these social constructions. Taking a social and historical approach to defining citizenship, they often drew from their knowledge and experiences to define the term. Lina’s statement illustrates this point, as she discusses her frustration with the “system” and the mistreatment of im/migrants, particularly from Mexico.

“When they [media, popular masses] say “America is a free country,” but they have the border and people get killed trying to cross the border, I GET SO MAD. Because if they’re saying that America is a free country, and that you have these rights here and
that you should be lucky - that every other country should be like us, IT’S REALLY UPSETTING. I mean what I don’t get is that California was once Mexico, and so now they’re not letting Mexicans access it because they DON’T BELONG HERE. I DON’T GET HOW PEOPLE COULD THINK THAT WAY.”

(Interview 2)

Lina drew from historical accounts of displacement and deterritoriality. In particular she mentioned the annexation of Mexico, currently Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California and Nevada, to discuss that U.S. territories were once a part of Mexico. With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, many Mexican people were displaced to Mexican territory, and Lina referenced an historical account to claim that Mexican people have a right to be in the U.S. This strong statement situated the issue of im/migration and citizenship within an historical Mexico-U.S. context. Lina’s reference to the history of Mexicans in California in particular shows several powerful remarks that Chicanas/os have been stating as well: “¡Yo no cruze la frontera, la frontera me cruzo!” (“I didn’t cross the border, the border crossed me!”) (Muñoz, 2007). This expression of resistance helped mobilize several people during the Chicana/o Movement of the 1960s, and it reaffirmed their history, culture, language and power as a collective community that has been marginalized in the U.S. In her statement, Lina makes similar remarks when she claims that “California was once Mexico, and so now they are not letting Mexicans
access it because they DON’T BELONG HERE.” Lina taunts the power of the state by re-centering it in a history of colonization and conquest.

Moreover, Lina’s response also challenges notions of rights and freedom in the United States. When she states, “‘America is a free country,’ but they have the border and people get killed trying to cross the border, I GET SO MAD.,” she is naming the irony of this ideology of rights and freedom that are reserved only for certain people who are north of the Mexico-U.S. border. In other words, she is stating that if the U.S. were truly free, and if people possessed rights, than the right to strive for a better life and opportunities, and the freedom to live a life without harm would hold true for all people, not just legal citizens of the United States. Through this claim Lina is also holding the U.S. accountable to the violence and deaths at the border, which are a result of the U.S.’s militarization of the border (Palafox, 2000). Lina’s response makes visible the power of the nation-state, not just in terms of conquest, but also in justifying the murder of millions of people who try cross the border to pursue the false ideology of the American Dream (Gándara, 2009; Gonzalez, 2000).

In a follow up statement, when asked to describe the term citizen, Lina provides the following response:

Well I think the little things help. Like trying to, like trying to volunteer […] Little things help everyone, not just some people, I mean we’re all equal and deserve the same, like we can help each other. I think that as long as they’re [undocumented people] taking care of the community and helping out they should be considered citizens. (Interview 2)
Lina’s definition of a citizen describes several qualities, such as equality and community, toward describing citizenship. She mentions that all people, regardless of their status, deserve equal rights and should be treated with the same dignity and respect. Also, she states that caring for the community and others should be enough to constitute a person’s status as citizen. Within these themes of care and community is the notion of membership – of being made by and through the relationships and social positioning of being in relationship with others. The following statement by Jackie highlights membership in ways that adds more nuance to Lina’s claims:

Jackie: Citizen means MEMBER- I think. That’s what I would say, but I believe that we’re ALL citizens here [U.S.] (Interview 2)

Jackie began her response with the bold statement, “Citizen means MEMBER,” and she concluded with the claim that, “we’re ALL citizens here,” which resonates with Lina’s argument that all people are citizens. That is, that borders, nations or states should not determine a person’s citizenship. Jackie re-conceptualized the term citizen to mean member, yet she did not specify or mention any particular affiliation. Instead, Jackie leaves this open-ended to emphasize the communality, or universality, of citizenship. These themes also emerged in Luz and Kyle’s statements:

Luz: Citizenship is about helping out and doing activities, like being a part of things, not just sitting around doing nothing, but actually belonging-being a part of groups. (Interview 2)

Kyle: Umm like helping others. Like umm, working together and be[ing] stronger and not giving up. (Interview 2)
Luz and Kyle conceptualized citizenship in ways that emphasized collaboration, working together, and being members of a collective struggle. Luz, for example, mentioned “belonging- being a part of groups,” whereas Kyle stated, “be[ing] stronger and not giving up.” Luz and Kyle also emphasized the importance of being in community and working with others – their responses underscore the importance and significance of acting as part of a collective. Their understanding of citizenship is based on social action, and values of mutuality and communality, which are characterized by reciprocal care. Citizenship, beyond rights and state affiliations, is a practice of engaging with the cultural, social and political (e.g., civic) representations of a community, through practices and acts that reinforce a person’s membership and enfranchisement within that community or nation (Rosaldo, 1994). Latina/o youth’s responses characterize membership as a practice of citizenship that emerges from the ground-up, from people who are part of a collective group.

Taken together, the statements by Lina, Jackie, Luz and Kyle underscores several contemporary critical theories of citizenship, which view citizenship as a conglomeration of acts and values that develop across time and social context in community with to other people (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Ong, 1996; Rosaldo, 1994). Such approaches toward the construction of citizenship are also consistent with a cultural citizenship framework that re-conceptualizes citizenship beyond the nation-state, and is in resistance to the status quo. Cultural citizenship is a process that encompasses membership and belonging, as well as the claiming of space and rights in society. By reflecting and articulating their definitions young people were re-
constructing citizenship beyond the state, rights, and national loyalties. Their ability to think conceptually and critically, about the terms citizen and citizenship shows the complexity of their definitions, and also their re-imagining of what it should be.

Conclusion

The nuances of young people’s citizenship definitions are presented in this chapter. Their definition cannot be explained without an understanding of the sociopolitical context through which these citizenship discourses emerge. Although young people’s definitions were characterized by narrow constructions of citizenship as a status and a practice, at other times their responses often took a social, political and economic lens. Citizenship constructions that emphasize the possession of legal documentation, voting, and engaging in “good” behaviors that uphold the status quo are problematic, yet they reflect the dominant discourses that shape conceptualizations of citizenship and provide access to resources. Given these prevalent discourses on what constitutes citizenship and how it is enacted, Latina/o youth often demonstrated a double consciousness, where they recognized dominant social constructions of citizenship yet offered valuable critiques.

In the concluding chapter I discuss at greater length the nuances of their definitions, as well as the implications of Latina/o youth’s conceptualizing of the terms citizen and citizenship.
Chapter 5: Results

Latina/o Youth Cultural Citizenship

Membership

In contemporary theories of citizenship, the term membership is often used to define who does and does not belong in the nation-state (Oboler, 2006). Extending this definition, cultural citizenship theorizing posits that membership is also about people’s experiences of inclusion and/or marginalization within political, economic, cultural, and social contexts (Rocco, 2014; Rosaldo, 1994). As a process that develops from people’s lived experiences, membership considers how people’s positionality and social identities intersect to facilitate their empowerment or disenfranchisement. Membership is characterized by people’s social positioning and social identities, and how these intersect to facilitate their affiliate to a community, or a particular social group (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1997; Tajfel, 1974).

To demonstrate the practice of membership, in accordance with a cultural citizenship framework, I discuss and give examples of how the Latina/o youth in Change 4 Good embodied their membership. First, I discuss membership in relation to Latina/o youth’s positioning by adults. Specifically, I describe how their interactions with power-holders (e.g., adults, teachers, staff) at their school made salient their membership within the categories of student and youth. Second, I provide evidence on how Latina/o youth’s social identities informed their membership within particular social groups, including their cultural communities. I end with a discussion of how Latina/o youth’s membership was constructed through their social positioning
within the context of school, and their social identities.

**Membership and Latina/o Youth’s Positionality in Relation to Adults**

Membership is a process of self-categorization that is characterized by those experiences that position a person within a particular social category. Among the young people in Change 4 Good, their positioning as students was made salient through their interactions with adults or power-holders at their school. The following fieldnote, for example, demonstrates Latina/o youth’s schooling positionality as they discussed an interaction they had with the lunch lady.

Yesenia (10) raised her hand and she said that sometimes there were teachers at the school, like Mrs. M, and other yard duties who were very mean to the students. Some of the students then began to share their experiences with Mrs. B, the lunch lady. Lina (9) raised her hand and shared that the other day, she had asked the lunch lady if there was anything else for lunch, and Mrs. B said “No, that’s all we have and all you are going to get until the end of the YEAR” Lina said that when the lunch lady made that comment, she was really sad and angry because she couldn’t do anything about it. Yesenia added that the lunch lady was always in a bad mood. Another student, Diego (10), said that Mrs. B was in a bad mood because she was the only one working there and there were too many students. Luz (9) then said “There are mean people at school,” and talks about a yard duty named Ms. R was always asking the students “to do this and that.” (Fieldnote 03/15/2012)
Yesenia, Lina, Diego and Luz shared a common schooling experience that is characterized by disempowering interactions with adults. Yesenia began by stating that some teachers are “very mean to students” and this prompted Lina to share an interaction she had with the lunch lady regarding the food. Lina described feeling frustrated because she could not address the problem of bad lunch food at her school, likely due to her positioning within the school. Diego, however, provided a structural analysis of the lunch lady’s reaction toward Lina. Diego explained that there are too many students to serve, perhaps implying that there are not enough resources at their school. In response to Lina’s experience, Luz echoed Yesenia’s sentiment as she claimed, “There are mean people at school.” Through this process of sharing their interactions with the adult facilitators in Change 4 Good, Yesenia, Lina and Luz validated each other’s experiences in ways that made their social positioning as youth within the schooling context salient.

Young people conceptualized their experiences in school as subordinate to adults. That is, their collective accounts of disenfranchisement validated their individual experiences, as well as their ability to see themselves as a group who was positioned differently at their school than were adults. Thus, young people were forging their membership within the social category of youth. This label represented their collective experience and status as subordinate to adults. By discussing and essentially reflecting upon their experiences, youth were relating to each other’s accounts. Through the sharing of their interactions with power-holders (e.g., adults) at their school, youth co-constructed a tapestry of shared experiences that represented
their youth membership.

School-based youth-adult interactions were characterized by a hierarchy of power. That is, Latina/o youth often had little to no power within the context of school. Their experiences of subordination by adults binded them as a social group within the social category of student. Latina/o youth’s social awareness of how they were positioned within the context of the school appeared more salient among youth who spoke up, or resisted being silenced by adults. For example, in her interview Lina shared an interaction she had with her school basketball team coach. Lina uses this account to describe young people’s social positioning in relation to adults.

Lina: I think, sometimes it’s really hard to speak up ‘cause adults, they’ll do- they’ll think that children aren’t big enough to understand certain things. When really I think that if we’re gonna be them [adults] one day, that it’s never too soon to actually think the way they do and see different things that are going on, and decide for things to happen. […] There's several times that I’ve seen people not have power against other people.

Jesica: Do you have a story when you saw somebody not having power?

Lina: Well, one girl in my basketball team named Ana- I had this coach that was really strict and upbeat, and I guess, she wouldn’t stand up to him the way I did (haha). So she would kinda have a small voice against him and she asked for like, a drink of water in a break and he started yelling at her, and so she just stayed quiet for the rest of the time. That kinda reminds me of a time where you don’t really have power to like stand up
to anybody, especially since he was an adult and she didn’t wanna talk back ‘cause she was a kid and a student in his team. (Interview 2)

Lina described her understanding of adults’ views toward children, particularly when she stated that adults think “children aren’t big enough to understand certain things.” In her initial response Lina claimed youth are going to be adults, so young people must be afforded opportunities to have a say in decisions that matter to them. As she continued, she stated that people often use “power against other people,” and she demonstrated this point with a follow-up story of a girl in her basketball team and her interaction with the coach. Using her teammate’s experience as an example of adults’ power over young people, Lina concluded that the power young people have is limited by their social positioning as subordinate to adults. Lina’s critique of adult’s power over young people allowed her to resist being silenced by adult’s authority and speak up.

The experiences of marginalization and silence described by Lina, which were common among young people, were also important in shaping youth’s membership within the school. At the center of Lina’s response was a conceptualization of power – defined as something that people have and can use to subordinate other people. Lina demonstrated having an awareness and critique of power when she described Ana’s experience with the basketball team coach at her school. Specifically, Lina describes how Ana’s agency and voice was constrained by her social positioning (e.g., youth, student, team player). Lina’s understanding of power led her to reflect on her social positioning as subordinate to adults. Through this, she recognized her membership, as
well as the social positioning and membership of her teammate, within the social categories of student, youth and team player, and as separate and subordinate to the positioning of an adult and teacher/coach at their school.

The examples just described demonstrate how sociocultural constructions of childhood and adult’s power over children shaped Latina/o youth’s social positioning, and ultimately their membership. When Latina/o youth acknowledge that their positioning by power-holders at their school is possibly a result of their status as youth and students, they viewed their membership within a group that is subordinate to adults, regardless of whether the adults are staff, coaches or teachers at their school. In other situations, however, young people saw themselves as members of their school community because they were afforded opportunities to meaningfully participate. For example, during the 2011 budget cuts at Maplewood Elementary School, several students participated in social actions with their teachers, many of whom had received “pink slips” (i.e., termination of employment). Latina/o youth’s school-based experiences of standing in solidarity with their teachers on Pink Day broadened their membership beyond the social positioning, or category of youth, and strengthened their affiliation to the school community. The following fieldnote describes a conversation young people had about Pink Day.

The story Jackie read was about powerlessness surrounding the pink slips [discharge notice] that the teachers got, and the power they [students] felt on Pink Day. Celine exclaimed, “Oh, PINK DAY” and Lina said she had two points to make about that. She explained that on Pink Day everybody
wore pink to symbolize the pink slips and that they made some signs and were chanting. Celine said that when they would chant in the streets cars would honk, and it was super exciting and pretty cool. Lina’s second point was that when Mr. E [teacher at an after-school program] shared this story at the house meeting [focus group] that she saw a connection. Celine said that their protest was about trying to get their jobs back. Lina said she felt a connection because she remembered that one time when they were driving to [an agricultural community nearby] she saw some other people with signs that also said something about trying to keep their job, and that her mom honked. Jesica asked if anybody had teachers who got pink slips. Lina said that some of her favorite teachers got pink slips, and Celine named them and said it was really sad. Bruno asked what pink slips meant, and Aldo said, “It means the school doesn't have enough money to pay them and it's a warning that they may not have jobs next year.” (Fieldnote 07/19/2011)

The dialogue between Celine and Lina regarding pink slips, described their experiences and reflections regarding an event that took place at their school. The event involved youth and teachers coming together to protest the termination of their employment at Maplewood Elementary. Through their conversations, Celine and Lina highlighted youth’s collective engagement and action with their teachers and the broader school community. By collectively participating with other students, teachers and school staff, Celine and Lina viewed themselves as active agents who were in
solidarity with their teachers. Through these experiences of collective action, youth saw themselves as members who were included and whose voices were heard. As members within a collective effort, youth advocated on behalf of their teachers’ employment because they were affected by the situation.

