

Summer 2014

## An Appreciative Look: Examining the Development of Urban Youths' Civic Identity In and Out of the Social Studies Classroom

Wendy Elaine Scott  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/teachinglearning\\_etds](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/teachinglearning_etds)



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Urban Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Scott, Wendy E.. "An Appreciative Look: Examining the Development of Urban Youths' Civic Identity In and Out of the Social Studies Classroom" (2014). Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Dissertation, Teaching & Learning, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/dppd-s148  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/teachinglearning\\_etds/36](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/teachinglearning_etds/36)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Teaching & Learning at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teaching & Learning Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

**AN APPRECIATIVE LOOK: EXAMINING THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF URBAN YOUTHS' CIVIC IDENTITY IN AND OUT OF THE  
SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM**

by

Wendy Elaine Scott  
B.A. American Studies, University of Mary Washington, 2001  
M.Ed. Education, Regent University, 2010

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
August 2014

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Yonghee Suh (Director)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shana Pribesh (Member)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Peter Baker (Member)

\_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN APPRECIATIVE LOOK: EXAMINING THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN YOUTHS' CIVIC IDENTITY IN AND OUT OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM**

Wendy Elaine Scott  
Old Dominion University, 2014  
Director: Yonghee Suh

Current trends in the United States show a decline in voter participation and other forms of political engagement (Torney-Putra, Wilkenfeld, & Barber, 2008). There is further evidence to suggest that an understanding of civic knowledge and behaviors that represent civic participation is even more abysmal for urban students including students with low economic status and minority groups (Kahne, 2009; Torney-Putra, 2001). However, traditional discourse around the gaps and deficits faced by urban students fail to recognize the educational systems that limit the growth and development of marginalized youth and ignore the assets that urban youth possess (Irizarry, 2001; Landson-Billings, 2006; Kirkland, 2010). Therefore, this intrinsic, embedded case study using an appreciative inquiry lens within a critical and indigenous paradigm sought to explore the questions 1) What factors and experiences contribute to the development of civic identity according to urban students? and 2) How can social studies teachers help to facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity according to urban youth? An analysis of the findings led to the development of a conceptual model that emphasized ethic of care as an intervening condition that contributes to the central phenomenon defined as empowering uplift. Empowering uplift characterizes the participants' sense of civic identity and is illustrated by participatory acts of civic engagement labeled as

consequences of the central phenomenon in the model. Finally, the model includes strategies defined as authentic learning experiences that the participants suggested to help social studies teachers facilitate the development of active, empowered citizens in their classrooms.



Copyright, 2014, by Wendy E. Scott, All Rights Reserved.

This dissertation is dedicated to the amazing and courageous young people that contributed to this study and taught me what it means to be a citizen that can change the world.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee Dr. Shana Pribesh, Dr. Peter Baker, and Dr. Leslie Grant for being willing to take a risk on a non-traditional research adventure. I would like to thank Dr. Danica Hays and Dr. Angela Eckhoff for editing and reviewing the early drafts. A special thanks goes to my advisor Dr. Yonghee Suh who challenged me to think critically and see beyond the obvious. She supported me from the very beginning in my journey to make an impact in education for the students I love.

I would like to thank the members of my dissertation cohort especially Danielle Forest who blazed a trail for the rest of us to follow, set the expectations high, answered all of our questions along the way, and introduced me to other scholars with a passion for social justice.

I would like to thank my roommate Matt Phillips who took care of the house while I was immersed in research, tolerated every room being taken over by concept maps and books, listened tirelessly to my frustrations and celebrations, and encouraged me to work with integrity of purpose.

I would like to thank Stacey Hubbard for helping to organize and transport the participants that were involved in the project.

I would like to thank Dale Harrell, Pastor Bob Robinson, Pastor Danny Kesner and everyone a part of the community outreach program at my beloved church who reminded me to walk this journey with God's peace and trusting in His plan.

I would like to thank my sister for sister movie nights with ice cream and popcorn, and the chance to hang out with my beautiful niece, Ava, to remind me what is really important in life.

I would like to thank my good friend Jamie Fatek who spent hours teaching me math so I could pass the GRE.

I would like to thank all of the students and young people that have opened up their lives to me so that I may see the world in a new light. I will not name them all here in an effort to maintain their privacy, but you have truly changed my heart, made me a better person, a stronger teacher, and I am so grateful for each and everyone one of you.

Finally, I would like to thank my amazing parents. Thank you for inviting me over for dinner, and always sending me home with left overs. Thank you for keeping my gas tank full so that I could still help students get to where they needed to be. Thank you for always having a glass of Jameson ready after a late night at school. Thank you for being available for parent teacher conferences. Thank you for late night pep talks and brainstorming sessions. Thank you for believing in me, loving me, and not letting me quit. Thank you for teaching me to take a risk, follow my dreams, and to live passionately with integrity. Thank you for always, always, always being there.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Research Problem .....	2
Theoretical Framework .....	2
Purpose Statement and Significance of Study .....	6
Organization of Dissertation .....	7
Summary .....	7
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
Defining Civic Engagement.....	10
The Current State of Urban Youth Civic Engagement .....	12
Civic Identity of Urban Youth .....	16
Significance of Sociopolitical Culture .....	22
Where Are We Going From Here? .....	25
METHODOLOGY .....	26
Critical and Indigenous Research Design .....	27
Research Design.....	29
Role of the Researcher .....	38
Data Collection .....	41
Data Analysis .....	47
Ethics .....	53
FINDINGS .....	56
Urban Youths' Civic Identity Conceptual Model.....	57
Intervening Condition: Ethic of Care.....	62
Central Phenomenon.....	70
Consequences.....	82
Strategies: Pursuing and Offering Authentic Learning Experiences .....	90
Summary .....	103
DISCUSSION.....	106
Overview of the Study .....	107
Revisiting the Findings .....	111
Lessons Learned about Appreciative Inquiry .....	125
Conclusion and Project Implications .....	133
Personal Reflection .....	136

REFERENCES .....139

APPENDICES

- A. Appreciative Inquiry Interview Protocol .....153
- B. Line by Line Open Coding Example.....155
- C. Codebook .....159
- D. Axial Code Illustrations by Participants .....162
- E. Selective Code Illustrations by Participants .....166

VITA .....169

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table	Page
1. Description of Participants.....	34
2. Urban Community Demographic.....	35
3. Appreciative Inquiry Data Collection Matrix.....	46
4. Open Code Examples .....	50
5. Participants' Description of Citizens' Power.....	72

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure	Page
1. 4D (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny) Appreciative Inquiry Model .....	30
2. Embedded Case Study Design .....	33
3. Open Codes Relationship with Axial Codes.....	48
4. Axial Codes Relationship with Selective Codes.....	49
5. Conceptual Model of Urban Youths' Civic Identity.....	59



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a mystery. Just because things don't seem like they're right and they want us to think that they are right, but sometimes you know you just have that feeling like there's more to it and they just don't want to tell us. Maybe it is for our safety to help us not, like, you know, flip out over stuff that is like, whoa. It's just I be having that feeling sometime, like it's just not always black and white.

–12<sup>th</sup> grader in an urban high school

Many high school students across the country start their school day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance; yet, how many of those students believe the concepts of democracy, liberty, and the justice for which they pledge apply to their own citizenship? Current trends in the United States show a decline in voter participation and other forms of political engagement (Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, and Barber, 2008). Educational research describes a decline in civic knowledge and civic participation among young people (Hart & Atkins, 2002; Torney-Putra, 2001). There is further evidence to suggest that an understanding of civic knowledge and behaviors that represent civic participation is even more abysmal for urban students including students with low economic status and minority groups (Kahne, 2009). There is a strong understanding among scholars that civic participation and knowledge among urban youth is disappointing, and there is a need to help social studies teachers in high school classrooms implement effective practices to close the civic empowerment gap (Levinson, 2012; Malin, 2011).

## **Research Problem**

The most widely used models to explore civic engagement consider the lack of experiences and opportunities which urban youth have in terms of civic participation and consider ways to prevent student deficiencies of civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. However, the problem/prevention model does not attend to the complexities of civic identity development specifically for urban youth (Ginwright & Cammorota, 2002). Identity development is based on the lived experiences that urban students do have which informs, molds, and shapes their ideas about citizenship (Levinson, 2012). There is not a single, united American identity (Jahromi, 2011; Malin, 2011), which makes identifying with a national image challenging for students, especially those that feel disenfranchised from the mainstream. Banks (2009) explained that students' experiences in the larger society have not validated their racial, ethnic, linguistic identities. Students also feel out of place in their own communities and struggle to find their place further leaving students discouraged because they have been marginalized in their local communities and in their national civic culture (Banks, 2004). Miller-Lane, Howard, and Halagoe (2007) explain that groups and individuals who have been historically excluded from the opportunity to be a part of the governmental process for various reasons may believe that they are not fully included as citizens. John Dewey (1938) explained that students must experience democracy; however, for many students the democracy that they have experienced has not exemplified "liberty and justice for all."

## **Theoretical Framework**

Every student in the United States experiences democracy every day; however, not every student experiences democracy in the same way (Rubin, 2007; Torney-Purta,

Wilkenfeld, and Barber, 2008). Some educators and researchers subscribe to a deficit model in regards to citizenship. They believe that students either have acquired civic skills and abilities or not. On the other hand, many students are sitting in classrooms simply interpreting the lessons on democracy and civic engagement differently than their teacher intended because of their own personal experiences (Payne, 2005; Rubin, 2007). The deficit model measures students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes from a mainstream perspective and ignores the unique civic dispositions of urban students (Levinson, 2012). Rubin (2007) and Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) both share models for examining civic identity that appreciate urban students own unique experiences within their social context. By learning from the students' own experiences and reflection classroom teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers will have a clearer understanding of who students are so that they can facilitate activities and discussion that are more authentic in an attempt to foster active democratic citizenship for urban students.

Beth Rubin (2007) took a closer look at civic experiences of youth in marginalized groups while dismissing the deficit perspective and embracing the idea that civic knowledge is constructed based on experiences. Therefore, her study focused on what students did know instead of what they didn't know. Rubin used the grounded theory tradition and a sociocultural frame and interpretive research approach to analyze group and individual interviews from four varying high schools. She concluded that civic identity could be considered based on how a student's ideals were related to experiences and student's attitudes towards participation. Students demonstrated congruence or disjuncture between their ideals and experiences and either active or passive attitudes towards participation. These two axis create four quadrants identifying four different

civic identities, which Rubin named citizens who are aware, empowered, complacent, or discouraged. Every citizen experiences democracy differently, which complicates the development of civic identity (Banks, 2009; Levinson, 2012; Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, & Barber, 2008). Rubin's (2007) theory acknowledges each student's differences and uniqueness especially for those students who experience life in the margins.

In addition, social justice youth development (SJYD) examines the processes by which urban youth contest, challenge, respond, and negotiate the use and misuse of power in their lives (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). SJYD allows for the opportunity to research civic identity in social context with students' own voice and reflection being paramount. Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) explain that in previous research there was an emphasis in deficit models such a problem/prevention model. This research identified traditional challenges faced by urban students, and then worked to solve the problem. However, the problem/prevention model only focuses on the negative aspects of youth and urban youth development. Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) continue to explain that more recent research has taken a more positive outlook and emphasized youth assets and youth as change agents; however, Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) still feel that these models fall short because researchers fail to acknowledge the complexities of ecological factors that impact positive youth development in urban situations. They espouse that researches must consider the social, political, and economic challenges that urban youth face in their unique context.

SJYD combines social action with critical consciousness. Social action references students' capacity to take action against social injustices. Freire (1973) defined critical consciousness as an awareness of the social, economic, and political

institutions and policy that are oppressive to different groups of people in society. Together, these principles make up social justice youth development, which encourages students to critically examine factors of oppression while taking social action that leads to community and individual transformation. Nassir and Hand's (2006) research supports the significance of practice-linked identities. When students live what they learn, it becomes a part of their identity. Freire describes the intersection of critical consciousness and social action as praxis, reflection and social action in order to create change (1993). The opportunity for urban students to reflect on the political, economic, and social forces that impact their identity allow them to have a greater sense of empowerment and control to make change that is positive and healthy (Levinson, 2012). "We become closer to our humanity and agents of our own development when we reflect and act to transform the conditions influencing our own existence" (Ginwright & Cammarota, p. 87, 2003). Many urban students feel disconnected or discouraged from a system that seems to leave them out; however, social justice youth development can help students move past these negative views of citizenship to a place of empowerment.

The two-fold, theoretical framework for this research allowed for urban students voices and own identity to be highlighted. Urban students in high school already have a view of citizenship and knowledge of democracy, justice, and liberty. The problem is that many urban students' lived experiences demonstrate disjuncture in terms of how the basic principles that our government was founded impact their lives. A teacher cannot change the experiences that a young person has already been involved in. Yet, teachers have the opportunity to help students reflect on their experiences in a way that can help

students be empowered agents of change in the future for their own lives and their community.

### **Purpose Statement and Significance of Study**

Previous research suggests that there is a civic engagement gap (Kahne, 2009; Torney-Putra, J., Wilkenfeld, B., & Barber, C., 2008). However, previous research about the civic engagement gap fails to acknowledge that urban students who come from working-class or poor families have a civic identity that is distinct and relevant to their authentic context. Furthermore, previous research fails to provide first-hand knowledge from the student's perspective. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to explore how urban youth develop civic identity in and out of the social studies classroom. The research questions included:

1. What factors and experiences contribute to the development of civic identity according to urban students?
  - a. How do urban youth describe their civic identities?
  - b. How do urban youth describe the impact of the community on the development of their civic identity?
2. How can social studies teachers help to facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity according to urban students?

A more holistic understanding of how civic identity is shaped can provide educators and curriculum developers effective methods and strategies to foster positive civic identity development.

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research problem and an overview of the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 is a discussion of the literature specifically including the dynamic perspectives of civic engagement and civic identity development for urban students. The literature review further explores the significance of the sociopolitical lens and the lack of critical perspectives in current interpretations of civic identity and civic engagement. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and design of the project. There is an extensive conversation of the critical indigenous lens and appreciative inquiry research paradigm followed by a detailed description of the study design for future replication. Chapter 4 explains the conceptual model that emerged from the group interviews, collective document analysis, post interviews, and reflexive journal collected during the research project. The conceptual model includes the context, casual conditions, intervening conditions, the central phenomenon, consequences, and strategies related to the central phenomenon. In conclusion, Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings and specifically addresses how classroom teachers can implement strategies and methods that will help to foster active democratic knowledge, skills, and attitudes for urban students based on their unique contextual experiences. The final chapter also contains a reflection from my perspective as the researcher on how my own socioeconomic status and positionality influenced the project.

## **Summary**

The old story goes that when the final decisions had been made at the constitutional convention, Ben Franklin walked outside where he was greeted with a question, “Are we a democracy or a monarchy?” He responded, “A republic, if we can

keep it.” Thomas Jefferson noted that democracy takes work. Therefore, as social studies educators we have a responsibility to prepare the next generation to be ready to sustain the American experiment that we call democracy. In order to effectively prepare all students to be equipped to sustain our democracy, we must recognize the differences in civic identity for urban youth and highlight their value as citizens.

There is research to suggest that urban students are incompetent in terms of their civic knowledge and unmotivated to take up an active role within the government and their community. However, a closer look reveals that urban students have their own knowledge about democracy and are taking an active role within in their community. The experiences that students have in the community with their peers, families, and community groups, and those they have in the classroom shape their civic identity at a pivotal point in the socialization and development process (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, they have their own unique identity. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors and experiences that shape urban youth’s civic identity and suggest the best practices in the classroom to help develop empowered, active democratic citizenship from the urban students’ point of view.

Democracy requires citizens who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to participate in civic life. Educators have a captive audience in their classrooms each day to help reverse the trend of civic disengagement and encourage empowered active citizens. This study provides teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers with insight to how ecological factors have impacted urban students’ civic identity and suggests methods and strategies to facilitate the development of empowered, active democratic citizens for urban students based on their unique experiences.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

I hope that Mitt Romney wins the election so that everyone knows what it feels like to be poor.

- 12th grader in an urban school

Civic identity is often defined in binary terms such as active or passive (Parker, 2012) and engaged or disengaged (Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2009); however, the complexities of civic identity are more dynamic for urban youth (Rubin, 2007). The current body of research focuses on the deficits of urban youth in terms of experiences in and out of the classroom, civic literacy, and civic knowledge. However, these deficits are measured and evaluated from traditional, mainstream perspectives, which fail to take a critical perspective that is conscious of how varying social classes and race groups engage in their communities uniquely (Levinson, 2012; Santau & Ritter, 2013). It is this concern that has led to this study in hopes to illuminate the need for a sociopolitical lens when viewing civic identity from the urban youth perspective.

Young people view themselves from the perspective of others and placed within a social context (Ryan and Deci, 2003). Yet, the current body of research focuses on the deficiencies of urban youths' civic engagement (Hart & Atkins, 2002; Levinson, 2012), and often disregards a sociopolitical perspective (Rubin, 2007). A sociopolitical lens can illuminate a critical consciousness that disrupts the binary understanding of civic identity (Freire, 1973; Kirshner, 2009). Civic identity is something that all youth have including urban students who live with the challenges of poverty; however, the civic identity of urban youth is based on their experiences which are often different and/or perceived

differently than the mainstream cultural model (Torney-Purta, J., Wilkenfeld, B., & Barber, C., 2008). A critical lens allows voices to be heard that have been silenced or misrepresented in the past (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). A more complex understanding of urban youth's civic identity can help social studies educators work to provide experiences and opportunities that are consonant with urban youths' knowledge in order to facilitate the development of active and empowered democratic citizens (Barton & Levstick, 2004; Levinson, 2012). A critical lens will also help social studies educators to deconstruct misconceptions about urban youth civic identity (Cross, 2012). The development of active and empowered students will help to provide the resources needed for a sustainable democracy.

### **Defining Civic Engagement**

In order to explore civic engagement, it is first necessary to define and describe the nuances of civic engagement as they were interpreted for this research study. There are those that view civic engagement in terms of active and passive action. Parker (2012) states that active citizenship is about being informed, voting regularly, and engaging in public service opposed to a more passive view which focuses on compliance with authorities and obeying the law. Martin and Chiodo (2007) make a distinction between civic engagement and political engagement. Political engagement requires citizens to be actively involved in local, state, and/or national policy changes compared to civic engagement that focuses on community action and service. Downs (2012) emphasized the definition of civic engagement that was explained in the 2006 *Democracy at Risk* report, which notes that civic engagement is any activity influencing the collective life of the polity. Shiller (2013) takes the definition a step further and suggests that critical civic

engagement is the recognition of injustice and developing a desire to act to correct it.

The underlying theme among these discussions of civic engagement is the recognition that citizens have rights and responsibilities within a democratic government.

Therefore, for this project, civic engagement takes a holistic approach to include informed citizens who act politically, hold civic virtues, and participate as defined by The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and Carnegie Corporation of New York (2003) report, *The Civic Mission of Schools*.

Informed citizens engage in the civic process with the knowledge of the fundamental concepts of American Democracy, an appreciation of history, and an awareness of public issues. (Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2009; CIRCLE and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003; Ley & Alleman, 2012). Informed citizens act politically through group problem solving, public speaking, petitioning, protesting, and voting for the common good (Circle and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003; Parker, 2012). Civic virtues such as respect, tolerance, social responsibility, and a belief that one can make a difference are the driving force behind civic engagement (CIRCLE and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003; Martin & Chiodo, 2007). Finally, civic engagement requires participation through community membership in organizations working to address cultural, social, political, and religious interests and beliefs (Barton & Levstik, 2004; CIRCLE and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003; Dewey, 1938; Oriason & Perez, 2009).

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) further develop the idea of citizenship and civic engagement. They define three types of citizens including the personally responsible citizen, participatory citizen, and the justice oriented citizen. The personally responsible citizen is similar to Parker (2012) definition of a passive citizen. The personally

responsible citizen obeys the law, pays taxes, and serves on juries. In order to solve social problems and improve society, the personally responsible citizen must be honest, responsible, and a law abiding member of society (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). The participatory citizen is an active member of community organizations who organizes efforts to help improve the community. People taking the time to plan and organize a community food drive or a clean the bay campaign are examples of participatory citizenship. The participatory citizen actively participates and takes leadership positions within established community structures. The justice oriented citizen seeks out and addresses areas of injustice. The justice oriented citizen questions, debates, and changes established structures that reproduce patterns of social injustice (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004).

*The Civic Mission of Schools* report and Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) perspective of civic engagement recognize both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in terms of knowledge, skills, and values necessary to affect change and improve society. It is not enough to just know the law or the government systems. A citizen must be engaged and prepared to do the work of citizenship in order to sustain a pluralistic democracy (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Therefore, for this project civic engagement was defined as participatory citizens who are informed, act politically, participate through community membership, and value civic virtues including tolerance, respect, and social welfare in an effort to make a difference in the community.

### **The Current State of Urban Youth Civic Engagement Gap**

Despite the need for active citizenship there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that there is a civic engagement gap (Shiller, 2012) in terms of voting, civic knowledge,

participation in government institutions, and opportunities to engage in factors that promote civic engagement (Levinson, 2012; Malin, 2011; Stanley, 2005; Youniss & Hart, 2005). According to the U.S Census Bureau from 2008, only 64% of those unemployed registered to vote. Only 54% of registered unemployed voters actually voted in the 2008 presidential election. Only 52% of registered voters were from families that made less than \$20,000 voted.

Furthermore, urban students score significantly worse on standardized tests and surveys of civic knowledge and skills than middle class students. *The Civic Mission of Schools* reports that African-Americans and Hispanic students are twice as likely to score below proficient on national civic assessments (CIRCLE and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003). Torney-Purta (2001) states that the data from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement demonstrates a gap in achievement and participation between students from homes with ample educational resources who expect to attend higher education and those without these advantages. 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment reported that fourth and eighth graders who were eligible for free or reduced priced lunch scored lower on the assessment than middle-class and wealthier students.

*The Civic Mission of Schools* attributes the gap to the lack of civic learning opportunities that foster civic engagement for low-income and minority students. Kahne (2009) explained that civic learning opportunities include discussing current events, studying issues of concern to students, facilitating open classroom discussions of social and political issues, studying related social sciences, interacting with civic role models, participating in extracurricular activities, service-learning, and simulations. Kahn's team

surveyed over 2,500 California high school students from a diverse sample about their civic education experiences. Students in higher income classrooms were two times more likely than students in classrooms with average income levels to report studying how laws are made and were also two times more likely to report participating in service activities (Kahne, 2009). Students in higher income classrooms were also one and half times more likely to report participating in simulations in their social studies classes and 80% more likely to take part in panel discussions or debates (Kahne, 2009).

There is also evidence to suggest that urban students have less opportunity to critically examine civic identities and issues of struggle, oppression, and resistance (Hart & Atkins, 2002). Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2012) reported the rare opportunities students have to discuss the impact of social class on their identity during their work with literature circles in high school classrooms. Malin (2011) stated that educators are afraid to confront real issues of controversy in the classroom, which alienates marginalized students from the political process. Carlson (2003) noted the monumentalizing of figures after an extensive content analysis of history books. For example, Rosa Parks is often described as a woman who got tired and sat down on the bus in the White's only section instead of a thorough discussion of the grassroots movement that was organized by a multi-generation group that took weeks of planning, sacrifice, and courage. This type of monumentalizing reduces the opportunities for students to engage in conversations about struggle and resistance, which may resonate with their own civic experiences. Anyon's (1978) content analysis of textbooks claimed that the social attitudes and beliefs that are implicit in the textbooks predispose the learner to accept and support institutional coercions and constraints. Avery & Simmons (2000) reported after a review of textbooks

and curriculum there seem to be one national story that limits the story of the working class and poor. Bickmore (2008) explained that curriculum materials gloss over relevant issues of social justice or the materials deliver incorrect information. Anyon (1981) conducted a study of school knowledge across schools that represented different social classes. She reported that the working class schools delivered little information about relevant marginalized groups and were the least honest about U.S. society. The implicit and explicit messages passed on through curriculum and instructional experiences or the lack there of in the classroom have an impact on the civic engagement gap.

The literature leaves little doubt that there is a civic engagement gap in terms of multiple factors. However, Levinson (2012) suggested that the gap is due to distrust, poor political efficacy, and non-mainstream perspectives of citizenship. Rubin (2007) explained that urban youths' experiences are often contradictory to perceived American ideals; hence, they distrust the system and are hesitant to get involved. High and low political efficacy which is manifested in examples of active participation by citizens is related to student's experiences (Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, and Flanagan, 2008). Students that have high political efficacy see the benefit in advocating for social change while students with low political efficacy express deep cynicism or support the status quo (Rubin, 2007; Parker, 2012). Levinson (2012) used her own classroom anecdotes to describe her students' civic identity based on distrust in the government as a barrier for civic engagement. After September 11, she was shocked that her middle school urban students from Atlanta immediately assumed that President Bush was responsible for the destruction of the Twin Towers. Levinson (2012) explained that although she does not believe that her students were correct, she does believe that her interpretation is grounded

in her perception of the facts based on her experiences growing up and living as a White, middle-class, native-born American citizen with an Ivy League education. Contrarily, her students believed they were right because of their interpretation of the facts grounded in their perception based on their experiences growing up as non-White, poor, first and second generation immigrants in de facto segregated schools (Levinson, 2012).

Levinson's (2012) work echoes the work of Rubin (2007) and Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, & Barber (2008), which call attention to the complexities of civic identity based on a sociopolitical lens.

### **Civic Identity of Urban Youth**

The reality that urban students are less likely to participate in learning experiences in the classroom that promote civic engagement certainly needs to be explored and attended to; however, this research study is focused on exploring further the sociopolitical context of urban students' civic identity development. Identity emerges from a developmental process that happens in a cultural context (Ryan & Deci, 2003). We only know ourselves as we interact with others (Mead, 1934). The relationship between personal experience and broader social and historical events construct civic identity (Mills, 1959). Civic identity is based on a citizens' connectedness to the community manifested through rights acquiesced and responsibilities to the community (Atkins & Hart, 2003). Kirshner (2009) stated civic identity is constructed based on a persons' sense of belonging to a larger polis and a sense of responsibility to contribute to its health. Wray-Lake, Syversten, & Flanagan (2008) explained that students learn what it means to be a citizen through every day experiences of membership in communities and opportunities to exercise their rights and fulfill obligations.



**Discouraged.**

Discouraged civic identity is based on passive participation and disjuncture between lived experiences and proclaimed civic ideals (Rubin, 2007). The literature overwhelmingly demonstrates that marginalized students feel discouraged as citizens. Their experiences have left them believing that life is unfair and that no change is possible (Banks, 2009; Rubin, 2007; Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, and Barber, 2008).

