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CHILDREN AS ACTIVIST ARTISTS: CONSTRUCTING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE ARTS-BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

PSYCHOLOGY

by

Danielle M. Kohfeldt

September 2014

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of figures ........................................................................ iv
Abstract .................................................................................... v
Dedication .................................................................................. vi
Acknowledgements ..................................................................... vii
Chapter 1: Literature Review .................................................. 1
Chapter 2: Method ..................................................................... 62
Chapter 3: Results ..................................................................... 73
Chapter 4: Results ..................................................................... 101
Chapter 5: Results ..................................................................... 135
Chapter 6: Conclusion ............................................................... 162
Appendix A ............................................................................... 170
Appendix B ............................................................................... 173
Appendix C ............................................................................... 175
Appendix D ............................................................................... 177
Appendix E ............................................................................... 179
Bibliography .............................................................................. 188
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: National Alliance Flyer.................................................114

Figure 2: Maplewood Stories Mural Draft.....................................115

Figure 3: Maplewood Stories Mural...............................................116
ABSTRACT

CHILDREN AS ACTIVIST ARTISTS: CONSTRUCTING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE ARTS-BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

by

DANIELLE M. KOHFELDT

This dissertation investigates the creation of social justice art as a context for children’s critical citizenship education and community empowerment. Drawing on data from an arts-based, after-school, youth participatory action research program with 4th and 5th grade low-income Latina/o children, this ethnographic case study investigates the creation process of a school mural depicting the histories, strengths, and struggles of community members. Data for this research include ethnographic fieldnotes, semi-structured participant interviews with children and adults, and archival data (e.g., curriculum, participant evaluations, art projects). Results highlight how participation in creating social justice-oriented art can facilitate membership, participation, collective solidarity and creativity in participants as they work to construct alternative narratives within their school community. A particular focus is on the institutional and ideological tensions that arose in response to children’s participation in social justice art. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of an intersectional approach to children’s citizenship education, as well as the constructive function of tension within social justice oriented change efforts.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: Jason Harris, Marion Kohfeldt, John Kohfeldt, Dwight Helmer, and Margaret Kohfeldt, for their unwavering patience, love and support.
I am astonished by the magnitude of support I received (and continue to receive) from so many wonderful people throughout this project. I cannot thank these people enough for lifting me over hurdles, helping me find my way, or just throwing their arm around me and reminding me to laugh.

I am indebted to my dissertation committee for their intellectual support. I was fortunate to benefit from the skilled and generous mentorship of my graduate advisor, Regina Langhout. I am grateful for your profound influence on my thinking about the world and my development as a scholar. Thank you for being my guide. I promise to read the newspaper every day. Bettina Aptheker is the kind of teacher and scholar I aspire to be. Our conversations always left me feeling inspired and motivated to press on. Craig Haney seamlessly bridges theory and practice, linking social psychological research to policy change. I strive to emulate these efforts in my own work, and am fortunate to have you as a model. Thanks to all for asking hard questions that greatly improved this work.

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I knew Don Rothman only briefly, but several of my most cherished memories from UCSC involve learning from him. I want to thank him for teaching me about the role of social justice art in education, and for reminding students that they have a place in the university.
My sincere thanks and admiration to the students, staff, teachers, administrators and parents at Maplewood Elementary School. Your passion for your work and for social change inspire me. To the UCSC students who assisted me in collecting, coding, and analyzing data – you have my endless gratitude.

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

Children as Activist Artists: Constructing Citizenship Through Social Justice

Arts-Based Participatory Action Research

As members of a group conceptualized as future persons in need of preparation rather than actively engaged citizens in the present (B. Hayward, 2012), children exist in a liminal space at odds with conventional ideals of citizenship (e.g., independent, participants in economic production, civically and politically engaged, voters). Citizenship education, the process through which children develop an understanding of and co-construct their roles and responsibilities as members of a community, is the focus of this dissertation study. This dissertation will illustrate how social justice art participation can serve as a more critical context for children’s citizenship education. Art has a long history as a medium utilized by subordinated groups to contest dominant cultural narratives, raise awareness of social issues, and initiate group-level dialogue and action. Drawing on data from an arts-based, after-school, youth participatory action research (yPAR) program with 4th and 5th grade children (Change 4 Good), this ethnographic case study investigates the creation process of a school mural depicting the histories, strengths, and struggles of community members.

In this chapter, I explain the purpose and contribution of this dissertation to the fields of social and community psychology. I then elaborate on the theoretical foundations of this study. To do so, I review the literature on the sociocultural construction of childhood to provide an orientation to the critical
constructivist view of children and childhood taken up by this study. Next, I
describe and critique conventional modes of children’s citizenship education, and
define the concept of critical citizenship education as an alternative framework
that positions children as productive, caring, and legitimate citizens in their own
right. Subsequently, I review the literature on participatory action research with
youth (yPAR). Finally, I discuss social justice art as a context for engaging
children in efforts to empower themselves and their communities, and therefore as
a setting in which they experience and perform critical citizenship education. In
the final section of this chapter, I outline in detail the three organizing questions
that guide this study.

Social Justice Art with Children

Arts-based programming is used as a modality to foster youth engagement
in the civic life of their communities (Dewhurst, 2011). One orientation to such
programming is “activist” or “social justice” art, defined as an art making process
that “enable[s] people to develop the critical analytic tools necessary to
understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and
to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive
patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities of
which they are a part” (Bell, 2007, p. 2). In contrast to other forms of public art
devoid of community context, social justice art creates an intentional space for
dialogue and action with the goal of individual and social transformation
(Goldbard & Adams, 2006; Kester, 1998). Social justice art processes are
contexts for identity development and critical consciousness raising. In addition, the products of social justice art function as acts of resistance through space-claiming, shifting community narratives, and re-envisioning children’s contributions to their worlds (Duncum, 2011; Heath & Roach, 1999; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996).

Social justice art is theorized to facilitate critical literacy, or a deep understanding of social structural forces, as well as the public display of marginalized stories (Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). The development of critical literacy and alternative narratives within subordinated communities can be contentious, as it disrupts the hegemonic order of power (Rappaport, 1995). Indeed, the activist art process implies a redefinition and assertion of values, and is thus “controversial, for in a world of injustice, exploitation, war, and alienation, a formulation of values implies a criticism of that world and the projection of a possible alternative world” (Cockcroft, Weber, & Cockcroft, 1977, p. 73). When situated within institutional spaces where participants occupy multiple subordinated categories, social justice art projects may provoke opposition from those in power. For example, poor and working class im/migrant children of Color are often constructed as passive or potentially deviant (B. Hayward, 2012), in need of socialization and control, and as a group who receives (or drains) resources rather than as contributors or resources themselves (C.R. Cooper, 2011). Social justice art projects situated in this context can be particularly challenging at a structural level. For example, visual art that publicly calls attention to
inequitable social conditions may be met with resistance from institutional authorities who are accountable to multiple stakeholders. Theoretically, however, the tensions generated through the creation of social justice art may serve constructive purposes in terms of advancing critical literacy, revealing implicit power structures, and building participants’ capacities to strategically approach social change (Kohfeldt, Chhun, Grace, & Langhout, 2011).

Clearly, the logistics of producing a piece of public, social justice oriented art with under-heard groups can be contentious under even the most favorable conditions. What happens when activist artist-researchers take their work outside of enclosed spaces; when they “go public,” beyond sketches and discussion, and attempt to claim a space within public institutional walls (both literally and symbolically)? What if these activist artist-researchers also happen to be children? This dissertation tells the story of the processes of collective engagement and negotiation that took place in a social justice art-based participatory action research program situated within a public after-school setting. The telling of this story is informed by multiple perspectives, including children, university-based adult researchers, elementary school-based adults, and others who co-created the path toward art generation, regeneration, and reception.

The focus of this dissertation is on how participation in the process of creating social justice art in a public institution supports critical inquiry, collective interests, and “creative resistance” by children (Duncum, 2011). The study will pay particular attention to describing and explaining the constructive function of
institutional and ideological constraints in the processes that promote the skills, values, and “democratic imaginations” vital to citizen participation (B. Hayward, 2012). The broad research questions that guide this dissertation include (1) what is the nature of citizenship education within an after-school participatory social justice art process; (2) how do sociocultural constructions of children within the setting impact the art creation process, and what are the implications for their citizenship education; and (3) how do children and adults understand their experiences as participant-researchers in a participatory social justice art project, particularly their perspectives on tensions present in the art making process.

Grounded in a feminist youth participatory action research (yPAR) paradigm/methodology, this ethnographic case study also illustrates how a participatory social justice art context can serve as an alternative site for the construction of children and children’s citizenship education.

**Purpose and Contribution**

This dissertation contributes empirical research to the scholarly literature on children’s citizenship education, yPAR, and social justice art in several ways. First, it proposes how an arts-based yPAR setting can serve as an alternative site for children’s citizenship education. yPAR is grounded in a critical feminist pedagogical foundation that engages participants in an iterative, embodied process of knowledge generation, critical reflection, and social action. As such, yPAR serves as a potential context for participants to enact a form of critical citizenship that is based in community, membership, critical dialogue, and collective
solidarity. Children are understood as capable social agents with multiple and intersecting identities and experiences of both privilege and oppression. In this sense, yPAR challenges dominant notions of childhood and children as passive learners or future citizens. Therefore, this study not only adds to the empirical literature on yPAR as a setting for citizenship education, it also contributes to the childhood studies literature. This literature focuses to a great extent on age as an axis of inequality, but not as much on the intersections of age and other social group memberships such as race, class, and immigration status. This study therefore takes an intersectional perspective to account for these multiple lived identities. In addition, the growing literature on children’s citizenship education focuses primarily on civil rights frameworks, are located largely in the Western European context, and tend to center on the experiences of older youth. This study fills gaps in the literature by elaborating an embodied, participatory citizenship education rather than children’s learning of predetermined civic “facts”; is based on data from low-income children of Color in a U.S. context; and focuses on the experiences of children in middle childhood.

Empirical studies on community-based social justice art have focused on its pedagogy (Dewhurst, 2011; Rosette, 2009), its potential for community revitalization (Hutzel, 2007), and as a strategy for changing community narratives (Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). Two important areas of inquiry and theoretical consideration are only marginally present or missing in the literature. First, although social justice art projects often involve youth (though rarely children),
there is a lack of a nuanced consideration of how socio-cultural constructions of children and childhood influence the process and products of institutionally situated social justice art. This study extends the literature by focusing explicitly on age as well as other social categories (e.g., race, class, and gender) to advance a more intersectional analysis of children’s involvement in such processes.

Second, social justice art projects often take place within public institutional settings (e.g., schools). The constraints endemic in this social location are only tangentially considered within much of the literature around yPAR, and even less so within social justice art projects. Yet the social positioning of children as well as the social location of projects within institutions like schools pose considerable challenges to the implementation of these projects, as well as abundant opportunities for both individual and community level change. A social psychological perspective demands attention to the institutional forces that shape all people’s participation and agency within these projects (Haney & Zimbardo, 1973). Thus, in this study I consider the social, political, and institutional context of a social justice art program to examine how this social location functions to facilitate and hinder children’s collective change efforts.

**Theoretical Foundations**

This dissertation examines a social justice art project in a school-based yPAR program with poor and working class children of Color, primarily Latina/o. The theoretical orientation of the research combines the perspectives of children’s citizenship education, the sociocultural construction of childhood, and collective
engagement for social change through arts-based yPAR. In this section of the paper I outline the social positioning of children in the US, in order to contextualize the current state of children’s citizenship education. I suggest how dominant constructions of childhood shape the most common forms of children’s citizenship education as studied in the empirical literature, and define the less common, but more politically relevant *critical* citizenship education, which is aligned with children’s unique status as community members. Next, I describe an alternative context for children’s citizenship education – yPAR – and illustrate how yPAR capitalizes on intergenerational partnerships between young people and adults to foster critical consciousness. As such, I argue that yPAR is a space where dominant constructions of children can be interrupted and agentic formulations are more possible. Finally, I propose social justice art as a process well aligned with the goals and tenets of yPAR, and one that can foster critical literacy, empowerment, and individual and social transformation. Specifically, I suggest that the tensions generated through the art creation process can serve as an important component of a critical citizenship education, and thus deserve greater attention in the literature.

**Sociocultural Construction of Childhood(s)**

Understanding socio-cultural constructions of childhood must be at the forefront of an examination of children’s citizenship education within social justice oriented civic engagement efforts. These constructions form an ideological context at odds with attempts to conceptualize children as active
social agents who contribute to the public good. Dominant understandings of children as in the process of becoming full humans also have implications for their citizenship education. As people in the process of development, children are by default non-citizens, in the sense that conventional understandings of citizenship require independence (Wyness, 2000). Thus, social roles for children exclude their participation as active and valuable contributors to their communities. Therefore, critical citizenship education predictably generates tension, especially when undertaken within institutions whose histories, norms, and policies are premised upon more conventional conceptualizations of children’s needs, abilities, contributions, and potentials. To be clear, it would be a misinterpretation of the childhood studies scholarship to imply that children are equivalent to adults nor that they should uncritically be granted identical rights or responsibilities. Rather, my point is to call into question the social hierarchies that have been constructed on the basis of age, with the implication being that the value we assign to perceived differences has consequences for children’s participation as agentic members of their communities.

Childhood is not only a period of human biological development but is also a socio-cultural artifact (Rogoff, 2003; Steinberg, 2011). The meaning and significance of childhood shifts historically, cross-culturally, and in relation to economic and political structures. For example, the Western notion of childhood as its own realm of unique human experience, that children have vastly different needs compared to adults, or childhood as a time of innocence and separation
from adult institutions is a relatively recent phenomenon (i.e., the last 150 years; Rogoff, 2003; Steinberg, 2011). Indeed, although childhood\(^1\) is a particular stage in the life course it is also an institution. As such it takes a “structural form” and can be understood as “that socially constructed period in which children live their lives” (Corsaro, 2005, p. 3). Childhood as a social structure is marked by inequitable power distribution between youth and adults (Gordon, 2007; Kitzinger, 1990; Oakley, 1994; Rodgers, 2005).

The separation of children’s and adults’ institutions does not imply adult intentions to subordinate children. Indeed, the institutionalization of childhood is largely based on the premise that as distinctly “different kinds of people,” children have needs and desires separate from those of adults, and so partitions are erected for a variety of purposes, including child protection. Although research, policy, and education serve important functions in promoting children’s welfare and protection, differences between children and adults are institutionalized in a way that excludes children from acting as stakeholders or decision-makers in the very institutions established for their wellbeing. Indeed, as exemplified by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, \(^1\)

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\(^1\)In using the term “childhood” I do not imply that there is a unitary or monolithic childhood, nor that childhood is experienced in the same way for all children. Indeed, as a social category childhood intersects with other social categories that confer social status and so individual experiences vary. Yet children, as people who inhabit the structural form of childhood, are subject to the norms, discourses, and age-based social and legal policies that underpin its construction. Thus, I assume that all children in the US experience the following as children: “they are forced to take part in…schooling; they are exposed to socialization measures; they experience particular forms of institutionalization; [and] they are subject to adult authority” (Qvortrup, 1993, p. 121).
children can possess both protection and self-determination rights, as these exist on separate axes (James & James, 2004).

In this dissertation consideration is given to the fact that children are made vulnerable and dependent not just by biology, age, and generation, but by other axes of oppression such as race, class, and gender (Steinberg, 2011). Because childhood is popularly understood as a universal phenomenon, there is a danger in ignoring or pathologizing the diversity of childhoods across and within social groups. For example, dominant assumptions about children’s needs and capabilities often contribute to the delegitimation of the wishes and perspectives of actual children; particularly children from non-dominant cultural groups (e.g., poor and working class and children of Color) who are more often disciplined, reprimanded and stigmatized as “bad children” when their words or bodies move outside the bounds of behavior considered “appropriate” by adults (Polakow, 1992). In essence, the universalization of childhood creates a context in which differences are presumed to indicate deficiency, deviance, or dysfunction rather than variations of diversity or the outcome of oppressive conditions. The privilege that underlies childhoods perceived as “normal” is thus ignored. It is important to recognize that age is not the only marker of difference embodied by children; childhood is related to other stratified social categories (Corsaro, 2005; Qvortrup, 1994), and must be conceived in relation to other systems of inequality. Indeed, children are also raced, classed, and gendered. Unfortunately, literature that takes a critical social constructivist view of childhood focuses little attention
on how childhood is constructed and experienced differently in conjunction with other social markers of difference, including race and class. This dissertation addresses this deficiency by taking an intersectional perspective to an analysis of children’s community participation.

Three broad notions of the child that are particularly relevant to the conceptualization of children’s citizenship in this study include the idea of children’s innocence, incompetence, and futurity. These notions of the developing child are separated below for the purpose of analysis, but are not mutually exclusive, and overlap in many, often contradictory, ways. It should also be noted that these are Western conceptualizations, and are not necessarily universalized within cultures outside of the West.

Innocence is so central to the universal conception of normal childhood that children who engage in behavior or have experience that does not affirm their innocence are excluded from the bounds of childhood, and thus deemed unworthy of adult protection (James & James, 2004). Research has repeatedly shown that institutionalized race and gender bias differentially construct children in terms of their innocence or culpability (e.g., Anyon, 1980; Ferguson, 2001). The misbehavior of white children is often pardoned as consistent with adult expectations of developing children, while the behavior of Black male children is interpreted as conscious decisions to break rules (Ferguson, 2001). In addition, while adults may proclaim the value of children as “the next generation,” this concern does not always extend to poor and working class children. Indeed,
Feagin and Vera (1995) illustrate that many white Americans view the allotment of resources to “urban” children (read: poor children of Color) as a social “waste.” Finally, in the legal realm African American juveniles are significantly more likely than their white counterparts to be tried in adult courts (K.J. Cooper, 2011).

Clearly the attribution of childhood innocence is stratified by race and class, a reason the universalization of such an attribute is so problematic – universalized constructions/values become naturalized, and are therefore invisible. An intersectional analysis is critical if we are to better understand how dominant institutions like schools construct childhood for diverse groups of children. This dissertation contributes to this analysis by examining how taken for granted institutional norms and ideologies shape children’s participation in school-based collective action.

Closely tied to the construction of children’s innocence is their corresponding need for protection. There is a tension, for instance, between the role and responsibility of adults to protect children and children’s participation as social agents in the adult world. Competence and innocence is inversely linked such that as competence and experience increases, innocence (and thus preservation of one’s childhood) is perceived to decrease (Wyness, 2000). The maintenance of children’s innocence and location in childhood is thus dependent in part upon their protection from adult roles and knowledge – experiences that would increase their competence acting in adult-centric institutions. In interviews conducted with students and teachers at English primary and secondary schools
utilizing peer mediation, Wyness (2000) found that adults were often ambivalent about children’s roles as mediators, concerned about putting too much responsibility on children to deal with bullying, especially race-related bullying. Yet children themselves felt competent to address such conflict with appropriate levels of training, and often expressed the desire for greater scope of responsibility in their roles as mediators.

A major consequence of the construction of children’s innocence and incompetence is their influence on the organization and composition of dominant institutions and everyday interactions between children and adults. Based on presumptions about their innate innocence and underdeveloped capacity to reason, children are “systematically denied access to a language of power” (Kitzinger, 1990, p. 175) that might better enable them to recognize and articulate unjust power structures. On the one hand, dominant socio-cultural understandings of children support the belief that children cannot learn about systems of power. They are assumed to have little to no experience with injustice, to lack the intellectual capacity to think critically or in abstract terms, and to lack the competency to acquire the skills necessary to interrogate power. In her study of pre-school settings, Epstein (1993) found that children were seldom given opportunities to take on classroom responsibilities due to adults’ assumptions that this would be detrimental to their emotional welfare. Furthermore, these assumptions rested on the underlying belief that young children had not yet developed the kinds of cognitive competence needed to handle such
responsibility. Adults conflated incompetence with innocence so that, for example, teachers consistently failed to intervene in children’s use of racist language based on the presumption that children would not understand the concept. Yet researchers have shown that young children do act as competent social agents in their own lives (Solberg, 1990).

Simultaneously, dominant constructions of childhood support the belief that children should not be exposed to knowledge related to oppression because it disrupts social norms around childhood as a time of innocence, and violates ideologies about their need for protection. Childhood is seen as a time of freedom from mature, “adult” issues like poverty, discrimination, and violence. Wyness (2000) argues that the preservation of children’s innocence necessitates their exclusion from issues constructed as adult. Yet children are not excluded from the perils of political and economic processes, even if their formal participation in shaping them is precluded (Coles, 1986; James & James, 2004). Specifically, over 16 million children live in poverty in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), five children died each day as a result of child abuse in 2010 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011), and children are more likely to experience poverty and homelessness than adults (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As Ann Oakley (1994) points out, “the realities of many children’s lives uncover the empty rhetoric of the political valorization of children” that rests upon discourses of children as the future and as worthy of adult protection, but in reality “they are
clearly not worth the financial and policy investment required to ensure even adequate living conditions” (p. 17).

Young children readily identify oppression when asked to share their personal experiences (Langhout, 2005). Psychological research has shown that preschoolers are aware of, and able to articulate, status differences based on race and gender (Ramsey, 1991a) and social class (Ramsey, 1991b). Yet there is persistent fear that teaching children to recognize systemic forms of inequality will lead to hopelessness and apathy; that exposure to “adult” knowledge may lead to truncated childhoods or objectionable behavior (Mayall, 1994). These fears are, however, a denial of the fact that powerlessness is part of children’s everyday, lived experience. Avoiding difficult conversations reifies dominant conceptualizations of power as a personal, individual possession and “fragments common experiences of oppression and thus undermines our perception of the necessity for collective, political action” (Kitzinger, 1990, p. 173).

Children’s development is also conceived in terms of their futurity – their growth and maturation into adults through socialization processes. As future citizens who will contribute meaningfully to society, children are less valuable now than they will be in the future, based on an implicit understanding that children are engaged in an unstable process of “becoming,” traveling toward the stable and fully developed state of adulthood (James & James, 2004). Therefore, children take on socio-cultural norms and values through socialization in order to become functional adults. In this context, children’s experiences are relevant
mostly for their influence on their future functioning as adults (e.g., early trauma’s effects on adult relationships; Kitzinger, 1990). Barrie Thorne (1987) points out that socialization theories posit children as gradual “learners of adult culture,” rather than as creators of, and participants in, child culture in the present historical moment. A double standard is inherent in dominant concepts of adults and children wherein “adults are understood by their present actions and experiences in the world; children are understood more by their becoming, as adults-in-the-making” (Thorne, 1987, p. 93). This focus also places utmost importance on adults as responsible for the socialization of children into productive members of society.

The social construction and institutional structure of childhood has important implications for examining and facilitating children’s agency. Within the past few decades, the field of childhood studies has emerged as an alternative paradigm for research surrounding children and childhood (Kellet, 2010; Prout & James, 1990), and for envisioning children as partners in framing their lives. The paradigm advocated by childhood studies, and the one taken up in this study, calls for a move away from positivism (Steinberg, 2011) to social constructivism, a more contextualized approach to research that involves children, insisting that the study of children include a notion of childhood defined as “an actively negotiated set of social relationships within which the early years of human life are constituted” (James & Prout, 1990, p.7). This perspective does not entail simply shifting our view of children as socially and structurally determined to one that
views children as agentic and powerful. On the contrary, it demands an understanding that “childhood is always produced as an object in relation to power” (Walkerdine, 2004, p. 101), and cannot be conceptualized in simplistic or universal terms. Theorizing about children’s agency requires researchers’ attention to how childhood is constituted in relation to other forms of power and how this positions children as agentic (or not) in particular contexts.

The move toward viewing children as social agents has important implications for their citizenship. Rodgers (2005), a social movement theorist, argues for seeing children as “socially located” agents who engage actively in negotiations and interactions with their environment. She points out that because of the normalization of childhood as safe, universal, protected, and dependent, children’s perceived agency and involvement in collective action is restricted, the outcome being that they are among the least studied participants in social movements. Children’s action is rarely a focus, signaling a way dominant research approaches silences, minimizing their roles as political change agents. Rodgers argues that looking at children’s participation can contest dominant narratives that portray them as innocent, and also “alter the discussion of inequalities and oppression that effect children and includes the possibility of children having a voice in their own lives and even taking action” (p. 241). This is an important distinction because it can reposition children from social problems to problem solvers.
Although children have considerable constraints on their actions, viewing childhood as a social construction enables us to imagine working with children in ways that acknowledge their abilities, capacity to think critically, lived experience, and agency (Langhout & Thomas, 2010). This stance is especially imperative given the power of dominant narratives to define children’s (in)abilities and legitimize their social exclusion. Re-imagining children as agents is a first step in developing more empowering narratives about their roles and abilities that might cast them as active citizens in the present (Rappaport, 1995).

**Children’s Citizenship Education**

The precise role that collective creative efforts for social justice plays in children’s citizenship education has not been well-documented or theorized in the literature, an omission this dissertation begins to address. There are multiple frameworks for understanding children’s citizenship and citizenship education. A child rights framework, one that understands citizenship as a status bestowed upon individuals by a nation-state, and that is coupled with various rights and responsibilities, is among the most common. This is a valuable and certainly popular conceptualization of children’s citizenship, but it is not the one I take up in this paper. More relevant to the present study is understanding citizenship consistent with the ways children themselves experience it, knowing that this of course varies with other social identities, life experiences, and social and historical contexts. Rather than conceptualizing citizenship in terms of rights, I am more interested in citizenship education broadly defined as the process
through which children come to understand and co-construct their roles and responsibilities as members of a community. In this section I briefly review the literature on children’s citizenship and citizenship education. I then draw conceptually from a variety of critical scholarship (e.g., community psychology, feminist, education, and children’s studies) to formulate a model of *critical citizenship education*.

Research on formal citizenship education tends to generate primarily from the United Kingdom and Western Europe where educational policy dictates a more or less standardized national citizenship curriculum. These programs are largely concerned with advocating and implementing the articles set forth within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), especially around the child’s right to participate in decisions that impact their life. Much of the theorizing and research on children’s citizenship arose in conjunction with and in response to the UNCRC, particularly how to integrate children’s perspectives into local and national policy decisions (e.g., Willow, Marchant, Kirby & Neale, 2004), and thus takes for granted a rights framework for understanding children’s citizenship. The idea that children have a right to act on their own behalf in decision-making is established in UK institutions in a way that it is not in the US (one of the few UN countries that has not ratified the UNCRC). A rights framework for conceptualizing children’s citizenship education, especially one based on the UNCRC, is insufficient for examining children’s citizenship education in a US context.
The United States has not adopted a standardized national curriculum for formal citizenship education. Indeed, although teaching about citizenship is encouraged by the Department of Education, it is not mandated. Rather, citizenship education is assumed to be built into social studies, civics, and extracurricular activities like student councils. In other words, support does not yet exist at the policy level for citizenship education, nor does it exist at the institutional level where public schools in general, and especially poor schools, struggle to meet the mandated curricular basics. Despite the absence of an “official” mode of citizenship education in the US, the empirical research documents how this education takes place both explicitly and implicitly in various formal and informal settings such as schools (Levinson, 2012; Thornberg, 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

In the US, an increasingly common mode of citizenship education is school-based character or moral education (Howard, Berkowitz, & Schaeffer, 2004). Character education programs place varying degrees of emphasis on transmitting democratic values and fostering skills for citizenship practice (Josephson Institute, 2001). Important democratic practices such as debate, collective action for justice, and political dissent are replaced by a whitewashed democracy of politeness and obeisance. In addition, character education programs reify children’s futurity, as preparation for democratic citizenship (Howard, Berkowitz, & Schaeffer, 2004). For example, defining a citizen as someone who votes places children’s ability to fully participate as such sometime
in the future. Conflating citizenship with an individual’s character depoliticizes the concept, obscuring the fact that democratic citizenship has arisen out of hard won collective struggles against oppression (McLaren, 1995; Osler & Starkey, 2005).