The Pink Day example demonstrated how membership is socially constructed by and through people positioning themselves and their social identities, as well as being simultaneously positioned by others. Through this experience Latina/o youth saw themselves as having the agency to be in solidarity with their teachers in a situation that affected the entire school community. Latina/o youth viewed their social positioning in school in relation to and in support of their teachers. Young people’s participation on Pink Day broadened their membership beyond the social category of student-youth, to the category of school member. That is, through their participation on Pink Day, youth people were acknowledged by adults as members of the school community constituency with the capacity to be actively engaged and in solidarity with their teachers.

The Latina/o youth, as the Pink Day example demonstrates, engaged in a practice of fluid membership by situating themselves in relation to their teachers. A central aspect of membership in a cultural citizenship framework is moving beyond simple in-group and out-group binaries to work toward solidarity (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Fuentes, 2011; Rosaldo, 1994). Because membership develops through experiences of inclusion, as well as social interactions that make salient an individual’s identities and social positioning, taking up roles and responsibilities was
one way through which young people claimed their membership. Although at times Latina/o youth viewed their positioning within the school as subordinate to adults at their school, such as the examples by Yesenia, Luz, Bruno and Lina, at other times they saw themselves and their participation as equality valuable, as shown on Pink Day. Membership therefore was shaped by young people’s relationships with others.

Cultural citizenship posits that membership is often conceptualized and shaped by the roles a person fulfills within the social group, and how those relate to person’s relationships with others in the community (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Relatedly, how other people position a person, because of their role or status, is important for informing and reinforcing relationships and interactions within the group (Flores, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The act of self-making and being-made by power structures within their schooling environment afforded young people a shared experience of subordinated, yet at other times a sense of inclusivity and membership. The conglomeration of Latina/o youth’s experiences, shaped by the events that unfolded through their positionality within the school and in relation to teachers and school staff, in some cases led them to view themselves as members within the social category of students. Through such experiences young people were forging an ideological membership, or collective social group, as they made sense of their positionality within schooling, and broader social constructions of childhood.

**Membership and Latina/o Youth’s Social Identities**

Membership entails understanding that social categories are socially constructed through relationships and interactions (Flores & Benmayor, 1997;
Rosaldo, 1994). Among Latinas/os, for example, the racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics that bind them as a social group also mark them as different from the dominant white U.S. society (Rosaldo, 1994). In this view, social categories – like race, ethnicity, age, and gender – construct socially institutionalized boundaries that conceptualize Latina/o youth’s membership as separate from other social groups (Mirón & Inda, 2004; Oboler, 2006).

Among Mexican heritage people in California, where this dissertation research took place, the hyphen between Mexican and American becomes a space sometimes of denial and other times of affirmation. In other words, there is a doubling of a social identity wherein shared experiences of inclusion and othering are often co-occurring (Hurtado & Gurin, 2004; Tajfel, 1974). A hybrid identity is constructed from within the borderlands, or the in-between, experiences of being neither here nor there (Anzaldúa, 1987; Lugones, 2003; Zavella, 2011). The following interview excerpt demonstrates this contention.

Lina checks out three books from the library. I asked Lina about the American History book and I ask, “What about our history?” (referring to Latinas/os and Mexican American histories). Lina says that, “The book is a start. It shows how other people have talked about their history, and how we can begin to talk about our history.” I ask Lina if she thinks that “We belong?” (referring to another book that she had titled, “Where We All Belong”), Lina said, “Yes, we do but sometimes it feels like we don’t.”

(Fieldnote 05/03/2012)
In this fieldnote, Lina’s response juxtaposed the ways in which some social groups have talked about their history, and how other social groups can begin to talk about their history as separate and distinct from the dominant group. She explained that sometimes the social group with which she identified was not recognized or included within the broader society. She elaborated by describing how the dominant social group (e.g., American, white) often excluded Mexican communities, and thereby othered her experiences. In this particular case, she made a distinction between the Mexican and American communities of which she is a part, and how these communities are positioned differently within the broader society.

Furthermore, Lina used words such as their, we and our, to situate her identity in relation to two social groups, yet considered herself to be a member of both the Mexican and American communities. Lina described her ethnic identity as Mexican American, and she explicitly identified with both, as she stated in a follow-up interview: “I’m part Mexican and part American.” In her statement, as in the fieldnote excerpt, Lina constructed her membership through her affiliations to both Mexican and American cultural communities. Although she recognized the positioning of each social group differently, she viewed both as complementary aspects that shaped her identity as a Mexican American youth. The cultural hybridity of Lina’s experience was characterized by her recognizing her ethnic identity as fluid and interconnected to other identities; this process is important for conceptualizing cultural citizenship.

Within the Chicano Movement, several Chicanas/os identified in ways that Lina did, as members of both cultural communities, yet honoring and reclaiming the subverted
ethnic identity of being of Mexican heritage. In the process of embracing a sociopolitical ethnic identity, the term Chicana/o was constructed (Rosaldo, 1989).

Cultural citizenship posits that being a member of a social group requires reflecting upon notions that include or exclude social identities (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). This process of recognition was evidenced in Lina’s claims. In effect, Lina, like other youth in Change 4 Good, embodied her membership through her use of words and claims that positioned her as a part, or in relation, to other social categories. Among other youth in the program the distinction between social groups was more nuanced, however. Young people often articulated their social identities in ways that complicated their membership within particular cultural communities. The following fieldnote, for example, demonstrates young people’s social identities in relation to political topics, particularly the 2012 U.S. presidential election.

There was a cover of the TIMES magazine that had several headshot photographs of Latinas/os of varying ages and phenotypic characteristics. In the cover were the words written that read: Yo Decido, and a subheading that read: Why Latinos will pick the next president. I asked Feliz if she could read the headings, and if she knew what this meant. Feliz said “Yo Decido” means “I decide.” I asked Feliz to think about what this meant beyond the translation and if she could tell me what she thought about the photographs of the people on the front cover of the magazine. Feliz said “all these people have the right to decide.” I then asked her to read the other subheading (Why Latinos will pick the next president). I
asked her if she agreed with the statement and she said “yes.” Luz who was sitting next to us said “If \textit{they} vote for a Mexican one maybe.” I asked Luz who are the \textit{they} and she said “the \textit{American} people are too many, and I don’t think that \textit{they} would pick a Mexican to be president.” I asked her if she really believed that Latinos were a minority, and she said “maybe not at \textit{our} school.” I asked Luz, Jackie and Feliz about the number of Latina/o students at their school. Luz said “the majority of us [students] are Latino.” Feliz added “more than 80\% are Latino.” I asked them if they thought this was representative of the overall population in the United States, and Luz said “no, I don’t think so, I think there’s still more \textit{American} people than \textit{us} Mexicans.” (Fieldnote 05/24/2012)

In this fieldnote youth made \textit{they} and \textit{us} distinctions, as well as explicit references to \textit{American people} and \textit{Mexicans}. Initially the conversation began with an exploration of the meanings embedded within the cover of the magazine, and Feliz agreeing that all people have a right to decide who will be the next president. Yet, Feliz’s claim was challenged by Luz, who believed that although there are more Latinas/os at their school, these demographics are not representative of the U. S. population.

As the conversation unfolds, Luz made statements that conflate American people with non-Mexican heritage people. For example, she remarked that it is unlikely that American people, whom she refers to as \textit{they}, will vote in favor of a Mexican presidential candidate. In this way she assumed that race and ethnic social categories shape people’s politics, such that Mexican people will likely vote for a
Latino or Mexican president because they affiliate with that particular social group.
The result, however, is that American people, which could be interpreted as white and of non-Latino heritage, will not vote for a Latino. Although Luz’s claims demonstrated a narrow conceptualizing of racial and ethnic social categories, she nevertheless situated her social identity in relation to these social constructions.

Luz further demonstrated this when she stated, “I think there’s still more American people than us Mexicans.” With this claim she emphasized her ethnic identity as Mexican, and membership in the Mexican community. The distinction she made between the us and them highlights her membership within a cultural citizenship process that is characterized by being within a liminal space of self-making and being made by those experiences that are often at odds and/or constitutive. As evidenced by Luz’s statement, cultural citizenship among young people was characterized by a process of membership that was constructed in relation to their lived sociocultural experiences, as well as what they experienced in relation to their cultural communities. Youth, like Luz for example, often made reference to the social groups of which they are members, and those with which they do not affiliate, as a way to define their social identities in relation to their race, ethnicity, and age.

Youth’s social identities, as well as their positioning within certain groups, however, was often at tension with their own embodied experiences in certain activities or contexts where they held active membership. Because social identities are often constructed and determined by others’ perceptions (Tajfel, 1974), it was often the case that youth experienced contradictions between how they embodied
their membership and how they were treated. The following statement by Daniela demonstrates how her gender identity, as a self-identified “girl,” was in tension with her membership in soccer. Daniela stated the following:

I used to play with the boys’ soccer team- um, my mom made this funny comment because they were giving away trophies, and I was on a boys’ team and I was the only girl there, and when they were giving the trophies out at the end, they gave me a trophy and it had a boy, and my mom was like ‘That’s discrimination, you’re a girl. They should give you a girl trophy. It was really funny. […] One time I felt bad because the other guys from the other team just looked at me and I saw them talking and I felt like they were talking about me. Then when the game started, they saw that I was good- because when I had the ball, I’d, I like, do tricks on them, and I’d like kick it through their legs- I’d run past them, I’d run faster than them. There was this one game, where they just passed it back to me, I kicked it- ‘cause I was really mad ‘cause I saw that one of them wanted to kick me in the ankle, and I just kicked it really hard and it was from half field- and I kicked it and it went over the goalie AND IN. I was just walking and I staring at my coach, and then as soon as I looked at the coach from the other team, I see his face and he’s like- and he looked at me and he looked like shocked ‘cause I was the only girl playing, and then all I see is my cousin running at me and he’s like, ‘Did you see that? You just scored.’ And I’m like, WHAT DID I JUST DO. It felt good after, but
before I felt really bad because they were like discriminating me because of my gender. (Jesica: You still play?) Yeah, I’m starting to play with [local soccer league for youth]. I always imagine myself, what if I, I played in the guys’ league and I was like the only woman there? I keep imagining myself like just being the only one like that. I don’t know, I just imagine that everybody would just stare at me like ‘What are you doing here? You should go to the girls’ team.’ (Interview 2)

Daniela reflected on an experience she had playing soccer that made visible the sexism that exists even for young girls who do not conform to traditional gender roles or activities. Daniela situated her account of the event in relation to how she felt (e.g., discriminated against) and how others viewed her because of her gender. Daniela’s ability to demonstrate her talents as a skilled soccer player affirmed her membership within a sports community that excluded her. Yet she embraced her identity as a girl soccer player who strived to prove to those on the field that girls can play soccer. Daniela embodied her membership through her determination and resistance to socially constructed ideals of what it means to be a girl. In particular, she resisted dominant conventions of girlhood, which portray girls as passive and disengaged from sports (Gibbons, Humbert, & Temple, 2010). By rejecting these associated and disempowering narratives, yet affirming her identity as a girl who plays soccer, Daniela resisted dominant social expectations of what it means to be a young girl.

Daniela’s embodied and subjective experience as a young girl demonstrated her membership within that category. Yet as a young girl, who is actively involved in
sports, sociocultural constructions of gender complicated her social positioning by other people, particularly boy soccer players. Daniela’s experience demonstrates the nuances of a cultural citizenship process that develops from those experiences of subordination, including the denial of a person’s full experience, as well as people’s resistance to conformity. Together these accounts are what fuel people, and in this case Daniela, to demand to be treated with dignity and respect.

Latina/o youth saw their social identities and membership in some groups as mutually reinforcing. The examples provided thus far suggest that membership, constructed in relation to youth social positioning by adults, as well as youth’s conceptualizing of their social identities, is about how youth view themselves in relation to others (Tajfel, 1974). Membership is therefore about people’s shared experiences of subordination, which reflect their social positioning within the power structure. These experiences with power help shape people’s social identities or their affiliation with particular groups with whom they might work toward building a collective community identity.

**Conclusion**

The above examples demonstrate a cultural citizenship process, which posits that membership is constructed through the social positionings and social identities that shape people’s relationships and interactions with others. That is, how people position themselves, as well as how they are positioned by others – whether they are included or disenfranchised by power-holders – shapes their membership and affiliation to a particular social group or category with which they self-identify.
As discussed in this section, Latina/o youth’s embodied subjectivities as youth, students and Latinas/os shaped the lens through which they viewed themselves as members of some communities and social groups. Within the context of the school, Latina/o youth’s social positioning was subject to the rules and conditions set forth by adults. This was not surprising considering the structure of schooling where students often have little power to determine the conditions and boundaries of their participation. Yet, there were other instances where youth engaged in social actions with their teachers, which allowed them to see themselves as members of the school community. These mechanisms of constructing and reproducing their positioning and social identities in relation to others informed their membership within a cultural citizenship framework that posits that members of oppressed social groups must create conditions where they can be seen, be heard and belong.

**Sense of Belonging**

Sense of belonging is an important practice of cultural citizenship because it is through relationships that people establish a sense of community to be and ultimately act in solidarity across social status differences (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). In my review of the cultural citizenship literature, I discussed sense of belonging among Latino communities, especially adults, as involving practices of authentic caring (e.g., positive relations that are validating and supportive), and cultural capital, including *respeto* and *educación*. These practices reinforce positive feelings and emotions toward the formation of supportive group relations. Sense of belonging is therefore defined as feelings and emotions that develop through being in
relationship, or community with others (Oboler, 2006; Rocco, 2004; Rosaldo, 1997).