Rubin's (2007) study looked at high schools with varying backgrounds including a low-income, urban area. The students in the urban high school were identified as discouraged based on Rubin's framework compared with students from the upper middle to high-income suburban area. The urban students experienced a disconnect between the learned ideals of the United States and their experiences. Rubin reported that some students discussed overt violations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment such as police barging into homes looking for someone without warrants creating disjuncture between U.S. ideals and their experiences. These students experienced disjuncture and responded with passive participation.

Banks (2009) explains that students' experiences in the larger society have not validated their racial, ethnic, linguistic identities. Students also feel out of place in their own communities and struggle to find their place further leaving students discouraged because they have been marginalized in their local communities and in their national civic cultural (Banks, 2004). Miller-Lane, Howard, and Halagoe (2007) explain that groups and individuals who have been historically excluded from the opportunity to be a part of the governmental process for various reasons may believe that they are not fully included as citizens. Bonet (2011) states it is within the imaginary boundaries of the

school that students learn who is a citizen and who is excluded. Bonet (2011) discusses the impact of educating Muslim American youth in a post 9/11 era. Bonet (2011) declares that Muslim youth do not feel connected to their schools and community because they are discriminated against in many different ways. Bonet (2011) continues to say, “If youth feel silenced by the violence they experience in schools, how can they then become actively engaged in school and civic spheres within their schools, communities, and country” (p. 53). Implicit and explicit constraints, rules, and expectations can pass on negative messages that impact marginalized students’ identity in a negative way (Bonet, 2011; Ho, Alviar-Martin, Sim, & Yap, 2011). McGuire and Cole (2008) state, “if students can’t imagine themselves in such roles then they will never aspire to such roles” (p. 90).

The disjuncture between civic ideals and experiences leave students feeling discouraged. Marginalized young people recognize that they participate in a society in which social power is not theirs (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013, Malin, 2001). They hear of an equal opportunity, but yet they sometimes feel denied or excluded leaving them apathetic, frustrated, and doubtful that their participation has any chance of creating a difference for themselves or their community.

### **Empowered.**

Yet, in some cases disjuncture between civic ideals and experiences can motivate urban youth to become more civically engaged and empowered. Furthermore, although some research states that students simply lack the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to participate as active citizens (Atkins & Hart, 2002), there are examples to support the contrary. Rubin (2007) and Levinson (2012) record the examples of urban students

participating civically and politically within the community as informed citizens. Rubin (2007) noted that some students in the urban school did believe in their ability to make a difference. Levinson (2012) described taking her students from a de facto segregated urban school to participate as jurors in a mock trial competition held at a local university as example that urban students to possess knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to engage in the civic process. The college students and the judges admitted they were concerned about the students' ability to process the information in a sophisticated way, but all of the students demonstrated they were able to deliberate and negotiate with their peers using evidence presented in the case to come to fair judgments with reasonable explanations. Hackney (1997) stated that who we think we are shapes what we do. Although, the evidence of the civic engagement gap is bleak there is evidence to support urban students can be empowered to take part in the democratic process.

Empowered civic identity must be experienced and practiced by students (Dewey, 1938). Nassir and Hand's (2006) research pointed to the significance of practice-linked identities. When students live what they learn, it becomes a part of their identity positively or negatively, academically, or socially. "Learning is not only new knowledge structures, but it is also about personal transformation about becoming" (Nassir and Hand, 2006, p. 467). Nassir and Hand (2006) examined access to domain, opportunities to take on integral roles, and opportunities for self-expression in practice in a qualitative study with students in a math class and on the basketball court. They concluded that practice-linked identities explain how intrapersonal dimensions of learning and learning settings can support or fail gaining skills and deep connection with participants. Students on the basketball court were given the opportunity to experience roles that were

significant to the team, their community, and participated in carrying out their new skills necessary to maintain their responsibilities in those new roles. However, practice was not linked to identities in the math class. The class was only focused on the development of skills without an understanding to the meanings of the context (Nassir and Hand, 2006). Students' experiences on the basketball court, in the classroom, or in the community affect student identity and lead to varying levels of participation in different contexts. Levinson's (2012) example of students as mock jurors demonstrated that when the practice is linked to identity students can be empowered to take an active part in the political process.

When people feel connected their attitude about participation changes. Oraison and Perez (2009) documented a study from Argentina where over 50% of the population lives below the poverty level. The schools are forced to deal with many social challenges and there is significant distance between teachers and students. Through parent interviews at random, teacher workshops, and student surveys they explored the image of the school, community opportunities for dialogue, and communication and participation. The next phase involved a joint service learning project between the school and the parents in order to reestablish the breakfast program called "Cup of Milk." Teachers and parents worked together to deliver free breakfast to the students each morning. This allowed space for dialogue and participation based on equally shared power (Oraison and Perez, 2009). The experience transformed teacher, student, and parents perceptions of the image of school as well as their perceptions of each other, and themselves. Oraison and Perez (2009) wrote, "learning by doing indicates that we learn to participate by undergoing the experience and in the act of participation."

Youth empowerment programs demonstrated that urban youth can use cognitive skill in a constructive fashion, work collectively, and know political tactics (Youniss & Hart, 2005). Positive youth development and youth organizing can protect students from risk and develop critical consciousness and sociopolitical awareness (Kirshner, 2009). Kirshner (2009) studied the Youth Rising organization whose mission was to build visionary leaders capable of transforming their schools and communities in an urban environment. During an ethnographic study Kirshner found that the urban youth developed civic competencies such as decision making skills, social trust, and tolerance (2009). In addition, Kirshner (2009) noted the positive collective agency that developed among the students and leaders. Shiller (2013) studied two community based organizations dedicated to positive youth development. Shiller (2013) interviewed adults that were in charge of the program, conducted focus groups with student participants, and conducted observations once a week for six months. Shiller (2013) reported similar findings in terms of political efficacy. Shiller (2013) also noted the importance of students being encouraged to think critically and critique various community ills from social, political, and cultural perspectives. Youth empowerment programs lead to strategic thinking about how to locate information, send messages to policy makers, respond to unforeseen problems, increase civic efficacy, and increase intergroup understanding (Hansen & Larson, 2005). Facilitating experiences that are in consonant with students' civic identity instead of assuming that the students' deficiencies will not allow them to take positive political or civic action led to student empowerment. The students are able to see how their knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they have

developed from their own experiences can be applied to help improve their community and society.

Snarey & Walker (2004) further explained that that moral formation that leads to the motivation to improve the community and society can be based on care and justice values. Their theory is based on African-American perspectives on justice and care, which lead to various virtues that can be related to civic identity. Empowering uplift is as a combination of two virtues constructed from dual-basic values within a care-and-justice ethic. Empowerment is a virtue based on the values of agency and legacy, which recognizes marginalized groups ability to make a difference in the midst of a legacy of disenfranchisement from the dominate culture (Snarey & Walker, 2004). “Empowerment becomes a tool for constructive change”(Snarey & Walker, p. 136, 2004). Uplift is a virtue based on the interconnectedness value of the community and the individual (Snarey & Walker, 2004). Uplift is defined as “the enhancement of the community and the valuing of the individual’s diverse gifts” (Snarey & Walker, p. 136, 2004). Therefore, empowering uplift describes a civic identity that celebrates the gifts of the individual and the community while recognizing the power of the individual to make a difference despite the legacy of oppression.

### **Significance of Sociopolitical Context**

Levinson (2012) questions whether or not the explanation of civic engagement and civic identity truly takes a critical perspective that is conscious of how varying social classes and race groups engage in their communities uniquely. The lack of critical critique is the common theme in terms of the experiences and curriculum that urban students are exposed to in the social studies classroom. Checkoway & Aldana (2013)

stated that a critical perspective is needed to impact the development of civic identity. A sociopolitical lens recognizes that there is not a single American identity because social and political context matters within the developmental process (Malin, 2011).

Furthermore, the sociopolitical lens acknowledges that a new perspective does not necessarily assume deficiencies (Epstein, 2001).

The institutions that are tasked with preparing students to be active democratic citizens often do not recognize their own patriarchal practices (Smith, 2012). Bickmore (2008) stated that “what makes dominate discourse hegemonic is the way it builds an understanding of the status quo as factual or common sense masking or closing down opening for rethinking” (p.163). Tyack (1988) explained that the education model is based on the puritan middle class work ethic, and this model has not changed over time. Therefore, political influence is limited to the middle-class and the affluent (Bartels, 2008). The dominate cultural model makes it difficult for urban youth to connect and relate to the idea of American citizenship without a critical lens because it seems foreign and unassociated with their own experiences as citizens (Dunbar, 2008) American Political Science Association’s Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy (2004) wrote “Citizens with low or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government, while that advantaged roar with the clarity and consistency that policy makers readily heed” (p. 651). Epstein (2001) believes that the perspectives of the marginalized have been white washed.

There is a gap between American ideals and American reality that challenge urban youths’ understanding of their rights and obligations as a citizen (Jahromi, 2011). School knowledge embodies contradictions that impact social change (Anyon, 1981).

The sociopolitical differences are often seen as a cultural deficiency (Epstein, 2001). Thein, Guise, & Sloan (2012) conducted literature circles that specifically called into question issues of social class. The authors noted that the students' responses reflected specific social class performances grounded in lived experiences. The students did not respond with neat larger predicted conceptions. Epstein (2001) interviewed fifth, eighth, and eleventh graders about the Bill of Rights. The White students stated that the Bill of Rights gives "you the right to do what you want" (p.43). The Black students stated that the Bill of Rights explained that "you can get in trouble if you don't obey the law" (p.43). The White students consistently noted how the document led to freedom, while the Black students consistently noted the limitations and constraints of the document. Sociopolitical context affects the perspective of civic identity. A dominate cultural view can overshadow the ways of knowing and knowledge systems of marginalized students.

Research, policies, and practices should support the ways in which children's social identities shape their knowledge (Epstein, 2001). Everyone has a distinct voice and diverse perspective. "Every human must count and be taken into account" (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, p. 36, 2006). The challenge in citizenship education is teacher expertise because many White, middle-class teachers are unaware of identity complexities (Bickmore, 2008). Educators must ask what and whose politics am I teaching (Stonebanks, 2008). The sociopolitical perspective emphasizes critical consciousness that encourages all citizens to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of society and work to make improvements for a sustainable democracy.



### **Where Are We Going From Here?**

Social studies classrooms have a primary role to educate for citizenship (Avery & Simmons, 2001). In order to create schools that are more inclusive to build engaged citizens we must listen to marginalized youth (Bonet, 2011). Teachers need knowledge about sociopolitical context in order to engage students in critically conscious discourse (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). Malin (2011) encouraged future researchers to investigate the students' perspective beyond the classroom. There is a need for those that are inside urban communities to work to close the civic engagement gap (Atkins & Hart, 2003). Levinson (2012) encouraged students and teachers to be co-learners to close the gap and rethink ways to develop empowered civic identity that are consonant with knowledge and experiences of urban youth. Rubin (2007) explained that students from urban communities that felt that they could make a difference attributed their attitude to the classroom practices they were exposed to in their social studies classroom. Social studies teachers have an opportunity to develop sociopolitical practices that impact the development of empowered civic identities for urban youth. Consequently, this project sought to explore: How do urban students develop civic identity in and out of the social studies classroom? First, we investigated the factors and experiences that contribute to the development of civic identity according to urban students. Then we examined how social studies teachers can help to facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity for urban students.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

Interviewer: “What do you think teachers should know about you and citizenship?”

12th Grade Urban Student: “Hmmm...that we’re not all just dumb little kids. We know more than what you think we know.”

Urban youth’s experiences contribute to their understanding of who they are as democratic citizens (Banks, 2004; Bonet, 2011; Rubin, 2007). In order for teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers to effectively facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity for urban students, they must first recognize the factors and experiences that contribute to the development of civic identity in urban youth (Cross, 2012; Irizarry, 2001). Current research focuses more on the problems and subsequent prevention models associated with encouraging civic engagement instead of focusing on the process of civic identity for urban students (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Consequently, this intrinsic, embedded case study of participatory urban youth citizens within a critical indigenous research paradigm sought to explore how urban youth develop civic identity in and out of the social studies classroom through appreciative inquiry. The research questions included:

1. What factors and experiences contribute to the development of civic identity according to urban students?
  - a. How do urban youth describe their civic identities?
  - b. How do urban youth describe the impact of the community on the development of their civic identity?

2. How can social studies teachers help to facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity according to urban students?

The design allowed for a deep, holistic, and contextualized understanding that privileged the voice of urban students leading to empowerment and transformation.

### **Critical and Indigenous Research Design**

History has seen the evolution of qualitative methods from the early ethnographic phase in the 15th century to the modernist phase in the 1940s to the triple crisis in the 1980s (Hays & Singh, 2012). Now Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest there is a new eighth historical movement in qualitative research dedicated to alternatives and non-Western approaches to qualitative research (Hays & Singh, 2012). Critical and indigenous research methods move beyond positivist and post positivist traditional research to give voice to marginalized populations by decolonizing Western dominated thought and promoting self-determination among research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 2012). WaThiong (1986) described Western dominated research as a “cultural bomb” that destroys the cultures that are researched. Hsia (2006) noted that positivist and post positivist research reduces people and their experiences into isolated bits that are numbered and calculated without taking into consideration the social realities in which participants live. However, critical and indigenous research provides a framework to intentionally break down previous cultural stereotypes, respect participants knowledge and ways of knowing, and construct new ideas for empowerment and social transformation (Gergen, 2003; Smith, 2012).

Critical and indigenous research methods are based on the assumptions of community, collectivity, social justice, power, colonization, and representation (Smith,

2012). Critical indigenous research recognizes the significance of the individual in the context of the community and appreciates the collective nature of marginalized groups (Smith, 2012). Denzin & Lincoln (2008) emphasize the importance of calling attention to the power structures that are related to colonization and encourage researchers to represent marginalized groups in a way that empowers the participants within their communities locally and globally. The critical and indigenous design for this project allowed me to represent the unique assets of urban youth within the context of their community while working to de-emphasize the concepts of active citizenship viewed through the dominate culture lens.

Urban youth ways of knowing and knowledge are often silenced or ignored by White, Euro-centric, Western thought (Banks, 2009). Institutions such as public schools are still led by a White middle class majority that fails to recognize how their policies and procedures often limit opportunities for urban youth (Beachum, 2008, Irizarry, 2001). Tyack (1988) explains that American schools started as a creation of Puritan New England and that the cultural ethos has yet to be removed. Yet, urban youth are unique individuals with their own sophisticated ways of knowing that can inform educators and curriculum developers (Rubin, 2007). Therefore, the critical and indigenous research paradigm provided the researcher the chance to disrupt traditional conversation, challenge assumptions, build new relationships, and create new visions (Gergen, 2003). Concepts, ideas, and themes that have been misrecognized in the past were illuminated by privileging the knowledge and ways of knowing of the urban youth with the understanding that they are the best people to speak about the truth impacting their own

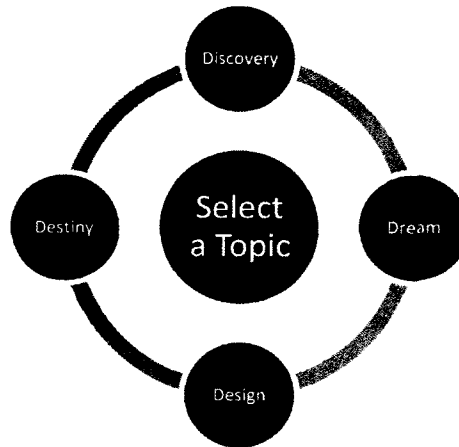
civic identity development (Cook-Lynn, 2008; Cross, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997; Lincoln, 1997; Smith, 2012).

### **Research Design**

The project was an intrinsic, embedded case study (Hays & Singh, 2012; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2012) using appreciative inquiry as a lens. Appreciative inquiry woven together with the intrinsic, embedded case study design allowed me to explore and describe the factors and experiences that contribute to the development of civic identity in urban students from the inside out (Cross, 2012).

**Appreciative inquiry.** Appreciative inquiry is a critical and indigenous lens that goes beyond traditional participatory action research (PAR). PAR encourages active participation from community members to collectively share power (Hays & Sigh, 2012); Appreciative inquiry allowed me to work with participants to focus on the assets and values of a group, giving voice to the silenced, and focusing on the propositions that are working within a particular context (Cooperrider, 1986; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Often researchers identify a problem and then work to solve it, but appreciative inquiry uses a four part cycle that begins with illuminating what is working and then encourages action and transformation to encourage long lasting change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). After the group settles on a topic, the first part of the cycle is discovery where the group emphasizes the best of what is. Then the group dreams together of what could be by agreeing to a vision for a better world, a powerful purpose, and a compelling statement of intent (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Next, the design phase challenges the group to articulate a plan that substantiates the dream. Finally, the destiny phase

allows for people to connect and co-create sustainable change and transformation (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2006).



*Figure 1.* 4 D (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny) Appreciative Inquiry Model

Appreciative inquiry is grounded in social constructivism (Grant & Humphries, 2006) and echoes the Freirian model that pushes for critical consciousness within economic, political, and social contexts (Berglund & Wigren-Kristofersen, 2012). Therefore, this paradigm helped to focus on the micro-contexts, factors, and experiences that impact the development of civic identity for urban students. Appreciative inquiry embraces the holistic nature of the identity development process and allows the students themselves to call attention to the stories that have brought them to where they are and envision the world that they would like to become a part of (Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008). Some critics believe that only focusing on the positive characteristics of a concept limits the opportunities to challenge and consider all of the societal factors that could impact an idea negatively (Grant & Humphries, 2006). However, appreciative inquiry does not limit the complete and thorough investigation of a topic, but encourages participants to look beyond the problems to aspects of resistance, resiliency, community and family supports, and creative problem solving that they are already implementing to

respond to various forms of oppression or bureaucratic inefficiencies within a system (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 20006). The goal is to focus on what is possible instead of what is wrong (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

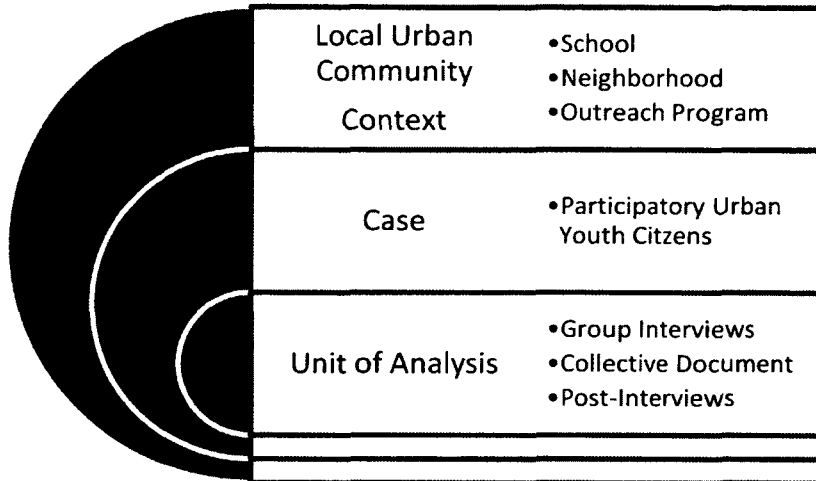
Appreciative inquiry is becoming more visible (Dick, 2011). Fieldhouse & Onyett (2012) grounded their action research study in appreciative inquiry as they worked to promote social inclusion to local mental health services. Through interviews and focus groups using the 4D (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny) cycle the researchers worked with the community to create a “learning history,” which helped to draw attention to the historical, organizational practices that were hindering social inclusion. Lemelin et al. (2013) used appreciative inquiry to engage indigenous communities through visual analysis to create a more culturally relevant and respectful photo history of First Nation tribes in Canada.

More important than the visibility of the paradigm is the recognition that appreciative inquiry is an effective tool in educational settings that are working with diverse populations. Smith and Neil (2005) grounded their study about Northern Ireland’s attempt to include curriculum to foster an understanding about peace in the country in appreciative inquiry. The authors used student poems about peace to illuminate the social and political context. Once the students had created the poems about peace, community groups and professionals responsible for school-based instruction about peace participated in focus groups based on the student work. Smith and Neil (2005) wanted to move away from the narrow view of standards and outcomes to beliefs, values, and authentic relationships that could lead to a deeper and practical understanding of peace. The authors hoped the understanding would contribute to the

politics of democratic citizenship and social justice. Smith and Neil (2005) recognized that the “regimes of performativity” left out student voices and were unsatisfactory at moving school reform toward transformation for a more peaceful and democratic society. In the end the collaborative and self-reflexive process led to participants commitment to reimagining what curriculum and instruction could look like to promote peace, social justice, and democracy. Researchers have demonstrated the value of appreciative inquiry especially in terms of an action model that involves democratic participation in the form of dialogue from all participants who share equally about positive aspects of a concept that can be nurtured through recommendations for the future.

**Case study.** The intrinsic, embedded case study allowed for a deep and thorough description of the factors and experiences that contribute to the development of civic identity in urban youth (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2012). The case study focused on a single case of participatory urban youth citizens in an urban community. The community in this project was represented by the local high school that each of the participants attended, the neighborhood that each of the participants currently reside in, and the community outreach program that the participants all voluntarily have attended prior to the research project inception. I had an intrinsic interest in the project because I am connected to each aspect of the community as it is defined, which will be explained in detail within the researcher’s role discussion later in the chapter. The case study used three different embedded units of analysis including group interviews, a collective document, and post-interviews to create triangulation to substantiate the data (Clarke, H., Egan, B., Fletcher, L., & Ryan, C., 2006; Yin, 2012). A careful explanation of each unit of analysis will be discussed within the data collection section later in the chapter.





*Figure 2.* Embedded Case Study Design

**Participants.** Twelve urban youth from low or working class families between the ages of 18 and 21 were involved in the study. Each participant completed the mandatory U.S. Government class required for graduation within Virginia, lived in the same community, attended the same high school, and participated in *Smart Starts*, a community outreach program. Two of the participants attended four year colleges at the time of the study. One participant was attending the local community college. Five participants were still enrolled in their last semester of high school. The participants included five female students and seven male students. Nine participants are African-American, two participants are of mixed race, and one student is White. These participants have participated in *Smart Starts* for at least two years at the time of the study, and are connected with a strong sense of family outside of school and *Smart Starts*. They enjoy hanging out, going to school dances together, and have supported each other during hard times. Table 1 provides a complete description of each participant. Some of the students chose to use pseudonyms, but some chose to use their given name.

The participants were selected based on a purposeful sample of young, urban students that represent participatory citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Participatory citizens are described as citizens that are active members of a community organization(s), organize community efforts for change, know how government agencies work, and know strategies for accomplishing collective tasks (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Each of the students has voluntarily participated in *Smart Starts* regularly for at least two years. *Smart Starts* is a mentoring program grounded in leadership and service reflecting the traits of participatory citizens as described. Their voluntary participation in *Smart Starts* meets the requirements of participatory citizens based on Westheimer and Kahne's definition.

Table 1

*Description of Participants*

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Years of Attendance at <i>Smart Starts</i></b>	<b>Education</b>
<b>Ryan</b>	19	Male	Black	4	Completed HS
<b>Rashiem</b>	19	Male	Black	4	Completed HS
<b>Sheniqua</b>	19	Female	Black	4	Attending HS
<b>Brianna</b>	19	Female	White	4	Attending CC
<b>Kendall</b>	19	Male	Black & White	2	Attending U
<b>David</b>	22	Male	Black	4	Completed HS
<b>Zay</b>	20	Male	Black	4	Completed HS
<b>Kenyah</b>	18	Female	Black	2	Attending HS

<b>Tatyana</b>	18	Female	Mixed	2	Attending U
<b>Shanquell</b>	18	Female	Black	4	Attending HS
<b>Chris</b>	18	Male	Black	2	Attending HS
<b>Slim</b>	18	Male	Black	2	Attending HS

*Note.* HS = High School; CC = Community College; U = 4 Year University. Students' race is based on how the participants identified themselves.

**The Urban community.** The urban community for this project is a part of a city that was founded in the early 1960's in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States with the merging of two independent cities with colonial roots. The city is now recognized as one of the most populous in a Mid-Atlantic state. However, it is reported that historically some residents believed that the merge hurt one area while it strengthened another as money was siphoned from one part of the city to another. Today, the borough formed from the original city that was depleted of resources struggles without equal access to opportunities and resources compared to the other areas of the city. The participants for this project all reside in a neighborhood within the struggling borough.

Table 2

*Urban Community Demographics*

	Average Household	Families Below the	Race %		
	Income	Poverty Rate %	W	AA	Other
<b>Struggling Borough</b>	\$25,718	24.7	35	55	>5
<b>Rest of the City</b>	\$50,743	7.7	62	30	>10

*Note.* W = White; AA = African-American. Adapted from city census report.

The high school that each of the participants attended is physically outside of the struggling borough. The original high school built in the 50's did lie within the boundaries of the borough historically, but a new, more modern school was built in the early 90's in a more affluent area of the city. Seventy percent of the school receives free or reduced priced lunch. Fifty-eight percent of the student body is African-American and thirty-six percent of the students are White. There are an estimated 2,200 students in grades 9 through 12 that attend the school. The school houses an International Baccalaureate (IB) program and an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, but a small proportion of the student body participates in these instructional programs.

*Smart Starts* is a community based after school program that was started in 2010 in an effort to help under resourced high school students gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be successful in high school and beyond through activities with positive role models and mentors. *Smart Starts* serves over 50 families in total. Official economic demographic information is not collected by the program; however, most of the students who participate are challenged by some level of poverty, which is noted based on students and families informal interactions with volunteers from the program. Participation in this program is voluntary. Students are invited to participate by friends that are already involved in the program. The volunteers do not market or specifically recruit participants. The students participate without incentives or other external forces such as court orders. The program is hosted by a local church that is near the high school, but still outside of the neighborhood and struggling borough that the participants live in. The mission of *Smart Starts* is to help build relationships between under

resourced youth and positive role models by providing program that supports the whole family, provides for basic needs, addresses student academic challenges, and fosters spiritual and personal growth in order to empower students to make positive choices and grow confident in their own purpose.