Another line of research on children’s citizenship education documents the more insidious, implicit messages children receive about citizenship. Indeed, citizenship education is woven into the very fabric of everyday social interactions, dominant cultural narratives, and the norms and assumptions that ground everyday experiences (Levinson, 2005; Levinson, 2012). The contemporary neoliberal political culture, the notion that the economic market will produce social equality, shapes the image of the “good citizen” in the US. Here, responsible citizenship is conflated with the active participation of individuals in the economic structure to support the perpetuation of capitalism.

In the US, three primary types of citizenship are emphasized, often implicitly, in the conventional curriculum (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The “individually responsible citizen” is one who addresses social problems through acting responsibly (good character), contributing to charitable causes, and obeying laws. This type of citizen might practice active citizenship by giving time, money, or goods to charitable events or organizations. The “participatory citizen” addresses social problems by contributing actively in existing civic systems, which may include running for public office or organizing a fundraiser. These are the two most common models of citizenship promoted in schools.
Children learn citizenship (but not democracy) through memorizing civic facts and established models for civic participation. More rarely emphasized is the “social justice oriented citizen,” who engages in critical analysis to unearth root causes of social problems and works to address them through collective action. Rather than working within existing systems that may further oppress subordinated groups, these citizens attempt to dismantle those systems. This type of citizenship is less common in part due to increasingly rigid education policy. As schools restrict curricular offerings to subjects relevant to standardized tests, students are taught in ways that are the most time and cost effective for short term gains. In other words, the current system is not structured to provide opportunities for children to take part in democratic dialogue, critical analysis, and questioning social systems. As B. Hayward (2012) contends, conventional citizenship education in the US “emphasize[s] ideas of volunteerism, charity and obedience rather than the values of tolerance, critical thinking and active participation which are necessary for a healthy liberal democracy” (p. 15).

Particularly disturbing about implicit modes of citizenship education is that they stratify good citizenship not only by age, but also by other social markers of difference such as race and class. Thornberg’s (2009) study of school rules demonstrated how the hidden curriculum functions as a form of implicit citizenship education where children learn what sorts of behavior - in this case rule following and passivity – make them “good,” thus keeping them within the bounds of a moral community. McLaren (1995) draws on critical pedagogy to
elucidate the serious consequences of these implicit constructions of the normative citizen, as “student identities are differentially constructed through social relations of schooling that promote and sustain asymmetrical relations of power and privilege” (p. 138).

Cultural structures of inequality, including those based on age, race, class, and gender, remain largely invisible in these forms of citizenship education. Thus, children are prevented from learning to identify and articulate more insidious forms of domination, a skill that is at the heart of democratic citizenship concerned with social justice. Learning skills to transform oppressive structures (e.g., through organizing) are severely limited in schools, if they exist at all. For instance, Jeff Duncan Andrade (2005) notes how the role of Latinas/os in the curriculum is relegated to that of a conquered people who contributed little to U.S. history. Social movements that instigated significant changes in national policy (e.g., the civil rights movement) are taught as singular incidents prompted by a few select leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. (Dimitriadis, 2005), and are disconnected from larger political struggles that employed widespread political organizing. In other words, the tools of social change are hidden from view.

In addition, children’s historical roles in social movements are largely ignored in the curriculum, and in political theorizing the agents of change in social movements are almost exclusively adults (Gordon, 2007; Rodgers, 2005). There are few, if any, models that exist for children to draw upon in developing
an understanding of their own agency or citizenship. Yet children have been active participants in social movements throughout history, ranging from initiating union formations, striking, and organizing in various industries of the early 1900’s, to active involvement in the Communist Party in the 1930s and 1940s in the U.S. (Rodgers, 2005). It is noteworthy that this is not taught in mainstream elementary education. The fact that children’s participation is seen as a relatively “new” occurrence (if recognized at all) is ahistorical and speaks to the exclusion of their history from dominant understandings of political participation. It especially highlights the inadequacies of developmental theories that question children’s ability to think critically or understand their own experiences of injustice that can compel them to action. This erasure from historical social movements “emphasizes children’s marginality as citizens,” and postpones their legitimate participation as engaged citizens until a later date (James & James, 2004, p. 118). This is yet another way children’s citizenship practices are denied, as their efforts are neither accounted for nor legitimated.

Dominant models of citizenship are inadequate for conceptualizing a more critical children’s citizenship for a number of reasons. Conventional models of citizenship are inadequate for thinking about the citizenship of any marginalized group, including women, children, and people of Color, partly because liberal citizenship assumes an independent white, male, property owning individual (Fraser & Gordon, 1992; Roche, 1999). Some feminists have argued that groups socio-culturally constructed as dependent (socially and economically) are
automatically restricted from full citizenship (Lister, 1997). Cockburn (2013) argues that the notion of an “autonomous individual freely operating in the world without constraint” (p. 14) does not adequately account for the interconnected and intergenerational nature of most adults’ lives, and certainly not children, who are by definition dependent. He contends that the communitarian perspective of citizenship is more aligned with children’s (and other subordinated groups’) lived experiences, in that it acknowledges the interactional aspect of development and participation. In the communitarian notion of citizenship, the individual is not separate from the community, rather the community mediates the individuals’ ability to act and reflect, and thus the community is the source and context for individual and group identity development.

**Critical Citizenship Education**

Citizenship is much more than paying taxes and voting in elections; we can also think about citizenship as an active, embodied practice (Dewey, 1939/1989), one that is enacted through participation in community by “doing democracy” (B. Hayward, 2012). We consider most adults who participate in protests, debate the merits of social policies, or organize community events as practicing *citizenship*, whereas children who do the same are practicing citizenship. Adults are really doing it; children are preparing to do it “for real” one day in the future. Surely, there are capacities and skills all people learn and develop over time, but skills and citizenship should not be conflated to the point where one is equivalent to the other; rather, skill and capacity building to practice
democratic participation can support citizenship. Scholars within the field of critical childhood studies advocate an awareness of children’s existing contributions and evolving capacities to participate in the civic life of their communities. This perspective problematizes dominant approaches to children’s citizenship that “view children as marginal rather than integral to community developments with a limited role as passive recipients of knowledge and care, and promote instead studies and programs that incorporate children as community agents – citizens in their own right” (Golombek, 2006, p. 15).

McLaren (1995) stresses the need for critical citizenship education. This perspective entails adults and children building intergenerational alliances (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Larson, 2006), “dreaming together,” and struggling “for a solidarity that is not centered around market imperatives,” but rather on the central task of transforming inequitable power relations (McLaren, 1995, p. 131). The positioning of citizenship education as a political endeavor concerned with creating a more equitable society distinguishes critical citizenship education from more conventional models. Critical citizenship education is oriented toward action, or embodied practices. As Osler and Starkey (2005) contend, “fundamentally citizenship is about making a difference. It is about working with others in the quest for the good society” (p. 2). Based on a review of the limited literature on children’s critical citizenship education, I construct four primary, but overlapping features: membership, participation, collective solidarity, and collective creativity.
Membership. As stated earlier, citizenship education is a process through which children come to understand and co-construct their roles and responsibilities as members of a community. Membership, a sense of identifying with, belonging, and of mattering to a group of people with common interests, is central to citizenship and goes hand-in-hand with participation (B. Hayward, 2012). Unlike more conventional perspectives, critical citizenship education problematizes the exclusion of some groups from membership in a community. As Held (1991) states, “if citizenship entails membership in the community and membership implies forms of social participation, then citizenship is above all about the involvement of people in the community in which they live; and people have been barred from citizenship on grounds of class, gender, race and age among many other factors. Accordingly, the debate on citizenship requires us to think about the very nature of the conditions of membership and political participations” (p. 20). The very notion of incorporating children as members in a community who participate fully in determining the political and social life of the community is a radical act given dominant socio-cultural constructions of children. As Cockburn (2013) notes, “children have not been able to participate in communities because of the way in which they have been understood and treated, as not being part of communities other than as appendages to families” (p. 16). Additionally, Minnow (1996) argues: “including children as participants alters their stance in the community, from things or outsiders to members” (p. 297). Particular modes of participation are implied by membership in a community
(Levinson, 2005), and as non-members (in a citizenship sense), children are expected not to participate as critical citizens, but rather as “good” students who follow rules (Thornberg, 2009).

**Participation.** Membership in a community is not just a feeling, though feeling connected and accepted certainly are important aspects of citizenship (Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward & Green, 2003; Osler & Starkey, 2005). In addition to a sense of belonging, critical citizenship educators must attend to whether children have significant roles and responsibilities, decision making power, and opportunities to participate. In other words, do children belong in the sense that their contributions, participation, and perspectives are valued by others in the community? The goal here is not to allow children uncritical access to independently make all decisions and have all the same rights and roles as adults, but rather to have more control over the boundaries of their actions (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010; C.R. Hayward, 2000).

**Collective solidarity.** Critical citizenship also entails collective solidarity (McLaren, 1995). Collective work is not merely engaging in group-based activities, but striving in solidarity for transforming inequitable power relations. It implies attending critically to where and how goods and resources are inequitably distributed and striving for the empowerment of subordinated people (Rappaport, 1995). Unlike conventional, neoliberal modes of citizenship that rely on furthering the economic interests of capitalism, critical citizenship education involves acting for the collective interests of those without access to control over
the resources that impact their lives. In other words, the purpose of solidarity is empowerment (Rappaport, 1995). Uncovering the structures that support subordination and determining actions to address problems requires skill building in democratic practices of critical dialogue and deliberation. Disagreement is acceptable, and children can learn that democratic citizens do not always agree on what the community needs or how best to address those needs. As Levinson (2005) points out, “democracy is about the continual construction of a political order that sponsors reasoned deliberation, promotes civic participation in decision making, justly distributes political-economic power, and strives for cultural inclusiveness” (p. 335). Furthermore, solidarity does not imply the erasure of difference in favor of harmony, but rather creating space for disagreement, dissent, and the exploration of multiple positionalities (McLaren, 1995).

Collective solidarity is also action oriented; it is a “combining with others” (Osler & Starkey, 2005). This conceptualization is aligned with Golombok’s (2006) suggestion that we “broaden the concept of citizenship to include other activities that engage individuals in public life,” and that focus on activities, not age, as a means of recognizing people as citizens (p. 12). Rather than viewing the civic education and political activity of children as preparation for future adult citizenship, she proposes that we view these as citizenship practices by present citizens. As B. Hayward (2012) notes, the dominant approach to conceptualizing citizenship (e.g., as adult, rights-bearing citizens), “overlooks the way children also identify with their communities, make demands and contribute to civic life as
citizens, in the sense of actors who participate in, identify with and belong to our communities, even in the absence of a full framework of adult legal entitlements and obligations” (p. 3). For example, Rodgers (2005) points out how the Children’s Movement for Peace in Columbia resulted in an expansion of what counts as peacemaking efforts – from specific adult-centric activities to nearly any activity that “improves the quality of life” in violent/war-torn communities (p. 352). This conceptualization expanded notions of civic participation to capture and validate acts that would have otherwise been ignored or dismissed as juvenile.

**Collective creativity.** Finally, critical citizenship education encompasses collective creativity. It is hopeful, generative, and forward-looking (Dewhurst, 2011). Researchers variously describe this dimension as “dreaming together” (McLaren, 1995), developing “creative resistance” (Duncum, 2011) and “democratic imaginations” (B. Hayward, 2012), and imagining with others what could be (Cockcroft, Weber, and Cockcroft, 1977; Thomas & Mulvey, 2008). Thomas and Mulvey (2008) highlight the importance of imagination in the development of critical consciousness and critical literacy:

Imagination—the ability to form mental images that are independent of present perceptions and the ability to create new images through reorganization of previous experiences—is critical to advanced study in any discipline…As students exercise their imaginative capacities, they gain access to new perceptions and possibilities of human experience. They may discover their potential for new understandings and see new possibilities for themselves and others. This sounds utopian, and it is. Thinking about what could be, what is possible, is not, however, an easy project designed to make students feel better about themselves or to simplify or idealize mythical ideals. Maxine Greene reminds us that ‘the role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve.
It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected’ (1995, p. 28). (p. 243)

The ability to listen to the multiple and varied perspectives of others and to make explicit connections among one’s own and others’ experiences and linking them to social structures, is at the core of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2007). Critical literacy, learning not only to interpret the world in terms of structural power, but to act creatively, requires imagining how things could be different than how they are. Critical citizenship education is linked to critical literacy because critical citizens must develop the tools and capacities to identify and transform inequitable social conditions. Yet, seeing things differently than the dominant world view takes time and effort (Collins, 2000), and is nurtured through collective work (Freire, 1970/2007). This is facilitated through the collective imaginings of possibilities. As Levinson (2005) points out, “the study of citizenship education for democracy is…the study of efforts to educate the members of a social group to imagine their social belonging and exercise their participation as democratic citizens” (p. 335). The precise role that collective creative efforts for social justice plays in children’s citizenship education has not been well-documented or theorized in the literature, an omission this dissertation hopes to address.

As opposed to conventional forms of children’s citizenship education, participatory action research with youth (yPAR) can be conceptualized as a context in which children practice critical citizenship. Children are active participant-researchers in yPAR, which disrupts conventional participant-
researcher and child-adult roles. yPAR is thus a particularly relevant context for critical citizenship education because it is specifically intended to foster critical consciousness, and collective “dreaming together” (McLaren, 1995) for social justice.

**Participatory Action Research with Children**

Participatory action research is a research paradigm, epistemology, and method of critical inquiry that engages subordinated groups in the process of collaborative research and knowledge construction in order to enact multi-level transformative change in their lives and communities. It is based on the premise that we can create more just social science research, and more valid interventions, by involving the groups we wish to study as participants and collaborators in the process of research (Hall, 1992; Torre & Fine, 2006). PAR is an example of embodied theory, as a product that arose out of liberatory social change efforts (McTaggart, 1994). PAR’s theoretical formulations are largely constructed from adult education and organizing paradigms (e.g., Myles Horton and Paulo Freire’s work with disenfranchised groups). Indeed, some have argued that critical andragogy is a more befitting and historically accurate description of the critical pedagogical roots of PAR, because of its association with adult education (Stuttaford & Coe, 2007). Yet, PAR is now widely used in collaboration with youth (yPAR) in the U.S. and Latin America and has been undertaken with success in a variety of contexts (e.g., schools, healthcare, community development). The inclusion of youth in PAR, however, often involves
adolescents and young adults, not young children (i.e., elementary school age, or children under 10) (see Langhout & Thomas, 2010 and Montero, 2009 for exceptions). The exclusion of younger children from the empirical literature on yPAR indicates the potential need for re-theorizing yPAR with this population, because generalization of theory or method from one population to another may be inappropriate. This dissertation adds to a small but growing literature engaging children as co-researchers in yPAR.

yPAR can be conceived of as a context for constructing children’s agency and an embodied form of citizenship education that has the capacity to interrupt dominant understandings of children. Given the constraints of conventional forms of schooling, yPAR is not always feasible as a mode of research or pedagogy within schools. In the literature yPAR is often implemented as after-school programs (Kohfeldt & Langhout, 2012), literacy projects (Van Sluys, 2010), within community-based agencies (Chen, Weiss, & Nicholson, 2010), or as youth summer programs (Morrell, 2008). Although these yPAR settings all encompass an educational component, some even residing within schools themselves, they are often positioned in after-school or community settings rather than as part of the formal school day. For marginalized groups who have been historically excluded from the liberatory potential of education, creating spaces that provide the opportunity to name their experiences and practice challenging dominant discourses can be pivotal in engaging critical consciousness (Martin-Baro, 1994). yPAR can be conceptualized as a “third space,” an alternative site for challenging
hierarchies of power, engaging in collective action, and reconstructing definitions of citizenship to include children. Feminist scholars (e.g., hooks, 1984; Kramsch, 1993) and psychologists concerned with education (Gutierrez, 2008) have long theorized about the notion of a third space, a “borderland” between cultures, institutions, and opposing discourses that functions as a bridge between multiple identities and realities (Anzaldua, 1987; Dunlop, 1999).

Although school as an institution itself may not be democratically organized, as a third space yPAR acts as a mediating setting between and within the school and community. Infused with elements of the school culture, the community culture, and children’s culture, students may come to experience this space as one that is both within and outside of each. In this alternative learning space people expand their thinking through the freedom to create, question, explore, and form new experiences and meanings that are suppressed in other settings. yPAR can be a context that utilizes students’ own collections of knowledge, flexible teaching methods, and curriculum based on problem-posing radical pedagogies.

There is no one PAR “method,” nor is there an exportable model for engaging in such research. Rather, PAR is best understood as a set of processes that can be used to guide practice across diverse contexts (McTaggart, 1994). There are five core tenets of PAR (based on the work of Brydon-Miller, 1997; Cahill, 2007; and Nygreen, 2011). First, local, subjugated knowledges are valued and given audience over dominant cultural narratives. Second, it assumes all
research and knowledge production is political. The questions we ask and the methods we employ in our research is always reflective of our social positions that include diverse experiences with privileged and oppression. Third, the creation of knowledge and liberation necessitates praxis – cycles of dialogue, reflection and action. Fourth, the purpose of research is transformative change rather than amelioration of social or individual problems. Fifth, it is important to interrogate naturalized power structures, including the recognition of age as an important structure of power.

Simply involving children in research through participation is a radical act. But this also needs to be subjected to a power analysis. Involving children through participation does incorporate their perspectives and knowledge in the research as valid data, but it does not necessarily alter power hierarchies or role relationships. Engaging children and adults together in a liberatory praxis has the potential to shift the contours of the structural form of childhood.

**Interrupting dominant constructions of childhood.** The greater inclusion of children in yPAR marks a shift in the dominant positivist paradigm of research (Christensen & James, 2000; Maguire, 1987; Steinberg, 2011) that prompted researchers to question the validity of research on children and started considering the potential of research for and later with children (Kellett, 2010). This was a radical shift, especially considering the social construction of children and young people. Yet children’s inclusion in yPAR also goes a step further by not only researching with children (e.g., allowing them some freedom in setting
the research agenda), but undertaking research with children for the purposes of transformative, socially just change. Therefore, yPAR presents a critique of dominant socio-cultural constructions of childhood. It does this in part by changing the role relationships between learners and teachers – or children and adults – as children become co-researchers, as well as by structuring opportunities to access a language of power (McLaren, 1995). yPAR allows us to recognize children as positioned within the cultural politics and structure of childhood without rendering them powerless as social agents.

Within the contextual world of yPAR, children can be constructed as change agents whose actions are seen as consequential. Their knowledge and their subjectivities are treated as legitimate in the here and now, within the structural world of childhood they inhabit. Understanding of children’s knowledge and behavior “do[es] not begin from the premise that they have only a misguided, mythological, superficial or irrational understanding of the rules of social life” (Jenks, 2004, p. 91). Their behavior and understanding is not merely practice for adulthood, but meaningful in its own right. An important piece of combating social exclusion is adult interaction with children that demonstrates belief in their competence. This act replaces the notion of children as passive recipients of knowledge with the notion that they are active contributors to knowledge. Clearly, the theoretical premise of yPAR is consistent with critical citizenship education’s emphasis on respecting the views and contributions of children as legitimate community members.
PAR engages youth as active participants in change efforts and works on many levels to subvert power and contribute to change: it contests dominant assumptions of children (Langhout & Thomas, 2010), especially about children who are poor and working class and children of Color (e.g., about their capabilities and also about their supposed apathy or self-defeating resistance); it addresses the fact that children’s (and their family’s and community’s) realities are marked by injustice at multiple levels (interpersonal, systemic, structural, policy) and works to identify and address those injustices through action; it is individually transformative – through the development of critical consciousness (Cahill, 2007), and academic skills (Morrell, 2006 & 2008) for navigating institutions and systems of power. In this way, yPAR exposes the systems of domination operating in children’s lives and connects their lived experiences with broader social structures. Therefore, participants are not blamed for their own experiences, and “failure” or “apathy” are framed as symptoms of larger, structural problems.

Furthermore, yPAR involves taking action rather than just identifying oppression. In this way yPAR encourages strategic action with others, emphasizing collaboration, solidarity, and recognition that oppressive forces are not permanent but transformable (Freire, 1985; Maguire, 1987). Unfortunately, due in part to the way children are socioculturally constructed in the US, much of the yPAR literature is based on the participation of older youth, so investigations into how the research process develops for younger children is needed. In this
dissertation, I illustrate the process of conducting research and taking action with children in one yPAR setting to show how young people can engage in collaboration, solidarity, and creative efforts to improve their community.

Identifying and legitimating the creative agentic efforts of younger children can lead to a reconsideration of what counts as active citizenship and how we understand change. Conventional and adult-centric models of agency leave the civic and political implications of the actions children engage in invisible (Bloemraad & Trost, 2008). As yPAR confronts subordinating narratives and constructions of children, it can benefit from the incorporation of the literature in children’s cultural studies in an effort to “provide an analysis that not only uncovers the social construction of childhood, but also, as a result of breaking out of a strictly developmental model, views children as competent social actors” (Rodgers, 2005, p. 255).

**Social Justice Art**

In this section I present social justice oriented art making as a social process through which children gain a critical citizenship education through engagement in critical inquiry, building collective interests, and development of democratic imaginations. First, I will define and distinguish social justice art from other art processes. I then describe social justice art as a process aligned with empowerment theory in three primary ways: first, through transforming dominant cultural narratives; second, by claiming space; and third, by building social and cultural capital. Social justice art is a politicized process that prompts
tensions in institutional spaces. Although the literature on tensions in the creation of social justice art with children is almost nonexistent, I outline a framework for examining how these tensions can serve a functional purpose in social justice art with children. Thus, social justice art making processes can serve as a powerful context for children’s citizenship education that promotes embodied practice and an explicit connection between children’s lived experiences and their social practices. Empirical research, however, has not examined this process within a yPAR after-school context. Attention to yPAR processes within public institutions like schools is important because many of these projects take place in such settings. In addition, child-oriented public institutions play a significant role in socializing and shaping children’s conceptualizations of their roles and responsibilities as members of society (Haney & Zimbardo, 1973), making such settings an important context for social and community psychologists concerned with critical citizenship education.

Art is theorized to make evident and promote that which is culturally and socially valuable within a community (Dewey, 1934/1980; Dissanayake, 1988), and is thus inseparable from the social context of its creation. Publicly visible art is often endorsed by public leaders or business owners to beautify dilapidated neighborhoods and attract consumers (Duncum, 2011). In these cases, artists may have little or no connection to the community, and resident input is limited. In contrast to economically motivated “helicopter art” dropped into communities without their consent, social justice art endeavors to reflect the perspectives of
community members, often with the goal of increasing citizen engagement and participation.

Art has a long history as a medium through which people contest dominant oppressive narratives, reveal structural inequities, explore alternative narratives, and agitate for social justice (Felshin, 1995) (e.g., theatre of the oppressed [Boal, 1985], digital storytelling, poetry [Anzaldua, 1987], and visual arts [Wang & Burris, 1997]). Dewhurst (2011) outlined three distinguishing elements of social justice education, often present in social justice art making processes: it is based in lived experience; involves praxis, or reflection and action; and endeavors to transform social structures to produce a more equitable society. In addition, social justice art, regardless of its form or medium of production, “draws attention to, mobilizes action toward, or attempts to intervene in systems of inequality or injustice” (Dewhurst, 2011, p. 366). The process of social justice art making is thus posited to engender an embodied form of citizenship consistent with critical citizenship education.

Although the arts have garnered the attention of psychologists, this attention has largely been the study of cognitive aesthetic experience, art as cathartic release in clinical settings, and art as a means of individual self-expression. Yet the arts can offer an important tool for facilitating children’s citizenship education through engaging them in collective struggles for empowerment and social justice. This dissertation will contribute to a conceptualization of the arts as contexts for citizenship education.
**Art and Empowerment.** At its core, empowerment is fostered by conditions that “enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives” (Rappaport, 1981, p. 15). Empowerment is defined as “an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources” (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989, p. 2).

An empowerment perspective necessitates a critical stance toward social inequities created by imbalances in social and political power, but power and hierarchy is not presumed to be inherently destructive. Hierarchical structures within many settings contribute to efficiency (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010). C.R. Hayward (2000), a political philosopher, defines power as “a network of social boundaries that constrain and enable action for all actors” (p. 11). These boundaries encompass formal laws and policies as well as social norms and identities, all of which circumscribe action. Asymmetries in power exist when some individuals and groups have more control over the social boundaries that restrict their action. This view of power allows us to view boundaries of action as socially constructed, maintained through relational interactions, and subject to deconstruction. In the case of children’s empowerment, the goal is not for all children to have complete control over all the forces that might affect their lives, but rather to lessen asymmetrical access to resources. Empowerment requires a
recognition that the assumptions upholding asymmetrical control of boundaries of action are not inevitable; they are socially constructed.

Control over and access to important resources is increased through transformative, second order change processes. Second order change is the alteration of conventional role relationships in a structure or setting that can lead to the more equitable distribution of power (Perkins, Bess, Cooper, Jones, Armstead, & Speer, 2007). For example, the relationship between adults and children within classrooms are in part defined by their contrasting roles as teachers and students. These roles are imbued with historical, institutional, and cultural norms and expectations for the people who inhabit them. Without altering these role relationships, power hierarchies, and thus control over resources in a given setting, are unlikely to change. This explains why, as Seymour Sarason (2004) points out, firing and hiring new teachers and school administrators is not likely to produce significant improvements in schools. Changing individuals rather than changing the relationship between the roles they occupy is first order, not second order change, because nothing structural has been transformed.

Settings built upon the principles of participation and collective engagement to address social issues, such as social justice arts-based yPAR, can foster second order change and thus empowerment. As Rappaport (1981) argues:

The implications of an empowerment ideology force us to pay attention to the mediating structures of society, i.e., those that stand between the large impersonal social institutions and individual alienated people [(e.g., family, neighborhood, community organizations)]. These are the places
where people live out their lives, and the more control they have over them the better. As researchers, our obligations are to study and understand more about how such settings actually work to provide niches for people that enhance their ability to control their lives and allow them both affirmation and the opportunity to learn and experience growth and development. (p. 19)

A social justice art project can operate as what Rappaport calls a “mediating structure,” a setting that facilitates capacity building, increased control over resources, and second order change. This is analogous to a third space in that mediating structures exist on the boundaries between institutions and individuals, thus enabling critical, collective reflection and action (Akom, 2007; Dunlop, 1999). Social justice art is aligned with an empowerment social agenda specifically through (1) creating opportunities for constructing alternative narratives, (2) space claiming, and (3) building relational power that enhances social and cultural capital.

**Art and narrative.** Historically subordinated groups, including children and people of Color, women, and the poor, have been systematically excluded from narrating their own and their groups’ histories, struggles, and successes. These stories often exist on the margins. Yet the stories we tell, the narratives of a community and broader society, are linked to individual and social identity, the possible selves we imagine and strive to become, and the individuals, groups or structures we identify as the source of social problems. In the US we commonly tell stories that focus on individual accomplishments, mistakes, freedom and choice. These stories, told again and again, become dominant cultural narratives, or what Rappaport (1995) defines as “those over-learned stories communicated
through mass media or social institutions that touch the lives of most people, such as television, newspapers, public schools, churches, or social network gossip” (p. 803). Dominant narratives are typically unquestioned, so ubiquitous that they are taken for granted as truth. For example, the US dominant cultural narrative of individual choice and responsibility, coupled with the ideology of meritocracy translates into victim blaming as a dominant response to social problems (Ryan, 1972).