Among Latina/o youth, however, I propose that there are other practices, in addition to authentic caring, *respeto* and *educación*, which can facilitate their sense of belonging. In the sections that follow I discuss Latina/o youth’s sense of belonging in two ways. First, I describe it as a process that develops from positive feelings associated with Latina/o youth’s opportunities for meaningful participation in the activities of the Change 4 Good program. Second, I discuss Latina/o youth’s sense of belonging as intergenerational relationships of mutuality and communality, which youth labeled as “friendships.” I refer to these reciprocal relationships of mutuality and communality as friendships in order to situate Latina/o youth’s voice and experiences in the theorizing of cultural citizenship, as well as to attend to the role of friendships more explicitly in the development of a sense of belonging.

**Sense of Belonging as Meaningful Participation**

Cultural citizenship theorizes that social action occurs from the bottom-up, through relational practices of building and strengthening community ties (Rosaldo, 1994; Rocco, 2004). In this vein, sense of belonging involves having affective, as well as social connections to a group (Oboler, 2006). Positive feelings associated with the group are central for developing a sense of belonging, because these experiences can often help sustain a person’s accountability and commitment to the group (Oboler, 2006). These connections can often be characterized as positive experiences and opportunities toward meaningful participation, such as actively contributing to the group. Meaningful participation involves providing young people with
opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities where they can critically engage in the planning and decision-making of conditions that concern them (Hart, 1992).

Among the Latina/o youth I interviewed, feelings associated with opportunities where they could meaningfully participate facilitated their sense of belonging to the Change 4 Good program. For example, when asked to reflect upon their experience in the program, several youth made reference to activities, such as the mural, that were most salient to them and important for facilitating their opportunities for meaningful participation. Youth’s feelings of meaningfully participating were often described in relation to the activities that made them feel good about themselves, as Bruno’s response demonstrates.

“I felt good [in Change 4 Good], ‘cause I was doing a mural and making a change in the community, which made me feel- which made me feel like I was a part of it, and like proud of myself ‘cause I was doing it for the community.” (Interview 2)

Bruno described feeling good about his participation in Change 4 Good, and he mentioned the mural as one activity that made him feel he was a part of the program. Bruno’s experience in Change 4 Good was characterized by his involvement in the mural-making process, as evidenced in his statement, “I felt good [in Change 4 Good], ‘cause I was doing a mural and making a change in the community.”

Recognizing that his involvement in the program was part of an attempt to create a change in the community, including the school, Bruno described himself as being
actively involved in the mural making process, and this experience of participation fostered his sense of belonging.

Bruno’s statement also demonstrated how sense of belonging within a cultural citizenship process is about actively contributing to the community with which one affiliates. His response demonstrated how positive feelings associated with meaningful participation can strengthen a person’s sense of belonging. This was particularly salient when Bruno stated, “I was a part of it, and like proud of myself ‘cause I was doing it for the community.” Bruno’s sense of belonging was thus characterized by positive feelings he associated with his participation in Change 4 Good. The mural making process was an important action for Bruno and other youth to take because this fomented their sense of belonging. Positive experiences associated with meaningful participation can facilitate opportunities for “doing” with others, and reinforce a sense of “feeling” that one is a part of a group-led process.

Echoing Bruno’s sense of belonging, as a feeling associated with meaningful participation, Feliz made a similar remark.

Feliz: I thought that, um, school wasn’t that important, but then this program made me feel that I belonged in the school- that I made a change so I had to go to school ‘cause it [Change 4 Good] helped me and it helped the school a lot.

Jesica: Why do you think you felt like you didn’t belong in the school?

Feliz: ‘Cause I didn’t really feel that way in school, like- I’m not sure, but I just felt like I didn’t belong. (Interview 1)
In her response Feliz claimed to belong to the program, and in the process of articulating her affiliation with it she also reflected on how she felt at school. By comparing her experiences in the Change 4 Good program to those in school, she was able to identify some differences in terms of belonging or not belonging. That is, of feeling connected, or marginalized within the context of the school. The opportunity to participate in the program was an important experience for Feliz because it allowed her to feel and associate with Change 4 Good, and ultimately with her school.

In a follow-up interview, Feliz provided another response that reflects her sense of belonging.

In school for me it was mostly just learning, and in the after-school program [Change 4 Good] I felt like it was more fun because you had to just open your mind, to learn a lot, and say what you think, even if it’s not right. […] The program made me feel good, like I belonged, because I mean in school I used to- before the Change 4 Good program was introduced to me- I used to feel like pressured and stressed because I couldn't do anything, and I felt that when I went to the Change 4 Good program, like I could be myself and could express myself more- and then I had like less stress. (Interview 2)

Feliz described a sense of belongingness to the program in a way that was consistent with her end of year interview; however, in this response she named the experiences in school that made her feel like she did not belong. This is evident when she claimed, “I used to feel like pressured and stressed because I couldn’t do anything.” Feliz
remarked that after having participated in Change 4 Good she was able to express herself, and she attributed this to her experience in the program, which she described as “fun because you had to just open your mind, to learn a lot, and say what you think, even if it’s not right.” By juxtaposing her experiences in school to those in the program, Feliz was also able to recognize how, through her participation in Change 4 Good, she developed the confidence to speak up and express herself. Sense of belonging within cultural citizenship often develops through those experiences that feel validating and liberating, such that a person can be who she is without the need to change (Rocco, 2014; Rosaldo, 1994). Feliz’s sense of belonging was therefore characterized by positive experiences and opportunities for meaningful participation, including opportunities where she could be herself.

Consistent with Bruno’s and Feliz’s experiences, Lina’s sense of belonging was also characterized by feelings she associated with her participation in the program, but she explicitly links her belonging in the program to her belonging in other settings. The follow-up interview conversation with Lina demonstrates this.

Lina: The program [Change 4 Good] might have made me feel a little better about myself. ‘Cause, um, I started thinking about myself, I feel like I belong in a lot more things now, ‘cause before I used to think that I just belonged with my friends and my family but, um, I couldn’t like meet other people and belong with them too.

Jesica: What do you feel like you belong to now?
Lina: The community, my friends, my family, I’ve- I’ve always belonged with them, but now I belong to the program too and to my school, and that’s why I tried for [elected positions at school]. (Interview 2)

Lina explained how her experiences of participation led her to feel connected to Change 4 Good. Her sense of belonging developed over the course of her participation in the program. Unlike Bruno and Feliz, Lina made an explicit connection between her sense of belonging to Change 4 Good, and to other groups and communities with which she did not previously affiliate. This is evident by her claim, “I feel like I belong in a lot more things now, ‘cause before I used to think I just belong with my friends and family […] but now I belong to the program too and to my school.” As Lina’s response demonstrated, she initially did not consider herself as belonging to the program and the school; rather she affiliated only with her family and friends. Yet, after being in Change 4 Good for two academic years, her sense of belonging developed and was strengthened by those opportunities and feelings she associated with meaningfully participating and contributing to the program.

Lina, like Feliz, also gained self-confidence through her involvement in Change 4 Good. Lina’s sense of belonging to the program supported her determination to engage and participate in activities beyond Change 4 Good. She described how, through her experiences in the program, she gained confidence in her ability to take on activities, such as running for elected positions at her school. Lina’s response demonstrates how positive feelings associated with meaningful participation are central for sustaining a sense of belonging within a cultural citizenship process;
the emotional affiliations and positive feelings people associate with group-based experiences help reinforce a person’s commitment to others.

Young people, like Bruno, Feliz and Lina, developed a sense of belonging that was rooted in their positive feelings associated with their meaningful participation in the program. These experiences further reinforced their motivation to make a change in their community. In the process of developing a sense of belonging, young people often drew from their experiences in Change 4 Good. Through this process of constructing a sense of being in and belonging to the program, young people were developing positive feelings associated with meaningful participation, including a sense of commitment to the group.

**Sense of Belonging through Intergenerational Friendships**

In this section I argue that intergenerational friendships, characterized by feelings of mutuality and communality, are at the core of Latina/o youth’s sense of belonging. Mutuality is defined as an ongoing relationship of interdependence, where people are receptive of each other’s subjective experiences, yet responsive and attuned to their collective needs (Jordan, 1985; Padilla, 2000). Communality, which is reinforced by mutuality, signifies being in community with others, as well as having a sense of responsibility and accountability to the group (Gómez, 2001). Practices of mutuality and communality, which characterize Latina/o youth’s friendships, reinforce their sense of belonging, as well as their building of a community. Yet their friendships, and the practices of mutuality and communality that constitute it, are relatively overlooked, or not referred to as friendships, within the cultural citizenship
literature. Hence, by centering the voices and experiences of Latina/o youth in the theorizing of cultural citizenship, my dissertation calls for a discussion of friendships in the construction of a sense of belonging.

Friendships, within the context of the Change 4 Good program, facilitated and supported youth’s sense of belonging, and were characterized by intergenerational relationships. Intergenerational relationships, though often used in reference to youth-adult relationships, are characterized by supportive interactions and partnerships among people of different ages, including youth and adults (Zeldin, Camino, & Mook, 2005; Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013). Jackie, for example, described these relationships in the following way:

Jackie: Adults help us learn and umm we get smarter just by learning in lots of other- different ways. They help us learn by teaching us how to do stuff step by step.

Jesica: What was the relationship like?

Jackie: We’re friends. (Jesica: Friends?) Yeah, we umm worked together. I learned that we should all help each other.

(Interview 1)

Jackie stated that youth and adults are friends, and she described youth’s process of learning in the program to further illustrate their friendship. She emphasized the role of adults in teaching youth “how to do stuff step by step.” Jackie described her friendships with adults as a relational process that was characterized by young people and adults collaborating and supporting each other. The intergenerational interactions
and relationships that Jackie described characterized her sense of belonging as being deeply rooted in friendships of mutuality and communality. For Jackie the term friends represented the community she was part of and to which she belonged.

In the cultural citizenship literature the word “ally,” for instance, is often used to describe what some Latina/o youth, like Jackie, describe as friendships. In a study using a cultural citizenship framework, for example, immigrant Latinas in a grassroots community organization, which focused on women’s rights, used the term “Latinas” to refer to themselves as affiliates of a women’s organizing collective. With this term they described their camaraderie, as well as identification with each other as women with a shared Latino heritage and a commitment to prioritizing immigrant women’s issues (Coll, 2010).

Concepts like ally and Latinas, when constructed and defined by and in accordance with the values of the group, are central to cultural citizenship because these emphasize the significance of affirming one’s collective identity, as well as the importance of being in relation with others. An ally can be a supporter, or someone who stands in solidarity for a social cause or effort, and the assumption is that two or more people can be allies if they have shared ideological values and visions for a social cause (Lugones & Rosezelle, 1995; Lugones, 2003). With regard to friendships, however, ideology and vision is not necessarily the underlying factor for building relationships – though it is certainly important and can develop over the course of the friendship relationship (Lugones & Rosezelle, 1995). Among the Latina/o youth, the experience of being in mutuality and communality with each other...
is what drove and sustained their intergenerational friendships, particularly with adults. Luz’s statement demonstrated this, specifically when she described the importance of being heard by those in the Change 4 Good program.

“I liked being there [Change 4 Good] ‘cause it would- it helped me get more into activities, and participate in more things. I would be really shy to show myself. And then like, in there, I just had to be myself, I wouldn't be shy. […] There were times when we would have to share and the whole class would be quiet, but there would be some people that would be doing their own thing, but most- other people in the class were paying attention to everyone who was- the person who was talking. Mhm yeah, I mean, no one was just doing their own thing, we all kinda cared for each other.”

(Interview 2)

Luz described how being heard was an important and meaningful experience for her. The experience of being heard was a practice that seemed to support and build intergenerational friendships among youth and adults. The value and importance given to young people’s experiences was stated by Luz, who described how her peers and the adults would often pay attention to whomever was talking. Luz demonstrated this point toward the end of her response when she says, “no one was just doing their own thing, we all kinda cared for each other.” As Luz’s response illustrates, Change 4 Good was a place where youth felt like they could be themselves, because they were heard and supported by adults in the program.
Intergenerational friendships characterized Latina/o youth’s a sense of belonging to the program. The opportunities youth were provided to open up and build relationships with the adults in Change 4 Good fomented a sense of mutuality and communality among them. In deepening the theorizing of cultural citizenship to account for the experiences of Latina/o youth, I propose that practices of mutuality and communality, which characterize intergenerational friendships, underscore youth’s sense of belonging. The practice of building and reinforcing a sense of belonging through the building of friendships thus characterized Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship process.

Taken together, the examples in this chapter demonstrate intergenerational friendships, characterized by practices of mutuality and communality, as important for fostering Latina/o youth’s sense of belonging to Change 4 Good. Interactions characterized by meaningful participation, authentic caring, and cultural capital, specifically treating young people with respect, aligned with practices of mutuality and communality. These processes add to the theorizing of cultural citizenship because these developed from the bottom-up through being in relation and community with others in the program. Sense of belonging within cultural citizenship among Latina/o youth involved developing and sustaining intergenerational friendships of mutuality and communality.

Friendships must be centered in the construction of group and community relationships within a cultural citizenship practice of belongingness. This is necessary because when people who are oppressed are marginalized and silenced by the social
structures, relationships of mutuality and communality, such as friendships, are important if not necessary tools toward liberation and social justice (Lugones, 2003). Friendships, like ally relationships, are therefore just as important as actions, because actions gain momentum through the relational power that people build by being in community (Christens, 2012). In other words, if people do not feel connected to their communities, then possibilities and opportunities to engage in social action are limited because there would be no sense of unity or commitment to the collective.

**Conclusion**

Cultural citizenship derives its power from the collective, from the people and communities that constitute the movement for rights and full enfranchisement in society (Rosaldo, 1994). Building relationships with those in positions of power can therefore help create opportunities for structural change (Rocco, 2014); however, these relationships require creating conditions where a sense of belonging can develop among people with different social statuses. Understanding cultural citizenship processes, like sense of belonging, are important for unpacking the foundations of solidarity movements and community building in the U.S. (Rocco, 2014). Sense of belonging, as this section demonstrates, develops through positive relationships and supportive experiences that provide people, and in this particular case Latina/o youth, with opportunities to meaningfully participate and build intergenerational friendships. These experiences facilitate Latina/o youth feeling connected and part of a community.
Given that social action necessitates the collective power of people, meaningful participation and intergenerational friendships, including feelings of mutuality and communality, are necessary if not essential for developing and sustaining community relations. Sense of belonging, developed through participation and friendships, is an important practice of cultural citizenship because it helps develop and strengthen authentic caring relationships (Oboler, 2006; Rosaldo, 1994). In my work, I explicitly characterize sense of belonging as positive feelings associated with meaningful participation, and intergenerational friendships of mutuality and communality. Theorizing sense of belonging in this way provides an alternative perspective from which to understand the social and cultural processes that allow for young people to build community and work toward solidarity.