The students meet every Tuesday at school at the end of the day where they are greeted by a mentor and provided snacks while they wait for the church van to pick them up. Then the students are taken to the local YMCA where the students have time for physical activity. Then the students head over to the church for a meal with their families, the mentors, and the mentors' families. After a hot meal, the students and mentors participate in community building activities that foster democratic dispositions such as critical thinking, problem solving, positive communication skills, tolerance, respect, and responsibility (Parker, 2012). Then the students are given the opportunity to choose from various activities that they can participate in for the rest of the evening with the mentors. They can work on their homework, prepare job applications, take a practice SAT test, fill out college applications, take part in art based activities, games, engage in spiritual discussion in small groups, and/or take part in various ongoing service projects. Once a month the students participate in a community service activity together such as packaging cereal for a mission trip that supports young children in poverty. Outside of Tuesday nights mentors and students often connect within their neighborhood to continue working on school work or other activities that are service based such as volunteering at a homeless shelter. The program is based on a leadership model that encourages each student to not only be responsible for their own behavior, but also responsible for

encouraging their peers to be held accountable for their actions and make positive choices.

Students continue to attend the program even after graduating from high school. They return to be positive role-models and lead the underclassmen by example, while also gaining help from mentors in their pursuits as young adults. Many of the high school graduates are seeking full time employment and are working towards postsecondary degrees; therefore, mentors work with these students to ensure they have the resources they need to be successful. Many of the participants in this research project are recent high school graduates, but they continue to participate in *Smart Starts* as positive role models encouraging the underclassmen to make good choices in and out of school and to complete their high school education.

*Smart Starts* serves as an important link between the different parts of the community. *Smart Starts* works with the high school that the participants attend by partnering with the teachers and staff to provide additional support to students academically. In addition, *Smart Starts* mentors and volunteers spend a great deal of time working with the families of the participants and other students in the neighborhood. There are no direct incentives to the students participating in *Smart Starts*; yet, each of the students has chosen to participate based on their own motivation to be a part of an organization that helps to better themselves and in turn their community directly and indirectly.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as a researcher plays a synergistic part in the research process because of my relationship with the participants that developed prior to the start of the project

(Jocson, 2013). I am a White, middle-class female who is the co-founder and coordinator for *Smart Starts*. I also taught World History and Government for five years at the high school that the participants attended. The participants and I have interacted in school, in the community, and during events and activities sponsored by the mentoring program weekly over the past four years. Five of the participants were in my ninth grade World History class, before I left the classroom. I continue to have close relationships with the participants' guardians and families, which have developed informally over time through participation in *Smart Starts*. Some of the families refer to me as a sister or "back up mom. I was invited to celebrate births and graduations with the participants and their families. I have also walked with the participants and their families during times of tragedy such as deaths or illness.

This closeness with the participants and the community as a whole allowed me to engage in authentic, critical and indigenous research methods that emphasize the importance of community and relationships (Smith, 2012). Authentic and natural engagement with the participants is essential in order for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's knowledge systems, culture, and traditions that are required to show respect towards the participants own culture (Nitza, Chilisa, & Makwinja-Morara, 2010). Yin (2012) suggested that in order for the research to describe authentic learning and meaning the researcher must implement methods that allow for closeness to the case. My previous relationship with the participants created space for our conversations to be more genuine, honest, and authentic. These open conversations led to richer and truer data (Paris, 2011).

My relationship with the students was especially important as an outsider to the community. Although I am embedded in many different ways into the community that the participants live, I represent the dominant mainstream culture as a White female who has always lived in suburban middle class communities. bell Hooks (1989) stated that when we attempt to research and write about a group that we do not belong, our work could be used to perpetuate domination without a clear understanding of the culture and group systems. Cross (2012) also noted that cultural perceptions by researchers that are outsiders can unintentionally perpetuate negative stereotypes or lead to misconceptions emphasized during the research process. Therefore, it was vital to the research process that the participants felt comfortable enough to share honestly and openly. An intentional effort was made throughout the research process to ensure that dominant, white-washed stereotypes were not perpetuated. The authentic relationships between the participants and I helped to establish validity of the data (Jocson, 2013). A greater understanding about the participants and their cultural background allowed me to gather thicker, richer, and honest data while intentionally working to decolonize and deconstruct ideas of Western dominant thought.

In traditional qualitative research methods it is appropriate for the researcher to clarify their role as participant or observer (Hays & Singh, 2012). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that when using non-Western methods it is useful for the researcher to think in performative terms. Researchers as performers move from imitation to construction of knowledge embodying the struggle and intervening to break a part dominate cultural thinking as a sociopolitical act (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Heron and Reason (1997) explain that research should be done with participants not on them or



about them. I was a performer in this project acting alongside the participants. I intentionally sought out opportunities to humanize the research process and share power amongst the participants (Fine & Weiss, 2005; Freire, 1973). The participants were encouraged to add their input at all parts of the project. The participants were given a chance to rearrange the original codes into categories and concepts. The participants made the decisions about the collective document created during the destiny phase of the project. The participants also read final drafts of the research and provided feedback. I constantly reached out to the participants informally through email, text messages, and casual conversations in passing to clarify participants' responses and ideas and double check certain interpretations stated in the findings. The research process involved constant comparison between the participants' knowledge and my interpretations. I recorded our interactions in a reflexive journal documenting my journey as a researcher walking alongside of participants throughout the research process.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process involved three different units of analysis including group interviews, the collective document, and post-interviews, and maintaining a descriptive reflexive journal borrowing from the ethnographic tradition. The twelve participants were divided into four groups of three for the initial part of the data collection process (Barton, 2013). The students chose who they wanted to meet with. Each small group met once for a two hour meeting. The four separate small group meetings were audio recorded with the participants' permission. Then the participants met again in three small groups of four to plan and create the collective document to be shared with social studies teachers. Extensive field notes were recorded during the

process of creating the collective document and during post-interviews with each student as the collective document was completed. In addition, I engaged in constant informal member checking in between each of the group meetings and summarized the conversations in my reflexive journal. I borrowed from the ethnographic tradition to emphasize informal data collection which is gathered through prolonged engagement and observations (Lincoln & Guba, 1995; MacDonald, 2001). These field notes were recorded in the my reflexive journal throughout the research process.

### **Discovery phase.**

The practice of appreciative inquiry involves metaphors and conversation; therefore, the first unit of analysis involved group interviews conducted in small groups to engage in the 4D (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny) appreciative inquiry cycle. I created semi-structured interview questions known as unconditional positive questions (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2006) while allowing space for the participants to ask their own questions as well (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Unconditional positive questions focus on the assets and positive perspective while encouraging creativity and open mindedness. (See Appendix A for a complete interview protocol). The appreciative inquiry model requires that participants have a chance to engage in the inquiry process together in order to generate awe, inspiration, and creativity (Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008).

To begin each interview, I asked each participant to bring one artifact to the first meeting that they felt reflected their identity as a citizen (Berglund & Wigren-Kristoferson, 2012; Gregen, 2003; Freire, 1973). The participants were told that an artifact could be a photo, a song, a poem, an object, or anything else they wanted to share

that they felt reflected their identity as a citizen. I did not give the participants any additional clues or prompts so as not to influence their own thinking about citizenship. During the interview, the participants discussed artifacts including the American flag, shoes, the community recreation center, money, and the Statue of Liberty. The discussion of artifacts was used to help the participants discuss the abstract idea of citizenship in concrete terms and discover the positive aspects of their own civic identity. Participants were asked to explain why they chose their artifacts and how the artifact reflected their civic identity. Appendix B includes each of the participants' responses. During the Discovery phase participants were also asked to discuss their strengths as a citizen and what they valued most as a citizen.

#### **Dream and design phase.**

The participants shared their stories that exemplified their journey as citizens while dreaming of what the development of civic identity could look like for urban youth. During the Dream phase, the participants were asked questions such as "How could you better yourself as a citizen?" "If you had three wishes, what would you wish social studies teachers did to help you be a more empowered citizen?" and "What gives you the most hope for other students to become active and empowered citizens?"

At the conclusion of the group interview, participants began the Design phase based on their discovery and dreams that could help to foster empowered civic identity in and out of the social studies classroom. Participants brainstormed ideas that they would like to share with social studies teachers, and how they would like to share those ideas. The participants were asked questions such as "What message do you feel like social studies teachers need to hear so that they can help their students become empowered

citizens?” Participants also shared ideas about how they would like to get their message to social studies teachers.

### **Destiny phase.**

The second unit of analysis included the participants’ collective document. First, one member from each original group meeting came together to discuss how to create a product that would help social studies teachers learn how urban students define citizenship and how the teachers could help students become empowered citizens. In the original meeting each group came up with many ideas on how to display their knowledge to teachers, but the common thread between all the groups was to create a video. All four groups suggested that a video would help to capture their message. The initial guiding questions were created and offered by myself based on the original interview questions in order to help the participants focus on civic identity and stay connected to the purpose of the study; however, the participants were given free range to add and revise the questions as they saw best. The guided questions included:

What is a citizen?

Who are you as a citizen?

What has led you to define yourself as a citizen?

What do you need from teachers?

Why?

After a thorough discussion about the purpose of the video and important themes to highlight that were captured in the interviews, the participants chose to use these guiding questions without changes as an outline for their video.

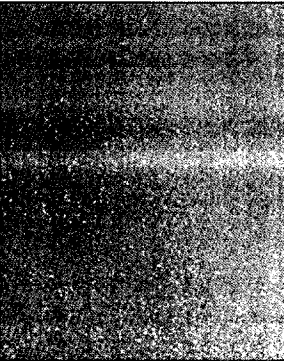

In an effort to help the participants create a video within our time constraints, I suggested several video options including the video tool, PowToon, which the participants opted to use. PowToon is an animated movie platform free to educators with certain embedded internet safety features for students. The video tool was user friendly and allowed the participants to present their ideas creatively. The first group of participants worked on the rough draft of the video outlining the ideas that they wanted to include based on the guiding questions. Then the other two small groups met at different times to edit the rough draft adding music and text that they felt needed to be included (Jocson, 2013). Finally, the original group saw the final product before it was published on YouTube and disseminated to social studies teachers within the school district that the participants attended school. The participants' video is available for viewing at the following link [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBALEbDBHwI&feature=em-upload\\_owner](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBALEbDBHwI&feature=em-upload_owner) entitled Citizenship.

The third unit of analysis involved post-interviews conducted while the participants completed the video. The participants and I had an informal conversation, and their responses were recorded in my reflexive journal with other field notes. The participants were asked to share why they made certain choices in the video and to reflect on their process (Jocson, 2013). The participants were also asked to talk about the most important aspects of the video that they hoped social studies teachers would understand. Participants discussed ideas that they would add if they had more time. Finally, the participants were asked if their ideas about citizenship had changed over the course of our discussions and video production.

Due to the role I played in the research process, I maintained a reflexive journal. I recorded field notes and observations during each of the small group interviews and during the collective document process. I also recorded informal conversations between the participants and I throughout the research process including text messages and other passing comments. The reflexive journal also served as place to record thoughts, questions, and ideas that were inspired while working with the participants or the data as it was created and analyzed (Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

Table 3

*Appreciative Inquiry Data Collection Matrix*

<b>How do urban youth develop civic identity in and out of the social studies classroom?</b>	<b>AI Inquiry 4D Model</b>	<b>First Meeting</b>	<b>Second Meeting</b>	<b>Constant informal member checking recorded in the researchers' reflexive journal throughout the process.</b>
		4 Small Groups	3 Small Groups	
<i>A) What factors and experiences contribute to the development of civic identity in urban youth?</i>	<b>Discovery</b>	Unit of Analysis Semi-structured group interviews		
	<b>Dream</b>			
<i>B) How can social studies teachers help to facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity for urban students?</i>	<b>Design</b>			
	<b>Destiny</b>			

Several steps were taken to maintain the participants' confidentiality during the data collection process. Participants were given a chance to create a pseudonym. The nature of the research model encourages participants' ideas and comments to be shared openly in an effort to create change for the future. Most students insisted on using their

real names. The video does not have any identifying student names, faces, or voices. The video is contained to a private link to ensure internet safety. The audio recordings were deleted after the recordings were transcribed. The transcriptions will be saved for three years in a computer file that is password protected.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted by implementing constructivist grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2011). Grounded theory assumes that people construct both the studied phenomenon and the research process through their actions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Constructivist grounded theory is specifically useful for social justice research because it allows for a critical look at the processes behind oppression and inequalities (Charmaz, 2011). Charmaz (2011) explains that the approach rejects claims of objectivity, locates researchers' generalizations, considers the positionality of the researcher and participants, and adopts concepts such as power, privilege, equity and oppression. Constructive grounded theory allowed me the opportunity to use inductive logic and rely on comparative inquiry to examine emergent themes without steam rolling over the significant nuances of concepts brought to life by the participants.

In order to analyze the data thoroughly, I first immersed myself in the data by transcribing the data from all four of the group interviews, and then read through the participants' transcripts many times. I began by recognizing large domains that were identified as open codes. I created a codebook based on the open codes. Table 4 illustrates a sample of domains that were identified. Appendix B provides examples of original, line by line coding, and Appendix C is a record of the complete codebook.

As new data were coded, I engaged in constant comparison and continued to update the codebook as new codes were created and reorganized (Hays & Singh, 2012). After the interviews were coded, then I went back through the transcripts and collapsed the original codes into larger axial codes that represented various patterns (Hays & Singh, 2012). Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between the open codes and the new axial codes. The axial codes that were identified included 1) individual agency as a citizen 2) individual attributes related to character 3) direct relationship to the community 4) being your own person 5) learning from others 6) student's desire for genuine relatable teachers, and 7) engaging teaching methods. Appendix D provides examples of how the axial codes are represented by each participant.

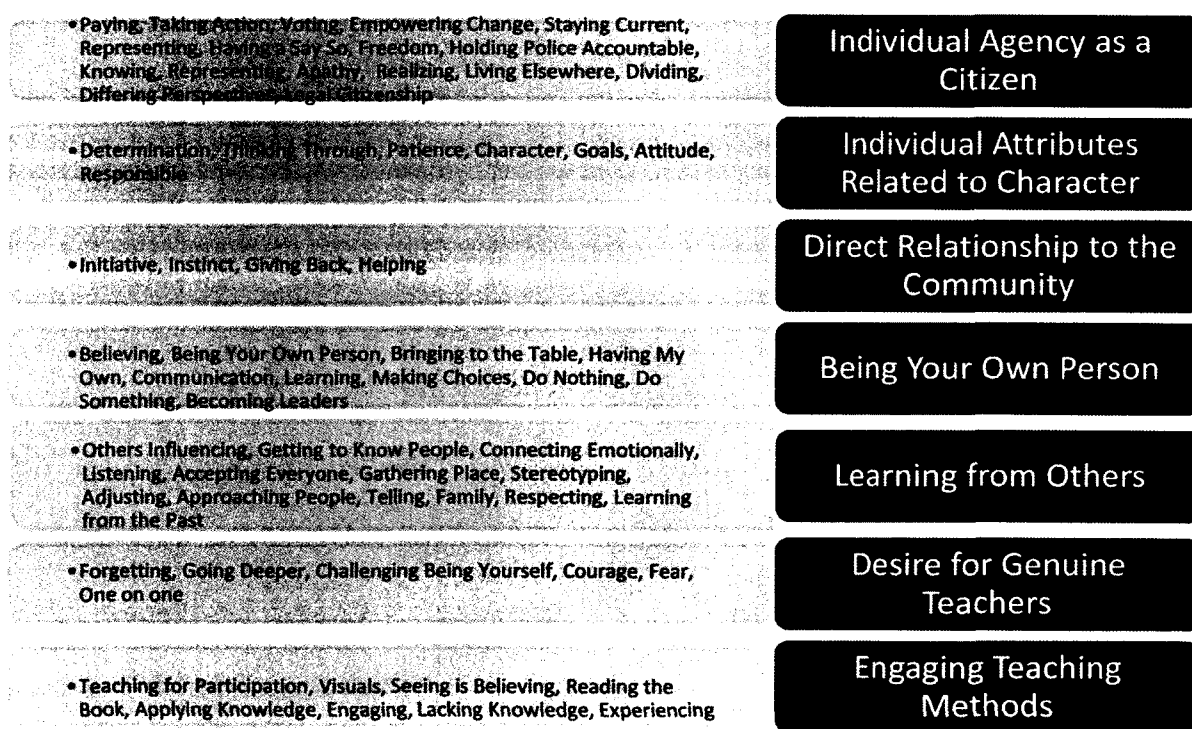
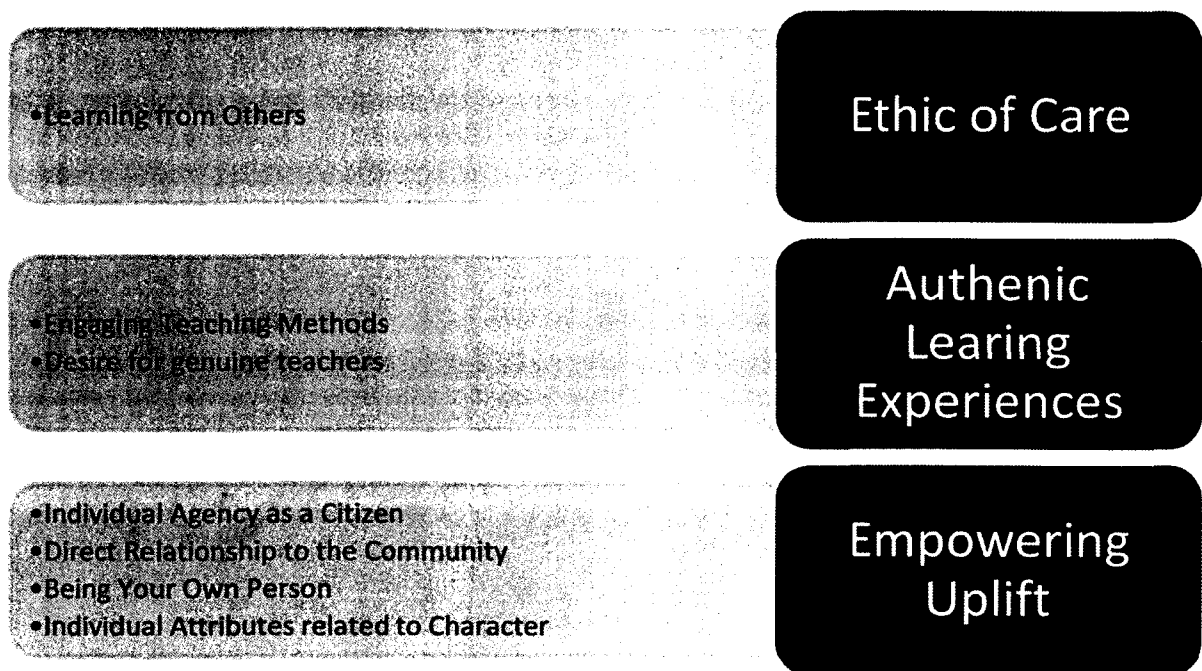


Figure 3. Open Codes Related to Axial Codes

Then I reviewed the axial codes to consider selective codes that could be linked to theory development in the future (Hays & Singh, 2012). The axial codes were analyzed



to identify casual conditions, intervening conditions, and consequences (Hays & Singh, 2012). The theory was further refined by determining three selective codes based on central themes including 1) empowering uplift 2) ethic of care, and 3) authentic learning experiences. Figure 4 shows the relationship between axial codes with the conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2011). Appendix E shows how the conceptual categories are reflected for each participant. The selective codes were the conceptual categories used to create a middle level grounded theory model (Charmaz, 2011).



*Figure 4.* Axial Codes Related to Conceptual Categories (Selective Codes)

Before the visual portrayal of the model was created, the data was analyzed for variation and saturation (Hays & Singh, 2012). This inductive process led to a grounded theory conceptual model that identified an intervening condition, central phenomenon, consequences, and strategies related to the development of civic identity in urban youth that is characterized by empowerment, hope, and a balance between individual and

community responsibility known as empowering uplift. The conceptual categories and the model will be discussed in great length in Chapter 4.

Table 4

*Sample of Open Code Descriptions*

<b>Open Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Reading the Book</b>	References to the curriculum or specifically the textbook	“Get kids thinking outside the box, not just answering the questions, but asking them how this applies to everyday life.”
<b>Stereotyping</b>	Negative bias towards students from people connected to an institution school/law	“If he was black he would have gotten 30 or 50 years.”
<b>Listening</b>	Hearing advice	“Someone who listens even when being criticized.”
<b>Taking Action</b>	Following through on what you say	“Ideas we can put towards politics like just say being able to vote from home.”
<b>Do Something</b>	Being involved in something productive	“Not being a statistic.”
<b>Holding Police Accountable</b>	Speaking out against police unfairness	“Make an arrest on the police officers. Citizen’s arrest cause they be doing some cruel stuff.”
<b>Living Elsewhere</b>	Recognition of those living in foreign countries	“Like if you go to many other places you speak when you are told to speak.”
<b>Connecting Emotionally</b>	Emotional link or tie	“It puts me in a happy place, I know that.”
<b>Character</b>	Positive personal attributes	“Following the rules more.”

---

<b>One on one</b>	Teacher to student ratio	“Somehow everyone got this one on one thing. I don’t know how she got to everyone, but she did it.”
<b>Being yourself</b>	Teachers not being robotic	“Once you be yourself everything will just fall together. It’s not like God intended on us all to be the same anyway. He made all of us one by one.”
<b>Paying</b>	Give money to someone/institution	“Because like gyms and the YMCA and stuff you have to pay to get in.”
<b>Instinct</b>	Do something without thinking	“I just feel like that is what you are supposed to do. Like I never thought not to and let her sit here and struggle.”
<b>Behind the scenes</b>	The real world details that are not in the textbook	“She showed you the behind the scenes and showed you it’s okay to vote for republican and be black.”
<b>Differing perspectives</b>	Different ideas	“Fun is completely different to everybody, and some people don’t understand that.”

---

The collective document, post-interviews, and reflexive journal were also reviewed and compared to the axial and selective codes created in order to refine various themes and patterns discovered (Charmaz, 2005). The video was coded based on the text that the participants created (Jocson, 2012). The post-interviews and the reflexive journal were also coded and compared to the other data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1995;

MacDonald, 2001). The information was used to identify casual conditions, conditions, and consequences and further refine the data (Hays & Singh, 2012). The ethnographic field notes and observations were compared to the conceptual categories to ensure the saturation of data (Hays & Singh, 2012; Charmaz, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The trustworthiness of the study was strengthened through triangulation, reflexive journals, member checking, prolonged engagement, simultaneous data collection and analysis, thick description, and an audit trail (Hays & Singh, 2012). Triangulation of data methods were met by comparing the small group interviews, the collective document, post-interviews, and the reflexive journal (Creswell, 2008).

Triangulation occurred in three different ways. First, the three units of analysis were used for triangulation. Second, the multiple group interviews supported triangulation. Triangulation of data sources were conducted by meeting with four groups of different students (Mays & Pope, 2000). Third, the multiple post group interviews also supported triangulation. The multiple opportunities for triangulation provide credibility. Triangulation also helped to establish authenticity and dependability in the findings.

The reflexive journal, member checking, simultaneous data collection, and prolonged engagement contributed to the credibility, dependability, authenticity, and coherence of the study. The reflexive journal provided thoughts about how the research process impacted my reactions to participants, thoughts about data collection and analysis, hunches about potential findings, and changes that were made (Hays & Singh, 2012). Member checking was continuous throughout the process which provided coherence and authenticity. Each member was given the opportunity to review the

transcript and analysis of findings to ensure authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Prolonged engagement with the participants in multiple settings allowed me to gain a deeper insight and thorough analysis within the participants' context (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). Simultaneous data collection and analysis allowed me to stay abreast of important questions, issues, and topics to address with the participants during the project to ensure a thorough analysis (Maxwell, 2005). Thick description provided detail beyond simple reporting to demonstrate authenticity and coherence (Maxwell, 2005). Finally, the audit trail provided credibility and substantive validation to the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). Although no study can be completely rigorous, these strategies maximized trustworthiness by establishing credibility, authenticity, and coherence.

### **Ethics**

The ethics of critical and indigenous research goes beyond ensuring that the researcher does no harm and challenges the researcher to consider responsibility, the rights of the participants, respect, and reciprocity. Responsibility of the researcher to the community is a paramount consideration (Dillard, 2008). Therefore, I made a continuous and intentional effort to protect the community and participants from colonized practices that could lead to misrepresentations of cultural traditions, practices, and historical understanding (Nitza, Chilisa, & Makwinja-Morara, 2010). Each decision during the research process considered the rights of the participants and respecting their knowledge. Participants signed a consent form and were told that they could withdraw from the process at any time. Participants were given the chance to choose a pseudonym or maintain the use of their given name. The description of their racial background was based on their own language despite the fact that it created inconsistencies in the

narrative. I examined my own motives for entering the community and considered whose knowledge systems were valued, who would benefit from the research, and what voices would be heard (Smith, 2012; Dillard, 2001). I also provided opportunities for the participants to be involved in all parts of the research process including debating definitions of active citizenship, creating their own questions, choosing their own types of artifacts, reviewing the transcripts, and deciding on the design of a collective document to be shared with other educators. Participants' right to not expose or share some aspects of their stories were respected (Tuck & Yang, 2014), and their ways of knowing were privileged by constant member checking and comparisons between participants.

Four participants volunteered to be key informants (Cook-Lynn, 2008). These participants have worked with me on other research projects in the past, but only one participant worked on a project specifically related to citizenship, which was conducted three years prior to this study. The key informants were knowledgeable about the case study, familiar with the research process, willing to put in extra hours to confirm final research drafts, and comfortable with speaking honestly and openly. They reviewed the theoretical framework, helped to facilitate each of the small group meetings, reviewed transcripts, examined the codebooks, and offered input on the findings. I had a responsibility first and foremost to the participants in the project in order to make an effort to ensure that their words were not drowned out by academic politics or dominant culture bias.

The research that was produced during the project demonstrates a reciprocal gift to the community of practice, to the participants, and their community. The research design attempted to ensure that the participants gained something from the process. The

participants were given the chance to have their knowledge and voices heard which led to transformation, healing, self-determination, and mobilization (Smith, 2012). They had the chance to reflect on their own civic identity to discover their potential and dream of the possibilities for the future. They were given a chance to have their voice heard through the video that was shared with social studies teachers. They also received a copy of this dissertation as a symbolic representation that this work belongs to them. The community of practice including myself gained insight into the knowledge systems and ways of knowing that provided a greater understanding behind the needed practices to develop an empowered civic identity for urban youth (Cross, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

My relationship with the participants allowed for informal and formal chances of member checking throughout the process that are recorded in my reflexive journal. As stated in detail earlier, I was a part of the participants' lives before the project, but more importantly I will be a part of the participants' lives after the project. I was very intentional about ensuring that all activities related to the research project strengthened the relationships between the participants and I, helped to lead to empowerment and healing among the participants, as well as constructing meaningful learning to be shared with the community of practice. The results of the study are shared in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

In actuality citizenship doesn't have a look or a perceived appearance.