Narratives are powerful sculptors of lived experience, and thus have great consequence to people’s lives. Developing perspectives that are in opposition to dominant narratives is difficult and requires significant intellectual and emotional labor (Collins, 2000). Social support from others who share (or acknowledge) non-dominant life stories is needed to sustain new ways of thinking. Alternative narratives can be fostered through sustained group dialogue, action and reflection among people who have experiences with oppression (Freire, 1970/2007; Martin-Baro, 1994). Here, people listen, connect, and reflect on shared experiences of struggle, and build critical literacy as they uncover shared experiences of struggle and shared hopes for the future. As subordinated groups make these connections, they recognize the dominant story about them and their circumstances as a “social lie” – an inaccurate representation meant to benefit those in power. Communities build power by constructing a collective identity rooted in their lived experiences and a critique of the social lie (Martin-Baro, 1994).
Community-based art is one way to turn the stories of individuals into collective community narratives, thus contributing to the construction of collective community identities. Art carries cultural capital in the sense that it conveys the histories, relationships, and values that communities find meaningful. Thomas and Rappaport (1996) argue that art is a tool for translating and transforming dominant cultural narratives, and in the process, for the expansion of life possibilities and identity development of participants. Participation in social justice art processes is a mechanism for “communities that are typically excluded from control over the means to uncover, interpret, and create their own identity to obtain access to a powerful resource” (Thomas & Rappaport, 1996, p. 317). Thus, community art democratizes knowledge production and produces alternative stories to counteract damaging dominant narratives about groups, largely created through dominant institutions and ideologies and not by members of the group themselves. In her study of a community art process with low-income youth of Color, Hutzel (2007) found that participation in community art education rooted in the lived experiences and cultures of participants helped to cultivate a strong sense of community belonging among participants and residents. For example, a mural at a previously dilapidated and dangerous park led to increased usage of the space by community residents and contributed to a positive shift in the way both participants and community members talked about the park. Because narratives have serious implications and consequences for individuals and groups, the opportunity to deconstruct them, control the
dissemination of counter stories, and construct powerful collective identities is an important resource. Thus, facilitating increased control over and access to this resource is in line with the objectives of empowerment.

The power to control narratives, and art as a tool for indexing them, is inequitably distributed. Increasingly, children from poor and working class communities are systematically excluded from the arts as public schools strip curriculum to meet standardization requirements and testing benchmarks (Bell & Desai, 2011; Dewhurst, 2011). The art education that remains is often enough to satisfy parents that their children are receiving “creative” experiences at school (e.g., art that commemorates major holidays; also used as a way of integrating “multicultural” education, although in a tokenistic way). Unfortunately, art is marginalized within schools, as it is not considered a rigorous academic subject. Art is conceptualized as recess, a break from formal schooling. Students are taught that artists possess natural, inborn talent that cannot be learned, and come to think of art as rarefied objects preserved in museums (Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). Art as a context for children’s critical citizenship education is largely missing from the empirical literature. Although studies like Hutzel’s (2007) certainly have implications for constructions of children’s citizenship, this analytic frame is not taken up. This dissertation begins to address this gap.

Education in the arts can lead to “the kinds of critical transactions that empower persons to resist both elitism and objectivism, that allow them to read and to name, to write and to rewrite their own lived worlds” (Greene, 1991, p.
36). Thus, the arts can foster proficiency in translating and transforming the world as a literate practice synonymous with Freire’s concept of “critical literacy” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In contrast to conventional individualistic conceptions of literacy as simply the ability to read and write, Freire asserted a definition of literacy that acknowledged the socially situated context of teachers and learners in hierarchical systems of power (Souto-Manning, 2010). In this sense, learning to read entails not only the interpretation of the written word, but the ability to decode multiple forms of communication and social discourse in the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1996). Literacy then, involves much more than reading text; it is an intrinsically social dialogic process that requires an awareness of hegemonic social relations and a structural analysis of oppression. Furthermore, literacy includes the ability to write and rewrite/reshape the world through social action so that it is more closely aligned with social justice. Critical literacy is a process of decoding, visioning and re-visioning that is cultivated through social justice art processes. These involve participants reading the world, translating their perspectives into aesthetic objects or images, and revising them as needed to communicate their message strategically to the world. Involvement in arts-based research and education can facilitate critical literacy. In their study of college students enrolled in a health psychology course that utilized arts-based curriculum, Thomas and Mulvey (2008) concluded that students developed “critical analysis and compassionate concern” for issues of social injustice (p. 244). As students participated in their own creative writing, visual arts projects,
and analyses of social issue through the arts, they developed creative ways of translating and understanding complex problems. Critical literacy is imperative to developing the perspectives necessary to developing truly liberatory alternative narratives. Excluding subordinated groups from access to art as a social justice tool is thus deeply political.

**Art and claiming space.** Space – both literal and symbolic – is an important resource that is disproportionately controlled by dominant groups. For example, access to publicly visible spaces to communicate or display information (e.g., billboards, television commercials, magazines, museums, the walls of buildings) is limited to those who can afford to purchase the space and whose messages are authorized by those who own the property. Unauthorized public communication (e.g., graffiti) is deemed problematic and illegal. Art has been used as a form of resisting dominant narratives and dominant cultural values through space claiming at multiple levels (El-Haj, 2009; Goldbard & Adams, 2006). The Chicano and African American mural movements recognized the power of (re)appropriating space as an important cultural and community resource. Claiming physical and geographic space (e.g., a wall, building, neighborhood block, park, or stage) is accomplished through mediums such as public murals, street art, and public performances. But space claiming also occurs through (re)appropriating histories, narratives, values, and cultures that are typically unseen or unheard, and is thus symbolic as well as literal. Space claiming implies an assertion of rights and values, in claiming who matters, and
whose stories and histories matter to a community. A strong sense of collective history can foster community solidarity, a necessary resource in building momentum and support for second order change (Mulvey & Mandell; 2007).

**Building relationships and capital.** Social justice art processes are aligned with relational organizing, or power that is built with others (Kreisberg, 1992; Warren & Mapp, 2011). In contrast to unilateral forms of power (or power over), relational power is amplified when relationships are deepened. Relational power is an important way that groups who lack financial and other material resources can work toward social change. Art is an effective medium for building relational power through the active participation of community members. Social justice art is by definition participatory – it engages groups of people to build solidarity, thereby fostering collective agency and a sense of community. One strategy used to build relational power is community storytelling. Storytelling helps marginalized communities recover histories of struggle and strength that can facilitate collective identity (Martin-Baro, 1994). Art processes can preserve these untold stories and expose them to a wider audience. In addition, as youth participants in social justice art immerse themselves in community stories, histories, and diverse perspectives, they may come to see themselves as part of a larger community with shared histories and experiences. A sense of collective history and identity is critical to building the solidarity networks necessary for social change (Martin-Baro, 1994). Thomas and Mulvey (2008) describe how Latina/o immigrant students involved in a high school mural project in the Pacific
Northwest began to identify as a community through drawing, storytelling, and discussing their histories and futures. In this sense, art participation can foster the sense of community and belonging, which is integral to children’s citizenship education (Thomas & Mulvey, 2008).

In the process of building relational power through social justice art, social capital and cultural infrastructure is fostered (Bourdieu, 1986; Goldbard & Adams, 2006). Social capital is defined as “resources and key forms of social support embedded in one’s network or associations, and accessible through direct or indirect ties with institutional agents” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1067; Bourdieu, 1986). Community-based, participatory social justice art projects often involve deep engagement with community members, including individuals, families, and leaders to learn valued stories and histories. The creation of dense social networks, and building relationships between individuals with different strengths and skill sets, can promote social capital, a valuable resource that enhances empowerment. Cultural infrastructure, the development of cultural resources and information, is created when people “deploy cultural tools [such as murals] for social change, asserting themselves as artists within their own communities and winning recognition for their contributions to cultural capital” (Goldbard & Adams, 2006, p. 73).

**Art and citizenship education.** Although citizenship education in the US tends to emphasize what Westheimer and Kahne (2004) describe as the “personally responsible citizen” and the “participatory citizen,” social justice art
processes are conducive to more critical models, including the “social justice oriented citizen.” El-Haj (2009) describes a social justice art project for Arab American youth as one that foregrounds the role of art in educating democratic citizens. He argues that this is especially relevant in public schools, where spaces for deconstructing lived experiences and creating alternative narratives have been decimated by the current neoliberal policy structure. In contrast to the typical citizenship models conveyed through school lessons in democracy, the arts project, in which youth created digital stories about Arab Americans to critique dominant discourse, created a supportive setting for participants to engage in a collaborate effort to address an important issue they defined in their community. Essential to this more critical model of citizenship education is the process of creating social justice art.

Arts-based projects can also serve as citizenship education settings for younger children. In her study of an arts-based action research program for children in Venezuela, Montero (2009) illustrates a model for conceptualizing and empirically assessing children’s citizenship education. In this framework citizenship is conceptualized as “the sense of belonging that generates engagement and commitment with specific tasks and with projects concerning that sphere, and the shared social identity derived from knowing that one is part of a collective group belonging to a locality, a region, a city, or a nation” (Montero, 2009, p. 151). Together with the assertion that children should be constructed as active citizens in the present, through membership and participation in
communities, Montero’s work shows how an arts-based, participatory research context can serve as a citizenship education setting. Yet, the study is based primarily on anecdotal examples rather than systematic analysis of the process. My study seeks to provide a theoretically grounded empirical example of the arts-based citizenship education process with children.

Little research has been undertaken on social justice art as a context for critical citizenship education, and even less so that focuses on elementary school age youth of Color in the US. Yet, children are active constructors of their own lives, capable of meaning making, collective work, and critical care and concern for their communities. Engaging them in citizenship education that honors not just their potential as future citizens, but their valuable capacity to contribute meaningfully as present citizens is important, and is a central focus of this dissertation. Models for assessing the dimensions of the social justice art process in relation to critical citizenship education are scarce. Below, I combine several tenets from both critical citizenship education and social justice art to elaborate the assessment framework used in this dissertation.

**Assessing the dimensions of the art process as critical citizenship education.** Joining the dimensions of critical citizenship education outlined previously (i.e., membership, participation, collective solidarity, and collective creativity) with the empowering aspects of art making (i.e., alternative narratives, space claiming, and building relationships and social capital) suggests that social
justice art processes provide a unique context for children’s critical citizenship education.

A framework for conceptualizing the social justice aspects of the art making process is described by Dewhurst (2011). The first lens, intention, asks us to ponder the intention of the art and the implied social change strategy associated with the intention. The social change strategy implied by the intention of the art may range from ameliorative (e.g., to beautify a neighborhood), transformative (e.g., to challenge assumptions and change behavior and attitudes), or a combination.

The second lens, process, refers to the underlying actions and thinking that contributed to the making of the art itself. Dewhurst urges researchers to examine “the intricate moments of making—not just the bookends of its beginning or end—by asking what makes the practice of making this work an act of social justice” (p. 370). The lens of process includes participant engagement in connecting, questioning, and translating. Makers of social justice art engage in critical questioning and inquiry to assess the cause of perceived social problems, and collect data (e.g., through focus groups, surveys, collecting oral histories) to more deeply understand those issues. They also connect the social issues they identify to their own and others’ lived experiences with oppression (Freire, 1970/2007; Martin-Baro, 1994). Artists must translate the themes and intentions of their process of critical inquiry into aesthetic objects. According to Dewhurst (2011), translation of this sort is a learning process that “requires activist artists to
critically reflect on the intentions of their artwork and match those with the appropriate artistic tools and techniques that have emerged from a deeper understanding of the issue at hand” (p. 371). Thus, this step in the process is a culmination of intentions, critical inquiry, connections, and knowledge construction, and involves praxis.

The third and final lens Dewhurst (2011) proposes for assessing social justice art is that of social location, where and by whom the art is created. The social contexts in which social justice art projects are carried out vary widely from community-based youth organizations, museums, to public schools. Therefore, the particular constraints, audiences, and stakeholders involved will depend on the specific setting. For young, working class children of Color engaged in creating social justice art, this process will likely be constrained by dominant assumptions and sociocultural constructions of their multiple social categories, as well as by the institutional constraints inherent in public schools.

**Tensions.** In addition to the three lenses from Dewhurst, outlined above, in this study I extend social location to also include institutional and ideological tensions. These tensions are crucial to an ecological understanding of social justice art. Moving art from the classroom to public spaces is contentious for poor and working class children of Color doing social justice work. Tensions, however, are instructive because they can elucidate power hierarchies, decision structures, and implicit assumptions and values of the institutional culture (Kohfeldt et al., 2011). In addition, tensions offer teachable moments and
capacity building for moving toward second order change. Indeed, tensions in public art are expected and may be used as a catalyst for greater understanding and community building around contested meaning and values (Cockcroft, Weber, & Cockcroft, 1977). For example, Cityarts Workshop, a non-profit established in 1968 in New York’s Lower East Side engages youth in creating social justice public art. In an early project, young people and artists designed a mural for a multiethnic, working class neighborhood that sparked controversy among Jewish residents. Among the images were figures of African Americans and Latinos struggling to overcome oppression. But “particularly galling…was the religious symbol of the cross in the very center of the mural,” which represented a religious-cultural artifact common to the growing Black and Latino population in the area (p. 95). The Cityarts participants met with members of the Jewish community to reach a compromise in which the cross was turned into an ankh, an Egyptian symbol of the key of life. In this sense, tensions served as an opportunity to build bridges between diverse groups within the community.

Some literature describes how social justice oriented public murals elicit institutional and community tensions, but this tends to be anecdotal. For example, based on their extensive experience, critical muralists argue that conflict often arises when poor and working class struggles are made visible, as the middle class “may feel implicated or embarrassed by the public expression of discrimination, drug abuse, etc., as part of their community” (Cockcroft, Weber, & Cockcroft, 1977, p. 97). In a recent dissertation study on critical muralism, Arturo Rosette
(2009) described the controversy over a mural designed with Chicana/o students at a community college. The mural, which was to be placed inside a student building, explicitly depicted social and economic stratification with symbolic imagery of major economic corporations (e.g., Ronald McDonald, Barbie, Jack of Jack in the Box) defecating on huddled masses below them. Despite institutional support from the Dean of the college and many staff, faculty, and students, a small group of community members, including some white students, leveraged an organized opposition to the mural threatening legal action. The mural, though completed on wood panels, was never displayed publicly in the college.

These kinds of tensions, rooted in the cultural struggles for empowerment and social justice, are not indicative of failure and are in fact essential to critical citizenship education. Anecdotally, participants in the studies cited above learned about citizenship by doing it. They collectively explored their own and their society’s strengths and challenges, deliberated over representations, engaged in debate and dialogue with the community (including with those in positions of authoritative power), and built democratic imaginations through the creative and strategic task of generating and regenerating symbolic images in response to controversy. Yet research and analyses of these tensions needs further empirical study.

Participatory arts can serve as entry points for children to participate meaningfully within public institutions (e.g., schools), and may lead to second order change as role relationships shift. This study fills a gap in the literature by
exploring how these projects are valuable within a school community, even with tensions. I focus not only on how the tensions impede the work, but also how they can enhance the work by elucidating otherwise unspoken roles and assumptions. In addition, I explore how tensions arise not only in response to subordinated groups making publicly visible value assertions, but also how these are related to socio-cultural constructions of children and in particular poor and working class children of Color. As Peter McLaren (1995) reminds us, social justice is born out of collective struggle for material and symbolic resources, so any efforts for such will inevitably elicit conflict.

**Research Questions and Organization of the Study**

Three research questions guide this dissertation. First, what is the nature of citizenship education within an after-school participatory social justice art process? Although as an arts-based yPAR setting, Change 4 Good is theoretically consistent with critical citizenship education, how this unfolds in practice is not well documented in the literature, particularly with low-income youth of Color. To address this question, I compared dimensions of critical citizenship education gleaned from the literature (e.g., Levinson, 2005; McLaren, 1995; Montero, 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) to the mural creation phase of Change 4 Good. Tensions, important but often overlooked elements of the participatory art creation process, were used as a unit of analysis in understanding how the social context and institutional structures operated to hinder and support the aims of the program. This question helped to generate a deeper understanding of how tensions
served as learning experiences and opportunities to deepen understandings of
democratic citizenship and social change processes.

Relatedly, the second research question asked how sociocultural
constructions of children within the setting impacted the art creation process, and
what were the implications for their citizenship education. yPAR and social
justice art making have the potential to disrupt dominant notions of childhood and
therefore to challenge long-held values and beliefs of people in the setting.
Although the premise of subordinated groups of people creating public art is in
itself political (Lacy, 1977), I investigate how participants, in this case poor and
working class children of Color, are constructed in the process. The literature on
the socio-cultural construction of children lacks empirical examination of how
non-white/middle class young people are uniquely positioned not only as children
but also as occupying intersecting social identities. Importantly, I look not only at
adult constructions of children, but also to the ways children themselves actively
coop-construct their own agency, often resisting adult presumptions and
expectations of their competence.

Finally, the third question guiding this study concerns how children and
adults understood their experiences as participant-researchers in a participatory
social justice art project, particularly their perspectives on tensions present in the
art making process. This final question endeavored to deepen our understanding
of critical citizenship education through exploring participants’ subjective
experiences. Both adults and children were interviewed in order to put their
voices into conversation with one another rather than focusing exclusively on one group. Adding the voices of children themselves to the chorus of scholars involved in children’s citizenship studies can expand current notions of what it means to be a “productive” citizen.

The following chapters are organized around the four primary features of critical citizenship education: membership, participation, and collective solidarity and collective creativity. In chapter two, I describe the methods utilized to carry out this study. In chapter three, I focus on membership and participation by detailing the process through which children developed the capacity to participate actively in critical dialogue in the context of intergenerational partnerships that cultivated a sense of membership and belonging. Chapter four builds on chapter three by examining how children’s participation is complicated by its extension beyond the micro-setting on the Change 4 Good setting and into the larger school and community, and thus how children’s agency is circumscribed by unspoken roles and responsibilities conferred by social norms. Chapter four also illustrates the role of tensions in critical citizenship education through social justice art. The fifth chapter explores how children leveraged their creativity and identities as helpers to create a mural that endorsed collective solidarity. In this chapter, I foreground how children themselves construct the meaning of their participation in social justice art. In the sixth and final chapter I conclude by highlighting the major contributions of this study to the fields of social and community
psychology. Throughout the following chapters I describe the contributions of social justice art processes to children’s critical citizenship education.
Chapter 2: Methods

Research Relationships

This research includes data from Change 4 Good, a youth participatory action research (yPAR) project I co-led as a graduate student researcher for four years. Change 4 Good motivated my broader personal and intellectual interest in childhood as a structural phenomenon, children’s agency, and schools as contexts for citizenship development. I am interested in how involvement in participatory arts fosters children’s citizenship education as well as alternative, less subordinating constructions of children.

Maplewood Elementary School. I have a well-established partnership with Maplewood Elementary School\(^2\) (MES), where I have spent the last seven years developing relationships with school and community members. From 2007-2011 I co-led a weekly after-school participatory action research program for fourth and fifth grade students at MES. The program was collaboratively designed by my faculty adviser, a teacher, a resource specialist and the school’s principal, and was attended regularly by the teacher. During this time I formed relationships with this teacher, as well as with others present during after-school time, such as the custodians, other after-school program coordinators, and several teachers. In 2010 I spent ten weeks working as an ethnographer and aide in one classroom, which gave me the opportunity to experience day-to-day operations of a typical classroom at MES. My role as a classroom aide allowed me to form

\(^2\) All proper names are pseudonyms.
relationships with teachers, students, staff, and parents with whom I would not have otherwise come into contact. During this time several veteran teachers remarked that I had become a “regular” at the school. In other words, my presence and commitment had become legible. In 2011 and 2012 I co-led the MES Parent Achievement Academies, a four-week series of workshops designed to educate parents about preparing their children for college. I conversed regularly with the principal, parents, and co-organizers through my participation in the Academies, again building relationships in multiple contexts.

Change 4 Good

The intention of the yPAR program, Change 4 Good, is to create an empowering setting to facilitate critical inquiry, conscientización, and child-directed social change to increase children’s control over resources that affect their lives. Based on their own research, participants identified a number of interlacing problems within their school community, including a lack of accountability to children and a low sense of belonging and ownership among students. Changing these problems in such a large and complex setting is no small feat, and one that requires systems-level change, defined as “an intentional process designed to alter the status quo by shifting and realigning the form and function of a targeted system” (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, & Yang, 2007, p. 197). Essential to this process is a focus on altering “the underlying structures and supporting mechanisms that operate within a system…such as the policies, routines, relationships, resources, power structures, and values (Foster-Fishman,
The structure of a system is maintained through the dominant values, beliefs, and normative behaviors of those populating the setting. Therefore, actions to alter the values, beliefs, or behaviors that dictate system norms are important change goals. Values and beliefs are upheld in part through narrative discourses (Rappaport, 1995). Community-based, participatory, social-justice oriented art is one strategy psychologists and activists use to create alternative narratives that work toward changing the values, beliefs and norms that underlie systems (Thomas & Rappaport, 1996).

**Research Site and Participant Selection**

During my tenure as an active member of the Change 4 Good team, MES served approximately 450 students in Preschool through 5th grade, and was the second largest elementary school in the district (California Department of Education, 2012). The student body was racially and ethnically diverse and served primarily students of Color: 62% Latina/o, 29% white, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% African American. More than half of the students were English learners, the majority of whom spoke primarily Spanish at home. Nearly 80% of the students were considered low income (i.e., qualified for free or reduced price lunch). Some teachers, including the teacher who collaborates with Change 4 Good, have a relationship with a local community organizing group affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation.
Participants in this study include the MES student researchers, university-based adult researchers, an MES teacher and principal, the district superintendent, and our art collaborator, all of whom were involved in the mural creation action phase of the program. Ethnographic fieldnotes collected during this period document the actions and interactions of all individuals involved. For this ethnographic case study, I will intentionally draw from a smaller, purposeful sample (Creswell, 2012; Light, Singer & Willett, 1990; Maxwell, 2013) of students and university-based researchers in order to gather additional qualitative data that will specifically address my research questions. Of the twenty one students involved in the design and painting of the mural, eight were involved in the program for two consecutive years (their 4th and 5th grade years), which included a fieldtrip to a university where they learned about social justice art. Seven of these eight children were interviewed (one declined). This particular subset of children was selected for several reasons. First, they have a firm grounding in social justice art based on their experience attending the fieldtrip and so will likely be better able to connect the creation of their own mural to broader narratives about the purpose and history of public art. Second, these children were involved in the program for two years (their second of a 2-year program), whereas the others had been involved for one (their 1st year of a 2-year program). This is relevant to the theoretical grounding of my research questions, which seek to gather students’ perspectives on issues that require more long-term engagement
in processes (e.g., empowerment, relationship building, feelings of belonging and collective interests).

A purposeful sample of eight adults involved in the mural process were interviewed: the critical muralist who partnered with the program, a teacher, the school principal, the superintendent, two undergraduate research assistants, a graduate student, and the faculty member who served as the principal investigator on the program. The teacher has been directly involved in the program since its inception, and is familiar with the history and institutional memory of the elementary school as a long-time teacher there. She thus serves as a cultural broker between the institution of the school and the after-school setting of the yPAR program, offering a unique perspective on the context of the program and associated constraints. The two undergraduates (out of 5 who served as research assistants during the mural painting phase) selected for participation include one white, middle-class woman, and one Chinese American middle-class woman, both in their early 20s. They were purposefully selected due to their length of time spent in the program (both exceeded one academic year), their deep involvement in several art-making aspects of the project (e.g., drafting and painting the mural, producing a documentary film about the mural), and my observation of their particularly close relationships with the children involved in the program.
Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using several methods, including observational fieldnotes, semi-structured interviews, and archival records. Fieldnote and archival data derive from the mural phase of the yPAR program, spanning from the development of the mural draft to the unveiling. Fieldnotes for the mural creation phase span from May 2012-December 2012. In addition, I analyzed fieldnotes documenting a fieldtrip to learn about social justice art from April of 2011. Actual time “in the field” (i.e., for which fieldnotes were created) varies because of the 3 month summer break, during which data were collected for 4-5 weeks only. Therefore, fieldnotes total approximately 16 weeks, though some weeks included several days of contact each week. Archival data (lesson plans, art work, press releases, audio-visual materials, etc.) are also from this time span.

I collected semi-structured interviews with participants during the 2013-2014 academic year. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by undergraduate research assistants. Each audio recording was double checked for accuracy by a second transcriber. The transcription format was consistent with that outlined by Briggs (1986). Short pauses were indicated by a comma, long pauses with elipses, and stutters or a change in direction with a dash connected to the last letter of the word or syllable. Drawn out syllables were indicated by a colon, with additional colons added to syllables drawn out for more extensive periods of time. Parentheses signal short interruptions or brief overlapping
Fieldnote data were collected by all members of the research team (undergraduate research assistants, graduate students, and a university professor) present at each meeting in accordance with the procedures outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), and generally written within 72 hours of each observation. Two fieldnotes (out of 2-6 taken for any given meeting) from each session were coded, one from a graduate level (or higher) student, and one from an undergraduate student. Most ethnographic research data consists of one ethnographer’s observational fieldnotes, yet in this project there were as many as six ethnographers present at one time. Coding multiple rather than a single fieldnote strengthens the truth claims made in this study, especially when incidents and interactions are corroborated by more than one perspective.

Choosing to code one fieldnote written by a graduate student or professor and another written by an undergraduate researcher is purposeful. Anecdotally, based on my experience as a member of the research team, some of the children had qualitatively different interactions with the undergraduate adults, and so their fieldnotes may document observations or interactions the others missed. When sessions included break-out groups, with each fieldnote documenting a unique observation, all session fieldnotes were coded.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both adults and children involved in the mural phases of the program. As recommended by Maxwell
(2013), interviews were collected in order to provide context and alternative perspectives to those gleaned from fieldnote data. Interviews were conducted with eight children who participated in the mural process. Interviews with the children focused on their reflections on their experiences in the mural-making yPAR process, including their roles and responsibilities, relationships with adults and peers in the program, perceptions of the purpose and impact of the mural, and how they feel their involvement affected their values and stances toward participation and social justice (see Appendix A for interview protocol).

Semi-structured interviews with adults involved in the mural process of the program were also conducted. These interviews focused on their roles and responsibilities, relationships with children and other adults, their constructions of children/childhood, the perceived impact of their participation on their perceptions of children, and their involvement in the mural making process (see Appendices B-D for adult interview protocols). Ethnographic observations can provide information about what happens in a particular setting, but not how the people in that setting think, feel, or interpret what is happening. Interviews helped to contextualize site observations by providing explanations for particular behavior and interactions. In addition, one-on-one interviews allowed me to compare the perspectives of multiple groups of people (e.g., children and adults). Finally, interviews were useful for examining processes (e.g., how adults’ assumptions about children relate to their interactions with students).
Data Analysis Procedures

Throughout the study, I describe how the people in the setting engage in particular practices theorized from the literature to be relevant to the construction of children’s citizenship within an arts-based yPAR setting (see Appendix E for codebook). Deductive coding was conducted based on the theoretical and empirical literature. In addition, I did not assume that existing frameworks for understanding social justice art processes, constructions of children, or citizenship education apply to my particular participants (primarily Latina/o children). Therefore, I also performed inductive (open) line-by-line analysis to construct new codes and themes to extend concepts present in the literature.

More specifically, I used categorical analysis/coding to answer the questions that deal with comparisons and contrasts (e.g., comparing theoretical dimensions of critical citizenship education to the arts-based yPAR process). To examine how certain perspectives (e.g., that children are innocent/unable to grasp adult concepts) are connected to, or inform, the behaviors, norms, and practices in the setting (e.g., what kinds of decisions children have the opportunity to make), I employed connecting/process analysis, a procedure that looks for connections between what people say and believe (gleaned through interviews) and their behavior and choices (gleaned from fieldnotes; Maxwell, 2013). This also involved triangulation, or testing one form of data against another for stronger validity claims (Fetterman, 2010). As suggested by Wolcott (1994), I sought “patterned regularities” as I constructed themes from the data to aid interpretation.
All data were qualitatively coded by me and two trained undergraduate research assistants using consensus coding. Consensus coding (Ahrens, 2006; Russell, 2000) is a procedure in which several coders (some insiders and some outsiders) independently code data, then come together to compare codes. When there is disagreement or inconsistency in codes, coders discuss their disagreement and come to a consensus on how the data in question should be handled. If consensus cannot be reached, that piece of data is not coded. Consensus coding is a data analysis procedure that is especially relevant for research where at least one of the coders has direct, long-term involvement in the research as an insider, as this accords her/him with a deeper knowledge of the culture and norms of the setting than outsiders. It is important also to include outsiders as data coders as they can identify blind spots or issues insiders may take for granted (Ahrens, 2006; Russell, 2000). Consensus coding has been utilized by social and community psychologists conducting qualitative analyses of participatory research with children (e.g., Langhout, Kohfeldt & Ellison, 2011).