Claiming Space

Claiming space is a powerful way to demand rights and respect, particularly within settings that have been, or continue to be, oppressive for group members from communities who have been relegated to subordinated social statuses (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). A cultural citizenship framework posits that, for subordinated groups, claiming space is often an act of resistance that makes visible their agency as individuals and members of a broader collective community (Flores, 1997). Occupying a physical space, for example, is often a necessary means toward enfranchisement (Coll, 2010; Getrich, 2008). Claiming space, either physical or social, can often involve people taking control of or changing the setting and its features. Within cultural citizenship theorizing the claiming of space is not
exclusively focused on the physical setting, however. Space claiming, as the following section will demonstrate, can also involve people making their voices heard and their experiences visible in settings or social contexts that are oppressive and disempowering.

Although the literature on cultural citizenship has emphasized the importance of taking and occupying spaces, this process, I argue, is more complex for young people given their social positioning and subordinated status in relation to adults. The following sections will therefore provide examples of Latina/o youth’s process of claiming space in accordance with cultural citizenship. I discuss the process of space claiming among Latina/o youth in two ways. First, as co-constructed spaces of de-ideologization where Latina/o youth’s voices and lived experiences were centered in the process of engaging in reflection and dialogue with adults. Second, as working toward spaces of decoloniality where Latina/o youth’s social identities and cultural communities’ narratives are made visible in the creation of a public mural at their school. Together, these two processes – de-ideologization and decoloniality – help to deepen the theorizing of Latina/o youth’s claiming of space within a cultural citizenship framework.

**De-ideologized Spaces: Centering Latina/o Youth’s Voice**

In cultural citizenship, claiming space is not exclusively an act of occupying a physical setting; it can also involve people making their voices heard. People having their voices recognized and honored by others in the setting can characterize the claiming of space. Voice is important for cultural citizenship because the practice of
being heard allows for oppressed individuals and groups to make demands to rights and enfranchisement.

To deepen the theorizing of cultural citizenship, I refer to the concept of “de-ideologized space” to refer to settings where subordinated people can have their voices heard. De-ideolization is the practice of deconstructing the world, and its social realities, by interrogating what is naturalized and purported as “truth” (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 1994, 2009). A de-ideologized space facilitates opportunities for oppressed people to speak for themselves – to be heard and act on their voice – rather than having those in positions of power speak for or on behalf of them and their experiences. Through the centering and prioritizing of their voice, people can reflect on their collective experiences and in the process build community.

The examples that follow demonstrate how young people and adults co-constructed spaces of de-ideologization where youth’s voices and experiences were heard. Young people’s discussion of topics that concerned them featured prominently in the after-school program. Most topics and issues were raised by the young people, and comprised the focus of the group’s discussions. Although adults facilitated these conversations and also shared their opinions with the youth, in most cases young people and adults co-constructed spaces of intergenerational dialogue were de-ideologization was possible. That is, where youth and adults often reflected and engaged in dialogues in relation to each other’s experiences.

Spaces of de-ideologized intergenerational dialogues often took place during the sorting of community stories. For example, in small group discussions youth were
often encouraged by adult facilitators to recall stories from their school and community that related to their data from the focus group they conducted with community members. In the process of discussing these community stories youth would reflect on their experiences, and discern themes or symbols to represent in their mural. The following fieldnote, for example, highlights a discussion on homelessness, and how some youth viewed poverty and a lack of opportunities as interconnected.

Side conversations broke out amongst the small groups of young people, but all were talking about the topic of homelessness. Some youth were talking about seeing homeless people drinking beer and smoking cigarettes, and other talked about them being loud or holding signs asking for money. Sonia [research assistant] commented that the drinking and smoking may be related to Feliz’s comment; “losing hope and wanting to escape.” Celine then shared a story about an old man in a wheelchair near her house who asked for money for the bus, but actually used it to buy other things. Danielle [graduate student coordinator] brought us back to a large group discussion, so we could all hear each other’s stories. She reminded us of how we got on the topic of homelessness – Diego mentioned seeing a person asking for money by the McDonald’s and said, “people are lazy and don’t want to work.” – In response to this, Iris said, “Maybe they just don’t have the opportunity to work.” Danielle then asked if they understood the difference between these two situations [being lazy and not having opportunities], and Feliz states “Some people may not be
able to get a job because they didn’t get an education.” Luz adds, “Maybe they are poor, and college costs money.” Yesenia added, “Some people have to work because they are poor.” Danielle agreed and added that when people’s choice is to either go to school and not have food, or drop-out to get a job and be able to buy things, like food, then it’s not always a real choice. (Fieldnote 07/28/2011)

Several youth engaged in a conversation on homelessness and poverty with Danielle and Sonia, the adult facilitators. In the course of discussing two narratives (i.e., people are lazy vs. not having opportunities) to account for homelessness, young people began to unpack poverty. With the support of adult facilitators, young people conceptualized poverty and homelessness as structural consequences of institutional inequalities and limited opportunities. Because homelessness was a salient occurrence in their community, youth’s conversations with adults helped inform their understanding of power and oppression, or the limited opportunities and possibilities people can access. Instead of viewing homelessness as an individual’s choice, which reifies hegemonic narratives, youth and adults discussed poverty as a systemic problem.

In the course of having young people talk about homelessness, and the destitute people they have encountered in their community, the adult facilitators prioritized what youth wanted to say. In effect, the adult facilitators did not silence or invalidate youth’s voice, rather they listened and followed up with questions that would allow the Latina/o youth to de-ideologize, or deconstruct, what was assumed to
be “true”—that people are lazy, hence they are poor. Young people’s perspectives were thus taken into account in the process of questioning ideologies that reproduced systems of power. Such practices are consistent with the democratizing of knowledge that several social community psychologists consider important for creating a more just society (Kohfeldt & Langhout, 2012; Montero, 2009; Watts, et al., 1994).

When considered in relation to the claiming of space, de-ideologization extends the current theorizing of cultural citizenship because it makes explicit the importance of democratizing knowledge through the co-construction of space. That is, spaces where people can engage in reflection and dialogue toward deconstructing hegemonic narratives that suppress their voices and lived experiences. Cultural citizenship emphasizes the necessity to claim counter-hegemonic and empowering spaces, yet spaces must also be co-constructed. De-ideologization offers one approach toward the creation, as well as claiming of spaces because it facilitates the democratization of knowledge, while prioritizing people’s voices and experiences.

In the process of de-ideologizing spaces, other topics, like racism and discrimination, were discussed because these were considered an important issue in the community. Discrimination, especially racism, was another recurring topic raised by the youth and discussed in the program. On several occasions youth talked about being witnesses to and targets of discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity and/or age was an issue voiced by youth in Change 4 Good. Because young people encountered discrimination in their communities, these experiences were often discussed in relation to the community stories they collected for their mural. The
following fieldnote shows a conversation among youth about racism, and how people of Color experience contemporary forms of discrimination.

Feliz shared that “Sometimes kids feel ignored by adults” and she went on to tell the story of the day she, her brother and uncle had gone to the flea-market, and that she had asked the guy who was attending to the things that were being sold for the price of a doll. Feliz said he just looked at them and didn’t respond. She continued, “We were standing there, and the man was just looking at us. And then a few minutes later an older man and woman came up to him and asked him for the price of this other thing, and he responded and gave it to them.” Sonia [research assistant] asked Feliz what the guy looked like and Feliz said, “He was ‘pale.’” and Lina said, “HE WAS WHITE” Feliz added, “He looked American.” Then Luz asked if the other people that the man had talked to also looked American, and Feliz conceded, “They looked the same as him.” Danielle [graduate student coordinator] stated that the white man ignored Feliz, and only responded and interacted with the white people. Feliz agreed and added, “The man was only listening to people that looked like him, and we didn’t look like him.” (Fieldnote 07/19/2011)

Feliz shared this story of an experience where she felt invisible and powerless. By talking about her experience, Feliz made her voice heard within the broader discourse on oppression. This was especially in regards her experience and the differential treatment she encountered by a white male adult who ignored her request. Feliz
contributed to the conversation an intersectional experience that focused on her ethnicity and age. Having an intersectional understanding of one’s experiences, and how these operate within a matrix of power and oppression is central to developing a sociopolitical analysis and critical consciousness that characterizes cultural citizenship (Benmayor, 2002). Reflecting and acting in the world happens over the course of engaging in critical dialogue with others, and this was demonstrated by Feliz’s remarks, as well as those made by the youth who discussed homelessness.

When youth brought up poverty and racism as topics they wanted to engage they co-constructed a space with adults where reflection and dialogue, or de-ideologization, happened. Young people raising and responding to topics related to structural inequalities, specifically around racism, suggests that they are not only aware of power and oppression, but how these work to perpetuate inequities. The discussions young people engaged in support previous research on children’s understanding of race and racism, which suggests that young people have the capacity to engage in conversations about such topics (Feagin & Van Ausdale, 2001; Tatum, 1992). The examples I provide on youth’s discussions of racism demonstrate that young people are capable of engaging these topics in conversations with adults. Most importantly, the fieldnotes show how youth have a critical understanding of racism, especially in regards to how it manifests in their lives and their communities.

Among Latina/o youth the practice and process of enacting cultural citizenship was characterized by the intergenerational relationships that involved the co-construction of de-ideologized spaces where young people could reflect and
engage with topics they cared to discuss. In some cases young people, like Feliz, wanted to make sense of the racist and ageist experiences they encountered. The after-school program therefore became a setting for centering youth’s voices in conversations about power and oppression, such that it prioritized youth’s experiences with poverty, racism, and ageism in their communities.

Within the context of Change 4 Good the role of adults was to respond to and facilitate youth’s critical understanding. Over the course of subsequent after-school program sessions, young people continued to make their voices heard in the process of engaging in intergenerational dialogues while co-construting de-ideologized spaces. Together, and in dialogue with adults, youth reflected on those experiences they encountered with poverty (e.g., homelessness), racism and ageism in their communities. Young people made their voices heard when they drew from their own accounts to develop a narrative that connected their experiences to those of adults. Voice was therefore most salient among young people when discussing stories centered on power relations, as well as when reflecting on their social identities (e.g., ethnicity, age).

My dissertation results on Latina/o youth’s claiming of space within a cultural citizenship process is not restricted to the physical aspects of the setting; instead it emphasizes the importance of facilitating opportunities and conditions for subordinated group members to be heard, while also being in community and feeling connected to others (Flores, 2003; Fuentes, 2011; Rosaldo, 1994). Spaces constitute any setting where individuals and groups can affirm their agency, dignity and
identities. In the context of Change 4 Good, young people shared stories, opinions and narratives that situated and engaged their voice within and in relation to others in the after-school program. Discussions and stories drew from young people’s school, family and community experiences.

The practice of relating one’s lived experience to others is consistent with a cultural citizenship process, where the sharing of stories becomes a common and important practice of affirming one’s membership and sense of belonging to a community (Benmayor, 2002; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). The stories young people shared, which focused on poverty, racism, and ageism, brought them together to discuss and reflect on their experiences. Through these dialogues, young people and adult facilitators co-constructed a de-ideologized space where they reflected and engaged in dialogues about their experiences with power and oppression. In the process young people enacted their cultural citizenship, which was characterized by a practice of de-ideologization through intergenerational dialogues that centered on youth taking up space to make their voices heard.

**Toward a Decolonial Space: The Maplewood Stories Mural**

Cultural citizenship emphasizes claiming space toward fomenting and building of community (Rosaldo, 1994). The characteristics of the physical setting can often facilitate possibilities for social identities and groups to be formed and sustained within the context (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). For example, the space is often characterized by infrastructure in the environment, such as murals, parks, community centers, streets, landmarks or other material features, that represent a
cultural community or the practices and relationships that constitute it (Gottdiener, 1985).

The literature on cultural citizenship describes space as a physical and public setting where social interactions and relationships take place (Benmayor, 2002; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Fuentes, 2011). In my work, however, I use the term “decolonizing space” to refer to settings or places where experiences of subordinated group members are made visible. Hence, I define a decolonizing space as any physical setting or material representation that works to make visible people’s lived experiences, or that deconstructs oppressive narratives about subordinated group members. I refer to the mural the youth created at their school as an example of a decolonized space because it represents the narratives of the school and the broader community, as well as young people’s lives, identities and experiences in relation to those narratives. I discuss the mural, and the negotiation process that took place with power-holders, to suggest that decolonality, and the making of decolonizing spaces, is important for deepening the practice of claiming space within cultural citizenship.

Before discussing one of the decolonizing symbols and representations in the mural, I provide an excerpt from the mural documentary script the youth created. This excerpt contextualizes the process, as well as the purpose and goals of the mural.

Once upon a time, students at Maplewood Elementary School wanted to make a change in their school and neighborhood. [...] We joined the Change 4 Good program. We wanted everybody not only to hear, but also relate to the stories of the people in Maplewood. We decided to make a
mural so that everybody would know the community stories. Then we organized meetings with parents, teachers, other adults, teens, and students. We asked, “Tell me a story about a time when you had the power or didn’t have the power to make a change in your community.” Us students took notes about the people’s stories and ideas and put the notes into groups of themes. After that, we took pictures, drew, and made collages out of magazine cut outs about the themes. The collage helped us come up with ideas for the mural. Then, we thought about the images that we wanted in the mural. We wanted to choose symbols that represented the themes [discerned from the community stories]. After all of this, we decided on the symbols we wanted in the drawing. Next, we sat down with the UCSC helpers [research assistants] and talked about what to draw in the mural. We sorted the symbols into two piles: the symbols we wanted in the design and those we did not want to include. We all worked together to design the mural. (‘Maplewood Stories Mural Script,’ 2012)

The script describes the process leading up to the making of the mural designs. As stated in the script, youth engaged in data collection and analysis of community stories, which were then grouped to create themes that could be visually represented in the mural. The young people sought to include and represent in the mural various community stories, especially those from community members who are often excluded or whose experience are often misrepresented, as is the case for immigrant youth in low-income communities.
In the process of discerning symbols for their mural design, young people engaged in various art-based activities. One activity in particular was the creation of a collage. The following fieldnote demonstrates Feliz presenting and sharing her collage with the rest of the group.

