SUMMERTIME ENRICHMENT IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF THREE URBAN PROGRAMS FOR ECONOMICALLY-DISADVANTAGED MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Educational Studies)
in the University of Michigan
2015

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For Mom.

(This was all your idea.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine participant experiences and instructional practices of a summer service-learning program for economically disadvantaged middle school students. Data were gathered as a part of the National 2012 Summer of Service (SOS) Evaluation, focusing on three urban SOS sites engaging a total of 172 young people. Using a communities of practice (CoP) theoretical framework to illuminate the socially-situated nature of learning and development in the program, the findings highlight two aspects of SOS programming that appeared to support CoP development: (1) a community-building repertoire of norms and rituals, a consistent culture of caring and respect, and the pursuit of the common good; and (2) a youth-led repertoire engaging young people as legitimate peripheral participants that could reposition and negotiate more central work in the community. Regarding participant experiences, pre/post participant surveys demonstrated a mix of mostly null and slightly positive outcomes related to civic engagement constructs. Qualitative interviews with a subsample of 27 focal youth offered multiple benefits of participation including a deepened sense of social responsibility, opportunities for socioemotional growth, and the identification of achievement-oriented pathways to success. However, there was little evidence of academic skill-building, impact on political engagement, or contextualized analyses of community issues.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

In the wake of the Great Recession, our country faces tremendous challenges. Statistics report the largest gap in wealth between the rich and the poor in America since the 1920s (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). Economic mobility has become stagnant. Forty-two percent of children born in poverty will remain there as adults, and 45% of black children born to middle class families will fall into poverty during their lifetimes (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). Research has shown that low-income children and youth often confront multiple environmental stressors caused by exposure to racism, violence, crime, and isolation from support networks (Tolan, Sherrod, Gorman-Smith & Henry, 2004). Unfortunately, our most vulnerable populations of low-income, urban youth are also disproportionately enrolled in failing schools where up to 40% or more of high school students do not graduate on time (America's Promise Alliance, 2014).

Despite the many challenges, however, there are a number of young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds that overcome tremendous obstacles to transition successfully into adulthood. Several decades of research have been devoted to identifying the characteristics of youth and their environments which support healthy adolescent development. The Search Institute identified 40 Developmental Assets that bolster youths' social, civic and intellectual growth which included personal attributes such as self-esteem and motivation to learn, environmental supports at home and in peer networks, and engagement in community

service activities (Search Institute, n.d.). Among these assets, participation in structured, out-of-school time (OST) enrichment programs has been found to be one of the most consistent predictors of school success, civic engagement and resiliency (Scales, Benson, Leffert & Blyth, 2000, p. 43). The field of OST enrichment encompasses a vast and diverse array of opportunities for school-age children and youth after school, on weekends, and in the summer months. In one of the most in-depth studies of OST participation, McLaughlin (2000) tracked the social, academic and civic outcomes of 60 inner-city youth over 10 years. The majority of these youth succeeded in earning post-secondary degrees, finding livable wage jobs, and making a lifelong commitment to serving their communities. McLaughlin reported that "little doubt exists in their minds that the community-based organizations where they spent time after school, on weekends, or in the summer months played a critical role in nurturing their development and in mediating the risk factors in their schools, neighborhoods, and often their families and peer groups" (2000, p. 7). While evidence about the benefits of youth programs continues to mount, the field has drawn attention from educators, parents and policymakers interested in not only creating safe spaces, but also supporting youths' learning and development opportunities outside of school. The current study contributes to this discussion through an in-depth examination of participant experiences and instructional practices in an OST enrichment context.

A 20-Year Journey in the OST Field

The current study has evolved through 20 years of my work in the OST field as a youth worker, curriculum developer, researcher, evaluator, and policy advisor. I have worked on the local, state, and national levels serving within nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and academic institutions. Over the years, I have positioned myself as a "reflective practitioner" engaged in both the design and assessment of OST contexts. Through this work, I have sought to

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bridge theory and practice in the interest of maximizing youths' learning and development opportunities outside of school.

My career began in 1995 when employed as Special Assistant to the Executive Director of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Launched by the Clinton administration and passed into law in 1993, CNCS was created to fulfill a presidential campaign promise to vastly expand domestic volunteerism and college financial aid (Waldman, 1995). The purpose of CNCS and its signature AmeriCorps program was to provide opportunities for citizens to work together giving their time and talents to help solve problems in America (Sagawa, 2010), which included mobilizing young people to serve. As a recent college graduate, I was given the assignment to launch a new national initiative focused on increasing the quantity and quality of service opportunities specifically in structured after-school programs. I visited sites across the country documenting the most promising practices, convening community groups, and presenting a model of "service as a strategy" to OST practitioners. During one of my first trips, I interviewed staff at an afterschool center in Washington State which had recently received praise from the local police department. Located in a small house with a dingy pool table, tiny kitchen, and a meeting room, the modest space seemed to betray its position as a potent crime prevention strategy in the neighborhood. The center had been successful in getting youth off the streets, reducing gang-affiliated violence, engaging young people as leaders in serving their communities, and teaching them life skills along the way. This site visit became one of many where I documented the efforts of dedicated OST professionals working to transform the lives of children and youth during an exciting time of growth and innovation in the field. AmeriCorps had brought an influx of resources for OST programs, and the influence of these federally-funded initiatives could be seen far and wide. Local and national AmeriCorps

conferences brought together the OST community to share ideas about youth-centered

programming, the assets-focused approach, and engaging young people as leaders. I witnessed

first-hand the transition of OST opportunities from prevention programs to positive youth

development.

I left my job at the Corporation for National Service to pursue a master's degree in public

administration at the University of Washington in Seattle. During my studies, I worked as the

Evaluation Director of JustServe AmeriCorps, a multi-site youth violence prevention program

serving low-income neighborhoods across the city. I was tasked with designing a comprehensive

evaluation plan for JustServe that would show the impact of their work on young people and

communities. This was my first experience grappling with the complexities of measuring

outcomes in an enrichment context. Many of us in the OST field knew that our programs made a

difference, but struggled with how to show demonstrable results. A common saying in the field

back then was, "if I can see that I made a connection and helped one young person, then I know

I've done my job." I was troubled by the "one youth" benchmark. I had observed dozens of

afterschool and summer programs where there was obvious bond between staff and youth. I had

recorded countless stories from young people who described how these programs had made a

positive impact on their lives. However, the goals of these programs were often very diffuse, and

the confounding factors were difficult to tease apart. As I struggled to develop instruments at

JustServe, this task prompted a lifelong passion to set the bar high for quality and effectiveness

and to pursue the most effective ways of evaluating OST programs.

As I began exploring evaluation strategies, I also became interested in how OST

enrichment programs might help young people do better in school. In the early years of my

career, there was huge divide between schools and OST programs. As a volunteer reading tutor

at a public elementary school in DC, I remember picking up a student dictionary from the shelf to help a first grade boy look up an unfamiliar word. Not a moment later, a teacher came by, snapped the book shut, and put it back on the shelf. She was giving me a very clear message not to touch her things. Unfortunately, this was a sign of the times when many schools did not value the work of OST programs. In addition, most afterschool centers at that time were play-based with little, if any, academic support. Practitioners boasted about their methods of "disguised learning" which vaguely integrated academic-based competencies within project- or play-based activities. I remember distinctly a professional development video on literacy learning in OST which promoted strategies for disguised learning. One practitioner in the video explained (with a clever smile), "these kids are learning—they just don't *know* they're learning." Although I sympathized with OST providers faced with a youth revolt at the very mention of bringing school work into their out-of-school space, I felt uneasy with an approach that seemed to contradict my understanding of the role of metacognition in the learning process. These experiences led me to pursue the development of OST curriculum designed with conspicuous learning goals. For more than 15 years, I have written and delivered curriculum in a variety of OST contexts serving elementary, middle and high school youth. I designed a series of arts-based activities that included a puppet-making project featuring the stories of influential women in American history where youth were asked to write original scripts based on their characters. I also wrote a series of lesson plans to engage a group of Detroit public high school students in participatory action research mapping the strengths and challenges of their community. Youth were tasked with gathering data through neighborhood interviews and observations, then posting a summary of their findings in a web-based directory of youth-friendly resources for their peers. As the program evolved, the youth took on increasingly complex projects including the

production of videos that dissected their lives coming of age in an economically depressed and racially divided environment. During my two years coordinating the Detroit program, I began to see the OST context as potentially fertile ground for developing youths' awareness of community issues, ability to think critically about economic and social circumstances, and sense of empowerment towards bringing about positive change.

In 2008 while enrolled as a PhD student in education, I received a fellowship from the nonprofit Innovations in Civic Participation to help spearhead a new national initiative, Summer of Service (SOS), designed to increase opportunities for middle schoolers to serve their communities over the summer months. The long-term goal of the SOS model was to cultivate the next generation of civically-empowered citizens with the skills, interests and expertise to actively participate in civic and political affairs now and into adulthood. In collaboration with experts in service-learning and youth civic engagement, I set forth an ambitious agenda for the program that would engage low-income youth as problem solvers and community leaders through 6-7 weeks of full-time community service, leadership training, reflection, team-building, arts and recreational opportunities. The SOS model was designed to expose youth to multiple forms of civic participation including volunteerism, advocacy work, community mapping, and capacity-building efforts (Tysvaer, 2011).

During the reauthorization of the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2009, the Summer of Service initiative received federal funding as part of a national service expansion under the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. SOS pilot projects launched across the country in summer of 2010. However, in an eleventh hour negotiation between the Obama administration and Republican congressional leaders, SOS was defunded in 2011 as part of a budget deal to prevent a government shutdown. In 2012, Innovations in Civic Participation

received funding from the Walmart Foundation to support SOS programs in 11 communities engaging 620 middle school youth. Serving in a reflective practitioner role as both a doctoral candidate and program developer, I provided support to the 2012 SOS pilots in the areas of program evaluation, training, and technical assistance. I also recruited three of the SOS sites to become the focus of my dissertation study.

Overview of the Present Study

Summertime Enrichment in a Community of Practice draws upon data collected from three SOS sites included in the National 2012 Summer of Service Evaluation, a mixed methods study that included pre/post participant surveys, weekly program observations, pre/post staff interviews, and a series of semi-structured interviews with a subsample of focal youth (Tysvaer & Rutherford, 2013). The purpose of this dissertation study is to provide an in-depth examination of program processes and participant experiences in an OST enrichment context. To consider whether particular program processes helped or hindered youths' learning and development, I use a communities of practice (CoP) theoretical framework as a guide. From a CoP perspective, learning is an inherently socially-situated phenomenon, one which transpires when individuals with shared interests form sustained communities to pursue common goals (Lave and Wenger, 1991). My analyses address the following research questions:

1. How were the SOS programs implemented? In particular,

   a. To what extent did the sites resemble communities of practice (CoP) to support the learning and development of youth?

   b. Were there any particular characteristics of SOS programming that appeared to either help or hinder CoP development?

2. What were the benefits associated with participation? In particular,

a. Did youth demonstrate changes in civic engagement skills, attitudes and interests associated with SOS participation, as measured by pre/post participant surveys?

b. Did civic outcomes vary by youths' demographic backgrounds, prior service experience, or site placement?

c. From a qualitative perspective, what did youth appear to take away from their participation in terms of skills, experiences, knowledge and resources?

d. To what extent did youths' interpretations of their SOS experiences build connections to the program's civic themes?

Chapter II. Background includes a review of relevant OST literature and introduces CoP theory as an effective tool for examining learning processes in OST contexts. In Chapter III. Methods, I detail the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analytical procedures. Chapter IV. Results: Program Processes provides a detailed account of SOS instructional practices, as viewed through a CoP lens. Chapter V. Results: Participant Experiences presents findings of mixed methods analyses designed to assess the ways young people benefited from their participation in the program, guided primarily through the perceptions of the youth participants themselves. In the final Chapter VI. Discussion, I build connections among participant experiences and program processes, offering several recommendations for improving or enhancing opportunities for youth to learn and develop in the OST space.

CHAPTER II

Background

The present study seeks to extend scholarship on adolescent learning and development in structured enrichment experiences outside of school. The field of out-of-school time (OST) programs has grown considerably in recent decades, and with this growth comes increased expectations for what can be accomplished in afterschool and summer enrichment contexts. In this chapter, I trace the history of the OST movement and summarize the literature which has sought to define the processes and outcomes associated with OST participation. In the second half of the chapter, I introduce the *communities of practice* (CoP) theoretical framework as an insightful instrument for examining learning processes outside of school. Although CoP theory has rarely been applied to studies of adolescent development, I consider how aspects of OST research intersect with this theoretical frame. In the conclusion of this chapter, I explain how the current study seeks to contribute to this body of work.

History of the OST Movement

In the later part of the 20th century, demographic changes among U.S. families, including growth in single-parent and two-parent working households, increased the demand for safe, structured, and enriching activities that engage children and youth outside of school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; Afterschool Alliance, 2014). In 1994, Carnegie Corporation of New York sounded an alarm with the publication of *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Out-of-School*

Hours, a national report highlighting the lack of productive alternatives for young people facing a myriad of choices detrimental to their development such as alcohol and substance abuse, criminal and gang activity, and unprotected sex. The Carnegie report promoted the proliferation of youth development programs during the non-school hours as a strategy for not only keeping youth safe, but also supporting adolescents' social, emotional, physical, civic, and cognitive development. Since that time, the field of out-of-school time (OST) enrichment programs has become a multi-billion dollar taxpayer investment with funding through such programs as the U.S. Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Cross et al, 2010).

The term "structured out-of-school time enrichment program" encompasses a wide range of activities, learning and developmental goals, curricula, and programming structures in a variety of contexts for K-12 children and youth. Extracurricular activities such as sports and jazz bands, artistic programs in theatre or dance, informal learning environments found in museums, technology-related employment training, and community service clubs may all be considered structured OST enrichment. Researchers have estimated that approximately 60-75% of youth are engaged in at least one structured OST activity (Mahoney, Harris & Eccles, 2006; Bouffard et al., 2006; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007). Overall, Caucasian and African-American children (ages 5-18) spend about 5 hours/week participating in structured OST activities. Bouffard et al. (2006) estimated the median intensity at 1-2 times per week (Mahoney, Harris & Eccles, 2006). Several studies have repeated the finding that low-income youth and Latinos are less likely to be involved in structured OST activities (Faith, Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2007; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Bouffard et al., 2006; Wimer et al., 2006; Pedersen & Seidman, 2005; Jordan & Nettles, 2000).

The history of OST enrichment programs in the U.S. dates back more than 150 years when organizations such as Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA began offering community-based recreational programs (Boys and Girls Club, n.d.; YMCA, n.d.). In the late 1900s, programs grew in response to policy changes in compensatory education and child labor practices which increased the amount of leisure time for adolescents (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert & Parente, 2010). Growth of women in the workforce spiked the demand for after-school and summer programs throughout the latter half of the 20th century (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This earlier wave of "school-age care" offerings often resembled childcare sites with a combination of recreation, arts and crafts, and a strong emphasis on giving kids "downtime." However, as the OST field has grown and become more established, programs have evolved to reflect what McLaughlin (2000) called "intentional learning environments" that embed challenging, educational curricula within project-based activities tailored to youths' skills and interests. OST practices have also spawned the youth development field of study, an interdisciplinary applied developmental science that combines aspects of education, sociology, psychology, and public health (Hirsch, Mekinda & Stawicki, 2010). Multiple college and universities now offer a youth development degree to help prepare professionals for careers in OST programs. In recent years, educators have begun to recognize the value of a youth development approach, prompting new expanded learning partnerships between schools and OST providers to create seamless in-school/out-of-school experiences for students (Gannett, 2012).

However, along with the increased growth and attention comes the realization that OST providers are being asked to do more than ever to meet the social, emotional and educational needs of their young participants (Hirsch, Mekinda & Stawicki, 2010). In particular, pressure from funders and school districts to increase the academic outcomes in the OST space has

prompted a debate in the youth development field about the extent to which afterschool and summer programs can meet academic demands without retreating away from their enrichment foci (Hull, 2008). OST experts have also raised the concern that efforts to extend the school day into the OST space may inequitably track more students from low-income, underperforming schools into remedial programs and away from other types of "middle class" enrichment through drama, music, arts, sports, leadership and other programs (Kirkland & Hull, 2011).

OST Defined

As described above, the field of OST programs represents a vast collection of structured enrichment opportunities for children and youth that take place before and after school, on weekends, and during the summer months. In the literature, these programs have been identified as youth development programs, afterschool programs, summer day camps, organized activities, extracurricular activities, community-based youth programs, and informal learning environments. However, regardless of the label, these contexts share in common the desire to create fun and engaging experiences for young people outside of school that support participants' learning and development. The term "enrichment" distinguishes these contexts from out-of-school interventions that are exclusively targeted to academic support such as one-on-one tutoring and other remedial programs. OST enrichment may include homework help, but typically does not include academic instruction, didactic lesson plans, or competency exams. As young people enter middle school, OST opportunities become increasingly voluntary. A common saying in the field is that participants "vote with their feet" (Westmoreland & Little 2006, p. 3), and therefore the success of OST programs hinges upon providers' abilities to incorporate youth-friendly activities, while also offering sufficient challenge and rigor to satisfy developmental goals.

In addition, common characteristics across the spectrum of OST programs include the integration of a *youth development* approach. At its core, the term "youth development" signifies a shift away from viewing adolescence as a pathway of potential problems and deficits towards a more positive view of adolescence as a destination rich in assets and possibilities (Chan, Carlson, Trickett & Earls, 2003). Youth development refers to both a field of interdisciplinary research and a strategy for intervention implementation. In both cases, researchers and practitioners recognize the active role that young people play as agents in their own development, and thus focus attention on the ways that youth can be supported in cultivating skills, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes conducive to positive development (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert & Parente, 2010; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Based on an extensive review of OST research and predominant theories of adolescent development, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine published a textbook on the key features of positive youth development settings that support healthy physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Among these features (see summary Table 2.1), the researchers highlighted the importance of creating contexts where youth feel a sense of connection and support guided by caring, supportive adults. This textbook also emphasized how OST contexts should challenge youth to take risks, assume leadership roles and exercise autonomy, asserting that "positive development is not something adults do to young people, but rather something that young people do for themselves with a lot of help from parents and others. They are the agents of their own development" (p. 103).

In addition to these key features, youth development programs often embrace a broad perspective regarding what attributes young people need to succeed. The Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets has become a widely adopted OST framework for identifying the "skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and

contributing adults" (Search Institute, n.d.). These assets include aspects of a young person's

social development (e.g. caring and supportive school and home environment, involvement in

community service and other extracurriculars, conflict resolution and interpersonal skills),

cognitive development (e.g. school motivation, homework completion and pleasure reading), and

personal development (e.g. promoting equality and social justice, honesty and responsibility,

sense of purpose and self-esteem). Large-scale surveys of youth have demonstrated a positive

association between developmental assets and multiple "thriving" indices such as school success,

physical health, community contribution, and overcoming adversity (Scales, Benson, Leffert &

Blyth, 2000). While it may not be possible for one program to address all 40 Developmental

Assets, OST providers often subscribe to a holistic view of adolescent development that

acknowledges the psychological, social, cognitive, physical and environmental needs of young

people for making a successful transition into adulthood.

Table 2.1

Features of Positive Developmental Settings (Eccles & Gootman, 2002)

Physical & Psychological Safety	Positive Social Norms
- Safe facilities	- Rules of behavior
- Positive peer group interactions	- Ways of doing things
	- Values and morals
	- Obligations for service
Appropriate Structure	Support for Efficacy and Mattering
- Clear expectations and boundaries	- Empowerment practices that support autonomy
- Continuity and predictability	- Making a real difference in one's community
- Age-appropriate monitoring	- Responsibility
	- Meaningful challenge
Supportive Relationships	Opportunities for Skill-Building
- Caring, connected, responsiveness	- Intentional learning experiences that support physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional & social skills
- Secure attachment	- Multi-literacies
- Good communication	- Social & cultural capital
Opportunities to Belong	Integration of Family, School, and Community Efforts
- Inclusiveness	
- Cultural competence	- Coordination
- Engagement	- Synergy among family, school, and community

Benefits of OST Participation

Over the past three decades, research on the benefits of OST participation has gained considerable momentum among scholars in multiple disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, and public health. Beginning in the 1980s, a pioneering ethnographic study by Health, McLaughlin and colleagues demonstrated a host of positive outcomes associated with participation in community-based programs among at-risk, urban youth (McLaughlin, 2000; Heath, 1999; Heath, 1998; McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1994; Heath & McLaughlin, 1994). Observing 120 community-based OST programs serving 30,000 youth over a 10-year period, the researchers found that participants increased their academic performance, self-esteem, sense of hopefulness about the future, engagement in civic activities, and personal agency (McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1994). The researchers concluded that these programs act as sanctuaries providing youth with resources and support to help them transition successfully into adulthood.

In another pioneering study, Larson and his colleagues collected 15,000 self-reports of activities and engagement from fifth through ninth graders (n=392) who carried electronic pagers that beeped randomly over the course of a week (Larson & Richards, 1991). Data analyses revealed that structured OST programs created a uniquely optimal space for learning and development, as participants reported their highest levels of both intrinsic motivation and concentration on challenging tasks while engaged in enrichment activities (Larson, 2000). What this amounts to, explained Larson, is the potential for the development of *initiative*, which he defined as a core element of positive youth development similar to agency, or the ability "…to be motivated from within and to direct attention and effort toward a challenging goal" (Larson, 2000, p. 170). In the 1990s, a national survey of 6,000 6th-12th grade youth concluded that of all

40 Developmental Assets, "time spent in youth programs appeared to have the most pervasive positive influence in that it was a meaningful predictor" of several youth "thriving" indices including school success, leadership, helping others, maintenance of physical health, and overcoming adversity (Scales, Benson, Leffert & Blyth, 2000, p. 43). These earliest studies helped build the case for OST contexts as potentially fertile ground supporting youths' social, emotional, civic and academic development. The following summary highlights OST research to date in each of these developmental areas.

Social and Emotional Development – A number of studies have linked OST participation to aspects of youths' social and emotional development including measures of self-esteem (Rhodes & Spencer, 2005; Moody, Childs & Sepples, 2003), self-efficacy (Salusky et al, 2014; Berg, Coman & Schensul, 2009; McLaughlin, 2000), agency (Hull & Katz, 2006; Larson, 2000); teamwork skills (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007; Larson, Hansen & Walker, 2005; Rahm, 2002), positive interpersonal relations (Mahoney, Cairns & Farmer, 2003; Barber, Stone, Hunt & Eccles, 2005), and sense of responsibility (Salusky et al, 2014). In a meta-analysis of 69 OST control group studies, researchers found a positive association with participation in project-based enrichment programs and multiple indicators of social and emotional learning including self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-esteem, positive social interactions, and responsible decision-making with respect to drug and alcohol use (Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010). However, the meta-analysis also revealed that these social and emotional benefits of participation accrued in programs that had four implementation criteria for quality programming: (1) clearly defined goals; (2) intentional skill-building training; (3) hands-on, project-based activities; and (4) a graduated series of learning opportunities. Control group studies of OST programs without these four criteria did not show positive social and emotional learning outcomes in the analysis.

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Several qualitative studies of arts-based OST programs have also shown how enrichment contexts can provide space for youths' emotional development through self-expression, identity exploration, and agentive positioning (El-Haj, 2009; Hull & Katz, 2009; Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez & Rodriguez-Muniz, 2006; Vadeboncoeur, 2006; Heath, 1999). These studies have demonstrated how engaging youth in the production of a digital story, hip-hop song, or theatrical skit can present a unique opportunity for young people to share their lived experiences, critically analyze their place in the world, and imagine a positive future. In one ethnographic study of an afterschool program, Hull and Katz (2006) observed over 3.5 years how the construction of personal narratives through digital storytelling provided not only an opportunity for youth to enhance their writing skills, but also offered the "means to reposition themselves as agents in and authors of their own lives" (p. 69). The digital stories often included reflections on significant life incidents and life trajectories. Over time, the storytellers assumed a more agentive role within these narratives demonstrating the ability to "influence present circumstances and future possibilities" (p. 71). Other researchers have dissected this process of reflection and repositioning through creative self-expression in OST programs. In a summer video production program for Arab-American youth, El-Haj (2009) explained how the medium gave youth an "alternative site for civic education" that allowed participants to challenge conceptions of transnational identity in a post-911 world and open up "the possibility of building a politics of inclusion" (p. 15).

Other studies have focused on the development of youths' interpersonal skills in the OST space (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007; Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez & Rodriguez-Muniz, 2006; Larson, Hansen & Walker, 2005; Moody, Childs & Sepples, 2003; Rahm, 2002; Macneril & Krensky, 1996)). In one qualitative study of an after-school leadership club, researchers

documented how the work of designing a youth-led summer day camp helped strengthen participants' abilities to work productively in teams (Larson, Hansen & Walker, 2005). Through an in-depth analysis of participant interviews and weekly meeting observations over several months, the study demonstrated how youth gained collaborative decision-making skills, an appreciation for diversity, and respectful discussion techniques while creating an action plan for the camp. Larson and colleagues described how participants moved from an "egocentric perspective" to a "sociocentric orientation" that respectfully acknowledged the "subjective realities and agency of other team members" (p. 173). The authors described how the youths' collaborative skills appeared to evolve through trial-and-error as they forged ahead with their assignment. In the absence of any explicit team-building training, the adult facilitator served in a reactive capacity intervening only when group dynamics became stalled or conflicted.

The OST literature also includes several studies which illustrate interpersonal development through intentional team-building activities that serve to build solidarity among participants and cultivate a collective identity (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007; Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez & Rodriguez-Muniz, 2006). Research in adolescent development has underscored the importance for young people to experience a sense of belonging as a fundamental aspect of their well-being (Barber, Stone, Hunt & Eccles, 2005; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). This attachment can be particularly important for youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds as a means of mitigating their exposure to negative influences. A number of OST youth activist studies have documented this process of fostering youths' interpersonal skills and awareness through cultivation of a positive collective subculture. In a four-year study of a girls' basketball program in a under resourced, low-performing public high school, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) described how the coaches intentionally

sought to build a counter-culture among students that emphasized high expectations and teamwork over individual achievement. The program was successful not only in winning games, but also in creating a kind of familial support system for participants which extended beyond the basketball court to academic and social development, as well. In a study of the Batey Urbano progressive hip-hop organization in Chicago, researchers demonstrated how an arts-based OST program created space for Puerto Rican youth to take ownership of their work, set high standards for conduct, and find strength in numbers (Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez & Rodriguez-Muniz, 2006). Batey Urbano youth produced and performed original hip-hop music reflective of their lived experiences. This communal setting allowed participants to connect personal stories to social issues regarding race, ethnicity and gentrification. The researchers explained, "While discovering, claiming, and expressing one's identity—and particularly one's ethnic identity—is at the core of self-awareness, realizing that others share that identity leads to social awareness" (p. 187).

Academic Development – A multitude of large-scale, longitudinal quantitative studies have demonstrated a positive association of OST participation and academic achievement through high school and college. For example, in a study of the nationally representative National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) dataset, Jordan and Nettles (2000) found that time spent in structured OST activities during tenth grade was positively associated with educational outcomes at twelfth grade, as measured by standardized test scores in math and science. In another NELS:88 study, researchers found that OST participation in the eighth grade was positively associated with college enrollment seven years later (Zaff, Moore, Papillo & Williams, 2003). Analyses of interview data collected via the 25-year Carolina Longitudinal Study showed that OST participation in middle and high school related positively to educational

attainment at age 20 (Mahoney, Cairns & Farmer, 2003). Researchers of the Carolina study found that OST participation was a stronger predictor of educational attainment than socioeconomic status. In a five-year Maryland study that surveyed youth in grade 8, grade 11, and one year post-high school (n=1,000), participation in organized activities predicted higher grades, educational expectations, and educational attainment (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006).

However, experimental studies examining causal links between OST participation and academic development have been more mixed (Vadeboncouer, 2006; Honig & McDonald, 2005; Moje & Eccles, 2005; Little & Harris, 2003). A meta-analysis of 35 OST experimental evaluations showed modest gains in standardized test scores for both reading (effect sizes ranged from .05 to .13) and math (effect sizes ranged from .09 to .17) (Lauer et al., 2006). Although effect sizes were small by conventional standards, the researchers argued that such overall effects may be "typical for remedial programs" and therefore should not be discounted. The researchers concluded that "OST programs are unlikely to close the achievement gap between at-risk and more advantaged students," but stated, "[n]onetheless, our results suggest that at-risk students who participate in OST programs improve learning outcomes more than at-risk students who do not participate" (Lauer et al, 2006, p. 304). A large-scale study of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program estimated that the overall impact of staying after school on middle school students' academic performance was minimal at best (Dynarski et al, 2003). Data from the 2000-2001 school year included a nationally represented sample of after-school 21st CCLC participants and a matched comparison group in 34 school districts (62 sites) with 4,400 middle school students. The authors concluded that middle school participants had slight increases in school attendance, classroom effort, and math grades, but found no impact

on student classroom performance, disciplinary problems, and grades in English, science and social studies.

Some OST experts have argued that student grades and standardized test scores are not appropriate indicators of program quality (Hull, 2008; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles & Lord, 2005). OST providers have asserted that not only are youth disinterested in tackling academic tasks outside of school, but also that young people need downtime, participants covet their space away from the negative associations of schooling, and academic objectives would harm the appeal of their programs. "If it looks like school, smells like school, [the youth] do not want to have anything to do with it," claimed one afterschool director (Moje & Tysvaer, 2010). Furthermore, as Hull poignantly wrote, the assertion that more school afterschool may lead to standardized achievement gains remains highly suspect: "Never mind that persistent and long-standing academic achievement gaps have not appreciably narrowed through the doing of traditional school. Never mind that underfunded, time-strapped afterschool programs are being asked to show a value added and to achieve results that the entire school day hasn't been able to accomplish" (Hull, 2008, p. xiii).

In response to these concerns, some OST experts have been promoting an alternative approach to academic development in OST space. Rather than mimicking classroom-based instructional practices narrowly focused on test-taking achievement, the alternative approach suggests aligning project-based OST enrichment curricula with academic standards-based competencies such as written and verbal communication, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills (Hill, 2008). The wide adoption of Common Core State Standards in education has placed a premium on cultivating students' higher-order cognitive skills including the ability to think independently, engage in multiple perspective-taking, contextualize arguments with evidence,

and analyze and critique source material (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). There are several examples in the literature where researchers have documented youths' acquisition and application of critical and conceptual thinking skills in an OST environment. For example, an ethnographic study of arts-based youth programs concluded that the collaborative process of creating art in the OST space enhanced youths' ability to analyze and critique artistic compositions, propose hypotheses regarding their own work, and devise plans to solve problems of execution (Heath, Soep & Roach, 1998). In another study of a youth leadership program, participants demonstrated increased strategic thinking skills which included the ability to investigate issues, communicate messages effectively, and identify action plans (Larson & Hansen, 2005). In a summer seminar engaging high school youth in participatory action research to address problems plaguing their underperforming school, researchers reported that participants developed "critical research skills" including their abilities to gather and analyze data, review relevant literature, and produce college-level essays of their findings (Rogers, Morrell & Enyedy, 2007). Organizers of the summer seminar credited their success to program design principles that ensured topics were relevant to youth, teachers and students shared leadership roles, a curricular mix of training followed by opportunities to apply new skills, and a focus on making a measurable impact in the community.

However, there are other OST studies which have highlighted the challenges associated with engaging youth in higher-order thinking skills in enrichment programs (Wilson et al, 2007; Kirshner, O'Donoghue & McLaughlin, 2005; Rahm, 2002). For example, in a study of 13 programs designed to engage middle schoolers in Photovoice service projects in their schools, researchers reported that "many of the projects did not achieve the anticipated depth of thinking and action" that organizers had anticipated (Wilson et al, 2007, p. 253). Only one of the 13

groups conducted background research to explore the root cause of an issue they were discussing. The researchers claimed that youth appeared to lack the ability to think critically on these topics and also appeared reluctant to engage in intellectual work during their afterschool time. The researchers also noted how facilitators appeared ill equipped to scaffold youth participation in academic work. The authors concluded that to support youths' engagement, "a program must accommodate their frequent lack of experience with critical thinking, resistance to writing, and negative attitudes toward school" (p. 256). Similarly, a study of two high school participatory action research projects found that youths' observations of their community were not contextualized with other pieces of data beyond their own perceptions, and therefore did not achieve a critical depth of thinking and analysis (Kirshner, O'Donoghue & McLaughlin, 2005). The authors of this study concluded that youth needed more training in data analysis procedures including understanding the difference between "evidence and speculation" (p. 151).