To analyze atypical data, including visual data (e.g., the mural itself, the mural documentary, associated art projects) the research team coded written descriptions of the artifacts (Saldaña, 2013). The written descriptions were completed by me and one undergraduate research assistant. These descriptive written notes were then coded following the procedures outlined above.

Member checks were conducted with participants subsequent to coding, but prior to final analyses. Three children and five adults agreed to read their
interview transcripts. One adult, the teacher, asked for minor changes (i.e., to correct spelling of misunderstood words) to the transcript. No one requested substantive changes.


Chapter 3: Results

Fostering Student Voice through Membership and Belonging

Membership, a sense of identifying with, belonging, and of mattering to a group of people with common interests, is central to citizenship and goes hand-in-hand with participation (B. Hayward, 2012). Unlike more conventional perspectives, critical citizenship education problematizes the exclusion of some groups from membership in a community. As Held (1991) states, “if citizenship entails membership in the community and membership implies forms of social participation, then citizenship is above all about the involvement of people in the community in which they live; and people have been barred from citizenship on grounds of class, gender, race and age among many other factors. Accordingly, the debate on citizenship requires us to think about the very nature of the conditions of membership and political participations” (p. 20). The notion of incorporating children as members in a community who participate fully in determining the political and social life of the community is a radical act given dominant socio-cultural constructions of children. As Cockburn (2013) notes, “children have not been able to participate in communities because of the way in which they have been understood and treated, as not being part of communities other than as appendages to families” (p. 16). Additionally, Minnow (1996) argues: “including children as participants alters their stance in the community, from things or outsiders to members” (p. 297). Particular modes of participation are implied by membership in a community (Levinson, 2005), and as non-
members (in a citizenship sense), children are expected not to participate as critical citizens, but rather as “good” students who follow rules (Thornberg, 2009).

Change 4 Good positions young people and adults as intergenerational partners in the process of community development. Intergenerational relationships are often conceptualized within the community psychology and positive youth development literatures as Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAPs). YAPs are defined as “the practice of (a) multiple youth and multiple adults deliberating and acting together (b) in a collective (democratic) fashion (c) over a sustained period of time (d) through shared work (e) intended to promote social justice, and strengthen an organization and/or community issue” (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013, p. 388). YAPs are distinct from other youth-adult relationships, such as mentoring which is typically done in a one-on-one setting with one adult and one young person primarily for the benefit of the mentee. In addition, YAPs problematize typical youth-adult research relationships in which adults determine what youth will study or study youth themselves. Instead, YAPs involve democratic processes that challenge the socially constructed power hierarchies between youth and adults. In this sense, YAPs can serve as settings for critical citizenship education (Larson, 2006; Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013).

Although YAPs offer an alternative framework for structuring goal-oriented intergenerational relationships, the YAP literature makes several
problematic assumptions. YAPs expect the active participation of young people in deliberation and decision-making. Thus, there exists an unspoken assumption that youth arrive ready, willing, and able to participate in particular ways (e.g., dialogue, asserting their perspective) and assume leadership roles. The expectation of youth participation is complicated by the fact that many youth, especially those who occupy multiple subordinated social identities, may be unaccustomed to such practices. YAP models tend to emphasize the importance of a sense of belonging among participants, but presuppose a particular kind of relational climate, for example that youth have (or desire) a close connection to adults partners.

The problem with these assumptions is that non-participation is institutionalized in schools. Non-participation as a norm undermines the intention and effectiveness of YAPs, particularly those seeking to redress the exclusion of children from critical citizenship education. Although “safe space” and shared decision-making are core elements of YAPs, we must also interrogate how decisions are made in the context of age-based structural power differences. Additionally, although rapport building is considered important in most of the educational literature, the links between rapport (i.e., the relational aspects of YAPs) and intellectual and practical outcomes (e.g., development of critical literacy) are under-theorized. Finally, Mannion (2007) reminds us that children’s voices do not resound in a vacuum: “while ‘voice’ and ‘participation in decision making’ are important markers and useful starting points, we need at the same
time to understand how the spaces for children’s lives are co-constructed by the actions of adults and how child-adult relations in fact are central in deciding which children’s voices get heard and what they can legitimately speak about” (p. 417).

In this chapter I focus on nurturing student voice and participation through YAPs in Change 4 Good as a critical component of critical citizenship education. I describe the process through which children developed a sense of membership within the Change 4 Good program. The characteristics of participation expected in participatory social justice art (e.g., divergent thinking, co-construction of knowledge, discussion and debate) are qualitatively different than that expected in conventional educational experiences. Building the capacity of youth and adults to engage in partnerships requires defeating the silencing discourses, norms, and policies institutionalized in schools. To do so, the youth and adults partnered in Change 4 Good cultivated a strong sense of membership and belonging through personal relationships and a critical feminist pedagogy. I describe how these relationships and pedagogical practices forged a space in which youth resisted the school-sponsored silencing of student voice. In turn, I illustrate how YAPs in this setting supported children’s intellectual risk taking and collective creativity, both central to a more critical citizenship education.

School-Sponsored Silencing

“School-sponsored silencing” is prevalent among low-income youth and youth of Color (Quiroz, 2001, p. 328; see also Fine, 1991), whose voices are
discouraged or disregarded through a combination of age-based discrimination (e.g., children should be seen and not heard), classism and racism (Urietta, 2004). Gender socialization also plays a role (Mikel Brown, 2005). Silencing is defined as a process by which the perspectives that challenge the dominant narrative in a setting are ignored, derogated, and/or dismissed, thereby delegitimizing alternative perspectives and perpetuating dominant cultural narratives. As Michelle Fine states, “silencing is about who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled” (1991, p. 33).

The children who participated in Change 4 Good were familiar with school-sponsored silencing, particularly cognizant of the ways both pedagogy and discipline structure this silence. Layla, one of the most outspoken students in the program, recalled a correlation between her entrance into formal schooling and the onset of what nearly all of the young people referred to as “shyness”:

I mean I always thought as-of myself as a, SHY.; not very: outgoing person, (Danielle: yeah) … in this picture I’ll show you something (Danielle: ok) ((Layla brings out her binder and shows me a school picture of herself from 1st or 2nd grade)) …when I was like- when I entered schools [was] when I started to, get really shy but, before that, I was NOT afraid of pictures…I wouldn’t make very many friends either uhm, I mean people would try and talk to me and I’d kinda like…STAY AWAY (Danielle: yeah) you know, uhm, like Lilliana she was probably my first friend (Danielle: mmm), uhm, she came up to me and tried making small talk with me and I would just stay quiet no matter what she said like ‘HEY HOW’S IT GOING’... (haha) (Danielle: haha) and nothing came out of my mouth.

The shyness Layla describes, a shyness that permeated her school functioning and peer interactions, she directly attributes to her early experience in schools. In this case, Layla’s perspective was not simply ignored or dismissed, but completely
unheard; her silence was literal, in the sense that she recounts an inability to speak, even to a friendly peer.

According to students, a particularly powerful mechanism of muting student voice and participation was a pedagogy based on what Freire (1970/2007) considers a “banking model” of education. Characterized by an emphasis on rote memorization and the one-way transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student, Freire (1970/2007) regards conventional pedagogy as an instrument of oppression that obstructs subordinated groups from developing a structural critique of oppression. For example, Francesca critiques the shortcomings of the conventional pedagogical approach so common in her school classroom:

I usually felt like the teachers didn’t really ask you ENOUGH questions (Danielle: mm) so sometimes like, for example when the teachers would be teaching something, they would ask, ‘do you guys GET IT’ (Danielle: mhm) and I wouldn’t an- I wouldn’t answer because I was, basically too shy to ask.

As Francesca illustrates, the few questions teachers ask students imply that information flows from the teacher to the students. Students then demonstrate learning by reproducing this information in the classroom. Asking if they “get it” positions students in the role of passive absorbers of curriculum rather than co-creators of knowledge. In addition, closed-ended questions that require a simple “yes” or “no” response define knowledge as static information one can “get” rather than material to engage critically or dialogically. Francesca’s admonition corroborates previous research showcasing teacher dismissal of unexpected or novel student questions and ideas, in part to adhere to time constraints and the
pressure to stick to the time allocated for particular curriculum (Black & William, 1998; Kennedy, 2005). Francesca suggests that the conventional approach to education is silencing, as she felt “too shy” to respond or to ask questions. In this case shyness is a stand in for silenced. Because active citizenship necessitates participation as stakeholders in their communities (Montero, 2009), pedagogy that silences children’s perspectives also communicates that they are not legitimate citizens in the setting. The children in my study described their own and others’ shyness as a personality trait, an individual characteristic, rather than a structure of institutionalized silencing. This is consistent with other research illustrating how Latina/o elementary school students tend to attribute their lack of participation in the classroom to internal deficits (Quiroz, 2001).

It is noteworthy that the participants I interviewed were primarily girls. As Lyn Mikal Brown’s (2005) research attests, girls are especially likely to experience silencing within school. Every student I interviewed spontaneously used the word “shy” at least once to describe her or his own behavior in school (and sometimes to describe other children before entering the Change 4 Good program). It should be noted that in their semi-structured interviews children were not explicitly asked about their experiences of school-based silencing. I assume that if I had asked children more directly about these experiences there would have been additional examples.

It is also important to note that silencing does not just impact students in school settings, and that teachers are also subject to institutional constraints
(Haney & Zimbardo, 1973). Indeed, as Joselyn, the teacher involved in the Change 4 Good program notes, “I think they: have to, process things, (Danielle: right) a little, har-, more, deeply, than they usually do, ask ‘em … deep questions and they’re not used to that, and I don’t think ANY of us are, usually we just kind of give a QUICK answer, and people are happy.” In other words, pedagogical decisions are a manifestation not only of teacher preference, but of the social and political context of schooling, which constrains teacher “choice.”

Student experiences of silencing also recalls Anyon’s (1980) study of school discipline and pedagogy structures in 5th grade classrooms illustrating that the social class of students predicts pedagogy and behavioral norms. Poor and working class students were highly controlled and punitively disciplined, and learning was associated with following preordained steps and instructions. Everyone in the class should come up with the same answers and similar products. The implications of this research are that children are prepared for vastly different relationships to authority, different classes of jobs, and different expectations for their own labor and productivity. Based primarily on the idea that citizens are participants in capital, students were prepared for competence in different kinds of jobs, menial to executive, based on class. Teachers, too, were socialized into particular approaches to teaching and behavior management based on the social class of students within the institution.

In addition to banking orientations to classroom instruction, children described silencing structures within other after-school settings. Yelena, a student
who attended a state-funded after-school program for academically struggling students, felt policed by the adult supervisors:

Yelena: Um… in [the state-funded after-school program] I guess you just had to, yo-you get to be around your friends a lot and they’d help you with stuff but in the Change 4 Good program you actually, um I don’t know get to know more about the people who’d go and you’d get to talk with them instead of just being around and being ((word unclear)) teachers. Danielle: Being what? Yelena: Like being watched by other TEAchers (Danielle: Oh), so it was like better being with you guys. Danielle: Interesting, does that happen at [the state-funded after-school program]? Yelena: Uh like they just always watch what you’re doing and if you do something bad they’d go tell you.

According to Yelena, adults in the state-funded after-school program she attended were more concerned with watching students than conversing with them. The way Yelena describes her experience, watchful adults were not engaged in benevolent supervision, but surveillance intended to control behavior perceived as “bad.” In this case, it is not only the words, but the bodies of young people that are controlled. Previous research has shown that the prevailing narrative in public low-income schools is that good teachers – and in this case this includes after-school program supervisors – are in control of student behavior, the underlying assumption being that these children are always at the threshold of disorder (Langhout, 2005). Schools that serve low-income students are more likely to enforce punitive and controlling behavioral guidelines than higher income schools, sending the message to children that they are not to be trusted to make decisions about their own actions, including the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them (Levinson, 2012).
The implications of school-sponsored silencing for these children’s citizenship education are clearly problematic. Young people learn their roles and responsibilities as community members through civic institutions and socializing agents like schools (Haney, 1997; Rubin, 2007). Stifling children’s voices can have devastating consequences for young people and their communities. Indeed, common responses to alienation are for students to “give up, give in, or get out” (Quiroz, 2001, p. 344), and may lead to dropping out of schooling entirely (Fine, 1991). Beyond the educational consequences, silence is antithetical to the values of a democratic society. The Change 4 Good program served as a space within the school where students were able to enact identities as knowledge creators. Based on interviews with children, student voice and participation was fostered through relational and pedagogical aspects of youth-adult partnerships in Change 4 Good. I turn first to the centrality of relationships.

**Cultivating Student Voice and Participation: The Centrality of Relationships**

Consistent with the literature on positive youth development, relationships with adults were highly valued by the young people in Change 4 Good (Noam & Fiore, 2004). Relationships with adults were of central importance to children’s interest in and commitment to the Change 4 Good program. When asked why they chose to remain involved for over two years, all of the children mentioned their connection to the people in the program, particularly the undergraduate university students. Initially built through “icebreakers,” group activities bookending the more formal curriculum of weekly meetings, youth cited relationships with adults
as critical to their sense of membership and belonging within the program. Based on student interviews, informal youth-adult interactions fostered a sense of membership in three primary ways. First, these interactions provided low-stakes opportunities for children to exercise voice and gain experience in collective participation. Second, informal interactions between young people and adults destabilized age-based boundaries between young people and adults and helped to equalize generational power. Third, informal activities provided opportunities to learn about one another as multidimensional people, thereby humanizing both young people and adults.

**Low-stakes opportunities for participation.** The children from Change 4 Good describe icebreaker activities, which typically took the form of name games, movement activities, or interactive discussion as both fun and easy opportunities to participate. Because young people consider these activities as separate from the more formal work of the program, they offered low-stakes opportunities for students to speak, act, and interact in front of and with others. Layla, who described herself in our interview as “shy” and fearful of “embarrassing” herself in front of others before joining Change 4 Good, attributes her confidence and willingness to publicly share her ideas to participating in icebreakers:

Layla: It was really funny though how things worked out because, uhm we did like these games and like, I really wouldn’t want to participate (haha) because you know we’d- they were like sing-along type games sometimes (Danielle: yeah, yeah) and I’d just be like nope, (hahah) nope (Danielle: yup) and then, [research assistant] Ralph would like encourage and I’d
just, be doing what I’d think was impossible before (Danielle: yeah) so it was really fun.

The silliness of icebreakers, in this case a sing-along with an undergraduate student research assistant, gave Layla practice participating actively with others. For someone self-identified as “shy,” this was akin to doing the “impossible.” With adult encouragement, Layla saw her own participation as a real possibility, setting the stage for speaking up in more formal program activities. Lilliana, another Change 4 Good student, noted the similarity between the kinds of practices within low-stakes icebreaker activities and more formal dialogue:

Lilliana: …when we first started out [with icebreakers] it was like when you were like saying like who you are and like what you like, like what you like about yourself, and like what you like about the program…why you’re interested, but I still remember the really big circle we get into [for formal group discussion] and we would sometimes say our ideas in there.

Lilliana points out that icebreaker activities included sharing personal facts with the group (e.g., what you like about yourself, why you joined the program), and couples this with collectively sharing ideas relevant to the mural creation process. In addition to practice speaking in a group setting, the icebreakers facilitated rapport among people in the setting through sharing personal information. Lilliana’s description highlights the resemblance between formal and informal activities in the setting, as well as the transferable skills she was able to apply from one context to another (i.e., publicly sharing your perspective).

**Destabilizing age-based boundaries.** Building a sense of membership and belonging within YAPs is complicated by generational power imbalances. Informal activities helped to destabilize age-determined boundaries between
young people and adults in the program, signaling to children that adults were
invested in more equitable relations. When asked to describe the kinds of
activities youth and adults did together in Change 4 Good, Francesca responded:

Francesca: Yes, um, both adults, and children did icebreakers, which I
thought was really NICE ‘cause most adults don’t, really, LIKE TO
PLAY, games.
Danielle: Oh I see, so they actually participated, (Francesca: yes) oh, yeah.
Francesca: They participated in most, of, everything, so it made you feel
like, “oh okay, it’s not just, the person, like, children activities… it’s
EVERYBODY’S activities.”

Francesca is aware of the fact that divisions exist between activities considered
appropriate for adults and children, with “play” typically reserved for the latter.
Adult participation in children’s activities, rather than their supervision of such
activities, is a sharp contrast to the teachers Yelena described as “watching” kids
to catch bad behavior. Age-based divisions are destabilized when all participate,
transforming child’s play into “everybody’s activities” (Corsaro, 2005).

The relationships between youth and adults in Change 4 Good also
differed from those in schools through an emphasis on one-on-one and small
group interaction that enabled more individualized attention. Lilliana, for
example, states that she “felt like I kno- I knew [the adults] in Change 4 Good
better than my teacher, ‘cause like my teacher:…she’s like not always talking to
one person she’s talking to like the whole class … and they don’t- they don’t
really talk about themselves as much like, cause they have a lot of work to do, so
like, I got to know the [Change 4 Good undergraduate] students a lot more.”
Lilliana attributes her teachers’ lack of attention toward individual students to
structural constraints such as large classes and heavy workloads, constraints adults in Change 4 Good are not restricted by. Change 4 Good thus offered an alternative school-based setting to form close connections with adults and minimize institutionalized separation from youth.

**Humanizing one another as multidimensional.** A final way informal activities helped foster close relationships and a sense of belonging among youth was through humanizing the people in the setting. By humanize, I refer to the process of learning about one another as more than “student” and “teacher” or “adult” and “child,” but as multidimensional people. As Joselyn, the teacher in the program, attests, “I think the kids just, really enjoy working with, the students [from the university], that was the best thing I think, and they learn from them:, and ask them about their life a little bit…that does help, build the relationship, the [icebreaker] games, ‘cause they get to know, the, the adults as somebody, as FUN, (Danielle: right) instead of just someone just trying to make you do something (haha).” The importance placed on learning about each person in the program sends the message that both youth and adults are valuable for who they are both inside and outside of the classroom, not only for what they know (Bergum, 2003). Carmen, a student from Change 4 Good, notes that both children and adults in the setting “share: their LIFE, sh- some people shared, were sharing their childhood, or stuff they’ve been through, their hardships.” Yelena agrees, explaining that both youth and adults told personal stories: “we’d tell stories that ha- stuff that had happened to us and see if we could relate to it in some way.” In these
examples, the icebreakers and storytelling that took place in the program
cultivated personal connection between people, creating a basis of shared
knowledge and common life experiences. This fostered a familial atmosphere
based on support, trust, and interdependence. Many students describe the adults
in Change 4 Good as “like family,” people who stick together and look out for
each other. For example, after Lilliana mentioned that adults and children in
Change 4 Good program “stuck together,” I asked her if she could think of an
example. She used the following analogy to describe the quality of these
relationships:

Danielle: Can you think of an example of: like how people in the Change
for Good program stuck together, or?
Lilliana: Like you know like those little fishes when they swim around
together like they- they’re mostly like always together so they can stand
up to like-… so they can stand up to bigger fishes it’s like harder to get
like the little fishes if there is so many.

Many children referred to the adults in the program as their family, either directly
or in familial terms. For example, Yelena states that when a fellow Change 4
Good student experienced a problem “all of a sudden the students from [the
university] started helping her with what happened to her, so just like made us
seem like we were a family we’d be there for each other.” This echoes previous
research demonstrating how close caring relationships with adult staff facilitates
emotional connection and commitment to an organization, wherein adolescents
come to view the setting as a second home (e.g., Deutsch & Hirsch, 2002; Larson,
2006). As young people and adults shared their lives with and supported one
another, children in Change 4 Good gained a sense of membership and belonging.
Unlike paternalistic relationships that cast adults as caregivers and children as care receivers, children describe the relations between Change 4 Good youth and adults as mutually supportive. Thus, both adults and children shift from unidimensional roles based on age to multidimensional people with common interests. A sense of group membership, a core aspect of critical citizenship education, was enhanced by caring relationships that were also based on equity.

**Cultivating Student Voice and Participation: Pedagogical Approaches**

Student membership, enacted through voice and participation, was enhanced not only by close youth-adult relationships, but also through pedagogical approaches that contrasted with the banking model children experienced in the classroom. In Change 4 Good, adults drew on a critical feminist pedagogy that involved the recognition of multiple valid perspectives, and challenged taken for granted norms and ideas. Children’s voice and participation was fostered through two primary aspects of this pedagogy: giving audience (Moosa-Mitha, 2005) and utilizing a problem-posing education.

**Giving audience.** Quiroz (2001), in her theorizing on the school-sponsored silencing of Latina/os, articulates the connections between silence and power. She asserts that “voice implies having power over the presentation of reality and meaning, and the ability to construct, articulate, and therefore shape one’s experience as it is presented to others” (p. 328). Thus, the silencing students experience when they decide not to speak in class, the case for many students from Change 4 Good, is a manifestation of powerlessness and indicative
of exclusion from the process of knowledge construction. Quiroz reminds readers that having “voice” is not the same as being empowered. Indeed, speaking is not the same as being heard. Moosa-Mitha (2005) emphasizes the importance of not only having a voice, but an audience, and argues that we conceptualize children’s citizenship not in terms of their autonomy, but their presence, a conceptualization that recognizes the relational character of their citizenship: “by presence, I mean the degree to which the voice, contribution and agency of the child is acknowledged in their many relationships. Presence, more than autonomy, acknowledges the self as relational and dialogical, thereby suggesting that it is not enough to have a voice; it is equally important to also be heard in order for one to have a presence in society. Not to recognize the presence of a citizen…is itself a form of oppression” (p. 381). The distinction between “giving voice” and “giving audience” is an important one. While giving voice to others implies a patronizing brand of ventriloquism (Bakhtin, 1981), giving audience suggests a willingness to listen, to acknowledge the presence of others. Indeed, when the children from Change 4 Good spoke of learning to “speak up,” they did not suggest that adults gave them voice, but rather opportunities to develop their voice. This development was fostered through a supportive audience:

Layla: Well you guys always included me, uhm you guys always took my ideas, you guys never offended my ideas, never offended me in specific (Danielle: Yeah) uhm, you guys never said anything like, ‘no let’s not do that’ … IF you guys didn’t like my idea, it wouldn’t be- you guys wouldn’t be mean about it (Danielle: Hmm) you guys would take the idea, and then you guys would vote about it towards the entire class (Danielle: Right) … it gave me a chance to speak out you know, and be
able to give out my ideas and, be able to be a part of, the making of the mural.

In this interview excerpt, Layla describes her experience of feeling that her and her ideas were included. She points out that her ideas were never dismissed outright, but submitted to collective deliberation (“vote about it towards the entire class”). In addition, Layla places emphasis on herself and her ideas, stating that the adults in the program not only accepted her, but her ideas as well. By including Layla and Layla’s ideas, adults recognized her as a whole person, a person with valid knowledge to share. In other words, in this setting giving audience meant recognizing the inseparability of individuals and their knowledge, facilitating the development of identities as thinkers and contributors. Like Francesca, Layla connects feeling included relationally with having and sharing ideas.

Giving audience to children’s perspectives was not a passive activity. Listening involved hearing, but also responding to children, challenging them to think critically, and engaging with their ideas, as described by Yelena:

Danielle: Was there:: anything that, like adults in the program did to:: make you think that or to like encourage you t-to speak out? Yelena: Um sometimes they’d ask us questions and then like you’d be like I don’t know but then they’d ask you like they rephrase the question for you and they’d make us like answer it. Danielle: What did the adults do in this process [of creating the mural]? Yelena: I think they give their own stories I think. Danielle: Oh okay. Yelena: Um:: They helped us putting the things in idea- they give us ideas, and they questioned us more, if we said- if we gave an answer they wanted more to the answer than just plain answers, and so like that kinda got us to talk more to them and we thought about it and they’d like read to us or say like I disagree and give us why.
In short, giving audience meant taking children seriously. To take someone seriously does not mean outright acceptance of the veracity of all perspectives. To do so would be to essentialize children’s perspectives. All people’s perspectives develop within the context of a patriarchal, racist, classist society, and therefore must be subjected to critical analysis (Fine, 1991). Adults engaged in the process of critical analysis by asking questions to help young people cultivate and connect their ideas. Yelena saw children’s role in Change 4 Good as active participants who “speak out” and respond to questions. Adults facilitated by asking questions, challenging students to think beyond “I don’t know” responses. When adults wanted more than “just plain answers,” children were encouraged to “talk more” as they “thought about it.” Adults engaged youth’s ideas not by accepting them wholesale – Yelena states that adults sometimes disagreed with children. Yelena does not interpret disagreement as dismissive, however, because adults did not condemn ideas as “wrong,” but rather explained why they disagreed.

**Problem posing pedagogy.** Whereas a banking model of education serves as an instrument of oppression, Freire (1970/2007) considers a problem posing education an instrument of liberation. Characterized by the democratic co-construction of knowledge through cycles of dialogue, reflection, and action, a problem posing pedagogy positions children and adults as both teachers and learners. Rather than equate the rote recitation of learned “facts” with learning, a problem posing orientation to education values subjugated knowledges and lived
experience as a legitimate resource for understanding and transforming the world.

Rita, the university professor associated with the program, explained the epistemological approach to community-based research and action (PAR) taken up by Change 4 Good:

Rita: People in communities know really well, the conditions of their communities, what their lives are like, um, and so PAR says that we can all be, collaborators, in that space, that researchers come in with a certain knowledge base, that community members can come in with a certain knowledge base, and that both can work together, to: figure out, what are the strengths in the community, what are the issues to be worked on, how they can be worked on together.

Adult partners in Change 4 Good regarded both children and adults as possessing a wealth of experiential knowledge from which to draw on in their efforts to create meaningful community change.

Problem posing pedagogies in Change 4 Good also promoted the validity of multiple perspectives. For example, Lilliana recalls learning to consider the perspectives of others when she engaged in group dialogue:

I learned that in Change 4 Good, like when we went like when you guys gave us those little note things and (Danielle: Little notepads?) yeah, and like everyone was like saying their ideas of like what they think of it [the mural] and like what do they see (Danielle: Yeah) like what do you think is like going on in the image (Danielle: Mhmm) and that’s how I learned like how to, like see things, like how other people see them.

Lilliana’s example illustrates how the experience of interpreting a public mural in dialogue with others enabled children to offer and to hear varied perspectives on the meaning of the art. Arts-based activities are especially well-positioned to foster divergent thinking and the consideration of diverse perspectives because they invite creativity and imagination. The validation of multiple and even
contradictory perspectives is in direct contrast to conventional forms of education that recognize only “correct” perspectives. The pedagogy employed within Change 4 Good promoted the exploration of different ideas, recognizing that because knowledge is socially constructed, there is not one single right answer. In addition, as Lilliana suggests, children also practiced adopting the perspectives of others. Understanding the point of view of others is an important skill in the creation of public art because public art requires putting oneself in the shoes of diverse audiences to determine which images might evoke the desired response.