– Urban high school graduates

The inductive approach to inquiry described in Chapter 3 led to a middle-range grounded theory model based on emergent conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2011). The grounded theory model provided insight into the research questions. The grounded theory model was made up of the context of the study, casual conditions, intervening conditions, the central phenomenon, consequences, and strategies (Hays & Singh, 2012; Charmaz, 2011) that help to illuminate concepts surrounding the development of urban youth civic identity. The context of the model is based on the embedded case study, which was bounded to include the participants' neighborhood, high school, and the community outreach program that the participants all attended, *Smart Starts*. The casual conditions that impacted the central phenomenon for this study included the participants' low socioeconomic status and disenfranchisement as traditionally marginalized youth in an urban community. The intervening condition ethic of care (Starrat, 1994; Gilligan, 1982) emerged as a conceptual category that influenced the central phenomenon. The central phenomenon that emerged was a conceptual category defined as empowering uplift (Snarey & Walker, 2004). Empowering uplift was illustrated by the participants' sense of agency, character, commitment to the community, and self-reliance. The consequences of the central phenomenon included the participants' strength as empowered citizens as well as recognition of barriers of citizenship. Finally, the model also included the conceptual category that emphasized the participants' suggestions for



strategies that are significant to the development of an empowered, active civic identity, authentic learning experiences. The grounded theory model provides a representation of the participants' perception of their own civic identity, the conditions that contributed to their identity development, the consequences of their perceived civic identity, and suggested strategies to help other urban youth develop empowered, active civic identity.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into six sections. The first section begins with a brief overview of the model that developed and a discussion of the context and causal conditions of the model. The second section is a thorough examination of the conceptual category that is identified as the intervening condition, ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982). The third section is a description of the central phenomenon defined as empowering uplift. The fourth section identifies consequences of empowering uplift related to empowered, participatory citizens. The fifth section notes findings related to the conceptual category authentic learning experiences, which summarizes the participants' suggestions for strategies that could help to develop empowered, active citizens. The sixth and final section is a summary of the grounded theory model. An intentional and purposeful effort was made throughout this chapter to privilege the voice of the participants and provide thick description of the participants' responses in the context of describing the conceptual model that emerged.

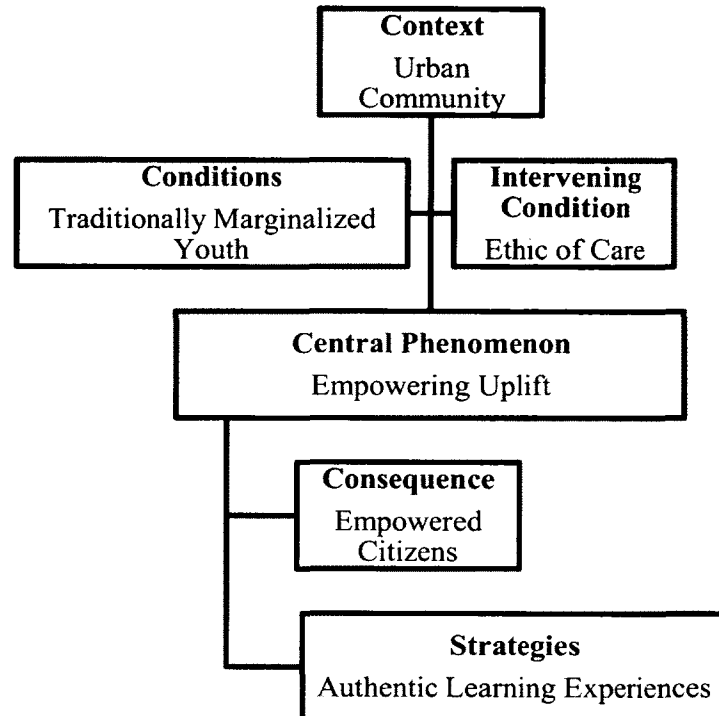
### **Urban Youths' Civic Identity Conceptual Model**

The findings of this intrinsic, embedded case study led to the development of an emergent middle-range grounded theory model. The conceptual model was developed by following flexible analytic guidelines that were introduced in Chapter 3. The model offers a definition of urban youth civic identity described as empowering uplift, explains

how the context, casual condition, intervening condition ethic of care contributed to the development of urban youth civic identity, and consequences illustrated by behaviors associated with empowered citizens. Finally, the model suggests strategies to help develop empowered civic identity defined by the conceptual model that emerged as authentic learning experiences.

The conceptual model is based on three conceptual categories that emerged during the study and the given context and causal condition. The context of the study is grounded in the bounded case study of the urban community described in Chapter 3. The causal condition is defined as the circumstances noted to impact traditionally marginalized youth explained in detail in the next section. The first conceptual category that emerged was ethic of care, which the model identifies as an intervening condition. The model illustrates that the context, causal condition, and intervening condition all contribute to the central phenomenon. The central phenomenon emerged as the second conceptual category defined as empowering uplift. Empowering uplift emerged as the central phenomenon that described the participants' civic identity. Empowering uplift is defined as a combination of values related to agency, legacy, individuals, and the community (Snarey & Walker, 2004). The central phenomenon was recognized after an analysis of the axial codes including individual agency as a citizen, individual character, and being your own person. These axial codes collectively reflected the characteristics of empowering uplift (Snarey & Walker, 2004). The fourth axial code, direct relationship to community, was noted as a consequence of empowering uplift because participants explained how they were connected to the community through volunteer service and other acts of civic engagement in the community. These acts of civic engagement are

related to empowered citizens (Rubin, 2007) and reflect the participants' sense of civic identity. The last conceptual category that emerged from the data analysis was authentic learning experiences. The model explains authentic learning experiences as strategies that the participants suggested teachers should implement to positively impact the development of urban youth's civic identity (Figure 5).



*Figure 5.* Conceptual Model of Urban Youth's Civic Identity

#### **Context and causal conditions.**

The context and causal conditions that make up this grounded theory model are based on the prior discussion in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 about the conditions of traditionally marginalized youth specifically noted for this particular case study. As a reminder, the context of this study involved a local urban community bounded by the neighborhood that the participants live in, the high school the participants attended, and *Smart Starts*, the community outreach program that each participant attended regularly.

The neighborhood was an economically depressed area plagued by challenges associated with being isolated from resources that are more accessible for residents in other parts of the city such as transportation, jobs, and technology. The high school is not located in the neighborhood, but reflected the challenges of the students that attend. Seventy percent of the student population was eligible for free or reduced lunch. The school also had the highest dropout rate in the district. *Smart Starts* was a program developed specifically to support under-resourced youth between the ages of 14 and 22 and their families. *Smart Starts* connected mentors with youth to help empower youth to grow confident in their own purpose through service and leadership activities. The participants have demonstrated qualities of participatory citizens based on their voluntary attendance in the program that is designed to help students take positive action in their communities through service to the community and individual positive choices. The context described a unique case that includes three influencing factors within the participants' environment.

The causal conditions are associated with the challenges that influence traditionally marginalized urban youth including economic and social factors. They have faced discrimination, bias, and institutional racism. Some participants noted times that teachers refused to listen to them with an open mind because of their past behaviors and the area that they lived in. The participants shared their experiences that some teachers treated them differently based on negative stereotypes. One participant explained how she was looked at like just a "regular" student when she tried to register for classes at a new school. She said the guidance counselor suggested she take remedial and low level classes. The participant explained that she was on an honors track and requested the counselor look at her transcript. Afterwards, the participant noted that the guidance

counselor completely changed her tone of voice and attitude towards her and began registering her for higher level classes.

Issues of discrimination impact the participants outside of school as well. During a field trip with *Smart Starts*, a group of African American participants playing basketball were approached by a staff member at the facility we were visiting. The staff member said, "You are intimidating the other people here, so you will have to spread out." I watched as the participants obliged the staff member without question or retort. It was clear that this was not the first time the participants had faced this type of interaction with authority figures.

The participants also acknowledged issues of violence in their neighborhood. One participant nonchalantly explained that he had seen a man get shot right in front of his apartment. More than one participant shared about the loss of a friend or relative on the street. Another participant spoke about buying a bullet proof vest. Still another participant described that he never felt safe in his own home in his own neighborhood. While taking one of the participants home from *Smart Starts* one evening, we crossed over a set of rail road tracks in the neighborhood. She told me that this was the area that her mom told her never to come to alone at any time even during the day time because of the habitual violence in the area.

The constant threat of violence became a normal condition for the participants. While I was watching the 11'o clock news one night, I heard that there was gun fire in the neighborhood close to where a group of participants lived. I called one of the participants to make sure everyone was okay. The participant said that everyone was okay. I said I was sorry that he had to live in such a dangerous place. He said it was just

“normal.” Then he said that “everyone is so busy trying to stay alive that no one has time to live.” The stories of violence and discrimination are a part of the participants’ day to day lives. They are not exceptions or anomalies.

The participants also faced financial struggles. The participants shared about times when their families were out of work making it hard for ends to meet. They have gone without food or luxuries such as internet, cable, or heat. Some of the participants have been forced to “couch surf” because they did not have anywhere else to go. The participants in this study illustrated many of the typical images in the media or described in the literature about traditionally marginalized youth. However, the story that these participants told about their role as citizens and members of their community is empowering and disrupts many preconceived ideas about their civic identity.

#### **Intervening Condition: Ethic of Care**

Ethic of care is the conceptual category that emerged from the findings, which is identified in the model as the intervening condition. The participants spoke about the importance of interpersonal relationships based on compassion, understanding, and acceptance. The participants’ acknowledgement about the importance of authentic relationships with family, God, community members, and/or teachers in terms of their civic identity was echoed repeatedly throughout the interviews and in the collective document. Ethic of care influenced the central phenomenon because authentic relationships based on compassion, understanding, and acceptance contributed to the participants’ sense of agency despite their circumstances.

**Family.**

Previous literature often espouses that urban students are at a disadvantage in terms of civic identity growth because of the disparities at home in their family (Hart & Atkins, 2002). However, the participants in this project spoke strongly about the positive influences that their family and their faith play in their identity as a citizen. Rashiem said,

The reason I think about voting is because Mr. Robert (stepdad) come up to me and be like when he was young he didn't have the right to vote. He didn't have any say so. He told me a story about how he was walking with his grandma and the lady came up to him, and he spoke to her. And she said did you speak to my dog yet? He couldn't do that stuff, so he thinks as a black man I should vote because I have it.

Rasheim respected the opinions and knowledge of someone that understood circumstances that shadowed his own life experiences. When I asked Ryan how he learned how to become a participatory citizen, he said,

I guess from watching my mom. I mean my mom went through a lot of stuff. I guess it's a foundation. The foundation that was laid that you need to always be doing something. Like there is always something to do even though sometimes there's always not something to do...So even when you think there isn't anything to do, there is always something else to learn, there is always something to find out, there is always something else to do, somewhere, someone else that needs help, someone that needs to talk, someone that needs to be listened to. It's never ending. There is just too many people here to for it be silent.

Ryan noted that his mom “went through a lot of stuff.” Like Rashiem, Ryan felt a sense of connectedness to someone that had an understanding of challenging circumstances and respected her knowledge. Kenyah said, “The way I was brought up because my mom, my family, taught me to never be mean and stuff.” Tatyana said, “My parents’ influence, I guess. They influenced me. They raised me, so I kind of took up a lot of their beliefs and such.” The participants explained that they listened and learned from people they believed loved them and had helped to care for them like their parents and guardians.

In the video that the participants created for social studies teachers, they included a slide that listed adjectives that define them as citizens. The following slide says, “The reason we believe that is because of the environment that you were raised in influenced by your parents.” The participants agreed that their relationship with their parents impacted their sense of civic identity.

Kenyah, Rashiem, and Ryan also referenced their relationship with God and Jesus. They believed that their relationship with God helped them to be a good person, which they saw as a characteristic of a good citizen. Rashiem brought up Jesus in the first group interview spontaneously during a conversation about leaders. Then I followed up by asking Ryan and Rashiem if they felt like their faith played a big role in their identity as citizens, and they agreed.

Rashiem: I just said that to say, it depends on who your leaders is. That depends on what you are going to do. I feel like it is right to believe in Jesus, but they might not feel like that.

Interviewer: Do you feel like your faith helps you be active citizens?

Ryan: I think it does.



Rashiem: It is plain stated, if he is with us, who can be against us. If you your own person, then once you accept Jesus even if someone say to you if you don't do this I'm going to do something to you, if you believe in Jesus, don't do it.

Their sense of faith and relationship with God helped to ground them and give them confidence about reaching out and taking positive risks in the community. Similarly, when I asked Kenyah what gives her the most hope for other students to become active citizens, she stated that she hoped that people would go to church.

Kenyah: I just hope that people would know better. Like know what to do.

Interviewer: In terms of what.

Kenyah: In terms of living. People aren't living right.

Interviewer: What do you think people should do to live better?

Kenyah: Go to church.

Interviewer: Why?

Kenyah: Because you can't have a life without God.

Kenyah's discussion about God resonates with Ryan and Rashiem's discussion because she also saw a relationship with God as a way to live well and on the right path with confidence.

The participants explained that they learned about citizenship from listening to their families' stories and opinions and watching how they lived and approached life. The participants explained how they felt like they could connect to their family members because of their compassion and understanding of life's challenges. Some participants also noted that their relationship with God strengthened their will to live as good citizens. The interpersonal connectedness allowed the participants to be open to what their family

members were sharing. The participants were able to see a bit of themselves in the struggles and challenges faced by their loved ones. They gained a sense of confidence in their own potential by learning from those before them.

### **Community groups.**

Participants also discussed the influence of other's outside of their family including school groups, community, and recreational groups. Chris stated that watching groups like Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Student Council Association (SCA) helped him learn how to be an empowered citizen. These school groups help students take leadership positions and work with other students and adults to prepare for military competitions and student activities such as the homecoming. ROTC and SCA work to include everyone and treat everyone as equal worth regardless of differences in power. Chris was a member of SCA, but not ROTC; however, he still recognized the value of school groups based on mutual respect that work to delegate individuals to make a difference in their community in or out of school.

The participants also spoke about groups outside of school including *Smart Starts* and neighborhood recreational programs. Kendall stated that he felt like *Smart Starts* helped him to become a more active citizen. He said,

I think that the things that have helped me become that type of person are the people that motivate me in my everyday life like going up to *Smart Starts* and the morals they place inside of me kind of made me see those are the right types of things to be doing, and I enjoy doing those types of things.

Zay followed up and said, "That is basically what I was going to say, just not that many words though. Mine was going to be definitely shorter." Kendall explained the

importance of the relationships with the volunteers to “motivate” him, share new opportunities with him, and help him uncover his own unique strengths and purpose as an individual. He felt like the mentors helped him to see things about himself that he had not seen before.

Brianna and Sheniqua also reflected on how *Smart Starts* helped them become active citizens. Sheniqua said, “Because it helps you do positive things and get your (school) work done.” Brianna said, “Because you can be a part of a positive community.” Brianna and Sheniqua referenced the importance of the community as a whole that represented a safe place to focus on positive things like school work without being judged. Zay spoke about recreational programs in his neighborhood. He said, “Like helping out with recreational functions like during the holidays being Santa Clause for them and the Easter Bunny.” His opportunity to be a part of recreational programs as a leader represented a chance to be treated as an equal among other community organizers. The participants discussed activities that they were actively involved in at spaces where they had the chance to interact with people they related with while being connected to doing positive things in the community. The programs not only gave participants a chance to see citizenship in action where they could gain the skills necessary to be empowered citizens, but were also places where relationships of mutual respect and acceptance motivated them to make positive choices for themselves and their community.

#### **Social studies teachers.**

The participants’ recognition of social studies classroom teachers that had influenced their civic identity was at a minimum; however, the participants that did speak

about social studies teachers that influenced them testified to the importance of teachers being relatable, open, honest, and willing to work with students as individuals.

Pseudonyms were used for the teachers' names to respect the relationship that the participants have with their former teachers. Rashiem spoke about his Government teacher. He said,

Mrs. Reagan never once just taught us government... Register to vote that was one of the things she wanted to teach us. She showed us how to do our taxes. She showed us why to vote for who and who. Don't just say he's a Democrat; I'm going to vote for him. She says it is more beyond it... She was us just older. You get what I'm saying. She was showing us that we can become this. It just takes time.

Rashiem explained that Mrs. Reagan was willing to go beyond the textbook and explain things in depth while connecting to the students' own interests, questions, and doubts. Mrs. Reagan wanted her students to not just learn government, but be equipped to be better citizens. She believed in their potential and challenged them to be independent thinkers. Rashiem continued to explain,

People don't want to teach you the behind the scenes, but Mrs. Reagan did that. She showed you the behind the scenes and showed you it's okay to vote for republican and be black. Because I feel like that people think republican is white and democrat is black, but she showed you that it's more than just black and white. It's gray everywhere.

Rashiem felt like Mrs. Reagan was willing to "be real" with him. There was a sense of trust and honesty between Mrs. Reagan and her students.

In a different interview, Sheniqua reflected some of the same notions as Rashim about her government teacher. She shared that her government teacher allowed her class to watch CNN, and then they discussed the issues as they were presented. She explained that this gave the class more of a chance to understand the things going on around the world, but it also gave students a chance to dialogue openly and honestly with their teacher about the challenges they face every day. Sheniqua's teacher created an environment based on mutual respect and understanding which allowed students to share their opinions, ask questions, and challenge each other. Sheniqua felt respected for her own contributions and acknowledged the atmosphere of trust in the classroom.

Ryan spoke about his history teacher, Mrs. Burr because he felt like she took time to help each student understand the material and wasn't afraid to be different. He explained,

Get out of the box. The box is like the book, the chapter book that they sit in front of every time that's like 2000 pages. You gotta carry this book around. It's almost like the box that everyone is stuck in and everybody thinks that everyone has to teach the same exact way over and over every year, every teacher. That's why I love Mrs. Burr so much because Mrs. Burr taught out of the box. If she see you didn't get it, well some kids did get it when there is just writing on the board. Like, okay, if half the class didn't get it, then you need to find some other way to figure out how it's going to get through their brain. Some people are like, you need to come up to them and let them know that you can stay after school, and I'll do one on one with you or maybe some people just like groups, so she switched it up with us.

Ryan appreciated the fact that Mrs. Burr was willing to relate to each student instead of simply standing in the front of the room lecturing without any sense of connectedness. Ryan noted that Mrs. Burr connected to her students by recognizing their own learning styles, offering to work with them after school, and being creative to catch student's attention based on their own interests instead of just preaching from a book.

When I asked what has helped you become a citizen that chooses to participate in the community, Rashiem said, "A strong adult...I just think it's got to be a strong adult, someone older than us that has been through it will make you a better person." All twelve participants related their civic identity first and foremost to a significant group or individual in their life that they trusted and could relate to on a personal level. The participants discussed how their relationships with others in and out of the classroom impacted their civic identity development emphasizing the importance of understanding, compassion, and acceptance characterizing an ethic of care.

### **Central Phenomenon: Empowering Uplift**

The central phenomenon that emerged as a conceptual category is defined as empowering uplift. Empowering uplift involves a belief in mutual self and community reliance and an attitude of being authorized to exert muscle to protect individual and community rights (Snarey & Walker, 2004). The participants acknowledged their own sense of resiliency and determination to be individuals with strong character and make a difference in their community. The participants' views of their civic identity incorporated nuances of individual power as a citizen as well as their own individual character and sense of self-reliance. The findings reflect a civic identity defined as

empowering uplift because they model a sense of resiliency, self-reliance, and responsibility demonstrated through agency within the community.

**Individual agency as a citizen.**

The participants explained that they believed they had power as a citizen of the United States. They stated that they believed citizens have a voice and an opportunity to participate as active citizens in order to make a difference. Many of the participants also recognized their power as a citizen of the United States compared to the agency of citizens in other countries. Each participant was asked to describe how much power they believed citizens have on a scale of 1 – 10, one being the least amount of power and ten being the most amount of power. None of the participants identified a citizen's power to be less than five. Then I asked the participants to compare their own power as a citizen with the power of citizens in general. Those that identified their own power as a citizen less than five stated that it was because of their own motivation, knowledge, determination, or the need to work together with the entire community instead of as an individual (Table 5). The participants did acknowledge some challenges to their agency as citizens, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Overall, the participants believed that citizens including themselves did have the power to make a difference for themselves and the community if they were willing to make the effort and take advantage of the opportunities afforded to them.

Table 5

*Participants Description of Citizens' Power*

<b>On a Scale of 1-10 how much power do...</b>	<b>Citizens in the United States have.</b>	<b>You in comparison to other citizens.</b>
<b>Ryan</b>	9	More
"Because without citizens there is no government. There can't be a government if there's no people to govern."		
<b>Rashiem</b>	6	3
"Everyone in the whole community must work together, not alone, to make change."		
<b>Kendall</b>	5	Less
"I think citizens have power up to 5. I feel its mid-way because the government needs a way to have a check and balance over the people. I think I have less power because I'm one person. Its power in numbers."		
<b>Tatyana</b>	5	Less
"I don't give them any higher than a 5 because ultimately the government has their say so, but I gave them a 5 because we have the ability to vote and we do have the ability to say how we feel and it does get taken into consideration. I feel like I have less power because I don't do as much as normal citizens."		
<b>Sheniqua</b>	7	Less
"Like you are taking so much, but leaving half of it out."		
<b>Shanquell</b>	9	8 or 9
"It's upon themselves if they want to do it or not. You can't force anybody to do it. If they want to make a change, they will do it."		



---

<b>Brianna</b>	7	More
“Because that is as much power as we take. Because we could do so much more, but we choose. I’m going to say more because we have more opportunities. We have more opportunities to do positive things. Rather than everyone has the same opportunities, but we have a bigger chance to give back.”		
<b>Chris</b>	9	?
“Because everything you do is on yourself. If someone tells you to do it, it’s not because they told you to do it, because you wanted to do it.”		
<b>Slim</b>	7	2
“The citizens have basically the most power of what is going on. Like it’s a democracy. The citizens run things basically.”		
<b>David</b>	5	5
“A citizen’s power is determined all on what the citizen knows as in the law and government.”		
<b>Zay</b>	7	10
“You can try and do anything you want in the world, but it’s hard to speak out in general. Like Martin Luther King had a hard time getting his voice heard. He had to boycott and protest.”		
<b>Kenyah</b>	10	10
“I can make a difference in anything I chose to do.”		

---

The participants also noted their right to be heard, express themselves, and the freedoms afforded to them as a United States citizen which demonstrated their sense of agency as citizens. Kenyah, Tatyana, Kendall, David, Ryan, and Rashiem all spoke about how they valued their freedom and right to be heard as a citizen. Kenyah, Ryan, and Rashiem compared their freedoms to those in other countries. Kenyah said, “I value my freedom because like in the United States we get to do a lot of things, and we get a lot

of representation versus being in a foreign country.” I asked Kenyah to elaborate. She said, “Like other countries are run by one person, and they want them to do things in a certain way, but we get to do things in a number of ways.” Ryan and Rashiem also reflected on how they value their freedoms that they have as a citizen in the United States compared to citizens in other countries. Ryan said,

I guess I can say voting, now. The fact that I have a say so in my country because some countries, they don't have any say so. It's like you could wake up in the morning and it could be someone different...But here it is like we vote for what we want. So if something goes wrong then we just vote again until we get it right.

Rashiem said,

Not only voting, but just freedom, period. Like we got a lot of freedom. Like if you go to many other places you speak when you are told to speak. Just like in Wal-Mart I watch how Iraqi people, Middle Eastern people come in and the husband will say something and if the wife is speaking over him he will just tell her to shut up. And it like blows my mind, that he would just tell her to shut up.

Ryan, Rashiem, and Kenyah spoke about their own freedoms as a citizen in terms of comparing their rights to others in other countries.

Kendall, Tatyana, and David also spoke about the importance of their freedoms, but without the comparison to other countries. Kendall said, “I would say our strength is expressing ourselves.” He continued to explain that, “I value most my words, my speech. The things that I say because the things I say is a direct representation of who I am as a

person.” Tatyana was in a different group, but she also spoke about how she valued her right to have a say so. She said,

I value the ability to choose, I guess. We have the ability to vote. We have the ability...like our rights. I like the fact that we have the rights that we have, and like a say so in our government.

David talked about his ability to choose social factors outside of voting. He explained, “I guess I value the freedom to love whoever you want to love. I guess I value that the most.” The participants discussed the importance of having the right to speak up and the freedom to make choices in how they live their life. The participants acknowledged that their voice would be heard by the government and members of their community.

David, Kendall, Chris, and Zay spoke about how they believed that knowledge about the law also gave them power as citizens in the community because they can speak out for themselves. Chris explained to the other students in his group that it was important to know about the law, and he recognized that “street law” and the law of the government were different. Zay said,

If teens know that they don't have marijuana in the car or anything in the car and they (police) say search, they don't have to let them search. Like everyone should know that...like the police would stop being the pain.

Zay discussed how the police sometimes overstep their boundaries without cause, but suggested that citizens' knowledge about the law can help teens specifically protect their rights and hold the police accountable for their actions. Kendall also reflected on ways that the police can inhibit people's life. He struggled to consider an answer to the

question, “What gives you the most hope for other students to become active and empowered citizens?” He said,

It is hard to say because there are a lot of things going on that I feel like are the opposite of. Like how I think it is New York cops that pull over minorities and do searches just because they are a minority.

Yet, Kendall was able to say that knowledge of the law provided individuals more power. Kendall said, “The more you understand the law the less you can get taken advantage of.” David said, “A citizen’s power is determined all on what the citizen knows as in the law and government.” Not every student spoke about the importance of knowledge about the law and their rights. Those that did stated that knowing how their rights could impact them in their day to day lives was an important factor in their ability to be an empowered, active citizen.

The participants’ responses illustrated that they saw themselves as active agents within their own community, including not only their neighborhood, but also their nation. In the video the participants created a slide that listed words that they used to define themselves as a citizen. They included, “strong willed,” “rebellious,” and “leader.” The participants wanted to acknowledge their independence and power. They illustrated their own potential agency as individuals through their opportunity to speak out and be heard, a discussion about their freedoms compared to other countries, and the impact of being informed and knowledgeable about the law.

#### **Individual attributes related to character.**

In addition to demonstrating a strong sense of agency, the participants defined their civic identity in terms of their character. The participants illustrated specific

attributes that they felt like they possessed related to their character that identified them as a good citizen. The participants explained that to them citizenship was about being a good person with good character. David drew a direct comparison between being a good citizen and a good person.