Civic Development – Understanding the relationship between OST participation and civic development requires first defining the term "civic engagement," as scholars and educators often have disparate views on what constitutes an optimally-engaged citizen (Ravitch & Viteritti, 2001). At its core, civic engagement refers to exercising one's rights and responsibilities as citizens of a democratic society (Sherrod, Torney-Purta & Flanagan, 2010). In the literature on civic development, engagement has been defined as political participation such as voting or contributing money to an election campaign, community involvement through direct service and advocacy work, and feelings of social or personal responsibility towards contributing to the greater good (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins, 2007; Flanagan, Syvertsen & Stout, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Zaff, Moore, Papillo & Williams, 2003; Nie & Hillygus, 2001). In an analysis of citizenship curricula, Westheimer and Kahne

(2004) identified three conceptions of citizenship imbedded within civic coursework: (1) *personally responsible*, the citizen who obeys laws, reflects good character, and volunteers occasionally; (2) *participatory*, the citizen who is knowledgeable of civic and political affairs, engages in service regularly, and takes an active leadership roles in contributing to the community through established organizations, and (3) *justice-oriented*, the citizen who understands root causes of community challenges, has a desire to address social and economic injustices, and works towards systemic changes. Westheimer and Kahne's research showed that civic curricula often privilege one conceptualization of engagement over others.

Building upon these various definitions of citizenship and civic development, the current study adopts a broad conceptualization of civic engagement as a complex set of psychological, behavioral and environmental factors that includes political activity in conventional (e.g. voting, writing letters to officials) and nonconventional (e.g. protest, boycott, demonstration) forms, civic or community-based involvement, a sense of social responsibility, and knowledge of public affairs. Table 3.2 organizes this concept into five dimensions of civic engagement: (1) action, including participation and intent to participate in a variety of civic and political activities; (2) civic skills, the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and organize others toward a common cause; (3) responsibility, also called civic duty, reflecting a desire and willingness to act, as well as a belief that actions will lead to a positive outcome; (4) connections, a map of resources—institutional, individual, and associational—that provide opportunities and support for civic engagement and a sense of feeling valued by adults in the community; and (5) knowledge of public affairs, social issues, and the structural foundations of inequality. Thus, participating in community service or volunteerism is one of many expressions of civic engagement.

Table 2.2

Five Dimensions of Civic Engagement

Characteristics of Civically Engaged Youth	
Categories	Defining Variables

Action	Civic Participation	Political Participation
		Community Service *Conventional*
		Faith-Based Volunteerism Voting / Intent to Vote
		Financial Contributions Contributing Money or
		School- or Community-Based Volunteering on Election
		    Clubs, Associations Writing Letters to Public
		    Membership or Leadership Officials
		Capacity-Building for Lobbying/Advocacy Work
		    Community-Based
		    Organizations *Nonconventional*
		Desire to Help the Community Boycott
		                               Protest March
		                               Demonstration

Skills	Civic Action Competencies Critical Thinking Oral and Written Communication Critical Literacy – print and digital Deliberation Leadership
Responsibility	Personal and Collective Concern for the Common Good Belief in Ability to Make a Difference (civic efficacy) Interest in Helping Others Desire to Combat Injustices Willingness to Act to Bring about Change (civic agency) Empathy / Worldview (Communal vs. Individualistic) Social Tolerance
Connections	Community Resources / Networking (social capital) School- and Community-Based Opportunities Parental Influence Adult Mentors Trust Peer Coalition-Building Feeling Valued by Community
Knowledge	Government and the Public Policy Process Community Resources and Development Sociopolitical Awareness / Social Analysis Social and Political Issues / History / Current Events

The extent to which OST participation may promote a multi-dimensional understanding of civic engagement among youth also remains debated in the literature. Several large-scale quantitative studies have shown an association between OST participation and youths' civic

development including aspects of political participation (e.g. voting, advocacy work, participating in a protest march) and civic participation (e.g. volunteering, serving on a school or neighborhood committee, donating to charitable organization) (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; Zaff, Moore, Papillo & Williams, 2003; Scales, Benson, Leffert & Blyth, 2000; Smith, 1999; Glanville, 1999; Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). In Smith's (1999) study of NELS:88 data, the author found extracurricular activities to be the "most important predictor of young adult civic virtue and political participation" (p. 571). Smith hypothesized that such voluntary associations connect youth to other adults and to the community thereby building social capital resources which become "important components of the political socialization process" (p. 574). Some research has indicated that youth engagement in OST community service is a stronger predictor of civic development, including volunteering, voting, and joining civic organizations, than other types of extracurricular activities (Flanagan, Kim, Collura & Kopish, 2014; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins, 2007; McFarland & Thomas, 2006). Youniss, Yates and colleagues have linked youth service involvement to civic activities such as voting, writing letters to government officials, or participating in a public demonstration later in life (Youniss, McLellan, Su & Yates, 1999; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins, 2007).

The above research supports the theory of a service-induced civic multiplier effect, i.e. youth involvement in community-based volunteerism leading to additional pathways of civic engagement later in life. However, other researchers disagree that community service leads to multiple forms of civic engagement, pointing to studies which demonstrate that young people volunteer out of an interest to "help others," but are less interested in or knowledgeable of conventional political processes (Torney-Purta, 2002; National Association of Secretaries of State, 1999; Serow, 1991; Reidel, 2000; Walker, 2002; Marks, 1994). While none of the scholars

has argued that a desire to help others and grow personally from service experiences is inherently problematic, the critics of community service initiatives have expressed concern over the lack of attention to providing youth with contextual knowledge regarding social and political issues and the role of public affairs in meeting community challenges. Without a focus on larger structural issues, explained Walker (2002), the service becomes equated with charity work, positioning "…social problems as individual concerns needing individual solutions rather than systemic problems that need sustained society-wide attention" (p. 186).

Several scholars have advocated for a more intentional model of community service that would combine local volunteer action with increasing knowledge and awareness of public policy and the underlying systemic issues that contribute to the problems facing communities (Berg, Coman & Schensul, 2009; Torney-Purta, 2002; Walker, 2002; Marks, 1994). In theory, this integration of civic education and community action constitutes the essence of the *service-learning* approach. Service-learning is a pedagogical approach which aims to teach students the principles of civic engagement by providing opportunities for youth to experience first-hand how ordinary citizens can make positive contributions to society (Sagawa, 2010). Unlike more traditional forms of volunteerism, service-learning activities imbed content-area learning goals, reflection and critical thinking opportunities within projects designed to address authentic community needs. Service-learning curricula are structured around a cycle of research, action and reflection that help guide youth through a process of identifying, analyzing and implementing activities designed to promote community change (Kaye, 2004). Some research has concluded that service-learning may be associated with more positive civic engagement outcomes than service alone, such as future voting, volunteering, and discussing political issues (Martin, Neil & Kielsmeier, 2006; Perry & Katula, 2001; Billig, 2000). However, the vast

majority of K-12 service-learning studies have focused on classroom-based curricula, with few (if any) prior studies examining the application of service-learning pedagogy in a structured OST program.

OST Benefits – Summary. The above review of OST literature demonstrates the potential of enrichment programs for supporting the social, emotional, academic and civic development of youth. This body of work has led to some common indicators of quality in OST programming, as outlined in Table 3.1 Features of Positive Development Settings (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). However, the research offers less insight on how to implement these quality features (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert & Parente, 2010; Granger, 2010; Larson & Walker, 2010; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles & Lord, 2005; Eccles & Gootman, 2002) on the " 'rough ground' of practice when daily events, pragmatic realities, and the widely varied personalities of youth enter into the practice" (Larson & Walker, 2010, p. 339). Several OST scholars have called for more nuanced studies that delve deeply into programming practices and link processes to youth outcomes (Granger, 2010; Vadeboncoeur, 2006; Lauer et al., 2006; Honig & McDonald, 2005; Moje & Eccles, 2005; Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles & Lord, 2005).

Examining OST through a Communities of Practice Lens

The current study represents one attempt to examine more closely the "rough ground of practice" in an OST summertime enrichment program. In the absence of any dominant theoretical frameworks in OST scholarship, I employ *communities of practice* (CoP) theory to help guide a closer examination of the ways that OST contexts work to support adolescent learning and development. Broadly defined, a community of practice is any definable group of individuals convened around a shared interest or goal with sustained modes of interaction (Lave

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and Wenger, 1991). In this next section of Chapter II, I provide a definition of the CoP

theoretical framework based on foundational texts by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, followed

by a summary of relevant CoP research. While CoP theory is rarely taken up in the study of

programs serving children and youth, I identify a number of areas where OST literature and CoP

theory intersect.

Communities of Practice Defined

Communities of practice theory was first conceptualized by social anthropologist Jean

Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger in the 1980s, but the roots of CoP theory can be

traced back to Vygotsky's early 20th century work revealing the socially- and culturally-mediated

nature of human development (Lave & Wenger, 1991). From this sociocultural perspective,

theorists assert that learning occurs always as an interaction of learner and context, and therefore

to understand the process of learning, one needs to carefully consider the social, cultural,

historical, structural, and political influences, or *mediators*, which may help to define the context

(Moje & Lewis, 2007; Vadeboncouer, 2006; Lantolf, 2000). Socioculturalism sits opposite more

traditional notions of cognition which narrowly perceive of learning as an interaction between

teacher, student, and instructional material. Paola Freire refers to such individualistic and

hierarchical enactments of learning as the banking model of education where teachers make

deposits of knowledge into student receptors responsible for "receiving, filing, and storing the

deposits" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). By contrast, a socially-situated view of learning presumes that a

prescribed curriculum delivered by a designated authority figure represents only one facet of a

myriad of influences on the learning process. Sociocultural theory is by necessity

interdisciplinary in its approach, and has developed through contributions across multiple

scholarly fields including sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, history and linguistics

(Wenger, 1998). Although only recently gaining momentum as a dominant perspective in scholarly research, sociocultural theorists have asserted that the social, cultural and historical nature of learning has existed throughout human history (Wenger, 1998).

Within the broader context of sociocultural perspectives on learning, *communities of practice* (CoP) theory represents an effort to define the more or less bounded arrangements by which socially-situated learning transpires. Lave and Wenger (1991) developed CoP theory initially through an in-depth analysis of apprenticeship research. Seeking to articulate a more comprehensive theoretical framework that would help explain how people join and share knowledge in educational environments outside of formal schooling, Lave and Wenger looked at a diverse range of primarily adult learning contexts including Mayan midwifery in Mexico, Liberian tailors, and membership in an Alcoholics Anonymous group. Through in-depth analyses of the ways in which newcomers became initiated, supported, legitimated, and promoted through an inbound trajectory towards full participation and master status, Lave and Wenger identified a set of common characteristics that help to define the socially-situated nature of learning. For example, the researchers found that midwives and tailors and nondrinking alcoholics began their involvement in apprenticeship groups as partial participants who could divide their time between observation and meaningful contributions to tasks that gradually increased in scope and complexity. Lave and Wenger called this newcomer role *legitimate peripheral participation*, explaining that novices learn and grow by having "broad access to arenas of mature practice" (p. 110), while initially assuming less consequential responsibilities as authentic contributors within the community.

According to Wenger (1998), there are three primary components that define learning communities: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. The first component,

mutual engagement, refers to the quality of participation in that all members have opportunities to contribute to the practice and meaning-making in the group. While the formation of CoPs may be more or less intentional, and the structure more or less formal, the maintenance of the collective requires sustained mutual engagement over an extended period of time. Communities of practice are distinguished from other types of ad hoc committees by its ongoing pursuit of an internally-manifested collaborative project, interest, or desire to solve a particular problem. This aspect of CoPs has been referred to as the "joint enterprise," or "domain" of the community which gives the group its purpose, in other words, its *"reason d'être"* (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 31). The community's joint enterprise becomes enacted through the third CoP component, a shared repertoire, which includes the tools, actions, discourse, history, stories, and trade secrets that can be utilized, perfected, shared, and replicated among members. It is important to note, however, that Wenger emphasized how CoPs are not static entities and ideally evolve over time, continually adapting new forms of shared repertoire, new opportunities for joint enterprise, and new strategies of mutual engagement.

Combining all three attributes of CoPs together – mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire—the sum of these parts constitutes what Wenger has defined as the "practice," or a "set of common approaches and shared standards that create a basis for action, communication, problem solving, performance, and accountability" (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 38). The practice in a CoP can be thought of as the group's own unique brand-- its modes of communication, conceptual and analytical models, cultural norms, explicit and tacit knowledge, and business processes. Through development of its practice, the CoP "operates as a living curriculum" (p. 38) whereby learning occurs through opportunities to engage in the practice. Thus, teaching in a community of practice does not transpire through the delivery of a

rote set of prescribed lesson plans, but rather as a product of multiple interactions among newcomers and more seasoned members delivering instructional moments in real time.

According to Wenger (1998), communities emerge as a product of both internal and external circumstances—both through the pursuit of a shared interest among members and in response to global relationships. Wenger defined any initiative that bridges or connects one CoP to another as a *boundary practice*, asserting that such linkages are critical for situating the CoP within a broader enterprise. These linkages give communities a larger purpose beyond their borders. Wenger also asserted that boundary practices serve to prevent insularity in a CoP, which can be detrimental to the learning process:

> "Through engagement [in a CoP], competence can become so transparent, locally ingrained, and socially efficacious that it becomes insular: nothing else, no other viewpoint, can even register, let alone create a disturbance or a discontinuity that would spur the history of practice onward. In this way, a community of practice can become an obstacle to learning by entrapping us in its very power to sustain our identity" (p. 175).

Thus, communities of practice benefit from maintaining a kind of border permeability which allows information and resources to flow across communities.

While CoP theory defines learning as the outcome of practice, Wenger (1998) also posited that learning is "first and foremost the ability to negotiate new meaning" (p. 226). The concept of *negotiability* represents a critical component of mutual engagement, defined by Wenger as the "ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration" (p. 201). Adoption occurs when negotiated meanings become absorbed into the practice. Wenger viewed negotiability and adoption as a way for participants—including newcomers—to take "ownership" of the practice, in other words, to build a sense of empowerment and identity as meaningful contributors to the community. It is through negotiation that a diversity of opinions and expertise may merge or

come into conflict, and through the resolution of conflict that members continue to learn and develop.

Therefore, according to communities of practice theory, CoPs constitute a "crucial locus of learning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 132) through members' participation in and negotiation of a social practice. CoP foregrounds the importance of viewing learning as the sum of many parts including the relationships between novices and experts, the opportunities to apply new skills and information to an authentic enterprise, and the engagement in a practice that empowers learners to take actions of consequence in their communities.

Applications of CoP Theory

Since the publication of Lave and Wenger's books in the 1990s, the CoP concept has emerged across multiple disciplines as a dominant framework for understanding, cultivating and enhancing informal contexts for adult learning and collaboration. In early 2000, Wenger co-authored an article in the Harvard Business Review that positioned CoP theory as the key to innovation and best practice dissemination in the knowledge economy, illustrating the productive potential of CoPs with case studies from large corporations such as Hewlett-Packard, Chrysler, and the World Bank (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Since publication of that article, the "communities of practice" concept has extended far and wide to become ubiquitous vernacular among businesses, nonprofit organizations, funders, and government agencies. For example, grant guidelines from Annie E. Casey Foundation, McKnight Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education have asked applicants to demonstrate how they will build "communities of practice" as a key implementation strategy in social and educational interventions. A number of professional associations, such as the National Association of Agriculture Educators and the American Health Information Management Association, have

developed what they call "online communities of practice" that encourage members to communicate with one another through web-based portals. Thus, the term "communities of practice" has become a catch-all for describing groups of professionals that convene and share knowledge around a common mission, career-related interest, or problem.

Academia has published thousands of articles rooted in CoP theory since the 1990s, dominated primarily by qualitative, non-experimental studies of adult formal and informal learning contexts. Research has covered a diverse range of settings including teacher education and in-service professional development (Woodgate-Jones, 2012; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004; Little, 2002; Hodges, 1998; Palinscar et al, 1998), a network of organic farmers (Morgan, 2011), membership in a university-based social justice organization (Curnow, 2013), and the survival of the long-term unemployed in East Germany (Beck, 2007). Although there is little application of CoP theory to contexts engaging children and youth (E. Wenger, personal communication, May 30, 2013), prior studies have begun to complicate notions of the socially-situated nature of learning—exploring some of the nuanced aspects of how communities convene and sustain themselves, as well as the benefits that accrue through membership.

One particular strand in the CoP literature has explored issues of power and privilege as an inherent struggle within communities of practice (Curnow, 2013; Callahan & Tomaszewski, 2007; Contu & Willmott, 2003; Little, 2002; Maynard, 2001; Hodges, 1998). These studies have illuminated both the subtle and overt ways that communities may work to impede diversity in membership, perspectives, and negotiability. For example, a study of teacher "collegial workplace practices" in two high schools demonstrated how a community of practice can simultaneously support professional development among some, while marginalizing and closing off opportunities for growth among others (Little, 2002, p. 919). Through a detailed discourse

analysis of everyday conversations involving small groups of teachers, Little illustrated how competing agendas among educators can shut down individual perspectives and stymie the adoption of new practices. Hodges (1998) conducted a self-study of enrollment in a pre-service early childhood education program demonstrating how the author's own learning and development was hampered by feeling marginalized in the collegiate community. Hodges explained that members of a CoP can experience "…'lags' in participation when a person is engaged in 'doing' and yet is withdrawing from an identification with the practice… These are 'ontological gaps' where normative practice and participation intersect, where the two don't quite touch" (Hodges, 1998, p. 279). Wenger (1998) identified four types of engagement in CoPs: (1) full participation as a community "insider"; (2) non-participation as a community "outsider"; (3) peripheral participation as a form of limited, novice involvement in the community; and (4) marginality which Wenger defined as "restricted, non-participation that leads to outsider or marginal status" (p. 167). It is important to know that peripheral and marginalized forms of participation may sometimes look outwardly similar, such as in moments of observation. However, marginalization does not lead to more central forms of participation, whereas peripherality builds intentionally towards full-participant status (Hodges, 1998).

Another area of tension in the CoP literature revolves around the debate between theoretical and practical learning (Korthagen, 2010). Several studies have shown how engagement in a community of practice privileges practice-based knowledge over more abstract forms of critical or conceptual thinking (Huang, Lubin & Ge, 2011; Rahm, 2002; Barab, Barnett & Squire, 2002). In one four-year study of pre-service teachers, the authors convened a community of practice populated by academic professors and pre-service teachers interested in developing "transformative" teaching practices, a pedagogy responsive to issues of "power,

equity, authority, culture, and pedagogy in schooling" (Barab, Barnett & Squire, 2002, p. 492). The researcher found that students valued sharing and discussing concrete teaching skills, as observed in their classrooms, above abstract, theoretical learning. The students rejected, for the most part, reading the literature that would have contextualized their practicum experiences. In one of the few experimental design studies of CoP learning, pre-service teachers in an information technology course were sorted into two classrooms—one guided by community-building principles and the other offering a more traditional syllabus (Huang, Lubin & Ge, 2011). The researchers found that CoP students worked more collaboratively and spent more time reflecting on their own work, but learned less about technology than the students in a more traditional college course setting. While these studies suggest that learning in a CoP may privilege practical knowledge over more abstract concepts, Korthagen (2010) argued the tension between theory and practice need not exist, promoting a progressive model of cognition where concrete information leads to schematic reasoning and theory-building. The key, explained Korthagen, is that learner begin to "feel the need to bring order into the complexity" through the use of critical and conceptual thinking skills (p. 103).

CoP in OST Research

Although the development of communities of practice theory and its application has been dominated by contexts exclusive to adults, the notion of socially-situated learning need not be age specific. Lave and Wenger's (1991) analysis of research on Mexican midwifery, for example, demonstrated how the education of midwives begins as a child through observation and supportive roles gradually increasing in responsibility. A family, explained Wenger (1998), represents a type of intergenerational CoP tasked with transmitting basic survival skills, among other things. Furthermore, the concept of learning through practice has been a central feature in

predominant educational theories. In the early twentieth century, progressive educator John Dewey argued that students learn best when given the opportunity to actively apply educational concepts to real-world problems, as opposed to abstract thinking (1916/1944). Dewey also emphasized the role that groups play in K-12 education, using the term "community" to describe voluntary associations or groupings in an educational setting with shared norms, experiences and interests from which learning thrives.

Key features of the OST context also align with aspects of CoP theory. For example, several scholars and practitioners have advocated imbedding OST curricula within a collaborative enterprise of real-world, project-based activities (Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010; Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, Donahue & Weimholt, 2008; Kwon, 2008; Macneril and Krensky, 1996). Youth development programming also positions young people as decision makers in the policies and practices that affect their lives (Urban, 2008; Checkoway & Guitierrez, 2006; Chan, Carlson, Trickett & Earls, 2003; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Sometimes referred to as "youth-led" or "youth voice," these types of mutual engagement help grant youth legitimacy in the OST space. Furthermore, research on OST contexts has highlighted how afterschool and summer programs establish social norms and build a culture that youth adopt as their own (Eccles & Gootman, 2002), a kind of shared repertoire among participants and staff.

In one of the very few studies of CoP development in an OST program, Rogers, Morrell and Enyedy (2007) examined how community-building in a youth activist setting supported participants' learning and identity development. According to the researchers, the high school summer program aligned with CoP theory in that youth had voluntarily chosen to participate out of a shared interest in the programming objectives, activities centered around a joint enterprise of improving their public schools, and youth negotiated meaning-making in the group through

multiple leadership opportunities thereby positioning them as legitimate peripheral participants. As time went on, Morrell and colleagues documented the youth gradually taking on more substantive roles in their work as critical researchers and activists exposing inequalities in their public education system. The young activists moved along an inbound trajectory towards full participation eventually repositioning themselves as experts presenting their research to school administrators.

Viewing OST research through a CoP lens also illuminates the complicated roles of adults as "masters" or "full participants" in an intergenerational community. CoP theory asserts that novices learn through mutual engagement in the practice as more seasoned members of the group share their knowledge, provide access to resources, model behaviors, and construct opportunities for newcomers to demonstrate competencies (Kirshner, 2009). Several studies of OST programs have shown how adults and youth struggle to find equilibrium in their shared roles (Larson & Walker, 2010; Kirshner, O'Donoghue & McLaughlin, 2005; Alvermann, Young, Green & Wisenbaker, 1999). Researchers have noted how adults can be reluctant to relinquish their positions as authority figures, and how youth may feel unprepared to step up as leaders (Alvermann, Young, Green & Wisenbaker, 1999). In other cases, OST staff have operated in a reactive mode sitting on the sidelines until youth stall or otherwise become hampered in their work (Larson, Hansen & Walker, 2005). In a three-year study of a youth participatory action research intervention, researchers found that the more adults intervened in youth discussions to scaffold learning and encourage youth to consider multiple perspectives for social problems, the more likely youth developed prosocial solutions to issues of risky teen behaviors (Berg, Coman & Schensel, 2009). Lave and Wenger (1991) cautioned that any CoP may be susceptible to

power struggles, particularly when masters seeks to maintain their position as "pedagogical authoritarians" which resist the contributions of newcomers to the practice.

The Current Study's Contribution to the Literature

The current study works to extend this discussion of how a communities of practice framework may inform our understanding of adolescent learning and development in the OST space. By observing the implementation of a summer camp program at three urban sites, my analyses provide a detailed look at participant experiences and instructional practices in an enrichment context. The mix of quantitative and qualitative measures helps to address gaps in the OST literature by offering a rare opportunity to consider how youth outcomes may connect to particular program processes. In addition, this study contributes to the broader scholarship on socially-situated learning as the findings illuminate some of the complexities of building authentic, intergenerational communities of practice.

CHAPTER III

Methods

In the current case study, I examine participant experiences and instructional practices of a summer service-learning program for economically disadvantaged middle school students. I use a communities of practice (CoP) theoretical framework to illuminate the socially-situated nature of learning and development in a structured, enrichment context outside of school. Data were gathered as a part of the National 2012 Summer of Service (SOS) Evaluation, focusing on three SOS sites engaging a total of 172 young people. In this thesis, I address the following research questions:

1. How were the SOS programs implemented? In particular,

    a. To what extent did the sites resemble communities of practice (CoP) to support the learning and development of youth?

    b. Were there any particular characteristics of SOS programming that appeared to either help or hinder CoP development?

2. What were the benefits associated with participation? In particular,

    a. Did youth demonstrate changes in civic engagement skills, attitudes and interests associated with SOS participation, as measured by pre/post participant surveys?

    b. Did civic outcomes vary by youths' demographic backgrounds, prior service experience, or site placement?

c. From a qualitative perspective, what did youth appear to take away from their participation in terms of skills, experiences, knowledge and resources?

d. To what extent did youths' interpretations of their SOS experiences build connections to the program's civic themes?

Data sources include participant pre/post survey questionnaires, participant and staff interviews, and observational field notes. In this chapter, I outline the program model, sites, participants, and measures, as well as the data collection and analytical procedures. I describe each procedure used to analyze the data, including t-test and regression analyses of pre/post survey items; inferential coding across qualitative data; and the creation of a case-ordered predictor outcome matrix to examine variations in participant experiences. I present results of these analyses in Chapter 4: Program Processes and Chapter 5: Participant Experiences.

The Summer of Service Model

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP), a nonprofit organization, launched the Summer of Service (SOS) program model in 2005. Employing a service-learning methodology, SOS programs engaged young people as problem solvers and community leaders in six or seven weeks of full-time programming that included civic participation, training, reflection, team-building, and recreation. The long-term goal of SOS was to help youth cultivate the skills, knowledge and interests that increase their participation in civic and political affairs now and into adulthood. SOS programs built pathways to civic engagement through a series of project-based learning activities designed to increase or enhance youths' social, civic, and intellectual development (see Appendix A. SOS Goals and Objectives).

The SOS model did not prescribe a particular curriculum or set of lesson plans, but rather offered a framework for building high quality out-of-school service-learning experiences.

Drawing on research in education, youth development, and service-learning, as well as input from OST practitioners and service-learning experts, the SOS model identified nine Elements for Quality SOS Programming: (1) Intentional Program Design and Planning, (2) Meaningful Service, (3) Summer-Style Learning, (4) Youth Voice, (5) Qualified Staffing, (6) School, Community and Family Involvement, (7) Continuity and Intensity, (8) Present, Reflect and Celebrate, and (9) Monitor, Evaluate and Sustain (Tysvaer, 2011). See Table 3.1 for descriptions of each element. SOS programming was designed to expose youth to multiple forms of civic engagement, including aspects of personal responsibility, participatory action and justice-oriented participation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Activities were aligned with service-learning pedagogy which includes an iterative five-phase process of researching, planning, serving, reflecting, and recognizing success. The model placed young people in substantive roles as leaders and decision makers in various programming activities. The SOS model also emphasized the importance of identifying service projects that address authentic community needs in collaboration with local partner organizations. Reflection components encouraged opportunities to delve deeply into the root causes of social problems and explore systemic or policy implications of youths' service work (Tysvaer, 2011).

Table 3.1

Nine Elements for Quality SOS Programming

Element	Description	Key Components
1) Intentional Program Design and Planning	Similar to other types of after-school and summer initiatives, a high quality SOS program is guided by a thoughtful and intentional plan of action.	(a) Well-articulated goals and objectives (b) Well-designed curriculum, materials, and activities aligned with goals (c) Safe and productive spaces (d) Recruitment and retention plan to encourage diverse participation (e) Advance planning and preparation timeline (f) Sustainability and fiscal oversight

2)	Meaningful Service	In SOS programs, service projects are an integral part of the enrichment experience. SOS participants are convened as community problem-solvers, and the service piece becomes the focus of their work.	(a) Meet real needs (b) Integrated within service-learning framework (c) Embrace diversity and teamwork (d) Provides context of larger social, political and economic issues related to their service experiences
3)	Summer-Style Learning	Learning in the summer should be fun, interactive, project-based and intentional. Youth should be aware that they are gaining skills and knowledge that can be helpful in school.	(a) Fun, project-based learning rooted in alternative teaching methods (b) Intentional lesson planning to build skills, knowledge and strategies (c) Responsive to youth interests, strengths and needs (d) Small group and individualized formats (e) Tied to curricular standards (f) Building a path to college and careers
4)	Youth Voice	A primary goal of SOS programming is to foster a new generation of youth leaders empowered to use their knowledge, skills, expertise, and talents to contribute to the common good.	(a) Youth and adults working in partnership (b) Opportunities for substantive decision-making (c) Intentional scaffolding of leadership and communication skills (d) Formalized youth leadership positions
5)	Qualified Staffing	Qualified staff should have knowledge of youth development and service-learning principles, be prepared to work in partnership with youth participants, and show an appreciation for diverse cultural and generational backgrounds.	(a) Low staff-to-student ratios (b) Knowledge of service-learning and youth development principles (c) Supportive, caring relationships (d) Extensive and ongoing staff development (e) Cultural competence
6)	School, Community and Family Involvement	Successful SOS programs enlist the support of a broad and diverse network of partners to help organize service projects, provide training and educational expertise, and link programming to college access.	(a) Formal linkages to schools (b) Community-based collaboratives (c) Higher education as a partner (d) Special roles for parents/guardians
7)	Continuity and Intensity	Service-learning research shows that longer and more intense service experiences make a greater impact on youth than short-term or episodic volunteering.	(a) Maximize summer service time (b) Link SOS to year-round service and learning
8)	Present, Reflect and Celebrate	Quality service-learning experiences include time for youth to present, reflect and celebrate their work in the community.	(a) Incorporate ongoing reflection throughout program (pre, during, post) (b) Reflect on multiple levels (self, group, community) (c) Offer multiple formats for reflection (d) Provide space for in-depth analyses and transformative thinking (e) Opportunities for youth to present work to broader audience (f) Recognize success with a celebratory occasion

9) Monitor, Evaluate and Sustain	In the interest of continuous quality improvement, SOS programming should include multiple opportunities to monitor and evaluate program effectiveness.	(a) Systematic and ongoing data collection to measure progress towards goals (b) Components of a comprehensive evaluation strategy (c) Planning for the future

The SOS Sites

The current case study draws from data collected via the National 2012 Summer of Service Evaluation, a non-experimental mixed methods study designed to examine program processes and participant outcomes in 11 sites across the U.S. Due to proximity to my hometown, I chose three sites located within one large U.S. northeastern city as the focus of my dissertation study: Gilmon Academy (n=30), Linden Hills Community Development Corporation (n=120), and Goodrowe Middle School (n=55).[1] Sites competed for SOS funding through a written application process, which were reviewed by a local out-of-school time intermediary organization which established benchmarks for quality standards. The intermediary selected sites based on their history of and capacity for delivering quality summer programs to middle school students, as well as their ability to articulate a program action plan that aligned with the goals, objectives and quality principles of the SOS model. All three urban sites were coordinated by community-based social service agencies with a longstanding presence in the city. The Linden Hills Community Development Corporation was founded in 1983, and the other two sites were run by a large social service agency founded in 1936. All three sites had been operating after-school and summer programs co-located in public schools for a decade or more. All sites maintained a low staff-to-student ratio of approximately one adult counselor for every 10-15 youth participants. Adult staff included a mix of college-educated youth development professionals, educational consultants, and college student interns. Staff-to-student ratios were

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[1] To protect confidentiality, names of organizations, locations, and individuals are referred to by pseudonyms.

lower on fieldtrips, as required by state and local guidelines, and each of the sites used the city's Summer Youth Employment Program participants, entry-level interns ages 16-24, as additional support staff as needed.

Each of the SOS sites was based in an underperforming public middle school serving economically disadvantaged populations where 75-95% of the student population was eligible for free or reduced lunch. According to state standardized tests, the majority of students in these schools did not meet proficiency scores in English language arts and mathematics for the 2011-12 school year. Among the student population at Gilmon Academy, only 18% tested at or above proficiency levels in English and only 25% proficient in math. Linden Hills middle schoolers tested 30% proficient in English and 39% proficient in math. At Goodrowe Middle, the percentage of middle school students demonstrating proficiency was 22% in English and 36% in math. These scores were substantially lower than the middle school population for the state, which averaged 64% proficient in math and 61% proficient in English. A summary of site characteristics is provided in Table 3.2.