**Intellectual risk taking.** Intellectual risk taking, defined as “engaging in adaptive learning behaviors (sharing tentative ideas, asking questions, attempting to do and learn new things) that place the learner at risk of making mistakes or appearing less competent than others” (Beghetto, 2009, p. 210), is critical for children who are learning to exercise their voice as citizens. The combination of strong relationships and a problem posing pedagogy created a context that minimized social and relational risks and supported students in taking intellectual risks through sharing their ideas and “speaking out” (Beghetto, 2009; Clifford, 1988):

Danielle: Yeah, what, made you feel safe to share your ideas?
Lilliana: Like I was more comfortable cause the people there I actually knew, like I kn- I got to know them (Danielle: Mhmm) and i- I was more comfortable sharing my ideas, cause if you’re like with someone you don’t really know you feel like shy, you’re like ‘OH what is this person gonna think of me’?
Danielle: Like if you have a bad idea or something?
Lilliana: Mmhmm, like oh what if this person thinks like…bad about my idea
Danielle: YEAH, so they were excepting of your: (Lilliana: Mhmm) ideas
Lilliana: Like there is no wrong answers.
Danielle: Mm:: is that something that they said (Lilliana: Mhmm) that we said, okay, that’s sort- that’s:: that’s something that // a l-
Lilliana: // and like everyone’s ideas: (Danielle: Yeah) like there is not wrong answers like you can’t exclude someone because of their idea…and sometimes the teachers like when they call on you and you say something wrong, you feel like OH like or may- why am I not smart enough (Danielle: Yeah::) to answer that, sometimes I feel like that too, like when I get called on and I don’t know the answer and they’re like trying to explain to me but I still don’t understand.

In this excerpt Lilliana explains how she felt able to share her ideas through a combination of close relationships with people in the program and a problem posing pedagogy in which there are “no wrong answers.” Her narrative suggests that both of these elements are critical in encouraging young people to feel “comfortable sharing” their ideas, a form of intellectual risk taking (Beghetto, 2009). As Lilliana attests, sharing one’s perspective is risky. Children socialized as learners within conventional classrooms take a gamble every time they speak; they risk giving a “wrong answer,” which translates into feeling “not smart enough” and potential social exclusion based on their ideas. The structure of Change 4 Good offered a counter space where “you can’t exclude someone because of their idea,” thus reducing her fear of embarrassment or the stigma of being labeled unintelligent.

Likewise, Francesca echoes this sentiment when she connects participation in dialogue to idea generation:

Well I think that one of the things they [adults] did was, help us understand more about what the community was doing, and we talked about sometimes the problems and how COULD they be solved and, sometimes we: like, just talked, and had ideas and more, and we also had
According to this student, the practice of “just talking,” engaging in collective discussion in a format where “there was no right or wrong answer,” helped her to contribute her own perspective. If there are no wrong answers, then space exists for “many different ways” to respond to a question, thus encouraging divergent thinking and positioning children as knowledge creators. This was markedly different from other educational settings Francesca experienced that fostered silence:

Francesca: I think [other after school programs] they’re different ‘cause they don’t really, say there’s no right and wrong answer: (Danielle: Mhm) or actually help you get your fear out or like, involve yourself with more things, or they don’t paint MURALS or, they don’t do, like the type of activities that, the Change 4 Good program does.
Danielle: Okay, um:: you just said something that I think is really interesting, they don’t “help you get your fear out”, can you say:: what, that means to you?
Francesca: Well, to me, it means, basically that they don’t really an-help you, um make yourself understand that...you don’t have to be basically afraid of what other people think of your opinion ‘cause all they basically did was, help you with your homework, and do fun- like some activities for you, but they didn’t really sit down there and talk to you and want to hear your ideas (Danielle: Mmm) they just basically did what, they came to do.

In her analysis, Francesca points to a problem posing feminist pedagogy as a tool for overcoming her fear, a necessary step in taking intellectual risks. Fine’s (1991) research demonstrates that silencing of low-income students is
institutionalized through norms, ideologies, and policies that govern schools, and that silencing in this context “signifies a terror of words, a fear of talk” (p. 32). In Francesca’s case silence arises in part from a fear of “what other people think of your opinion.” As Lilliana’s narrative attests, the stakes of participating in the “wrong” way are high in other educational settings. Empirical studies of intellectual risk taking and creative self efficacy, the belief that your creative risks that will pay off, researchers have found that “girls, English language learners, and younger students” self reported lower levels than boys, students who spoke English, and older grade students (Beghetto, 2006, p. 453). It is noteworthy then that in this study the participants (almost exclusively girls, English learners, and elementary aged) reported such strong identities as intellectual risk takers.

**Linking Relationships and Pedagogy**

Not only did the relationships help prepare the way for children to participate actively in the critical pedagogical approach, the problem posing pedagogy and giving audience in turn helped strengthen the relationships in a dynamically reinforcing process. The combination of close personal relationships and problem posing pedagogies created a setting that invited young people to take intellectual risks. This risk taking involved resisting the school-sponsored silencing of Latina/o youth by daring to speak, coming to see themselves as “not shy,” and as thinkers. This is especially significant for Latina/o youth who find themselves labeled as English learners, and who deal with the burden of “resource-needy” stigmatization. One student sums up the relational connections
she developed with adults in the program and her critical learning and engagement within the program as follows:

Francesca: I actually REALLY REALLY came back [to the program] ’cause I felt like I was actually, being listened to, and getting involved in the community (Danielle: Yeah) because of, the PEOPLE, that were in the program, they were just so nice, and they would tell you and ask you a, questions that made you feel like you HAD to answer them in a GOOD way (Danielle: Okay) and, you just had more ideas popping in your head so, that’s what made me stay in the program.

The bridge between relationships and the ability to participate actively (“ideas popping in your head”) was the sense of being listened to, of having a receptive audience. The experience of having an audience of “nice” supportive people created a context where she felt able to articulate her ideas. These practices of listening, or what bell hooks (1994) calls “acts of recognition,” are central to a critical feminist pedagogy. hooks emphasizes the importance of teachers and students, or in this case adults and children, hearing one another, which involves acknowledging each person as an individual with a unique constellation of life experiences and perspectives. Respectful interactions reflected through the act of listening/hearing one another enhance a collective “commitment to learning” (hooks, 1994, p. 186).

**Implications for Citizenship Education**

Silencing is both an academic and a civic issue. As Fine and Burns (2005) observe, schools systematically stream “poor, working class, immigrant youth and youth of color, away from academic excellence and democratic participation and towards educational failure and civic alienation” (p. 116). Intellectual risk taking
is crucial both for altering dominant narratives and for generating a sense of creative and collective efficacy because developing a more critical analysis consumes considerable intellectual and emotional labor, and asks us to question long-held prevailing beliefs, norms and values. Therefore, the task of constructing counter narratives is a creative endeavor because it requires entrance into the realm of (im)possibility – the ability to imagine how things could be different. Relationships mediate this work because they construct a counter space where the labor and joys of collective reimagining are possible. In this chapter I extend the literature by arguing that relationships and pedagogy are important elements within critical citizenship education for establishing a sense of membership and participation. I also argue that relationships are important not only as a means of establishing a sense of membership and belonging, but for cultivating another core aspect of critical citizenship education – participation in critical dialogue. Close, supportive relationships were not secondary, one of many equal components of a YAP model, nor were they simply a step in an additive or cumulative model (e.g., first you have a good relationship, and then you get the participation you want). Rather, these data suggest that the participation and critical literacy was mediated by, developed, and enacted through these relationships.

The membership roles and participation fostered in classroom environments in which children feel scared to speak are qualitatively different from those fostered in Change 4 Good. If institutions like schools teach
citizenship by sending implicit messages about appropriate roles, responsibilities and rights of community members, then these children were learning that their voices are welcomed only when they speak the right answer. Because the socialization children encounter in schools often translate into their (non)participation outside of school, Levinson (2012) calls these civic microaggressions that underlie a “civic empowerment gap” between affluent and subordinated social groups.

The absence of wrong answers combined with a safer space created through supportive, caring, (more) equitable, and critical friendships, created an environment that helped children to participate, develop identities as capable thinkers, and as people who take intellectual risks. This is important for citizenship education, because it implies that there is not one “right” way to participate, and supports democratic imaginations by illustrating the social constructed nature of knowledge.

Previous research on intellectual risk taking among children has not focused on youth-adult relations but on adult academic support. In addition, to date researchers in the domain of positive youth development and YAP’s (e.g., Camino, 2005; Goldstein, 1999; Jones & Deutsch, 2011; Shiller, 2013; Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O’Connor, 2005) have highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships to youth engagement, participation, and learning in after school and community-based settings, but have focused mainly on relationships for the goal of maintaining youth engagement, not on enhancing
intellectual risk taking. They suggest that youth engagement progresses linearly from positive relationships to engagement and participation, suggesting that sense of belonging and membership is step one of a multi-step process. Shiller (2013) notes how “building relationships was critical to the next phase of the work” in a community based YAP (p. 81). I argue that relationships are more than a means to an ends – the ends being participation in activities adults structured for youth. Rather, in the children’s narratives, they describe a dynamic process wherein relationships were the very vessels through which participation was constructed, understood, and embodied. Their participation and learning and critical literacy practices were not separate from their relationships but happened through them.

Finally, improved relationships between youth and adults are not trivial, nor are the “fun” activities that tend to bookend the meetings (icebreakers, games, snack time), as these are critical to the success and sustainability of program, in part because they undergird many of the outcomes we hope to see, such as development of collective agency and change agent identity, critical inquiry and literacies, and a more structural analysis and critique of systems.
Chapter 4: Results

Constructive Tensions in Critical Citizenship Education: The Maplewood Stories Mural as a Site of Discursive Struggle

“The occurrence of conflict around a mural does not usually indicate a failure of the artists or inappropriateness of design. On the contrary, the tensions are already present; the mural only brings them to the surface. Murals...may provide a vehicle for a symbolic resolution of tension, or compromise, which may have real consequences of enhanced communication, mutual respect, and unity.”
(Cockcroft, Weber, & Cockcroft, 1977, p. 94)

Tensions are a predictable part of the process of creating social justice oriented art (Cockcroft, Weber, & Cockcroft, 1977). The development of critical literacy and alternative narratives within communities that have experienced oppression can be contentious, because it disrupts existing relations of power (Rappaport, 1995). Yet these frictions and constraints may also serve constructive purposes in terms of advancing critical literacy and building participants’ capacities to approach social change. Whereas chapter 3 examined voice as an aspect of critical citizenship education, and assessed how membership and participation was enhances through nurturing student voice, chapter four addresses the idea of voice and silencing within citizenship education by inspecting a point of contention in the art making process – the negotiation of symbolic representations of community narratives – and what this tension reveals about the structures and ideologies that uphold silencing.

Social justice oriented art is theorized to facilitate second order change and empowerment, yet is also subject to the institutional constraints and
restrictions of the art-making context (Dewhurst, 2011). Artists must translate the themes and intentions of their process of critical inquiry into aesthetic objects, but the social contexts in which social justice art projects are carried out vary in terms of their receptiveness to art that is by nature political. For young, working class children of Color engaged in creating social justice art, this process will likely be constrained by dominant assumptions and sociocultural constructions of their multiple social categories, as well as by the institutional constraints inherent in public schools. Our obligation as social scientists is to “study and understand more about how such settings actually work to provide niches for people that enhance their ability to control their lives and allow them both affirmation and the opportunity to learn and experience growth and development” (Rappaport, 1981, p. 19).

In this chapter, I identify the tensions around public art as a discursive struggle for representation (Livesey, 2001), and locate this struggle as rooted in ideological norms governing the institution of Maplewood Elementary School (MES), including the sociocultural construction of low-income Latina/o youth of Color. Thus, the mural, as a public contest over meaning and over how to understand the world (Kapur & Cossman, 1993), is positioned to reveal the implicit norms, fears, and values – in short, the cultural assumptions – at work in the institution. Rationales deployed by adults to alter the images in the mural depend on unspoken assumptions about how children think, learn, interact, and ought to behave as community members – in essence, their perceived citizenship.
I contextualize the discourses at work in the setting as arising within a heterogeneous community rife with dominant cultural narratives that devalue and delegitimize Latina/o im/migrants. First, I contextualize the tensions at play – specifically the discursive struggles over representation of community stories of power and struggle – within a local context where hostility toward low-income Latina/o and im/migrant groups is highly salient. Next, I analyze the discourses deployed by school-based adults to legitimize their censorship and illustrate how these align with dominant sociocultural constructions of low-income children and Latina/o children in the US. I conclude by arguing that adult responses to the mural imagery can be used to better understand the taken for granted roles and responsibilities of the institution.

This chapter illustrates that there is not one “accurate” representation, particularly in a context with multiple perspectives and discourses competing for legitimacy. All stories/representations are constructions in a contest over meaning, so the effort to produce counter narratives is always situated within power structures. Thus, as Livesey (2001) argues, local tensions, in this case discursive struggles over representation in a public mural, reflect local conflicts and are also indicative of broader sociopolitical and cultural contestations involved in institutional change processes.

**Mural Context**

The Maplewood Stories mural was intended to enhance the community’s sense of belonging and present a publicly visible manifestation of their shared
experiences, values, and commitments. In addition, a goal was to build a stronger connection between the school and the broader community. In an effort to ensure the mural was representative of diverse perspectives, the Change 4 Good program ran “house meetings” to gather stories from local stakeholders. House meetings are a community organizing tool during which a small group gathers to share their experiences about a particular issue in order to build understanding and identify common concerns. Similar to focus groups, house meetings start with an overarching question and people answer in turn. In this case, house meeting participants were asked to tell a story about a time when they felt they had the power or did not have the power to make a change in their community. The children in Change 4 Good co-facilitated house meetings and participants were parents, student peers, local youth, teachers, after school program leaders, and local residents. Due to the nature of the organizing question, stories shared in the house meetings were connected to power and were thus political. Many stories, for example, concerned people’s struggles with economic and social structures.

After months of qualitative analysis of the house meeting stories, children generated a number of primary themes and drafted symbolic imagery to represent each theme in the mural. Upon review of the initial mural draft, school-based adults including the Principal, Superintendent, and the program’s Teacher partner, were uncomfortable with several images depicting organized struggle and activism and requested that these be modified or removed from the mural. The conflict between the representation of community stories advanced by the
children and that advanced by the school-based adults can be understood as a function of the contextual and ideological norms and assumptions operating in this setting. In the following section, I examine the socio-political landscape of Maplewood and Maplewood Elementary School in order to provide a basis for understanding the adults’ call for censorship.

**The Socio-political Landscape of Maplewood and Maplewood Elementary School**

An appraisal of the tensions generated through the mural creation process demands scrutiny of the socio-political landscape within which Maplewood Elementary School is positioned. Adult reactions to the mural draft are not separate from the dominant narratives circulating in the district concerning students, their families, and the roles and responsibilities of schools in the lives of communities. Adult reactions and child responses, therefore, must be understood as arising in relationship to a local perception of Maplewood Elementary School as an “urban school,” marred by “white flight” and a “culture of poverty.”

**Constructing the urban school.** Together, the white flight and the culture of poverty discourses that dominate local perceptions of MES coalesce to form a master narrative of MES as a poor, failing, urban school. Although MES is not located in a city center, but rather in an unincorporated area more comparable to a suburb, the urban school narrative is present. Recent decades have witnessed a growing influx of im/migrants into inner and outer suburban
neighborhoods historically populated by middle class European Americans fleeing urban centers:

Today, residents in these racially and ethnically diverse ‘inner suburban’ communities struggle with challenges related to a variety of social, economic and cultural factors…And while these are not, at least aesthetically speaking, ‘inner-cities’…the orderly appearance of these neighborhoods…conceals the poverty, hunger, unemployment and underemployment, alienation, inequitable schooling conditions and concern with street crime and violence that mark them as ‘inner’ suburbs.” (James & Saul, 2007, p. 843)

The unincorporated area in which MES is located is one such area. The county of Surf City is predominantly white and middle class or affluent. Maplewood is more economically and racially diverse, with a growing population of working class residents and residents of Color, particularly Latina/o im/migrants (Maplewood is 30% Latina/o).

According to Leonardo and Hunter (2007) “urban” is embedded with racialized, gendered, and classist meaning, as an adjective most commonly applied to areas comprised of poor and working class people of Color, particularly African Americans and Latinas/os. As a socially constructed concept, the “urban” is produced by and reproduces particular social relations that perpetuate race and class inequities. Because of their social location within a perceived urban education setting, the children are situated in a contested space in terms of the meaning of their community and their own subjectivities.

White flight from urban schools. According to the California Board of Education, most of the standardized test scores of students at MES do not meet the minimum requirements to demonstrate learning goals. In the past, MES has
been formally classified as “in need of improvement,” and thus faced sanctions under No Child Left Behind, including financial sanctions. For example, when a school fails to meet standardized learning goals it must finance parents to send their child to a better performing school in the district. This “school choice” policy is intended to empower students and families, but punishes schools with low standardized test scores as they lose a portion of funds for students who leave.

In “inner” suburbs like Maplewood, families with the economic means to do so tend to move their children out of poor and failing urban schools into better performing, predominantly white schools (Noguera, 2003). According to the Principal at MES, “white flight” is a common phenomenon:

Principal: Well, (sigh) I THINK it is, it’s twofold, there’s a certain amount of the population that lives around this neighborhood that is: CAUCASIAN (Danielle: Right) that looks at this school as a ‘Latino school,’ and has decided to, either go to a private school, or take their children to other schools (Danielle: Mmhm)...that’s a certain, PERCENTAGE of the surrounding area, the other- there’s other parents, that are, you know...uh the LATINO parents (Danielle: Mmhm) and SOME, maybe, you know a small:: minority of parents who, who don’t- aren’t interested in...FLEEING the district or the- or this particular school site, and there are parents who are- live in the area and they, are happy to bring their kids here.

From the Principal’s point of view, a proportion of the white residents perceive MES as a school for Latina/o students and families. With 77% of MES’s student population identifying as Latina/o, the highest proportion of Latina/o students among schools in the district, the school itself is raced as “Latino.” White families respond by “fleeing” to a neighboring school or district. In the
Principal’s estimation, only a small minority of white parents are “happy” to enroll their children at this “Latino school.”

White flight extends beyond removing children from MES to avoiding contact with Latina/o children even in extracurricular settings:

Superintendent: We have a school…a charter school in our district that, is all white and, every one- maybe people who are, well-educated, and white decide to put their children out of our schools and into our- the charter school, (Danielle: Mhmm) and they get priority, so the charter has to give priority to district parents, so really takes all the parents who are engaged, and have the resources to be engaged to higher level, that would often be people who’re really helping with the school fundraise and that sort of thing (Danielle: Right, right) and I think they require each parent to give $2000 and they all do, even though it’s public school, and um, we had uh Junior [Baseball], this summer…and apparently the [charter school] parents really didn’t even want their children to intermingle during Junior [Baseball] leagues, like they wanted their children to be in their own team, I think that is so::: uh, such a poor message for their children to always be with people exactly- in [Surf City], really? You’re never gonna be in a team with a Hispanic student? That is crazy:: and yet, you’re gonna go out in the world and, and interact with people who will be very diverse and…how will you NOT grow up a racist? I just don’t understand, (Danielle: Yeah) so, I’m surprised that people who are as well-educated as most of the parents are there, wouldn’t have a broader spectrum on the world, and know that that’s probably not in the best interest of my child…so that’s blatant [racism] in my mind, and it’s been troubling to me ever since I got here.

The behavior of these financially privileged white parents is a form of “othering” that delegitimizes subordinate group members. The local perception of MES among whites, who view MES as a failing urban school (i.e., a “Latino school”), fosters a sense that these are “other people’s children” (Delpit, 1988, p. 280).

This narrative fosters the exclusion of MES students and their families from social membership in the community and to treat them as “unworthy of dignity, respect, and kindness” (Zirkel et al., 2011, p. 17).
**Urban schools and the culture of poverty.** Another component of the urban school construct is the notion of a “culture of poverty” that organizes the lives of low-income families and perpetuates their own poverty (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). In addition to a student body comprised primarily of Latina/o students and students of Color, 86% of students at MES are considered low-income (i.e., they qualify for free or reduced price lunch). In fact, MES serves the greatest proportion of low-income students in the district.

The “culture of poverty” is a term coined by American anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1969) to describe cultural patterns developed among people in poverty “that are necessary for survival at a particular time, but that, as they are passed on, tend to perpetuate the very conditions which produce them, thus generating a vicious cycle” (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 208). The assumed characteristics of the culture of poverty include difficult, truncated childhoods, feelings of inferiority, minimal self-control, and a lack of social skills and social capital. For Latinas/os, the culture of poverty is linked to the myth of “the lazy Latino,” which Martin-Baro (1994) describes as having internalized a sense of fatalism so that they resign themselves to their present reality with little focus on or hope for change in the future. Importantly, the notion of a culture of poverty essentializes modes of survival that are actually a function of social context and reinforced by oppressive structures. Indeed, Martin-Baro (1994) reminds us that the supposed culture of poverty is a myth with no empirical data to support
“existence of a subculture specific to the poor, perpetuating their situation as a functional mechanism independent of the overall social system” (p. 210).

Despite a lack of empirical evidence, the characteristics associated with a culture of poverty are evident in the discourse around the needs of students at MES:

Principal: …they need to learn how to PLAY, a lot of them don’t know how to play… kids come here and they- they have no idea how to play with their group- with other kids... so, they don’t have the social skills (Danielle: Okay), so there’s a lot:: of things that they do so they- they can learn, social skills, they have to learn the academic skills, self-control, they have to learn how to PLAY:…

The principal expresses that children at MES come to school with a set of deficits in social skills, executive functioning, and academic skills. These are aligned with assumptions about children from low-income families as overly impulsive, academically underprepared, and deprived of play.

MES faces cumbersome mandates that are misaligned with what students need to succeed. For example, the Superintendent says their “hands are tied” in terms of the kinds of resources they are able to offer students. These resources are typically limited to remedial tutoring and homework help rather than “exploratory” learning opportunities she feels would benefit students. She elaborates:

Superintendent: We have a lot of state mandates about what has to happen in our programs in our ratios and all of that… I wish the money came to us and … there were fewer mandates on how it had to be, because we could be more creative.
Furthermore, the Principal links the stringent top-down mandates to assumptions about the needs and abilities of children who live within a culture of poverty:

Principal: The government, and uh the CST’s: [California Standardized Testing] and the p-predomiance on…the FIXATION on, language arts and math, it’s PUSHED out a lot of the arts, so that kids’ education is reduced to essential academic skills:…the district office, cabinet feels as though, kids are, are ‘BEST SERVED’ [said sarcastically], children of poverty are ‘best served’ if they can read and write well.

The Principal critiques what he sees as policy maker’s “fixation” on two learning objectives as myopic. His analysis suggests that the education of “children of poverty” is diminished rather then enriched by these narrow emphases.

**Neighborhood and regional context.** Beyond the context of the school and district itself, blatantly discriminatory incidents are a regular occurrence in Maplewood. The school staff and administrators each gave examples of racism and classism they had witnessed both within and outside of the school despite the fact that this was not something I asked about directly in our interviews.

Superintendent: We had… a BIG brew-ha-ha last year around the day worker’s center (Danielle: mmm) and, initially…I thought um, ‘well, I don’t know I do see a lot of people hanging out and I wouldn’t want that-that close to [nearby elementary school]’ (Danielle: Mmhm) and then I had parent advocates come and I had, the…potential coordinator if they were able to put it there…and then I had community meetings I attended that were just…very…contentious and ugly to watch people who were concerned their property values would go down and, probably legitimate concerns, but the way in which they voiced them had a- a- strong racial overtone that I was uncomfortable with (Danielle: Mmhm), I attended all of those, and then recently, I was, news came out to interview me to ask, and we actually had board members who…were almost uh told, you won’t be re-elected because you’re willing to take a stance on this, ‘cause our board thought about it- and thought, you know…we just felt like we would alienate a lot of our…(Danielle: Mhmm) customers by saying we didn’t want a day worker center (Danielle: Right, right), and, um, and we didn’t feel it, it did pose a safety concern and so, we didn’t want to take up
a position, and actually, they [the school board members] were targeted because of that by, the, people in the…community, and there’s been NOTHING, I go by- it’s beautiful- they put flowers, it looks better than it ever looked- the building- no one’s EVER outside, inside, they have all kinds of comp- technology skills being learned, and the community’s coming in together and feeling positive and I- in the news [there is] a person talking about ‘we don’t know yet, it’s only been six months,’ and I thought, WOW.

Class, race and gender intermingle as day laborers in this region tend to be poor and working class im/migrant Latino men. Although the day worker’s center was approved, the fact that school board members received threats about their reelection indicates the riskiness of aligning oneself with im/migrant groups in this region. In fact, pressure from whites who oppose the allocation of goods and resources to Latinas/os is a widespread occurrence. For example, a neighboring school district, with schools that serve primarily low-income Latina/o im/migrant students and families, received strong opposition from whites regarding the proposal to name a new school Cesar E. Chavez High School. Despite the fact that Latinas/os made up over 90% of the students who would attend the school, a proposal to name the high school after a renowned Latino activist with historical roots in the region were met with much controversy. The Teacher partner explains:

Teacher: Yep, well they’ve even had trouble, like, in [neighboring district], they wanted to name a high school ‘Cesar Chavez’ and they wouldn’t do it, it’s ‘[East] Valley’ instead but, because it was, so many protests of people in power not wanting that to happen (haha)...so there’s a big co- there’s a lot of controversy AROUND Cesar Chavez too.

County records of a meeting of the East Valley School Board trustees documenting the incident indicate that, “some longtime residents decried allowing
the school to be named for the preference of any one ethnic group” (Davis, 2002). An elected member of the board argued that the district ought to "choose a name that is going to be welcoming to everyone," and reported, "I’ve had parents call me to say they won’t send their kids to that school" (Davis, 2002). Though whites made up a small proportion of families, they were a vocal and powerful minority. Colorblind racist narratives (Bonilla-Silva, 2009) are clearly operating in the school board deliberation, as white community members claim that calling attention to a particular race (i.e., non-whites) creates an exclusionary environment for non-Latinas/os.

In the neighborhood surrounding MES, racist and anti-immigrant narratives have been overtly hostile. In 2008, flyers from the National Alliance, an organized neo-Nazi group, were disseminated throughout Maplewood (see Figure 1). The flyers read,

Immigration? Or INVASION: If current trends continue, Whites will be a minority in this country within the next 50 years. Non-Whites are turning America into a Third-World slum. They come for welfare or to take our jobs. They bring crime. Let’s send them home now! National Alliance: An organization of Whites who aren’t afraid to speak up for our race. (National Alliance, 2008)

Since disbanded, the National Alliance “was for decades the most dangerous and best organized neo-Nazi formation in America” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014). The flyer advances a discourse that derogates, dehumanizes, and delegitimizes the human rights of Latina/o immigrants.
Figure 1

*National Alliance Flyer*

The Maplewood Stories Mural: Controversial Imagery

Given the social identities of participants in house meetings, many of whom were Latina/o, im/migrant, and/or low-income, it is not surprising that many of the stories related to power drew attention to the struggles of these particular groups. Though certainly not homogeneous, there were overlapping
experiences with inequitable access to resources, seldom identified strengths, and hopes for a better future. Through a nearly year-long process of analyzing qualitative house meeting data, distilling themes, and determining visual representations of community stories, Change 4 Good collaboratively drafted a mural design. The school-based adults determined that the earliest draft of the Maplewood Stories mural (see Figure 2) contained several problematic images that would have to be altered. These included images of a raised clenched fist, a raised clenched fist holding a megaphone, and a protest sign stating “no more pink slips.”

Figure 2

*Maplewood Stories Mural Draft*
Those images were subsequently altered and replaced by images of a person holding a megaphone (rather than a disembodied fist), and protest signs that do not call attention to teacher layoffs or budget cuts to education (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

*Maplewood Stories Mural*

The fact that adult decision-makers called for changes to the mural draft is not particularly noteworthy. Indeed, as public art murals tend to go through multiple iterations of design changes before a final product is decided upon. Rather, my central interest in these negotiations is around the tensions they brought to the surface in terms of child-adult relations, institutional norms and values, differential roles and responsibilities, and the social-political location of this particular piece of art.
Institutional Tensions: Constructing A “Good Representation of the School”

In line with other studies of school contexts, I chose to present adult perspectives in this chapter in order to “understand what those in power say about children” (Langhout, 2005, p. 135). This forms the local institutional narrative undergirding the particular quality of adult reactions to children’s proposed social action (the mural). In other words, I do not intend to privilege the voices of adults, but to put the perspectives of children and adults into conversation with one another, for the purpose of gaining insight into how they paint a complex picture of the larger social milieu of not only adult-child relations, but the discursive struggle over representation (and thus children’s participation) within a racist, classist, colonizing society.