Interviewer: What has helped you to become an empowered citizen?

David: Miss Scott helped me, well...She helped me become a better citizen if you call it that. Yah, she helped me. I wouldn't call it a better citizen. She helped me become a better person. Cause I kind of felt like I knew what the right thing was, but I wasn't doing it. She just helped me, nudge me.

David acknowledged his own character in terms of doing right and wrong and noted the similarities between a good citizen and a good person.

Although the other participants did not speak as directly as David did about the comparison between being a good person and a being a good citizen, the other participants explained positive character traits that defined their civic identity. Kenyah defined her strength as a citizen by talking about her determination. She was focused on her goals to do well in school and become a nurse. Sheniqua also defined her strength by talking about her ability to set goals, improve in school, and go to college.

I asked Brianna and Sheniqua to list two words that defined them as citizens. The words they chose were strongly grounded in values associated with character.

Interviewer: How about two words that defines you as a citizen?

Sheniqua: You said two words.

Interviewer: Two words.

Sheniqua: You can say reliable, right?

Interviewer: That is one.

Sheniqua: Self-confident

Interviewer: And?

Brianna: Kind

Interviewer: And?

Brianna: Respectful

Interviewer: Got any other words now that you are on a role.

Sheniqua: Honest. I don't know any others, Miss Scott.

In a different interview other words associated with character were also shared.

Shanquell noted that she felt like she was respectful. Chris agreed with Shanquell that respect was an important part of citizenship and added the importance of being cooperative. The description of civic identity that the participants shared illustrated a strength of character.

Rashiem acknowledged the idea of “bad” and “good” people as he deconstructed his view of civic identity. He identified his strength as being patient and thinking things through. Rashiem said,

The main problems with the community and stuff today, it's not bad people. It's that they don't think stuff through before they do it. So you just have to be patient and think it through. It's just like a lot of the shootings and stuff that is wrong in the community, happen when you are just going off of reaction like I'm angry.

So the best thing I think I got is patience.

Rashiem explained that people aren't bad, but their reactions can lead to trouble if they don't think about the consequences of their actions before they do something. Rashiem

illustrated his belief that civic identity was related to self-control and individual discipline in order to help keep the community a safe and positive place to live. The importance of character represented the significance of the participants living right within the community. The participants demonstrated that to them individual character reflects citizenship.

**Being your own person.**

The language of “being your own person” was used by many of the participants specifically to represent the importance of being a unique, self-reliant individual as a citizen. The participants demonstrated that their civic identity reflected their own sense of independence in terms of their actions as well as their physical needs to lead a comfortable quality of life. The participants noted the importance of being an individual and not just following the crowd. Rashiem said that he believed it was a positive thing that young people were becoming positive leaders. He said,

I feel like there are so many people now a days that are leading down the right path. Even as far as I just feel like you had a generation of dead beats and now you have a generation of men who don't want to be that dead beat.

Rashiem provided several examples of friends from school and in the neighborhood who had decided to blaze their own trail for themselves instead of getting caught in negative stereotypes and the cycle of poverty. Rashiem named one person in particular from the neighborhood who had struggled with issues of drugs, gangs, and violence, but he made a choice to be different. Rashiem said, “If he wanted to be bad, he could have, but he didn't. He wanted to be good.” Rashiem continued,

Yah, a big thing with me is just being your own person point blank. It's just I think, gangs, everything, people who do that have no leadership. You got to be yourself. It takes some strong will person to be their own self. Like some people just adjust. They just think everybody is doing this let me do it. That's so easy to do, but its hard to be honest with yourself, so I think the best thing is that there are so many people coming their own self. So many people saying I'm not going to smoke with you. No, I'm not going to drink with you. That's not me.

Rashiem discussed the importance of not falling into the trap of following a crowd that was leading people in the wrong direction. He espoused about the importance of becoming a leader and working to do what is right even if it goes against what other people are doing.

Zay also spoke about the importance of individual fortitude and strength as an individual. He believed that it was important for citizens to stand strong in their opinions, values, and beliefs. Zay said he thought a pole represented him as a citizen. He said, "I feel like I stand strong as a citizen. You know. I feel like I can't be knocked down." Zay explained the significance of being his own person who could not be swayed by others or made to feel less important because of his beliefs or actions.

Ryan also discussed the importance of being an individual, but in terms of personal style and how a person represents himself. Ryan explained that the freedom to be unique as an individual reflected his view of civic identity. Ryan said he would choose shoes to represent citizenship. When I asked him to elaborate he said,

Being a citizen is kind of like being your own person in your own country. So it's like I can do what I want to do. So if you like shoes, you can wear any kind of



shoes that you wanna wear. If you like shirts, you can wear any kind of shirts you want to wear or pants or hat.

Ryan illustrated that he felt like it was important as a citizen to be able to express individuality and uniqueness.

Participants also reflected on the need to “have their own.” The concept of “having your own” was connected to the idea of having material goods that would lead to a comfortable quality of life. Slim said,

I’m spending my money and its going back to the government. And I’m just buying my stuff like a regular person. I don’t have to ask nobody. Don’t have to ask my mom and dad for money. It makes me feel more grown.

Slim explained that he wanted to be self-reliant in terms of being able to live independently without having to depend on others for his basic needs. Rashiem said,

I want to do something where I don’t got to be one of those people always walking around the neighborhood all day, not doing nothing. They are citizens, buy they aren’t a citizen, citizen. Do you know what I’m saying? All they do is do bad stuff like walk around, do it all again tomorrow. I don’t want to live my life like that. I want to have my own. I feel like that helps me be a better citizen.

Rashiem also reflected a need to be productive as an individual working to be able to have the money needed to live a comfortable life.

The participants testified that part of their civic identity was related to the importance of being their own person and having their own. Individualism and self-reliance reflects perspectives throughout American society (Kirshner, 2009). Yet, Tatyana recognized that being completely self-reliant and individualistic can be a

problem. She said, “I guess that everyone is in their own little bubble kind of thing. No one cares about the country as a whole.” Individualism not balanced with a sense of connection to a social community limits the basis for civic and political participation (Kirshner, 2009). However, the next section about the consequences of empowering uplift demonstrates that the participants’ individualistic views did not overshadow their sense of responsibility to the community.

In brief, the urban youth participants in this project reflected a civic identity characterized by empowering uplift, which emerged as a conceptual category from the data. The urban youth that participated in this study spoke about their own agency as individuals, their character, and their self-reliance to be their own person. They acknowledged the legacy of oppression and negative stereotypes in their community, but they demonstrated that they were not defined by the past or limited by their circumstances. They illustrated a sense of agency and self-reliance that is dedicated to improving their own lives as well as their community.

### **Consequences**

The description of civic identity that emerged from the findings does carry a strong theme of individualism; however, the participants recognized the part they can play in their community as citizens. The consequences of empowering uplift are illustrated by the participants’ active participation in the community that reflects empowered citizens (Rubin, 2007) seen by voting, volunteering, staying informed, and acting as responsible citizens. Although the participants illustrated that they are active members of their communities, they also suggested barriers to citizenship for themselves and others, which are outlined at the end of the section.

**Empowered citizens.**

Voting, volunteering and helping in the community, participating in *Smart Starts*, staying informed, and acting as a responsible citizen represent qualities of empowered citizens that the participants discussed that emerged out of the conceptual category empowering uplift. The participants discussed the opportunity to vote as a way of having their voice heard. Four of the participants have already voted in at least one election. One recently registered at the time of the study, but did not have an opportunity to vote in an election yet. Six plan on registering. Only one participant stated that he did not want to register to vote because he did not trust the process. However, most of the participants acknowledged the value of voting, which has been illustrated by participant responses presented earlier in the chapter. The participants believed that their individual vote matters in terms of the country as a whole and either have participated in the process or have planned to register.

In addition to voting the participants discussed how they value the opportunity to volunteer, make donations, and help people in the community. Ryan said,

I like helping people with anything. It doesn't matter what it is. You don't even have to come to me. Sometimes I just sense it, and I feel like being a citizen you are supposed to help anybody and everybody.

Rashiem provided a specific example of taking time to help the homeless people. He said,

I think the soup kitchen and doing the thing we did, the NEST (Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team) thing...Just like you say you want to help other people. It ain't nothing to say you want to help people, but to actually do it.

But I think when I actually doing it like I feel like a better person.

Rashiem and Ryan both felt like helping people was just something that was a part of their DNA. It was just an instinct for them to jump in and help where they could, and it made them feel good to be helpful. Kendall also stated the importance of volunteering. Kendall stated that he felt like his behavior as a citizen was at its best when, "I get involved in everyday life like voting and community service, when I'm serving my community doing volunteer hours." Zay explained that he has volunteered to help with the neighborhood recreation center by being Santa Clause and the Easter Bunny for the holidays.

In addition to volunteering, Tatyana and Kenyah discussed making donations to homeless people. Kenyah explained that she gave to homeless people that were standing on the street corner. Tatyana said,

I help the homeless people sometime. I give them food. Here (college) I swipe for them like we have swipes, and I have too many, way too many, so I will buy them a meal or something sometimes. In the summer I volunteer at soup kitchens and stuff. I actually like helping the homeless.

The examples that the participants provided about their service in the community was almost exclusively contained to helping those less fortunate.

However, David told a story about risking his own safety to help a young boy that was in danger of being hurt by a car. He said,

The boy's head was under the car because the man didn't seen him when the boy was getting his ball out of the ditch. He was a little boy so he was under, and the man just backed out. His head was under the back wheel. And I was like

‘No,No,No Stop’ because he was about to crush him. I was thinking boy I’m glad I looked over there because he would have died. For real, the boy’s face was just bloody. It was scary, but I saved the boy’s life. I was superman.

David said he felt like a hero when he realized he had saved the little boy from serious injury. The boy and the man driving the car were complete strangers, but he still felt led to jump in, risking his own security to make sure the boy was safe. In the video the participants listed “helpful” and “caring” as words to define themselves as citizens. Yet, the participants’ description of themselves is illustrated by their actual examples of their willingness and capacity to be helpful and show compassion.

The participants explained that they want to be involved and connected in their communities. When I asked how would you better yourself as a citizen, Tatyana said, “I would like to do more. I don’t do much. I kinda just coexist. I do things here and there, but I don’t really do a whole lot.” Zay said,

Taking on more responsibility. You know trying to help out the people around. Like the community, we got a little thing where I stay at where the elementary kids get off the bus and they go to this little center...They go down there and get help with their homework, and they make them read books and stuff like that.

You know, I think if I help with that it would make it even better.

At the end of the interview, Zay came up to me to suggest that we do another fundraiser for *Smart Starts*. Then shortly after the group interview, Zay called to get one of his family members connected to *Smart Starts*. I told him I was excited that he was reaching out and trying to get more people involved. He simply said, “I just want to help.”

The participants also demonstrated their willingness and motivation to make a positive contribution to the community by participating in *Smart Starts* and this research project. Each of the participants participated in *Smart Starts* regularly for at least two years at the time of this study. Some of the participants in this study have attended *Smart Starts* for over four years since its inception. The participants engaged in service projects each week when we met such as making blankets for new babies of single moms and making handmade beads that were donated to an organization that was sponsoring a clean water project for villages in Tanzania. The participants not only engaged in service while they were present, but they also helped to set a good example for the rest of the students. Often times David, Ryan, and Rashiem intervened with a student that was having troubles following the rules or was upset about something. Shanquell helped to mediate conflicts between younger students. All of the participants valued the chance to be a part of a positive community and work to maintain the safety of everyone involved.

The participants demonstrated their empowered citizenship by willing volunteering for this research project. They took time out of their daily lives to participate in the group interview, and then more time to work on the video without any incentive other than to have their voices heard. The participants spent even more time reviewing transcripts and answering follow up questions informally at all different times. They responded to text messages and emails promptly. They showed up for the interviews on time and prepared to discuss the issues. When I asked Zay if he was willing to participate, he said, "I've been waiting for someone to ask my opinion." The participants were curious about the process and appreciated the opportunity; however, their motivation stemmed mostly from just wanting to be helpful and give back.

The participants also illustrated other consequences of their civic identity by staying informed. We discussed earlier in the chapter how Sheniqua stayed informed in her government class by participating in conversations about the daily news from CNN. Tatyana also stated that she felt like staying informed and keeping up with the news was important. She said she tried to watch the news, but it was hard to find the time at school. She said, “I could watch the news more and be more aware of the things that are going on.” Although Tatyana wished that she watched the news more, she was able to discuss several examples of current events during the small group interview including the government shut down.

Finally, the participants also illustrated the importance of acting as responsible citizens. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) defined a responsible citizen as one who obeys the laws, works and pays taxes, acts responsibly, recycles, and volunteers in times of need. When asked to describe their strengths as a citizen, Slim said, “I recycle, and I don’t break no laws. I’m a good citizen.” Chris said, “paying taxes.” Both responses echo almost the exact description of a responsible citizen. Shanquell specifically stated that a strength of hers as a citizens was that she followed the law. She said, “I obey the law.” One participant attended to his responsibility as a juror. The participants were also faithful about attending school and working on their school work, and nine of the twelve participants were employed at the time of the study. The participants were responsible citizens in terms of working diligently to provide for themselves and follow through on their responsibilities as a citizen. The participants provided illustrations of empowered citizens who not only managed their passive responsibilities as a citizen, but were actively involved in the community through service, voting, and community membership.

**Barriers of citizenship.**

Yet, the participants did note that their power as individuals and ability to participate as active citizens was limited by their motivation and the number of people that are willing to work together. The participants explained that their motivation impacted how active they would be in the community. In one small group, the students began to discuss how the law can be “misinterpreted.”

Interviewer: Final thoughts?

Slim: The law is retarded.

Interviewer: Why?

Slim: Some of the laws. Let me rephrase.

Interviewer: Like what?

Slim: Like the Zimmerman, janks. How are you going to get away with murder? That is crazy, like. That had me mad for a good while. He got away with murder.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you guys have the power to speak up against these misinterpretations?

Chris, Slim, and Shanquell: Nah! (in unison)

Slim: I'm too lazy.

Interviewer: Would you know what to do if you wanted to speak out against those things?

Slim: I couldn't be that type of person to speak out against those things.

Although Slim, Chris, and Shanquell stated they didn't want to speak out for change, they did recognize that they could if they wanted to. Other participants also noted that it was hard to speak out. Zay explained that even Martin Luther King struggled to be heard, but



he also stated that through protest and boycotting he was able to get his point across. The participants recognized that speaking out and being active takes work; therefore, one's motivation was a factor as to how active a citizen they would be.

Motivation was not the only factor that the participants stated could impact someone's ability to be an active citizen. The participants also recognized the importance of being able to act in a group. Brianna said it was important to be a part of a "positive community" and recognized that her strong communication skills are a strength of hers as a citizen. Kenyah said she felt that her strength as a citizen was what she brought to the table. The students suggested that their ability to work in a group was important. However, some students also suggested that without a group, an entire community, or many people then their power as a citizen was limited. Shanquell said that in order to make the community a better place everyone has to be involved. She said, "That's got to be something that everyone participates in. It can't just be a one person thing. She continued, "It takes people that want to do it. It can't just happen." Chris added, "Not alone, anyways." When I asked the students to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of their own power as a citizen, Kendall said less than a 5. He explained, "I think I have less power because I'm one person. It's power in numbers." Rashiem also agreed with Kendall. Although students spoke mostly about their own capacity as individuals, they did recognize the significance of collective agency and having a group of individuals working together for the common good.

In summary, the consequences of the central phenomenon empowering uplift are illustrated by the participants' description of their own behaviors as active, empowered citizens. The participants recognized the challenges that they have inherited living in an

economically depressed area, but they are not defined by their circumstances. They spoke about hope for their future and the future of their community and recognized that they have the potential to play a role as a citizen. They were excited to get registered to vote. They have engaged in community activities like *Smart Starts* that work to make the community a better place. They have volunteered and helped the homeless, and they represent responsible citizens who work hard, pay their taxes, and serve as needed when called upon. They recognized their potential and capacity to make a difference in their communities as individuals and working alongside others. Furthermore, many of the students suggested that they would like to get more involved and take more responsibility in their communities in the future.

### **Strategies: Pursuing and Offering Authentic Learning Experiences**

The conceptual model that emerged from this study not only contained the causal and intervening conditions that contributed to the central phenomenon, but also strategies that related to empowering uplift. Authentic learning experiences is the final conceptual category that emerged from the data based on the participants' description of their desire for learning experiences that go beyond the textbook and engage students in learning that is connected to the real world. The participants were explicit about the importance of authentic engaging experiences that involved hands on projects, guest speakers, and field trips to help them understand how to apply the ideas of citizenship to their everyday lives. The participants explained that they wanted teachers to go deeper into the subjects to provide the whole picture instead of just skimming the surface. The participants also espoused on their desire for genuine and authentic teachers who respected and accepted them as individuals and wanted to connect with them.

**Engaging experiences.**

The participants suggested that teachers should engage students in hands on projects, field trips, and guest speakers in order to help students relate the ideas of citizenship to their everyday lives. When asked what message do you feel like social studies teachers need to hear, Kenyah said, “Like we should do exercises with the class instead of just learning out of the book.” When I asked her to give an example she said, “Like how illegal aliens have to take a test before they can become a citizen we could practice that. Pretend like we were foreigners.” Kenyah was interested in working through some of the issues of citizenship on her own so that she could construct her own knowledge and take ownership of her learning.

Shanquell was asked, if she had 3 wishes, what would you wish social studies teachers did to help you be a more empowered citizen. Shanquell said, “Do more activities based on citizenship.” Shanquell was interested in more explicit instruction that allowed her to ask her own higher level questions. Rashiem said, “It needs to be more hands on. I feel like social studies comes out as numbers, but it is so much more behind it.” Rashiem felt like social studies is taught as just a discussion of dates and what happened on those dates, but he recognized that social studies was more than that. He also stated that he was able to construct his own knowledge because he enjoyed history and studied it independently, but other students may not be able to make those connections since they did not enjoy studying the subject. Sheniqua suggested more projects would make citizenship easier to understand and more engaging. Brianna referenced a project that I did with advanced students while I was still teaching that required each student to create and implement a service project. Brianna said,

Being like in AP, like what you taught, wasn't that it? How you sent your students out like to do stuff and got grades for it. They should do that in regular classes as well.

The participants explained that they want to be engaged and involved in their own learning as active agents. They wanted to be challenged to answer higher order thinking questions and go beyond the basic notions of citizenship.

The participants in this project referenced the importance of applying their knowledge to everyday life and understanding how citizenship is directly relevant to their own lives. In the video that the participants produced, they agreed to specifically present the ideas of "applying knowledge" and "going beyond the book" to their discussion about what students need from social studies teachers. When the participants were asked how teachers could help students become empowered, active citizens, Ryan said, "Let us know how this is relatable to life because if it is not relatable then we are not going to pay attention." I asked students to imagine a classroom that was effectively developing active citizens and describe what they saw. Tatyana said,

An interactive teacher. Someone that is getting the class involved and demonstrating how the government works in their lives opposed to just as just the government. And getting kids thinking outside the box, not just answering the questions, but asking them how this applies to everyday life.

Tatyana continued to say,

If kids knew how it was beneficial to their life or how it impacted their life, they would care more about how government is and would care to learn more about government.

Ryan and Tatyana both articulated why it was important to demonstrate that the information applies to everyday life. They explained that relatable information gives students greater motivation to learn the material. They also explained that material that is connected to their personal lives is of greater interest to them.

The participants offered many suggestions on how teachers could help students connect the material presented in the classroom to their personal lives. Brianna, Sheniqua, Kendall, David, and Zay all mentioned they would have liked to take more field trips so that they could see and understand more about how the government works in their lives. Kendall said,

Everyone likes field trips, and I feel like you can relate something to like makes you feel good. Let's say you go the capital and talk about politics, you are more likely to remember that then just like the stuff you learned at city hall versus what you learned in your classroom because it kind of attaches emotionally to your memory.

David added, "It gets in you." David talked about going to the see President Obama when he came to a local venue in a nearby city. Brianna and Sheniqua reminisced about going with *Smart Starts* to speak with the Mayor and his planning commission about the state of youth development activities in the area. The participants explained that field trips allow the learning to come to life and seem real instead of just abstract ideas off in the distance.

Many of the participants also talked about inviting guest speakers into the classroom to get students involved and seeing how the concepts actually affect everyday people. Zay said, "Like have more guests come. Let's say from D.C. the Whitehouse,

like try and get the President down here. Obama will come, if you tell him it's me.”

Brianna said,

Bring different people in from the community. I don't know how to explain it.

Like the Senate or somebody of power to help explain, but make it fun. Don't

just make us sit there. Make us get involved with them.

Brianna explained further that having a guest speaker come in to talk that was boring was not effective. She explained that the guest speaker needed to be prepared to get students involved and engaged. The participants were interested in how the information pertained to them as individual citizens within their community.

The participants wanted the curriculum to have value to them beyond the classroom tests and objectives. Tatyana said,

I wish that in Government it wouldn't just be test based all the time. There is a bunch of stuff about our government we should know, but we don't because we have to follow a certain set of objectives.

Tatyana was the only participant to specifically speak about taking a test; however, other participants spoke about the importance of “going beyond the book.”

### **Going deeper.**

The participants often spoke about their desire to know more about the subject. Kenyah said, “I wish they would explain more. What makes a citizen? What are we able to do?” Sheniqua said, “I wish we would explore more of what we are studying.” Chris said teachers should “tell students more about the law and about how it all comes down to court and stuff like that.” Chris believed that teachers needed to spend more time teaching about how the law actually impacts people every day. David also suggested that

teachers should explain more about individual rights. David said, “Not just teaching them government, but the right things about it.” I asked him to elaborate. He said, “Like you know, know your rights, what this means, and why. What this means and why is this, why this came to be. Not just in word form, or just read it, but give examples.” The participants expressed a need to understand the cause and effects of citizenship instead of just a basic understanding general vocabulary. Zay said,

I wish social studies teachers would have gone deeper. Like you were my social studies teacher and you went deep...deep into history. I felt like that is why I got more involved in history the way I did.

Kendall agreed and said, “I wish social studies teachers went more in depth in the topic.” By going into depth about a topic participants are giving the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how they are able to participate as empowered active citizens protecting their own rights and recognizing their responsibilities within the community.

Tatyana said she wished that teachers would explain more about how the government works. She said,

Like how the government works. Like we learned about the branches and stuff, but we didn't learn like when a bill was passed or something all the process it has to go through like when Obama. Like when the government shut down. I didn't understand what was going on. Why did it shut down? How did that happen kind of thing? I didn't know what it took and all. Like if Obama wants something done it's not going to go his way. It has to go through different things in order to get passed. When the government shut down, I was confused. I didn't even know how that could happen.

The participants were clear that they wanted to know more. Despite the participants request for more knowledge, they did not give examples that suggested they felt disconnected or disengaged as a citizen. They simply requested a chance to have a fuller picture of their role and capacity as a citizen.

The participants also stated that they felt like there were some things left out of the curriculum, but when questioned further most of the participants weren't able to articulate what information they felt like wasn't presented. I asked the groups to talk about what social studies teachers should do help students be empowered citizens. Sheniqua said, "I feel like they leave stuff out sometimes." When I asked her to elaborate she said she didn't know. Ryan and Rashiem were more specific about what they felt was left out of the curriculum in school.

Rashiem: Progression has become so crazy. Like when I watched the movie *12 Years a Slave* last night. This is what wows me. Remember Hitler and the Nazis. They tell you all these things not to forget about, and then they want you to forget about slavery. That is crazy to me. Remember all the wrongs of everyone else, but forget ours.

Interviewer: How do you think teachers demonstrate that slavery should be forgotten?

Rashiem: They talk about the basics. No one goes in depth. They don't go into how they used to put people on a ship and how close they had to be and how they couldn't come up for air. No one talks about that. They say, they put them on ships and sent them to Jamestown.



Ryan: I think they don't go into depth just because some people will get emotional. And that will cause other things to happen just because you get so emotional.

Rashiem: I think who are we to just to forget about them.

Ryan: I don't think it's a forget about, I mean it kind of is and it isn't. I think its about don't speak on it because it is bad...

Ryan and Rashiem were the only participants to make a suggestion about why teachers might not go into depth on certain topics or why it seemed that some topics were forgotten. Yet, the other participants were in agreement that there is more to know and understand about citizenship and the history of citizens in the United States. They challenged teachers to challenge students more by providing in-depth opportunities of inquiry that would contribute to their capacity to act as empowered, active citizens.

#### **Desire for genuine teachers.**

The participants explained the importance of teachers working to understand students and accepting students without judgment (Gilligan, 1982). The participants also encouraged social studies teachers to understand the material themselves and have a genuine interest in the material so that they could relate it to their students. The participants shared a need to be heard, connected with, and understood. These needs reflected their characteristics of their own civic identity including valuing their freedom to express themselves as a citizen and participating within their community.

The participants recognized the importance of being understood on their terms based on a vision that everyone would be responded to (Gilligan, 1982). When I asked Kenyah to imagine a social studies classroom that was helping students to become active

citizens, she said, “It looks like there are students and teachers and teachers spending one on one time with each student because some students don’t get that one on one time, and they don’t learn it like everybody else does.” Kenyah was not the only participant to suggest the importance of one on one time. Ryan and Rashiem spoke about a former English teacher that worked to give each student one on one time.

Rashiem: No matter what she did. She always managed to give everybody one on one time.

Ryan: That was the good thing about Mrs. Tennyson. There was like 25 of us in that class.

Rashiem: She managed to give everyone one on one time.

Ryan: Somehow everyone got this one on one thing. I don’t know how she got to everyone, but she did it. There was always a one on one thing.

The participants noted the significance of not only being able to ask needed questions, but the acknowledgement that each student was valuable. When I asked Sheniqua what social studies teachers could do to help their students be more empowered, active citizens, she said, “Acknowledge us more.” The participants even edited the final draft of the video to include “one on one” time after the slide that said, “What do we need from you?” The participants explained that students want to feel heard and be seen by their teachers, which reflects the participants’ affirmation of being heard as citizens by their government discussed earlier in the chapter.

The participants also spoke specifically about being understood. They recognized that each student is different and that some students need help setting behavioral limits. Yet, they espoused on the importance of teachers working with

students compassionately and with the knowledge that students have challenges and stressors that impact their actions in the classroom. I asked the participants to explain the message that they felt like social studies teachers needed to hear to help their students be empowered, active citizens. Chris and Slim responded with the following dialogue.

Chris said: Be more understanding about how everyone is different.

Slim: YESSSSSS!!!!