Across the three sites, SOS activities included community service projects, teambuilding workshops, reflection through journaling and other types of mixed media, creative expression through visual and performing arts, physical education, and recreational fieldtrips. None of the SOS sites operated from a single, scripted curriculum or set of lesson plans that guided instruction day-by-day throughout the summer. Rather, site coordinators assembled a calendar of activities with weekly themes and programming objectives that included structured and unstructured time, excerpted lesson plans from published curricula, and new or recycled lesson plans designed by on-site counselors and educational consultants. Programming schedules ran 4-5 days per week for 6-7 weeks, as outlined in Table 3.3.

Although all three sites agreed to align their programs with the SOS model, the implementation of these core elements varied across the three sites. Gilmon Academy engaged 30 middle schoolers in one primary service-learning project, the production of a documentary on "how to be a successful teen," that transpired through a series of weekly activities over the summer. The project began with brainstorming sessions where SOS youth shared their perspectives on several topics related to "teen success." Collaborating with professional evaluators from Gilmon's parent nonprofit organization, youth compared and contrasted their own perspectives with findings from research in education and adolescent development, and distilled this information into a list of essential "teen success" assets. Following these discussions, youth developed and administered a survey instrument and one-on-one interview protocols to gather additional perspectives on these assets. Throughout the summer, participants filmed their activities, and this footage was edited into a 16-minute documentary titled "How to be a Successful Teen in the [Neighborhood]."

At the Linden Hills CDC site, 120 SOS youth were divided into five teams, each named for a college or university that the youth aspired to attend. The curriculum was divided into four strands: service-learning projects, college and career awareness, team-building activities, and arts and recreation. Service work included leading Middle School Preparedness Workshops for incoming fifth graders at their school, facilitating a career-oriented Dream Big art project for elementary school children, and conducting an environmental community needs assessment. SOS youth at Linden Hills also participated in several sessions where they researched college funding options, identified potential careers that interested them, and explored which higher education schools would best meet their needs.

Fifty SOS youth at Goodrowe Primary participated in a variety of short-term service projects interspersed throughout the seven-week program. During the first week, Goodrowe youth facilitated a friendship-themed puppet-making project for children enrolled in a co-located elementary program. Goodrowe youth also organized a social visit to a local senior center, installed new garden boxes adjacent to their school playground, and created an anti-bullying campaign that would launch in the fall. The summer at Goodrowe culminated in a youth-led community carnival, which brought together participants' family members and neighbors for a series of informative and entertaining activities.

Table 3.2

Site Demographics

	Gilmon Academy	Linden Hills CDC	Goodrowe Middle
General Student Population			
School Performance[a]			
% Proficient English Language Arts	18%	30%	22%
% Proficient Math	35%	39%	36%
% Free and Reduced Lunch[b]	75%	95%	78%
Racial/Ethnic Origin[b]			
American Indian or Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%	2%
Black or African American	18%	14%	41%
Hispanic or Latino	80%	75%	48%
Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1%	9%	1%
White	0%	2%	9%
Multiracial	0%	0%	0%
Limited English Proficiency [b]	23%	23%	8%
[a] Performance measured based on 2011-12 State Department of Education standardized tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics for grades 5-8. [b] Data provided by City Department of Education for the 2010-2011 academic year.			

Table 3.3

Summary of Site Schedules and Themes

	Gilmon Academy	Linden Hills CDC	Goodrowe Middle
Program Schedule	Mon – Thurs 9am-6pm Seven weeks	Mon – Fri 9am-5pm Six weeks	Mon – Fri 8am-6pm Seven weeks
SOS Curriculum	-Fundamentals of conducting a research project (survey design, data collection, analysis) -Video Production -Critical Literacy- dissecting images in the media -Healthy Eating Habits	-Theatre of the Oppressed -Team-building workshops -College and career exploration -Self-expression through writing	-Team-building workshops - Classroom, Inc. "West End Law" debate prep -"Real Stories, Real Teens" literacy -Performing arts
Service Projects	-Community Needs Assessment. -"How to be a successful teen" documentary. -Activity leaders for elementary students' theatre arts program.	-Dream Big tutoring and mentoring project with young elementary students. -Middle School Success presentation to rising 5th graders. -Community Needs Assessment.	-Construction of school garden. -Community Needs Assessment. -Community Arts and Education Festival. -Visit to a local senior center.

Participants

SOS sites recruited youth participants from their existing after-school programs, as well as through various outreach efforts to the general student population at partner schools. SOS programs were free to all participants and included breakfast and lunch each day. The programs did not provide a stipend or other type of direct compensation, but offered free weekly recreational trips as incentives to participate. Each site had minimum attendance requirements, and youth were required to participate in at least 125 hours of training and service to be considered program completers. Sites had the capacity to engage a total of 200 middle schoolers over the summer months. With attrition and absences, the sites reported 172 completers (86% completion rate).

Across the sites, youth averaged 12 years old and identified their racial/ethnic

backgrounds as predominately African American (33%) and Hispanic/Latino (39%), with 26%

of youth self-identified as "other" or "multi-racial." There were zero participants who identified

themselves as White on the survey. At each site, about 40-50% of participants were female.

Previous experience with service learning and volunteerism varied significantly across the sites.

Youth at Linden had the least experience with service-learning and volunteerism: fewer than

50% of Linden participants reported having taken a service-learning course in the past year,

compared to 62% at Goodrowe and 72% at Gilmon. Similarly, 44% of Linden participants

reported no volunteer hours in the past year, compared to 34% at Goodrowe and 20% at Gilmon.

Participant background characteristics are summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Participant Background Characteristics

	All Sites (n=175)	Goodrowe (n= 54)	Gilmon (n= 25)	Linden (n=96)
Average Age	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.2
Gender	42% Female	40% Female	50% Female	40% Female
Grade				
Rising 6th	14%	21%	0%	15%
Rising 7th	35%	30%	60%	31%
Rising 8th	36%	34%	28%	40%
Rising 9th	13%	13%	12%	14%
Race/Ethnicity				
Alaskan/Native American	1%	0%	0%	1%
Asian American	1%	0%	0%	1%
African American or Black	33%	48%	16%	29%
Hawaiian or Pacific Isl	0%	0%	0%	0%
White or Caucasian	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic or Latino	39%	20%	24%	53%
Multi-Racial	11%	24%	8%	5%
Other	15%	7%	52%	10%
Prior Service-Learning Coursework	56%	62%	72%	48%
Prior Volunteer Experience	63%	66%	80%	56%
One or more hours of volunteering per week	47%	45%	76%	41%

In addition to the questionnaire data on the 172 youth at these three sites, I gathered in-depth, qualitative data on a convenience sample of 27 focal youth via individual interviews at three time points over the course of the summer. SOS site coordinators were asked to recruit this group of youth interviewees, seeking diverse representation by age, gender, prior out-of-school time enrollment with the provider, and prior service experience. Table 3.5 displays interviewee background characteristics. About half were female, and the sample included youth of all middle school grades—rising 6th through 9th graders. Most (74%) had been enrolled in the provider's after-school or summer program for at least one year, and several of these participants had been enrolled in the provider's out-of-school time programs since early elementary school. The vast majority of interviewees (n=19) had either been born in the neighborhood or moved there as a small child.

During first week interviews, I gathered additional background information on focal youths' motivation for participating in the program. Most of the focal youth (54%) indicated that it was their own personal choice to sign up for the program, while about one-third of the youth explained that a parent or guardian had signed them up. When asked what they would be doing with their time if not participating in SOS, the majority of interviewees (82%) stated that their days would be filled with unstructured, mostly idle time watching television, playing videogames, and/or hanging with friends. Only 5 of 27 interviewees could name an alternative summer camp or other structured enrichment opportunity that would fill the void if their current SOS provider closed shop. The most common reasons that focal youth shared for joining SOS were to have fun and/or to avoid being bored or unsupervised at home. Only 6 of the 27 interviewees (22%) identified helping the community as a motivation for enrollment.

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In addition, data collected via first week interviews suggest that focal youth brought to the program a variety of experiences, attitudes and beliefs about being civically and politically engaged. Most of the interviewees (78%) could describe one or more prior experiences they had volunteering in the community. Many of the youth recalled episodic, direct service projects where they cleaned a park or picked up trash around their school, delivered Meals on Wheels, collected canned goods for the poor, or helped a teacher organize the classroom. Others described experiences that lasted over prolonged periods of time ("From sixth grade through eighth grade, I was part of the Green Group at my school that built community gardens..."), required more substantial levels of responsibility ("I've been helping out after-school with the little kids…"), and/or offered different types of engagement beyond direct service ("When we had a protest, I was there… and twice I've given a speech to [the mayor] about how they shouldn't close down the after-school.").

All interviewees reported that they planned to vote when they turned 18 with the exception of two youth who were undecided. When asked if they were interested in "getting involved in politics," about 50% of the focal participants responded in a positive way. Some of these "politically interested" youth described their recent involvement in a successful campaign, organized by their SOS provider, to restore after-school funding. These youth also indicated a willingness to repeat their engagement, which included demonstrations on the steps of city hall, if called upon again. Others expressed interest in politics, but acknowledged a lack of background information on how government works, the platforms of political officials, and/or the substance of policy issues. About 50% of interviewees responded negatively to the idea of "getting involved in politics." Several of these "politically disinterested" youth appeared confused by the question and asked for clarification on the definition of "politics." Others stated

that politics is "…just not my thing at all." For some youth, the term "politics" conjured negative connotations. One youth told me, "I don't like politics. I think it's kind of boring. It's just too much numbers, and I'm not good at math. And it's too much… too much stress for summer."

Based on these interview data, I created four categories of civic engagement profiles among focal participants at entry into the SOS program:

- *Disengaged* – youth who expressed no prior volunteer experience and no interest in political involvement (n=3).

- *Community-based volunteer* – youth who shared some prior volunteerism experience primarily through episodic, direct service opportunities, but appeared disinterested in political involvement (n=10).

- *Multiply engaged* – youth who expressed interest and experience in both civic and political engagement (n=11).

- *Politically interested* - youth who expressed an interest and/or experience in politics, but had no prior community service experience (n=3).

Table 3.5

Focal Youth Background Characteristics

	All Sites (n=27)	Goodrowe (n=8)	Gilmon (n=9)	Linden (n=10)
Demographics				
Gender (# Female)	14	4	5	5
Grade				
Rising 6th	4	1		3
Rising 7th	12	3	6	3
Rising 8th	7	3	1	3
Rising 9th	4	1	2	1
Minority Status	27	8	9	10
9+ years living in the community (predominantly low-income)	19	7	6	6
Summer Enrichment Opportunities				
Structured Alternatives to SOS Participation	5	3	2	0
Prior Civic/Political Engagement Profile				
Disengaged	3	1	2	0
Community-Based Volunteer	10	4	4	2
Multiply Engaged	11	3	2	6
Politically Motivated	3	0	1	2

Data Collection Procedures

All data were collected as part of the 2012 National Summer of Service Evaluation, a mixed methods study of program implementation and participant outcomes. Serving in a multi-functional capacity as a reflective practitioner with the project, I assumed responsibilities as program developer, lead evaluator, and training and technical assistance advisor. As program developer, I drafted the SOS Toolkit which outlined programming goals and objectives, provided quality standards for program implementation, and offered a series of sample activities and lesson plans. As the evaluator, I designed the program logic model, identified key measurement indicators, drafted interview and observation protocols, and developed a data collection plan. In my role as training and technical assistance advisor, I conducted a pre-program, full-day training

for SOS site coordinators on quality standards and evaluation components. Throughout the summer, I also had weekly discussions with site coordinators to gather their feedback on the model and offer suggestions for program enhancements. In some cases, I designed and delivered new curriculum in collaboration with site staff and youth participants.

The evaluation consisted of both quantitative and qualitative measures designed to capture participants' civic, social and intellectual outcomes, as well as assess the quality of program implementation. The mixed methods design resembled what Rallis and Rossman (2003) referred to as *component expansion design* whereby both quantitative and qualitative tools carried equal weight in the analyses. Results are thus presented side-by-side with complementary and contradictory findings noted.

The primary source of quantitative data came from pre/post participant survey questionnaires (copies of instruments are provided in Appendices B and C). Program staff administered participant surveys in the first three days and last three days of the program. Among the 172 SOS completers, I received 109 valid and matched pre/post surveys, which represented an overall response rate of 63% (see Table 3.6). The content of survey questionnaires is described below.

Table 3.6

Pre/Post Participant Survey Response Rates by Site and Aggregate

Site (participant slots)	Program Completers	Pre Surveys	Post Surveys	Match Pre/Post (Response Rate)
Goodrowe (50)	50	54	48	39 (78%)
Gilmon (30)	27	25	24	20 (74%)
Linden (120)	95	96	59	50 (53%)
TOTAL	172	175	131	109 (63%)

Qualitative data sources included semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, informal discussion groups, and observational field notes. Copies of interview protocols are included in the appendix. Prior to program start-up, I conducted in-person, semi-structured interviews with each of the site coordinators in May 2012. In September 2012, approximately three weeks after program completion, I conducted final interviews with site coordinators via telephone. Staff interviews were approximately 30-45 minutes in length and had three primary objectives: (1) to assess the alignment of program implementation to the quality SOS principles; (2) to document the goals and accomplishments of the program; and (3) to gather feedback on the strengths and challenges of engaging youth in summertime service-learning. All staff interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Focal youth participants (n=27) were interviewed one-on-one at three time points during the beginning, middle and end of program. I conducted all participant interviews on site, which averaged approximately 20-30 minutes in length. I tape recorded and transcribed these discussions and developed weekly memos that summarized results. Topics covered in the semi-structured participant interviews included youths' prior civic and political engagement, program highlights, benefits of SOS participation, leadership and team-building opportunities, and interest in future civic and political engagement (see interview questions in Appendices E., F. and G.). Some questions evolved over time as I reviewed analytical memos and identified potential themes in the data. For example, participants' interest in whether I had met President Obama prompted a series of interview questions regarding youths' background knowledge of the President and the upcoming presidential election.

Throughout the program, I visited each site weekly for an average of six hours. During my visits, I observed various programming sessions and activities, conducted formal and

informal interviews, and participated in a number of "check-in" sessions with program staff. On site, I was often the only Caucasian, non-Hispanic person and the only visitor from outside the community. However, despite my outsider status, I felt welcomed by both the staff and youth participants. Many of the youth seemed friendly and curious asking numerous questions about my life in Washington, DC, and my experiences as an evaluator. Staff appeared open and willing to discuss with me the challenges and opportunities of the summer service-learning model. On several occasions, our collaborative discussions would generate new content that was incorporated into programming activities that I observed in subsequent weeks. I used constant comparative analysis techniques (Strauss, 1987) to document my observations. I reviewed and transcribed my field notes weekly, extended my interpretations of events in additional commentary, and generated a list of future research questions to pursue through observations and interviews.

Key Measures

Pre/Post Participant Surveys - The content of the pre/post participant surveys was adapted from instruments developed by a team of service-learning experts led by Alan Melchior at the Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University (Melchior, 2011). The survey consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions designed to measure youths' civic engagement skills, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and desire to participate in future civic affairs. Youth were asked to rate on a 1-5 scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) their agreement with statements such as "When I grow up, I plan to volunteer with a group that helps make the community better" and "I have talents that can be useful for improving or enhancing my community."

Survey items were designed to measure five key constructs related to civic development:

- *Action/Intent* – Capturing the youths' interest or desire to participate in future civic activity.

- *Civic Skills* – Measuring youths' self-assessment of their ability to think critically, communicate, and collaborate to promote a civic agenda.

- *Social Responsibility* – Examining one's sense of social consciousness and sense of obligation in supporting the common good.

- *Community Connections* – Surveying participants' access to networks, appreciation for diversity, and belief in collective efficacy.

- *Civic Knowledge* – Capturing youths' self-assessments of their understanding of public policy processes.

Table 3.6 maps individual survey items to each of the above civic engagement constructs.

An additional 11 post-only items asked youth to self-assess, at the beginning (retroactively) and end of summer, their abilities to perform several civic action skills including ability to research a community issue, manage their time effectively, and work collaboratively with their peers. These items were recorded on a 1-4 scale (1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=pretty well, 4=very well). The survey also captured youths' demographic information including age, grade, gender, and race/ethnicity. Prior service experience was measured by two items: (a) participation in one or more classes in the past year that involved service projects (yes/no response); and (b) during the last school year, about how many hours were spent each week volunteering/providing community service (0= no hours, 1= less than one hour per week, 2= one to three hours per week, 3= four to six hours per week, 4= seven or more hours per week).

Table 3.7

Civic Development Constructs

Civic Engagement Outcomes	Pre/Post Participant Surveys	Participant Interviews
Action/Intent: - Future civic participation	-When I grow up, I plan to volunteer with a group that helps make the community better. (Q3) -After this summer, I plan to continue volunteering to help improve my community. (Q8)	-Post participant interviews: Q20, 21, 22
Skills: - Civic Action Competencies	-See post-only Q21 items b-l. - I know how to design and do a service project in my community. (Q20)	-Post participant interviews: Q12, 15, 16 -Unstructured Weekly Participant Interviews.
Skills: - Critical Thinking	-See post-only Q21 items c and i. -It's important to consider the pros and cons of an issue before making a final decision. (Q4)	-Post participant interviews: Q18. -Unstructured Weekly Participant Interviews.
Responsibility: - Civic Efficacy	-I believe I can make a difference in my community. (Q1) -By working with others, I can make an important contribution to the world around me. (Q15) -I have talents that can be useful for improving or enhancing my community. (Q16)	-Unstructured Weekly Participant Interviews.
Responsibility: - Civic Agency	-Doing something that helps others is important to me. (Q2) -I feel like I can stand up for what I think is right, even if my friends disagree. (Q7) -It is my responsibility to work with others in helping solve community problems. (Q19) -I try to help others when I see a need. (Q10)	-Post participant interviews: Q12
Responsibility: - Concern for common good	-We need to work harder to ensure that everyone has a fair chance at success in America. (Q5)	
Connections: - Appreciation for diversity	-I prefer to spend time with people who think, look, and act just like me. (Q6) -People can learn a lot from spending time with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. (Q17)	
Connections: - Collective efficacy	-By coming together with others in my community, we can tackle some big problems. (Q12)	-Post participant interviews: Q17
Connections: - People and org contacts in the community	-There are adults in my community that value my opinions. (Q9) -I know who to ask for help to get something done in my community. (Q11) -I know of organizations in my community that offer fun and educational things to do outside of school. (Q13)	-Post participant interviews: Q18, 19 -Unstructured Weekly Participant Interviews.
Knowledge: - Understanding of how to influence public policy	-I know several ways that young people can work to influence the rules and laws that affect their lives. (Q14)	-Post participant interviews: Q18, 19 -Unstructured Weekly Participant Interviews.
Knowledge: - Context / critical reflection		-Post participant interviews: Q11, 13 -Unstructured Weekly Participant Interviews.

Knowledge:		-Post participant
- Content knowledge		interviews: Q11, 13
		-Unstructured Weekly
		Participant Interviews.

Data Analysis Procedures: Program Processes

I used the following analytical procedures to examine particular aspects of SOS program

implementation, specifically:

1a. To what extent did the sites resemble communities of practice (CoP) to support the

learning and development of youth?

1b. Were there any particular characteristics of SOS programming that appeared to either

help or hinder CoP development?

To answer these questions, I examined qualitative process data from field notes and interviews

via constant comparative analysis using a three-step open, axial and selective coding procedure

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I began the process by manually open coding hardcopies of the first

two weeks of field notes using an inductive scheme (Strauss, 1987) that broadly identified an

exhaustive list of program activities/content (curriculum), techniques/methods (instructional

strategies), context/environment (physical conditions), interactions (relationships, discourse), and

consequences (performance and youth engagement). Next, I drew by hand several possible axial

coding structures that grouped together open codes into logical themes. I compared these themes

to aspects of the communities of practice theoretical framework and found substantial overlap in

two groups of codes, which I labeled the "community-building repertoire" and the "youth-led

repertoire." I adopted the CoP term "repertoire" to connote both the explicit and the tacit

characteristics of community participation including the "language, tools, documents, images,

symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedures, regulations and contracts," as well as the "subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognizable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views" (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). I labeled "community-building" the examples of sites' repertoires that explicitly or implicitly worked to coalesce membership and give the sites a sense of collective identity. I often thought of the community-building characteristics as a type of branding that gave the group its unique culture. Program ground rules, routines, expectations, common verbal and non-verbal language and ways of interacting were all coded as part of the sites' community-building repertoires. I labeled "youth-led repertoire" examples in the data where instructional practices appeared to prepare, support, or create space for youth to take on more substantive and consequential roles in the program. Sites' youth-led repertoires included the application of youths' assets to various programming activities, their contributions to meaning-making in group discussions, and opportunities to reposition themselves as facilitators and role models. For example, at each site youth-led practices involved engaging participants as facilitators leading others in a group activity. As I delved deeper into my analyses, I began to understand sites' youth-led repertoires as a form of legitimate peripheral participation in the SOS programs, a topic which I explore in detail in Chapter Four.

Once these two axial categories were established, I imported qualitative data into NVivo software to selectively code for community-building and youth-led characteristics. I labeled 73 community-building references and 111 youth-led references throughout the data. I used the tree node function in NVivo to highlight specific aspects or sub-themes of the programs' community-building and youth-led repertoires. The predominant sub-themes that emerged regarding community-building were norms and rituals, social cohesion, and joint enterprise.   Predominant

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sub-themes of sites' youth-led repertoires were capitalizing on youth assets and engaging in youth/adult shared roles. I organized the presentation of results in Chapter Four around these prevalent sub-themes, seeking to highlight data exemplars where the practices of the SOS programs appeared to align most closely with the CoP conceptual framework. These exemplars did not necessarily represent common practices across all three SOS sites. For example, my discussion of youth-adult shared roles illustrates how some staff served as role models drawing upon their own personal experiences of overcoming adversity to educate participants, similar to how a master might embody the full trajectory of experiences in an apprenticeship community. However, I could not make claims as to the frequency and intentionality of role modeling practices in the programs based on the available observational data. Rather, I use the role modeling illustration to show where aspects of SOS programming and CoP theory appeared to intersect, suggesting a potential promising practice in program implementation.

Data Analysis Procedures: Participant Experiences

Quantitative Analysis Procedures

I used the following quantitative analytical procedures to assess youths' civic outcomes associated with participation, specifically:

2a. Did youth demonstrate changes in civic engagement skills, attitudes and interests associated with SOS participation, as measured by pre/post participant surveys?

2b. Did civic outcomes vary by youths' demographic backgrounds, prior service experience, or site placement?

Factor Analysis – I confirmed constructs using maximum likelihood factor analysis with varimax rotation and eigenvalues greater than one. I tested the model fit using Cronbach's alpha

reliability scores. Initially, items were grouped according to the theoretical structure created by Melchior (2011). However, because some items had been omitted from the original instrument to shorten the survey, initial reliability scores appeared unacceptably low (< .70) (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, I performed additional exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to assess whether combining complementary constructs would improve the overall fit. This process produced three civic engagement factors (see Table 3.8):

- *Future Civic Participation*: the average of two survey items that measure youths' interest in volunteering in the community into the school year and into adulthood.

- *Networks and Pathways to Engagement*: the average of five survey items measuring youths' awareness of community resources, connection to adults, knowledge of ways that young people can influence public policy.

- *Social Responsibility*: the average of nine survey items designed to measure youths' sense of civic agency, collective efficacy and concern for the common good.

I included two additional measures in quantitative analyses as single items due to the fact that these items either did not factor or did not improve the reliability scores of the above constructs:

- *Service Project Design*: "I know how to design and do a service project in my community."

- *Appreciation for Diversity*: "I prefer to spend time with people who think, look, and act just like me." (reversed scale: strongly agree=1, agree=2, neutral=3, disagree=4, strongly disagree=5)

T-Tests - I calculated differences in pre/post responses on the five civic constructs (Future Civic Participation, Networks and Pathways to Engagement, Social Responsibility, Service

Project Design, and Appreciation for Diversity) with a series of paired sample t-tests for the full

sample and disaggregated by site. Changes in youths' self-perceived civic skills were also

assessed via paired sample t-tests across all sites.

Regression Analyses – To examine if civic outcomes varied for particular subgroups of

participants, I conducted a series of multiple linear regression analyses. Prior research has shown

that females, older youth, and African Americans (as compared to Latinos) are more likely to

engage in some types of civic activity, and therefore perhaps would be more responsive to the

program's civic themes (Lopez & Marcelo, 2007; Marcelo, Lopez & Kirby, 2007). I also

hypothesized that youth with prior volunteerism and service-learning experience would be more

receptive to the program's civic themes, and thus demonstrate greater gains in civic engagement

constructs. I designed four multiple linear regression models with the following post-test

dependent variables: Model I. Service Project Design, Model II. Social Responsibility, Model

III. Future Civic Participation, and Model IV. Networks and Pathways to Engagement. I did not

include Appreciation for Diversity as a dependent variable due to the fact that none of the t-tests

produced statistically significant differences relative to this survey item. Independent variables

included race/ethnicity, age, gender, prior service-learning coursework, prior volunteerism, site,

and the relevant pre-test scores associated with the dependent variable.

Table 3.8

Survey Items Used to Create Civic Engagement Constructs

Survey Items	Mean (SD) Pre-Test	Mean (SD) Post-Test	Cronbach's α (pre-test)	Cronbach's α (post-test)
Appreciation for Diversity -I prefer to spend time with people who think, look, and act just like me.	2.91 (1.23)	2.98 (1.21)	n/a	n/a
Service Project Design -I know how to design and do a service project in my community.	3.34 (1.12)	3.66 (1.03)	n/a	n/a

	3.85 (.68)	3.96 (.58)	.854	.771
Social Responsibility				
-I believe I can make a difference in my community.				
-By working with others, I can make an important contribution to the world around me.				
-I have talents that can be useful for improving or enhancing my community.				
-By coming together with others in my community, we can tackle some big problems.				
-Doing something that helps others is important to me.				
-I feel like I can stand up for what I think is right, even if my friends disagree.				
-It is my responsibility to work with others in helping solve community problems.				
-I try to help others when I see a need.				
-We need to work harder to ensure that everyone has a fair chance at success in America.				
Future Civic Involvement	3.36 (.93)	3.57 (.91)	.716	.720
-When I grow up, I plan to volunteer with a group that helps make the community better.				
-After this summer, I plan to continue volunteering to help improve my community.				
Civic Networks & Pathways	3.69 (.70)	3.72 (.71)	.748	.740
-There are adults in my community that value my opinions.				
-I know who to ask for help to get something done in my community.				
-I know of organizations in my community that offer fun and educational things to do outside of school.				
-I know several ways that young people can work to influence the rules and laws that affect their lives.				
-It's important to consider the pros and cons of an issue before making a final decision.				
-People can learn a lot from spending time with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.				

Qualitative Analysis Procedures

From a qualitative perspective, I sought to answer the following research questions:

2c. What did youth appear to take away from their participation in terms of skills,

experiences, knowledge and resources?

2d. To what extent did youths' interpretations of their SOS experiences build connections

to the program's civic themes?

Similar to the qualitative procedures described above, I used a three-step process to analyze qualitative data collected via formal and informal interviews, informal discussion groups, and observational field notes. In the first step, I identified and coded examples in the participant and staff interview data that suggested participants' exposure to new skills, experiences, knowledge and resources. As summarized in Table 3.9, this process generated a list of low-inference, primarily descriptive codes which were then organized and consolidated into larger categories via pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Six categories for potential participant learning and development emerged through this process: Civic Knowledge, Group Dynamics, Academic Enrichment, Social Responsibility, Personal Satisfaction, and Personal Growth.

To identify the predominant or *axial* categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) of potential benefits through participation, my second step plotted all relevant data points on a key-linkage chart (Erickson, 1986), a series of tree diagrams that help to connect major assertions to individual exemplars in the dataset. This chart allowed me to prune weakly supported claims, observe patterns in the analysis, and draw higher levels of inference. Through this process, I reduced the codes to three predominant axial categories:

(1) Socioemotional Support – defined as fostering prosocial behaviors (an expanded understanding of group dynamics, building cooperation, opportunities to lead), and supporting the development of self-efficacy (exposure to mastery experiences, feelings of self-acceptance and resiliency).

(2) Pathways to Success - defined as opportunities to enrich academic skills (literacy, critical thinking, verbal communication), a prioritization of soft skills / affective behaviors (study habits, health and wellness, goal setting, staying above the influence), and increased awareness around college and career planning.

(3) Civic Development - defined as a repositioning or reinforcement of youths' identities as positive contributors (social responsibility), increased knowledge of community issues and the needs of others, and increased intent around future civic roles.

I found several areas of overlap in the axial categories, such as an example of a participant practicing leadership skills while executing a service project, which reflects aspects of both socioemotional and civic development. I distinguish between these axes by focusing civic development on the ways that youth position themselves as civic actors contributing to the common good or otherwise exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Socioemotional support focuses more broadly on the development of interpersonal skills that may be support civic engagement and other types of prosocial behaviors. Data exemplars categorized under socioemotional support include references to participants engaging in community service projects, as well as other site-based activities that did not involve service.

In the third and final step, I selectively coded for the three axial categories throughout the qualitative source material. I identified exemplars in the data that confirmed and disconfirmed the primary inferences and redrew the key linkage chart to align all data points with the predominant themes. I found a substantial number of data points to support of the prevalence of all three axial codes. I counted 56 examples of civic development 49 examples of pathways to success, and 101 examples of socioemotional support. I also color-coded data points on the key linkage chart according to SOS site. However, I could not identify any differentiation in the color codes to draw any conclusions about the variability of these themes by site. In other words, all three SOS sites appeared to provide evidence for these areas of learning and development in somewhat equal measure. Throughout the process, I drafted and revised memos that connected themes to references from the literature and sought to extend existing theoretical frameworks.

To qualitatively examine variations in how youth connected to the civic themes of the program, I organized responses to semi-structured interviews and pre/post surveys for the 27 focal youth into a case-ordered predictor outcome matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994), a visual representation of the data which allowed me to examine the relationship of independent variables to multiple civic-related outcome variables. Table 3.10 includes a summary of participant descriptive information included in the matrix. Independent variables include the participants' site, grade, gender, pre-survey results, civic engagement profile on entry, and initial motivation for participating.

The primary outcome or dependent variable of interest was the extent to which the focal youth appeared to "connect" with the civic engagement themes of the program. In other words, I sought examples where youths' interpretations of their experiences suggested alignment with the SOS long-range goal of cultivating the next generation of active and engaged citizens. For example, I highlighted references to youth practicing or enhancing their civic skills, expressing a desire or intent for future volunteerism, and gaining a new understanding or new insight on civic-related issues. I organized these civic references into three categories of information obtained via the interview protocols (see Table 3.10): (a) *recruitment pitch* – examples where youths' hypothetical marketing statements specifically mentioned the civic benefits of the program; (b) *significant incidents* – descriptions of recent program events or activities that reflected service-learning content; and (c) *lessons learned* – examples where the youth identified something they learned that related to SOS civic program goals. I considered both the frequency and the analytical depth of comments made by interviewees, noting when youths' reflections moved beyond surface-level descriptions to include examples of *critical* and *conceptual* thinking. I subsequently ranked participants according to these criteria and created three groups representing

"high," "medium," and "low" identification with the program's civic themes. Descriptions of each group are included in the results Chapter Five. In the final phase of this qualitative analysis, I sorted the predictor-outcome matrix according to high, medium and low civic results, which allowed me to examine variations in participants' background characteristics within and across each group.