Two themes arose consistently in the rationales adults assert to defend their positions on the mural symbolism. One is related to the sociocultural construction of childhood and children, and these fall into categories of childhood as a protected sphere and children as innocent; second is children’s (in)competence; and third children’s need for socialization. All of these intersect with race, class, and gender identities specifically related to dominant cultural narratives about low-income “urban” im/migrant children of Color.

The second theme derived from adult rationales for changing the mural symbols was related to the institutional context of the school, specifically its role in the education, socialization, and well-being of children. Tensions were apparent where the roles and responsibilities of the institution, as an urban school,
conflicted with the messages conveyed in the mural. The roles and responsibilities of the institution vis-à-vis the mural image controversy included socialization and safety (e.g., social skills, civil handling of discord), a focus on the purely “academic” and not the political (how to read and write well), and the protection of children (from co-optation by adults, union issues, or controversy). These roles and responsibilities overlap with one another and intersect with sociocultural constructions of children, making it difficult to tease them apart and also maintain the integrity of the interview data. Therefore, I have presented the data so as to preserve the cohesion of the narratives, rather than segment them into these categories. Therefore, in the following analyses I discuss the multiple themes and issues at play in each interview excerpt.

**Pink slips.** The mural symbols school-based adults deemed the most controversial and therefore in need of revising were an image of a protest sign reading, “no more pink slips,” and an image of a raised, clenched fist. According to the children in Change 4 Good, both symbols represented collective solidarity and alternative narratives of hope and community support (see chapter 5 for more on children’s intended meaning). Although both the pink slip and the fist signified controversy to the adults, the images evoked different narratives regarding children and the role of the school as a child-oriented institution. I will begin by examining the discourses regarding the inappropriateness of the pink slips symbol.
The “no more pink slips” image stemmed from house meetings with community members, including teachers, who told stories about the negative consequences of budget cuts to public education (including teacher lay-offs, or pink slips) and the sense of support teachers felt when student marched with them in public rallies about the issue. The themes constructed from interview data suggested concerns about age appropriateness and the role of the school as a public institution. In the case of the “no more pink slips” sign, a particularly salient issue concerned the message this sent about the school as a poor, struggling school. The Superintendent, for example, interpreted the “no more pink slips” symbol that critiqued budget cuts to public education as having more to do with teacher wage increases. She explained:

Superintendent: One of the pieces that they wanted to put up had to do with the teachers and not having a raise and… and, actually we weren’t in bad relations with the union, we haven’t been, (Danielle: Mmm) but we’ve been lucky because we had a fairly good reserve so… (D: yeah) we didn’t go into the crisis in the way some people did—the economic crisis, so… there was some—I thought it was the ADULTS using children, I didn’t feel comfortable (Danielle: Mmm) with children getting pulled into, at this age union issues and teachers being worried about their percent increase, I just didn’t think it was appropriate for 5th grade students…I just didn’t feel like a big wall in the school needed to be about teachers…that is public, EVERYONE:: could see that on all the roads and that’s not what really what we’re about, we’re about children.

In this excerpt the Superintendent connects perceptions of child appropriateness with the institution’s role in the community and in children’s lives. As an institution tasked with education and socializing children, she argues that making a public statement about teacher wages was “not what they’re about.” Rather, they’re “about children.” By centering the importance of children as the primary
concern of schools, she grants them ultimate priority, yet also makes the case that “being about children” is incompatible with also being about the issue of teacher support. Thus, the school’s association with children conveys that it is apolitical, and silos child concerns into a separate category from adult issues like union politics. Yet children themselves argued that teacher wages are relevant to students:

Layla…ranted about how these were also their stories, and that they had also marched out there with the teachers when the rally against pink slips was going on. Both Layla and Francesca explained that when teachers get pink slips, it’s not only the teachers that are being hurt, it’s the students too because some students might like and be attached to the teachers, and so it makes them sad to see the teachers leave. (Graduate student fieldnote, 7/2/12)

The Superintendent’s argument can also be understood as contesting the dominant narrative that this school is poor. Thus, an “accurate” representation becomes all the more imperative due to the “very public” location of the mural. Rather than rely solely on the rationale that a public statement about the school’s financial constraints is problematic, the Superintendent also leverages taken for granted assumptions about the role of schools in children’s socialization. In terms of implicit assumptions about children, this narrative draws on sociocultural constructions of children as apolitical and highly susceptible to adult cooptation. Skepticism about the authenticity of the message implies that children were co-opted by adults concerned with their salary, robbing children of any agency in the process. This assertion suggests that knowledge constructed with others (adults) is inauthentic. If the images and themes did not come directly from children
themselves, then this was an instance of ventriloquism (Bakhtin, 1981; Derrida, 1974/1997). The Superintendent expanded, “I just don’t know who…it’s something about that just…to me seemed like adults…using children for their…cause.” As in institution “about children,” the school is responsible for looking out for their best interests. Thus, the legitimacy of the institution itself rests on the presumption that children are not capable of self-representation (Lee, 1999), and so doubt about children’s “ability to speak for themselves” is not surprising in this context (Lee, 1999, p. 468). In other words, the Superintendent’s ambivalence about children’s abilities is not to be interpreted as evidence of personal prejudice against children, but rather a rational response from her role as a representative of the institution. In addition, the notion that adults might use children is rooted in the reality that some adults do in fact use (and abuse) children.

Other school-based adults provided a different perspective on the issue. The Teacher, for instance, explains more about the rationale for censoring the image of the pink slip symbol:

Teacher: …well this mural’s, it’ll be here for a long time … and, children at the school are, are YOUNG, (Danielle: mhm) so it need- it’s, just like, they wanted to have more of a positive statement I think, rather than the, like the no more pink slips, for instance, would be, would mean that, teachers don’t get laid off anymore, which is, that’s a positive thing, of course, BUT, it’s not in the control of, uh necessarily the superintendent or anybody, it’s up, the state gives you a certain amount of money and sometimes, the class size has to get bigger, and people have to get laid off, and I think that … the power, you know, the powers that be didn’t want that to be on there, because it’s just like something they don’t ha-necessarily have control over…it’s very controversial, (Danielle: yeah) and so I think that, you know, the district was trying to avoid controversy,
as a theme...the kids don’t need that, and they...some of them don’t even know what it means, especially the young ones can’t even READ...I think just, they felt like they wanted, more of a positive statement and...and to keep it, you know, wholesome... just general, for the general public, and happy... you’re gonna see it every DAY, and the kids are gonna see it every day and, we want it to be, positive and ... and not bring up, bad memories or...or bad feelings...

The Teacher emphasizes the age of the children (they are “YOUNG”) as an important consideration. Her explanation reflects constructions of young children as in need of sheltering and protection from controversy (“they don’t need that”), especially if it will bring up bad feelings on a daily basis. In this way, she draws on a narrative of protection while also invoking an image of childhood as a time of happiness (James & James, 2004). Yet, this is a relevant concern, particularly for children who experience the kind of intolerance, discrimination, and challenges of poverty that likely do generate “bad feelings.” Her reasoning harkens to not only an idyllic view of what childhood should be, but also the school as a positive force in the lives of “children of poverty.” In addition, she deploys the narrative of the children as innocent and naïve in the sense that they do not understand the meaning of the symbolism. As Research Assistant Alyssa points out, the notion of young children engaging in civic action (e.g., protesting) is so foreign to most adults that the thought that they could have come up with such an idea, much less understand its meaning, is absurd:

Alyssa: Um, I mean in terms of kids being engaged in: protest with signs and stuff I think that’s just something that there wasn’t even something in their [the adult’s] heads to latch onto, you know...yeah historically, a kid holding a protest sign, you know, like, what? The kid having a political opinion, what? You know, so there wasn’t even anything to latch onto there.
These data also signal several underlying assumptions about the role of the institution. The Teacher catches the potential contradiction in her argument when she reasons the mural should be positive, then acknowledges that halting teacher lay-offs would in fact be positive. At that moment, she clarifies that the image symbolizing the protesting of budget cuts to education (the “no more pink slips” protest sign) is actually out of the control of the “powers that be,” or in this case, the district. To convey support for teachers on the walls of a single school within one district is to direct one’s argument at the wrong audience, while also oversimplifying a complex issue. The potential controversy this act could generate is at odds with the image the school needs to project to the general public – one of wholesomeness and happiness. Thus, the institution is not intended to provoke controversy about issues perceived as out of its control. Considering the pressures for this particular school to stick to basic academic skill and social development, additional controversy is not particularly welcome, as conveyed by the Principal:

Principal: Well the primary role [of children at MES] is to WORK, their primary role is to work and, learn how to read, learn how to write, learn how to THINK, learn how to behave well…so, they need to learn a lot, here, and some of them are essential fundamental skills.

Indeed, constructions of the urban “are consequential to the way educators imagine the kind of schooling appropriate for urban students” (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 781). Rather than learning strategies to actively combat social
problems, schools are constructed as places to learn social skills and good behavior.

The Teacher’s excerpt also encompasses a combination of two themes. One is ambivalence about the appropriateness of exposing young children daily to a controversial issue they likely do not understand. The second is doubt about the appropriateness of broadcasting a controversial economic issue in an elementary school. As an institution charged with educating and socializing children, such a political statement seems outside the purview of the school. The administration at this particular school feels significant pressure from state mandates and CST’s to emphasize language arts and math; political organizing and protest do not seem to fit those concerns. The Teacher underscores the institutional role when she explains, “just how appropriate is it for an elementary school? I mean, that’s what you kind of have to ask yourself. Maybe a downtown mural would be FINE to have stuff like that.” In other words, it is not the political nature of the mural per se that is objectionable, nor is it the public setting (the same mural on a wall downtown would be appropriate), but the social location of this particular imagery within a publicly funded child-serving institution. Although not explicitly mentioned in the adult narratives, the political landscape of public education is one teeming with public disapproval of curriculum perceived as politicizing young people of Color (e.g., the recent defunding and dissolution of the Raza Studies curriculum in Arizona public high schools).
Likewise, the Superintendent leverages an argument about the appropriateness of the imagery of a “no more pink slips” sign on the walls of MES, not because it is political, but because it signified the probable co-optation of the children’s mural by adults:

Superintendent: …frankly I’m gonna be candid here- I was a little disappointed that the adults would take it to…negotiation in teacher raises, I really- I was SOMEWHAT disappointed, now maybe, maybe it was appropriate, but I-I was dis-disappointed in that one (Danielle: mmmm) um… not that you KEEP the truth from children…it wasn’t that it was that…I just think teachers’ salaries is…that one bothered me, not BECAUSE they were revolting ‘cause I think kids walking out of classrooms, around an issue, it’s probably good for them.

In this excerpt, the Superintendent emphasizes that the conflict around the mural imagery was not linked to its (in)appropriateness for children as children. Indeed, she expresses support for exposing children to “the truth,” and characterizes their involvement in political action as “good for them.” Rather, she critiques the (perceived) actions of adults, who she saw as commandeering the mural imagery generation process.

In the following excerpt the Principal also draws on the roles and responsibilities of the institution, and of the adults as representatives of the institution, to rationalize the changes to the “no more pink slips” image:

Principal: Well basically, I mean, it was- I looked at it, as well as the superintendent (Danielle: uh huh) and you know her job is much more, um- you know she’s much more of a politician than I am (Danielle: mm ha, uhhh) so the, the images and the IMPLICATIONS of those images, and she has to temper and buffer those more than I would, although I’m supposed to, my role also is to champion that, or have that role as well…I think some of them were…very TIME sensitive, LIKE, you know the thing about pink slips, it’s really, this particular district, it’s not REALLY, I mean, I’ve been in other districts where it’s much more of a concern,
here, it’s not really a concern, so::: I don’t know:: how relevant that was, it may have been just ONE comment, or ONE teacher, because GENERALLY, I mean I would tell you it’s not really…you know so…sometimes, things can lose their way, the message can be DISTORTED.

The Principal explicitly references the responsibility of the Principal and Superintendent to consider not only the images themselves, but the implications of the images. Consequently, their role is to “temper and buffer” images that deliver a “distorted” representation of the school or district. Indeed, the Superintendent described her role in the Change 4 Good program as “VERY indirect actually… I was involved in the mural, uh, in terms of what I thought would…be a…a good representation of the school.” She locates her primary concern as ensuring a good representation of the school to the public. Like the Superintendent, the Principal argues that in comparison to other districts he has been part of, teacher lay-offs were not a concern at MES. Avoiding unnecessary or irrelevant controversy regarding finances is of considerable importance to a school constructed as an urban school. Overstating economic concerns risks reifying the narrative of MES as a “poor school,” and may bring additional negative attention to an already struggling district. Thus, the administration contests the “poor district” narrative.

**Raised fist.** The raised clenched fist image elicited both overlapping and distinct discourses and assumptions about the children at MES and the role of the institution. Similar to the pink slips controversy, these related to the question of appropriateness. Unlike the pink slips symbol, the controversy around the fist
symbol largely concerned issues of safety and socialization, often connected to age, race, class and gender. For example, adults feared that children would misinterpret the symbols, resulting in conflict with school policies regarding conflict resolution:

Superintendent: I’m kind of liberal but, I’m, was surprised at my reaction like, really? I- I don’t know if I want that [image of a fist] (hahaha), it’s a playground! We have kindergartners there too! I don’t know that you need a fist, so if you think of non-violent…revolution (Danielle: yeah), why does it need to be a fist? I don’t think Martin Luther King would have held up a fist, you know (Danielle: mhmm), now… I understand there are times that maybe the fist is necessary, maybe there’s times you HAVE to, but I think I’d prefer non-violent, but I can understand with enough oppression, you would want to hold up your fist, definitely…but I’m not sure if you need to hold up your fist in an elementary playground, when we’re telling children not to fight…we’re TEACHING them about peaceful communication and peaceful resolution of conflict (Danielle: I see), and…most children would get the fist not the…background history behind the fist, it wasn’t age appropriate really for a child, to understand, it looked like.. fight, to me, that’s why I opposed.

The Superintendent’s response positions nonviolent, peaceful conflict resolution at odds with the fist as a symbol of fighting oppression, conflating civil disobedience with violence, and creating a binary between Martin Luther King’s brand of civic activism (peaceful and nonviolent) and militant activism. The raised clenched fist is undoubtedly a political image, inseparable from messages implicitly coded as raced and classed. For example, according to the Superintendent, the raised clenched fist has “certainly represented, throughout time, revolution.”

The historic significance of the raised clenched fist to activist causes is noteworthy. Activist groups have used the symbol of the raised clenched for
decades (e.g., women’s liberation, black solidarity, the American Indian civil rights movement, the United Farm Workers, a number of socialist and communist parties, and environmental activist organizations), and it is now ubiquitous among social movements as a symbol of resistance, solidarity, and collective struggle for justice and equality. It is not necessarily synonymous with violence or armed resistance. In addition, murals themselves are historically associated with groups of Color as a form of public political action and resistance. The Superintendent is aware of this: “I think the work with the children is true to the nature of what murals are, uh, originally murals were, were political statements almost – often, early statements about the community and so um…I would think of Diego Rivera.” Diego Rivera, a member of the Communist party in Mexico, helped to spearhead the Mexican Mural Movement of the 1920s. His controversial public art was explicitly political. Many of his pieces were destroyed at the behest of the government for their critique of unjust economic structures and capitalist politics. Therefore, adult opposition to the fist image is automatically embedded in a larger socio-political narrative regarding the civic uprising of subordinated groups. Like the “no more pink slips” symbol, an overtly political image was deemed inappropriate for children and for child-serving institutions constructed as apolitical.

Adult rationales for censoring the fist also reflected anxiety over the socialization and civilization of low-income Latina/o children, echoed in the principal’s stance more explicitly:
Principal: Well it IS an aggressive symbol…it symbolized many things in history, one is, uh, protests, it also symbolizes- it symbolized ARMED resistance as well, and it’s- the fist is an aggressive symbol and: PART of education for me: is learning how to solve problems in a:….proactive an- and also an- in a CIVIL manner (Danielle: mm) and:: THAT… it’s a borderline symbol, and- ESPECIALLY::: for an elementary school (Danielle: mhm), our message often times is we need to solve our problems via our WORDS and not via our fists (Danielle: I see) and kids, I-I on a daily basis have to work with kids to do that, and you know there’s A LOT of images in- in our society and on television that that’s how problems are solved (Danielle: mm).. via, all the way, from the Tortuga Ninjas with the 3 year olds, all the way up to- I have kids playing Call of Duty, out in the yard here.. so from Tortuga Ninjas where turtles solve their problems by, you know BEING NINJAS to Call of Duty where, the 4th and 5th graders are out in the field, you know, ‘MASSACRING’ other kids because that’s what they see so…I don’t believe that it’s a message that really you know is CONSISTENT with our school and, and the message that we want to put forth to the public (Danielle: mm mhm) we WANT kids to be able to stand up for their rights but- in a civil, and HUMANE way.

The principal’s response pulls on the urban school narrative to explain the inappropriateness of symbols of civil disobedience for these children (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). Urban is constructed as a danger filled “jungle,” where schools, as socializing institutions, are positioned to civilize out of control children. The threat of violence, gang involvement, and drugs is ever present and schools are continually warding off these dangers. Race is always encoded in the urban imaginary (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and is evoked by the principal in his reference to Latina/o children’s mimicking of violent behavior in the media (i.e., Tortuga Ninjas). His assessment is also gendered as masculine, again consistent with the social construction of urban schools as hyper-masculinized “jungles,” particularly around issues of violence (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007).
The adult responses to the fist image reveal unspoken values and assumptions of the institution. For example, safety (of students and others) is paramount here, as reflected in the Superintendent’s articulation of her roles and responsibilities: “the first thing that I’m responsible for is safety, so that—that always trumps anything else.” Both the Superintendent and the Principal argue that the fist is inconsistent with their efforts to teach nonviolent conflict resolution. Yet, as they acknowledge, the fist has a much deeper political history, which if taught to children could re-vision the clenched fist as a symbol of social justice and liberation, of combating oppression. Their opposition reflects not only the social location of MES as an urban school, but also a hesitation to expose children to potentially painful issues. Yet children here experience discrimination and structural oppressions on a daily basis.

Finally, the opposition to displaying images of political activism on the walls of the school also occurs within a broader political reality of white flight from this particular school. The symbol of a clenched fist, associated with racialized resistance, may have reinforced existing narratives about the school as a “Latino school” in ways that could harm the school, both economically (white families continuing to remove their children) and socially (backlash from vocal families and local residents about the appropriateness of the images). For example, one student, Lilliana, speculates:

Lilliana: Adults thought that like maybe it’s too inappropriate cause like what if people think- start thinking bad about their school, and what if they’re like, ‘Oh what if they start taking their kids OUT of this
school’…what if they’re like, ‘OH is this school really like this? I don’t want my kid to be in a school that- that’s like that.’

Lilliana’s observation is grounded in the reality of white flight in the district, but also lets school administrators off the hook for pushing back against dominant narratives that maintain white flight. Yet, her narrative points to another risk – the threat to the perceived legitimacy of the institution. As Haney and Zimbardo (1973) point out, “most of us automatically grant to a social institution or organization…the presumption of rationality…although we may disagree with an action now and then, we rarely question the fundamental rationality of the act” (p. 38). A public critique of the district administration’s decision to lay off teachers (though this is an oversimplification of the decision-making process and inappropriately assigns blame), or a proclamation of the need for resistance (raised fist), calls into question the rationality and therefore the legitimacy of the system. Therefore, the censorship of the images of collective resistance against oppressive structures is completely rational given the social location of these adults as agents of the institution.

**Social Justice Art Within a Public Institution: Implications for Citizenship Education**

Social justice art is a tool to amplify the voices of young citizens, thus serving as a context for critical citizenship education. Yet, the social location of the Maplewood Stories mural within an “urban” elementary school presented a number of challenges. In this chapter I conceptualized tensions as constructive because they elucidated implicit assumptions, norms and values of the
institutional culture (Kohfeldt et al., 2011). In this case, discursive struggles over the representation of community stories elicited tensions that revealed role relationships between adults and children and the role of the institution, exposing these as constructed rather than natural.

Controversy over the Maplewood Stories mural brought to light two key matters: dominant conceptualizations of children at MES and the roles and responsibilities of educational institutions. Consistent with the culture of poverty narrative adult interviews revealed that MES children are constructed as in need of social skills training and civility, highly susceptible to adult co-optation and therefore in need of protection, and as too young to comprehend symbolic references to collective political action. Unspoken assumptions about the role of the institution in the lives of these children included the primacy of safety, control over perceived violent and impulsive behavior, and the priority of “basic” academic skills. These foci were related to and intensified by top-down education mandates and restrictions on MES as an underachieving school. Indeed, many of the adult narratives exposed anxiety about the perception of MES as a poor, urban school, and the material realities of white flight from the district. Thus, the sociocultural constructions of children and the role of an urban school institution mutually reinforced one another.

This study contributes to the scant literature on social justice art with children by highlighting the tensions experienced in the process of working within a public institution. As an institution, the school creates and sustains its
institutional legitimacy through the premise that children are dependent, incompetent, and in need of socialization. Lee (1999) observes that we need to attend to “the way institutions create their legitimacy and how the production of institutional legitimacy produces ambiguity around childhood” (p. 457). In this case, the mural provoked controversy in part by suggesting that children are capable of critical analysis, invested in social justice, and engaged in political discourse, thus undermining core foundations of the institution’s role. Yet because children inhabit a liminal space - they are dependent but are presumed to need to learn independence - institutional legitimacy also produces ambiguity around children’s present role in decision making and participation (Lee, 1999). In other words, the institution of school is tasked with the dual role of protecting and sheltering children (i.e., restricting their decision making) and also training them as independent thinkers and workers. The adults struggled to support a public mural that would satisfy their roles as stewards of this institution while reconciling at once their contention that children should be involved in active participation, their support for activist oriented art, and competing discourses about what children need from school. Thus, adult interview data suggests a tension between the goals and norms of the institution, adult roles as part of that institution, and the evidence before them that children are indeed capable of producing “deeply” meaningful, critical products.

Unlike conventional citizenship education, critical citizenship education demands attention to transforming inequitable power relations (McLaren, 1995).
Thus, within institutional settings that are legitimized in part by their alignment with dominant cultural norms and value, critical citizenship education will generate conflict. Yet social justice and activist artists contend that to see conflict as a mistake, a simple lack of understanding on the part of one (or more) group(s), is to miss the civic character of these disagreements (Lacy, 2005). Furthermore, the discourse prompted by civic arts projects like the Maplewood Stories mural is fodder for the embodiment of democratic citizenship participation: “Within this paradigm, the role of art in getting people to talk with each other, and perhaps as a result to think or act differently, is just about the only certain role for civic artists. (Lacy, 2005, p. 11). Reconceptualizing tensions as an important element of critical citizenship education helps to consider the civic value of these experiences.

For the children in Change 4 Good, the censorship of some of the mural images signified that they had touched upon particularly sensitive issues. This in turn contributed to a better understanding of the expectations and values on the parts of the Change 4 Good program as well as from the perspective of the school-based adults. Thus, a social justice art perspective is conducive to second order change because tensions can identify implicit role relationships and point to where these are particularly resistant to change. Discomfort is often necessary to provoke change. Social justice art participation engaged the Change 4 Good children in a critical citizenship education that provoked, aggravated, and unsettled dominant assumptions about them and their communities.
Chapter 5: Results

“Kids Can Help”: Enhancing Collective Solidarity

[Art] is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. [Art] is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.”

(Lorde, 1984, p. 37)

The children involved in Change 4 Good affirm and expand on the empowering potential of public art that occurs through collective solidarity and creativity. Consistent with the empowerment and social justice art literatures, the young people in Change 4 Good cited the creation of alternative narratives, the act of space claiming, and the enhancement of social and cultural capital among the most salient aspects of the mural creation process. Yet, as documented in this chapter, they expand existing notions of children’s critical citizenship education to include a focus on humanizing social issues through a process of de-ideologization (Martin-Baro, 1994).

Despite (perhaps in part because of) the tensions that arose in the last chapter, Change 4 Good participants see their mural as a product of collective solidarity and creativity that has the capacity to foster social change in their community (B. Hayward, 2012; McLaren, 1995). As such, I conceptualize their participation as “doing” critical citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), rather than a simulated experience to prepare them for real future citizen participation.

In this chapter I develop an analysis of children’s participation in the social justice art creation process as aligned with the notion of a “social justice
oriented” critical citizenship education (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Drawing on Martin-Baro’s (1994) contention that subordinated communities need “de-ideologizing tools” to counteract dominant narratives and build collective identities, I interpret the Maplewood Stories mural as a “social mirror” that humanizes the struggles of community residents. To contextualize children’s citizenship education in Change 4 Good, I start by describing the landscape of citizenship education more generally by assessing conventional opportunities for children’s community participation. I argue that these opportunities are aligned with dominant sociocultural constructions of children, particularly low-income youth of Color, and are misaligned with the quality of participation children aspire to. Finally, I illustrate how the children conceptualized their construction of the Maplewood Stories mural as an opportunity to build collective solidarity and creativity, thus allowing for an embodied experience of critical citizenship.

“It Means That I’m Helping”: Children’s Conceptualizations of Community Membership

When the children from Change 4 Good talk about what it means to be a member of a community and the roles and responsibilities linked to that membership, they do so in terms of their “helping.” For example, when asked, “what does it mean to you to be part of [your] communities,” Josefina replied, “it means that I’m helping.” Another student, Daniel, simply responded, “you can help out the community.” An interest and commitment to helping was a defining feature in children’s definitions of themselves as citizens, in the sense of people
who identify with, care about, and work to improve their communities (B. Hayward, 2012). Every student interviewed identified as a person who “helps” her or his community, with hopes to continue to do so in the future. It should be noted that children are often encouraged by adults to help and to be helpful. From popular rhymes learned in school (e.g., “I’m a helper good and kind…”) to character education programs’ promotion of helpfulness as an individual trait of good citizens, the notion of helping pervades children’s socialization within dominant institutions. Thus, it seems likely that their use of the word “helping” to describe their community membership is a reflection of dominant discourses circulated socially around children’s behavior. The children in Change 4 Good, however, subvert common meanings of helpfulness to instead imply a sense of social responsibility and action to promote the common good. As helpers within a community context, children emphasized relational connection, collective agency, and communication.

The children all conceived of a community as people rather than merely a place, and relational connections were paramount in defining community. One student explains:

Lilliana: what it means to me for- to be part of a community is like it’s kinda like family…everyone should st-stick, like with each other (Danielle: mhmm) and all friends should be friends like, ther- there shouldn’t be any enemies…like communities are there for each other, like they should all stick together.

Lilliana stresses relational harmony, social cohesion, and unconditional support for one another despite differences. Emphasizing unity, she explains that there
are no enemies in community, only friends. In this conceptualization, communities are inclusive, peaceful, and caring. Yelena says community members “relate to stuff, to work together and solve a problem.” Like Lilliana, Yelena sees community in relational, people-oriented terms, and extends this to also mean the ability to “relate.” Relate here means the capacity to share and identify with common experiences. She also indicates that people work together collectively for the common good. Solving problems together through solidarity work is a component of this definition of citizenship participation. In addition, Francesca shares that:

Francesca: To be a part of a community means…to actually get to know it, really well…I think a community of people is basically: people who live in your area…people who you actually, were WITH, and were, actually COMMUNICATING with, and:: you were with them.