I told the rest of the research assistants that Feliz would be presenting. Feliz placed her collage on the projector. The collage showed a cut out picture of a protest, and many fists in the air holding signs for peace and love, and one big fist in the middle holding a megaphone with a peace sign. She explained that she really liked this picture and wanted to include something like it on mural. Feliz also said, “People holding the megaphone [protestors] could be parents, students and teachers who don’t have the opportunity to speak up.” We applauded Feliz and told her she had a great idea. Gina told Feliz that she especially liked how she included multiple themes in her collage. (Fieldnote 05/24/2012)

Feliz’s collage was particularly powerful and striking because it represented various themes through the symbol of a megaphone. According to Feliz the megaphone stood for those students, teachers, and parents whose voices are silenced, or “who don’t have an opportunity to speak up.” Feliz’s collage was important in the course of designing the mural because it included and merged several themes. Among these was merging themes of peace and love, with opportunities to be seen and heard. Feliz’s collage facilitated a process of decoloniality that was characterized by resistance to dominant social constructions of children as passive and acritical.
In the process of negotiating what symbols to represent in the final mural design, the fist and megaphone collage proposed by Feliz was only partially included. Several other young people, like Lina, were disappointed to find out that only some symbols were approved by school stake-holders to be included in their final mural design (see Figures 1 and 2 for images of the mural draft and final design). The following interview excerpt shows a response by Lina on the significance of the hand-fist and megaphone symbols that were removed from their final mural design.

Lina: Well, I got to put some of my images on the mural and um, another thing was that, well my decisions I felt like they were important because all the kids got to pick something [for the mural]. But not all of the ideas got put on because of the different decisions that the principal and the superintendent had to make.

Jesica: Do you want to say a little bit more about that?
Lina: Well, a lot of the kids- including ME, wanted the megaphone, but we couldn’t really have that cause the superintendent and the principal thought it was a little too violent. And I respect their decision but I really think they should have thought through that a little more. I would have told them what that [the megaphone and hand-fist] meant for us- to speak out, not just like one person holding the megaphone, but um like the whole group. There that was cheering and putting the signs up, they were kind of like, how’s it called when you’re, when you’re like, you get in front of a
building: Oh YEAH PROTEST. To make it like they [people] are protesting for freedom or something similar to that.

Jesica: Did you agree with what they said about the megaphone looking a little bit too violent?

Lina: Not really, cause I think the [hand] fist meant that, that that group was strong. Not- not in any way of violence but it - I think it just meant that they were strong because they came together. (Interview 1)

For Lina the disappointment was so palpable that she wanted to explain to the school principal and superintendent their reasons for wanting to include the hand-fist and megaphone in their mural. Although a direct conversation between the youth, the principal and other power-holders at the school never took place, young people, like Lina, reflected on and raised this matter during their interviews. This experience was so salient for some youth, such as Feliz, that even a year later after the mural was created, the mural the negotiation process was still an important issue raised in their follow-up interviews.

Feliz: What I thought was the best was the mural, to show what was around the community what- what it was alike. What was alike in two different cultures and the only thing I didn't really like was the fact that some things were forbidden to be put on the mural.

Jesica: What do you mean some things were forbidden?

Feliz: I remember that me and another group member [Daniela] we saw a photo that we really liked and we presented it to like see if we umm-
recommended it [to be a part of the mural] and we all sort of liked the idea but when it came the time to like show it to the school board they said it was too aggressive because it might show other students to fight, like physically.

Jesica: How did it make you feel that you couldn't have that in the mural?
Feliz: It made very frustrated and angry because I didn't think that was bad- I thought more like you have to verbally act and stand up for what you want, and it made me very sad that we couldn't have that photo or something like that. But at the end we sort of had something somewhat like it. (Interview 2)

In the process of decolonizing the physical infrastructure of the school, young people, like Feliz and Lina, supported their claims to include certain symbols with stories from their communities. For some adult power-holders at their school the image of the megaphone and the hand-fist was perceived to be too violent. Even though Feliz and Lina provided legitimate explanations for including the megaphone and hand-fist symbols, this was not sufficient. The final mural design included a modified depiction of the megaphone, which helped placate the concerns raised by school stake-holders; however, young people were still disappointed that their original illustration was not represented in the mural. Feliz and Lina, similar to other youth in the program, strived to create a mural that illustrated stories from their community. That is, young people wanted to create a mural that told an empowering story of their community.
Decolonization is an explicit political process that involves the dismantling of oppressive structures, including the narratives that perpetuate the status quo. A decolonial approach is rooted in understanding the lived experiences of people, including their culture and their histories. Communities who co-construct knowledge and discourses together as a way to resist hegemony are engaging in a decolonial process (Lugones, 2010). In other words, people who resist and struggle against colonization are creating decolonial spaces characterized by practices that work toward the building of community and solidarity across differences (Lugones, 2010).

Claiming space does not necessarily mean demanding or occupying spaces; rather it is about co-constructing physical and social settings that uphold practices that align with values of social justice. Assessing the importance of decoloniality in the conceptualizing and deepening of the claiming space is necessary because it contributes to the social justice process that is rooted in cultural citizenship. The values of social justice that focus on decolonizing structures, settings and relationships characterize a movement that begins from the bottom-up, from those who are the relegated to positions outside the margins of the status quo.

Conclusion

Although there is no linear or normative process to describe cultural citizenship, much less the practice of claiming space, the physical and sociocultural practices that characterize settings are important to the sustenance of people’s enfranchisement. In addition to being a physical or a public social setting, space is also encompassing of relationships and interactions where change and action can
happen (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). Social action, as cultural citizenship would posit, requires having a critical understanding of power and oppression, yet this awareness necessitates opportunities for engaging in conversations and discussions on such topics, like racism and ageism for example. Spaces, as these examples demonstrate, were thus co-constructed by and through young people’s process of making their voices and lived experiences heard.

Cultural citizenship theorizing posits that a space can be considered empowering when there are opportunities for people to reflect on shared experiences, and build community. The accounts provided in this section demonstrate how Latina/o youth claimed space, as well as co-constructed a space in accordance with their cultural citizenship process. I proposed two approaches toward this end. The first is the co-construction of de-ideologized spaces where all people can reflect on and engage in dialogues that center their voice and prioritize their experiences. The second is the decolonization of spaces that sustain or uphold power structures through the reproduction of disempowering narratives or public representations of subordinated communities. Thinking critically of the historical, political, cultural and social contexts is made possible through the creation, if not the claiming, of de-ideologized and decolonial spaces where people, such as youth and adults, can come together to reflect and engage in dialogue.

**Demanding Rights**

Citizenship has often been conceptualized in relation to rights (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Marshall, 1950). Rights can be defined in various ways; however,
they are often equated with legal entitlements. Legal rights are characterized by the procedural and civil rights that the nation-state bestows to individuals or groups who poses legal citizenship. In most cases, for example, this is associated with a birthright status (Ngai, 2006). As a rights-bearing status, citizenship therefore affords some people a set of privileges and responsibilities, which are mutually reinforcing, and representative of a person’s relationship to the nation-state. These legal rights hold power for ascribing privileges, responsibilities, and opportunities for some people (Bloemraad, et al., 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Unlike legal rights, social rights are constructed by dominant discourses that determine who is to be included in the collective “we.” Social rights operate in relation to structures of power and oppression that determine people’s access to resources, as well as the conditions under which some people can gain legal rights and opportunities for full enfranchisement (Isin, 2008; Flores, 1997). Under this construction of social rights, the power that individuals and groups have is institutionalized and conceptualized in relation to dominant discourses that uphold the nation-state (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Yet, rights are often unequally distributed by the nation-state, thereby leading some members of society to be systematically excluded, or marginalized, from certain resources and opportunities.

In a cultural citizenship framework, the demand for rights – legal, social or otherwise – is what constitutes a person’s status as citizen. That is, the demand for rights underscores a cultural citizenship process toward individual and collective group enfranchisement. The de-legitimization of people’s rights catalyzes a cultural
citizenship movement to gain rights, including access to resources, equal opportunities, and to be treated with dignity and respect. Cultural citizenship reinforces a sociopolitical process that involves membership and sense of belonging in a community, claiming space, and demanding rights. Rights must therefore be conceptualized within a framework of contentious politics that centers/de-centers power, and which makes visible a person’s and a group’s right to power, or agency to decide for themselves and have control over the boundaries of their participation.

Although the notion of rights, as conceptualized within a cultural citizenship framework, has been extensively researched, there are few empirical studies on Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship. This literature is still relatively nascent. Similarly, there is limited research on Latina/o youth’s rights specifically because most studies on children’s rights are predominantly Euro-centric, or conducted with children from middle-class white families. Most of these studies are also centered on children’s knowledge of rights as civil liberties, instead of what it means to have and enact one’s rights (Helwig, 1995; Melton, 1980; Melton & Limber, 1992). In other words, how young people experience rights in their own lives – as well as, what importance they give to rights, both in terms of their own citizenship experience and that of their cultural communities, and what rights are most salient in their lives – has been empirically understudied. Hence, the exploration of rights and rights claiming, as a cultural citizenship practice among Latina/o youth, is warranted.

The following sections demonstrate Latina/o youth’s conceptualizations of and claims to rights. In my follow-up interviews with the youth, many of them were
asked to reflect and articulate what rights mean to them. Through these interviews, young people engaged in reflection and dialogues that involved meaning making, problematizing, and re-constructing rights, within the context of their lives, families, and cultural communities. In doing so, Latina/o youth made explicit how they conceptualized and made claims to rights in their lives in accordance with a cultural citizenship process. As articulated in their definitions and stories, Latina/o youth’s claims to rights encompassed their resistance to oppression and inequities, and it echoed cultural citizenship’s emphasis on enfranchisement.

I begin this section with a discussion of where and how Latina/o youth learn about rights. Specifically, in what contexts and through which experiences are Latina/o young people exposed to discourses on rights? After discussing the contexts in which children learned about rights, I then describe how Latina/o youth defined rights in accordance with self-determination. Youth conceptualized self-determination rights for themselves, as well as for their family and communities. In other words, young people viewed self-determination rights as necessary toward the fulfillment of universal rights, which they defined as rights to equality and freedom in society.

Learning about Rights

Exploring children’s conceptualizations of rights necessitates understanding the context in which children learn about rights. Related to this is unpacking how children are exposed to and socialized to exercise their rights. How children make meaning of and act upon their rights is as important as the definitions children ascribe
to rights, because their process of meaning making and enacting rights is informed by their conceptualizations of rights.

Schools, for example, are one context where young people learn and are often exposed to topics related to rights (Hart & Pavolic, 1991). Youth are often introduced to rights as statutes that have been institutionalized to protect the liberties and freedoms of some people, as well as their responsibilities to the nation-state. Among the Latina/o youth I interviewed, school, specifically language arts class, was named as a context for learning about rights. When I asked the youth to define the term rights, young people often referenced language arts and the material that was covered in that class. The following responses by Iris and Daniela demonstrate this point.

Iris: We learned about that [rights] in language arts. (Interview 2)

Daniela: Yup, I heard it today in language arts. (Interview 2)

Both Iris and Daniela mentioned this particular class as being a context for learning about rights. When Daniela was asked to elaborate on what she had learned in language arts, she responded by stating that she had also learned about the Civil Rights Movement.

Daniela: We were talking about it, the Civil Rights Movement. […] My teacher said that Dr. Martin Luther King was fighting for his rights but at the same time he wasn’t violent, and the ones that- the powerful people, like the government and everybody, they were the one’s looking bad on the news because they were the one’s that were hurting other people. They
were hitting people, the African Americans, just because of the color of their skin. (Interview 2)

Daniela contextualized her learning of rights in relation to the histories of the Civil Rights Movement and the legacies of activists, like Dr. Martin Luther King. Like Daniela, Iris also talked about rights as a concept that is connected to human rights, as well as historicized accounts of race, inequality and institutionalized discrimination.

Iris, like Daniela, made explicit the mistreatment of people in the United States, specifically the history of the African American community.

Iris: When people say human rights, like some people don’t have them, and like human rights is like when you have freedom of speech and stuff like that. But like some people don’t have rights because they’re like from other places and sometimes they’d be like treated differently.

Jesica: Do you think that’s right?

Iris: No, because like we’re all the same. We watched a human rights video, and we’d see like some people mistreated- treated differently because you know some people are like racist and all that, and that’s what we learn about, how some people like treated different people from different places differently. (Interview 2)

Iris’s response demonstrated the context and discourses through which young people were exposed to rights. Most importantly young people articulated the connections they made in language arts class to rights, history, and the oppression of people. In her explanation of rights, Iris stated that human rights are about freedom of speech,
and these rights should be afforded to everyone, equally, regardless of differences. Iris mentioned racism to describe some people’s actions against others who are excluded and differentially treated. Iris’s response, like Daniela’s, demonstrated how rights are inherently tied to race. Such connections are made more salient when youth talked about rights in relation to social justice, a section near the end of this chapter.

Diego, unlike Iris and Daniela, did not mention school as a context for learning about rights. Instead Diego talked about rights as a concept that he was exposed to through his mother’s political engagement. In his response Diego recalled a protest he attended with his mother.

Diego: I learned about it [rights] in a protest I went to with my mom when I was like nine. I went downtown because she- she wasn’t getting paid the amount of money she was supposed to get paid so they got a group of people and started protesting [for] their rights.

Jesica: Have you gone to other protests after that?

Diego: Yeah. Hmm I don’t know, I think it was for the rights for people to stay in the United States so they wouldn’t get deported.

Jesica: An immigration reform protest?

Diego: Yeah, I went with my mom and my sister, and some people from my mom’s job. They had signs and they were marching. (Interview 2)

Diego’s response highlighted his experience in a protest as a salient context that informed his knowledge about rights, as well as the implications rights hold for shaping his family’s life. This response also demonstrated Diego’s knowledge and
familiarity with rights, as assets that can be claimed and demanded. His involvement in protests demonstrated the practice of rights claiming in accordance with cultural citizenship. For Diego rights were conceptualized as statutes that one must demand, similar to the ways in which Dr. Martin Luther King and other Civil Rights activists organized themselves to claim their rights to equality and social justice. Diego’s sociopolitical participation in the protest demonstrated a process and social context through which some children from Latina/o immigrant families learn about rights, including citizenship and immigration politics (Solis, 2003; Solis, et al., 2013). Yet, in learning about rights, specifically U.S. Civil Rights history, the demand for enfranchisement was also important for contextualizing social movements. These set of experiences informed Diego’s definition of rights with regards to how rights are claimed and practiced, as well as their relation to history.