Table 3.9

Open Codes and Related Categories

Category	Open Coding	
Civic Knowledge Data exemplars where youth and/or staff reported sharing information and resources about civic and political affairs including discussing social issues, identifying neighborhood assets, and exploring the role of government in their communities.	CK1. CK2. CK3. CK4. CK4.1	Opportunities to serve Public policy issues / role of government Neighborhood Resources Increased awareness of school and community issues, strengths and challenges Environmental issues (trash cans, litter, etc.)
Group Dynamics/Prosocial Behavior Examples of youth engaging in opportunities to lead programming activities, mentor or assist younger children, build collaborative work environments, and serve in diverse groups.	GD1. GD2. GD2.1 GD2.2 GD3. GD4.	Group cohesion / getting along well with others Leadership Group decision making – SOS implementation Mentor/tutor/assist younger children Collective efficacy
Academic Enrichment Examples where SOS programming aligned with academic development in the areas of literacy and communication, academic content knowledge, college and career planning, and the affective behaviors associated with school success.	AA1. AA1.1 AA2. AA2.1 AA3. AA3.1 AA3.1.1 AA3.2 AA4.	Exposure to academic content knowledge Math/statistics/data analysis skills Pathways to success "Soft skills" Literacy Self-expression Scrapbooking and journals Vocabulary development Career and college planning
Social Responsibility Examples in the text where youth describe gaining a sense of empowerment, civic agency, compassion, and understanding of civic roles.	SR1. SR2. SR3. SR4. SR5. SR5.1 SR5.2	Compassion Future volunteering / service Empowerment Civic agency Civic roles Not littering, keeping neighborhood clean Motivating others to serve
Personal Satisfaction Data exemplars where youth associate SOS participation with having fun, socializing with friends, and gleaning positive feelings from their service work.	PS1. PS2. PS3.	"Feeling good" helping the community Having fun Socializing with friends
Personal Growth Examples in the data where youth and staff report opportunities for socio-emotional support, changes in self-efficacy, and feelings of self-acceptance.	PG1. PG2. PG2.1 PG3.	Self-Acceptance Socio-emotional support Maturity Self-Efficacy

Table 3.10

Data Included in the Case-Ordered Predictor-Outcome Matrix

Variable Name	Description	Data Source
Independent Variables		
Civic Engagement Profile (T1)	Disengaged, Community-Based Volunteer, Multiply Engaged, Politically Interested profile at beginning of program.	Week 1 Interview
Site	Goodrowe, Gilmon, Linden.	Pre-Survey
Grade	Rising 6th through 9th.	Pre-Survey
Gender	Male/female.	Pre-Survey
Survey Results (T1)	Mean score of three civic engagement constructs at beginning of term (Social Responsibility, Civic Networks, Future Involvement).	Pre-Survey
Motivation to Serve (T1)	Response to question: "Why did you join SOS this summer?"	Week 1 Interview
Outcome Variable		
Identification with Civic Themes	High, Medium or Low ranking based on the following criteria:	
- Significant Incidents	Response to question: "What are some of the SOS highlights?"	Mid-Term and End-of-Term Interview
- Lessons Learned	Several questions related to what youth took away from their experiences including: "Is there anything you felt you learned this summer by participating in this program?"	Mid-Term and End-of-Term Interview
- Recruitment Pitch	Response to question: "What would say if you were going to recruit somebody [into the SOS program]?"	End-of-Term Interview

Limitations of the Methods

As described earlier, the present study relies upon secondary data collected primarily for the purposes of assessing whether the SOS intervention met its intended goals of cultivating youth civic engagement. The study was not designed as a controlled experiment. Site-based variations in program implementation were numerous and not well defined in the data, and therefore limited my ability to provide a fine-grained analysis comparing and contrasting particular programming elements at each site. In addition, due to financial constraints, SOS

program administrators were unable to include any measurements or observations of comparison groups, which thus limits the ability to make causal claims related to program outcomes. The evaluation did not include any longitudinal measures to examine the potential impact of the program for participants into the school year. The evaluation also did not include any measures external to the program such as parent feedback, home or neighborhood observations, and/or in-school data, which may have provided a more comprehensive examination of the intersection between youths' home, school and out-of-school experiences. Furthermore, the initial evaluation plan was not guided by a communities of practice theoretical framework, and therefore the key variables of interest in the dataset were not explicitly aligned with the theory. Working with these data over the past two years, I have developed insight on how the application of CoP theory might shape a study's methodology, a point that was driven home for me when I read Hodges (1998) assertion that situated learning theory shifts the unit of analysis from "what is being learned?" to "who are you becoming?" (p. 279). I discuss in more detail what an intentional out-of-school time "communities of practice" study might look like in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER IV

Results: Program Processes

In this chapter, I examine program processes at an aggregate level across the three SOS sites. Using a communities of practice (CoP) theoretical framework, I highlight some of the unique features of the out-of-school time enrichment space that appeared to create, or sometimes impede, opportunities for learning. Specifically, I seek to answer the following research questions:

1a. To what extent did the sites resemble communities of practice (CoP) to support the learning and development of youth?

1b. Were there any particular characteristics of SOS programming that appeared to either help or hinder CoP development?

As outlined in Chapter Two, CoPs represent informal learning collectives that operate through mutual engagement, the negotiation of a joint enterprise, and the cultivation of a shared repertoire (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The CoP framework helps illuminate the processes by which individuals enter a community of practice, advance through trajectories of learning, and contribute skills and knowledge.

Through qualitative analyses of observational field notes and interviews, I identify two aspects of SOS program implementation, specifically the community-building and youth-led processes, which appeared particularly fruitful in cultivating a CoP environment. I use the term "repertoire" as defined by Wenger (1998) to include the "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice… It includes

the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members" (p. 83). In this chapter, I present excerpts from the data that illustrate the ways in which sites' youth-led and community-building repertoires aligned with a communities of practice framework.

Community-Building Repertoire

Communities emerge through a shared set of practices that includes particular modes of communication, conceptual and analytical tools, cultural norms, routines and protocols. Whether prescribed through structured lesson plans or evolved organically through participation, these common ways of interacting serve as an epoxy that helps hold the community together and shape the group's collective identity. In this section of Chapter Four, I discuss three key features of the sites' community-building repertoires: norms and rituals, social cohesion, and the civic enterprise.

Norms and Rituals

Walk into any after-school or summer enrichment program today, and one will likely observe the markers of a collective subculture, distinguished, in part, by the group's use of language, methods of communication, and participation in collaborative tasks. Out-of-school time (OST) programs often have "ground rules" displayed prominently on a classroom wall representing a set of social norms that guide participant conduct. OST clubs such as the Boy Scouts, 4-H, and Girls Inc. are all branded by their distinct rituals, unique style of dress, and members-only vocabulary. Wenger (1998) described these "shared ways of engaging," "specific tools, representations, and other artifacts," and "shared discourse" as essential ingredients for the formation of a community of practice (p. 125).

I identified multiple markers within the community-building repertoires of the SOS sites that distinguished these programs as unique spaces in participants' lives. For example, engagement in classroom-based activities included highly interactive lesson plans and collaborative communication styles that worked to minimize the amount of adult-led, lecture-style instruction and maximize the time youth spent contributing to the discussion and interacting with their peers. During my observations of these programs, I documented multiple activities across all three sites that followed a similar sequence: (1) an icebreaker exercise where youth shared aspects of their personal backgrounds; (2) a large group discussion that introduced a service-learning topic; (3) small group work where youth responded to discussion questions or developed solutions to problems; and (4) large group report-outs. I noted how youth transitioned with minimal instruction from one task to another, often reconfiguring themselves and the furniture quickly and efficiently to accommodate the various activities. Occasionally, the groups would break into song and dance routines as part an icebreaker or team-building activity, and I noted how these performances appeared well rehearsed as they sang, clapped and stamped their feet in unison. I also observed youth engaging in *multiparty talk* (Lee, 2001) in the classroom, creating space for multiple simultaneous conversations which served to bring forth a diversity of opinions and perspectives on a given topic. As a means of managing this highly participatory environment, adult staff utilized code words and symbols to call the group back to attention. For example, some facilitators would say, "five up," and hold a palm in the air to signal transition to single-party talk. Other adults would say, "one mic!" and tap their fist like they were testing audio levels of an invisible microphone. These communication queues were highly effective as youth responded almost instantly to the codes.

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In addition to these programming structures and communication styles, qualitative data collected across all three sites indicate a common discourse in what I identified as the "excel" domain. This was reflected in comments from both youth and adults that emphasized overcoming challenges and making positive choices to succeed in school, career, and life. Throughout the summer, SOS staff engaged youth in a dialogue about possibility and the importance of autonomy, resiliency, and perseverance. I found that the excel discourse permeated SOS programming activities, including group discussions, reflection exercises, and service projects. The Linden site coordinator explained that the objective of the summer was to teach youth, "There's gonna be issues that is gonna try to keep our people down. There are obstacles that you'll face. Some will say it's not fair, and it isn't fair. But if you continually try, the opportunity is endless." The lead Gilmon instructor stated that the "whole theme of the summer" was to teach youth the steps they need to take "to get on the path to success and stay on it," avoid risky behaviors, "look at the bigger picture," and learn to independently make positive choices for themselves. In their responses to interview questions about lessons learned from the program, many focal youth reiterated messages about avoiding peer pressure, living above the influence, and "staying straight" on a path to achievement. Thus, as theorized by Wenger (1998), the SOS discourse reflected not only an internal codification of the practice, but also encompassed ways of viewing the world.

Social Cohesion

Across the spectrum of youth development research, scholars have continually emphasized the importance of building contexts where youth feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, support, and responsiveness to their needs and interests (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Middle schoolers often "vote with their feet," explained the Goodrowe site coordinator.

Therefore, OST providers must build program affinity, an emotional attachment durable enough to ensure that young people show up and keep coming back. Scholars in sociology and psychology use the concept of *social cohesion* to describe an individual's attachment to group membership, which is often measured through retention variables (Friedkin, 2004). Social cohesion research has also worked to define what group-level characteristics will cultivate attachment such as cooperation, positive interpersonal dynamics, contributions to group welfare, and shared goals (Friedkin, 2004).

Across all three SOS sites, I identified examples in the data that suggest the programs were successful in building cohesion among members. Retention during the summer program was high (86% completers), and the vast majority of SOS participants surveyed (89%) were considering reenrollment in a future SOS program. In addition, many staff and participants expressed a growing sense of camaraderie with their fellow SOS community members over the course of the program. By end of summer, several interviewees were using terms like "community" or "family" to describe the program. One participant explained that SOS taught her "that it's fun to be with your friends, be respectful, care, and have a great family." Several youth and staff noted how strangers had become friends through their summer enrichment experience. At the end of term, a staff person at Gilmon commented to the youth, "I've seen how different groups used to hang together. You two ladies – it used to be just you two hangin' together and now I see you mixing in with all the girls. Let's not go back to being strangers in the fall. Still have each other's backs."

Social cohesiveness was also evident in the interactions recorded in the data characterized as caring, respectful, and cooperative. Staff from all three sites described forming close and nurturing relationships with youth as a measure of quality programming. I observed instances

where staff openly expressed adoration for the youth in their care. For example, during a group discussion, a Gilmon facilitator inadvertently forgot to call on one of the small groups to do a report-out. Realizing her mistake, she replied, "Oh! I love you, though. Okay, go ahead please." The Linden site coordinator explained that during staff training, "We're very clear that every kid is being called by name. We ask staff to buddy up. No one should be sad or feel left out." One Linden staff member told me that if instructors "do your job right" then they "grow strong bonds with the kids... you know, in the beginning [the youth] might give you a little problem – but towards the end, they come to you and they're crying because they don't want to leave." Among participants, I noted examples where SOS youth voluntarily took initiative to assist their fellow campers. I observed instances of youth taking responsibility for their community and demonstrating acts of kindness, such as an experienced dancer offering one-on-one coaching to her peers while practicing a performance for the Goodrowe carnival, or when two Gilmon youth stepped in as facilitators for a team-building activity because a staff person had to step in the hallway.

Furthermore, this culture of caring and cooperation was reflected in the fact that I did not observe any altercations among youth at any of the sites over the summer. I did not witness a single verbal or physical conflict in my more than 100 hours of program observations. According to staff accounts, the positive interpersonal dynamics among SOS participants contrasted sharply with the level of violence these middle schoolers were subjected to during the academic year. This finding was especially significant at Goodrowe, which had enrolled children whose family members were connected to two rival gangs from neighboring communities. The SOS summer program was an unprecedented out-of-school convening for these decedents of a long-standing

rivalry. The Goodrowe site director shared how violence in the schools was a perpetuation of violence at home for some SOS youth:

> In [this] community, when a person goes to jail, going to jail is like wearing a badge. You are like a hero if you go to jail. If someone says something to you and it leads to physical violence, then it becomes glorified because you won't be called a punk because you're not scared to fight, you're not scared to do it. And these are adults that go through this type of culture. And these are adults that are glorifying this type of culture. And then you have the youth who are bought up into it, and they're just buying into that type of culture. You can see families that feuded – like the parents were feuding with each other – see their kids bring that same type of drama to school.

A facilitator at Gilmon described how staff became "human shields" to usher their participants into the after-school classroom "as quickly as possible" to protect them from the treacherous hallways at the end of every school day. When asked to describe their communities, more than half of the focal youth mentioned challenges their neighborhoods were facing such as gang violence, shootouts, drug activity, robberies, shouting arguments, physical fights, and vandalism. Therefore, the program appeared to serve as a refuge for many SOS youth, which likely reinforced their attachment to participation.

Analyses of observations and interview data suggest that this refuge was, at least in part, the result of a concerted effort by dedicated staff and program administrators to design a space deliberately saturated with a culture of caring and respectfulness. In particular, I noted two interrelated aspects of sites' community-building repertoires that appeared to support these values. First, the sites operated with low staff-to-youth ratios, which provided non-stop supervision, role modeling, and instructional opportunities. This constant availability of multiple staff allowed for individualized attention to youth who showed signs of struggling in the program whether on the playground, in the classroom, on a fieldtrip, or during their lunch break. Second, staff operated with a zero tolerance policy for disrespectfulness. Taking advantage of their

constant involvement, staff would intervene at the first sign of inappropriate behavior. For example, when a youth said "shut up," a staff member responded, "We don't use those words. Say 'be quiet please.'" At Goodrowe, I observed staff and youth playing a game of "push-up basketball" together where everyone takes a turn shooting a basket, and if you miss, then you do ten push-ups. One youth, who was obese, was struggling to do his push-ups, and his peers started laughing and criticizing him. Another youth said, "Look – he's not doing it right. He's humping the ground." Within seconds, a staff person immediately interjected, "Let him do it his way!" The staff member turned to the youth who were being disrespectful and said, "Come on, man, respect our differences. We're not here to talk down to people, or none of that. If it's your turn to do push-ups, just do your push-ups. I don't care what they look like. Just give me 10." Then the staff turned and offered encouragement to the youth doing push-ups, "Almost – way to go!" These incidents exemplify how SOS staff worked to promote a culture of caring and respect by addressing all offenses and modeling appropriate behavior in real time. Rather than separating the offender from participation or otherwise punishing him, disrespectful behavior was used as a learning opportunity, in much the same way that a master might respond to an apprentice who used a tool improperly in a trades program.

Joint Enterprise—Contributing to the Common Good

As discussed earlier, communities of practice are distinguished from other types of teams or ad hoc committees by members' ongoing pursuit of a *joint enterprise*, defined as an internally-manifested collaborative project, interest, or desire to solve a particular problem (Wenger, 1998). The enterprise provides a sense of purpose and constructive output for group activity. According to CoP theory, this collaborative work creates a kind of social interdependence as members seek to achieve something collectively that cannot be accomplished alone (Barab & Duffy, 2012). The enterprise also situates the CoP in a global context. As discussed in Chapter Two, Wenger (1998)

asserted that CoPs are not "self-contained entities," but remain interconnected to a "broader system" of "historical, social, cultural, institutional" forces (p. 79). Thus, the enterprise develops not only as a reflection of member interests, but also in response to a "societal goal that gives [the community], and the practices of the community members, meaning" (Barab & Duffy, 2012, p. 39).

In the SOS programs, members convened around an enterprise of solving social problems and contributing to the common good through the design and implementation of community service projects. SOS youth served as facilitators for young children, advisors of transitioning middle schoolers, researchers on neighborhood assets, and landscapers for the construction of a school garden. Aligned with CoP theory, these productive roles for SOS participants created a common purpose and connected their activity to the outside world. Projects also demonstrated social interdependence, as the activities were predominately group-dependent. Furthermore, as SOS youth traveled around their neighborhoods, they had opportunities to apply the communication and leadership skills that they practiced within their summer enrichment communities. Thus, the service domain provided opportunities to assume more consequential roles and responsibilities, a trajectory of learning that I return to later in this chapter.

However, as will be reported in Chapter Five, not all SOS participants appeared connected to the program's civic enterprise. At the beginning of the summer, only about half of the focal youth were aware of the program's service-oriented goals; one-quarter stated that they didn't know the goals, and another 25% offered somewhat vague goal statements, such as "to keep our minds straight until we get to school." At end of term, 25% of the focal youth demonstrated little or no connection to the civic themes when asked to describe SOS activities and interpret their experiences in the program. These findings suggest that some youth were

disengaged from the central work of the SOS community. As noted by Wenger (1998), CoP development hinges on mutually-engaged participation including the ability of all members to contribute to the community's domain. Therefore, such disconnection among a portion of the SOS population signals a divergence from the CoP framework, a topic that I will return to in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

Youth-Led Repertoire

As summarized in Chapter Two, a central component of CoP theory is the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). Conceptually, LPP serves as an analytical tool for understanding how newcomers (aka "novices") engage in a community—their roles, functions, and methods of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). According to Lave and Wenger, newcomers in a CoP are more than observers; they are active participants who make contributions to the practice. Newcomers learn and develop by participating in a graduated series of community involvement opportunities, which gives them an "evolving form of membership" in the community (p. 53). As newcomers move from peripheral to more central roles, they experience increasing levels of responsibility, autonomy, and complexity of work. Wenger (1998) identified the movement of newcomers through these levels of participation as *trajectories*, asserting that such movement requires *legitimate* status in the group:

> "In order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members… Granting legitimacy is important because they are likely to come short of what the community regards as competent engagement. Only with enough legitimacy can all their inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion" (p. 101).

Thus, the process of learning in a CoP needs to recognize newcomers' inherent capabilities and rightful place as future stewards of the practice.

In this section of Chapter Four, I consider the ways in which the SOS context provided opportunities for youth to engage as legitimate peripheral participants in their summer programs. Several scholars have written about how youth participation in decision-making processes evolves through a progression of training and action opportunities with the support of adult facilitators (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Kirshner, O'Donoghue & McLaughlin, 2002). In this analysis, I identify both the preparatory activities and leadership enactments as integral parts of the sites' youth-led repertoires. In particular, I describe numerous instances where SOS implementation appeared to facilitate youths' legitimacy status, peripheral positioning, and movement through trajectory. Examining these contexts through a CoP lens, I consider when, how, and under what circumstances youth moved through various roles and responsibilities as members of their SOS communities. I also take an in-depth look at the instructional practices that adult staff used to facilitate youths' evolving forms of membership.

I present results from qualitative analyses of interviews and observational field notes, illuminating two predominant aspects of sites' youth-led repertoires: (1) assets-based instructional practices; and (2) youth-adult shared roles. The following summary highlights how an assets-based approach imbedded within constructive youth-adult partnerships can help facilitate legitimate peripheral participation and, in turn, create space for youths' learning and development in a community of practice.

Assets-Based Instructional Practices

In Chapter Two, I traced the evolution of the out-of-school time (OST) movement in the United States, explaining how the OST space has been instrumental in promoting a positive youth development approach to meet the needs of children and youth during non-school hours. One key characteristic of positive development settings is an assets-focused or strengths-based

method of service delivery which intentionally places young people in consequential roles that capitalize on their inherent abilities in order to build productive pathways to adulthood (Benson, Scales, Hamilton & Sesma, 2007). In the Summer of Service (SOS) toolkit, the SOS model recommended an assets-based approach as a critical component of program implementation (Tysvaer, 2011). Sites were encouraged to incorporate youths' perspectives, talents, skills, and knowledge in the design and execution of their service-learning curricula. In this section, I examine the repertoire sites employed to capitalize on youth assets. In particular, I highlight ways in which sites positioned youth as resources, privileged their lived experiences, carved out opportunities for youth to apply their assets, and recognized participants' talents and perspectives through creative self-expression. This analysis demonstrates how an assets-based approach can grant youths legitimacy in a community of practice, serving as a springboard for more central levels of participation.

All three sites had launched efforts to adopt assets-based methods as an integral part of their service delivery strategies prior to SOS implementation. In some cases, this positive youth development approach was evident in written materials produced by the agency. For example, the parent organization coordinating the Goodrowe and Gilmon sites had published the following on their website: "At [our agency], we have a profound belief in the strength of every individual. We help each young person we work with identify and build on his or her inherent abilities." At Linden, the provider recruited a curriculum consultant who worked to infuse the concept of "collective knowledge" throughout their year-round programming. Inspired by Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the consultant trained out-of-school time practitioners on how to incorporate a "philosophy where everyone in the room has knowledge and can teach and learn." An assets-based approach was also evident in staff's descriptions of their instructional methods:

a counselor at Linden spoke about how he worked to shift the traditional teacher-student paradigm, explaining that "sometimes you think they won't sit down, but they really will, and they'll listen and give experiences… because believe it or not, kids they know a lot." Therefore, in terms of strategy, all three SOS sites had set an intention to incorporate young people as resources in their positive youth development programming.

In their efforts to operationalize an assets-based approach, I observed instances in the SOS programs where youth were positioned as repositories of valuable information, knowledge, skills, talents, and expertise. For example, classroom-based group discussions often privileged the lived experiences of participants by drawing on youths' background knowledge as reference material for exploring service-learning topics. This youth-led process was enacted at Gilmon while conducting research for production of a documentary on "being a successful teen" in their neighborhood. The goal of the six-week project was to create a video that offered multiple perspectives on the resources young people need to succeed in school and in life. The research began by asking participants to share their own perceptions, knowledge and experiences on topics such as community, work, school, money, and the police. Ms. Nina, the lead Gilmon staff person, instructed youth to brainstorm words or phrases that came to mind on the various topics and also offered several discussion questions such as "when your parents come home from work, what do you hear them say?" Participants gathered in small groups to generate their descriptors and then took turns reporting out in a full group discussion. Ms. Nina recorded their responses on posters that decorated the classroom walls for the remainder of the summer, and the group referred back to these perspectives in subsequent sessions that juxtaposed their personal experiences with findings from relevant research studies.

This example of an assets-focused service-learning project mirrors some fundamental aspects of *student-centered* pedagogy in K-12 education, an approach that also works to access youths' background knowledge and establish their perspectives as legitimate sources of data in classroom instruction (Land, Hannafin & Oliver, 2012). Both student-centered and assets-focused methods are rooted in beliefs about the co-constructed and situated nature of learning, in which learners play an active role in meaning making. Both approaches seek to build youths' autonomy by helping them to become independent thinkers and develop "greater responsibility for their own learning" (Land, Hannafin & Oliver, 2012, p. 9). At Gilmon, Ms. Nina explained that a primary objective of the program was to help youth "look at the bigger picture. Think before you do. If it doesn't make sense, don't do it." However, while student-centered learning environments focus predominately on the epistemology of the *individual* student, I found that SOS assets-focused activities worked to cultivate an environment that emphasized *collective* knowledge, where students and adult staff could contribute and learn from each other. Thus, the assets-focused approach aligns with what Wenger (1998) referred to as a method of *mutual engagement* where individual members contribute to the "collective production of meaning" in a community (p. 203). Wenger asserted that such contributions are essential to learning in the CoP context because mutuality fosters inclusiveness by preventing the kind of marginalization that might occur when members are not positioned as valuable contributors.

Observational data also included examples of mutual engagement through assets-based activities that involved creativity and self-expression. Throughout the summer, SOS youth showcased their talents and expertise as they were encouraged to express their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives through visual and performing arts. For example, in the Linden Camp Spirit competitions, teams of youth composed original song and dance routines to reflect on their SOS

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experiences, capitalizing on youths' poetic writing skills and musical abilities. Camp Spirit performances were judged based on three youth-friendly criteria: creativity, volume, and readiness. These productions including rapping, spoken word, hip-hop dance routines, and parodies of popular music. During Camp Spirit rehearsals and performances, this exploration of youth culture altered the teacher-student dynamic allowing participants to assume more central roles in the community. One Linden staff reported, "I learned a lot about the kids this year. I didn't know we have so many rappers in our summer camp. It's surprising to me the way they could use metaphors. It was just amazing."

At Goodrowe, SOS youth shared their creative talents and personal perspectives through journal writing. At least twice weekly, participants responded to service-learning reflection questions that asked youth to describe their experiences in the program and ponder the larger significance of their service work. They were encouraged to be creative in their responses, which included essays, poetry, original drawings, and collage. The art consultant at Goodrowe commented that the journals gave youth an opportunity to "realize what they are learning" and opened up space for exploring their own thoughts and feelings in ways that "kids don't get in school." Individual journaling exercises were followed by group discussions in which youth shared their responses with their peers, providing another opportunity for youth to be mutually engaged as they contributed their own unique perspectives to meaning-making in the community.

Furthermore, the SOS assets-based approach was not just about generating collective knowledge, but also about applying youths' knowledge, skills, interests, and expertise to the execution of real-world tasks. For example, Linden youth designed and led a series of Middle School Preparedness workshops for incoming sixth graders at their school. The project was

structured to tap the expertise of rising seventh through ninth grade SOS youth, who could draw

upon their personal experiences to assist students in their transition from elementary to middle

school. The project began by asking SOS youth to brainstorm topics of potential interest to rising

sixth graders and then use these brainstormed lists to generate surveys that were administered to

the younger students. Based on survey results, SOS youth created skits that addressed the most

pressing questions or concerns of the incoming sixth graders. I observed several groups

preparing for their workshops and noted how youth transitioned from freshmen-level observers

to more junior-level subject matter experts as they offered suggestions on scenes and dialogue.

These sessions were highly participatory with youth appearing eager to share their experiences

on navigating the social and academic terrain of a middle school environment. In addition to

tapping their content knowledge, the project also provided opportunities for youth to apply their

creativity and theatrical skills, injecting humor into skits designed to capture the attention of 10-

and 11-year-olds. As youth contributed to these planning sessions, their suggestions were

adopted and refined into a final sequence of skits performed at a local elementary school where

SOS participants assumed senior-level roles as facilitators and expert presenters. By capitalizing

on the assets of youth, this project served as a conduit by which SOS participants could move

along an inbound trajectory towards more advanced levels of membership within the community.

The project also reflected what Wenger (1998) described as fertile ground for CoP learning,

where members engage in both the production and adoption of meaning-making. SOS youth

produced new knowledge about transitioning to middle school, and the community adopted this

knowledge into the content of workshops delivered to younger students. These contributions to

the practice reinforced the legitimate status of SOS youth by recognizing their backgrounds as

valuable sources of information within the group, creating a context in which "experience and competence pull each other" (Wenger, 1998, p. 203).

Engaging in Youth-Adult Shared Roles

In the prior analysis, I discussed how SOS sites' integration of an assets-based approach to youth development programming helped foster engagement in the CoP by legitimizing youths' participation at multiple levels of membership. I next present analytical results that demonstrate how the interactions of SOS adult staff and youth participants in *shared roles* also supports the cultivation of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) opportunities for SOS youth. In particular, this section examines how adult staff shifted their roles in ways that disturbed the traditional teacher-student paradigm and created space for youth to advance through the learning trajectory. As outlined in Chapter Two, Lave and Wenger's theoretical framework offered little detail regarding the repertoire that more advanced practitioners use to facilitate LPP for newer and less experienced members in a community of practice. The researchers noted how master-apprentice relations vary widely across communities and emphasized the improvisational nature of CoP learning, which doesn't lend itself to pedagogical standardization. Still, Lave and Wenger recognized that masters play a significant role in the education of newcomers. Masters share history, confer legitimacy, model skills and techniques, and provide access (transparency) to advanced areas of the practice. Lave and Wenger also acknowledged that the relationship between newer and older members entails negotiation and may involve conflict as "generational encounters" present a "complex meeting of the past and the future" with "different degrees of emphasis on continuity and discontinuity" of the community's practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 157). Therefore, even though CoPs typically do not operate with prescribed curricula, masters likely

have access to a repertoire of pedagogical tools and techniques that they use to fulfill their senior-level responsibilities and to ensure reproduction in the community.

A focal point of my analyses revolves around how adults and youth reposition themselves into various roles within the SOS trajectory of membership, or what I refer to as *trajectile* movement. As mentioned earlier, CoP theorists have referred to peripheral members as "newcomers" or "novices" and more central or tenured members as "masters," "experts," or "old-timers." To describe changing roles in the SOS program, I borrow terms from education, designating newcomers as "freshman," old-timers as "seniors," and an intermediary group of "juniors." *Freshman* members reflect examples in the data where youth engaged at the most peripheral or observant levels of participation. *Junior*-level participation highlights opportunities where youth assumed more substantive roles and responsibilities within the community under the guidance of more tenured members. *Senior* membership encompasses adult staff and advanced youth participants who model the practice, facilitate activities, and offer guidance to junior and freshmen members of the community. In this section of Chapter Four, I offer examples of both youth participants and adult staff serving in these various roles as members of their SOS communities.

The following presentation of qualitative data illuminates aspects of the repertoire SOS staff used to cultivate youth leadership opportunities. My review of the literature highlighted how youth-led programming involves a complex interplay of distributed roles and responsibilities where adults provide instruction and support as needed, but also retreat to the background when appropriate. Several studies have shown how out-of-school time practitioners and youth participants struggle with finding an optimal balance of oversight and autonomy (Epstein, 2011; Kapustka, 2003; Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Fredericks, Kaplan & Zeisler, 2001).

The youth-led context of these SOS sites provides a particularly opportune setting for examining further the dynamics of an "intergenerational joint enterprise," which I define as the interaction of adults and youth engaged as partners in a community of practice. In this section, I present data that show SOS staff serving as senior members in their communities, offering instruction and support to youth participants. These excerpts of primarily classroom-based dialogue highlight how adults restyled and repositioned their interactions with youth to create opportunities for learning and development in the program. I also identify some of the challenges that sites confronted in building and maintaining their intergenerational joint work.

Throughout my observational field notes, I noted examples of adults drawing upon multiple instructional techniques to scaffold learning for SOS participants. In their role as senior members of these communities, I observed adult staff transition from coach to facilitator to advisor to role model, depending on the context and learning objectives. I labeled such transitions *restyling* to distinguish from the types of *repositioning* I had documented when youth or adults made trajectile movements within the community. When adults restyled, they appeared to maintain their roles as senior members, but shifted their modes of interaction to offer more or less authority, thus extending more or less autonomy to freshman and junior members. For example, Linden youth participated in a community mapping activity designed to inventory the strengths and deficits of the area surrounding their school. To begin the activity, the site coordinator shared some history of community development work in the neighborhood and offered encouragement regarding the task at hand:

> Take a look at the park [next to the school]. It was an area that had no trees. A vacant lot. It was not a good place. So people said, 'we can do better than this.' So every second that we're walking, you can identify needs in our community. I want to be clear here: you guys can make a change. In June, [our organization] came together to fight against cuts to after school. We stopped traffic. We marched down to city hall. We were featured on News 12. The clip is on Youtube. So we

got the message across to people that didn't have kids in the program that after school was in jeopardy. And we made a difference.

Resembling the kind of pep talk that a coach might give before a big game, this speech was designed to motivate youth to document their neighborhood and to use the community mapping exercise as a vehicle for change.

After the pep talk, Linden staff shifted to a facilitative role as they divided into small groups and accompanied youth on a walk through the neighborhood. I initially observed staff modeling the mapping process by pointing to various strengths and challenges of their urban environment, while the youth took photos and notes on surrounding buildings, parks and roads. As the walk progressed, youth began to draw attention to other points of interest including a newly developed community garden, walls covered in graffiti, and roads filled with potholes. When they returned to their classrooms, staff served primarily as recorders for youth engaged in a group reflection, sharing their thoughts on what they observed in the community. Through this mapping activity, Linden staff appeared to shift instructional styles in a way that gradually increased youths' ability to take initiative, move towards more central roles, and contribute to meaning-making in the group.

In other cases, adults appeared to restyle themselves as advisors or consultants who provided expertise, feasibility assessments, and constructive critiques. While observing Linden groups preparing for their Middle School Preparedness workshops, I noted how staff facilitated these sessions with a series of guiding questions designed to help youth expand their vision, reframe ideas, and critically analyze their work. Staff prompted the youth to draw from their own background knowledge: "Think about what's different from elementary to middle school. This is you bringing your experience to them. Tell them how it goes." After one youth suggested a skit

about "school supplies," a staff person responded, "I don't know if that's big enough for a skit. Maybe we can incorporate 'how to be prepared' into another skit." After rehearsing one sketch, Linden staff commented that the material needed more narration to get the point across, saying, "When the scene's over, you should elaborate even more," and then instructing youth to "huddle up" around the teacher's desk to draft more dialogue. During their huddle, youth took turns making suggestions for dialogue, while the staff person continued to serve as an advisor providing feedback on their ideas.