As she sees it, community membership means a group of people with whom you share deep connections and shared knowledge of salient community issues. In order to build these relations children, like Francesca, indicated that communication was critical. Talking to and listening to the concerns and experiences of others was critical to helping. Finally, a “helper” identity was also how the children conceptualized themselves as change agents. For example, Layla explains:

Layla: Helping your community is probably the most important thing you can possibly do…sometimes I feel alone or whatever and I see someone struggling and I help them, and it makes me feel powerful you know, like I could do ANYTHING…sometimes people don’t realize that when they lend a HAND: you’re not just making that person happy but they’re helping themselves.
Helping as they understand it is not altruism nor is it solely for personal benefit. The helpfulness Layla and others speak of is not altruism, a construct that is more aligned with a charity model of doing for others and thus resembles a charity model of citizenship education. Rather, the children articulate helping that is more consistent with a sense of collective responsibility and action taken in solidarity with others. This is akin to what Kirshner (2009) calls “collective agency” or civic participation that recognizes the mutual benefit to both helpers and helpees when all are members of the same community. When a person helps a community they identify with in order to improve the conditions of that community, their efforts are mutually beneficial. Conventional understandings of altruism is at odds with the solidarity children emphasize as so important, because it implies a charity model. Collective action is intended to create a more just and equitable world for all, recognizing that, as King (1963) notes, our destinies are intertwined. Altruism is often about helping the “other,” people outside of your own community. An ethics of care (Held, 2006) does not bifurcate the interests of the individual with the common interests of collectives. Instead, it recognizes that these overlap: “Persons in caring relations are acting for self-and-other together. Their characteristic stance is neither egoistic nor altruistic” (Held, 2006, p. 13). This is not selflessness, nor is it solely for personal benefit, but solidarity. Kirshner (2009) refers to collective agency as “an alternative vision of the relationship between individual and society—one in which people recognize their shared experiences and work together rather than in competition” (p. 431). This
is a contrast to atomistic thinking, or “a view of society in which persons were isolated actors motivated primarily by their own interests” (Kirshner, 2009, p. 425).

**Conventional Modes of Youth Participation in the Community**

The most common opportunities that exist for children to participate as members of their community are misaligned with the vision of themselves as active, helpful citizens articulated above. When asked what roles children actually get to take on in their communities, rather than those they believe themselves capable of, most children responded similarly to Layla when she said, “they could help, I mean, in any sort of like situation, like actually can help, unless it’s something like you know, where parents are the only ones able to participate.” Here, she points to key issues in children’s citizenship participation and how they are educated about their roles and responsibilities as citizens. First, children are framed as peripheral helpers or assistants with adult-created tasks, not as leaders; and second, most opportunities to participate are limited to adults. Therefore, conventional modes of children’s participation in the community is limited to “helping.”

As people who are understood as in the process of developing, children are perceived as not yet competent to participate actively. Thus, opportunities for community participation afforded to children tended to fall into the two most conventional categories of citizenship education as described by Westheimer and Kahne (2004): the individually responsible citizen and the participatory citizen.
In addition, the participation opportunities most commonly encountered by these children often reflect dominant constructions of children as “not-yets” (Verhellen, 2000, p. 33), and the culture of poverty myths outlined in the previous chapter.

**Helping as individually responsible citizens.** The individually responsible citizen practices citizenship by acting personally responsible, contributing to charitable causes, recycling and picking up litter, volunteering for community service, and obeying laws (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This represents the most common mode of community participation cited by children. For example, children cited opportunities to volunteer:

Layla: [kids could] go to the; uhm family resource center and try to figure out you know what would I do:, go around to like different sch- lower class schools, like my elementary school, I could go there, help out the teachers.

She explicitly names “lower class schools” such as Maplewood Elementary as a setting where children like her could help. Narratives about that school as a “poor school” abound, even among alumni. Layla’s idea to help poor schools is also consistent with a charity model of helping as altruism, and may be evidence of the school’s emphasis on teaching students social skills.

By far, the most frequently cited contribution children said they could make to their community was picking up trash:

Lilliana: I think like, like also like when you- like when you pick up trash, you’re like keeping your community clean… kids in their own schools can pick up trash like to keep their little community clean.

Layla: …if they wanted to they could just, go around picking up garbage if they wanted to help.
Francesca: Well I think kids are responsible for, helping cleaning up and not littering that’s number one, basic I think…they could contribute to their community by helping, like, in programs and stuff or even, not even in a program but like, clean up, like cleaning beaches, parks.

Carmen: Uh… I don’t know, I don’t think… any…well, kids get to like, CLEAN UP what the- the messes they do and stuff (Danielle: yeah), I mean like pick up garbage and stuff, um, I don’t- I REALLY don’t know, uh:: I, don’t, know... (Danielle: okay) I don’t know why I don’t know that but I just.

To be clear, cleaning and picking up litter is not an activity I believe children should be discouraged from. It makes sense that for children, who are excluded from more formal kinds of citizen participation, picking up litter would be especially salient. The prevalence of litter they described in their schools, neighborhoods, and beaches provides ample opportunity to engage in clean-up activities both formally and on their own. In addition, cleaning does not typically require adult permission. Thus, picking up trash is one of a limited number of opportunities to exercise agency while also beautifying the community and improving the environment. Noteworthy is the fact that when they think about ways they can act as active members of their community they are relegated to garbage collectors. Additionally, roles as cleaners and trash collectors cannot be separated from these children’s positionalities as poor and working class Latinas/os. The association between one’s role in the community and cleaning up (usually someone else’s) messes is not only a function of age, but is also a role that is raced, classed, and gendered. The children who gave these examples were primarily female and Latina, and cleaning has a strong gender association,
particularly for females of Color in domestic labor, and for men of Color in custodial labor.

**Helping as participatory citizens.** The participatory citizen is characterized as someone who engages actively in existing civic systems, including running for community leadership or political positions, organizing a fundraiser, or participating in community service (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). A common form of citizen participation for the children I interviewed was involvement in formal child-oriented programs. These are programs aimed directly at young people for their own growth and development, not youth-adult partnerships to benefit the greater community. As Josefina succinctly described this kind of participation, “it’s not help for them [the community], it’s help for me.” This has roots in a culture of poverty narrative about low-income youth as “at-risk” for a number of problems, and assumed deficits in social skills, health and nutrition, self-esteem, and academic skills (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). For example, Lilliana explains, “in ACES [another after-school program at MES] I think that it helps you participating, like sometimes you can participate in the:: events here, like when you dance.” A common opportunity to participate in the community was through after-school or out-of-school organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club.

Francesca: One…that I’ve HEARD of, but I went for a little, but I didn’t really like how they were gonna SUPPOSEDLY help you with your homework and they never did, was the Boys and Girls Club…I think that’s a program you could probably like get involved a lot in (Danielle: yeah) ‘cause you go and help in, and make cotton candy I think…and they have like a play date, where, uh:: the kids go and play games for a trophy
or something (Danielle: oh okay) which I think I consider EXERCISE for the kids.

Francesca describes this particular organization as offering homework help (although she says this never materialized), creative and competitive activities, and exercise. These activities emphasize mostly self-development: tutoring, nutrition programs, exercise and fitness, and social skills programs. In other words, their participation in the community was through receiving help and skills training from others, mostly adults. These activities also overlap with narratives about low-income youth of Color who are “at-risk” for poor health, bad nutrition, poor social skills, academic failure, and need activities to keep them occupied. In terms of citizenship education, these opportunities position children as people who receive help rather than as people who provide help or serve as valuable resources to their communities.

Another opportunity to participate was through “leadership” activities such as student governance. Yet, this was only mentioned by one student, Layla, who described children’s duties as taking notes during meetings and making decisions about school dance themes and organization. Layla describes the lack of decision-making power she had as student body president in school: “when I was student body president [at Maplewood Elementary]… I just went up to the principal, he wouldn’t really take my suggestion I mean he’d LISTEN but I don’t think he would really like, take it in.” The Teacher stated, “they kinda just run the meetings, and the kids decide on, different things, mostly our big job is just spirit days (hahaha).” In other words, children are not invited to make decisions about
the rules and policies of the school itself, and their role relationship to the
institution remains intact. The Superintendent sums up the lack of models that
exist for children’s active citizenship:

Superintendent: Well I don’t think we often think about, uh.. inviting them
[children] in, to that type of thing [community participation]…we still
don’t think of getting children involved in an age appropriate time
(Danielle: mmm) to let them, be a part of- or to observe- our conversations
(Danielle: mhmm) so they’d learn from that…or to have their OWN
conversations about their community…yeah, I don’t know what that
would look like if it’s not high school or middle school youth.

The current system is not structured to provide opportunities for children to take
part in democratic dialogue, critical analysis, and questioning social systems. It is
difficult to imagine, much less create, opportunities for youth participation as
community citizens when there is no framework for doing so.

**Scarcity of opportunities for children’s participation.** For a few
students, opportunities for children to participate in their community did not seem
to exist or are not institutionalized in ways that are legible to them. For instance,
when asked for actual examples of when children had contributed to the
community outside of Change 4 Good, Layla says, “I can’t really think right now
(haha) yeah.” Dominant modes of contributing to their community do not afford
much agency to children. This is not surprising given the sociocultural
construction of children as not yet competent to participate actively, especially of
low-income Latina/o students as in need of receipt of help rather than as resources. In addition, the opportunities to help available to them remain at actions taken mostly by individuals (not collective) that get at first order change, but not second order change or empowerment. In other words, they do not change role relationships or social structures. For example, after suggesting that children can pick up litter to help their school, Josefina recognizes that “it’d take me a long time though,” and “it would be clean for a little bit but they would keep on doing it” – meaning people would continue to litter because nothing has changed about the role relationships between people and the social context.

Although children offer up examples of opportunities to participate in their communities that coincide with an individualized character approach to citizenship education, that is not to say that children are content with existing opportunities. In fact there was a conflict between how they define community and membership – what it means to be a citizen – and the opportunities they have to actually participate in the life of their community.

**Social Justice Art: Helping as Empowerment**

The children saw Change 4 Good as expanding the possibilities for their participation in the community away from primarily individualistic modes of helping. Their involvement in the mural creation process afforded them the opportunity to engage in a qualitatively different form of helping their community more in line with a social justice orientation to citizenship education (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Through the process of creating the Maplewood Stories mural
children conceived of themselves as “helpers” concerned with humanizing the struggles and hopes of their community, an orientation to social justice characterized by an ethic of care. They were able to embody these values through the creation of a mural that reflected back to the community its own seldom heard stories of struggle, love and hope. In doing so, they position themselves as change agents who equate helping in this manner to empowering their community through social justice art. In the following sections, I draw on Martin-Baro’s conceptualization of “de-ideologization” to interpret the children’s helping behavior in Change 4 Good.

**Murals As De-Ideologizing Tools**

Dominant ideology is perpetuated by, and benefits, powerful classes to the detriment of subordinated groups. The “social lie” – or what social-community psychologists refer to as dominant cultural narratives (Martin-Baro, 1994) – obscures the reality of most people’s daily existence. In doing so, the social lie dehumanizes and alienates by individualizing social problems and blaming victims for their own lot in life (Ryan, 1972). Thus, the social lie prevents the community from taking action and creating resources to correct those social problems. The social lie systematically hides the structural roots of social problems (contributes to unawareness), thus alienating discourses become internalized (people feel alone, uncared for). The dominant cultural narrative therefore asserts distorted representations of lived experience that were not created or condoned by people. Often, no visible framework exists that would
enable people “to look at themselves and interpret the meaning of their existence as individuals and as a community” (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 188). Therefore, de-ideologizing tools are needed to expose and counteract the social lie. De-ideologizing tools function as a “social mirror,” an instrument that helps people “recognize themselves in the reality they know, and to become aware of their own identity as they work at constructing their own world” (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 187).

The Maplewood Stories mural: constructing the social mirror. In order to combat the alienation and dehumanization that results from the social lie, communities need something to reflect their realities, histories, and collective identities back to them. The mural is a “social mirror” that fosters a process Martin-Baro (1994) describes as recovering untold stories, overcoming individualism, and moving to action. Thus, social justice art fosters the development of critical literacy, because it enhances the ability to decode multiple forms of communication and social discourse in the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1996). As children and participants in the art process share their stories, they engage in a process of reading the world, translating their perspectives into aesthetic objects or images, and revising them as needed to communicate their message strategically to the world.

Recovering untold stories. Because the dominant narrative is often set by, and works to the advantage of, those with access to control over media, policy, and socializing institutions, subordinated groups seldom have the opportunity to
construct their own collective stories. Interpreted through the lens of those with power, the histories of subordinated groups are skewed, if communicated at all. Recovering untold stories and displaying them publicly through art builds collective identity by reminding people who they were, who they are, and who they can be. By proclaiming the community’s history, values, priorities, struggles, and strengths for all to see, the Maplewood Stories mural interrupts dominant cultural narratives that derogate marginalized groups. It alerts people to the fact that there is not consensus on these issues and that the dominant narrative does not define their existence. Thus, the Maplewood Stories mural empowers the community through allowing subordinated groups more control over their narrative.

The children in Change 4 Good frequently mentioned learning about the history and experiences of community members through the mural creation process. Lilliana, for example, says:

Lilliana: OUR mural, it TALKS, it tells…if you look at the pictures it tells like, the peace sign is PEACE: (Danielle: Mmhm) and then, the tree is HISTORY: the [Maplewood] history... the: hand... it’s-we work TOGETHER, working together with people, who are white or... dark colored...you could actually, READ it, and you could find out what’s about, and I think it...tells about the community and stuff.

Lilliana describes the mural as a way of actively broadcasting the community’s stories (it “talks”). The symbols she references are based on the values, histories, and stories generated from the ground up (it “tells about the community”). They have a concrete meaning based in the lived experiences of people.
Every student I interviewed said that learning about people’s struggles was particularly memorable to them. The stories were not only about struggle, but also strength and hope. The strengths of communities who have been derogated are not often publicized.

Layla: …they have something that see, you know, and be able to…remember stories and how they went through their problems and how they picked themselves back up… the [Maplewood Stories mural] is more like, to relate to it, because it talks about our history:, our principal: and how she dedicated her time and…uhm her time and life to the community, uhm it talks about how we are diverse and how we are different colors and we should be treated equ- equally (Danielle: Mhmm) EDUCATION and opportunities, uhm, when we work together you know we’re stronger… and, you know when we struggle, but we protest to help each other, AND we communicate.

The mural acts as a social mirror, a constant public reminder of the community’s stories of struggle and also of strength; their values, priorities, and hopes. In this case, Layla refers to the images on the mural that symbolize love, social justice, inclusivity, and agency. It preserves historical memory and proposes a redemptive narrative of survival and action.

Most of the children mentioned the impact of learning about the community’s history. Excavating histories, or what Martin-Baro (1994) refers to as recovering memory, is necessary for groups to construct a more accurate representation of their lives and around which to shape new collective identities.

Layla: …the mural contributed to…the community because, you know we all have a history and when you look at the mural, you can kinda tell, you can kinda relate to ALL of the, at least one out of ALL of the drawings that we drew on there…and you know it’s, it’s good to remember…it’s not good to BE in hard times but it’s good to remember hard times and how you went through them, so when you look at the mural I think you can remember things and like the PAST…like diversity for example…in
the past the white people: and black people didn’t have the same rights...you know it’s just good to remember to like, I remember the history that America and a lot of other places have already has and how, it’s good that we made those changes.

Layla draws attention to the importance of remembering “hard times,” the struggles and mistakes of the past, in order to go forward in a more reflexive and informed manner. Like other children in the program, she connects the stories in the mural with social justice issues like racism. In this case, the recovery of historical memory is important for better understanding how that past contributes to current social conditions, such as the continued oppression of people of Color.

Overcoming individualism. Another way the mural functioned as a social mirror to de-ideologize the dominant narrative was through combating isolation. According to the children, the mural humanized struggle and oppression by showing that these are not abstract issues; they affect real people. The mural’s imagery communicated that people do not have to confront life in isolation and without support. Martin-Baro (1994) refers to this as de-alienation. For example, Layla explains:

Layla: …sometimes it was really hard to listen to the people struggling and how they struggled, it was really hard to like, REALIZE, that these people went through A LOT:... and NO ONE reached out (Danielle: mhmm) to help them (Danielle: mhmm) and you know you feel kind of sad when they start talking about those types of things.

For some community members participating in the house meeting sessions, struggles were exacerbated by isolation. Gathering personal stories of community members built a sense of empathy and concern among children:
Lilliana: Well like I learned about like, you know the painting (Danielle: mhmm) we learned how to like, like sh- like um see: things and like how other people see it… and like feel like what other people… because some-like in the group, it’s like- it’s Change for Good, it’s like, how you should change and what you could change too, and I thought that was: like helpful to me like it made me like think, about other people too, like… how does this person feel, like can I change it can I help them? …the mural, it shows like… like how you CAN, change like the perspective of things… it shows that the fact of the things like- with like all the peace signs and stuff (Danielle: mhmm) and like the love (Danielle: mhmm) like it makes you like see the perspective of others like it makes you think of other (Danielle: mm) like do they:: do they have like people to love them? Do you think everyone feels peace in the world?

Lilliana not only describes learning how to take other people’s perspectives, but to consider their feelings and imagine possibilities for supporting them. This is consistent with other studies of arts-based learning in which students develop a compassionate analysis of social problems (Thomas & Mulvey, 2008). In addition, the mural provokes self-reflexivity, encouraging people to consider their own responsibilities to others (e.g., by taking care of your fellow community members).

The children stressed that a goal of the mural was to help the community. This helping took the form of providing social support to overcome individualism and alienation. For example, Carmen explains that the mural reminds people that others have also experiences difficult times:

Carmen: Um, it could help them, with their LIFE, I guess, if they have- if they’re going through, a tough time, it could REALLY help them…let’s say they think their life is worth, nothing I guess…well everybody’s been through SOMETHING at least (Danielle: Mhm) and so it’s- they have their own HISTORY.
Another aspect of overcoming individualism is recognizing we share common issues, which is necessary for attributing the source of social problems within structures rather than individuals. Thus, relating to the mural is important because it enhances a sense of ownership and belonging within the community. As Layla asserts, “what’s the point of making a mural if no one can connect to it?” In turn, the mural also builds collective concern, empathy and caring, and commitment to helping others, through relational organizing. In other words, solidarity is enhanced through bonding among people with common experiences and bridging across difference. This produces solidarity – the recognition that our destinies are linked in a network of mutuality (King, 1963).

Gaining a greater awareness of community issues and common struggles is not only a matter of (re)educating people. This awareness also fosters new schemata for understanding the world more in structural terms, builds coalitions, and aids shifts in role relationships between people, and between people and their social context (Martin-Baro, 1994). The ability to listen to multiple perspectives and to make explicit connections among one’s own and others’ experiences is at the core of critical literacy and conscientizacjion (Freire, 1970/2007). In gaining insight into the struggles and hopes of the community, the children also realized these as common experiences:

Lilliana: What I learned about my community, is that there is a lot of people that go through tough problems, it’s not just like one family, the whole community has problems it’s like everybody has problems…when they would share their stories and:: like what they feel and like what their family is going through makes me like wonder like ‘OH, I’m kinda going through the same thing too.’
When Lilliana explains what she learned about her community through participation in Change 4 Good, she highlights that it helped her to see problems as a regular occurrence, which in turn made her feel as though she shared this in common with others who are “going through the same thing, too.”

Not only did the children in Change 4 Good recognize shared struggles, they also came to see a shared commitment to social change. Carmen described her experience in house meetings where she learned about others who attempted to make a change:

Carmen: I learned a lot about other people, and at one point we had, like, these-the GROUPS other students came into the class and they, talked about stories about THEM, they were saying stories of, when, they didn’t have power, or when they DID have power to do something…a lot of people tried to make something HAPPEN and I’ve tried to make something happen…they wanted to FIX something and, yeah, I’ve tried to fix something too.

In relational organizing terms, Carmen and others describe a process of bonding social capital, or strengthening the relational ties between people with collective needs and shared interests (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Bonding social capital is especially important for subordinated groups to overcome individualism and organize for collective action, and requires members to feel a sense that they are part of a supportive group. Carmen illustrates the point when she explains, “I think we all wanted somebody t- people to be PART of something.” In her analysis, the mural aids de-alienation by generating a sense of belonging and greater purpose among community members.
According to the children, overcoming individualism through the social justice art process also included reaching out to members of more privileges groups. In relational organizing terms, the mural also facilitated bridging social capital. Bridging social capital involves building solidarity between diverse groups, enhancing communication and trust across boundaries of difference (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Layla illustrates:

Layla: well, people could relate to it that’s something, people could change and see that you know, diversity is a good cuz some people...believe it or not, there are some racist people still out there and you know like, I hope like, if someone, that’s racist passes by the mural might change their mind a little bit and like take a closer look at...you know it’s kinda like…being like, being a different color, being a different like, race or something or, believing in different gods or different, religions or whatever, isn’t gonna change the fact that that person might actually be someone you want to get to know.

In her analysis, Layla believes the mural can bridge difference by inciting self-reflection that can potentially change beliefs. By humanizing injustices, she hopes the mural will encourage people to see others as fully human and worthy of acknowledgement, no matter their race, religion, or language. Francesca, too, emphasizes the intention of the mural to send the message that people in the community should provide care and assistance to others who are different from them:

Francesca: Yeah, ‘cause [in the mural image] they’re, holding each other and they’re actually, basically, to me, saying that they’re actually working together by helping each other no matter like what will happen (Danielle: okay) and, I see that they’re both different color so one’s like, darker and one’s lighter so I think that PART of the mural says, ‘it doesn’t matter if you’re African, White, or Mexican or whatever’…they’re still gonna help you.
In this description, Francesca acknowledges the ethnic diversity of the community and contends that care should be unconditional. The mural is conceptualized as a bridge between multiple groups, and is thus a tool for embodying the care and concern the children spoke of. Indeed, Francesca explains, “I have people that I KNOW that are like FIGHTING: for their situation and they’re STRUGGLING so:: much like, and I think that would actually make them feel better you know when they see that.” The mural, as a social mirror, reflects the society these children strive for in the future, one that values inclusivity, care, and solidarity.

_Moving to action._ Finally, the development of new collective community identities aids commitment to change oppressive conditions (Martin-Baro, 1994). As members of the community engage in recovering untold stories and overcoming individualism, they build collective identities and solidarity. This process fosters second order change as the roles and expectations of community members begin to change. For instance, Carmen summarizes the primary message of the mural as: “we can change the world...because we changed it with the mural…we got to talk to people, they got to tell us about their story, I guess one of the [messages] is...we could change the world if we tried hard enough.” In her assessment, the mural constructs a narrative about the strengths and capacity of the community, particularly children, to act as change agents.

Another student links the mural’s reflection of community stories to a call to action:

Francesca: Well, I think the purpose was…to make a change in the community because, like, all the stories were there so it basically tells you,
if they actually KNEW what the stories were about they would probably think, ‘oh well this is telling me this for a reason so that I could do something about it, form a group or something,’ so that’s what I think the mural basically is...telling you, and trying to help people UNDERSTAND what is happening in the community and what can be changed, the problems and the stories of the community.

In this excerpt, Francesca synthesizes how all three elements of the de-ideologizing process manifest in the mural project: building awareness of the community’s reality, taking a collective approach to address problems (e.g., by “forming a group”), and working together to make change (“do something about it”). The ultimate intention of the mural is to spark interest and commitment to support positive change in the community.

Likewise, Yelena succinctly sums up the progression from awareness, to collective organizing, to personal and social transformation when she describes the purpose of her work in the mural, “to know what’s going on around our community and, help each other and change what’s going on that’s bad around here and try to change some people’s minds.” For Yelena, the program’s purpose involved greater awareness of community issues, solidarity in the form of helping one another, and effecting positive change both individually (“change some people’s minds”) and socially (“change what’s going on that’s bad around here”). Finally, Lilliana says:

Lilliana: I think the purpose of the mural was to inform people about how the community is (Danielle: Mhmm), to show them what we do and what we can do...what I hope happens because of the mural, is...when we work together we all s- we all stay cool with each other... people are showing peace and love, (Danielle: Yeah) I ho- I want people to think too, ‘oh we can bring peace to the world, too.’
In Liliana’s estimation, the mural is a depiction of “what we do and what we can do,” and so represents a beacon of hope and love in people’s lives. Like the other children, she hopes the mural reflects the kind of helping that creates a more peaceful, united, and loving community. The kind of action the children call for is consistent with an ethics of care that “calls on us to take responsibility, while liberal individualist morality focuses on how we should leave each other alone” (Held, 2006, p. 14-15). In terms of citizenship education, whereas conventional models implore youth to take individual responsibility for themselves and their own economic agency in a way that also supports beliefs in meritocracy and taking care of oneself without “handouts,” an ethic of care asks individuals to take responsibility for fostering and sustaining relationships that recognizes our interdependence. This is consistent with King’s “network of mutuality,” in which all of our destinies are intertwined.

**Implications for Critical Citizenship Education**

If citizenship is about membership, and membership is about participation in the community in which you live (Held, 2006), then existing opportunities for children to enact citizenship through participation communicates that they are not yet ready to be citizens. The children in Change 4 Good cited modes of helping their community consistent with conventional citizenship education models of the individually responsible citizen and the participatory citizen, but not the social justice oriented citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Change 4 Good was an opportunity for them to engage in learning and action consistent with the social
justice oriented citizen. Furthermore, these children conceptualized their participation as change agents involved in collective caring efforts to improve their community, which expands our understanding of children’s citizenship engagement. Through the creation of the Maplewood Stories mural the children hoped to fashion a more humanizing story about the people who struggle in their community. Unlike other modes of helping that cast children as assistants to adults who engage in real citizenship participation, this program was an opportunity to embody critical citizenship and make their participation legible through claiming public space. Through their actions children built a public artifact of not only the community’s stories reflected back to them (Martin-Baro; Thomas & Rappaport, 1995), but evidence of the capacity of low-income children of Color to contribute as agentic, conscientious, concerned, and caring members of the community.

In terms of implications for citizenship education, children’s involvement in social justice oriented art making also served as capacity building in social change by gaining experience in creating “de-ideologizing tools” (Martin-Baro, 1994). Social problems cannot be altered when they are individualized through victim blaming. Alienation perpetuates structural oppression because when people are divided they cannot organize for collective action (Apfelbaum, 1979). Overcoming individualism is an important step in changing role relationships that separate individuals and alienate people from the institutions that impact their lives. The children in Change 4 Good not only enhanced critical literacy by
unearthing the root causes of social inequities, they also expressed a deep interest in humanizing social problems.

Also relevant to children’s citizenship education, the mural creation process brought the two social worlds of the school and the community into conversation with one another. Children in Change 4 Good collected stories from community members who attend and work at MES as well as from community residents. By representing these groups’ common experiences on a highly visible space within school walls, the children acted as bridges to build social capital, enhancing trust and sense of belonging between heterogeneous groups. For instance, issues of immigration and language politics found themselves represented alongside concerns about teacher-parent communication. A democratic society benefits when schools serve as centers of community life rather than detached institutions (McLaren, 1995). Particularly important to citizenship education is the fact that elementary school children were responsible for creating a mural that helped to strengthen that connection. Through the Maplewood Stories Mural, children found their way into public life, illustrating how social justice art is also a civic process. Thus, social justice art participation served as a medium through which children exercised citizenship, and through which their roles and responsibilities as members of their communities were constructed.

Citizenship implies both rights and responsibilities. Children’s rights scholars have pointed out the tendency for adults to assume children desire more
rights but “do not want responsibilities, and that they see these as the preserve of adults” (Osler & Starkey, 2005, p. 106). This perspective is based on a view of young people as ego-centric that Osler and Starkey (2005) argue “underestimate[s] young people’s capacity and willingness to acknowledge their responsibilities” (p. 107). This study adds to the empirical literature confirming that young people, when given the opportunity, are invested in the welfare, rights, and care of others, and have a desire to contribute beyond conventional modes of helping. These children felt a strong sense of responsibility to support their neighbors, and worked to contribute to the betterment of their own and the global community.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This dissertation examined children’s critical citizenship education within an after school social justice art yPAR program. I focused in depth on one setting – Change 4 Good – to elucidate how the social justice art process unfolds as a powerful setting for children’s engagement in community-based research and collective creative action. Specifically, this study illustrates how social justice art processes can serve as an embodied form of citizenship education where children are positioned as active community members who contribute meaningfully to community thriving and transformation. As they worked to create alternative narratives within their school community through art, the children in Change 4 Good experienced a critical citizenship education that fostered membership, participation, and collective solidarity and creativity.