**Self-Determination Rights**

Rights have the capacity to inform a person’s citizenship. Yet, as history demonstrates, the nation-state, and its institutions, often construct people’s rights as citizens (Lister, 2007). One example of an organization, endorsed by several other nations and international organizations, that strives to advocate for and promote the rights of children as citizens is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC, 1989). Two rights purported in the UN-CRC treaty are nurturance and self-determination rights. The former is concerned with providing children with the material resources and care to help sustain their safety and wellbeing, whereas the latter refers to children’s agency and participation in the decision-making over their
lives (Ruck, et al., 1998a, 1998b). Of relevance to this section of the chapter is children’s self-determination rights, which most of the Latina/o youth described in their conceptualization of rights.

Echoing the construction of self-determination rights, or children having agency, and autonomy over their lives (Ruck, et al., 1998a), was Daniela’s response.

Daniela: Rights don’t tell you, you have to be, like you have to be like a certain gender, a certain skin color, to be in this country, they like- you don’t have to wear this like a specific type of clothing. Like me, I like jeans, I don’t really like skirts or dresses, I like shorts and jeans, it’s more comfortable for me, I think that’s why I like soccer ‘cause I like shorts.

Jesica: So you think people have the right to be different? Is that it?

Daniela: Yeah, ‘cause like I said, if I don’t like dresses and skirts and they make me wear that, then I’m not gonna feel comfortable. If there’s a type of food you eat and all of the sudden you’re not allowed to eat that and you’re allergic to it, you basically lose your rights, and you start to have a different culture. It’s not what it used to be. Like me, if I like to play soccer and all of the sudden they say girls can’t play anymore then I’d start crying and then I would try to get MY RIGHT BACK. (Interview 2)

In her response Daniela conceptualized rights as having the freedom to be herself, and engage in the activities that she wants. For her, rights were not necessarily tied to one’s race, ethnicity, age, gender, social class or legal status. Instead, Daniela conceptualized rights as separate from social identity markers. Yet, she recognized
that rights hold power because these structure and limit people’s choice and agency, and ultimately their culture. Moreover, Daniela emphasized the importance of self-determination in choosing, or having a choice, and how she would have reacted if her right to decide for herself was limited or denied. As she claimed, “I would try to get MY RIGHT BACK.” This particular claim of getting her right “back” is important to note given that within a cultural citizenship process the act of demanding, claiming and taking is important for enacting citizenship. In fact, the claim to rights is what constitutes a person’s cultural citizenship (Rosaldo, 1994).

Consistent with Daniela’s views on rights as the ability to act upon one’s agency, Shawn conceptualized rights as the capacity to act. For instance, when Shawn was asked to describe what he understood by the term rights, he responded with a story of an instance where he felt his agency and right to act was minimized because of his age and status as a child (or younger than someone, in his case the caregiver).

Jesica: Have you heard of rights? What do you understand by that term?
Shawn: Like, I have, hmm, rights is like, you could do something and nobody can tell you, you can’t.
Jesica: Do you think that children have rights?
Shawn: Yes- no. Hmm they’re different from adults.
Jesica: What are some of the differences?
Shawn: License cars, hmm (…) a job, ehh, and retirement, yeah (haha)
Mmm…they get allowed into school campus grounds
Jesica: Are children treated the same as adults?
Shawn: No. Adults treat them like, like, dogs

Jesica: REALLY.

Shawn: Yeah some of them.

Jesica: Do you have a story about that?

Shawn: Well if somebody’s babysitting you, like, they’re doing everything when you could do all the things by yourself. Like, like get stuff off the shelf- they’ll be like, “uh I’ll get it for you little baby!” and then I’d be like “REALLY. I’M ONLY LIKE TWO YEARS YOUNGER” so, yeah.

Jesica: How does that make you feel?

Shawn: Kinda like, mad since- I COULD DO IT MYSELF. (Interview 2)

In his response Shawn initially defined rights as actions, or “things you can do.” Yet, when asked to elaborate he further juxtaposed children and adult’s access to certain opportunities, such as having a license or being allowed on school grounds. He discussed children’s rights in relation to how they are treated and positioned by adults, or youth older than himself. In effect, Shawn was critical about instances where he felt his agency and autonomy was being minimized or subverted.

In his definition of rights, he understood how structures of power worked to disempower him and other youth, or how age can work to limit children’s agency to decide and act for themselves. Shawn referenced the differences in age, and how a person’s age can be a marker of status and power. This was particularly salient in situations where he felt his agency and autonomy was being minimized or subverted.
by an older youth. Like Daniela, he recognized rights as entitlements that could be claimed, as well as denied by people in positions of power.

Despite having an understanding of adults’, or other youth’s power, young people continued to make references to self-determination rights as these related to the opportunities they could access. Among the young people I interviewed, rights were often defined in relation to what they could and could not do, as Celine’s response demonstrates.

Jesica: What do you think about the word rights?
Celine: Uh that like everyone has the rights to like to do something, to do what they want to do. It’s something everyone has, it’s like something everyone is able to do I guess sort of. (Interview 2)

Bruno also made a similar claim, but he extended his definition to include privileges, which he described in relation to agency.

Jesica: What do rights mean to you?
Bruno: Privileges, to have some privileges and like, to do it like- you have the privilege to do like what you want. Yeah I think that’s what it means. […] I think all people have rights. Rights like- for people cause they’re grown up and they could like have their own life, and for kids I think they have rights too. (Interview 2)

Both responses demonstrated youth’s conceptualizing of rights as something people can claim. Celine, for example, defined rights as, “It’s something everyone has, it’s like something everyone is able to do.” Bruno furthered this by drawing on his own
social positioning as a young person to suggest that children have rights, regardless of their age. According to Celine and Bruno, rights are something everyone can have. Yet, often constructed as privileges, rights can afford some people opportunities to take action and make demands to power, or control over their lives.

Although Celine and Bruno conceptualized rights as having agency, or self-determination, other youth problematized their conceptualization of rights by dichotomizing and differentiating rights from something people are given to something they must claim. Examples of these are stated in Feliz’s response where she describes rights as privileges.

Jesica: So have you heard of the word rights?
Feliz: Hmm I know that rights are something that you are given. Like it depends, like sometimes- ‘cause you may have right at school to use the computers and other privileges at school. At your house you may have like the right to watch TV whenever you want or not. I don’t know but- there are different types of rights. But like my citizen rights might be, like you have the right to vote, you have the right to umm- I don’t know, have a house I guess, and the right to adopt kids.

Jesica: How would you explain rights to someone who doesn’t know what it means?
Feliz: I would tell them that rights are mostly like a privilege. Like something you could do and you don’t have to do. For example I would probably ask them, what type of privileges they have, like what can they
do that they don’t have to have something in order to do it, and then hmm
I would break it into pieces and try to explain more about what the word
means. (Interview 2)

In the course of her explanation, Feliz referenced a unique set of rights, “citizens’
rights,” such as voting, which some people can access. She then described how some
people, because of their status as presumably legal citizens, can act upon other rights,
such as owning a home or adopting children, for example. When pressed further,
Feliz, like Bruno, equated rights with privileges that grant young people the power to
choose to either do something or not. This conceptualizing of rights, in relation to
privilege, is narrow because cultural citizenship posits that rights must be taken.
Feliz’s response complicated this assumption, however, when she stated, “there are
different types of rights,” perhaps implying that there are rights that people can earn
by having some privilege. Yet, she also described rights as “something you could do
and you don’t have to do,” suggesting that rights involve people having the right to
agency, or to decide for themselves. Cultural citizenship, states that rights must be
taken in order to make demands full enfranchisement in society, and Feliz’s response
complicated this assumption by suggesting that some rights are given to people, but
other rights can be claimed by people’s capacity to engage their agency..

Within cultural citizenship, rights, like citizenship, must be claimed regardless
of the structures and conditions set forth by the nation-state because all people are
subject to human rights, as well as the right to be treated with dignity and respect
(Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Transcending the structures of power, to exercise and
demand one’s rights, is in and of itself a practice of cultural citizenship, which is characterized by acts of resistance to the dispossession of one’s rights and enfranchisement. Rights are thus defined in relation to the conditions and boundaries that determine one’s access to material and social resources, as well as the agency to be and act in society (Rocco, 2014).

Young people reflected on and discussed self-determination rights more than nurturance rights. In their conceptualizing of rights, self-determination rights were often described as solely related to the autonomy of the individual, as a privilege or something people can do. Yet, some Latina/o youth’s definitions, like Shawn’s for example, often critiqued adult’s power over children. Shawn drew on his lived experience as young person to reflect and talk about the structures of power, particularly ageism, in a society that is adult-centered. Although young people understood their rights in relation to broader structures associated with control, or power over other people, they conceptualized rights, specifically self-determination rights, as privileges that all people can access.

**Universality of Rights**

Young people have rights, and as the previous section demonstrated Latina/o youth describe rights in relation to how they experience these in everyday life. Given that rights, specifically children’s rights, are constructed in relation to social structures, and how young people view power in relation to their lives, the following examples turn to an analysis of Latina/o youth’s rights beyond individual self-determination toward a discussion of universal rights. Young people conceptualized
rights as universal assets to equality and freedom for all people, particularly for their cultural communities. Despite these conceptualizations, however, their responses were critical of how rights to equality and freedom were often violated. The following statement by Luz demonstrates how she often grappled with defining rights.

Jesica: What do you think about the term rights?

Luz: I think children might not have all the same rights as adults do, but I know that children have rights too. Like you have the right to hmm: I’m kinda stuck on that one. (…) Well everyone has like the right to- hmm, I remember we learned this in school, teachers were telling us about human rights. Like you- you have the right to speak you mind, you can- I think there’s thirty rights that we learned about- can’t remember all of them.

Jesica: Do you think that all people have rights?

Luz: Everyone should have rights. Like everyone should have the right to say and do what they want.

Jesica: Do you have rights?

Luz: Yeah, I think so. I think I’m different, I know I’m not going- not going to be the same as everyone else but I believe I do have rights. I feel like I should have the right to be listened to. I mean just because you are different doesn’t mean you can’t have the same things as others. Many people are different- no one is going to be the same. I think everyone should have rights. (Interview 2)
Luz remarked that all people should have rights regardless of social status differences. She further explained that despite being different she still has rights, especially the right to be heard. This response highlights how young people, like Luz, are not merely making claims to power, such having the right to decide and participate, but that young people have a right to be heard and be taken seriously by adults. This process of demanding to be heard and recognized could be described as a form of resistance to dominant constructions of children as passive. The act of making claims to rights demonstrates a process of cultural citizenship where young people are enacting their right to be heard. Children must claim rights in their process of enacting their cultural citizenship in a society that delegitimizes them and their right to full participation in decision-making.

In her response Luz also mentioned learning about human rights, which involved the right to freedom of speech, along with several other rights. When asked to determine whether all people have equal human rights, Luz stated that all people have rights. Luz’s conceptualizing of rights highlights the importance of mutuality and communality, or a sense of accountability to one another, wherein people have a social responsibility to each other. This is consistent with Yesenia’s response.

Jesica: What do you know about rights?

Yesenia: Well there’s like human rights, and there’s rights as in stuff you have the right to do and there’s stuff that you shouldn’t do.

Jesica: Tell me about these.
Yesenia: The human rights- I was just learning something about this. Okay so human rights are the rights that us humans have to do stuff. We have the right to our opinion, I think to speak free in this country. We also have the right to:: uhh, on yeah we’re- we’re not- I don’t think we’re allowed to discriminate people c’ause of their religion or sexual thingy.

Jesica: Sexual orientation?
Yesenia: Yeah, SEXUAL ORIENTATION. Uhmm I don’t think you’re supposed to do child abuse. I think that’s one of the human rights. Oh and you’re not allowed to discriminate people because of their race or sexuality or for people who like- you can’t just go and like judge somebody because of their skin color or because of where they were born. And umm sexuality rights is like you can’t just go and judge somebody because of what they like or who they like. (Interview 2)

Initially Yesenia’s described human rights as rights that all people, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, age, social class, and legal status, are afforded. In her definition, similar to Luz’s statement, Yesenia mentioned people’s right to do good by others. That is, not to inflict harm or abuse upon other people. Yesenia claimed that race, ethnic, and sexuality should not be a detriment to people’s human rights.

References to race and discrimination were common in Latina/o youth’s conceptualizing of rights. In fact, several other youth, like Feliz, made similar remarks to Yesenia’s. Such claims were often made in reference to people’s behavior,
and whether their actions were qualified as either good or bad, or as inflicting harm on others. Feliz’s statement furthers these points:

> I think everyone should have equal rights even if they’re different, but I think sometimes it depends if that person did good or bad, you know. What I consider bad is like killing someone or robbing something that is very valuable and very expensive or something. What I think isn’t really bad is like getting caught coming from your home place [country] to come here [United States] and then getting put into prison cause you came here without permission [legal documents]. I think that’s not very crimeable, if you came here to do a good thing for your family and yourself. It’s not very fair [to be criminalized] because some people that have rights don’t take the opportunity and people that don’t have that [legal] right want that opportunity and say, “Wow, these people are very lucky” and they are not taking the opportunity, and they start thinking what if I had the opportunity to do that and they probably will never be able to do that cause they don’t have the [legal] right. (Interview 2)

Feliz emphasized that everyone should have rights despite being different, and she made the distinction between good and bad behaviors. Yet, she qualified border-crossing without legal documents as good because this is an action that strives to do good by others, often by one’s family. In her view undocumented people, who in legal terms “violate” the law, are not criminals. Feliz advocated that undocumented immigrants should not be criminalized; instead, they should be granted rights so that
they can be protected and have equal access to resources and opportunities for a better
life, both for themselves and their families. These remarks point to a universal
conceptualization of rights, where people are afforded the freedom to migrate within
and beyond borders (Dahlin & Hironaka, 2008).

In this regard, migration, and the right to im/migrate for the betterment, safety
and wellbeing of one’s family, should not be considered a crime. Jackie, for example,
in her conceptualization of rights and how these are experienced in her cultural
community, mentioned how when some people arrive to the “receiving country” their
rights and access to resources are limited by their legal status. The following
conversation demonstrates these claims.

Jackie: Everybody has rights. Wherever you come from, you have rights,
but some people cannot have equal rights, like some people can’t get their
uhhh driver’s license.

Jesica: Do you think all people should have rights?