In some cases, staff appeared to cycle through instructional styles in a single discussion. During the Gilmon brainstorming session which I described earlier (see page 44), Ms. Nina moved among her roles as recorder, facilitator, and advisor who occasionally asked for points of clarification. She reinforced youths' perspectives with examples of her own and offered additional perspectives on topics, while recording ideas on the board during this report-out on the topic of the police:

Ms. Nina:	Okay – tell me what you got for "police."
Youth1:	Too much illegal behavior.
Youth2:	They can take advantage of you sometimes.
Youth3:	They pick on people of particular races.
Ms. Nina:	Any particular race?
Youth3:	Latinos.

Other youth mumble other races/ethnicities, e.g. "black people" and "Dominicans."

Ms. Nina:	I'll put down "minorities." Now you say police don't pick on white people. But tell me – how often do you see a Caucasian person in this neighborhood? People say we're diverse, but we're really not. This neighborhood is predominately Dominicans and Africans. If we were in a real mixed neighborhood, would you still feel the same way—that police only pick on minorities?
Youth4:	Yes. Because Latinos make the most crime.
Ms. Nina:	That's interesting.
Youth5:	Police keep you safe.

Ms. Nina:	Okay. I feel that way, too.
Youth6:	Some police are good, and some police are bad.
Ms. Nina:	That's true. Everywhere you go in life, there will be good people and bad people. You could be at McDonald's and get someone behind the counter who is having a truly bad day and gives you all kinds of attitude just for ordering your Big Mac.

The above excerpt demonstrates how within a few sentences Ms. Nina transitioned among multiple instructional styles to simultaneously gather youths' perspectives and expand their thinking on these issues. When she asked about the number of Caucasians in the neighborhood, Ms. Nina temporarily stepped out of her role as recorder to advise youth on how their opinions, if based on observations within their own zip code, might be skewed. However, Ms. Nina subsequently returned to her recorder role when one youth claimed that, "Latinos make the most crime." The data are inconclusive as to why Ms. Nina did not seek additional clarification on this point; it is possible that she provided more information on the relationship of crime and race/ethnicity at a later time when I was not present. Regardless, this interaction illustrates the complexity of her multifaceted role as a senior member in an intergenerational community of practice, a role stretched along a continuum between actively guiding and passively observing. As Ms. Nina restyled among facilitator, recorder, and advisor, she appeared to seek a middle ground between adult-driven and youth-led activity. On the one hand, Ms. Nina took care to acknowledge each of the opinions in the room and record them on the white board, thereby offering legitimacy to the youths' perspectives. On the other hand, she at times challenged these perspectives by bringing in relevant background information. This dialogue highlights how adult staff may need to be prepared to speak with authority on issues that surface during youth-led activities. However, this discussion also illustrates the techniques that staff use to encourage

youth to act autonomously in sharing their own thoughts and unique perspectives, which may require at times minimizing the role of adults as authority figures in the room.

In addition to such restyling instructional techniques, I also documented numerous instances of adult staff *modeling* various aspects of the practice. I observed staff consistently using a professional style of communication to interact with youth, whether in the classroom, on the playground, or walking the neighborhood. This discourse included using Standard American English, projecting their voices, standing up tall, and making eye contact with participants. Staff also modeled group facilitation skills such as the combination of hand symbols and trigger words (e.g. calling "five-up!" with fist in the air) that brought the group back to attention. In some cases, staff would pause the action and explicitly dissect the skills they modeled. For example, while facilitating a group exercise, one staff person paused and said, "by the way, do you see how I did that? I wasn't exactly sure what Juan was saying, so I asked him to clarify and then I recorded his point on the board like this. It's important that if you're leading a group, then you make sure everyone has their say." In their study of apprenticeship programs, Lave and Wenger (1991) recognized the role that masters, such as tenured midwives and accomplished tailors, played in demonstrating skill. However, Wenger (1998) cautioned that demonstration should only be used as a precursor to action. In other words, learning in a community of practice must not be limited to the presentations of masters alone. Each demonstrated skill must be reified through opportunities for members to apply that skill. In the SOS programs, youth had the opportunity to practice senior-level communication skills when executing service projects. As facilitators of activities for younger students, for example, SOS youth seemed to take on the persona of staff, adopting a commanding presence at the front of the classroom. In the third week of the program, I observed a Linden staff person facilitating a reflection activity by passing

around a kick ball. "If you have the ball, you speak," the staff person said. Two weeks later, I saw a group of SOS youth also using a ball to facilitate a conversation with a group of first graders, instructing them with a similar directorial intonation, "If you have the ball, you speak."

Modeling by SOS adults was not limited to a particular set of skills advantageous to civic development work, but also reflected an embodiment of the full trajectory, since many staff had firsthand experience achieving their life goals in the face of adversity. Several of the SOS staff grew up in the neighborhood, left to complete a college degree, and then returned to give back to the community. Most SOS staff were college enrollees or college graduates from underrepresented backgrounds. I documented multiple unscripted moments where staff shared advice for excelling in school and careers based on their personal experiences. Ms. Nina, the lead Gilmon instructor, grew up in public housing as the daughter of a single, teen mom, and had obtained a bachelor's degree in education and sociology. Ms. Nina told stories about how "a lot of my friends they got pregnant and had to drop out" of high school, but she had chosen a different path. Mr. Abel, Gilmon's assistant instructor, immigrated to the U.S. from Bangladesh at the age of 12. Although he left his birth country as a fifth-grader with no English-speaking skills, he was placed in a 7th-grade English-only classroom and had to learn the language "on my own" while also being placed in a mandatory Spanish language course. Mr. Abel had recently finished a bachelor's degree in nutrition. During a strategy discussion on excelling in school, Mr. Abel told the youth, "you have the power," a message reflective of his own ability to overcome obstacles and succeed in school. Ms. Lina, the curriculum consultant at Linden, was born in Panama, immigrated to the U.S. as a child, and had recently completed a master's degree in education from a top-ranked university. On a train ride to one of our service projects, I observed Ms. Lina giving advice to SOS youth about the requirements of earning a master's degree.

I also documented examples of staff temporarily *repositioning* themselves to more peripheral roles as an instructional technique designed to leverage youth leadership opportunities. For example, at the end of summer, Linden youth led a series of career awareness workshops for children at a nearby elementary school. During these workshops, SOS youth took on senior status as they coordinated games, performed skits, and organized craft projects, all designed to expand children's knowledge of future career opportunities. I noted how staff served primarily in freshman-level support roles during these sessions as observers, photographers, and assistants to the youth. One particularly illustrative moment came during a small group poster-making project, when one of the SOS youth turned to the adult staff in the room and said, "Fred, we need crayons over here." The staff person, Fred, immediately moved to the back of the room to fetch the supplies. This small, but significant moment demonstrates a kind of role reversal with youth positioned as instructional leaders and adults engaged as classroom helpers. Although staff could not completely relinquish their senior-level status and genuinely assume the position of newcomers, I came to understand this type of repositioning as an effective role playing exercise that created space for youth to try out more central responsibilities in the community.

In addition, such examples of SOS staff repositioning themselves into more peripheral roles appeared to unfold gradually over the summer. As documented by Lave and Wenger, learning in a CoP involves first engaging novices in smaller, less consequential tasks associated with the practice before moving into full participatory mode. This gradual growth in level of engagement was evident in the service-learning curriculum at Goodrowe. At the beginning of the summer, youth participated in a Little Buddies puppet-making project, an activity that involved younger children in creating their own puppets and acting out improvisational skits about "making friends at camp." Goodrowe staff designed the project, including defining the goals,

choosing the supplies, and writing instructions, while the SOS youth served in junior-level roles, guiding the younger students through the Little Buddies activity under the direction of SOS staff. By the end of summer, Goodrowe staff had delegated both the design and implementation of the final service project to SOS youth. The project was a half-day community "carnival" that offered a combination of recreational games and public education booths for parents and students. Youth were responsible for nearly all aspects of the planning, including choosing activities, composing song and dance performances, and marketing the event. On carnival day, youth became senior-level community members as they led the activities at each booth, while adult staff served supportive roles (directing foot traffic, fetching supplies, and picking up trash).

In the above examples, the Linden career workshop and Goodrowe carnival, it is noteworthy that the adults' peripherality did not constitute *non-participation* in the CoPs. Lave and Wenger (1991) asserted that peripheral engagement is a form of participation. Even when in observation mode, peripheral participants hold legitimate status as members of the CoP -- unlike non-participants who may be outsiders (i.e. non-members) or marginalized individuals within the group (Wenger, 1998). In both of the above cases, adults continued to be present and active in the community while assuming freshman or junior-level positions. The literature has repeatedly documented how practitioners misconstrue youth-led programming as adults being "hands off," a kind of abandonment which can be counterproductive for fostering youth engagement (Kirschner, 2008; Alvermann, Young, Green & Wisenbaker, 1999). I observed this type of adult non-participation in one classroom at Linden where staff told youth that they would "disappear" during the Dream Big career workshops and be "like we're not there."   According to staff interviews, these comments were intended to empower youth to step up into leadership roles. However, as will be reported in Chapter Five, data also suggest that the staff's non-participation

may have disempowered some youth. I also observed non-participation among some of the summer youth employment program (SYEP) interns that were assigned to SOS classrooms. During group discussions, for example, many of the SYEP interns were sidelined from the activity, sitting idly at the periphery of the classroom sometimes texting on their cell phones or filing their nails, but mostly staring blankly into the room, looking bored. It is not clear to me why the SYEP interns were, for the most part, underutilized in the program, but this marginalization of the interns may be viewed as a missed opportunity to productively engage a group of older youth as legitimate members in the SOS communities. Similar to the earlier observation regarding some participants' disconnection from the civic enterprise, these seemingly marginalized youth suggest also a divergence from the conceptual notion of mutual engagement in a CoP, a topic that I will return to in Chapter VI. Discussion.

Chapter Summary

The above examination of SOS program processes highlights the ways in which these summer enrichment contexts functioned as a communities of practice to support the learning and development of middle schoolers. In particular, I found two strands of SOS programming practices, the community-building and youth-led repertoires, which appeared to align with fundamental aspects of CoP theory. The sites' community-building practices worked to support membership cohesiveness and collective identity; the youth-led practices created a structure for middle schoolers to engage as legitimate peripheral participants and move toward senior membership. By tracing the implementation of these community-building and youth-led repertoires, I was able to show how these practices were interwoven within SOS programming. Aspects of these repertoires, such as the culture of caring and respect, were pursued by a cadre of youth development professionals, many of whom came from similar backgrounds as the youth

and therefore embodied the full trajectory of membership experiences. I observed staff skillfully

restyle and reposition themselves in the program to create space for youths' learning and

development. In place of any prescribed lesson plans, these repertoires became what has been

referred to as the "living curriculum" of the CoPs (Wenger, McDermott & Syder, 2002, p. 38). In

the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I discuss the implications of these findings for

designing practice communities within structured enrichment programs outside of school.

CHAPTER V

Results: Participant Experiences

This chapter presents results of analyses seeking to explain what middle school youth (n=172) gleaned through their participation in a six-week summer service-learning program implemented in three low-income communities across one large U.S. city. More specifically, this chapter addresses the following research questions:

> 2a. Did youth demonstrate changes in civic engagement skills, attitudes and interests associated with SOS participation, as measured by pre/post participant surveys?

> 2b. Did civic outcomes vary by youths' demographic backgrounds, prior service experience, or site placement?

> 2c. From a qualitative perspective, how did participants describe their experiences, learning and development in the program?

> 2d. To what extent did youths' interpretations of their SOS experiences build connections to the program's civic themes?

Guided by the interviews and survey questionnaires from youth participants in the program, I present quantitative results from participant pre/post surveys and qualitative insights from a series of interviews with focal youth. I also incorporate relevant data from staff interviews and observational field notes that support and sometimes diverge from what youth shared about their

experiences in the program. I structure the presentation of findings as a funnel that moves from the broadest measures captured via participant surveys to the more specific and nuanced interpretations of the program captured via qualitative interviews and observations.

Based on my analyses, I have identified the following key findings:

- At the aggregate level, participant responses to pre/post survey items measuring civic engagement constructs, such as social responsibility and future civic involvement, demonstrate a mix of null and slightly positive outcomes. Nearly two-thirds of participants reported a decline in one or more civic engagement constructs over the summer.

- Regression analyses examining whether youth background characteristics or site placement were associated with civic outcomes reveal few statistically significant results. Enrollment at the Goodrowe site is negatively associated with future civic involvement, as compared to the other two sites. In addition, prior volunteerism is positively associated with youths' self-assessed ability to design and do a service project.

- According to participant surveys, the vast majority of youth (95%) reported growth in one or more civic-related skills over the summer, and the largest area gains were reported in the cultivation of team-building skills to help solve community problems.

- While 89% of youth expressed an interest in serving another SOS term, nearly half of those participants reported "not sure" or "disagree" with the idea of future community volunteerism.

- Qualitative analyses of semi-structured interviews with a focal convenience sample of youth (n=27) suggest multiple benefits associated with participation including

promoting civic development, offering socioemotional support, and identifying

pathways to academic success.

- Based on interview responses, only 50% of focal youth articulated connections

between SOS programming activities and larger civic engagement themes.

- An analysis of focal youth background characteristics and site placements reveal that

high-civically connected (HCC) youth were diverse in gender, grade and site, but

most came to the program with some predisposition to civic activity through prior

volunteerism, an interest in politics, and/or an aspiration to help the community. In

addition, HCC youth were more likely to convey an understanding of the civic goals

of the program on entry, as compared to their low-civically connected (LCC) peers.

In the chapter's final results section, I offer case studies of two focal youth "outliers," one

that appeared to excel in the program and the other who seemed disconnected from the civic

content. These case studies provide detailed descriptions of the vastly different kinds of

experiences some youth had in the program and offer a more nuanced analysis of the ways that

the SOS context can help or hinder youths' learning and development.

Research Question 2a. Did youth demonstrate changes in civic engagement

skills, attitudes and interests associated with SOS participation, as measured by pre/post

participant surveys?

Descriptive Statistics

As described in Chapter Two, I used five variables to quantitatively measure youths'

civic engagement constructs: two single survey items (Appreciation for Diversity and Service

Project Design) and three factors (Social Responsibility, Future Civic Participation, and Civic

Networks and Pathways). Table 5.2 presents descriptive statistics which show the percentages of

youth who demonstrated an increase, decrease or no change on each of these variables. According to responses on the survey questionnaires, nearly half of participants (44.9%) experienced a decrease in their commitment to future civic participation over the summer, and 41.1% of participants showed a decline on an indicator of social responsibility, which included statements such as *"I believe I can make a difference in my community"* and *"It is my responsibility to work with others in helping solve community problems."* Social responsibility also showed the largest percentage of participant increases (49.6%), followed by 43% of youth increasing on civic networks and 42.5% of youth reporting increases in their ability to design and complete a service project. Overall, 65% of participants decreased on one or more of these civic engagement constructs over the summer.

Among the youth who demonstrated a decrease in their interest for future civic participation, a large portion also expressed an interest in reenrolling in the SOS program. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents at end of term reported "yes" to participating in a future SOS summer program, 27% were "not sure," and 11% responded "no." However, 62% of youth were also "not sure" or "disagreed" with the post-survey statement *"After this summer, I hope to continue volunteering to help out my community."* Among those youth responding "not sure" or "disagree" with regards to future volunteering, 43% also reported a desire to reenroll in SOS the following summer, a finding which suggests a possible divergence between youths' attachment to SOS participation and their commitment to civic engagement on a broader scale.

Table 5.1

Pre/Post Civic Survey Responses - Percentage of Participants who Increased, Decreased, and

Demonstrated No Change (n=109)

	% Increase	% Decrease	% No Change
Appreciation for Diversity	30.8%	31.7%	37.5%
Service Project Design	42.5%	19.8%	37.7%
Social Responsibility	49.6%	41.1%	9.3%
Future Civic Participation	38.3%	44.9%	16.8%
Civic Networks & Pathways	43.0%	28.0%	29.0%

T-Test Results

Overall quantitative results of the change in youth civic engagement from pre-test to post-test demonstrate small gains in three of five key measures. T-test results are presented in Table 5.2. Across all sites, average participant responses to the Appreciation for Diversity measure and the Civic Networks & Pathways factor did not change from baseline to end of program. Average youth responses increased in their ability to design and implement service projects, their sense of Social Responsibility, and their desire or intent to participate in future civic affairs. Overall, gains in pre/post civic constructs were small in magnitude, ranging from a .10 to .29 on a 5-point scale, as reported in Table 5.1. These modest results seem to suggest that youths' experiences in the 6-week summer program had little or no impact on their attitudes, knowledge and behaviors related to civic engagement. However, the results may also reflect that the instrument was not sensitive enough to capture the type of civic learning and development that transpired in the program. Both of these interpretations will be revisited in the discussion chapter of this study.

Table 5.2

T-Test Results Calculating Changes in Pre/Post Survey Civic Constructs for Full Sample and

Disaggregated by Site

Civic Engagement Constructs	All Sites (n=109)	Goodrowe (n= 39)	Gilmon (n= 20)	Linden (n=50)
Appreciation for Diversity	.01	-.17	-.20	.28
Service Project Design	.29*	.18	.55**	.27
Social Responsibility	.10~	.05	-.13	.23*
Future Civic Involvement	.20*	-.03	.23~	.38*
Civic Networks & Pathways	.03	-.00	-.24*	.15

~p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Youth reported larger gains when self-assessing their civic skills, as measured by 11 post-only survey items that compared "how well" participants could perform a variety of tasks at the beginning and end of summer. Figure 5.1 displays the means at Time 1 (retroactively reported) and Time 2 for each of the 11 civic skills items, all of which demonstrated statistically significant increases at the $p<.001$ level. At the end of summer, the average participant reported the highest level of confidence in his/her ability to:

- *"Work on a team with other students to help solve a community problem"* (T2 mean = 3.34).

- *"Use more than one source to gather information on a school or community problem"* (T2 mean = 3.29).

- *"Manage your time so you can get all of the steps in a project done"* (T2 mean = 3.23).

Youth reported their lowest Time 2 self-assessment scores on the following civic skills items:

- *"Make phone calls or do interviews to gather information on a community problem"* (T2 mean = 2.70).

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- "*Set up a timeline and action steps for a community project*" (T2 mean = 2.90).

- "*Identify people who need to be involved in a community project*" (T2 mean = 2.97).

Ninety-five percent of survey respondents reported growth in one or more civic skills areas, and 76% of youth reported growth in at least five civic skills. On average, youth reported their largest growth related to team work (+.82), deciding what is important in choosing a service project (+.81), and gathering multiple sources of information on an issue (+.80). Smaller gains were reported on youths' self-assessment of their abilities to look at different solutions to community problems (+.60) and time management (+.65). Self-reported growth in civic skills is displayed in Figure 5.2.
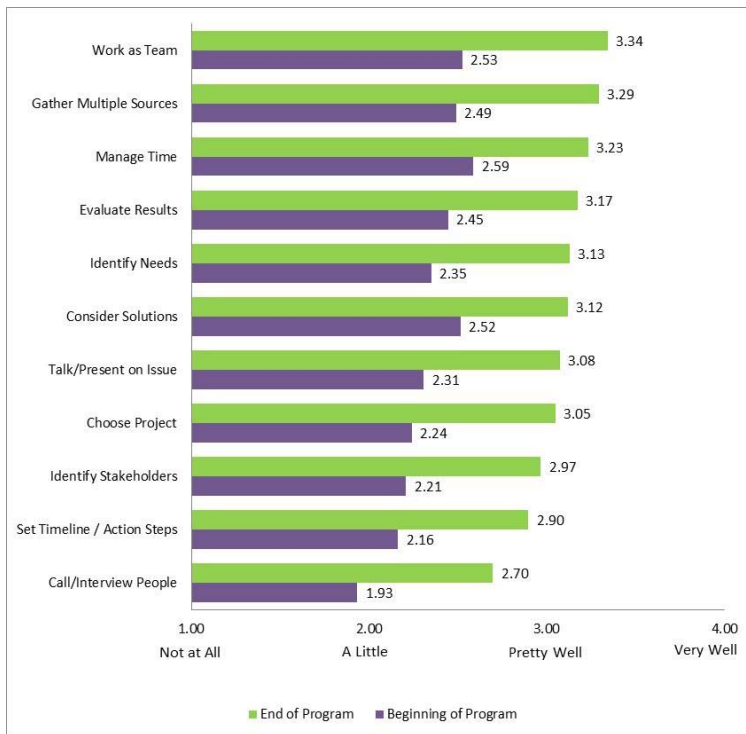
Figure 5.1. Average Civic Skills Self-Assessment Ratings Beginning and End-of-Term
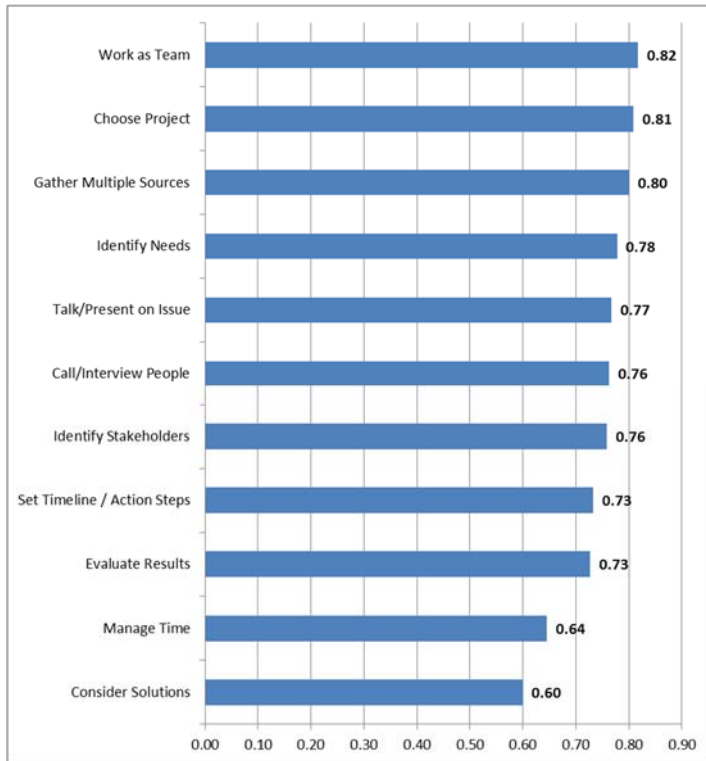
Figure 5.2. Self-Reported Growth in Civic Skills (T2-T1)

Research Question 2b. Did civic outcomes vary by youths' demographic backgrounds, prior service experience, or site placement?

Regression Results

I used regression analyses to examine whether any changes in youths' civic engagement beliefs, attitudes, and interests over the summer differed based on youth demographic backgrounds, prior service experience, or site placement. I created four models to test the relationship of these youth characteristics to participants' end-of-term responses on four civic engagement constructs:

- *Model I. Service Project Design*: results of a single survey item, "I know how to design and do a service project in my community."

- ***Model II. Social Responsibility***: the average of nine survey items designed to measure youths' sense of civic agency, collective efficacy and concern for the common good.

- ***Model III. Future Civic Participation***: the average of two survey items that measure youths' interest in volunteering in the community into the school year and into adulthood.

- ***Model IV. Networks and Pathways to Engagement***: the average of five survey items measuring youths' awareness of community resources, connection to adults, knowledge of ways that young people can influence public policy.

I also included the participants' pre-test response to each of the above constructs as an independent variable in each model. Results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 5.3. I found that participants' age, gender, minority status, and prior service-learning coursework were not associated with these civic outcomes. Youths' background in service was relevant only in Model I where an increase in prior volunteer experience was associated with a slight increase in the youths' assessment of their ability to design and complete a service project at the end of summer. The participants' site also did not relate to any of the civic outcomes with one exception: youth at Goodrowe demonstrated a .49 decrease in their desire for future civic involvement, as compared to participants at other sites.

In summary, results of these regression analyses suggest that participants' civic outcomes, as measured by pre/post surveys, did not vary based on youths' age, gender, minority background, or participation in prior service-learning coursework. However, results demonstrate that young people who came to the program with prior volunteer experience experienced slightly larger gains in their self-assessed abilities to design and complete a service project. In addition, results indicate that youth participants at the Goodrowe site were more likely to report a decline in their interest in future civic participation, as compared to their peers at Linden and Gilmon.

Table 5.3 *Effects of Youth Backgrounds and Site Placements on Civic Outcomes -- Results of Regression Analyses (n=97)*

Model	I	II	III	IV
	Dependent Variables			
Independent Variables	Post-Test Service Project Design	Post-Test Social Responsibility	Post-Test Future Civic Participation	Post-Test Civic Networks & Pathways
Pre-test Response[a]	.26**	.44***	.37***	.35**
Age (years)	-.14	-.02	.04	-.06
Female	.20	.12	.25	.12
Goodrowe Site[b]	-.15	-.15	**-.49****	-.11
Gilmon Site[b]	.19	.14	.17	.19
Minority Background: Black/African American[c]	-.01	.06	-.25	.11
Minority Background: Hispanic/Latino[c]	.25	.14	.04	.17
Prior Service-Learning Course	.04	.03	.12	.10
Prior Volunteerism	**.16~**	-.04	-.03	-.03
Constant	4.08***	2.47***	1.89***	2.99***
R Squared	.48**	.57***	.60***	.45*

~p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
[a]Model I = T1 Service Project Design , Model II = T1 Social Responsibility, Model III = T1 Future Civic Involvement, Model IV = T1 Civic Networks & Pathways.
[b]Comparison group = Linden Site.
[c]Comparison group = Asian, Native American, Multi-Racial, and "Other" Race/Ethnicity.

Research Question 2c. From a qualitative perspective, what did youth appear to take away from their participation in terms of skills, experiences, knowledge and resources?

To develop a deeper understanding of what young people took away from their experiences in the program, I conducted interviews with a focal group of 27 youth at beginning, middle and end-of-term. In contrast to the close-ended civic-oriented nature of the pre/post participant surveys, the open-ended semi-structured interviews gave youth an opportunity to share broadly what they felt were the most significant activities and key take-aways of their participation. The following section highlights the three predominant and somewhat overlapping themes that youth used to describe their experiences: civic development, socioemotional support,

and pathways to academic success. These findings are also supported by data exemplars from staff interviews and participant observations.

Civic Development

As highlighted in Chapter 2, I conceptualize civic engagement as a multidimensional amalgamation of one's attitudes, beliefs, skills, knowledge and behaviors associated with exercising one's rights and responsibilities as a member of a democratic society. Through the youths' descriptions of their experiences in the program, I identified three primary ways that participation may have had an impact on their civic development: (1) developing a sense of social responsibility, (2) increasing awareness of community issues, and (3) preparing for future civic roles.

Developing a Sense of Social Responsibility. Pioneering service-learning researchers Youniss and Yates (1997) defined social responsibility as feelings of obligation toward taking actions that address society's problems, which they argued reflect part of the "distinguishing elements that mark mature social identity" (p. 36). Youniss and Yates explained how having a sense of agency, or a belief that actions will meaningfully contribute to the common good, serves as a foundational component of social responsibility. A plethora of research has concluded an associational link between participation in community service activities and young people's development of socially responsible attitudes and beliefs (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins, 2007; McIntosh, Metz, Youniss, 2005; Shumer, 2005; Perry & Katula, 2001; Billig, 2000; Conrad & Hedin, 1991).

As described in Chapter Four, SOS participation provided opportunities for youth to take actions of consequence in their program, schools, and neighborhoods. For example, SOS youth

provided companionship for elderly residents of a senior home, built school garden boxes, produced a documentary on becoming a successful teen, facilitated middle school transition workshops for rising sixth graders, and launched anti-bullying campaigns. Nearly all (96%) of youth interviewed could identify one or more ways they felt they had made a difference by participating in the SOS program. When asked to describe the impact of their service work, focal youth estimated benefits for younger children (e.g. *"There's different places in life you got to know right from wrong... some people don't have anybody to tell them what to do, and we took our time to come over here to talk to them."*), their peers (e.g. *"Maybe they'll think twice about what they do online and what they do outside of school that causes bullying..."*), and their elderly neighbors (e.g. *"[We were] just helping people and bringing like the fun back into their life."*). By participating in actions of consequence and experiencing success in these roles, the SOS context positioned youth as positive contributors in their communities. One project director explained that the program "…taught kids that they have a voice and that they are part of the healing process."

In turn, some of the youth interviewees connected these positive civic experiences to what it means to be socially responsible members of a community. When I asked about the significance of her service, one focal youth replied, "It's important to help your community, and you should. You know it matters to people what you do for them, the people in your community, 'cuz it matters." One youth explained that through his SOS experience, he learned, "…you need to participate in your community so that your community can prosper." At the end of summer, another youth told me, "I learned the different service things we could do, and no matter what we can always make a change in our lives." After participating in a workshop on middle school transition issues for rising sixth graders, one of the focal youth said, "…if the mistakes that

we've made can help them make better choices ahead of time, then it will be a better society and a future." These comments, which position young people as active contributors in the community development process, suggest a sense of civic agency, a potential building block of social responsibility. Furthermore, these comments provide examples where youth are moving beyond pure description of their projects and connecting their SOS service to larger themes of what it means to be active and engaged citizens. However, as will be reported later in this chapter, only about half of the focal youth offered interpretations of their SOS experiences that included these types of conceptual connections.

In other cases, observations of their communities' challenges appeared to prompt reflections about what it means to be socially responsible. As youth discussed issues such as littering and graffiti, for example, they often spoke about environmental degradation as a consequence of individuals not acting responsibly. One focal youth told me, "It's the people that make it bad… like what they do if they throw stuff on the ground. They like to start fires. They do all that other stuff." Another interviewee said that his neighborhood is "…not very good. We do very little community things. We have a lot of garbage around the house. There are people who are very lazy that won't do the trash right, and we have all these stray cats and things like that." After returning from a community walk where youth mapped the assets and areas needing improvement of two adjacent neighborhoods surrounding their school, one low-income ([Y] Street) and the other upper middle class ([X] Street), I asked a focal youth what she learned through the process:

> Y: That my neighborhood over here needs some… I guess it needs more help in the community in general 'cuz they… like there's a difference between [X] Street and [Y] Street with the trash cans and lights and mail boxes and up in [X] Street you see four mail boxes, four trash cans, and you don't see that very much down on [Y] Street.

NT: Yeah, so that was really interesting how you guys were able to document the differences, and why do you think there are differences in what you see on [X] street and what you see on [Y] Street?

Y: Because it all depends on the community, and you know some people take responsibility where they live. Some people really don't care 'cuz why should you care if they're messed up or ruined or throwing away in a trash can unlike some places people care. I mean not that I'm saying here doesn't care at all. I'm just saying some people try hard, but then it just get thrown away because someone else doesn't want to pick up trash, or put it in the garbage can, or throw it where it's supposed to go right away. So it's very, I mean, it depends on the community itself and also people who live in it. So it's the difference between someone who cares and gives respect for it, and someone who doesn't.

Therefore, through her examination of a juxtaposition of two neighborhoods from near opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, this SOS participant attributed the conditions she saw as a product of resident behavior – one community taking responsibility and the other not. Her comments also speak to some of the complexities associated with positioning oneself as a socially responsible citizen in a community where things might be "messed up or ruined," and where efforts to maintain a clean environment might be "thrown away" by the actions of others. In other words, she appears to be acknowledging that choosing social responsibility may mean facing an uphill battle in her community. This sentiment of making choices that potentially "move against the current" becomes a recurring theme in how youth interpreted their experiences in the program, one which I revisit in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Increasing Awareness of Community Issues. As SOS youth participated in community mapping activities, service projects and reflection exercises, they confronted a variety of social issues, some of which exposed youth to new information and new perspectives about their communities. For example, after visiting a senior center, participants discussed the needs of local elderly populations. While filming a documentary on how to be a successful teen, SOS youth discussed the importance of a healthy diet and researched the availability of fresh fruits and

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vegetables at neighborhood markets. In debate exercises at Goodrowe, participants discussed

whether recycling had harmful effects on the environment, the value of a college degree, and the

pros and cons of gang affiliation. In some cases, youth explained how the civic content of the

program opened their eyes to "something that I didn't really notice until we talked about it and

gave examples." One project staff noted that after a community walk several youth

acknowledged a new level of awareness on issues affecting their neighborhoods. The staff person

commented that youths' written reflections included "lengthy lists of things they would like to

change," which she said was significant because:

> "Paolo Friere, the educator, says that's one of the things that needs to happen before change does occur in any person is the idea of being able to recognize, to name the world around them, to name their problems, name their circumstances. There has to be that first step of recognition before moving to change. So I think that a big thing learned from the [SOS] projects was the introduction of terminology that we did this summer with those kids. They began to name the world around them whether there were problems or positive things. And I think that's a great step to transition into having them think about how to change and wanting to change."