Chris: You being different, people should follow the rules the best that you can.

Slim: Be more understandable about how the students feel, but at the same time, put your foot down in a certain dominance.

Chris: Yes!!

Interviewer: Like don't get run over....

Slim: But be understandable at the same time.

When I asked the same question in a different group meeting, David and Zay responded with the following dialogue.

David: Don't give up, I guess.

Interviewer: Tell the teachers not to give up.

David: Yah, on kids. Don't like...

Zay: You've always got one who is like I don't care what you do anymore. I don't care. I don't care.

David: Don't be so quick to give up on them. Because I mean they don't really, I mean like...They might not know what is going on, and then like...sometimes, not saying that all of them do this, but a lot of times they might not even care enough to ask what's going on.

Zay: You don't know what they are going through back home.

David: Yah, because sometimes its like...

Zay: You just got to get to know them. You got to get to know all of your students... It is a bond.

The participants explained the importance of teachers reaching out to students with compassion and working to see things from the student's perspective.

Some of the participants felt like teachers' negative impressions stood in the way of the teachers connecting and relating with the students on a personal level. The participants shared that they did not feel valued or accepted, but instead judged. Rashiem, Ryan, David, and Zay all spoke about teachers stereotyping students in their group meetings. As David, Zay, and Kendall were deciding what kind of collective document they could make to pass on to teachers to share with them their ideas, David and Zay suggested having a round table meeting.

Zay: Like go, like us personally. Going inside the schools and having a big meeting.

David: I feel like they wouldn't take that serious though.

Zay: They would. What do you mean, they wouldn't take it serious? I mean comin from ... well, they aren't going to take us seriously.

Interviewer: Why not?

Zay: My background.

David: Yah, if they look at me or him they are going to be like, no, no, no.

David and Zay made assumptions about how teachers would respond to them based on past experiences, but they did not provide any specific examples of teachers stereotyping

or discrimination. However, Rashiem and Ryan drew attention to teachers that were quick to judge reflecting on previous classroom experiences.

Rashiem: Like teachers who automatically think... Well he is bad that is why he's not in my class anymore or this one is bad and he can't learn nothing. What's the point of wasting my time with him.

Ryan: That's how it is with teachers. They stay in this box thinking that every kid is like the kid from last year, but really it's not. And they get mad at us because they say you'll be bad, but we're not. I just feel like there is this box that teachers put themselves in, and then expect us to just get in the box. But that's just not going to happen because there are 20 kids in the class and everyone one of them are different.

The participants responses explained that they feel that they are judged by teachers based on their background and/or assumptions that teachers draw from past students. The participants stated that every student is different; therefore, every student should be valued as an individual. The participants also suggested that a students' perceived background should not keep a teacher from valuing a student's opinion as an individual.

During the post-interview, I asked Chris and Slim which part of the video did they feel was the most important for social studies teaches to see. They both commented that the first part of the video was important because it showed the different ways that students see themselves as citizens. The participants recognized that the definition of citizenship was not one prescribed statement, which makes it important for teachers to get to know their students and their unique beliefs and perceptions.

Finally, it is also interesting to note that some of participants espoused the importance of teachers making personal connections with social studies material themselves in order to help the students get excited about what they were talking about. The participants explained that they wanted teachers that are knowledgeable and genuinely excited about the material. Brianna said, “They need to be more enthusiastic about telling us about past events. Like getting us more involved.” David said,

I feel, I see like a teacher being like so involved that is kind of weird. I see like a teacher staying after class to help with whatever type of situation or activity that was involved or discussed in the class just because. Just to get people into it. Just to let the students know like, just to have them know I’m trying to make you as involved and as excited and enthusiastic about Government as I am.

The participants went beyond asking teachers to be enthusiastic. The participants suggested that teaches should work to find their own authentic reasons for teaching about citizenship in order to make it more relatable to students. The participants explained that it is important for teachers to believe what they are saying and be knowledgeable about why the material is important in everyday life. Ryan said,

I think the biggest thing is about not even just Government teachers, but teachers in general, but they think that everyone needs to be like everybody. What that is not it. Like you can just be a teacher and just be yourself. And the kids respond to that because we will pick up on that if you are trying to be like someone else or if you are being a robot, but we can tell if you are reading straight from a script.

Rashiem added,

My final thought to teachers is just to be yourself, be genuine. Don't be something that is created by somebody. Cause you are thinking I've got to get these kids to pass so no matter what I say then I'm all good. Do what you think is best. Sometimes that is better. You just gotta know that it's going to help. Sometimes you can't always trust what someone is telling you to do. Sometimes you just gotta say no. It's hard, but sometimes you just have to do it.

The participants explained that in order for teachers to be able to connect with students they had to have a sense of significance about the material for themselves. The connectedness between students and teaches is a bigger gap to close when teachers simply list information instead of really helping to make it stick for students.

In conclusion, the participants suggested strategies that require teachers to challenge themselves and challenge students. They believed that students want to know more than generalities about issues surrounding citizenship. They suggested hands on activities, field trips, and guest speakers to help make the material more relatable to students' everyday lives. The participants stated that they wanted to be challenged by learning more about topics. They also suggested teachers stepping outside of their box to reach out to students and connect with them on their level in order to make genuine and authentic connections. They were interested in understanding how ideas discussed in the classroom are relevant to them in their everyday lives, which can contribute to their own capacity to be empowered, active citizens with a sense of agency.

### **Summary**

Identity development swings like a pendulum (Gay, 2014). The findings are a snapshot of participants' development at one point in time. However, the participants in

this project reflected a disposition that recognizes their agency as individuals within the community poised for taking action, and they espouse that their beliefs have formed over time through their relationships with members of their family, church, community, and teachers and authentic learning experiences. Empowering uplift included characteristics of personally responsible citizens that demonstrate strong character, a desire to be their own person, civic virtues and a belief that they can make a difference in their community. They are clearly aware of the influences that have led to their civic understanding. They recognize the power of individuals and groups that speak into their lives to share with them their own experiences and show them their own values as a citizen in an authentic manner. The consequences of the central phenomenon illustrate the participants empowered sense of civic identity by voting, volunteering, community membership, staying informed, and attending to their responsibilities as a citizen. Finally, the conceptual model also included the participants suggestions for strategies for teachers that could help lead to active, empowered civic identity. The strategies were defined as authentic learning experiences, and the participants challenge teachers to find their own authentic understanding of the material so they can enthusiastically relate the material to their students.

In the post-interview, I asked participants if they had learned anything new about citizenship after our discussions. Brianna said, “To know that we can do more than what we think we can as a citizen and we can make a positive impact.” Ryan said, “I learned not to take things for granted.” The findings of this study led to a conceptual model that embraces the central phenomenon that urban youth can have a civic identity characterized



as empowering uplift, where they believe in themselves and have hope for a better future.

The implications of the study will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

I guess a question mark because personally I don't think I fully understand what being a citizen is, but I guess I'm learning.

- Urban high school graduate

Over two hundred years ago the great American democracy experiment began in the spirit of enlightenment to form a more perfect union. Yet, today the people in the United States are still working to form a more perfect union. The country faces more trials and challenges than ever before. The challenge to close the civic engagement gap is paramount. Levinson (2010) declared that there is widespread recognition that political power is distributed in vastly unequal ways among U.S. citizens. Traditionally marginalized citizens that represent minorities or those with low to moderate incomes are often unheard by the government illustrated by low voter turnout rates and participation reports (Levinson, 2010). A country based on a government run by the people must be able to ensure that all citizens are heard in order to ensure a stable and sustainable democracy for the future.

Therefore, this intrinsic, embedded case study was developed to give voice to those that are perceived as silent and explore the development of urban youth civic identity in and out of the social studies classroom. The research questions included:

1. What factors and experiences contribute to the development of civic identity according to urban students?
  - a. How do urban youth describe their civic identities?

- b. How do urban youth describe the impact of the community on the development their civic identity?
2. How can social studies teachers help to facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity according to urban students?

The purpose of the case study was to describe the development of urban youth civic identity according to urban youth themselves in order to provide educators and curriculum developers effective methods and strategies to foster positive civic identity development in urban youth.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections. The first section recounts the important aspects of the methodology for the case study including a discussion about the implementation of the critical indigenous paradigm using an appreciative inquiry lens. The second section discusses the findings of the study in relationship to each research question. The third section examines the lessons learned after conducting an appreciative inquiry and considers the limitations and recommendations for future appreciative inquiry projects. The fourth section includes the conclusion and project implications. The last section is a personal reflection that notes the impact of my positionality in this research and the tensions that arose.

### **Overview of the Study**

The research design for this project was based on the critical and indigenous paradigm through an appreciative inquiry lens (Smith, 2012; Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). The intrinsic, embedded case study was designed to provide a description of the factors and experiences that contribute to the development of civic identity in urban youth (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2012). The case study focused on a single case of twelve,

participatory urban youth citizens in an urban community. Data was collected through three units of analysis including group interviews, a video created by the participants as the collective document, and post-interviews. I also maintained a reflexive journal throughout the process. The data were analyzed by using constructivist grounded theory strategies in order to create a conceptual model (Charmaz, 2011). Ethical considerations were made in order to protect the knowledge of the participants. My role as the researcher was examined to provide validity to the project and elements of trustworthiness were established as discussed in Chapter 3. The analysis led to a conceptual model that describes the development of urban youth civic identity and the youth's suggestions for strategies that social studies teachers can implement to contribute to the development of empowered, active citizens in urban students.

#### **Critical and indigenous research method.**

The objective of this research project was to privilege the voice of the urban youth who have been traditionally marginalized. This study was designed to explore the development of urban youth civic identity from the perspective of those that understand the phenomenon the best, which are the urban youth themselves. Therefore, the methodology for this study was strongly grounded in the critical and indigenous paradigm in order to respect their ways of knowing and attempt to humanize the research process (Smith, 2012, Denizen & Lincoln, 2008). Freire (1970) stated, "From the outset her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization" (p.75). The methodology was designed with this idea in mind that in order to learn from the participants a space of respect, trust, and openness had to be established, protected, and maintained throughout the research process.

Critical and indigenous research methods are based on the principals of community, collectivity, social justice, power, colonization, and representation (Smith, 2012). The sense of community was illustrated by the way the case study was bound as well as the relationships between the participants and myself. The participants and I collectively worked to explore the phenomenon of civic identity and took action to see that other educators were given the tools to help empower urban youth. The critical and indigenous research method allowed the design to amplify the participants' ways of knowledge and protect their ideas from colonized, dominant interpretations.

**Appreciative inquiry.**

Appreciative inquiry is a process developed to encourage participants to take an active part in examining a phenomenon by considering the strengths of a topic and exploring how to emphasize the positive aspects to create sustainable change for the future (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). The appreciative inquiry process is organized into four phases known as the 4D model (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny). First, the participants responded to questions that allowed them to consider and discover their assets as citizens and within their own civic identity. The participants responded to unconditional positive questions that allowed them to be creative, open minded, and awaken their imaginations to new ideas based on the topic (Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008). Then the participants responded to questions that challenged them to dream of what could be in terms of their own civic identity, the civic identity of their community, and what teaching could look like that empowers urban youth to be active citizens. Next, the participants designed a plan to help social teachers consider strategies that would help their students to develop positive civic identity. Finally, in the destiny phase, the

participants organized and implemented their plan and created a video that was distributed to teachers throughout the school system that the participants attended. The appreciative inquiry process reflected a Freirian notion of empowering research participants to be active agents in their own research to stimulate change and transformation.

The conceptual model was developed by following flexible analytic guidelines that were introduced in Chapter 3. “These guidelines emphasized studying processes in the field settings, engaging in simultaneous data collection and analysis, adopting comparative methods, and checking and elaborating tentative categories” (Charmaz, p. 360, 2011). First, large domains were identified as open codes (Table 4) (Appendix C). Then the open codes that emerged from the original data collection were organized into axial codes based on the relationships between the identified domains (Appendix D). Next, these axial codes were analyzed to identify casual conditions, intervening conditions, and consequences (Hays & Singh, 2012). The theory was further refined by determining three selective codes based on central themes including 1) empowering uplift 2) ethic of care, and 3) authentic learning experiences (Charmaz, 2011)(Appendix E). Before the visual portrayal of the model was created, the data was analyzed for variation and saturation (Hays & Singh, 2012). This inductive process led to a grounded theory conceptual model that identified an intervening condition, central phenomenon, consequences, and strategies related to the development of civic identity in urban youth that is characterized by empowerment, hope, and a balance between individual and community responsibility known as empowering uplift (Figure 5).

## **Revisiting the Findings**

The findings of this intrinsic, embedded case study disrupt and complicate the traditional ideas of urban youth civic identity that have been presented in previous literature discussed in Chapter 2. The findings tell a story of participatory urban youth who recognize their own potential as empowered, active citizens and are not defined by the circumstances of living in an economically challenged neighborhood (Rubin, 2007). They certainly recognize the disjuncture between American ideals and their own day to day experiences (Rubin, 2007). However, the participants in this project reflect a definition of sovereignty based on the realization of their rights to social, cultural, and spiritual identities (Tuck, 2009), and they recognize their own abilities to make a difference in their communities (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). The urban youth participants in this study demonstrated a civic identity defined as empowering uplift and spoke of the importance of an ethic of care in their development. They also suggested powerful strategies to help social studies teachers effectively impact the development of urban youth civic identity through authentic learning experiences.

### **Research Question 1a.**

This research project focused on two questions. The first question explored the factors and experiences that contribute to the development of urban youth civic identity according to urban youth. In order to examine the question thoroughly two subset questions were created. This section discusses the findings related to the first subset question, how do urban youth describe their civic identities?

The participants stated in general that civic identities were “undefined.” Levinson (2012), Jahromi (2011), and Malin (2011) all stated that there is not one common

American identity. The participants stated they believed that there was not one prescribed definition. The opening of their video suggested that citizenship was many different things to many different people. During an informal conversation with Rashiem, he said that citizenship means different things to different people. During the creation of the video one group had a discussion questioning whether Malcom X or the Klu Klux Klan could represent citizens. The participants' notions that citizenship included many different concepts and their struggle to negotiate the definition to include negative aspects of civic identity reflected the variety of definitions of citizenship presented in the literature. Anderson, Avery, Pederson, Smith, & Sullivan (1997) suggested four orientations of citizenship including critical thinkers, cultural pluralists, legalists, and assimilations. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) explained three different types of citizens including the personally responsible, participatory, and social justice oriented. Rubin (2007) defined four types of civic identity which included empowered, discouraged, aware, and complacent. Parker (2012) distinguished the difference between active and passive citizens. More recently Castro (2013) categorized citizenship in two categories including conservative values based or awareness based. Previous literature struggles to come to a consensus on one idea of citizenship just as the participants have many interpretations of citizenship. The participants' broad claims of citizenship were consistent with the literature that has been published over time.

However, the participants' discussion of their own actions and beliefs as citizens did illustrate themes of civic identity including empowerment, character, and self-reliance. These concepts are strongly rooted in individualism, which supports previous research from Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Kirshner (2009). The participants



spoke about strong individual characteristics related to Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) definition of personally responsible citizens and Kirshner's (2009) atomistic view. Personally responsible citizenship was defined as someone who acts responsibly in his/her community, works, pay taxes, obeys laws, recycles, and volunteers (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The participants often espoused on personal character references of positive individual attributes. They spoke of being honest, respectful, and trustworthy. The participants also spoke directly about obeying the law, paying taxes, and showing up for jury duty. As described in Chapter 4 many of the participants spoke about volunteering and donating to the homeless people. The participants showed that their idea of being a good citizen was related to being a good person. These illustrations reflected Westheimer and Kahne's definition of personally responsible citizens (2004).

The participants also echoed an atomistic orientation (Kirshner, 2009). Kirshner (2009) explained that "in an atomistic world one's primary responsibility is to take care of one's self or one's immediate family" (p.432). The participants spoke about the importance of "being their own person" and "having their own." Brianna and Sheniqua spoke about the importance of going to school and continuing on to college. Slim, Chris, Ryan, and Rashiem spoke about having a job. The participants also spoke about being an individual in terms of making their own choices based on what was best for them instead of following the crowd. Zay explained the importance of being rooted so he couldn't be knocked down. The participants shared that they valued their right to be heard and to express themselves. The participants illustrated a strong sense of self-reliance and empowerment to make their own choices embedded in their own agency.

Yet, the participants only represented the atomistic view to an extent. The participants in this project also showed signs of identity rooted in their ability to contribute to the community by giving back to the community through volunteer service and others acts of civic participation. The participants gave examples of helping in homeless shelters, soup kitchens or donating to the homeless people on the street. The participants' attendance at *Smart Starts* illustrated their connection to the community and a sense of responsibility to make a contribution to the community (CIRCLE & Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003). Ryan spoke about doing random acts of kindness because it was just the right thing to do. Zay spoke about helping out at the neighborhood recreation center. Kendall stated that he felt like he demonstrated the most strength as a citizen when he was doing community service and volunteer hours. Although the participants valued their independence, they did not ignore their responsibilities or opportunities to be connected in the community.

In addition to being connected to the community through service, the participants also spoke about the connection to the community by acknowledging their opportunities to be heard and contribute to the government process (CIRCLE & Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003). The participants spoke about voting and participating in local, state, and national elections (CIRCLE & Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003). They noted the importance of staying informed and being aware of what was going on around them. Sheniqua appreciated the chance to watch the news in her government class and discuss the issues. Tatyana said she wished she had more time to watch the news. Ryan shared, 'without citizens there is no government. There can't be a government if there's no people to govern.' The participants recognized that they were a part of a larger

society with an important role to play. Several of the participants specifically noted that without a group of people it was hard to make change happen or take action. They acknowledged that the power of citizenship comes in numbers. Their sense of self-reliance did not replace an understanding of the need for citizens to join together to make a difference. The participants believed in the value of collective agency.

The participants' illustration of their own individual agency connected to their role in the community as a citizen epitomized the definition of empowering uplift (Snarey & Walker, 2004). Snarey and Walker (2004) note that empowerment is virtue made up of a combination of a sense of agency and legacy while uplift is a virtue based on the value of the individual and the community. The participants were empowered to take action, be involved, work to better themselves, and support their families despite the legacy of historical and present day oppression that they live with every day. They recognized the impact of discrimination and economic inequality, but those issues did not keep them from being participatory citizens who vote, stay informed, organize service projects, connect to their community, and get involved.

Nor did the negative conditions or challenging circumstances keep them from identifying as an American citizen. Banks (2004,2009) suggested that marginalized youth are forced to deal with a dual identity similar W.E.B Dubois (1903) idea of a double consciousness. Banks (2004,2009) suggested that traditionally marginalized youth have experiences such disjuncture from American ideals that they are disconnected and lack a sense of American identity. Rubin (2007) suggested that disjuncture can lead to discouragement or apathy. However, the participants in this project demonstrated that they did connect with American ideals as an American citizen. They lifted up the

American flag as a symbol of their citizenship. Sheniqua noted that she felt like monuments like the Lincoln Memorial and the Statue of Liberty, iconic representations of American freedom, represented her as a citizen. David did mention that he “didn’t really like America,” but he was still able to acknowledge and value some of the freedoms he has as an American. Several of the participants noted their freedoms and rights in comparison to people in other countries. Rashiem said, “We complain about a lot, but at least we have the right to complain. If you complain in other countries, it might be the last time you complain.” The participants recognized and appreciated their rights and freedoms as citizens of the United States despite the trials and challenges that they have experienced.

It is interesting to note that the participants themselves seemed to deemphasize their contribution as a citizen. Each of the participants were chosen for this project because they illustrated qualities of a participatory citizen. Westheimer & Kahn (2004) explained that a participatory citizen is an active member of community organizations, organizes community efforts, and knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks. I recognized their participatory orientation because of my prior knowledge about the participants’ actions and behaviors in and out of *Smart Starts*; however, the participants themselves did not highlight these aspects of their citizenship during the research process. They seemed to struggle to find the words to describe their own identity as a citizen and to recognize the positive contributions that they have made to their community.

When it came time to produce the video, the participants created a list of words that they felt like defined them as citizens. The title of the slide said, “So Who Am I As a Citizen?” The participants wrote “caring, patient, strong willed, smart, rebellious, leader,

accepting, helpful.” Their illustration demonstrated a sense of sovereignty and agency infused with compassion for their community (Tuck, 2009). They acknowledged their own individuality in the context of the community (Snarey & Walker, 2004). The participants also illustrated their own sense of power to make a difference in their community despite their circumstances (Cross, 2012; Snarey & Walker, 2004). The participants defined their own civic identity as urban youth by illustrating their strength of character and a self-reliant attitude infused with the will and power to make a difference for themselves and their community (Snarey & Walker, 2004). The participants’ illustrations demonstrated that civic identity is complex and multi-layered.

#### **Research question 1b.**

The second subset question to examine the factors and experiences that lead to the development of urban youth civic identity stated how do urban youth describe the impact of the community on the development of their civic identity? Previous literature makes presumptions that urban youth are at a disadvantage because of their community and the schools they attend (Levinson, 2012; Kahne, 2009; Hart & Atkins, 2002). Images from the media perpetuate negative stereotypes of urban communities that contribute to deficit thinking (Banks, 2009). Yet, the findings from this research project interrupted deficit thinking and demonstrated that the impact of the community on civic identity development is complicated.

The disjuncture between American ideals and urban community experiences cannot be ignored (Shiller, 2013; Levinson, 2012; Banks, 2009; Rubin, 2007; Epstein, 2001); however, this disjuncture does not always lead to a sense of apathy or discouragement (Rubin, 2007). The participants made references to inappropriate police

action. The participants have experienced or witnessed the injustices of a judicial system still plagued by history. They suffered from economic disparity at no fault of their own; however, each participant still spoke with hope and an attitude that illustrated their capacity to take action to make a difference because of the people in their lives that care and love them.

When people feel like they are respected and heard then they can be empowered to use their individual strengths to contribute to the community (Banks, 2009). Frankl (1946) stipulated that incredible suffering can be overcome when people find meaning in their life derived from caring for other people. Urban youth experience disenfranchisement and marginalization; however, they can still be equipped and motivated to be a participatory citizen within their community (Levinson, 2012). Starratt's (1994) definition of social justice included three aspects including an ethic of care, which he explained focused on the importance of relationships and absolute regard. Gilligan (1982) defined ethic of care as

the ideals of human relationship, the vision that the self and others will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair; the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt (p.62).

Gilligan (1982) explained that ethic of care involves three tenets including 1) the need to understand a given group on their own terms 2) special attention to interpersonal relationships with an emphasis on compassion, and 3) promotion of the need to recognize differences without assigning a value judgment. An ethic of care based on interpersonal relationships, compassion, acceptance, and understanding provide students a sense of

self-worth as individuals and hearts that are filled with hope to participate in their community (Gilligan, 1982). An ethic of care awakens individuals to their potential and agency within the community.

The participants spoke about the importance of interpersonal connectedness in their civic identity development (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). The students identified the importance of their family, faith, community groups, and teachers in their journey to define themselves as a citizen in the United States. Every participant identified an adult or specific group that they had a relationship with that helped them to define themselves as a citizen. There was a balance between those students that identified someone inside their family and those that recognized other's outside their family as having an impact on their development. They spoke about people and groups that they trusted, believed in, and deemed credible to help them become better people and overall more empowered citizens.

Gilligan (1982) stated that the first tenant of the ethic of care is the need to understand and interpret the beliefs and behaviors of members of a given group on their terms instead of based on a paradigm that wasn't created by that group. Understanding one groups' position based on their experiences instead of your own is the ethic of care that leads to mutual respect. The participants noted that *Smart Starts* is a place of mutual respect where students and mentors respect each other's position and authority. Chris discussed SCA and ROTC as places of respect where students and adults take leadership position and work together. Zay spoke about working with recreational programs that allowed him to work together with others based on a sense of understanding. The participants that spoke about the influence of their families specifically explained how

they respected their family members because of the struggles they had gone through, which they could connect with. Rasheim spoke of his government teacher who took the time to break things down honestly and directly related to the students' ideas and experiences. He said, "She was like us, just older." The participants acknowledged and appreciated being understood based on their own circumstances.

The second tenant of the ethic of care is focused on interpersonal relationships based on the concerns of others rooted in compassion (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan (1982) asserted that relationships are the cornerstone of the ethic of care. The participants explained how they felt accepted by other people. When Shanquell stood to share her words of wisdom with the *Smart Starts* family on graduation night, she said, "Thank you for accepting me." She honestly and heartfelt shared that she felt included even though the group was made up of mostly White, middle to upper class mentors and volunteers. Kendall stated that the mentors motivated and inspired him. David and Zay spoke about teachers they felt had reached out and cared about them. Zay said, "It's a bond." Tatyana and Kenyah spoke about the importance of the care and attention from their parents that helped to encourage them and guide them. Some of the participants also acknowledged the importance of their faith and the genuine relationship they have with the church and God. Ryan believed it was the foundation of his civic identity, and Kenyah stated it is what helps people stay on the right path. The participants illustrated the significance of genuine care and concern from others in terms of the choices that they made for themselves and in the community.

The third and final tenant of ethic of care is the need to recognize differences without assigning value judgment (Gilligan, 1982). The participants explained that they



often felt judged by teachers. David and Zay at first suggested that we should conduct a round table discussion as a way to disseminate their ideas to social studies teachers for the final project, but they quickly changed their mind because they felt like the social studies teachers from the school they attended would not take them seriously because of their history with sometimes getting into trouble at school. Rashiem and Ryan talked about how they felt sometimes teachers didn't take the time to get to know the new students in their class. They just made negative assumptions based on the students from previous years. The participants emphasized the desire to not be judged or stereotyped by the police or teachers. Kendall reflected on the "stop and frisk" policies in New York and suggested that represented negative stereotyping of minorities. Ryan stated, "we are all different, but we are all the same." He explained that people are different, but acknowledged a need for people to accept and be accepted. Chris and Sheinqua also highlighted the fact that American society is diverse and made up of different cultures, but they believed that citizenship reflected an appreciation and acceptance of people's differences. The participants expressed a need to be recognized for who they are, and emphasized a need to be valued instead of judged, but they also demonstrated that they wanted to value others without judgment as well.

The participants' discussion is particularly interesting in light of deficit literature that takes the position that the urban community lacks opportunities for positive civic identity or that the community contributes negatively towards empowered, active civic identity development (Levinson, 2012; Cross, 2012; Banks, 2004; Hart & Atkins, 2001). In contrast to the findings from previous studies, the participants in this project note that their community in terms of their family, church, and community groups has helped them

to develop an active, empowered civic identity. Their experiences have led to a sense of agency and resiliency. They gained strength from their family members. They were motivated by teachers and mentors. They drew inspiration from their church.