Jackie: Yeah, they should have equal rights, they should be able to drive,
they should be able to get their license like everybody else. I think we’re
all the same. I think they (Jesica: Who?) Latins (Jesica: Latinos?) Yeah
LATINOS. They [U.S. legislators] don’t let them [Latinos, undocumented
people] get their license and they’re not allowed to come over to America.

Jesica: What do you mean?

Jackie: Like, they (Jesica: Latinos?) Yes, Latinos (Jesica: Okay), like if
they’re here [U.S.], they’re not- basically they’re here, but they’re here
illegally so they don’t get the equal rights as people in the U.S. that are citizens supposedly. But I believe we’re all citizens HERE. I think that Latinos are citizens. Like if you’re a member of something you have rights, so they’re [citizenship and rights] kinda connected. (Interview 2)

Jackie stated that all people should have equal rights, and she drew on her community experiences to make visible the fact that disenfranchised group members, such as undocumented people, often cannot access equal opportunities in the United States. In her definition of rights, inequality was made salient and visible through the example of undocumented people who cannot have access to a driver’s license. For some people, however, this has changed since the passing of California’s Safe and Responsible Driver Act (Assembly Bill 60), which grants undocumented people the ability to apply for a driver’s license in the state, as well as for those who are eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order. Yet, according to Jackie’s experiences, access to a driver’s license, among other opportunities, are not possible for most undocumented people.

Jackie’s response also highlighted the dichotomous relationships between membership and belonging for Latinas/os in the United States. In other words, Jackie viewed Latinas/os, and all people as equal, yet she recognized that in the U.S., Latinas/os are not legitimately recognized and treated as equal members of society. Moreover, she elaborated on this claim by stating that Latinas/os, regardless of legal status, are citizens of the U.S. because they are members, or active participants, in the nation-state. Jackie’s conceptualizing of citizenship resonates with cultural
citizenship claims, which argue that citizenship is constructed in relation to notions of membership and belonging (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). Through this process of contesting Latinas/os membership and belonging in the U.S. Jackie drew a link between citizenship and rights, and states that these are interconnected as these are both mutually constitutive. In effect, rights and citizenship are so intertwined that the struggle for rights often becomes the catalyst for movements to de-center the power of the state in determining who is and can be a citizen of the nation-state.

The notion of equality, despite differences in social status, and freedom, as the right to equal opportunities, were common threads youth referenced in their construction of rights. Latina/o youth, for example, made explicit references to human rights, as they conceptualized human rights as both legal and social rights. Yet they emphasized respect, and identified it as an important right that all people should have. Diego, for instance, stated the importance of being treated with respect:

Everyone should have the same amount of respect, ‘cause we’re all human, we’re all the same. I mean if we didn’t have rights we wouldn’t have freedom. (Interview 2)

Diego, like Jackie, assumed that because all people are human, and therefore members of a collective universal community, that they are citizens and deserving of rights. This view of rights problematizes the role of the nation-state in conferring rights. Diego, while he made claims to universal citizenship and rights, also equated rights with freedom, particularly in the latter part of his response where he states, “If we didn’t have rights we wouldn’t have freedom.” In this particular statement he
conceptualized rights as a precursor to freedom. Diego described rights as being necessary for people’s freedom. Similarly, Lina claimed that even when rights are presumably granted and instated, this does not necessarily mean that all people will have access to the rights, including the material resources.

Jesica: What can you tell about rights? And who has rights?

Lina: Well last week we were learning about human rights- that’s when Eleanor Roosevelt was still alive- but hmm, so there [Human Rights Declaration] it states everyone has the right to food, home and things like that, but the thing is that having the right is different from actually having the things [material goods and access to resources].

Jesica: What do you mean?

Lina: Oh because- well in the Human Rights Declaration it said that you have the right to having food, but not everyone has it, not everyone is able to access food or things like that.

Jesica: Why do you think that is?

Lina: Well I don’t really know anymore ‘cause things are so different now than what they used to be. What I’ve noticed is that everything’s about money now. If you don’t have money, you don’t have food. If you don’t have money, you don’t have shelter. It’s just everything! And then the government, I don’t get it sometimes and I feel kinda MAD.

Jesica: What makes you feel kinda mad?
Lina: Well here’s the thing, if children were to grow up thinking that everyone had a right to everything and we’re gonna be the future you know- so if everyone thinks this way, things would change. Well, if everyone thought that- like, I know some people think it’s right to keep Mexicans or other cultures away from the United States but if we were all to combine as one, and if there weren’t fights with North Korea, or the past wars we’ve had, then we- we’d be all just ONE country, and not ruled- Yeah, not ruled-over by one person, but like by several people- and not just whites or certain ways of thinking- then maybe just maybe we’d all be able to have the RIGHTS WE WANT TO HAVE. (Interview 2)

Lina’s initial response, much like the other responses by other youth, such as Luz and Yesenia, made reference to human rights. Yet Lina challenged the Human Rights Declaration by stating that even though it exists and bestows certain legal rights and privileges to some people, it does not necessarily mean that all people will have equal rights. Her argument is also a critique of how rights are constrained by economic and political conditions. For example, when she stated, “If you don’t have money, you don’t have food,” she recognized the impact of neoliberalism in the lives of people. That is, basic fundamental human rights to equality and freedom are being commodified in relation to political neoliberal economies, where those in power determine the structural arrangement of the polity. By contesting the notion of human rights in a sociopolitical and economic climate where inequalities are increasing, Lina
situated her experiences and identities as a young person to discuss children’s power in shaping the future of this country, and cultural diversity as an asset to society.

Lina also suggested that the differences that set communities apart should also bind them as a nation to create “ONE country,” where people are not ruled by white supremacist ideologies or structures that sustain the status quo. This reimagining of what the nation-state, and the U.S. specifically, could look like is what affords people’s right to live in a socially just word where equality and freedom are not merely illusions but lived realities. This process of re-conceptualizing what is normalized is at the core of cultural citizenship, a practice of continuous struggle to build communities and a society where all people are equally afforded opportunities and freedoms toward creating a more just world (Flores & Benmayor, 1997).

**Conclusion**

Latina/o youth discussed rights to self-determination, as well as equality and freedom, including universal human rights and social justice for all people. Rights were described as having self-determination, specifically access to opportunities and privileges. Yet, Latina/o youth also problematized these meanings according to their experiences, and in relation to or against the backdrop of social structures.

Young people’s claims to rights often drew on a critique of social structures, and how these uphold the power of the nation-state to determine what people do and can access. Latina/o youth’s definitions of rights questioned the social structures that limit some people’s rights to have access to opportunities, and control over the boundaries of their participation. In essence, Latina/o youth’s claims to rights
emphasized enfranchisement for all people, regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, age, gender, social class, legal status (e.g., documented vs. green-card holder vs. undocumented), and other social categories.

In the course of conceptualizing rights, Latina/o youth provided powerful critiques of how rights were often unequally distributed, particularly among those who were positioned as subordinate to the dominant group (adults, legal citizens). Young people drew on their experiences and those of their cultural communities to talk about rights – those rights they had and did not have. In doing so, they reflected on self-determination, privilege and power. Given this, Latina/o youth endorsed human rights values, whereby all people, by virtue of being human and members of a national community, are citizens, and as citizens they should be granted rights. These claims resonated and situated their ethnic identities and age in a society that, despite its progress toward social justice, still upholds structures of power that disenfranchise young people, especially youth from communities of Color (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). In the process of reflecting and defining rights, the Latina/o youth engage their cultural citizenship to make claims to rights, not only for themselves, but also on behalf of their families and cultural communities.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Latina/o youth cultural citizenship can provide the theoretical lens to describe young people’s process of critically re-imagining and re-conceptualizing citizenship for themselves, their families, and their cultural communities. In deepening the theorizing of cultural citizenship to account for the voices and experiences of Latina/o youth, this dissertation examined Latina/o youth’s conceptualizing of the terms citizen and citizenship, and as well as their cultural citizenship. The results I discussed contribute to the limited empirical studies on Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship, and more broadly their understanding of citizenship and rights in their lives.

The evidence I presented demonstrates how Latina/o youth reflected upon, problematized and re-conceptualized existing notions of citizenship, specifically cultural citizenship. I explicitly focused on four practices that characterize cultural citizenship. These included Latina/o youth building membership within a group, feeling a sense of belonging to a community, claiming spaces where they can be seen, be heard and belong, and making demands to community-centered rights beyond individual self-determination rights. Latina/o youth situated their voices and experiences, and those of their families and cultural communities, in the re-construction of citizenship. In doing so they contributed to the development of a critical and deeper theorization of cultural citizenship. One that is characterized by Latina/o youth conceptualizing their membership via their positionality and social identities; developing a sense of belonging from their experiences of meaningful participating and intergenerational friendships; claiming space by co-constructing
settings where de-ideologization and decoloniality is possible; and, making demands to universal human rights toward individual and community enfranchisement.

Although the results from this research might not be generalizable to other youth, nor might these account for other youths’ experiences, this dissertation makes important theoretical and empirical contributions to the fields of social and community psychology, Latina/o/Chicana/o studies, childhood studies, and citizenship studies. In this concluding chapter I briefly highlight two contributions of this dissertation. First, this work adds to the nascent research on Latina/o youth’s citizenship and rights. Second, it also contributes to a deeper theorizing of the practices and processes that characterize Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship.

**Latina/o Youth’s Citizenship Re-conceptualizations**

In chapter four I discussed the results for the first research question, which focused on examining how Latina/o youth define the terms *citizen* and *citizenship*. These results, derived mostly from the follow-up interviews I conducted with the youth, demonstrated the nuances of Latina/o youth’s definitions and conceptualizations of *citizen* and *citizenship*, and how these meanings shaped their lived experiences and opportunities for meaningful participation. In their definitions, social constructions of citizenship as a status and a practice were common; however, Latina/o youth also offered constructive critiques of the ways in which dominant social constructions of citizenship constrain and limit their opportunities for participation and decision-making, as well as the right to be treated with dignity and
respect. These critiques were also similarly expressed when reflecting and articulating their community experiences.

In recognizing the limitations of conceptualizing citizenship as the possession of legal documents, voting privileges, and “good” behaviors, especially within the context of schooling, Latina/o youth viewed these constructions as being at odds with their experiences and those of their cultural communities. Some Latina/o youth, like Luz, Jackie and Lina for example, offered powerful re-conceptualizations of citizenship that questioned and moved beyond the power of the nation-state in determining who is, or is not, a member of the polity. Latina/o youth’s re-conceptualizing of citizenship, as the results demonstrate, provided a more holistic perspective of how young people think about and make sense of citizenship in their lives, their families, and their communities.

Thus, Latina/o youth’s citizenship definitions, especially how they make meaning of the term, are important and contribute to the study of youth’s citizenship and rights. Contextualizing young people’s citizenship is necessary for several reasons. First, situating young people’s perspectives within the broader discourses on citizenship, which position children as “second-class citizens,” “citizens to be,” and “citizens of the future,” is significant because it centers their voices and experiences in the process of deconstructing and re-conceptualizing adult-centered notions of citizenship that have disenfranchised young people (Lister, 2003; Lister, et al., 2003). Second, understanding young people’s citizenship – particularly how they embody and enact their citizen repertoires – can help inform the creation of appropriate
programs and curricula to support youth’s political socialization and engagement. Some examples include *justice-oriented* citizen education programs, which provide youth with the critical thinking tools to engage in a structural level of analysis to assess root causes to social problems, and develop solutions to address them (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), as well as ethnic studies curricula where the perspectives, knowledge, and agency of racial and ethnic groups are represented and encouraged in a pedagogy that is culturally relevant, rooted in history, and open to including multiple voices in the narrative construction of the U.S. (Cammarota, 2007; Cammarota & Romero, 2009). Third, re-conceptualizing citizenship in accordance with youth’s embodied experiences can provide a broader, more nuanced approach toward uncovering other forms of participation and social action, which may not be recognized as legitimate acts of citizenship for children and youth. Indeed, understanding how young people, like Latina/o youth, define and experience citizenship can help explain whether, and how they practice and enact their citizenship, including their cultural citizenship.

**Latina/o Youth’s Cultural Citizenship**

In chapter five I presented and discussed the results on Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship through examples from fieldnote and interview data. These results demonstrated how Latina/o youth’s citizenship emerged as an embodied form of critical reflection and action that situated their political subjectivities within the context of their lives and their cultural communities. Latina/o youth’s process of learning, enacting, and embodying cultural citizenship moved beyond dominant
social constructions of citizenship and childhood that view youth as *acritical* and passive citizens.

Membership, sense of belonging, claiming space and rights – four processes that characterize cultural citizenship – engaged Latina/o youth’s agency, social action, and enfranchisement. These practices were consistent with adult’s cultural citizenship process, yet at other times these were more complex and nuanced. In the process of building community and solidarity with others, in many cases adults, Latina/o youth reflected and situated their social identities in relation to their everyday experiences and interactions with power-holders (e.g., adults). Membership and sense of belonging, for example, were characterized by those experiences that made Latina/o youth’s social positioning and social identities salient, as well as those relationships, such as intergenerational friendships, which reinforced a sense of mutuality and communality across social status differences.

Latina/o youth’s membership and sense of belonging, within cultural citizenship theorizing, was shaped by common experiences and actions, which emerged out of a need or desire to be seen and heard, as well as belong. Indeed, when a person recognizes the oppression of a social group, and chooses to engage in the ideological and material struggle to challenge the *status quo*, or change what has been normalized, the person is engaging in a process of cultural citizenship that is bounded by a desire to resist the social structures of domination (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). Thus, Latina/o youth’s membership and sense of belonging, in accordance with a cultural citizenship process, contributes to a better understanding
of intergenerational collaborations, between youth and adults.

Like membership and sense of belonging, the process of claiming spaces is also made possible through those experiences of being in mutuality and communality with others. As the section of Latina/o youth’s claiming of space demonstrates, space, in addition to being a physical or public setting, is also encompassing of relationships and social interactions where change and social action can happen (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994). Social action, as cultural citizenship would posit, requires people having a critical understanding of power and oppression. Yet this awareness necessitates opportunities for engaging in conversations and discussions on such topics, like racism and ageism for example, with those who are most affected by the social structures. The creation of de-ideologized and decolonial spaces, which are not discussed or made explicit in the adult cultural citizenship literature, are two approaches I proposed toward the theorizing of Latina/o youth’s claiming of space.