In addition to naming issues, the SOS experience also helped put a face on these issues,

as youth came into direct contact with their service beneficiaries. Through their service projects,

youth had the opportunity to engage in perspective-taking as they considered the needs of

others—e.g. the loneliness of an elderly person, the shy child trying to make friends, a rising

sixth grader preparing to enter middle school. As youth assumed roles as facilitators and mentors

of younger students, staff observed changes in participants' attitudes and demeanor, including

what appeared to be a shift in attentiveness from their own personal needs to the needs of the

children in their care. For example, during a Dream Big career-building activity for first graders,

a staff person commented that participants transformed their "middle school tough faces" to a

"really sweet, caring, nurturing leadership role" as they offered support and guidance to the

younger children. Focal youth also made comments that suggested a broadening awareness of the

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needs of others. After leading a Middle School Preparedness Workshop, one SOS youth

explained, "They are going to have difficulties there-- people fighting, people bullying each

other. So we showed them the wrong way to do it, and [explained] we don't want you to do that,

we want you to do the right thing." In an interview shortly after the Dream Big project, one SOS

youth told me that participation in the program taught him, "Not to always think about myself.

There's other people out there that have worser lives than me."

  Preparing for Future Civic Roles. At the end of summer, all of the youth interviewees

expressed interest in serving another term in the SOS program, and they all intended to continue

volunteering into the school year, as well. However, I found that a simple analysis that

dichotomizes "intent to volunteer" at beginning and end-of-term was not sufficient to understand

the potential program impact on interviewees' desire for future civic involvement. Most of the

focal youth (78%) entered the SOS program with prior community-based volunteer experience,

although some service résumés involved more intensive levels of engagement than others.

Similar to end-of-term interviews, all focal youth had reported at the beginning of summer that

they intended to continue volunteering in the fall. Therefore, to develop a deeper understanding

of how youths' interests in future civic involvement may have evolved over the summer, I

looked beyond yes/no comparisons of intent and examined qualitatively what participants shared

with me regarding motivations for participation and their understanding of future service roles.

  Based on staff and participant interviews, the SOS experience appeared to expand

youths' repertoire of civic engagement opportunities by introducing new and more intensive

ways to contribute to their communities. As explained by one SOS youth, there are

misconceptions about "service" being equated with trash removal projects: "People are like 'oh,

you're going to do SOS… its community *service*.' People think you're just going to clean up

stuff and parks and stuff like that." However, she acknowledged that SOS was different because the program involved "helping out other people." SOS youth assumed the roles of researchers, activity facilitators, documentarians, and peer educators as an integral part of their service agendas. Focal youth told me that a key aspect of their learning in the program was enriching their knowledge of the "different service things we could do." According to one staff person, the SOS program "…gave [participants] the tools to learn how to be involved in the community—wherein they might not had been prepared to do some community service, or they might not have thought to venture into a nursing home before. So now, I think SOS gave them a couple options to improve their own quality of life and the way of life around them."

By the end of summer, most of the focal youth (63%) could identify by program name a specific volunteer opportunity that they planned to pursue during the school year, compared to only 22% on entry. Most of these positions were offered by the SOS provider, as all three sites were operated by community-based agencies that also coordinated local after-school programs. In some cases, youth intended to join (or rejoin) after-school service clubs to volunteer with their middle school peers. In other cases, youth were planning to assume positions as volunteer interns and eventually paid staff facilitating programs for younger children in the after-school setting. All three SOS sites offered advancement as program interns and team leaders, opportunities which required increasing levels of commitment, responsibility and expertise. As described in Chapter Four, this trajectory towards more intensive service roles aligns with Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation, whereby novices learn and grow by gradually gaining access to the core functions of their SOS communities.

In addition to their expanded repertoire of civic roles, another indicator of a deepening sense of civic commitment comes from examining youths' motivation for participating on entry

and their end-of-term ideas for marketing the program. To recap, at the beginning of the program, I asked focal youth why they chose to participate in SOS, to which only 7 of 27 interviewees (26%) mentioned serving or helping the community. At end of term, I asked youth if they would recommend the program to a friend (100% said "yes"), and subsequently asked what they would *say* to recruit a friend. Seventeen of the focal youth (63%) highlighted service as a key selling point in their recruitment pitches. In total, ten participant interviewees who hadn't mentioned service as a motivating factor on entry hypothetically urged their peers to join SOS to "help out the community." One youth who signed up because "it's very fun," pitched the program as, "Instead of being outside all day bored, you can come join the SOS program with us and help the community and help others." Another youth explained that he joined, "Just so I could find something to do instead of other kids my age do whatever they want, stay outside and what not." After six weeks in the program, this youth offered as a recruitment pitch, "This is a great place, and you learn more things, and you get to help out kids." Therefore, by end of term, there was a substantial portion of the focal youth who positioned service as a program benefit, and for some, these service-oriented recruitment pitches suggest a rethinking of what should motivate youth to participate. Furthermore, although this was only an exercise during an evaluation interview, the youths' willingness to recommend SOS as a civic engagement opportunity to their peers implies a willingness to call others to action. In the service world, recruiting others to serve alongside you is referred to as "volunteer generation," which may reflect a deepening level of civic commitment among these youth.

Civic Development – What's Missing? While qualitative analyses suggest that some SOS youth gleaned aspects of social responsibility, community issue awareness and future civic roles during their participation in the program, there were some dimensions of civic development

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which appeared to be lacking in the data. In particular, the data appear to lack threads that would demonstrate youths' consideration of institutional or structural dimensions of civic and political issues. A comparison of focal youths' interest in political engagement, captured by the interview question "*So what about getting involved in politics?*" on entry and end-of-term, demonstrated no change over the course of the program. As summarized in Chapter Two, about 50% of focal youth responded negatively to the question "what about getting involved in politics?" At the end of summer, youth interviewees' responses regarding political engagement were nearly identical. For example, at the beginning of summer one youth responded, "Like the governors and presidents and stuff? Oh. Maybe because I don't understand it. I don't understand the voting. I might." At the end of summer, this same focal youth said, "Maybe, I don't understand politics like that." Another youth shared at the beginning of summer, "To me, I'm not really a fan of [politics] because I never really understood it myself." In the program's last week, she replied succinctly, "No, I don't like it." In some cases, it appeared that the youth were lacking in sufficient background knowledge about what constitutes political activity. At beginning and end of term, several of the youth asked me for clarification on what the term "politics" means, including some youth who responded affirmatively to the political involvement question. Some youth with past political engagement experience also seemed to have difficulty defining politics. Many of the interviewees had recently been involved in a public demonstration to protest city budget cuts to afterschool programs. Some of these protestors identified their participation in the campaign as an act of political engagement. However, others did not make that connection, as exemplified by this exchange with one of the focal youth at the end of summer:

> NT: So I know that I asked you this before, but I'm wondering if anything has changed since the beginning of the summer. Are you interested in getting involved in politics?
> Y: No.

NT: No, not interested? Did you go to that rally with [the Mayor] when they were going to cut the funding for after-school programs?

Y: Yes, I went there.

NT: And so what was the point, like why did you go there?

Y: So we could fight for our afterschool so they don't have to close it and stuff because they about to close it then all the kids would have been hanging out on the street, doing other things that's not supposed to be done and stuff like that. That's why I went 'cus I didn't want be just bored in the house just watching TV like we need that stuff.

NT: So if [the Mayor] decided he was going to cut funding again do you think you would go again to do another rally?

Y: Yeah.

NT: So that's getting involved in politics. Did you know that?

Y: No.

Therefore, the data appear somewhat inconclusive regarding some youths' interest in political involvement due, at least in part, to misconceptions about what constitutes political activity. However, regardless of this challenge, an analysis of pre/post interview questions suggests no change in focal youths' interest or knowledge of the political sphere associated with their participation in the SOS program.

In addition to political engagement, there were other structural aspects of civic engagement that appeared to be missing in youths' discussions of civic issues. For example, in explanations of urban blight, youth often placed responsibility squarely on the shoulders of individual residents without consideration of larger systemic causes. After one youth explained, "…there's a difference between [X] Street and [Y] Street with the trash cans and lights and mail boxes…" and attributed those differences to people who "really don't care," I asked,

NT: Do you think the government plays a role, too, like the city? I mean aren't they kind of responsible for putting the garbage cans there?

Y: Mhmm [yes]. I mean the housing, like the housing, on the news I heard something about housing, and they have debt or something, and so it all depends on government most of the time.

As the above excerpt illustrates, when I prompted the participant, she agreed that government also plays a role in the environmental conditions of her community. She didn't speak directly on

the connection between garbage cans and public services, but she did raise an important issue about how a cash-strapped city maintains the public housing complex centrally located in her neighborhood. Still, discussions of systemic root causes to community problems in interviews and in my observational field notes were extremely rare. Therefore, in concert with many service-learning critics, the program appeared to stop short of fostering or enriching participants' *sociopolitical development,* a form of critical analysis that considers multiple perspectives of social problems beyond individual merit to include systemic relationships (Watts & Guessous, 2006; Watts, Williams & Jagers, 2003). In the concluding chapter of this study, I will make the case for how this is not only a missed opportunity to promote youth civic engagement, but also to sharpen youths' critical thinking skills.

Socioemotional Support

Socioemotional development refers to a set of related personal and interpersonal skills, behaviors and dispositions thought to have particular value in aiding adolescents in making a successful transition from childhood to adulthood (Berry & LaVelle, 2013). Most of the focal youth (89%) shared one or more ways that participation in the program supported their socioemotional development. Based on participants' comments, staff reflections and observational field notes, I identified two prevalent themes in the data related to socioemotional support: the cultivation of prosocial behaviors and opportunities to build self-efficacy.

Cultivating Prosocial Behaviors. Youth and staff described the SOS context as almost entirely group-dependent. Participants worked in teams throughout most aspects of the program including when conducting community needs assessments, designing and implementing service projects, traveling on recreational trips, and reflecting on their experiences. Some team-building experiences were intentionally structured within the curriculum, while others appeared to evolve

as a byproduct of the collaborative SOS environment. However, through both scripted and unscripted opportunities, youth appeared to be cultivating skills and attitudes conducive to *prosocial behaviors*, or ways of interacting socially that produce mutual benefits for individuals and groups (Eisenberg, 1982). In particular, youth enhanced their interpersonal communication skills, practiced leadership roles, and expressed a growing sense of cohesion and collective efficacy. Similar to gains found on the survey related to team work (see Figure 5.1), I coded more examples of youth connecting their SOS experiences to growth in interpersonal skills than any other category of learning and development. Twenty out of 27 participant interviewees described various aspects of group dynamics as the most significant lessons learned from the program. For example, one youth said, "I learned that by working together you can get far with others." Another youth replied, "I learned many things, but the number one thing [is] treat others the way you want to be treated."

As described in Chapter Four, all three SOS sites offered structured community-building activities designed to build camaraderie and cohesion among participants. At the Linden site, youth engaged in weekly Camp Spirit chanting performances where each classroom created an original song that showcased their experiences in the program. The activity required youth to work closely together to write lyrics reflecting SOS themes, craft a melody, and choreograph percussive beats with their hands and feet. A number of interviewees described Camp Spirit as a positive experience where they could share their talents with the group, build consensus, and gain a sense of team pride. One youth described how the process provided opportunities for youth to practice respectful ways of communicating dissension among the group: "I would be coming up with ideas, and if [my group] didn't like any of them, they would say, 'oh, I disagree,' and that's the right way to say you don't like something… so like that was great cooperation."

Other efforts to cultivate prosocial behaviors stemmed from the multitude of leadership roles carved out for participants over the summer. The SOS program model promotes *youth voice* as a key element of quality program implementation (Tysvaer, 2011), which has been defined in the youth development field as opportunities for young people to meaningfully contribute to the policies and practices that affect their lives (Fredericks, Kaplan & Zeisler, 2001). One mechanism for cultivating youth voice in the SOS programs was the inclusion of formal and informal leadership roles where participants could be involved in decision-making, facilitating activities, mentoring or managing others, and assuming other positions of influence and consequence. Eighty-one percent of interviewees could describe one or more opportunities they had to assume a leadership role during the program. Over the course of the summer, youth and staff observed participants becoming more comfortable and adept at serving in leading roles. One interviewee explained, "I've seen more of my leader qualities and my leader potential come out. I feel more like a leader. I always knew that I was a leader, but I took it to the extreme this time." Another youth shared at the end of the program that "sometimes I do look like staff" because she had increasingly assumed additional responsibilities as an organizer and facilitator in her group. One program staff person recalled that during "the first week I could make those kids do anything on the schedule… but by the third week… they started to challenge the process at which we were going about program. But, you know, negotiating. 'We're doing these hours still, but can we include this today? Can we include that tomorrow?'" Staff at another site shared, "One of the highlights [of the SOS program] for me was during that last week when one of our elementary counselors was late showing up and the SOS youth took it upon themselves to go into the classroom and teach a dance class to the little kids. You know, they really did step up."

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Through SOS leadership opportunities, participants experienced firsthand some of the complexities of what it means to hold positions of power and authority. For example, focal youth told me they learned "patience," to "be calm," assume "responsibility," take initiative and risks, act as a role model, to "control yourself," and to generally "act mature" through their experiences leading. These interpretations of their roles seemed to challenge more traditional paradigms of leader-as-commander to include ways of negotiating, leading by example, and collaborating to accomplish tasks. However, it is not clear the extent to which youth incorporated these lessons on leading into their views of leadership at a conceptual level. In beginning and end of term interviews, I asked youth, "In your own words, can you define what it means to be a leader?" At both time points, an aggregation of their comments shows that focal youth offered similar characteristics of leadership dominated by three core concepts which I coded as: autonomy, conscientious decision-making, and guidance. For example, many definitions included some aspect of acting or thinking autonomously described as independent-mindedness, self-awareness, and/or the ability to choose a desired path in the face of adversity. One interviewee replied, "A leader to me is somebody who doesn't follow others, who sticks up for themselves. Do what they want to do—not follow what everybody else wants to do. To be yourself. To be your own person." Another common set of responses highlighted a leader as someone who makes decisions with a conscientious understanding of moral certitude, in other words "…somebody that knows what's right from wrong." The third most prevalent characteristic described a leader as one who provides guidance to others, someone who "shows other people the positive ways of doing something."

Therefore, at an aggregate level, I did not observe substantial changes to focal youths' definitions of leadership. However, an analysis of individual pre/post responses to the leadership

question shows that about one-third of the interviewees altered their definition at end of term in ways that appeared to reflect themes of the program. For example, one youth made the following comments at entry and end of term (emphasis mine):

> Y1 (beginning of term): To be a leader is to be in charge of what you're supposed to do and to be able to cooperate greatly.
>
> Y1 (end of term): "My definition of a leader is to be able to **make good choices**, and to be **proud of them**, and um also to **help other people when needed** and also **help out**."

In contrast to her early summer definition, the participant's end-of-term conception of leadership aligns with SOS themes around social responsibility and pathways to success. Another example of an altered definition from beginning to end of program came from a youth who shared a rather hierarchical view of leadership on entry:

> Y2 (beginning of term): "A leader is someone who doesn't follow, who takes responsibility, who takes charge of people who they have to look down at because it's their responsibility to be bigger and better. Follow my lead. And being a leader is to show that whatever you take, however it works, and as long as you get there, it won't push you down. So being a leader is something you have a choice and a responsibility to be."

However, by end of summer, the youth's definition changed from leader-as-superior-commander to one who offers guidance, cares for others, and makes a positive contribution (emphasis mine):

> Y2 (end of term): "My definition for a leader in my own words is someone who takes responsibility, doesn't follow others and **keeps everyone else on track**… **make sure they don't fall off**, so keeping them on track and you know **make sure they know where they're going** instead of following others that do irresponsible things and you know in your head no that's not right. **Do something good**."

As these examples demonstrate, qualitative analyses of interview responses suggest that some participants may have, consciously or unconsciously, incorporated aspects of their SOS experiences into their conceptualization of what it means to be a leader. However, only about one-third of the focal group exhibited this type of relevant expansion in their leadership definitions over the summer. Another one-third highlighted very similar aspects of leadership at

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time 1 and 2, and the final third actually shortened or simplified their definitions of a leader at the end of summer.

   Presenting Opportunities to Build Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). The SOS program offered youth the opportunity to participate in what Bandura referred to as "mastery experiences," or tasks where participants could set high goals, exert effort, overcome challenges, and see positive results. According to Bandura, mastery experiences represent one of the most effective avenues for building efficacy beliefs. SOS projects required youth to challenge themselves, take risks, and move outside their comfort zones. One youth spoke about having to overcome her shyness in order to "step up and not be scared" when leading a career exploration workshop for elementary children. Another participant explained how he took initiative during a dance activity and convinced his peers to join in when "…they thought like they were too cool for it." Goodrowe staff also commented on how the debating curriculum required "…a small group of kids to really step up as needed and really take a huge risk, if you think about it, to put themselves out there."

   According to participant interviews, it appears that at least some of these risks paid off. As reported above, 96% of interviewees felt they "made a difference" by participating in the program. Several participants explained how their actions made an impact on the community. For example, focal youth told me, "we're helping kids out to get their education," and another youth said, "…especially like with the old folks… I feel like I made a difference in their lives, like I made their day better because I visited them." After completing a documentary on how to be a successful teen, one focal youth predicted, "we're going to help the community with that video… help people by motivating them." In other cases, youth described "making a difference"

in terms of their own personal development. One focal youth told me, "I used to be immature and now I'm mature." Another youth shared, "I've seen more of my leader qualities and my leader potentials came out."

Therefore, the vast majority of focal youth were able to describe positive engagement in some type of mastery-level experience during the program. In turn, these experiences may have contributed to participants' feelings of self-acceptance and self-confidence in the context of the program. I recorded a multitude of comments during mid-term and end-of-term interviewees where youth expressed a growing sense of self-efficacy as a result of their SOS participation. For example, one youth interviewee told me, "I learned that you need like a lot of tools to be successful, but if you wanna be really successful you gotta be yourself." Another focal youth told me that a big take-away from the program was to "keep confidence in yourself… always trust in yourself." Another participant shared, "Now I know that I am a successful person." According to Bandura, engagement in mastery experiences offers opportunities to practice *perseverance*, which may, in turn, breed *resiliency*. "Staying strong" in the face of challenges was a consistent theme in the program expressed by both youth and staff. One participant told me that she learned, "That it's good to try your best, and no matter how hard it is or even if you lose you still know that you won and that you're a champion." Linden's site coordinator also emphasized the importance of resiliency. When I asked what we wants youth to take away from the program, he told me, "There's gonna be issues that is gonna try to keep our people down. There are obstacles that you'll face. Some will say it's not fair, and it isn't fair. But if you continually try, the opportunity is endless. And I hope, I really hope, that the kids understood that this summer."

Pathways to Academic Success

A third prevalent theme of youth experiences in the SOS program focused on a set of behaviors, attitudes and beliefs geared towards helping participants achieve school success. The youth spoke metaphorically about these attributes as a pathway that could lead to achievement, and some participants committed to various courses of action. At the end of the program, I asked the focal youth if they learned anything in the program that might help them do well in school. Twenty out of 27 interviewees (74%) described behaviors conducive to excelling in a classroom environment. For example, one focal youth shared that he learned, "to listen, to be more focused and to learn," and another youth spoke about self-regulation, "…while having fun always like control yourself." Participants at Gilmon wrote "personal improvement statements" at the end of the summer where they outlined concrete steps to ensure future school success. Quoting from his statement, a focal youth told me, "I am trying to improve those things I wrote down like paying more attention, stop talking a lot in class, do all my work, and get good grades." Another participant interviewee reported she learned the importance of "...getting enough sleep so I won't be all sleepy in class… and getting a good breakfast and exercising so I can get better grades in general." Therefore, the majority of focal youth seemed to have acquired some advice about the habits of successful students and shared their intentions to incorporate these "soft skills" into their approach to learning during the upcoming school year.

In discussing their strategies for achievement, focal youth also repeatedly identified *autonomy,* or the ability to think and act independently, as a key component for creating a pathway to success. Avoiding peer pressure and living "above the influence" appeared to be consistent take-aways of the program across all three sites, a finding of special significance for this population of youth who lived in a city where nearly 50% of public high school students do

not graduate on time.[2] Surrounded perhaps by many underachievers, SOS focal youth told me

they learned in the program "to not be distracted by what the kids do in class," and "if your

friends want to go do something you tell them 'no I'm going to stay and be in class and do my

work and stuff' if they wanna cut or something." To be sure, some youth came into the SOS

program with a commitment to choosing the autonomous path, as captured by their definitions of

leadership on entry. However, the data also point to a reinforcement or prioritization of this

philosophy as an integral part of their SOS experience.

Charting a path to success, SOS youth also shared how the program taught them to set

high expectations for themselves, understand the trajectory towards achieving their goals, and

believe that success is attainable. One focal youth shared that she learned in the program, "you

could be anything that you want to be if you keep your head up and do good in school." One

youth told me the he learned in SOS to "stay on the right path, don't turn off the path, keep on

going straight, don't look back." Another participant spoke of tailoring the pathway with a goal

in mind, "I learned that in order to do what we need to do I think we have to actually see what

we want to do… you have to pick something that you really want to do and go for it." Staff at

Linden described a parallel two-track process in the program where the curriculum offered: (1)

specific information about college prep coursework, how to apply and pay for higher education,

and the educational requirements for various careers; and (2) constant reassurances that

participants have the capacity to reach their goals. As Linden youth moved about the city on

various fieldtrips, they participated in a Career Scavenger Hunt to gather information about the

résumés of professionals they met along the way. Explained Linden staff, "[The youth] were

shocked to have discussions with the zoologist at the zoo and finding out – what made you

---

[2] Source: http://www.edweek.org/apps/gmap/ 2010 data by city.

become a zookeeper? What is this? How did this come about? What was the schooling about?"

Linden staff explained that one of their most significant accomplishments for the summer was

instilling in participants a sense that "they know they have a future, and that it doesn't stop at

high school, that it continues with higher education... and that they're perfect for these different

careers."

Academic Pathways – What's Missing? I found few examples in the data that would

link the SOS curricula to opportunities for building academic standards-based competencies. All

three SOS sites incorporated *academic enhancement* activities into their service-learning

curricula, a method of educational enrichment which calls upon participants to apply academic

skills to further the goals of the program, but does not offer explicit instruction to develop

academic or literacy competencies (Moje & Tysvaer, 2010). Production of an anti-bullying

video required the application of literacy skills to write the script, interpretation of a "teen

success" survey involved statistical analyses, and conducting a community needs assessment

included observation, note taking, and written summaries of their findings. However, unlike

other types of skill-building activities in the program (as described in Chapter Four), these

academic enhancement applications did not appear to be fully integrated within the trajectory of

membership roles and responsibilities. As youth repositioned themselves from freshman to junior

and senior members, they rarely had opportunities to engage in the full cycle of observation,

practice, and demonstration relative to their academic work.

Therefore, although staff purported that the curriculum exposed youth to academic

content and skills such as social studies vocabulary, statistics, and literacy, these references were

nearly nonexistent in focal youths' discussions of what they learned in the program. When I

probed interviewees for their understanding of academic material, I also found discrepancies

between staff impressions of youths' learning and youths' demonstrated competencies. For

example, Gilmon staff told me that youth "learned a lot about statistics" as a result of their work

summarizing the results of a neighborhood survey. However, this informal discussion group

exchange with three Gilmon participants shows gaps in their understanding of how to interpret

the graphs:

> N: Can you describe for me what does this graph right here mean?
> Y: This one means about how many people live here in the [the community], the color of them, the [pause, speaks to peers in Spanish]
> N: You mean like race and ethnicity?
> Y: Aha [yes], like race, Latino.
> N: So what does this number 45 mean?
> Y: It's Latino. That 45% of the people living in [our community] are Hispanic/Latino.
> N: Ok yeah – so 45% of the people who filled out your survey, right? Which might be close to how it is in the [community], but yeah – 45% of the people who filled out your survey were Hispanic and Latino. And then 33% were what?
> Y: Black/African Americans.
> N: And then you had 11%?
> Y: Multi racial.
> N: A little bit of Asians. And a little bit of other.
> Y: And 2% are missing.
> N: They never told you in the survey. They just skipped that question. Can you tell me about this one [graph]? So what do you think this graph means? It says "rank the tools needed for going to college and beyond."
> Y: It means that people that 78% of people have confidence in self.
> N: Ok – or that 78% feel that confidence in self is very important to going to college. Right?
> Y: Aha [yes].

Although this is far from a representative sample of participants in the program and does not

reference pre-program data for comparison purposes, I include this excerpt to illustrate some of

the challenges associated with the "academic enhancement" approach in a community of practice

where academic skills are introduced, but not fully integrated within the trajectory of

membership.

Research Question 2d. To what extent did youths' interpretations of their SOS experiences

build connections to the program's civic themes?

To further explore participants' learning and development, I conducted an in-depth

qualitative analysis of the ways that focal youth referenced the civic content of the program

examining both the frequency and depth of comments interviewees made related to the civic

content of their program. In particular, I looked for civics-related references in youths'

hypothetical speech to recruit a friend into the program (*recruitment pitch*), in their retelling of

program highlights (*significant incidents*), and when discussing what they felt they learned from

the program (*lessons learned*). I also noted when comments expanded beyond a descriptive

nature to engage multiple perspectives, connect experiences to larger concepts of civic or

political engagement, consider root causes of community problems, or otherwise offer deeper

reflection relative to their service work (*critical thinking*). As summarized in Table 5.4, I

identified 13 youth as demonstrating a relatively "high" connection to civic themes, 7 youth as

"medium," and 7 youth as "low."

Table 5.4

Variation in Focal Youths' Connection to Civic Themes

Connection to Civic Themes	Recruitment Pitch	Significant Incidents	Lessons Learned	Critical Thinking
High Civic Connection (HCC) (n=13)	Yes = 12	Often = 6 Sometimes = 6 Never = 1	Often = 6 Sometimes = 7 Never = 0	Often = 2 Sometimes = 9 Never = 2
Medium Civic Connection (MCC) (n=7)	Yes = 5	Often = 2 Sometimes = 5 Never = 0	Often = 0 Sometimes = 4 Never = 3	Often = 1 Sometimes = 1 Never = 5
Low Civic Connection (LCC) (n=7)	Yes = 0	Often = 0 Sometimes = 2 Never = 5	Often = 0 Sometimes = 1 Never = 6	Often = 0 Sometimes = 0 Never = 7

Youth who demonstrated high connections to civic themes (HCC) were most likely to

highlight service in their recruitment pitch (e.g. "*I would tell them that there's this thing*

happening, this summer camp of learning service, and if you would like you could join them because it will be a great idea to make a better change… make a better choice and help the community out."), describe service projects as program highlights (e.g. *"…the highlights at camp is the extraordinary things that we've done so far like… taking care of the kids, well not taking care of the kids but like showing them different paths of what's positive from negative of what to do."),* and/or convey civic engagement skills, knowledge, or behaviors as an aspect of their learning in the program (*"I learned that doing community service is good for the community, and you know that you can help people that don't really have a lot of things."*). HCC youth were also most likely to offer interpretations of their SOS experiences that probed beyond describing events or activities to include explanations or a rationale for their service work. For example, in addition to describing an anti-bullying video project, one HCC youth added that bullying is a *"very important topic to discuss because it happens everywhere, and people get badly hurt from it all the time. And I feel that it's something important that people should know that is having an effect on people and it's not cool to do it at all."* Another HCC youth spoke about surveying the community not only as a means for gathering data, but also as a catalyst to promote civic action: *"If you give your opinion when you take a survey… and there's enough people feeling the same way, that could change something in your community."*

By contrast, youth in the low civic connection (LCC) category were most likely to highlight social, academic and recreation aspects of the program in response to interview questions. For example, none of the LCC youth mentioned service in his/her recruitment pitch. Rather, their marketing speeches centered around field trips (e.g. *"come to this camp because… we go to the pool every Monday"*) and leisure time activities (e.g. *"I would say that you should join summer of service because it a very fun and interesting camp and you get to do a lot of*

activities and other games and tricks."). LCC youth also rarely mentioned service as a program

highlight or lesson learned. Participants in this group were more likely to share their experiences

making friends, collaborating with their peers, spending time on the playground, going on

recreational trips, or participating in academic-related activities such as researching college

financial aid options. When asked to describe service projects, youth in the LCC category

offered largely descriptive accounts of their civic work focused narrowly on the task at hand.

Furthermore, additional interview probes asking the youth to describe the purpose of their

service work failed to elicit responses reflective of the larger civic engagement themes of the

program. For example, the purpose of a career exploration project for elementary school children

was described by a LCC youth as "…*the basic thing is that if they want to be a singer or dancer*

it's for them to learn more about it." When discussing a survey project of local teens, another

LCC youth explained that "*we got involved in this project because I think that [we] want to know*

how many people describe success and different ways."

Finally, I identified a mid-level category of participants (MCC) who occasionally

connected their experiences to civic themes, but without the same level of consistency, frequency

or depth as the HCC group. Many of the MCC youth included service in their recruitment pitches

and significant incidents, but rarely mentioned civic development as a key take-away or lesson

learned from the program. For example, one MCC youth described a service project, the

production of a documentary on becoming a successful teen in his community, as a highlight of

program. However, this youth also explained, "*The most important thing I learned is in summer*

to go somewhere where you don't have to stay inside all day… be active and go outside and

play." Another MCC youth talked about a service project with elementary children as a program

highlight, but when asked what he learned from the SOS program, the youth replied, "*I don't*

know. I know that I learned many new things, but can I skip that [question]?" Therefore, based on participant interviews, there appeared to be a group of youth who showed some awareness of the service work of their programs through their retelling of significant incidents, but stopped short of communicating the extent to which civic participation had an impact on their learning and development. In addition, similar to the LCC group, these MCC youth rarely offered explanations of service projects beyond surface-level descriptions.

However, even when youth chose to emphasize the social or recreational aspects of the experience over SOS civic goals, data suggest some level of attachment to the program. A number of staff commented on how they were impressed with youths' active participation and enthusiasm for learning in the program. Across all three groups, youth expressed interest in serving another term, and all interviewees stated they would recommend the program to a friend. During my interviews, youth used the word "fun" to describe the program 130 times.

The qualitative assessment of youths' connection to the program's civic themes also did not appear to predict their growth in civic engagement attitudes and beliefs, as measured by pre/post participant surveys. Based on the interview data, I expected that LCC youth would demonstrate relatively few gains on civic measures, and HCC youth would demonstrate the largest increases from beginning to end-of-term. Yet, I found that all three groups (LCC, MCC and HCC) demonstrated substantial within-group variations in civic engagement outcomes with a mix of positive, negative and null results. This incongruence in the data is best illustrated among HCC youth, which demonstrated the largest variations in their average civic change scores (see Figure 5.3). The graph of HCC survey results shows six youth increasing, six youth decreasing, and one youth showing no change in civic constructs from beginning to end of term. There may be a number of explanations for this potential divergence in qualitative and

quantitative results, but at the very least the finding suggests a disconnect for some youth between how they were interpreting their experiences in the program and how they reported their views about civic engagement on the survey.