Participants felt a genuine connectedness and engagement with groups and adults, which contributed to their sense of empowering uplift. Cross (2012) explained that it is possible for outsiders studying a group to misrecognize the assets of a community. The participants highlighted the assets of their community in terms of the people that they believe care for them.

### **Research Question 2.**

The second research question asked how social studies teachers can help to facilitate the development of an empowered civic identity according to urban students. The participants were encouraged to consider and share their suggestions and strategies on how social studies could help to impact the development of empowered active citizens in the classroom. The participants were encouraged to draw from their previous experiences, but to also dream and imagine new and creative ways for teachers effectively contribute the civic identity development.

The overall theme was identified as authentic learning experiences. Authentic learning experiences provide personally and socially meaningful experiences (Newmann, King, Carmichael, 2007). The participants espoused on the need for challenging work that allowed them to construct their own knowledge, participate in engaging activities that allowed them to take an in-depth look into citizenship and other topics, and learn how to apply their knowledge so they could see the value beyond the classroom (Newmann, King, Carmichael, 2007). The participants explained that it was important

for teachers not only to challenge them, but explicitly explain how citizenship relates to their life as individuals.

Nassir and Hand's (2006) research emphasized the importance of practice-linked experiences where students are given the opportunity to apply their learning in context. Students are more likely to comprehend and utilize new knowledge when they have a chance to apply it to an everyday context (Nassir & Hand, 2006). Experiential learning allows for material to be contextualized and authentic (Dewey, 1938). The participants explained that learning that is relatable is easier to understand and has more value. Ryan said that if the teachers don't use the material or know why it is important then the students are not going to be motivated to learn or get engaged. Tatyana shared that she felt like she didn't really understand how the parts of the government actually worked. She shared that when the government shut down in 2013 she didn't understand how that could happen. The participants explained that they didn't want to just learn the basic information. David said, "Not just in word form or just read, but give examples." The participants wanted to learn what citizenship was all about and how government impacted their life. The participants suggested teachers using engaging hands on activities, field trips, and guest speakers to help make real world connections. They wanted to understand the value of the material beyond the classroom (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007).

The participants stated that they not only were interested in how the material related to their lives, but they also suggested that teaches should go deeper into the material. Some participants suggested that they felt like teachers intentionally left some information out. Kendall said, "I wish social studies teachers went more in depth."

Rashiem appreciated when his teachers talked about, what he called the “behind the scenes” material. The behind the scenes content was his reference to ideas that aren’t in the book. Ryan said, that teachers have to get outside of the box in order to get to a deeper level of the material. The participants stated that they wanted to get more involved in the subject. The participants’ suggestions reflected Newmann, King, & Carmichael’s (2007) concept of disciplined inquiry. Disciplined inquiry helps to create socially and personally meaningful experiences that lead to deeper and more complex understanding (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007). The participants espoused the desire for authentic learning experiences.

The conceptual model highlights the participants’ suggestion for learning that can connect students with real world experiences that demonstrate the dispositions of citizenship in practice, while allowing students to engage in deep inquiry of authentic topics that are personally meaningful to construct new knowledge (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007). Newmann, King, & Carmichael (2007) stated that “construction of knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school” (p. 3) can impact students’ capacity as active citizens. These experiences provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to have the capacity to be empowered, active citizens (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003). Participants were aware of the need for teachers to follow a curriculum so that students can pass the state standardized tests, but they continued to challenge teachers to step out of their comfort zone, reach out, and connect with students in an authentic manner with an ethic of care. The participants’ view of citizenship demonstrated their own sense of active, empowered individuals in the community;

therefore, their desire to be engaged in authentic learning experiences in social studies classrooms is congruent with their sense of sovereignty as citizens.

In conclusion, the participants illustrated that their identity is not one dimensional and cannot be easily categorized into one particular concept. The participants demonstrated that their civic identity takes into account all of the positive and negative conditions of their community including the challenges of living in an economically depressed area as well the ethic of care that is poured out from family, their church, teachers, and mentors. These participants recognized their rights and responsibilities as a citizen of the United States. They are empowered as individuals to make a difference in their community and encourage social studies teacher to help other students be empowered as well through authentic learning experiences. It is easy to be blinded by the negative conditions of the urban community; however, the participants in this project resisted negative stereotypes of oppression and pushed back by rising above the bias that tried to limit their potential.

### **Lessons Learned about Appreciative Inquiry**

Appreciative inquiry is being seen more in educational research as was discussed in Chapter 3; however, it is not yet a widespread methodology. This section provides researchers an inside look at appreciative inquiry in practice.

#### **Advantages.**

There are many advantages to appreciative inquiry in order to explore phenomenon while engaging participants in a transformative process. There is no question that appreciative inquiry provided for rich contextual conversation with the participants, which led to more honest and authentic responses. The group interviews

with other participants that they were familiar with allowed them to feel safe and confident about sharing different ideas. Instead of trying to create probing questions during the interview, the participants themselves engaged in conversation with each other that helped to provide fuller responses. The participants also held each other accountable for their statements. If someone spoke about something that another participant didn't understand or disagreed with, they challenged and encouraged each other to elaborate and explain. This helped to ensure credibility and authenticity in the participants' responses.

Appreciative inquiry also provided an opportunity for empowerment, transformation, and healing for the participants. The objective of appreciative inquiry is to consider how to make a positive change or impact based on a central topic. In this case, the participants and I were engaged in a process to discover and present ways to help social studies teachers create environments, curriculum, and instruction that would help to develop empowered, active civic identity among urban youth. The participants had a chance to reflect on their own assets as citizens, which they had not thought about in the past. The participants had a chance to reflect and recognize their own strengths and resiliency and the factors that helped them to be empowered citizens. They also valued the chance to be heard and have their opinions known. They appreciated the chance to create something that they could take ownership of and that would make a difference to others. They were proud of their final project and felt good about being a part of something positive.

Appreciative inquiry also took the focus off the negative stereotypes of urban communities and put the spot light on the positive aspects of the community. Instead of getting steeped in sensational stories of injustice, the participants engaged in meaningful

conversations that emphasized progress, strength, and hope. The participants did not avoid discussing the negative influences or behaviors in their community, but they simply were not the focus of the interviews. The participants spoke of violence, gangs, economic challenges, and discrimination, but the conversation did not stop there. They looked beyond those conditions and considered other aspects of the urban community including their faith, strong families, and strong mentors. Grant and Humphries (2006) were critical of appreciative inquiry because they stated that it limits the discussion and avoids a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Grant and Humphries (2006) explained that appreciative inquiry isn't critical enough because it ignores the darker complexities of societal problems. Yet, the process for this project demonstrated that appreciative inquiry challenged participants to take a more holistic perspective because they could not just sit in the negative. They had to reach beyond obvious conditions and circumstances to find something that would allow for progress and inspiration, but that did not mean that the participants did not first acknowledge the hard challenges of life. This project highlighted one particular case designed specifically to refute negative stereotypes; therefore, appreciative inquiry was an appropriate lens. The aim of this study was never to generalize the findings to other urban youth, but to describe these participants' experiences and civic identity in this particular case at one particular time] in order to disrupt traditional thinking.

### **Limitations.**

Every research design and methodology has limitations. In this case, the most significant limitation was time. Time constraints made it difficult to go further with each group interview. Group interviews require significant time to ensure that each participant

has a chance to fully develop their thoughts and share their ideas. Organizing multiple participants to find time in their schedules that would allow for lengthy group interviews that everyone could participate in was difficult. Time also played a role in the development of the video and the post-interview process. After all the participants had given up their time to do the initial interviews, we arranged additional meetings to complete the video project. The participants volunteered to participate in the project without incentive. It has already been discussed that their voluntary commitment to the project is another illustration of their participatory civic attitude; however, I still felt pressure to not impinge on their time more than was necessary. The video project was agreed upon by the participants; however, it was a project that required time to learn about video production and the technology and a great deal of time to construct the actual product. In addition, the timeline for the research project was limited in an effort to collect data with enough time to analyze before the research findings and conclusions were expected to be reported. The prolonged engagement that I had with the participants prior to the project helped to create open relationships, but the lack of prolonged engagement during the actual data collection did limit participants' opportunities to reflect deeply about the process.

The openness and flexibility of the appreciative inquiry method was a strength, but also a challenge especially grounded in the critical and indigenous paradigm. The methodology works to provide participants as much power in the decision making process of the research as possible, but this created challenges in terms of organization, protocols, and time management. For instance, I created guiding questions as a collective document protocol for the video production to help the participants stay focused on the



research questions and manage time wisely. However, the guiding questions limited the participants opportunities for forming their own ideas in terms of what they thought were important to focus on and discuss. Allowing the participants to choose the collective document after the research process was started also made establishing protocols that were consistent with the approved IRB procedures for the process was challenging.

The video is a fun and engaging product, but we might have been able to have deeper conversations and deeper analysis by considering a different final product that was more manageable for our time constraints. We weren't able to analyze the video in terms of graphics, music, or other symbols because of the choice to use a prefabricated video tool called PowToon, which automatically makes some of the choices for you. The decision to use PowToon was based on the issue of time. However, I did not feel like I could influence the participants' decision to create the video because it was suggested by so many groups in the original interviews. Working to find balance between providing the participants power and credible research practices that fit the time constraints was a challenge.

### **Recommendations.**

For future projects using appreciative inquiry I believe the best recommendation would be to consider an ethnographic study as a performative researcher in a natural setting with key informants. An ethnographic study would allow for the time needed to meet with groups several times or for longer periods to develop ideas deeply and fully and to put them into action. An ethnographic study would allow participants more opportunity for reflection and transformation. Transformation is a process that takes time

that cannot be rushed. A natural setting such as a specific class in college or in high school or in a specific community program that is designed for a particular purpose would also help to provide stronger context. The participants ultimately worked on this project because I invited them to participate based on our prior relationship and the requirements for a purposeful sample. However, the participants did not have a strong common purpose. Jocson's (2013) video project was based on a class that students planned to take in order to develop writing and communication skills. Paris's (2011) project was also a class based on language development. These natural settings offered a strong context to develop ideas over time and reflect on the process, which this project lacked.

Reflection is an important part of the appreciative inquiry process. The participants did not get to follow up with the teachers after they viewed the video. Many of the participants have asked since the project concluded what the teachers' comments or thoughts were after viewing the video. This research design did not go to that next step. Yet, the opportunity for teachers to comment on the participants' video and to have the participants respond would be a powerful next step.

In addition, I believe the use of key informants is a critical piece for a research design where the researcher is positioned as an outsider. Key informants help to guide the research process and ensure credibility and authenticity of the findings (Cook-Lynn, 2008). Key informants also ensure the research process is respectful and responsible to the community that the researcher is working with (Cook-Lynn, 2008). Appreciative inquiry is a process that the group progresses through together to create a lasting change for the future, which does not call for key informants. However, the use of key

informants for this project was important since there was a cultural gap between myself as the facilitator and the participants (Cook-Lynn, 2008). The research design included key informants who were participants that have taken part in previous research projects with me in the past. The key informants for this project played a crucial role in the authenticity of the findings. The key informants helped to ensure decolonization of ideas and a fair distribution of power. The key informants were present during the group interviews to help the other participants feel more comfortable and to nudge them to be honest and elaborate on their stories. The key informants also helped to make sure that the research process from start to finish respected the participants individually as well as the community in general. Finally, the key informants worked to help validate the research findings to make sure that the conceptual model that was developed was a fair and appropriate representation of their beliefs and knowledge. Therefore, I would recommend the use of key informants in future appreciative inquiry projects when the primary facilitator is considered an outsider from the group.

The final recommendation is to consider the researcher in an active context. My role as the researcher took on a performative part in the research process because of the need to develop and maintain relationships with the participants, which allowed us to deconstruct traditional views of urban civic identity in an open and honest space (Smith, 2012, Paris, 2011, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, Freire, 1970). Positivist research emphasizes the importance of researchers to maintain their objectivity and neutrality during the research process (Hays & Singh, 2012). However, critical and indigenous research methods recognize that the distance of the researcher may impede opportunities to gain “insider glimpses” (Parris, 2011) that are necessary to ensure the respectful representation

of the participants' ways of knowing (Smith, 2012; Cook-Lynn, 2008, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Outsiders especially are in danger of unintentionally steam rolling over a groups' knowledge, beliefs, and values because they are unaware of the groups' individuality, ways of knowing, and culture (Cook-Lynn, 2008; Heron & Reason, 1997). Gay (2014) explained that our own bias as an outsider can create blind spots that hide information that may be important to the phenomenon for a given group. Therefore, it was important as an outsider that I make every attempt to become an ally of the participants in order gain their trust as well as insider knowledge on their interpretations of the central phenomenon.

In addition, it is difficult for a researcher to be completely neutral and objective because all researchers have a certain bias (Charmaz 2005, 2011). Charmaz (2005) explained that researchers should create design methods that acknowledge bias in order to create credibility in the findings. It was important to the credibility of the project to be honest about that relationship I have with the participants and provide enough description and context that allowed others to recognize the benefit of my role to the research design. Humanizing the research process can increase validity (Paris, 2011; Fine & Weiss, 2005). Taking a performative role can allow the researcher to acknowledge bias and position themselves in a way that contributes to the research trustworthiness through humanizing the process and developing authenticity, and credibility.

In summary, appreciative inquiry provided a unique opportunity to explore participants' identity, challenge traditional views, and encourage participatory action to promote change and transformation. Appreciative inquiry takes time, and requires opportunities for reflection. There is also a need for a specific context in a natural setting

in order for participants to be tied to a common purpose. Thus, the appreciative inquiry process would benefit from an ethnographic study that provides the time needed for the participants and researchers to discover, dream, design, and implement action projects that promote sustainable change. Active involvement of the researcher should be considered in conjunction with key informants that are knowledgeable about the group that is participating. This can humanize the process and lead to authenticity and credibility by prioritizing the voice and action of the participants. Appreciative inquiry is a journey that goes beyond entering a group to simply describe a phenomenon and then leaving. Appreciative inquiry opens the doors for life-long learning that continues to evolve and contribute to the community of practice as well as the directly impacting the participants involved.

### **Conclusion and Project Implications**

Educators can inadvertently perpetuate the cycle of epistemic injustice when they limit students' opportunity to be active agents in their own learning. Hookway (2010) defines two types of epistemic injustice including testimonial injustice and hermeneutic injustice. Testimonial injustice assumes that the person with knowledge lacks credibility, and hermeneutic injustice assumes that the person lacks the conceptual resources that are required for formulating important problems. When students are treated as banks for information to be deposited in, their own knowledge, values, and beliefs are ignored or judged for being invalid or lacking, which can strip them of their own identity. (Brooks, 2008). In an effort to disrupt the cycle of epistemic injustice, the findings of this research project illuminate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that urban youth do have about

their own civic identity and how they view the dynamic process of identity development in and out of the social studies classroom.

Although identity development is constantly evolving, the findings from this project still make an interesting contribution to the field of study. The literature often tries to categorize citizenship in binary relationships (Castro, 2013; Parker, 2012); however, the participants explained that the concept of citizenship cannot be mitigated to a single concept. Gay (2014) suggested that perhaps instead of trying to organize civic identity in terms of “either” “or” that we consider “both.” As educators we need to consider that urban youth civic identity is not necessarily defined as active or passive, congruent or disjuncture (Rubin, 2007), but both and sometimes all of the above. Civic identity is complicated and the sociopolitical factors add additional layers that influence the development. Therefore, if we try and limit urban youth civic identity to a single test score or rate of a particular type of participation, we may be blinded to other assets and strengths that can be celebrated and built upon.

The participants claimed that citizenship was undefined. Undefined does not reflect a sense of apathy, complacency, participatory, responsible, or justice oriented identity. Undefined illustrates a notion of a limitless definition that is based on blends and combinations of civic identity yet to be explored. Undefined citizenship creates opportunity and space for educators to engage in discussions that are open, honest, deconstructing preconceived notions of identity, and promoting concepts of empowerment and uplift.

Social studies teachers’ ideas about how to engage urban youth and develop active, empowered civic identity is beyond the scope of this study. However, I would

hypothesize based on my ten year experience in the classroom that teachers would not assume that students want to be challenged more in the classroom. Yet, the participants in this study consistently expressed their desire for authentic learning experiences that relate citizenship to their lives. They have questions they are curious about. They want to know the behind the scenes concepts of government and citizenship. Educators have an opportunity to develop engaging lessons that connect and relate the reality of the students' world with the content knowledge surrounding civics. Students that are challenged are engaged (Dewey, 1938). Students that are engaged in experiences in realistic contexts will be more prepared to apply their learning in everyday life (Nassir & Hand, 2008).

In conclusion, students come to school and begin each day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Despite the challenges that traditionally marginalized youth face, the participants in this study do believe in the potential for liberty and justice for all. They are excited about their potential as a citizen. They are curious about the opportunities to participate as a citizen. They are ready to be engaged and challenged. They are not defined or limited by their circumstances. The participants are encouraged by those that love them and have demonstrated an ethic of care in their lives. The participants have a sense of their power as citizens of the United States and want to be contributing members to their community through voting, volunteering, and other acts of participation. These participatory urban youth challenge educators to take the time to create authentic learning experiences that will help the next generation grow into empowered, active citizens. Ryan declared, "This is generation wake up call." They are ready to answer.

### **Personal Reflection**

Although it is highly irregular for a researcher to add a personal reflection to their dissertation, this dissertation is a bit irregular in an attempt to humanize the research process. Therefore, I wanted to provide a brief endnote that discusses the tensions that existed as a performative researcher in this process and my positionality. Carolyn Ellis (1997) explained that often academia discounts the subjectivity and personal notions of the researcher. However, research is a process conducted by people for people, thus it can be a humanizing process. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggested that the new eighth movement of qualitative research works to humanize research and reconsider power structures.

My role as the researcher in this project was rooted in strong relationships with the participants prior to the inception of the project, which allowed for the opportunity to reconsider power structures and humanize the process as was discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 3. However, my role did not come without tension. There was a constant struggle to balance the participants' ideas, beliefs, and values with traditionally accepted methods. I felt a responsibility to protect the participants, but also a need to validate the research findings with traditional methods of rigor. It was important to highlight the participants' views and voice, but it was also important to emphasize consistencies, contradictions, and new perspectives from the literature within the community of practice and from my own analysis. I believe that these tensions led to a stronger more authentic process that truly is coherent and credible.

Paris (2011) stated, "Others will judge, but I can control how I represent the youth as I argue for change and understanding as a result of what I learned from them." I am



proud of the work I have done that situates myself as a bridge between academia and those that academia exists to serve, the people within communities. I have made choices from the start of this project that some may view as inconsistent with rigorous research practices. Yet, each choice was made with purpose and intentionality to create a credible research project with findings that contribute to the community of practice while not steam rolling over the participants words or disrespectfully minimizing their voice to simple codes to be analyzed. As researchers when we chose methods that respect the voice of our participants, then we can only add to the credibility and authenticity of our work because our work becomes true reflections of those that we worked with instead of our own interpretations.

Finally, although my relationships with the participants are strong, I recognize that I am still an outsider to the community they are a part of. One of the participants explained one evening as we were talking that traveling to my neighborhood was like coming to an “imaginary world.” I didn’t tell him, but that is how I felt when I first went to his neighborhood. I felt like I was in the middle of a movie because it was hard to believe that some of the conditions that the participants lived in were real. I will always be a White woman with a middle class background from the suburbs; however, now I live with a critical consciousness that the participants taught me. I am so grateful that they chose to open their lives up and share their community with me because I have learned so much about strength, hope, resiliency, and perseverance. I have learned that as researchers we have a responsibility to make sure that our work does not perpetuate stereotypes that make the world more challenging for urban youth and harder for us to be a united community. And I have learned that as researchers we have an opportunity to

respond to a call for action by developing work that moves towards and delivers social justice. I cannot think of more valuable work as a researcher than to join as an ally with amazing young people that are working to make the world a better place.

## REFERENCES

- American Political Science Association Task Force (2004). American democracy in an age of rising inequality: Report of the American political science association task force on inequality and American democracy. *Perspectives on Politics* 2(4): 651-66. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S153759270404040X>
- Anderson, C., Avery, P. G., Pederson, P. V., Smith, E. S., & Sullivan, J. L. (1997). Divergent perspectives on citizenship education: A Q-method study and survey of social studies teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32, 333–364. DOI:10.2307/1163361
- Anyon, J. (1978). Elementary social studies textbooks and legitimating knowledge. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 6(3), 40-55.
- Anyon, J. (1981). Social class and school knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 11(1), 3-42.
- Avery, P. G., & Simmons, A. M. (2001). Civic life as conveyed in United States civics and history textbooks. *International Journal of Social Education*, 15(2), 105-130.
- Banks, J. (2004). Teaching for Social Justice, Diversity, and Citizenship in a Global World. *Educational Forum*, 68(4), 296-305. DOI: 10.1080/00131720408984645
- Banks, J. (2009). Human Rights, Diversity, and Citizenship Education. *Educational Forum*, 73(2), 100-110. DOI: 10.1080/00131720902739478
- Bartels, L. (2008). *Unequal Democracy: The political economy of the new gilded age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Barton, K. (2013). National Council of Social Studies Conference. St. Louis, MO.

- Barton, K. & Levstik, L. (2004). *Teaching History for the Common Good*. New Jersey: Mahwah.
- Beachum, F. (2008). Toward a transformational theory of social justice. In Ira Bogotch et al. (Eds.) *Radicalizing Educational Leadership: Dimensions of Social Justice*, pp. 39-60. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Berglund, K. & Wigren-Kristoferson, C. (2012). Using pictures and artifacts in a PAR process to disclose new wor(l)ds of entrepreneurship. *Action Research*, 10(3), 276-292. DOI: 10.1177/1476750312446297
- Bickmore K. (2008). Social justice and social studies. In Levstik, L and Tyson, C. (Eds.). *Handbook of research in social studies education*. p. 155-171. New York: Routledge.
- Bonet, S. (2011). Educating Muslim American Youth in a Post-9/11 Era: A Critical Review of Policy and Practice. *High School Journal*, 95(1), 46-55.
- Boyle-Baise, M. & Zevin, J. (2009). *Young Citizens of the World : Teaching Elementary Social Studies through Civic Engagement*. New York: Routledge.
- Brooks, J. (2008). Freedom and justice: Conceptual and empirical possibilities for the study and practice of educational leadership. In Ira Bogotch et al. (Eds.) *Radicalizing Educational Leadership: Dimensions of Social Justice*, pp. 61-78. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Carlson, D. (2003). Troubling heroes: Of Rosa Parks, multicultural education, and critical pedagogy. *Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies*, 3(1), 44-61. DOI: 10.1177/1532708602239267

- Castro, A. (2013). What makes a citizen? Critical and multicultural citizenship and preservice teachers' understanding of citizenship skills. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 41*(2), 219-246, DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2013.783522
- Charmaz, K. (2011). Grounded theory methods in social justice research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research, 4th ed.*, p. 359-380. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research, 3rd ed.*, p. 507-535. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Checkoway, B. & Aldana, A. (2013). Four forms of youth civic engagement for diverse democracy. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(11), 1894-1899. DOI: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2013.09.005
- Clarke, H., Egan, B., Fletcher, L., & Ryan, C. (2006). Creating case studies of practice through appreciative inquiry. *Educational Action Research, 14*(3), 407-422. DOI: 10.1080/09650790600847776
- Cook-Lynn, E. (2008). History, myth, and identity in the new Indian story. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y., & Smith, L. (Eds.) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, p. 329- 346. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cooperrider, D. L. (1986). Appreciative Inquiry: Toward a Methodology for Understanding and Enhancing Organizational Innovation. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.

- Cooperrider, D., and Srivasta, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In W.A. Pasmore and W. Woodman (eds), *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 1, p. 129-169. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Cooperrider, D., and Whitney, D. (2005). *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Creswell, J. (2008). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cross, B. (2012). How does community matter: Misrecognition and the participation agenda for children in socially disadvantaged communities. *Ethnography and Education*, 7(3), 311-326.
- Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (2008). Introduction: Critical methodologies and indigenous inquiry. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y., & Smith, L. (Eds.) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, p. 1-21. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dick, B. (2011). Action research literature 2008—2010: Themes and trends. *Action Research*, 9(2), 122-143. DOI: 10.1177/1476750310388055
- Dillard, C. (2008). When the ground is black, the ground is fertile: Exploring endarkened feminist epistemology and healing methodologies in the spirit. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y., & Smith, L. (Eds.) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, p. 277- 292. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Dillard, C. (2001). The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen: Examining an endarkened feminist epistemology in educational research and leadership. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(6), 661-681. DOI: 10.1080/09518390050211565
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: University Press John Wilson and Son.
- Dunbar, C (2008). Critical race theory and indigenous methodologies. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y., & Smith, L. (Eds.) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, p. 85-99. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Downs, D. (2012). Civic education versus civic engagement. *Academic Questions*, 25(3), 343-347.
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton Company.
- Epstein, T. L. (2001). Racial identity and young people's perspectives on social education. *Theory Into Practice*, 40(1), 42-47. DOI: 10.1207/s15430421tip4001\_7
- Fieldhouse, J., & Onyett, S. (2012). Community mental health and social exclusion: Working appreciatively towards inclusion. *Action Research*, 10(4), 356-372. DOI: 10.1177/1476750312451761
- Fine, M., & Weiss, L. (2005). Compositional studies, in two parts: Critical theorizing and analysis on social injustice. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. (3rd ed., pp. 65-84). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Flanagan, C. A., Cumsille, P., Gill, S., & Gallay, L. S. (2007). School and community climates and civic commitments: Patterns for ethnic minority and majority students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99*(2), 421-431. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.99.2.421
- Frankl, V. (1943). *Man's search for meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom*. New York: Continuum Press.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Press.
- Gay, G. (2014). Personal communication on April 28.
- Gergen, K. J. (2003). Action Research and Orders of Democracy. *Action Research, 1*(1), 39-56. DOI: 10.1177/14767503030011004
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. (2002). New terrain in youth development: The promise of a social justice approach. *Social Justice, 29*(4), 82-95.
- Glaser, J. and Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Grant, S., & Humphries, M. (2006). Critical evaluation of appreciative inquiry: Bridging an apparent paradox. *Action Research, 4*(4), 401-418. DOI: 10.1177/1476750306070103
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1989). *Fourth-generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.