Although the single case study design of this research limits the generalizability of the findings, this work makes important contributions to the fields of social and community psychology, education, and critical childhood studies. In this chapter I conclude by briefly highlighting three contributions of this study: the conceptualization of children’s participation in social justice art processes as a context for citizenship education; the constructive role of tensions in citizenship education; and the importance of an intersectional approach to conceptualizing children’s citizenship education.
Social Justice Art as Embodied Citizenship Education

Citizenship education is the US is often limited to the memorization of civic facts (B. Hayward, 2012), or to children’s socialization into forms of citizenship that prize individuality and market participation (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). This is particularly concerning within a democratic society where the full participation of all members strengthens solidarity, well-being, and the collective good (Dewey, 1939/1989; McLaren, 1995). Alternatively, a critical citizenship education stresses membership, the nurturance of citizen voice and participation, and collective solidarity with others to creatively address social issues.

The Change 4 Good program employed a social justice art process to engage low-income im/migrant Latina/o children in exercising their voice, learning together about their community, and enacting change. As children developed a sense of membership and belonging through close supportive youth-adult relationships, they learned the value of their voice and perspective to the social justice art process. In turn, they took intellectual risks through active participation, and worked collaboratively to create, revise, and re-create a public statement about the stories, hopes and values often silenced by dominant cultural narratives that reverberate through their community.

In the face of institutional constraints that challenged their artistic representations of community narratives, the children in Change 4 Good remained committed to telling the stories of their community, thus constructing roles for
themselves as “helpers” who enhance social support and resources for people who struggle. In this sense, these children enacted citizenship; they were not practicing for future citizenship. Therefore, the process of creating the Maplewood Stories mural was an embodied form of citizenship education.

With calls for children’s participation in decisions that impact their lives gaining credence in the social sciences and in local governance (e.g., through the growing literature on yPAR as well as through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), social justice art can serve as a model for children’s engagement. Yet, as shown in this study, children’s participation is a complex concept in need of further theoretical and empirical interrogation. For example, children, especially those who occupy multiple subordinated group memberships, may have a lifetime of experience with institutional silencing. In this study, children’s participation was not something the Change 4 Good program could take for granted. Rather, participation was facilitated over time through close, supportive youth-adult partnerships and a critical pedagogical approach to dialogue. In addition, this finding implies that we must attend to adult roles in children’s citizenship education, particularly whether and how adults nurture children’s participation and membership within dominant institutions like schools.

Social justice art is a particularly useful medium for critical citizenship education because its applied nature fosters embodiment. In Change 4 Good, children collaboratively created a highly visible mural, claiming space within their school community in a way that was legible to the public. Whereas other
modes of citizenship education may offer experiential activities (e.g., community service or charity food drives) that give children first hand knowledge of some forms of participation, transient projects may be limited in their capacity to remind the broader community that children are capable of active critical participation. Finally, collective engagement in arts-based change efforts weaves together creativity with solidarity. Democratic imaginations (B. Hayward, 2012) are an often overlooked component of citizenship education. Art can nurture and foster this kind of critical creativity, or engaging imagination in service of social change.

**Constructive Tensions**

Tensions are a predictable response to the contestation of dominant cultural narratives because resistance threatens existing power structures. Thus, tensions make social structures and power hierarchies visible (Kohfeldt et al., 2011). Conceptualizing tensions as indicators of movement toward second order change can contribute to powerful learning contexts for young citizens. As illustrated in this study, tensions provide a wealth of information about social systems, particularly the implicit norms, values and assumptions underlying the maintenance of institutions. Social justice art processes that resist the dominant assumptions perpetuating social inequity threaten system maintenance and institutional validity (Haney & Zimbardo, 1973). When systems respond to threat, in this case through the censorship of mural symbols perceived as political, the implicit roles and responsibilities of the system are made more visible, thus
exposing the social lie (Martin-Baro, 1994). For the children in Change 4 Good this censorship was a tension, but it was not a roadblock. Indeed, gaining a deep understanding of the taken for granted norms and assumptions that maintain and regulate institutions is a core role for social scientists interested in changing inequitable systems (Foster-Fishman, 2002; Haney & Zimbardo, 1973; Langhout, 2005; Sarason, 2004). Social justice artists welcome the discomfort and difficult conversations tension can elicit (Lacy, 2005). Shifting our perceptions of tensions as obstacles to tensions as constructive indicators of unspoken norms of the setting will serve social and community psychologists well.

Finally, adult concerns over tensions in projects involving children may be rooted in dominant sociocultural constructions of children as in need of protection. As scholars have noted, engaging children in critical social analysis raises ethical considerations about their access and ability to effect social change. For example, a failure to create the kinds of change desired may lead to disappointment and frustration (Silva & Langhout, 2011). Researcher self-reflexivity is needed to determine whether protecting children from tensions is rooted in paternalistic efforts to shelter them from disappointment. In this study, children were certainly frustrated by perceived efforts to censor their art, but also deeply committed to their project. Data presented in this dissertation suggest that children constructed an understanding of their participation that integrated tensions as one element of their overall positive experience.
Intersectionality of Children and Childhood

Children are not a homogeneous group. The broader dialogue concerning children’s citizenship education must consider how citizenship is stratified not only by age, but also on the basis of race, class, gender, and immigration status in the US. For example, in this study an intersectional approach generated a more nuanced analysis of institutional tensions than if I had attended only to age as the most salient social group membership. This study contributes to the childhood studies literature by complicating universalized notions of childhood that rely on white, middle class conceptualizations.

As illustrated in this research, children’s citizenship education is especially meaningful when children’s values and identities align with their actions. For example, the “helping” children engaged in through Change 4 Good was consistent with the roles and responsibilities they constructed for themselves as community members. These activities were in turn quite different from those more readily available to them through school and community organizations. These results suggest that conventional modes of children’s civic engagement may be inconsistent with their own aspirations and capacities to participate more critically.

Lessons on Critical Citizenship Education From Change 4 Good

Constructing with children opportunities for authentic citizenship participation is critical if we are to create a more equitable society. Change 4 Good represented an authentic civic experience. Levinson (2012) explains:
Authenticity matters because only authentic experiences will fully convince students that they can and should “soar into” this new world of empowering civic engagement…mere pretenses to empowering civic experiences will not convince young people that they are truly efficacious and responsible civic actors. Simulated experiences may help students develop the civic skills needed to reduce the civic empowerment gap. But authentic experiences are necessary to help them develop the engaged and efficacious identities, as well as the habits of action, that predict civic engagement and empowerment. (p. 187)

When children are positioned as civic actors, rather than the recipients of decisions made for them by adults, they develop identities as capable citizens. Based on the data highlighted in this dissertation, the children from Change 4 Good believed strongly that their actions would result in enhanced social support, education, and sense of belonging among members of their community. Whereas more conventional participatory opportunities helped children to develop personal and interpersonal skills (e.g., nutrition, exercise, study skills, community service), these were more aligned with “simulated” civic experiences. Their participation in Change 4 Good, on the other hand, was not a dress rehearsal for the “real” citizenship practices reserved for (some) adults. Rather, interview data suggest that children conceptualized their participation as consequential to their school and community, particularly in terms of fostering social capital, collective identities and action.

As a critical citizenship education process, Change 4 Good provided an opportunity for children with multiple subordinated group memberships to “magnify their voices through collective action,” a crucial skill needed to transform unjust social conditions (Levinson, 2012, p. 188). They recognized the
value of their own voices, gained an understanding of the struggles and perspectives of others, developed shared community identities, and fashioned their own participation as valid members of the community.
Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Protocol - Child

General
1. How did you become involved in the Change 4 Good after school program? (probe for why she/he decided to become and stay involved)
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of the program?
3. Can you describe your role(s) in the program?
4. Have you ever been a part of any other after-school programs or organizations that serve children? If so, what were/are they? How does the Change 4 Good program differ from those?

Citizenship
5. Looking back, what do you think was the most memorable or important thing you did or learned through your participation?
6. Tell me about some of the people (adults and children) you got to know in the program?
7. What kinds of things did children and adults do in this program?
8. What is a problem or important issue you see in your school or community? What are some things that could be done to help address the problem? What are some things you could do? Who could you ask for help? What do you think would happen? Who does the most in your community to help with that problem or problems? What can kids your age do to help with the problem? Can you do as much as adults? Why or why not? Who has the power to make changes in their communities? Do kids? Why or why not?
9. What kinds of activities do kids from around here do with other people? The groups we often do things with we can call communities.
   What does it mean to you to be a part of these communities?
   Who makes the decisions in these communities?
   Do you think the people who make the decisions in these communities listen to children like you? Why or why not? Do they listen to some children and not others?
10. What opportunities exist for children to participate in their communities? Are these different from those that exist for adults? If so, how?
11. Do you think children should have the same rights as adults? If not, why do you think that is?
12. What would need to change in order for children to have more rights?
13. Are there any issues you’d like to have a say about but don’t? Are there any issues kids should get to have a say about that they don’t currently?
14. How have you used the things you learned in the program outside of Change 4 Good? (e.g., in school, community, family)
15. Tell me about what you’ve been doing since the mural? Are you involved in any other programs or leadership positions?
Social justice art
16. Tell me about what kinds of art projects you have been a part of in the past. (For instance, in school or in other programs.)
17. What sorts of art did you make or contribute to in the Change 4 Good program? (probe for murals, collages, book, documentary) What were the steps you took to make these? Who was involved? What was their role?
18. How is the art you helped design and create in the Change 4 Good program different from other art projects you have done? How were they similar?
19. (Show a picture of the Change 4 Good mural and a collage of pictures of school murals from the other local elementary schools) How is the mural you helped create different from the kinds of murals at other schools? How is it similar? Why is yours different? (probe for process : who involved, tensions, imagery)
20. What was the purpose of the mural?
21. Tell about the process of creating the mural – what steps were taken to create it? Who was involved? How were they involved?
22. What was the hardest part about creating the mural?
  What kind of challenges did you (the group) experience as you went through this process?
  What did you do about those challenges?
  What did you learn from them?
  Knowing what you know now, is there anything you think you would do differently if you were to make another mural?
23. Talk about how you chose images to symbolize your themes. What was the most interesting part about turning your themes into symbols?
24. During the summer you painted the mural you found out that you had to make some changes to the images. Can you talk about how that happened? How did that make you feel?
25. Some students said they thought we should protest those changes. What do you think that means (i.e., to “protest”)? Did you agree/disagree/a little of both? Why/why not? What do you think might have happened if you had protested?
26. Did you learn anything about making art/murals that you did not already know?
27. What did you learn about yourself? Your school? Your community? What did you see other students learning?
28. What do you hope to do in the future?

Sociocultural constructions of children/childhood
29. What kinds of things did you learn in Change 4 Good? In other after school programs?
30. Is there anything that children your age didn’t/don’t learn about but should?
31. What kinds of roles do children your age get the chance to take on in the community? Are these the same as adults? Why or why not?
32. How can children contribute to their communities? Can you think of any examples of how you or someone you know has done this?
33. Have students ever asked for changes in Change 4 Good or other communities you are a part of and gotten them?
Appendix B

Semi-structured Interview Protocol – Adult (i.e., graduate student, research assistants, faculty PI, muralist)

General
1. How did you become involved in the Change 4 Good after school program? (probe for why she/he decided to become and stay involved)
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of the program?
3. Can you describe your role(s) in the program?
4. Have you ever been a part of any other after-school programs or organizations that serve children? If so, what were/are they? How does the Change 4 Good program differ from those? (probe for differences in philosophy, adult-child interactions, goals, mission, time, purpose, etc.)

Citizenship
5. What roles did children take on in the program during the mural creation phase?
6. What skills do you think children were learning in the program?
7. Did you notice any changes in individual students over the course of their involvement? What kind of changes?
8. How do you understand the purpose of children’s participation in the program? What’s the point?
9. What opportunities exist for children to participate in the life of their communities? Are these different from those that exist for adults? If so, how?
10. Do you think children should have more or different rights? Like what?
11. What would need to change in order for children to have increased rights and participation in their world?
12. What do you think is the biggest challenge/obstacle to greater youth participation?

Social justice art
13. Have you ever been involved in or exposed to other arts-based programming? If so, what were/are they, and how does the art aspect of Change 4 Good differ from them?
14. What was the purpose of the mural?
15. Tell about the process of creating the mural – what steps were taken to create it? Who was involved? How were they involved?
16. What kind of constraints did you experience as you went through this process? (probe for structural, relational, material). How did you respond to these challenges? What did you learn from them? What do you think the children learned from these? Knowing what you know now, is there anything you think you would do differently if you were to make another mural?
17. Did you learn anything about making art/murals that you did not already know?
18. (Show a picture of the Change 4 Good mural and a collage of pictures of school murals from the other local elementary schools.) How is the mural you helped create different from the kinds of murals at other schools in the area? How is it similar? Who do you think helped create those other murals? Why do you think that?

**Sociocultural constructions of children/childhood**

19. How would you describe the program’s philosophy toward children?

20. How did children and adults work together in the program?

21. How did the children’s age influence the way you taught? What you taught? Your relationships with them?

22. Is there anything you think children had difficulty learning? Is there anything you think children shouldn’t learn / topics that are off limits? What makes you believe that?

23. Did anything surprise you about working with children in the program? What?

24. Did you learn anything about children you didn’t already know?

25. In your experience how open do you think adults are to children’s participation (e.g., letting them make the rules, etc.)?

26. Have students ever asked for changes in the program or mural and gotten them?

27. Did you ever feel inclined to censor yourself around the children?

28. What role did children have in the way the program and the mural was defined and determined?
Appendix C

Semi-structured Interview Protocol – Adult (i.e., principal, teacher)

General
1. How did you become involved in the Change 4 Good after school program? (probe for why she/he decided to become and stay involved)
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of the program?
3. Can you describe your level of involvement and role(s) in the program?
4. As a teacher/principal your job entails interacting with children on a daily basis. Before taking your current position, were you involved in other child-serving organizations? If so, what were they?
5. There are several after-school programs and opportunities offered at MES. How does the Change 4 Good program differ from those? (probe for differences in philosophy, adult-child interactions, goals, mission, time, purpose, etc.)
6. What skills do you think children were learning in the program?

Citizenship
7. In any structured setting, such as schools, individuals take on different sets of roles and responsibilities. What is/are the role(s) of the principal/teacher at MES? What is/are the role(s) of children at MES? Do adults and children ever share similar roles? Like what?
8. What opportunities exist for children to participate in the life of their communities? Are these different from those that exist for adults? If so, how?
9. What would need to change in order for children to have increased rights to participation in their world? What could adults do to help facilitate this?
10. What do you think is the biggest challenge/obstacle to greater child participation in their communities?

Social justice art
11. As you know, the Change 4 Good program has engaged in multiple public art projects over the years. Have you ever been involved in (directly or indirectly) arts-based programming with children? If so, what were/are they? How does the art aspect of Change 4 Good differ from them?
12. What is the role of the arts, do you think, in education?
13. In your opinion, what was the purpose of the mural?
14. Please talk about the process of creating the mural – what steps were taken to create it? Who was involved? How were they involved?
15. (Show a picture of the Change 4 Good mural and school murals from local elementary schools.) Murals and public art is quite common at local schools. Here are pictures of murals at other schools in the district and of your mural. Can you describe how the Maplewood Stories mural differs from those at other schools in the area? (If they answer that it is different, then ask: What do you think accounts for those differences?)
16. As you know, several of the images from the original draft were changed (show picture of original draft), such as the fist with the megaphone, changing the
safety message to a peace sign, and the sign that read “no more pink slips.” Can you say more about how and why that happened? What do you imagine might have happened if those images had stayed in?

17. What do you think the children in the program had the opportunity to learn from the experience of making this kind of public art, particularly having to revise their original plan?

18. (For principal) Another issue the students focused on was the lunches. You mentioned at one point that it would upset the lunch lady if that came to light. Can you say more about why you think this would upset her?

19. Knowing what you know now, is there anything you think you would do differently if you were to collaborate in making another mural?

20. Did you learn anything about making art/murals that you did not already know?

**Sociocultural constructions of children/childhood**

21. How did you see children and adults work together in the program?

22. Did anything surprise you about the children’s work in the program? What?

23. Did you learn anything about children here you didn’t already know?

24. In your experience, how open do you think adults are to children’s participation as leaders (e.g., letting them make the rules, etc.)?

25. Have students ever asked for changes at MES and gotten them? If so, like what? If not, why not?

26. (For teacher) What role(s) did children have in the way the program and the mural was defined and determined?
Appendix D

Semi-structured Interview Protocol – Adult (i.e., superintendent)

**General**
1. How did you first hear about the Change 4 Good after school program?
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of the program?
3. Can you describe your level of involvement and role(s) in the program?
4. As a superintendent your job entails working in a child-focused organization. Before taking your current position, were you involved in other child-serving positions or organizations? If so, what were they?
5. There are many after-school programs and opportunities offered at Maplewood schools. How does the Change 4 Good program differ from those? (probe for differences in philosophy, adult-child interactions, goals, mission, time, purpose, etc.)

**Citizenship & Sociocultural constructions of children/childhood**
6. In any structured setting, such as schools, individuals take on different sets of roles and responsibilities. What is/are the role(s) of the superintendent? How does that compare to the roles of teachers and students?
7. What opportunities exist for children to participate in the life of their communities? Are these different from those that exist for adults? If so, how?
8. Should there be more opportunities for children to participate in the world? If yes, what form should these opportunities take? What would need to change to make this happen? What could adults do to help facilitate this?
9. What do you think is the biggest challenge/obstacle to greater child participation in communities?
10. In your experience, how open do you think adults are to children’s participation as leaders (e.g., jointly determining rules, etc.)?
11. The mural was based on the stories collected from members of the Maplewood community. Through your involvement in the mural making process, did you learn anything about Maplewood you didn’t already know?
12. Did anything surprise you about the children’s work in the program? What?

**Social justice art**
13. As you know, the Change 4 Good program has engaged in multiple public art projects over the years. Have you ever been involved in (directly or indirectly) arts-based programming with children? If so, what were/are they? How does the art aspect of Change 4 Good differ from them?
14. What is the role of the arts in education?
15. In your opinion, what was the purpose of the mural?
16. (Show a picture of the Change 4 Good mural and school murals from local elementary schools.) Murals and public art is quite common at local schools. Here are pictures of murals at schools in the district. Can you describe how the Maplewood Stories mural differs from those at other schools in the area? (If they
answer that it is different, then ask: What do you think accounts for those differences?)

17. As you know, several of the images from the original draft were changed (show picture of original draft), such as the fist with the megaphone, changing the safety message to a peace sign, and the sign that read “no more pink slips.” Can you say more about how and why that happened? What do you imagine might have happened if those images had stayed in?

18. What do you think the children in the program had the opportunity to learn from the experience of making this kind of public art, particularly having to revise their original plan?

19. Looking back at it now, is there anything you think you would do differently in this process? If Change 4 Good makes another mural, is there anything about the process that should change?
# Appendix E

## CODEBOOK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A. Citizenship Education/Construction within yPAR- Adult Roles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Power Sharing / Depowerment OR Not Sharing Power / No Depowerment</strong></td>
<td>- Kids are able to help make rules and contribute to setting the agenda for how to use meetings. Kids and adults make decisions that will affect the group together. This refers to authentic, substantive choices, not token choices.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(Dworski-Riggs &amp; Langhout, 2010; Montero, 2009; Hayward, 2012)</td>
<td>- Kids fill out evaluation forms to inform the agenda for the next meeting. - Research team decided on which research group kids would be in without their input. - Kids help determine the problem definition they will focus on in their research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Encouraging Youth Ideas and Perspectives OR Ignoring or Dismissal of Youth Ideas and Perspectives</strong></td>
<td>- Adults do or do not elicit kids’ opinions, ideas, perspectives on issues. This could mean they are asked to give their perspective, or it could mean an adult is excluding their perspective from consideration. Adults may acknowledge a kid’s idea while also engaging them in a discussion about why it might not be realistic.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Montero, 2009; Hayward, 2012)</td>
<td>- Research team asks kids to talk about what kinds of things they would change in their school. - A kid says she wants to help the janitor clean the bathroom and a teacher says it is a bad idea and she is not allowed to. This ends the conversation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Example</td>
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| 3    | Self-Reflexivity  
(Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Durand & Lykes, 2006)  
Adults talking about their realization that they have certain assumptions about youth. May talk about changes in their assumptions. | -Teacher says that she should let the kids make their own decisions because they are actually capable (self-aware).  
-Kids have difficulty answering a question so Danielle asks it in a different way  
-All of the kids were talking at once so adult reminds them that their agreement was that only one person speaks at a time.  
-Kids are not engaged, talking over one another, etc. and adults fail to facilitate or manage group dynamics |
| 4    | Facilitation  
**May be + or –**  
(Morrell, 2006, 2008; Silva & Langhout, 2011)  
Adults help kids think through issues by asking questions, suggesting ideas, and/or managing discussions by making sure people have a chance to speak (managing group dynamics). Helping students think critically through issues. It should be related to the substance of the project. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Interest in/acting in the interest of the collective good (i.e., social responsibility) OR Interest in/acting in the interest of individual gain (Hayward, 2012; Levinson, 2005; McLaren, 1995; Osler &amp; Starkey, 2005)</td>
<td>People in the setting indicate a concern or interest in the interests, well-being, equity of a social group or community, rather than for only themselves or a single person. This challenges neoliberal ideologies focused on individualism above community/solidarity (Hayward, 2012; Levinson, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Membership &amp; commitment to a group or community (Hayward, 2012; Levinson, 2005; McLaren, 1995; Montero, 2009; Osler &amp; Starkey, 2005; Thomas &amp; Mulvey, 2008)</td>
<td>People in the setting indicate a sense of belonging and commitment to a group (e.g., Change 4 Good, MES, Maplewood, social identity group, etc.).</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Participation in Decision Making and Deliberation (Hayward, 2012; Montero, 2009)</td>
<td>Kids do OR do not take up opportunities for actively contributing to decisions and activities. It does NOT include participation or engagement in activities or lessons where there is a right and wrong answer, though kids may be actively participating in these.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Awareness of Structure (Cahill, 2007; Freire, 1970; Freire &amp; Macedo, 1987; Thomas &amp; Mulvey, 2008)</td>
<td>Students demonstrate an awareness or understanding of underlying causes of problems. OR They ask questions or make statements that reflect a perception of or challenge to power/structure. This may or may not be in relation to the specific research project they are conducting.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Reflecting on Actions (Freire, 1970; Hayward, 2012)</td>
<td>Students reflect on actions or tasks before and after their completion. They talk about problems they might encounter before deciding on an action and/or the reasons why it is the best action.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Identify as Change Agent (Hayward, 2012; Thomas &amp; Rappaport, 1996; Van Sluys, 2010)</td>
<td>Kids talk about making change or not making change, in or out of the context of the program.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Concrete academic skills (Fine &amp; Cammarota, 2008; Morrell, 2006, 2008)</td>
<td>Kids learn and practice writing, oral presentation, computer/technical skills, etc.</td>
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</table>
| 8    | Comfortable or “Safer” Social/Relational Climate (Kohfeldt, Chhun, Grace & Langhout, 2011) | Interactions between kids with one another and/or adults that facilitate or hinder a caring, comfortable, or open atmosphere. This includes how adults respond to the manner in which the students are interacting with each other. May also include positive reinforcement/encouragement. | -A boy says that girls don’t like to play soccer because they are scared of the ball and a girl tells him that’s not true.  
-A kid tells the RA that another students is always in trouble and the adult does not respond.  
-All the boys sit to one side of the room and the girls sit away from them on the other  
-Before the program starts, a student tells an RA that she feels sad today and talks about why. The RA listens and offers a hug. |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Structural Power Differences Between Adults and Children (Durand &amp; Lykes, 2006)</td>
<td>Interactions, events, or incidents that reveal inequitable power relations that exist within the setting. These may be implicit and taken for granted as the norm (e.g., necessary for maintaining order or structure). This does not include rules or agreements children themselves made.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Assumptions about Children (Thorne, 1987)</td>
<td>Adults make comments (often stated as fact) that reflect a particular sociocultural assumption about youth, which could be stated in positive, negative, or neutral tones (e.g., innocence, energy, capacities, etc.). These can come from anyone, including children themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social Change Strategy</td>
<td>*Indicates Intention (Dewhurst, 2011; Duncum, 2011)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Connection to Lived Experience</td>
<td>*Indicates Process (Dewhurst, 2011; Hutzel, 2007; Montero, 2009; Thomas &amp; Rappaport, 1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Questioning and critical inquiry</td>
<td>*Indicates Process (Dewhurst, 2011; Hutzel, 2007; Rosette, 2009; Thomas &amp; Rappaport, 1996)</td>
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</table>

-A student explains that the purpose of the mural was to teach people about diversity. -A student says she hopes that when people learn about the mural it will change the world. -An RA reminds the students that the symbols must be based on the house meeting stories. -A student tells a story about a symbol that relates to something they’ve experienced. -The students ask why the teachers protested while brainstorming possible symbols to represent their house meeting stories. -A student suggests that we paint a hand with two fingers up to represent the theme of peace.
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<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Contextual Constraints</strong>&lt;br&gt;Indicates Social Location&lt;br&gt;<strong>ALSO OPEN CODE FOR OUTCOME – e.g., how were these learning experiences or opportunities to deepen understandings of democratic citizenship and social change processes? (Cockcroft, Weber, and Cockcroft, 1977; Dewhurst, 2011; Rosette; 2009)</strong></td>
<td>Impediments to the group’s process. This might be physical/material (e.g., lack of funds, lack of space), policy/bureaucratic (e.g., school policy or rules restrict action, ideological/philosophical (e.g., some people don’t approve of the art images), and/or based in systems of structural power (e.g., people in power disapprove)&lt;br&gt;-Adult explained to the kids that the superintendent did not approve some of the proposed mural images.&lt;br&gt;-The kids want to paint a larger mural but we do not have permission or funds to complete such a project.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Developing Alternative Cultural Narratives</strong> (Goldbard &amp; Adams, 2006; Rappaport, 1995; Thomas &amp; Rappaport, 1996; El Haj, 2011)</td>
<td>Stories and discourse that counter dominant cultural narratives and dominant socio-cultural constructions.&lt;br&gt;-A student says that people don’t think kids should vote because they assume kids are “thoughtless”&lt;br&gt;-The group engages in a conversation about stereotypes about people who live in Maplewood.&lt;br&gt;-Students paint a public mural at their school.&lt;br&gt;-Students conduct an unveiling ceremony for their mural on school grounds during school time.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Space-claiming</strong> (Cockcroft, Weber, and Cockcroft, 1977; Dewhurst, 2011; El Haj, 2011; Goldbard &amp; Adams, 2006)</td>
<td>Both material and symbolic space. Includes (re)appropriating histories, narratives, values, and cultures typically unseen/unheard. Space claiming implies an assertion of rights and values, in claiming who matters, and whose stories and histories matter to a community.&lt;br&gt;-Students paint a public mural at their school.&lt;br&gt;-Students conduct an unveiling ceremony for their mural on school grounds during school time.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Building relationships and capital (Bourdieu, 1972; Goldbard &amp; Adams, 2006; Kreisberg, 1992)</td>
<td>Developing relationships with people across and within settings (e.g., with people outside of the immediate program)</td>
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- A county representative meets participants and speaks at their mural ceremony.
- Children invite perspectives of various stakeholders, and distribute their own stories and perspectives broadly.
- A student asks one of the university people to provide resources for the program.