To consider whether particular background characteristics of focal youth were associated with their connection to the SOS civic themes, I created a case-ordered predictor-outcome matrix that consolidated the relevant qualitative data from beginning, mid-term and end-of-term participant interviews. The matrix grouped together youth who offered "high," "medium," and "low" connections to programmatic themes. A portion of this matrix is provided in Table 5.5. Possible predictors included youths' age, gender, site placement, civic experience on entry, understanding of the program's civic goals, and initial motivation for enrollment.
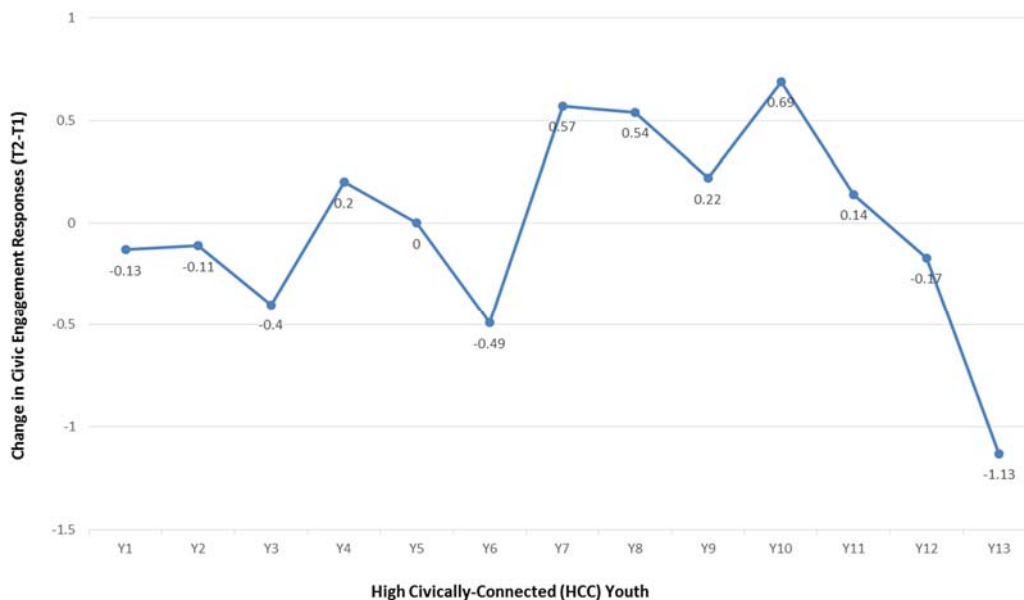

Figure 5.3. Pre/Post Civic Engagment Survey Outcomes for High Civic Connection (HCC) Youth

Table 5.5

Participant Backgrounds and Connection to Civic Themes among Focal Youth (n=27)

Youth	Site	Grade in Fall 2012	Gender	Civic Profile on Entry[a]	Goals Aligned w/Service on Entry	Motivation to Serve on Entry	Connection with Civic Themes
1	Goodrowe	7th	Female	Community-Based Volunteer	Yes	Yes	High
2	Gilmon	7th	Female	Multiply Engaged	Yes	Yes	High
3	Linden	7th	Male	Multiply Engaged	No	No	High
4	Gilmon	7th	Male	Politically Interested	No	No	High
5	Goodrowe	9th	Female	Community-Based Volunteer	Yes	No	High
6	Gilmon	8th	Female	Multiply Engaged	Yes	Yes	High
7	Goodrowe	8th	Male	Multiply Engaged	Yes	No	High
8	Linden	7th	Female	Multiply Engaged	Yes	No	High
9	Goodrowe	8th	Female	Multiply Engaged	No	No	High
10	Linden	6th	Male	Community-Based Volunteer	Yes	Yes	High
11	Goodrowe	7th	Male	Community-Based Volunteer	Yes	Yes	High
12	Gilmon	9th	Male	Community-Based Volunteer	No	No	High
13	Linden	9th	Male	Multiply Engaged	Yes	Yes	High
14	Linden	8th	Female	Multiply Engaged	Yes	No	Medium
15	Goodrowe	8th	Female	Multiply Engaged	Yes	No	Medium
16	Gilmon	7th	Male	Community-Based Volunteer	No	Yes	Medium
17	Goodrowe	7th	Male	Disengaged	Yes	No	Medium
18	Gilmon	8th	Male	Community-Based Volunteer	No	No	Medium
19	Linden	8th	Male	Community-Based Volunteer	No	No	Medium

20	Linden	8th	Male	Politically Interested	Yes	No	Medium
21	Linden	6th	Female	Politically Interested	No	No	Low
22	Gilmon	7th	Female	Community-Based Volunteer	No	No	Low
23	Linden	7th	Male	Multiply Engaged	No	No	Low
24	Goodrowe	6th	Male	Community-Based Volunteer	No	No	Low
25	Gilmon	7th	Female	Disengaged	No	No	Low
26	Linden	6th	Female	Multiply Engaged	No	No	Low
27	Gilmon	7th	Female	Disengaged	Yes	No	Low

[a] As described in Chapter Three, I defined four categories of civic profiles on entry: (1) ***Disengaged*** – youth who expressed no prior volunteer experience and no interest in political involvement; (2) ***Community-based volunteer*** – youth who shared some prior volunteerism experience primarily through episodic, direct service opportunities, but appeared disinterested in political involvement; (3) ***Multiply engaged*** – youth who expressed interest and experience in both civic and political engagement; and (4) ***Politically interested*** - youth who expressed an interest and/or experience in politics, but had no prior community service experience.

As illustrated in Table 5.6, I found that the high civic connection (HCC) group included a mix of participant genders, grades, and site placements. However, nearly all of the HCC youth came to the program with some prior civic engagement experience, and most HCCs were categorized as "multiply engaged" on entry, meaning that they had previously volunteered and had some interest and/or experience in political engagement, as well. On entry, most HCC youth had also identified "helping the community" as a goal of the program, either as a personal goal for the summer or as something articulated by program staff. Yet, when I asked youth why they signed up for the program, only about half of HCCs identified service as a motivation for participation on entry. Youth categorized as moderately connected to programmatic themes (MCC) were predominately male rising 8th graders without prior multiple engagement experience. Again, site placement did not seem to be a factor in predicting the MCC outcome. Only one MCC youth identified service as a motivation for participation, and fewer youth had identified service as a goal on entry, as compared to the HCC group. Finally, the low-civically

connected group (LCC) was predominately female, rising 6th and 7th graders without prior

multiple engagement experience and seemingly unaware of the program's service-oriented focus

at entry.

Therefore, based on this qualitative analysis of a small sample of SOS participants, I

found some patterns regarding the relationship of youths' backgrounds and their engagement in

the program. Although somewhat diverse in age and gender, HCC youth brought with them to

the program a predisposition to being civically engaged through past experiences, a familiarity

with programmatic goals, and/or their motivation to participate. Youth with fewer connections to

the civic themes had fewer prior civic experiences, were less familiar with program goals, and

did not acknowledge a desire to serve on entry. However, there were notable exceptions. The

following section details SOS experiences of two outliers from the focal group sample. I chose

these to focus in on these youth due to their "outlier" status. One rising 7th grader, Darius,

entered the program sharing little interest and experience in civic engagement, but seemed to

embrace the themes and became a multiply-engaged HCC youth over the course of the summer.

Another focal youth, rising 6th grader Maria, had significant prior civic engagement experiences,

but offered little testimony that linked her interpretations of the program to civic development. In

fact, Maria seemed rather disappointed in the civic and leadership opportunities offered through

the program. In this final presentation of Chapter 5 qualitative data, I offer a more in-depth look

at Darius and Maria as SOS participants, providing some additional insight on the various ways

that youth experienced the program.

Darius's Story – Identified as case #4 in Table 6, Darius was a rising 7th grader who was

a new enrollee for the out-of-school time provider. Darius didn't appear to be particularly

motivated by civic engagement at time of his enrollment. He said that it was his idea to join SOS

because "it looked really interesting. I saw what they lined up for the whole summer, and it looked pretty fun so I wanted to try it out." When I asked what in particular sounded fun, Darius said, "Well, going to Playland and the pool and stuff." His objectives for the summer were to "get more active" and do some "running around" outside. When I asked what he knew of the goals of the program, he mentioned to "be respectful" and "get more active." If he wasn't in the program, Darius stated, "I think I would just stay at home… probably just inside and probably go with my mom to her workplace." Darius did not have a history of volunteering or service work, although he expressed some interest in political engagement. When I asked him, "what about getting involved in politics," Darius replied, "I don't know that much about politics right now. I know a lot about who's the president and all the presidents and what they're doing for our country and what they did for our country. How they made this country better. And what they did to become president to make our lives better. I know about that, but I would like to get involved in politics. I think it's fun." When I asked Darius what he knew about the current presidency, he appeared to have more knowledge of President Obama's background and political agenda than most of his peers in the focal group. He knew that Obama was born in Hawaii, had roots in Kenya, and was working to reform U.S. health care. Darius also correctly identified Mitt Romney as Obama's opponent in the 2012 presidential election.

According to SOS staff, Darius had been struggling in school the prior year. The middle school principal recommended against Darius's enrollment in the SOS program. "[School staff] told me, you know, he was going to be a big problem. He wouldn't focus and he wouldn't listen," shared a SOS staff person. When I asked Darius how things were going in school, he replied, "Last year, I didn't have that much reputation about behavior. I behaved good, but sometimes I slacked off." Darius, who lived with his single mom and no siblings, also had very

few extracurricular activities. He mentioned being on the running team at school, but identified no other after-school programs. He said that the last summer camp he was enrolled in was when he was "little."

When I observed Darius in the program, he appeared to be a highly engaged SOS participant. In small group work, Darius took the lead on soliciting ideas from his peers, taking notes, and presenting their work during report-outs. I wrote in my field notes that Darius demonstrated strong writing skills. During a brainstorming activity, he wrote in complete, coherent sentences with correct grammar and spelling and exceptional penmanship. Darius also had a commanding demeanor when presenting in front of the group. He spoke in an articulate way and projected his voice well. On more than one occasion, I witnessed Darius take initiative to lead a group of his SOS peers. In one instance, the SOS counselor had left the room to confer with another staff person in the hallway, and Darius took it upon himself to step in and facilitate an ongoing team-building activity. Another time, I observed Darius acting as a coach and point guard on the basketball court. Darius appeared comfortable in assuming leadership roles. Furthermore, students seemed willing to accept his role as a facilitator of the group and follow his lead.

SOS staff at Gilmon described Darius's experience as one of the summer's most noteworthy success stories. "Every time an opportunity came up for him to do something or come across and give something, he was one of the persons who gave the most," explained the site's lead SOS staff. Despite being told by school administrators that Darius would be "one of the kids who was going to give me the most problems," SOS staff explained, "he was the kid I personally felt made the biggest change from when he started to the end as far as behavior, participation, getting along with others. I thought he did a very good job from beginning to the

end." Darius's work and his presentation skills were held up as an example for the other students. While Darius presented his collage of what it means to be "professional," SOS staff said to the group, "Thank you, Darius. He did exactly what I asked him to do. He included an explanation for why he chose particular images as successful and unsuccessful. This is about learning how to be confident in front of a group. Darius explained fully why he chose each picture. This to me shows he took it very, very seriously."

Based on interview data, Darius appeared to glean multiple benefits through his participation in the program. By end of summer, interview transcripts reveal that Darius had incorporated the language of social responsibility in the ways that he discussed the program. He said that the program taught him, "you need to participate in your community so that your community can prosper… that's what I learned that you need to help in your community." Darius also incorporated responsibility into his end-of-term definition of a leader. In beginning of summer, he defined a leader as largely someone who was self-motivated, who "…doesn't follow anybody. You don't go by your own rules. You follow rules, but what you do is what you think is best for you… Like if it's something that is going to benefit you in the long run that means like being a leader." At the end of the term, Darius reiterated his stance on autonomous decision-making, but added an interpersonal dimension to his definition of leadership (emphasis mine): "A leader is a person who doesn't follow other people, but they **explain to people the right choices** and **tell them like if you get in trouble you shouldn't do that**." This revised conceptualization of leadership includes a more collective or communalistic perspective acknowledging a leader's role in guiding others, which may be reflective of the SOS theme of social responsibility, or feelings of obligation towards helping others. In addition, Darius shared that he learned new strategies that may help him in school, "cuz' we met and talked about the

behavior and how could we improve it... So they are trying to help us out to know we could do better." From a socioemotional perspective, Darius demonstrated increasing self-confidence and self-acceptance, sharing that through participation, "I learned that you need like a lot of tools to be successful, but if you wanna be really successful, you gotta be yourself."

Therefore, participation in the SOS program seems to have offered multiple benefits for Darius including civic development, socioemotional support, and identification of academic pathways. In particular, he appeared successful at positioning himself as a positive contributor and leader in the program, which may have contrasted sharply with how Darius had been labeled in school. When I asked SOS staff at Darius's site if there was anything unique or special about the summer service-learning context that contributed to Darius's engagement, they credited the small group size (30 participants and 2 full-time staff), and the ability of the group to create a community where adults and staff collaborated well and respected each other. In addition, staff asserted that Darius flourished in a context that lacked the competitive environment of school, explaining that:

> "The difference with the summer is that it's really a more relaxed environment. It's not a lot of the pressures that they have – that they encounter during the school day. So by the time you get the kids in the afternoon, they've dealt with a lot of a different instructors and people yelling at them and all different emotions. School and summer is two different things. There's not as much pressure in the summer as there is during regular school. So you get different reactions from kids."

Darius didn't comment specifically on the community-building aspects of his group, but he did repeatedly refer to the SOS experience as "very fun." In particular, he enjoyed getting to "help the community," being outdoors, and going on fieldtrips including a waterpark and local museum. In his recruitment pitch, Darius suggested, "I would say SOS is a very fun summer program. It's not like other summer programs that it's just boring, you have to sit in a building

all the time and you don't do anything. You just like eat lunch and then you do a couple activities and that's it. This is like you get to go outside, you get to see places." This pitch highlighted Darius's interest in moving about his city and being able to capitalize on the resources for young people. However, in my discussions with Darius, it also became apparent that he was not just motivated by *seeing* places, but also thrived in a context that opened up new ways of making a contribution to the world around him—whether by leading his peers, mentoring younger children, or tackling neighborhood environmental issues. As I will discuss in Chapter Six, Wenger (1998) described this process in a community of practice as opening *fields of negotiability* for members which has potential for producing a durable kind of learning experience.

Maria's Story – Identified as youth #26 in Table 4.6, rising sixth grader Maria had a long-standing relationship with the SOS provider, having been enrolled in the agency's after-school and summer programs since first grade. SOS staff referred to Maria as a "bright student," and she told me that school is "good. People sometimes say, 'okay boring, I don't like school,' but you just have to pay attention, and everything will be fine." Maria explained that she signed up for the program because "I go every year, and I don't want to have to go to my mom's job and just sit there bored." Maria entered the SOS program as multiply-engaged, as she had prior volunteer experiences and expressed in interest in political topics, as well. She was involved in an after-school program called "My Hood is Good" where youth participated in community service projects. She spoke with pride about a project where youth raised funds by collecting bottles and cans, and then decided to give the money to a seemingly destitute woman they had met on the streets. Maria shared how she tried to be socially responsible at home by reusing bottles and separating recyclables in the garbage. She also expressed some interest in politics,

commenting, "Well, I try to be informed of what they're going to do. Like Obama said that, 'try to help our community instead of, you know, just being president.'"

Over the course of the summer, Maria appeared to become increasingly frustrated with some aspects of the program. During her mid-term interview, I asked Maria generally how things were going, and she reported that camp was "fun," highlighting the field trips to a nearby park and the public pool. However, when I probed for her feedback regarding service-learning activities, she seemed discouraged by the lack of collaboration in her group. During team-building exercises such as the production of Camp Spirit songs, she said, "we don't really congregate. We will be here with my friends, and then there will be a group playing Uno… We will be distant." This lack of cohesion seemed to be reflected in her group's performance, as Maria's class never won a Camp Spirit competition. Maria said from this experience she learned, "team work is important." During her end-of-term interview, Maria continued to express disappointment with the group dynamics in her classroom. She specifically referenced the interaction with her adult counselors, asserting that they were being overly harsh by "pointing out all of the negative things" while her group worked on their Camp Spirit songs. Maria contrasted this style of coaching to other camp counselors at her site whom she described as offering constructive feedback and encouragement to youth.

During semi-structured interviews, Maria rarely reflected on her participation in ways that connected with the civic themes of the program. During the end-of-term interview, Maria's description of the Dream Big career-building project for elementary school youth focused specifically on the programming content, as opposed to the civic mission:

NT: So you're preparing to talk to the Dream Big kids right, you're getting ready?
Y: Uh-mm [yes]
NT: So tell me what that project is about.

Y: Ok well we're doing skits right of different careers and it's like we'll pick like five basic careers like singing and dancing is one and then there is being a police, a fire fighter, a doctor and like that stuff and then we have different groups and do little skits about them and how they help you in your career.

NT: What's your role in the project?

Y: I'm doing singing and dancing with the girls.

NT: Good, ok, fun. And what do you hope to accomplish as a result of this? Like what's the big take away?

Y: Well the basic thing is that if they want to be a singer or dancer it's for them to learn more about it and what they're going to be doing.

When I asked if she felt she made a difference at end of term, Maria replied, "Umm… a little bit yes and a lot no." She compared her SOS experiences to prior service opportunities such as a beachfront cleanup project where she could visibly see the impact of her work through the removal of trash and other debris, stating, "So *there* we were making a *big* difference." Maria didn't seem to view her work facilitating a middle school preparedness workshop or educating children on career options as making a "big difference." When I probed for more information about the ways Maria felt she did make a difference in SOS, she spoke about her own personal development, "…like the trips it seems like it was educational like when we went to the museums and learned stuff." Maria's hypothetical recruitment pitch for future SOS participants also did not mention service: "Well, yeah you should come to our umm this camp because we have a lot of free time to yourself and we do do some activities and we go on trips. We go to the pool every Monday."

There may be multiple explanations for Maria's LCC status in the program. Compared to her focal group peers, Maria came into the program with a fairly extensive background of civic engagement experiences and interests. Therefore, she may have set different expectations than her peers for what should be accomplished in a summer service-learning program and became increasingly disappointed when the curriculum did not meet those expectations. Maria's lack of engagement may also be a product of the way the program was implemented in her classroom. In

addition to Maria's critique of her counselors' instructional approach, I also observed enactment of the curriculum in Maria's classroom that did not appear to align with SOS elements for quality programming. For example, in preparation for the Dream Big project, one of Maria's counselors told the group "when we go to [the elementary school] it's going to be like we're not there. You guys are going to be the ones in charge… 'cuz you are the role models." Therefore, in his effort to transfer authority over to the youth, Maria's counselor prepared a strategy where the adults step back and become invisible, a common misstep in cultivating youth-adult partnerships which should be characterized by shared roles and responsibilities. In Week 3, Maria's classroom was visited by one of the administrators of their SOS grant who relayed a concern to me about the lack of participation specifically among females in the group. During the following week, I observed the classroom during a large group discussion and documented a similar gender dynamic that appeared to give much of the airspace to boys and thereby seemed to marginalize the girls. The counselors did not intervene to solicit broader input from the group. I also noted that the discussion circle was segregated by gender with girls sitting on one side and boys on the other, which seemed to underscore Maria's assertion that her full group lacked cohesion. During her end-of-term interview, Maria was one of only a handful of focal youth who reported that she had "no" opportunities to lead in the program.

Darius and Maria provide an interesting contrast of SOS experiences which demonstrate how the program may tap the motivation of a previously unengaged youth, while also disempowering another young person predisposed to civic action. As illustrated by these individual case studies, SOS program processes, such as collaborative team-building exercises and small group work, may play a critical role in ensuring favorable outcomes for youth. Chapter Five of this dissertation delves deeper into the instructional practices of SOS staff, examining

whether particular elements of the curriculum and pedagogy appeared to help or hinder advancement of the program's goals.

Chapter Summary

This chapter seeks to explain what participation in a summertime service-learning enrichment program meant for a group of inner-city middle schoolers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Guided by the voices of the youth participants themselves through pre/post surveys and semi-structured interviews, I identify multiple benefits associated with participation including aspects of civic development, socioemotional support, and exploring pathways to academic success. In particular, the data present evidence that some youth developed a growing sense of social responsibility and increased interest in making a contribution in their communities. Youth also appeared to cultivate attitudes and skills conducive to prosocial behaviors, especially in the areas of team-building and leadership. SOS participation helped to reinforce youths' commitment to making future positive, autonomous choices even in the face of adversity, a stance especially relevant for a group of youth coming of age in an under-resourced community served by underperforming schools.

However, not all participants demonstrated measurable growth over the summer. Only about 35% of youth made positive gains across all three civic engagement factors included on the survey, identified as social responsibility, future civic involvement, and civic networks and pathways. Regression analyses of these civic outcomes controlling for youth background characteristics and site placements showed mostly non-significant results. Among the focal youth interviewees, only about 50% connected service participation with civic engagement themes on a conceptual level when describing their experiences in the program. Similar to quantitative results, an analysis of focal youth in the "high civic connection" category also showed diverse representation of gender, grade and site. Prior civic engagement experience was the only

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consistent indicator positively associated with civic outcomes in both quantitative and qualitative analyses. These findings suggest that participants who enter the program with some level of exposure and interest in serving the community were uniquely poised to actively contribute and glean benefits through their SOS participation. However, there were notable exceptions, as illustrated by Darius and Maria, both of whose experiences in the program took unexpected turns relative to their perceived abilities to affect change in the program.

These analyses also highlight some interesting gaps in how young people were interpreting their experiences in the program. There appeared to be a divergence in some youths' attachment to SOS participation and their ideas about civic engagement on a broader level. Survey responses show that some participants rejected the idea of future community volunteerism, but intended to reenroll in the Summer of Service program. Among the focal youth identified as highly civically connected, nearly 50% of the group demonstrated a net decrease in their civic constructs on the survey. This inconsistency in the data may suggest that the survey instrument itself lacked internal validity for measuring the types of civic development that actually occurred in the program. Suggestions for improving evaluation tools of out-of-school service-learning programs will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation. However, the disparate results between quantitative and qualitative measures may also suggest that youth lacked access to the vocabulary and critical-thinking processes needed to build connections between their work on the ground and higher-level concepts of civic engagement. Only 50% of interviewees spoke about their participation in the program in ways that linked their SOS service experiences with larger civic themes. Similarly with regards to leadership, most youth could describe positive experiences leading in the program, but few translated these experiences into their conceptual definitions of what it means to be a leader.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the processes and benefits associated with youth participation in a summertime service-learning enrichment program. To assess what young people took away from their experiences, I presented quantitative and qualitative data gathered via participant surveys, interviews and observational field notes. Using a communities of practice (CoP) framework, I also sought to illuminate some of the instructional tools and techniques employed by staff to engage youth in a trajectory of project-based learning opportunities. The goal of my study was to explore the potential of these OST contexts for supporting the social, civic, and academic development of youth. A secondary goal was to demonstrate the merit of examining enrichment programs from a CoP perspective which foregrounds the socially-situated nature of learning. Based on these analyses, I offer recommendations for OST providers and funders regarding ways to build communities of practice, and in turn, work towards maximizing youths' learning and development in structured enrichment programs outside of school.

The SOS Context as a Community of Practice

My analyses revealed that the SOS sites resembled communities of practice in a multitude of ways. I identified two prevalent aspects of SOS programming—the community-building and youth-led repertoires—that appeared particularly germane to CoP development. Sites' community-building repertoires included the establishment of norms and rituals, a culture

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of caring and respect, and indicators of social cohesiveness. The sites appeared to promote a set

of common expectations for membership that included cooperating and contributing to the

welfare of the group. Such positive, prosocial interpersonal dynamics undoubtedly contributed to

the success of their collaborative service projects. Yet, it is important to note that these

community-building characteristics likely evolved over several years of programming, as all

three sites had long-standing relationships in their communities.

This study also highlights some of the challenges associated with creating thick

communities for youth with somewhat limited exposure to the outside world. SOS staff

described their OST communities as a kind of refuge shielding youth from the dangers that

lurked beyond the boundaries. According to Wenger (1998), "Educational design must engage

learning communities in activities that have consequences beyond their boundaries, so that

students may learn what it takes to become effective in the world" (p. 274). Through service

project implementation, youth had opportunities to connect with individuals and institutions

beyond their SOS boundaries and engage in actions of consequence. Yet, these experiences were

narrow in ways that seemed to stifle a deeper commitment to civic engagement. These projects

were episodic in nature and did not delve into the root or systemic causes of issues confronted in

the communities. Thus, even through service participation, there seemed to be a kind of

insularity of the experience that may have hindered civic development for some youth.

Through assets-based programming and youth/adult shared roles, sites' youth-led

repertoires served to both legitimize youths' membership and lay the groundwork for participants

to negotiate meaning-making. According to Wenger (1998), assuming roles and responsibilities

of consequence in communities of practice can provide a potent kind of learning experience:

> Changing the field of negotiability—that is, rendering negotiable things that
> were not or had not been perceived as negotiable (and vice versa) – changes

what we consider to be within our purview. Once something has become negotiable, it expands our identities because it enters the realm of what we can do something about. As a transformation of identity, the learning involved in such changes is profound and cannot easily be undone. Opening and closing, shrinking and expanding, or tightening and loosening a field of negotiability can have more effect on learning than most other kinds of change or program (p. 248).

Findings from this case study revealed that negotiability via a youth-led repertoire may transpire through a graduated series of youth-centered training, preparation and action. SOS curricula capitalized on the talents and interests and expertise that youth brought to the table, creating space for participants to infuse their own creativity through media that were inspiring, familiar, and showed mastery. SOS activities worked to privilege the lived experiences of youth and offered multiple opportunities for participants to contribute to their perspectives to group discussions. As youth advanced through the membership trajectory and gained access to more mature areas of practice, the program opened new fields of negotiability for members in both the internal administration of the program, as well their external service-learning enterprise.

This study also highlighted the ways that sites shifted the traditional teacher-student paradigm to create partnerships that supported youths' legitimacy and movement within the trajectory. I found that repositioning in an intergenerational joint enterprise may require co-construction with adults temporarily moving toward the periphery as youth maneuver into central roles. This study underscores how peripheral participation does not mean that adults step back and become invisible, nor is it possible that adults would authentically assume the role of newcomers in the group. Rather, staff promote youth-adult shared roles through a complex series of role-playing repositioning and restyling designed to calibrate levels of adult authority and youth autonomy based on the needs of participants and the objectives of the domain in real time.

My analyses also revealed some of the ways that the SOS programs appeared to diverge or be otherwise misaligned from the CoP theoretical framework. For example, I noted how there appeared to be multiple, somewhat overlapping goals for program participation. In Lave and Wenger's early work, the CoP concept evolved primarily through the study of trade apprenticeships. In these case studies of midwives, tailors, and butchers, the end goal to become a master in that particular trade could be well defined within the community's domain. In the case of youth development programs, the end goal for "full participation" or "master status" may be more diffuse. SOS programs were asked to adopt a *civic* domain in the interest of cultivating the next generation of "civically-empowered citizens." However, as discussed in Chapter Four, SOS staff and participants also embraced a broader "excel domain" with the goal of developing youths' skills and attitudes to perceive achievement as attainable, demonstrate resiliency in the face of challenges, and visualize a successful transition into adulthood. At program entry, 50% of focal youth seemed unaware of the program's civic-related focus. At the end of the summer, SOS focal youth who demonstrated the fewest civic connections were also least likely to have demonstrated awareness of the program's civic goals on entry. Without sufficient knowledge of programming objectives, some of these individuals appeared rudderless and therefore weren't able to take advantage of some of learning opportunities presented to them. It's near impossible to hit a bull's eye if you have no idea where the target is.

In addition, the finding that one in four focal youth seemed disconnected from the program's civic content also suggests a kind of alienation from the central work of the SOS communities. Foundational texts in CoP theory have prioritized *inclusiveness* as a core strategy of building learning communities. CoPs prevent marginalization through mutual engagement where all members have opportunities to negotiate meaningful contributions to the practice. I

noted several areas where SOS sites struggled to mutually engage participants. For example, my field notes included observations of the underutilized, idle time among Summer Youth Employment Program interns. Maria also represents a very poignant example of how a participant might feel alienated from the practice. Maria's level of dissatisfaction with the program underscores the importance of recruiting adult facilitators highly attuned to the dynamics of building youth/adult partnerships as an integral part of legitimate peripheral participation.

Finally, the SOS sites also seemed to stop short of optimal CoP development with regards to their *boundary practices.* As defined in Chapter II, Wenger (1998) referred to one's movement across various CoPs as *boundary crossing*, which he claimed provides not only educative value, but also helps prevent insularity and close-mindedness within the community. According to Wenger (1998), "educational design must engage learning communities in activities that have consequences beyond their boundaries, so that students may learn what it takes to become effective in the world" (p. 274). In particular, I noted how SOS activities rarely crossed boundaries into academic content into the summer enrichment experience. The lack of social studies vocabulary, for example, seemed to impede some youths' abilities to build connections between their service and advocacy projects and larger concepts of civic and political engagement. Also, discussions of social and political issues seemed to lack contextual information such as background statistics and historical references that may have presented opportunities for critical thinking. Furthermore, this study illuminates some of the complexities of designing civic participation projects as meaningful boundary practices. If the goal is to increase awareness of a broad-based model of civic engagement that includes social responsibility and justice-oriented perspectives, then youth should be exposed to a variety of

civic experiences. Later in this chapter, I will propose integration of a "service triad" in OST programs that seeks to engage youth in multiple forms of civic participation.

Benefits of Participation

My analyses revealed that young people identified multiple benefits associated with their participation in the program including aspects of social and civic development, as well as the identification of pathways for academic success. The study's most robust findings were in the area of socioemotional support, as the majority of youth described opportunities for developing team-building skills and other prosocial behaviors. According to participant surveys, youth identified "learning to work on a team to solve community problems" as the largest area of civic skills growth. In addition, based on qualitative interviews with focal participants, I coded more examples of youth connecting their SOS experiences to the development of interpersonal skills than any other category of learning and development. These findings suggest that through SOS participation, many youth experienced a sense of collective efficacy and affinity for group membership. These results are supported by analyses which showed youths' apparent attachment to the program, as most had made an individual choice to participate, the vast majority expressed a desire to return for another term of service, and 100% of focal youth stated they would recommend the program to a friend.

Therefore, for most youth, SOS participation offered them a place to belong. This finding is particularly significant for middle schoolers coming of age in low-income, urban neighborhoods plagued with crime, violence, gang activity, and other risk factors. As highlighted by Wigfield, Byrnes and Eccles (2006), cognitive and emotional developmental changes during middle adolescence leads to an increased desire for independence from parental guidance. Many adolescents begin searching for a sense of belonging and identity, often formed in relation to

peer groups. However, without continued guidance from caring and trusted adults, such an intense time of changes can also leave youth particularly vulnerable to negative choices (Juvonen, Le, Kaganoff, Augustine & Constant, 2004). Thus, these OST settings provided a positive alternative for group membership at a critical juncture in participants' development, and based on my analyses, the SOS programs appeared successful at bringing youth into the fold.

In the area of civic development, I found evidence of youths' increasing sense of social responsibility, more awareness of service opportunities, and a willingness to recruit others to serve. However, only 30-50% of SOS youth demonstrated gains in these civic outcomes, as measured by pre/post participant surveys and semi-structured interviews. As highlighted in Chapter Two, scholars continue to debate the extent to which youth community service or volunteerism influences other forms of civic activity. Based on findings from the current study, it appears that while service participation may spur an interest in or awareness of multiple forms of civic engagement for some youth, such experiences may also have the opposite effect of narrowing or discouraging one's interests in civic activity, and for many others, there may be no effect. It is also noteworthy that based on my interviews with focal youth the program appeared to have no effect on their desire or interest in political engagement.

In addition, data analyses showed few youth connecting their SOS experiences with larger concepts of what it means to be civically engaged. More than 25% of survey respondents indicated a willingness to participate in another SOS term, but remained uncommitted to the notion of future community volunteerism. This finding seems inherently contradictory considering that re-enrollment in SOS would undoubtedly involve future civic participation. However, some youth may not have connected Summer of Service participation with the term "community volunteering." Their responses may also be an indication that some youth are less

interested in volunteerism writ large, but willing to serve when asked within the context of the

SOS program. This notion of "associational" volunteering parallels patterns found in national

civic participation studies such as research on the higher rates of volunteerism among members

of faith-based organizations (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2009).

Importantly, however, the finding that some youth might be ready and willing to serve another

SOS term, while also expressing a lack of commitment to community volunteerism suggests a

possible disconnect or misalignment between their attachment to their summer program and their

own sense of civic identity. These findings suggest that the program emphasized what

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) described as *personal responsibility* conceptions of civic learning

more than *participatory* and *justice-oriented* views. I also found few examples in the qualitative

data where youth described SOS projects beyond surface-level descriptions of their service work.

Only about 50% of focal youth offered interpretations of SOS experiences that connected

concrete examples of service-learning activities to civic engagement constructs on a conceptual

level.

This lack of practical-to-conceptual connections suggests a missed opportunity for

academic development in the program. Based on my observations, I found that the bulk of

academic content was delivered "infomercial style," meaning that academic knowledge and

skills were introduced briefly as a component of their service work, but not fully absorbed into

the instructional and work processes. Thus, it is not surprising that none of the SOS focal youth

offered examples of specific academic competencies learned in the program. Later in this

chapter, I offer recommendations for infusing more academic content, in particular critical and

conceptual thinking skills, in OST communities of practice.