- Hackney, S. (1997). *One America, indivisible: A national conversation on American pluralism and identity*. Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities.
- Hart, D., & Atkins, R. (2002). Civic competence in urban youth. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(4), 227-236.
- Hays, D. & Singh, A. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry in Clinical and Educational Settings*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Heron, J., & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3*(3), 274-294.
- Hochschild, J. and Scovronick, N. (2003). *The American dream and the public schools*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ho, L, Alviar-Martin, T, Sim, J., & Yap, P. (2011). Civic disparities: Exploring students' perceptions of citizenship within Singapore's academic tracks. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 39*(2), 203-237.
- Hooks, B. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Hookway, C. (2010). Some Varieties of Epistemic Injustice: Reflections on Fricker. *Episteme*,(7), pp. 151-163. DOI:10.3366/E1742360010000882.
- Hsia, H. (2006). Empowering "foreign brides" and community through praxis-oriented research. *Societies Without Borders, 1*, 93-111.
- Irizarry, J. (2001). Buscando la libertad: Latino youths in search of freedom in school. *Democracy and Education, 19*(1), 1-10.

- Jahromi, P. (2011). American identity in the USA: Youth perspectives. *Applied Developmental Science, 15*(2), 79-93. DOI: 10.1080/10888691.2011.560811
- Jocson, K. (2013). Critical media ethnography: Researching youth media. In D. Parris & M. Winn (Eds.). *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, 106-123. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kahne, J. (2009). Closing the Civic Opportunity Gap: How Schools Can Promote Political Equality. *Social Studies Review, 48*(1), 28-31.
- Kirshner, B. (2009). "Power in Numbers": Youth organizing as a context for exploring civic identity. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 19*(3), 414-440. DOI: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2009.00601.x
- Larson, R. & Hansen, D. (2005). The development of strategic thinking: Learning to impact human systems in a youth activism program. *Human Development, 48*, 327-349.
- Lavallee, L. (2009). Practical application of an indigenous research framework and two qualitative indigenous research methods: Sharing circles and anishnaabe symbol-based reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(1), 21-40.
- Levinson, M. (2012). *No Citizen Left Behind*. Harvard University Press.
- Levinson, M. (2010). The civic empowerment gap: Defining the problem and locating solutions. In L. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement*, 331-361. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

- Ley, R. & Alleman, J. (2012). Meaningful homework: A study of government that utilizes the broader community. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 24(3), 17-22.
- Lemelin, R., Wiersma, E., Trapper, L., Kapashesit, R., Beaulieu, M., & Dowsley, M. (2013). A dialogue and reflection on photohistory: Engaging indigenous communities in research through visual analysis. *Action Research*, 11(1), 92-107. DOI: 10.1177/1476750313476310
- Lincoln, Y. (1997) The sixth (and seventh) moments in qualitative research. *Collaborative Inquiry*, 20. Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, University of Bath.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1995). *Naturalistic Inquiry* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett. (2006). Appreciative inquiry: The power of the unconditional positive question. In P. Reason and H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 189-199). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- MacDonald, S. (2001). British social anthropology. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (p. 60-79). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Malin, H. (2011). American identity development and citizenship education: A summary of perspectives and a call for new research. *Applied Developmental Science*, 15(2), 111-116. DOI: 10.1080/10888691.2011.560811
- Martin, L. & Chiodo, J. (2007). Good Citizenship: What students in rural schools have to say about it. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 35(1), 112-134.

- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mays, N., & Pope, C., (2000). Qualitative research in health care: Assessing quality in qualitative research. *British Medical Journal*, 320, 50-52.
- McGuire, M. & Cole. B. (2008). Using the storypath approach to make local government understandable. *The Social Studies (Washington, D.C.)*, 99(2), 85-90. DOI: 10.3200/tsss.99.2.85-90
- Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Miller-Lane, J., Howard, T., & Espiritu-Halagao, P. (2007). Civic multicultural competence: searching for common ground in democratic education. *Theory and Research in Social Education* 35(4), 551-573.
- Mills, C. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. Oxford University Press.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress Civic Assessment. (2010). Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/civics/>
- Nassir, N. & Hand, V. (2008). From the court to the classroom: Opportunities for engagement, learning and identity in basketball and classroom mathematics. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 17, 143-179.  
DOI:10.1080/10508400801986082
- Nitza, A., Chilisa, B., & Makwinja-Morara, V. (2010). Empowerment and HIV/AIDS prevention for adolescent girls in Botswana. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 35(2), 105-114. doi: 10.1080/01933921003705990
- Oakes, J., Rogers, J., & Lipton, M. (2006). *Learning Power: Organizing for Education and Justice*. Columbia University: Teacher College Press.

- Oraisón, M., & Pérez, A. M. (2009). The school in non-inclusive contexts: Moral education, building citizenship and community development, an Argentinian example. *Part of a special issue: Moral and Citizenship Education in Latin America: Towards Reconciliation, Community Development and Democracy*, 38(4), 513-532. DOI: 10.1080/03057240903321964
- Parker, W. (2012). *Social studies in elementary education*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Paris, D. (2011). "A friend who understand fully:" Notes on humanizing research in a multiethnic youth community. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24(2), 137-149.
- Payne, K. R. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.
- Roper Center for Public Opinion. Retrieved from [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how\\_groups\\_voted/voted\\_12.html](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how_groups_voted/voted_12.html) on June 8, 2014.
- Rubin, B. C. (2007). "There's Still Not Justice": Youth Civic Identity Development Amid Distinct School and Community Contexts. *Teachers College Record*, 109(2), 449-481.
- Ryan, R. & Deci, E. (2003). On assimilating identities to the self: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization and integrity within cultures. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook on Self & Identity* (pp. 253-274). New York: The Guilford Press.

- Santu A., & Ritter, J. (2013). What to teach and how to teach it: Elementary teachers' views on teaching inquiry-based, interdisciplinary Science and Social Studies in urban settings. *The New Educator*, 9(4), 225-286. DOI: 10.1080/1547688X.2013.841489.
- Shiller, J. T. (2013). Preparing for democracy: How community-based organizations build civic engagement among urban youth. *Urban Education*, 48(1), 69-91. DOI: 10.1177/0042085912436761
- Smith (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. (2nd Ed). London: Zed Books.
- Smith, R., & Neill, J. (2005). Examining the possibilities of school transformation for peace in Northern Ireland from a narrative perspective. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(1), 6-32. DOI: 10.1177/1541344604270863
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stanley, W. (2005). Social studies and the social order: Transmission or transformation. *Social Education*, (September), 282-286.
- Starratt, J. (1994). *Building an ethical school: A practical response to the moral crisis in schools*. London: Falmer Press.
- Snarey, J. & Walker, V. (2004). *Race-ing moral formation: African American perspectives on care and justice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Stonebanks, C. (2008). An Islamic perspective on knowledge, knowing, and methodology. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y., & Smith, L. (Eds.) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, p. 293-321. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Thein, A., Guise, M., & Sloan, D. (2012). Exploring the significance of social class identity performance in the English classroom: A case study analysis of a literature circle discussion. *English Education*, (April), 215-253.
- The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and Carnegie Corporation of New York. (2003). *The Civic Mission of Schools*. New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://civicmissionofschoools.org/cmoss/site/campaign/documents/CivicMissionofschoools.pdf>
- Torney-Purta, J. (2001). What adolescents know about citizenship and democracy. *Educational Leadership*, 59(4), 45-50.
- Torney-Purta, J., Wilkenfeld, B., & Barber, C. (2008). How Adolescents in 27 Countries Understand, Support, and Practice Human Rights. *Part of the special section: Young People's Perspectives on the Rights of the Child: Implications for Theory, Research and Practice*, 64(4), 857-880. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00592.x
- Tuck, E. (2009). Re-visioning action: Participatory action research and indigenous theories of change. *Urban Review*, 41(1), 47-65. DOI: 10.1007/s11256-008-0094-x
- Tuck, E. & Yang, K.W. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.) *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 223-248). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Tyack, D. B. (1988). Ways of seeing: An essay on the history of compulsory schooling. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education*, 24-59. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

- U.S Census Report, 2010: Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. New Hampshire: Heinemann.
- Wray-Lake, L., Syvertsen, A. K., & Flanagan, C. A. (2008). Contested Citizenship and Social Exclusion: Adolescent Arab American Immigrants' Views of the Social Contract. *Applied Developmental Science, 12*(2), 84-92. DOI: 10.1080/10888690801997085
- Westheimer, J. & Kahne, J. (2004). Educating the “good: citizen: Political choices and pedagogical goals. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, April, 241-247.
- Yin, R. (2012). *Applications of Case Study Research* (3rd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Youniss, J., & Hart, D. (2005). Intersection of social institutions with civic development. *New Directions for Child & Adolescent Development, (109)*, 73-81.
- Zandee, D. and Cooperrider, D. (2008). Appreciable worlds, inspired inquiry. In P. Reason and H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (2nd ed., pp. 190-198). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



**APPENDIX A**  
**APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Discover Phase**

1. How does the “artifact” describe you as a citizen? (What is the connection between the artifact and who you are as a citizen?)
2. What are the strengths of your civic identity?
3. Share a time when you felt your behavior as a citizen was at its best?
4. What do you value most about your role as a citizen in the United States?
5. What has helped you to become a citizen that chooses to participate in the community?

**Dream Phase**

6. How would you like to better yourself as a citizen?
7. If you had 3 wishes, what would you wish social studies teachers did to help you be a more empowered citizen?
8. What gives you the most hope for other students to become participatory and empowered citizens?
9. When you imagine a social studies classroom that is effectively developing active citizens who are willing to be involved in their community, what do you see?

**Design Phase**

10. What message do you feel like social studies teachers need to hear so that they can help their students become empowered citizens?
11. How would you like to help social studies teachers become more effective at developing their students to be empowered citizens?
12. How do you want to share your message?

13. What do you dare to create to inform social studies teachers on how they can help their students?

## APPENDIX B

## LINE BY LINE OPEN CODING

<p>Gathering place Paying Dividing Accepting everyone</p>	<p>Interviewer asked, What represents citizenship to you?</p> <p>Rashiem said, “The recreation center because like gyms and the YMCA and stuff you have to pay to get in, but the recreation center you don’t gotta pay. So that is everybody from the community. So it’s just like Sam’s Club and Wal-Mart. Anyone can go into Wal-Mart, but everyone can’t come to Sam’s Club. Get what I’m saying. It is more community based than you have to have this money to get in. That’s not really a part of the community. That’s part of the community with money. So it’s like a lower demographic if you ask me, so I think the rec center shows the community because no matter who you is you can get in there.”</p>
<p>Living elsewhere Dividing Being your own person Independence</p>	<p>Ryan said, “When you first said that, a few things came to mind. The first thing that came to mind is shoes. Why did shoes come to mind? I don’t know. It was weird. Well, when I thought about it... citizenship because of your shoes because I think of it like people that don’t live here, some people don’t have shoes at all and the shoes that people do have, usually everybody has the same shoes so like being a citizen is kind of like being your own person in your own country. So it’s like I can do what I want to do so if you like shoes, you can wear any kind of shoes that you wanna wear. If you like shirts, you can wear any kind of shirts you want to wear or pants or hat like in other countries it is like a dress code. You are frowned upon when you wear different stuff. So I kind of thought of it like that.</p>
<p>Representing</p>	<p>Brianna said, “I would say an American</p>

	<p>flag.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “How come?”</p> <p>Brianna said, “Because it represents America.”</p>
Representing	<p>Sheniqua said, “I’ll say a statue.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “A statute. A statue of something particular? Any kind of statue.”</p> <p>Sheniqua said, “Statue of Liberty.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “Why did you chose the Statue of Liberty?”</p> <p>Sheniqua said, “Cause it represents like (pause)(pause) I don’t know.”</p> <p>Interviewer said, “What does it represent to you?”</p> <p>Sheniqua said, “A lot of things.”</p> <p>Interviewer said, “Like what?”</p> <p>Sheniqua said, “People”</p> <p>Interviewer said, “What kind of people?”</p> <p>Sheniqua said, “Presidents and stuff.”</p>
Representing Family Accepting everyone	<p>Kendall said, “ The American Flag.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked: “The American Flag, Why?”</p> <p>Kendall said, “We were raised here. My parents were both in the military. Kind of like the country that we are under. This is where we belong.”</p>
Lacking knowledge Learning	<p>David said, “I would say a question mark.”</p> <p>Interviewer said, “A question mark?”</p>

	David said, "Because personally I don't think I fully understand what being a citizen is. But I guess I'm learning."
Being your own person Individual strength Resiliency	Zay said, "A pole."  David asked, "A pole, why?"  Zay said, "I feel like I stand strong as a citizen. You know. I feel like I can't be knocked down."
Music Connecting emotionally Character	Kenyah said, "Music."  Interviewer asked, "Why?"  Kenyah said, "I like music. Makes me... When I'm ... It changes my mood sometimes."  The interviewer asked Kenyah to expand on her answer in writing later after the interview was transcribed.  Kenyah wrote, "Music sometimes makes people feel a little better, and when people feel happy they're good citizens."
Representing Connection Accepting everyone Society	Tatyana said, "I guess the American Flag."  Interviewer said, "Popular choice. Why would you like to choose the American Flag?"  Tatyana said, "Because citizenship is like... I don't know... representing your country and being of society. So I chose the American flag because it represents the United States just a little bit."
Visualizing Making choices Obeying	Shanquell said, "Posters, bulletin boards."  Interviewer asked, "Why would those things represent citizenship to you?"  Shanquell said, "Because if it is posted

	<p>around there. Then it is something that you should do. At least multiple times...more than once.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “So posters telling you about voting or whatever?”</p> <p>Shanquell said, “Yah.”</p>
<p>Music Connecting emotionally Representing Do something</p>	<p>Chris said, “Pop music.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “Why?”</p> <p>Chris said, “Because it is more positive.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “Do you think citizenship is a positive thing because you said pop music is positive?”</p> <p>Chris said, “Yes.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “How come?”</p> <p>Chris said, “It’s doing something for your country, somewhat, I think.”</p>
<p>Paying</p>	<p>Slim said, “Money.”</p> <p>Interviewer asked, “Why?”</p> <p>Slim said, “Because its money and money runs the world.”</p> <p>Interviewer said. “Popular answer.”</p> <p>Slim said, “You’ve got to buy everything. That’s the government.”</p>

## APPENDIX C

## CODEBOOK

Gathering place	A place for all different types of people to come together
Paying	Give money to someone/institution
Accepting everyone	Allowing everyone to participate
Living elsewhere	Recognition of those living in foreign countries
Dividing	Have and have not's in terms of social and economic resources
Patience	Patience
Thinking through	Ability to make wise choices thoughtfully instead of compulsively
Helping people	Reaching out to do something nice for someone else
Giving back	Sharing resources
Karma	Spiritual reference to help in hopes of being helped in the future
Instinct	Do something without thinking
Initiative	Do something without being asked
Voting	Voting in local, state, and national elections
Having a say so	Right to express oneself and be heard
Freedom	Rights
Empowering change	Action that leads to real change in people/community
Realizing	Change in position can cause new perspective
Telling	Being told to do something by an authority figure
Family	Influences by immediate relatives
Lacking knowledge	"I don't know."
Others influencing	Someone else besides a family member encouraging, sharing, and/or speaking into their lives
Seeing is believing	Being shown or told an actual application
Listening	Hearing advice
Experiencing	Actually taking part in activities
Do something	Being involved in something productive
Do nothing	Not being involved in something productive
Having my own	Being independent with the resources necessary for an intentional quality of life
Teaching for participation	Teach to vote

Engaging	Hands on and/or “fun”
Reading the book	References to the curriculum or specifically the textbook
Behind the scenes	The real world details that are not in the textbook
Differing perspectives	Different ideas
Getting to know people	Teachers building relationships with students
Forgetting	Leaving out certain material
Connecting emotionally	Emotional link or tie
Applying knowledge	Using what is learned in the real, day to day, world
Fear	Teachers worried about stepping out
Stereotyping	Negative bias towards students from people connected to an institution school/law
Adjusting	Make changes based on students learning style
Approaching people	How teachers relate to students
One on one	Teacher to student ratio
Being yourself	Teachers not being “robotic”
Becoming leaders	Students making change
Learning from the past	Students making change based on previous experiences
Being your own person	Not caring what other people say, having your own unique ideas, style, purpose
Taking action	Following through on what you say
Courage	To be yourself
Making choices	Choosing to do something better
Believing	Faith based
Character	Good/positive personal attributes
Legal Citizenship	Immigrants to the United States
Attitude	Personal disposition
Determination	Personal determination
Bring things to the table	Personal attribute
Responsible	Following “rules” (i.e obeying the law)
Representing	Symbols that represent the United States
Staying current	Current events
Apathy	Students not caring
Goals	Setting personal goals
Communication	Sharing with others positive ideas
Knowing	Civic knowledge
Challenging	Classroom work
Respecting	What others say
Learning	Learning new ideas about citizenship
Holding police accountable	Speaking out against police unfairness



Going deeper	Learning more details and the full story about a concept or idea
Visuals	Pictures, maps, globes
Individual	Keeping to yourself
Community	Sense of togetherness
Hope	Problems are becoming less
Disjuncture	Differences between “street law” and government

APPENDIX D

AXIAL CODE PARTICIPANT ILLUSTRATIONS

	Rashiem	Ryan	Sheniqua	Brianna
<b>Individual Student Attributes Related to Character</b>			“Being polite.”	“Graduating from high school.”
<b>Direct Relationship to the Community</b>			Someone who helps what people	A person that helps and helps
<b>Being Your Own Person</b>	“I guess a lot more people are becoming leaders.”	“A citizen is kind of like being your own person in your own country.”	“Self-confident.”	
<b>Learning From Others</b>			Smart Starts because it helps you do positive things	Smart Starts because you can be a part of things in your community
<b>Students Desire for Genuine, Relatable Teachers</b>	“She showed you the behind the scenes.”	“We are just not that kid from last year that sat in this seat.”	“Acknowledge us more.”	“They need to be more enthusiastic about telling us about past events.”
<b>Engaging Teaching Methods</b>	“You have to be able to apply it.”	“She had us doing so much stuff”	“Explore more of what you are learning”	“Bring different people in from the community”

	Kendall	David	Zay	Tatyana
<b>Individual Student Attributes Related to Character</b>		"I felt like I knew what the right thing was, but I wasn't doing it."	"Taking on more responsibility."	
<b>Being Your Own Person</b>		"My words are a direct representation of who I am as a person."	"Strong, I feel like I can't be knocked down."	"I guess that everyone is in their own little bubble."
<b>Students Desire for Genuine, Relatable Teachers</b>	"I wish social studies teachers went more in depth in the topic."	"I feel like if you want the best out of them and like the most enthusiasm out of the them then you gotta make it enthusiastic."	"It's a bond."	"An interactive teacher, I guess. Someone that is getting the class involved."
<b>Engaging Teaching Methods</b>	"I wish they made it more hands on instead of just standing there."	"I feel like field trips, like City Hall or the City House or like let them see."	"Something I don't know exactly what it is, but something that."	"I wish they had more of those things in the classroom."

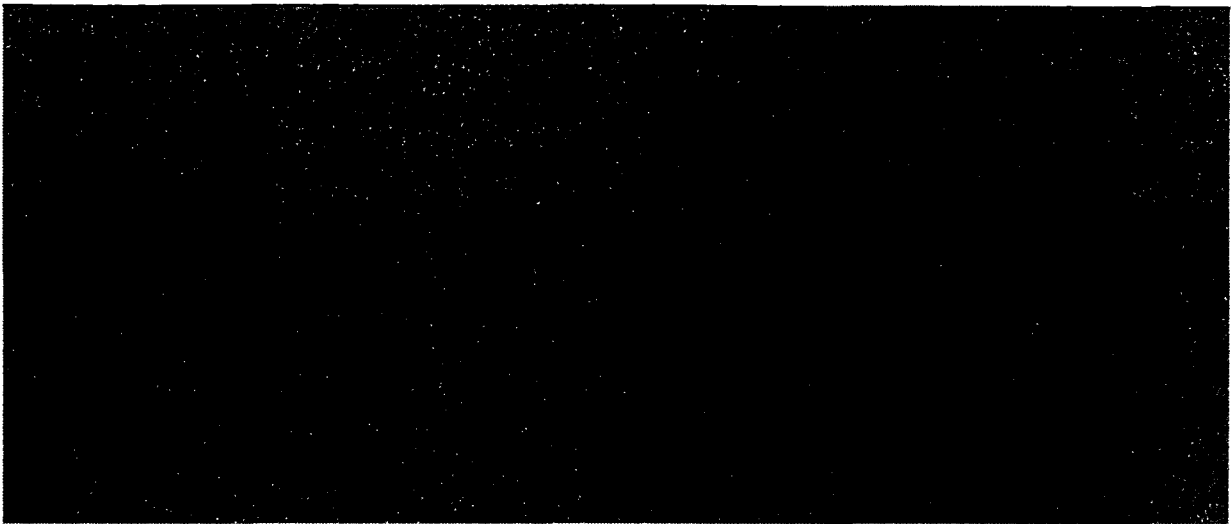


	Shanquell	Chris	Slim	Kenyah
<b>Individual Student Attributes Related to Character</b>	"Being Respectful"	"Cooperative."	"I recycle and I don't break no laws. I'm a good citizen."	"Like being a citizen period. Like being nice and stuff like that."
<b>Being Your Own Person</b>	"It's got to be something that a person wants to do."	"Because everything you do is on yourself."	"When I got my job because I had all the money and stuff right, so I could go out and buy what I wanted."	"I bring a lot of things like, my attitude, my determination."
<b>Students Desire for Genuine, Relatable Teachers</b>	"Spend more time with the students."	"Recreational program, RCHC, SCA."		
<b>Engaging Teaching Methods</b>	"Do more activities based on citizenship."	"Have more active roles with the students."		"Like... with... exercise with..."

APPENDIX E

SELECTIVE CODE PARTICIPANT ILLUSTRATIONS

	Empowering Uplift	Ethic of Care	Authentic Learning Experiences
<b>Rashiem</b>	<p>“Just like you can say you want to help other people. It ain’t nothing to say you want to help people, but to actually do it. But I think when I was actually doing it like I feel like a better person. When you actually do it, it is a whole different thing than saying it.”</p>	<p>“If she needed to be nice, she was nice. If she needed to be mean, she was mean. Whatever she needed to do to get to you, she was going to do that.”</p>	<p>“It’s like that kinesthetic and stuff like everybody learns different. It’s true. You can’t sit there and expect everyone to read these notes and learn.”</p>
<b>Sheniqua</b>	<p>“I would get a job to better myself as a citizen.”</p>	<p>“Acknowledge us more.”</p>	<p>“I think they leave stuff out sometimes.”</p>

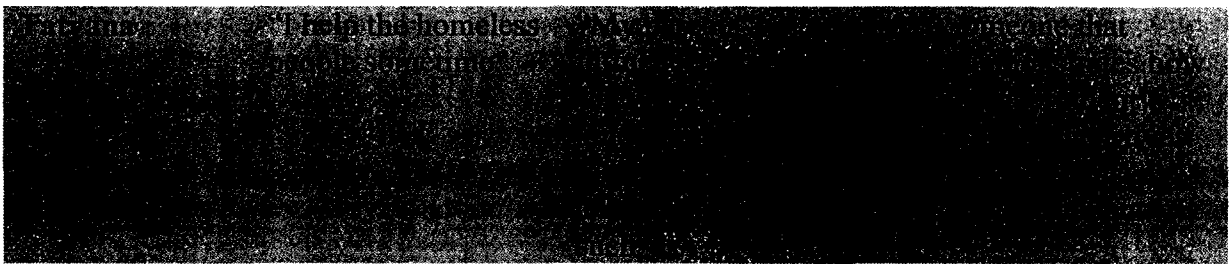


**Zay**

“I’m outgoing as a citizen.”

“You just got to get to know them. You’ve got to get to know all your students.”

“Have more guests come into the building.”

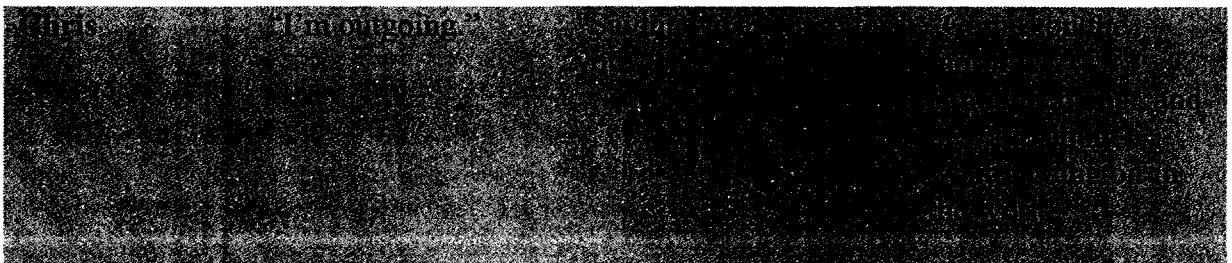


**Kendall**

“I would say my citizenship was at its best when I get involved in everyday life like voting.”

“I feel like they need to go one on one with each student to find out what they do understand and what they don’t understand.”

“I wish they would make it more hands on instead of just standing up their talking about it.”



**Slim**

“Minding my own.”

“Be more understandable about how the students feel.”



**Shanquell**

“I’m honest and trustworthy.”

“Seeing people involved in something.”

“Students more on citizenship.”

---

<b>Kenyah</b>	“My freedom.”	“Because some students don’t get that one on one time, and they don’t learn it like everybody else.”	“I’m just going to go with explain more.”
---------------	---------------	--	---

---



## VITA

**Wendy E. Scott**

Department of Teaching and Learning, #145 Education Building  
Old Dominion University; Norfolk, VA 23529

## EDUCATION

- 2011-Present      Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.  
Ph.D. Candidate
- 2010                Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA.  
Masters of Education
- 2001                University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA.  
Bachelor of Arts in American Studies

## EXPERIENCE

- 2011 – Present      Graduate Teaching Assistant, Darden College of Education,  
Old Dominion University
- 2001 – 2011        Secondary Social Studies Teacher

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

- Scott, W. (Under review). Standardizing the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes for democratic life: A content analysis of Virginia standards of learning and social studies textbooks. *The Social Studies*.
- Scott, W. (2014). *Climbing the mountain*. Paper presented at the Journal of Language and Literacy Education Social Justice Spring Conference. Athens, GA.
- Scott, W. (2013). Education reform for social justice-A review of Professional Capital: Transforming teaching in every school by Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan. *New Educator*. 9(4), 361-364.
- Scott, W. (2013). No greater investment: Changing lives one by one. *Camping Magazine*. October, 18-21.
- Scott, W. (2013). *Stand. Speak. Act*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of National Council of Social Studies. St. Louis, MO.