In this dissertation, Latina/o youth’s claiming of space was characterized de-ideologized and decolonized spaces were youth affirmed their voice, lived experiences, social identities, and cultural communities with the intent of working toward socially just spaces. Spaces where social justice was possible involved Latina/o youth making their voices and lived experiences heard, while in the process deconstructing oppressive relationships that uphold power. These spaces were also characterized by practices of mutuality and communality, including the reclaiming of space.
In working toward sociocultural enfranchisement, claiming space has been found historically among several Latino communities in the U.S., specifically in California. These examples include, but are not limited to the following: immigrant farmworkers’ grassroots movements organizing for labor rights (Shaw, 2008; Vargas, 2005); Chicanas/os in the creation of San Diego’s Chicano Park (Villa, 2000) and the Chicano murals in East Los Angeles (Baca, 1995; Sánchez-Tranquilino, 1995); urban youth hosting open-mics in San Francisco’s Mission District (YouthSpeakes.Org); and social justice educators promoting bilingual/bicultural youth-centered school curricula (Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 2007).

What these spaces and social groups have in common is that the physical environment is constructed through the relational practices of mutuality and communality that facilitate the collective group’s agency and sociocultural action to de-ideologize, decolonize, and re-construct the physical and social setting, while resisting structures that uphold the status quo.

Taken together Latina/o youth’s membership, sense of belonging, and space claiming, as enacted through a cultural citizenship process, also contributes significantly to young people asserting their rights. In this study the Latina/o youth, for example, made demands to universal rights that went beyond individual self-determination rights in the process problematizing and conceptualizing what rights meant to them, and how these manifested in their lives and communities. Latina/o youth, for instance, problematized rights often in relation to the opportunities and privileges that these can afford to certain people. Yet, in the course of defining rights
for themselves as young people, as well as for their communities, Latina/o youth often made links to power structures that grant some people agency over their lives. Accordingly, rights for Latina/o youth were conceptualized as community entitlements to freedom and equality, including the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Thus, as the results demonstrate, Latina/o youth were aware of rights, and the impact of institutions and social structures in facilitating and constraining their rights as young people. Moreover, Latina/o youth were critical of instances where adults, or power-holders, limited their rights, under the assumption that young people cannot advocate for themselves, and must be protected. Latina/o youth were critical of instances when their agency was constrained and voices were silenced, and they labeled these as violations of their rights not only to self-determination but to be treated with respect. More broadly, Latina/o youth viewed these experiences in opposition to their values of universal rights, specifically community rights to freedom and equality.

**Moving Forward: Theorizing Latina/o Youth’s Citizenship**

Situating this research on Latina/o youth’s cultural citizenship within a much broader argument around what is citizenship and who is a citizen, this dissertation serves as a platform for ongoing research on social constructions of citizenship for young people. Research on children’s citizenship is crucial to the sustenance of a participatory democracy, which upholds values of equality and social justice, and my dissertation engages these values to center the voices and experiences of Latina/o
youth in the theorizing of cultural citizenship.

Creating opportunities for Latina/o youth to enact and reflect upon their cultural citizenship practices is crucial because it is during the early years when young people’s sociopolitical identities are developing (Kirshner, 2009; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Additionally, it is during these early years of schooling when citizen socialization and academic tracking often begins (Gándara & Contreras, 2009) in ways that reproduce dominant citizenship performances. Such dominant practices align with and can further reinforce the liberal, civic-republican, and communitarian notions of citizenship, which undermine the critical and transformative power that a bottom-up approach, like cultural citizenship, can foment.

As Latinas/os become one of the largest ethnic and sociocultural groups in the United States, understanding Latina/o youth’s relationship to citizenship will be important because the democratic thriving of this country will likely rely on citizens’ capacities for active membership and participation. How, and whether, Latina/o youth view themselves as citizens within the nation-state, and as universal citizens beyond borders, will help inform their engagement in democratic practices both within the state and transnationally. The evidence provided in this dissertation offers some valuable insights into the theorizing of Latina/o youth rights and their relationship to citizenship, especially cultural citizenship.
Appendix A

Timeline of Change 4 Good After-school Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2011</td>
<td>Learning about house-meetings, and developing a “prompt” from the focus groups to use during house-meetings with school/community members; house-meetings led by students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>Learning about house-meetings with school/community members; recruiting new youth into the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2012</td>
<td>Continuing to learn about house-meetings; analyzing notes from house-meetings in order to discern themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2012</td>
<td>Analyzing notes from house-meetings and coming up with themes to include in the 2nd mural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
<td>Making of “Maplewood Stories” mural (2nd mural)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Interview Protocol
Latina/o Youth Cultural Citizenship

Demographics & Culture

1. Please tell me your name, age, the grade you are in, and school that you currently attend.
2. How do would you describe yourself?
   - Can you tell me what you think about yourself in terms of “race”? / “ethnicity”? / “gender”?
3. How long have you lived in Maplewood?
4. Tell me about your family.
5. What comes to your mind when you hear the word *culture*?
   - What do you understand by *culture*? What does this mean to you?
6. Do you have a particular type of *culture*?
   - If so, tell me about it. What is it like?
   - Is this different from other cultures that you know or see in your everyday life?
7. Can you give me an example of what *culture* looks like in your life?
   - In which spaces do you see *culture*? Think of an example you can share with me.
8. Does *culture* happen in your family? If so, how? Give me an example.
9. Does *culture* happen at school? If so, how? Give me an example.
   - If no, why no? Why is it that *culture* does not happen in school? What might be some reasons for that?
10. What do you understand by the words *citizen* and *citizenship*? Do these words mean something to you?
   - Have you heard of the words *citizen* and *citizenship* before? Tell me a story of when you heard these words.
11. How would you describe the words *citizen* and *citizenship* to your friend/sibling?
12. Who is a *citizen*? Are all people *citizens*? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Change 4 Good yPAR Reflections

1. How would you describe the Change 4 Good after-school program? What did you do?
   - What types of activities or projects did you participate in?
   - Probe: Did you create a mural / participate in the house-meetings?
     How was that experience for you? How did it make you feel?
2. Did the activities or projects make you feel different compared to the things you do in school? If yes, give an example of how these made you feel
different?
3. Did the activities or projects include things important to you? What kinds of
   important things?
   - If yes, give an example, and explain how they were included.
   - Probe: Ask about culture, language, traditions, family, history.
4. How important is it for you that culture be a part of your learning experience?
   Why is it important/not so important?
5. Do you think that culture was part of Change 4 Good activities or projects?
   - If yes, how was it a part of the program? Give me an example.
6. How did you feel when you were in Change 4 Good?
   - Can you think of a time when you felt like you belonged?
   - Do you think other students felt like they belonged? Why?
7. Can you tell me a story of a time when you felt you were being heard in
   Change 4 Good? What happened?
8. Can you tell me a story of a time when you felt that you were being seen?
   What happened?
   - In other words, a time when you felt that others were noticing you and
     your contributions or participation in Change 4 Good?

Children’s Views on Rights & Claiming Rights

1. What is a right? What do you understand by rights? Give me an example.
   - Probe: If your little brother/sister asked you what rights are and you
     had to explain what rights are, how would you do it?
2. Who has rights? Do children have rights? Which kinds of rights? Give me an
   example.
3. Should children have rights? Why or why not? If so, which kinds of rights?
4. Who should have rights? How do people get rights?
5. Do you have rights? If yes, what kinds of rights? Give me an example.
6. Are there different kinds of rights?
   - Please tell me the different kinds of rights that you know or have heard
     of.
7. Are there are different kinds of rights for different people or groups of
   people?
   - If yes, why do you think there are different rights for different people?
   - Do adults have different rights from children? Do children have
     different rights from adults?
8. Do you think it is fair / unfair that there are different kinds of rights for
   different people? Why do you think that?
9. Can you give an example of a person or group of people who do not have
   rights? Why don’t they have rights? Can they get rights? How?
10. What are some of the ways in which people can ask for (claim) rights?
11. Have you ever tried to ask for (claim) rights?
   - If yes, tell me about that. What did you do? How did you do it? How
did others (e.g., adults, students) react or respond?
- If no, is there a rights that you would claim? What would it be, and why?

12. Do you remember any particular conversations or discussions you had during Change 4 Good that were about rights? Or, topics related to rights?
- Can you tell me more about what these conversations or discussions were about?
- Probe: “power,” “education is a right,” “justice,” “social change,” “social movements,” “protest” etc.

13. During your participation in Change 4 Good, did you or any of the other students ask for (claim) something you believe you had the rights to have? Can you tell me about it? What happened?

14. Do you think people have the rights to be (culturally) different? Why? Do you consider yourself to be (culturally) different? If yes, give me an example of how you are (culturally) different and what this means to you.

15. Lastly, how do people or groups who are (culturally) different ask for (claim) rights?

Closing & Debriefing

1. Is there something you would like to tell me that I didn’t ask you about?
2. Do you have any questions for me? Is there something you would like to ask me?
Appendix C

Cultural Citizenship Codebook

Research Questions
1) How do Latina/o define the terms *citizen* and *citizenship*?
2) How do Latina/o youth reflect on and enact their cultural citizenship?

For each code(s) you will denote whether the interaction involves adult and youth/child interactions OR youth/child and youth/child interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | Membership     | • Acknowledgment of shared experiences with a group; formation of a group identity.  
|      |                | • A person is a “member” of a group by virtue of, for example, shared cultural/social practices, activities, and/or context (e.g., neighborhood), as well as the customs or practices associated with the group (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Silverstini, 1997). |
Membership is not mutually exclusive from sense of belonging; both membership and sense of belonging may be present.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Sense of Belonging</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional and affective ties that make a person feel validated and/or connected to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having emotional or affectionate ties to the group, like feeling accepted, validated and/or appreciated by others (Benmayor, 2002; Rosaldo, 1989).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Claiming Space</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Creating spaces, either physical or subjective, that met an individual’s or group’s needs, and/or creates a form of action.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Involves creating a shared space, where individuals and/or groups can be who they are and/or express what is important to them. For example, engaging in social actions, or sharing stories (Flores &amp; Benmayor, 1997).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Space can be constructed as the geographic site of social action and the possibility for engaging in critical thought (Gottdiener, 1985).</td>
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<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Claiming Rights</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asserting one’s right(s) with the intent to promote social justice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals and/or groups making demands and/or taking action to achieve access to rights.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involves acknowledging the entitlements and privileges that an individual and/or group may or may not have access to.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being aware of an individual’s or group’s needs and/or resources, either material (e.g., access to equal quality education) or social (e.g., being treated with respect and dignity) (Rosaldo, 1994).</td>
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This code must receive one of these following codes: # * ✓

The following codes A – D are defined as “processes” that facilitate and/or lead to the enactment and/or performing of cultural citizenship. These codes will often arise in connection to codes 1 – 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</table>
|      | Cultural Capital | • Involves traditions, customs and community cultural wealth values, such as respeto and educación.  
• Making reference to popular culture (e.g., music, art, and/or media) through conversations and/or the sharing of life experiences and/or stories. |
| A | The act of performing and incorporating culture into day-to-day activities involves people (re)affirming their culture, traditions, practices, and customs. | Culture is not monolithic or homogenous. |
| B | Translanguaging *formerly Linguistic Code-Switching | An exchange or back-and-forth use of two languages (e.g., Spanish and English) with the intent of achieving some goal or action, such as conveying meaning and/or to create a conversational space where two or more people (adult/youth, youth/youth) converse to enact the right to bilingualism. Language as a form cultural resistance or political action (Benmayor, 2002). Multi-language use (bilingualism) a process of transcending a transnational space (Mirón & Inda, 2004). |
| C | Taking Action | Creating opportunities to engage where other youth can be seen and heard, through public speaking, sharing stories, art or other forms of creative expression. Instances where youth create or facilitate opportunities for other youth to share, engage and collaborate with one another. Examples include encouraging other youth to speak up. |
| D | Authentic Caring | Positive and supportive relationships that are inclusive and validating, for example sharing, physical affection, or verbal encouragement. Defined as positive caring relationships that are supportive and allow for feelings of validation, inclusion and respect (Valenzuela, 1999). Youth looking out for each other by: 1) being supportive, 2) sharing, 3) being affectionate (3a- physically by giving a hug and/or 3b- verbally by saying something positive), 4) listening to each other, 5) giving advice, 6) pitching it or helping out by volunteering to take on a task, and/or 6) engaging in play activities conducive to making them feel good. |

**Defining Rights**
- Cultural citizenship emphasizes social/cultural rights, which are defined as the right to be treated with dignity, equality and respect, and to belong, participate and have opportunities in society, amidst structural, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic/racial differences (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1994).
- Social rights are a form of human rights that extend beyond material rights. Social rights, however, can afford people with material rights, which often include access to certain services and resources, such as education, health-care,
employment, housing, and/or other materials for well-being (Coll, 2010). Cultural citizenship is therefore the claiming of social rights, which are important for obtaining material and/or legal rights.

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</table>
| 4 | Claiming Rights | • Asserting one’s right(s) with the intent to promote social justice.  
• Individuals and/or groups making demands and/or taking action to achieve access to rights.  
• Involves acknowledging the entitlements and privileges that an individual and/or group may or may not have access to.  
• Being aware of an individual’s or group’s needs and/or resources, either material (e.g., access to equal quality education) or social (e.g., being treated with respect and dignity) (Rosaldo, 1994).  
*This code must receive one of these following codes: # * ✓* |
| # | Right to Respect | • Demanding dignity through individual fairness and/or equal treatment as a human being, especially making references to children’s rights  
• This refers to the right to be treated with respect or respeto. To be treated with dignity, fairness and equality. To be treated as a human being who is deserving of full rights, not as second-class citizens, citizens in the making or citizens of the future. |
| * | Right to Equal Opportunities | • Having equal access to material resources, irrespective of social statuses.  
• Expressing that all human beings should have access to resources and services, for example education, healthcare, employment and fair pay, and a safe community.  
• Refers to the right to an opportunity; having a chance in life as collective group.  
• Having youth talk about opportunities and possibilities for a better future, yet being aware of the structural and institutional limitation that challenge their opportunities. |
| ✓ | Right to Voice | • Having the right to name, say and express one-self, including one’s emotions and “truths”—sharing of stories that contextualize the claim to a right to “say.”  
• The right to voice, refers to having the right to name, to say and to express oneself; thoughts, feelings, emotions, “truths,” narratives and identities. |
Table 1.  
*Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age (2014)</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aldo</td>
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<td>Cuban &amp; Filipino American</td>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruno</td>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celine</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Salvadoran American</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diego</td>
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<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
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<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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Figure 1.
Maplewood Stories Mural Draft
Figure 2.  
*Maplewood Stories Mural*