Although not focused on academic development, focal participants did identify an increased awareness of beliefs, attitudes and soft skills associated with academic success. Youth described these characteristics or qualities as necessary for building "pathways" to achievement. In particular, youth described learning to "live above the influence," avoid peer pressure, set goals, and be confident in one's ability to succeed. These messages seemed particularly important for a group of youth living in an environment where typically 50% of their high school peers do not graduate on time. I came to understand these messages as a kind of "excel" discourse that permeated throughout the SOS communities. According to Wenger (1998), as communities of practice evolve, members develop shared repertoires that include not only their tools of the trade, but also unique ways of viewing the world. Importantly, this excel discourse promoted a worldview that both recognized the challenges facing these young people and affirmed their inherent abilities to forge ahead and succeed in the face of adversity.

Limitations of this Study

There are several limitations regarding the design of this study. As I have noted in previous chapters, the national evaluation which provided my data source lacked the resources to implement an experimental or quasi-experimental design, and therefore did not include the comparison groups necessary to validate participant outcomes. Contextual data were limited by what could be captured by a single researcher during weekly site visits, and therefore lacked a robust set of indicators which would have allowed for comparisons and contrasts of site-based differences. Furthermore, data collection remained limited to a snapshot of the lives of these youth, as I observed youth engagement exclusively within the confines of the program over the summer months. I have no direct observations of their lives outside SOS before, during or after

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the duration of the program. Thus, while participants' accounts make compelling cases regarding the impact of participation, I cannot make causal inferences, nor estimate any residual or long-term effects of the program.

My study is also limited by its lack of objective measures of participant performance. For example, growth in civic skill development among SOS participants relied on self-assessments, primarily via youths' responses to pre/post survey questionnaires. Additional measures of youths' acquisition of skills, collected via oral exams or portfolio reviews, could provide more definitive evidence on what youth learned in the program. Results from my study also suggest a need to reevaluate the content of the SOS participant survey, as the analyses of survey data often raised more questions than answers. In particular, the finding that nearly half of the "highest achievers" in the program (i.e. those interviewees identified as having the strongest connection to the program's civic themes) actually decreased their beliefs and interests regarding civic engagement on pre/post surveys. This incongruence may reflect a need to recalibrate the instrument with new ways of describing and measuring civic constructs.

Finally, another significant limitation of this study stems from the fact that the national evaluation was not designed to measure *communities of practice* variables. As is common with secondary data analyses, the information collected in this study was designed for one purpose, namely to assess the effects of SOS participation, but utilized to pursue an expanded set of research questions about the socially-situated nature of learning and development outside of school. Over the course of the study and the subsequent year spent analyzing the data, I came to view a CoP framework as an appropriate and helpful guide for understanding these contexts. However, there are many assumptions imbedded within CoP theory that were not incorporated

into the original research design. In next section of this chapter, I discuss some of implications of designing OST research rooted in a CoP theoretical framework.

Areas for Future Research

In the words of one prominent funder in the out-of-school time field, recent years have marked a shift in the focus of OST research "from 'do programs make a difference,' to 'why are some programs effective while others are not?'" (Granger, 2010, p. 441). To answer this question, Robert Granger, former president of the William T. Grant Foundation, recommends that "future research should continue to focus on understanding and improving program practices at the point-of-service" where youth participants and adult staff interact (p. 441). The current study represents one such attempt to provide a more in-depth look at the processes by which young people learn and develop in structured OST enrichment contexts. Based on my research, I have identified two promising areas for furthering this line of inquiry: 1) examining the nexus between practical and conceptual thinking skills among OST participants; and 2) the cultivation of community in the OST space.

As mentioned earlier, the advent of the common core standards in K-12 education has underscored the importance of bolstering critical thinking skills in youths' academic work. In Chapter Two, I highlighted the work of several scholars who have begun to document the potential of OST programs for developing youths' higher-order cognitive skills such as critical, conceptual and strategic thinking (Larson & Angus, 2011; Fox et al., 2010; Berg, Coman & Schensul, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). However, this line of research remains in its infancy. A possible next step would be to refine the methods by which researchers capture changes in youths' cognitive development through OST participation. In his work exploring teacher education, Korthagen (2010) laid out a model for understanding how learners move from

practical to conceptual knowledge. Korthagen described a three-level process by which reflection based on concrete experiences leads to (1) *holistic thinking* marked by an increased awareness of conceptual patterns or relationships, followed by (2) *schematization* or a mental mapping of these concepts with global implications, and eventually (3) *theory-building* which connects multiple schema together into a logical framework. Korthagen's model may be helpful for designing OST interventions and evaluative studies which seek to document the extent to which youth develop higher-order thinking skills through their participation in structured enrichment. In particular, future research could explore the types of instructional strategies and interactions with adult staff which appear to support or impede youths' engagement in levels 1-3 cognitive skills. In cases where programs are successful in helping youth connect practice-based experiences and conceptual thinking, an important follow-up question would be to examine the extent to which these skills appear to transfer to other contexts such as youths' school and personal lives.

In addition to expanding research on cognitive development in the OST space, I believe my study also demonstrates the value of examining OST participation through a *communities of practice* lens. As outlined in Chapter Two, CoP theory is grounded in an understanding of learning as socially-situated, the product of interactions among learners and context. Thus, a CoP study would expand the typical units of analysis in intervention studies to examine not only the delivery of a prescribed curriculum, but also the enactment of a "living curriculum" rooted in an authentic practice. Relevant data points include informal communications among staff and participants, the reproduction of membership, and the context (historical, social, political) in which the program is situated. A CoP study would document the program's culture including the use of language, tools and techniques (i.e. the shared repertoire) and the production of a joint enterprise. Process analyses would not just be concerned with what happens during structured

enrichment sessions, but also document program activity during the "downtime" between sessions, during fieldtrip travel time, at arrival and dismissal.

Furthermore, a communities of practice study of an after-school or summer program requires an in-depth examination of the quality of youth engagement. Participation variables must not be limited to attendance, but also include youths' movement across the trajectory of roles and responsibilities. In particular, such a study would examine how newcomers become initiated, supported, legitimated, and promoted through an inbound trajectory towards full participation and senior-level status. A CoP interrogation of the OST space would also identify opportunities for mutual engagement when participants contribute in meaningful ways to the practice and negotiate meaning-making in the community. The study should take into consideration how power transpires through collective activity. Several scholars have written about the implications of inequality, oppression and privilege within a community of practice (Curnow, 2013; Hodges, 1998). A CoP study would require researchers to be highly attuned to capturing different modes of participation including non-participation and marginalization. One would want to know, as pointed out by Hodges (1998), not only *what* constitutes "socially desirable" behavior in the community, but also *who* gets to decide.

Finally, a CoP study of an out-of-school time program would expand the units of analysis regarding participant outcomes beyond measurements of youths' knowledge or skills acquisition. As noted earlier, CoP theory shifts the primary research question from "what is being learned?" to "who are you becoming?" (Hodges, 1998, p. 279). Implied within the latter question are aspects of youths' identity development. According to Wenger (1998), CoP participation inherently leaves an impression upon one's sense of self, as "[b]uilding an identity consists of negotiating meanings of our experience of membership in social communities" (p. 145). A CoP

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study would therefore examine the extent to which youth are identifying with various elements of the practice and adopting the views of the practice as their own. Following this, a CoP researcher would want to know how an evolving sense of identity would affect youths' lives beyond the boundaries of their OST community. Thus, similar to the question I raised relevant to cognitive development, future research should explore the impact of youths' OST community membership on their engagement in school, neighborhood and family affairs.

Recommendations for OST Programs

This section outlines four recommendations for building communities of practice in the OST space. Rather than emphasizing a prescribed set of lesson plans, these recommendations assume implementation of a living curriculum from a CoP perspective. Although by no means an exhaustive how-to, these recommendations are intended for seasoned OST practitioners interested in beginning a discussion on how to enrich their programs through CoP development.

1. Specify the Trajectory – The first step in building CoPs is to articulate the purpose or end goal of participation. Who will youth become? What does senior-level membership look like? This process begins with identifying the community's *domain*. As outlined in Chapter Two, communities of practice (CoPs) convene around an area of interest shared among the members. Commonly referred to as the CoP's "domain," this collaborative project, goal, or problem constitutes the basis for the community's existence, the substantive issue by which members coalesce (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). The domain provides not only the entry point for membership, but also serves to guide communal activities, determine what topics are relevant, privilege a shared body of knowledge, and thereby build a foundation for the community's sense of identity. In other words, the domain provides the glue which holds the community together. Wenger (1998) asserted that all community members should be aware and

take ownership of the domain, viewing the domain as an integral part of their own identity.

Once the community establishes its domain, the next process in specifying the trajectory is to sketch out the roles and responsibilities of freshman, junior and senior members. These roles should be viewed not as a hierarchy, but more like a series of concentric circles where the innermost "senior-level" position constitutes the most seasoned practitioner. Membership in a CoP involves movement through a series of more or less structured opportunities that reposition members within the trajectory. Repositioning requires access to the tools and techniques of the trade. Thus, the living curriculum of an OST practice-based community should provide enough flexibility and support to encourage members to take on increasing levels of substantive work with opportunities to demonstrate competency imbedded within each of these positions. The challenge is to create an environment of mutual engagement at all levels of membership, a context where even the newest freshman members feel included and valued as legitimate peripheral participants. To that end, the trajectory should also include mechanisms for all members to meaningfully contribute to the community and its domain.

2. Negotiate the Shared Repertoire – For most OST programs, the development of a common discourse, shared worldviews, procedural norms, and programmatic rituals evolves through an organic process of communal activity. This repertoire enables the community to function and also gives the community its unique brand or identity. Mastery of the repertoire becomes an important product or characteristic of membership. However, according to Wenger (1998), what distinguishes CoPs from other normative groups is the ability of members to *negotiate* the repertoire. In other words, these shared tools and techniques are not etched in stone, but evolve through members' engagement in the practice. Negotiability is important for multiple reasons. First, it brings elements of the repertoire to the conscious level and allows for the

interrogation of these elements. Second, negotiation enables the community repertoire to adapt to changing environments incorporating new information and new technologies. Third, as discussed earlier, negotiability empowers member participation, as it creates a kind of durable inclusiveness. Thus, my recommendation for OST programs interested in building viable CoPs would be to set aside programming time for members, both youth participants and adult staff, to discuss, document, celebrate, critique, and modify the shared repertoire of their practice.

3. Develop Senior-Style Instructional Strategies - In Lave and Wenger's (1991) research of apprenticeship programs, the roles of full participants were occupied by the most seasoned experts in the domain, the "masters" of the trade. Similarly, OST providers should seek to recruit adult staff who demonstrate some level of expertise in the program's domain. Ideally, these staff have experienced the more novice levels of membership as young participants themselves and worked through the trajectory of roles and responsibilities. Ideally, these staff also have first-hand knowledge of the context in which participants are recruited from. The SOS sites, for example, recruited a number of staff from low-income, minority backgrounds who had excelled academically and earned college degrees. In many ways, these staff embodied the program's excel domain, and therefore had a wealth of personal experiences to draw upon. However, providers should not assume that tapping this expertise comes naturally to all OST staff. To help prepare senior-level members to serve as role models, I recommend engaging staff in structured training activities where they can reflect on their histories, identify lessons learned, and develop strategies for how to infuse their backgrounds as teachable moments in the curriculum.

In addition to sharing their personal stories, senior-level members also serve as role models demonstrating the tools and techniques of the practice. For example, SOS staff often demonstrated group facilitation techniques that youth would subsequently replicate during

service projects. However, in addition to modeling aspects of the practice, senior members can also provide commentary that explains the purpose and method of these techniques, similar to how a carpenter might simultaneously demonstrate and describe to his apprentice how to attach furring strips to a concrete block wall. Lave and Wenger (1991) explained that movement in the CoP trajectory requires transparent accessibility to the tools of the trade. When a seasoned member pauses in their role to explain a skill or activity to more novice members, I call this *instructional dissection,* which serves as a type of transparency in a community of practice.

Finally, senior-style instruction should involve both restyling and repositioning in an effort to create an optimal balance of adult-facilitated and youth-led activity. As summarized in Chapter Two, several researchers have begun to document the complexity of adult roles that seek to offer youth both guidance and latitude in OST activities (Kirshner, 2008). The current study aligns with the literature which suggests that youth development programming requires a blended approach where staff provide background knowledge and structure when needed, but also retreat to more supportive roles to encourage youth voice. *Restyling* refers to a staff person's movement among various modes of instructional communication styles such as coach, facilitator, lecturer, recorder, etc., to find the appropriate balance between adult authority and youth autonomy. *Repositioning* is the term I use to describe when staff move outside their roles as senior members of the community to create space for youth to step into leadership positions. Orchestrating when staff will restyle or reposition themselves depends on the needs of participants and the content of the curriculum. However, as mentioned earlier, a key aspect of senior-style instruction is that staff do not become non-participants in the community, meaning that they do not leave youth feeling unsupported.

4. Create Opportunities for Boundary Crossing – There are many ways that OST providers can integrate boundary crossing opportunities into their programs through fieldtrips, guest speakers, and service projects. However, I would caution that these inter-community experiences not be limited to the equivalent of "window shopping" where participants observe new practices from a distance. Youth should learn something about what constitutes membership in the communities they are crossing into. For example, during SOS fieldtrips to the zoo and museums, participants conducted career exploration interviews collecting data on the educational backgrounds and workplace experiences of professionals at these destinations. The interviews also provided the opportunity for youth to practice a professional style of discourse to communicate effectively with the adults in these communities. Thus, boundary crossing afforded youth the chance to not only explore membership in another CoP, but also to briefly engage in the practices of that community.

Another type of boundary crossing in OST programs transpires when youth participate in community service activities. To conduct service, OST providers often partner with local organizations, such as senior centers and elementary schools, which become the sites for implementing projects. As discussed throughout this study, civic involvement opportunities can position youth to take actions of consequence in their communities, and thus holds potential, according to Wenger (1998), for producing a kind of potent educational experience. To maximize service-learning outcomes, I recommend that OST programs collaborate with youth to design a variety of projects that connect directly to service beneficiaries, produce demonstrable results in the environment, and work to influence public policy. I call this the "service triad" of "people, place and policy," which helps youth cross boundaries into multiple avenues of civic engagement. Furthermore, when combining service with critical reflection, youth have the

opportunity to build connections between their service work and larger themes of social and political significance, a kind of boundary crossing that involves the use of critical thinking skills. Middle adolescence represents an opportune time for developing higher-order thinking skills as changes in cognitive function expand adolescents' ability to suspend personal beliefs, consider objective information and consequences of action, and incorporate background knowledge to solve problems (Wigfield, Byrnes and Eccles, 2006).

Finally, OST programs may include multiple opportunities for youth to cross over into academic territory by aligning targeted activities with standards-based competencies, content knowledge, and vocabulary development. Service-learning reflection, for example, may be designed as an academic activity that involves reading, comprehending, summarizing and critically analyzing multiple perspectives on topics that cover social studies, science, or other content areas. Such alignment requires knowledge of participants' in-school curricula. At a minimum, staff need to be familiar with relevant Common Core Standards at the appropriate grade level. Building connections to academic material also requires intentionally structuring this type of boundary crossing within the OST curriculum, seeking windows of opportunity when academic engagement would support overall programming goals. Weekly debates, written reflection activities, the publication of a polished essay or creative writing piece, and presentations to the public can all be opportunities for youth to practice an academic repertoire of speaking, reading, writing, and critical and conceptual thinking.

Policy Recommendations for the OST Field

Funders and policymakers can also play a pivotal role in supporting CoP development in the OST space. Many out-of-school time programs operate on shoestring budgets under the constant threat of looming budget cuts. This instability in the OST environment makes it difficult

to recruit and retain qualified staff, stifles long-term strategic thinking, and requires that programs continuously reinvent themselves to chase available funding sources. Cultivating communities of practice requires a sustained commitment over multiple years. CoPs also must operate with enough autonomy to purse an internally-manifested domain and joint enterprise project. Thus, policymakers and funders can support OST programs by offering multi-year funding streams that do not prescribe a particular curriculum or set of learning goals, but rather empower OST providers and youth participants to design their own parameters by which a community of practice can flourish.

In addition, policymakers and funders can work to dedicate more resources for the professional development of youth workers. In my early years leading the SOS team, I felt convinced that the future of the program depended upon designing a more or less scripted curriculum that would guide SOS activities from day-to-day. I now believe the opposite to be true. OST programs need support in their efforts to create a living curriculum imbedded in an authentic practice. This means that programs operate within a framework of quality youth development principles with access to a toolbox of enrichment activities all designed to support the work of an intergenerational joint enterprise. However, in the absence of prescribed lesson plans, OST program will rely more on highly skilled staff who can model the practice, restyle and reposition as needed to encourage youth leadership, and guide youth across boundaries effectively.

Finally, I believe policymakers and funders can be helpful in removing barriers for other reflective practitioners interested in positioning themselves as a bridge for research to practice in the OST field. Early in my career, I made a deliberate decision to work towards straddling the worlds of policy, practice and academia in an effort to improve the quantity and quality of

enrichment opportunities for children and youth in the non-school hours. This multi-functional role has helped me develop expertise and a unique set of skills in the field, increased my ability to think innovatively about the out-of-school space, and broadened my access to multiple stakeholders. This dissertation represents one product of my efforts to delve deeply into theory, while maintaining a broad enough set of indicators that could prove useful to practitioners on the ground. However, I have also been challenged by the difficulties of maneuvering across these professional boundaries, often feeling marginalized or otherwise unsupported in my interdisciplinary approach. I recommend the development of a fellowship program that would offer resources and support for reflective practitioners placed in multi-functional roles that bridge research and practice.

Conclusion

This study illustrates both the potential and the challenges associated with building contexts for youths' learning and development outside of school. These programs appeared especially effective in building a sense of community and cooperation that supported youths' social development. In many respects, the programs resembled communities of practice with cohesive repertoires and multiple opportunities for youth to make meaningful contributions to the practice. However, results were more mixed relative to youths' civic and academic development. In particular, the sites seemed to struggle with helping youth build connections between their SOS experiences and larger civic engagement concepts. These findings suggest a sort of insularity of benefits associated with participation, which may be an artifact of the situated nature of a project-based learning environment. As OST providers continue to refine enrichment programs to maximize youths' learning and development outside of school, it may be useful to consider how a living curriculum imbedded within a community of practice can support

a trajectory of roles and responsibilities for young people that intentionally crosses boundaries

beyond the OST space.

Appendix A. SOS 2012 Participant Goals and Objectives

G1: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: By engaging in service projects within their communities, SOS will help youth strengthen their networks of adults, peers and organizations that provide young people with productive opportunities outside of school.

> (OBJ 1.1) Youth will increase their social capital in the community as they build networks and gain access to local resources. (connections: contacts)
> (OBJ 1.2) Youth will feel valued by the adults in their community. (connections: contacts)
> (OBJ 1.3) Youth will develop relationships with diverse individuals and gain an appreciation for the power of collective action (connections: collective efficacy).

G2: CIVIC PARTICIPATION: Assist youth in developing positive and empowered identities with a sense of strength and purpose regarding civic work. Youth will become more aware of community issues, increase their repertoire of opportunities to get involved, and express more I interest and commitment to civic participation.

> (OBJ 2.1) Youth demonstrate a sense of responsibility to act and bring about positive change in society. (responsibility: civic agency)
> (OBJ 2.2) Youth adopt ways to take initiative in voicing their opinions and assume leadership roles in the planning and implementation of their SOS program. (skills: civic action competencies and communication)
> (OBJ 2.3) Youth demonstrate a commitment to future civic engagement activities. (action/intent: civic participation)
> (OBJ 2.4) Youth understand what actions they can take to influence rules or policies that affect their lives. (knowledge: public policy)
> (OBJ 1.1) Youth will increase their sense of strength and purpose regarding their ability to bring about positive change in society. (responsibility: efficacy)

G3: INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT: Increase youth intellectual development including critical thinking, literacy and academic content knowledge. ICP's Summer of Service sites will include activities that require the use of skills and knowledge aligned to formal learning standards.

> (OBJ 3.1) Youth will learn new content relevant to school curricular standards such as digital literacy, environmental science, and social/environmental justice.
> Participants will also demonstrate the ability to make connections between SOS content and in-school learning. (knowledge: issues and skills: literacy)
> (OBJ 3.2) Youth will demonstrate the ability to think critically about the issues addressed through service activities including: engaging multiple perspectives, considering pros and cons, demonstrating socio-political awareness (history, economics, social, political), using if/then propositions, and considering alternative strategies. (skills: critical thinking and knowledge: social analysis)

Welcome to Summer of Service 2012!

We need your help in assessing the value of this Summer of Service program. Please take a few minutes to complete this short survey. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, which means that no one at your program site will see your survey. We appreciate your thoughtful and honest opinions -- there are no right or wrong answers! Also, because this survey is completely voluntary, you do not have to answer any questions which may be uncomfortable for you.

If you have any questions about the survey, please ask your adult facilitator.Thanks again for completing this survey. Your answers will help improve the program now and in the future!

About You and Your Community

Fill in the bubble that most closely reflects how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I believe that I can make a difference in my community.	O	O	O	O	O
2. Doing something that helps others is important to me.	O	O	O	O	O
3. When I grow up, I plan to volunteer with a group that helps make the community better.	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. It is important to consider the pros and cons of an issue before making a final decision.	O	O	O	O	O
5. We need to work harder to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to succeed in America.	O	O	O	O	O
6. I prefer to spend time with people who think, look, and act just like me.	O	O	O	O	O
7. I feel like I can stand up for what I think is right, even if my friends disagree.	O	O	O	O	O
8. After this summer, I hope to continue volunteering to help out my community.	O	O	O	O	O
9. There are adults in my community that value my opinion.	O	O	O	O	O
10. I try to help others when I see a need.	O	O	O	O	O
11. I know who to ask for help to get something done in my community.	O	O	O	O	O
12. By coming together with others in my community, we can tackle some big problems.	O	O	O	O	O
13. I know of organizations in my community that offer fun and educational things to do outside of school.	O	O	O	O	O
14. I know several ways that young people can work to influence the rules and laws that affect their lives.	O	O	O	O	O
15. By working with others, I can make an important contribution to the world around me.	O	O	O	O	O
16. I have talents that can be useful for improving or enhancing my community.	O	O	O	O	O
17. People can learn a lot from spending time with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.	O	O	O	O	O
18. I want to help other people, even if it is hard work.	O	O	O	O	O
19. It is my responsibility to work with others in helping solve community problems.	O	O	O	O	O

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. I know how to design and do a service project in my community.	O	O	O	O	O

Your Background

21. How old are you? (Please fill in the circle for your age)

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

22. What grade were you in this past school year? (Please fill in the circle for grade last year)

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

23. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background? (Please feel free to mark all the answers that apply.)

O   Alaskan or Native American   O   Native Hawaiian /Pacific Islander

O   Asian   O   White

O   Black or African-American   O   Hispanic/Latino(a)

O   Other

24. Did you have any classes in the past year where you did a service project in your community as part of the class?

O   Yes, I had one or more classes last year where we did a service project.

O   No, I did not have any classes last year where we did a service project.

25. During the last school year, about how many hours did you spend each week volunteering/providing community service (including service performed through your school)?

O   0 hours per week
O   Less than 1 hour per week
O   1-3 hours per week
O   4-6 hours per week
O   7 or more hours per week

26. Have you participated in a Summer of Service program before this summer?

O   Yes   O   No

Thanks for completing the survey!

Do not fold paper. Hand in to the designated survey collector.

Appendix C. Participant Post-Survey

Thanks for a great SOS 2012!

We need your help in assessing the value of this Summer of Service program. Please take a few minutes to complete this short survey. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, which means that no one at your program site will see your survey. We appreciate your thoughtful and honest opinions -- there are no right or wrong answers! Also, because this survey is completely voluntary, you do not have to answer any questions which may be uncomfortable for you.

If you have any questions about the survey, please ask your adult facilitator.

Thanks again for completing this survey. Your answers will help improve the program now and in the future!

About You and Your Community

Fill in the bubble that most closely reflects how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
25. I believe that I can make a difference in my community.	O	O	O	O	O
26. Doing something that helps others is important to me.	O	O	O	O	O
27. When I grow up, I plan to volunteer with a group that helps make the community better.	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
28. It is important to consider the pros and cons of an issue before making a final decision.	O	O	O	O	O
29. We need to work harder to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to succeed in America.	O	O	O	O	O
30. I prefer to spend time with people who think, look, and act just like me.	O	O	O	O	O
31. I feel like I can stand up for what I think is right, even if my friends disagree.	O	O	O	O	O
32. After this summer, I hope to continue volunteering to help out my community.	O	O	O	O	O
33. There are adults in my community that value my opinion.	O	O	O	O	O
34. I try to help others when I see a need.	O	O	O	O	O
35. I know who to ask for help to get something done in my community.	O	O	O	O	O
36. By coming together with others in my community, we can tackle some big problems.	O	O	O	O	O
37. I know of organizations in my community that offer fun and educational things to do outside of school.	O	O	O	O	O
38. I know several ways that young people can work to influence the rules and laws that affect their lives.	O	O	O	O	O
39. By working with others, I can make an important contribution to the world around me.	O	O	O	O	O
40. I have talents that can be useful for improving or enhancing my community.	O	O	O	O	O
41. People can learn a lot from spending time with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.	O	O	O	O	O
42. I want to help other people, even if it is hard work.	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
43. It is my responsibility to work with others in helping solve community problems.	O	O	O	O	O
44. I know how to design and do a service project in my community.	O	O	O	O	O
45. I know how to lead a group project.	O	O	O	O	O
46. When I am an adult, I plan to be active in community organizations where I live.	O	O	O	O	O

Your Civic Skills – Then and Now

47. We'd like to know about how well you can do some important tasks in your community. For each of the following questions, please tell us how well you could do each type of task at the *beginning of the summer* and *now*. Could you do it **Not at all? A little? Pretty well? Or Very well?**

BEGINNING OF SUMMER				How well could you do each of the following?	NOW			
Not at All	A Little	Pretty Well	Very Well		Not at All	A Little	Pretty Well	Very Well
☐	⊞	◀	▶	a. Give a friend accurate directions to the town hall? (**sample question**)	☐	⛶	⊞	▶
☐	⛶	◀	▶	b. Identify needs or problems that are important to your community?	☐	⛶	◀	▶
☐	⛶	◀	▶	c. Use more than one source to gather information on a school or community problem (for example, newspapers, the Internet, people in government agencies or community organizations, etc.)?	☐	⛶	◀	▶
☐	⛶	◀	▶	d. Make phone calls or do interviews to gather information	☐	⛶	◀	▶

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				Item				
				on community problem?				
☐	⊟	◀	▶	e. Decide what is important to think about in choosing a community project?	☐	⊟	◀	▶
☐	⊟	◀	▶	f. Set up a timeline and action steps for a community project?	☐	⊟	◀	▶
☐	⊟	◀	▶	g. Identify people who need to be involved in a community project?	☐	⊟	◀	▶
☐	⊟	◀	▶	h. Manage your time so you can get all of the steps in a project done?	☐	⊟	◀	▶
☐	⊟	◀	▶	i. Look at different ways to solve a community problem to find the best solution?	☐	⊟	◀	▶
☐	⊟	◀	▶	j. Talk or present to people about a community issue that you care about?	☐	⊟	◀	▶
☐	⊟	◀	▶	k. Work on a team with other students to help solve a community problem?	☐	⊟	◀	▶
☐	⊟	◀	▶	l. Figure out whether or not a project made a difference?	☐	⊟	◀	▶

48. How would you rate your experience working on your service projects this summer?

⌂ Excellent   ⌂ Good   ⌂ Fair   ⌂ Poor

49. If you were offered an opportunity to do another Summer of Service next year, would you be interested?

⌂ Yes   ⌂ No   ⌂ Not Sure

Your Background

50. How old are you? (Please fill in the circle for your age)

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂

51. What grade were you in this past school year? (Please fill in the circle for grade last year)

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂	⌂

52. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background? (Please feel free to mark all the answers that apply.)

⌂ Alaskan or Native American   ⌂ Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander

⌂ Asian   ⌂ White

⌂ Black or African-American   ⌂ Hispanic/Latino(a)

⌂ Other

Thanks for completing the survey!
Do not fold paper. Hand in to the person assigned to collect your survey.

Appendix D. Participant Pre-Interview Questions

2012 Summer of Service
Youth PRE-SERVICE Semi-Structured Interview Questions
AUDIO RECORD Youth Responses

Thanks for speaking with me. As you know, we are conducting an evaluation of how the program went this year. And we want to ask a number of youth, such as yourself, about what was good about the program and what could be improved for next year. So I have about twenty questions or so, and it usually takes about 10-12 minutes. This interview is totally voluntary, so you can opt out at any time. Also, if there is a question that you don't want to answer, just say "skip." Okay? And I'm going to tape record your responses so I don't have to take notes while we talk. Any questions before we begin?

1) [Interviewer: read aloud the participant evaluation ID code.] This is _____ (interviewer name) and I'm conducting post-only participant interview # _____.

Part I. Youth Background

2) What grade will you be in this fall?

3) Have you participated in a Summer of Service before, or is this your first time?

4) Have you done any volunteering or service work before this Summer of Service program? (If so, please describe.)

5) Are you involved in any other programs outside of school—like after school programs or sports?

6) Do you have contact with any adults in your life who do any volunteering or work in the community— like family members, a teacher, coach or counselor?

7) What about friends – do any of them volunteer? (If so, in what capacity?)

Part II. SOS Motivation

8) Why did you join SOS this summer?

9) Whose idea was it to sign up? (Or, *who signed you up?*)

10) What do you hope accomplish – if anything – by participating in SOS this summer?

11) What have you heard about what the goals are for this program?

12) If you weren't here in this SOS program, what would you be doing with your time this summer?

Part III. Future Civic Involvement

13) In your own words, can do you define what it means to be a "leader"?

14) Do you think you will continue volunteering in the community during the school year? *(Why or why not? If yes, ask to describe the projects they plan to participate in.)*

15) What about getting involved in politics? Have you ever thought about if you will vote in public elections after you turn 18? (Why or why not?)

Appendix E. Participant Midterm Interview Questions

Mid-term Semi-Structured Youth Interviews

Check-in, Personal History and Obama Factor

Part I. Check-In

1) Name:

2) How's camp going so far?

3) What do you like most / what has been one of the highlights? (and why?)

4) Anything you wished was different?

5) Can you tell me about your upcoming service project?

Part II. Personal History

5) Where were you born? (If not in U.S., ask how long have you lived in U.S.? Relationship to home country? Family back home? Visits?)

6) How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

7) How would you describe your community?

8) Who do you live with?

9) How's school going? What's your favorite subject?

10) Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Part III. Obama Factor

11) Who is President of the United States?

12) Who was president before Obama?

13) Do you know anything about Obama's background from before he became President?

14) Do you know anything about where Obama stands on the issues – like education, the economy, health care, immigration issues?

15) Did you know Obama is up for re-election? (And what does that mean "re-election"?)

16) Do you know who Obama is running against?

17) If you could vote this year for President, who would you vote for? Why?

18) Where do you learn thing about President Obama? Books, websites, TV, school?

Appendix F. Participant Post-Interview Questions

SOS 2012
NYC Post Service Participant Interviews
Part III. SOS Activities and Learning

10b) Highlights from this past week?

11) Can you describe for me one (or more) of the service projects you were involved with this summer? What was your role and responsibilities? Why get involved with _____? (*Probe for understanding of context…* Why were these projects – eg. picking up trash at the beach— important? *Probe for critical thinking – engaging multiple perspectives, incorporating data or historical facts, weighing pros and cons, consequential statements, etc.)*

12) Do you feel you made a difference this summer? In what ways?

13) Is there anything you felt you learned this summer by participating in this program?

14) Is there anything you learned that you think will help you with your school work this fall? OR *Do you think learning _____ will help you with your school work this fall? And in what ways?*

15) In your own words, can do you define what it means to be a "leader"?

16) Did you have any opportunities to lead this summer as part of the SOS program? *(If yes, ask to describe leadership experience.)*

17) Can you explain to me how the young people in your program worked together as a group? Did you have a chance to build relationships with others? *(Probe for evidence of a building a cohesive team, exposure to diverse individuals, and sense of collective efficacy.)*

18) Did you meet any new people in the community during your Summer of Service?

19) Did you learn about any new programs in the community for young people?

Part IV. Future Civic Involvement

20) Would you like to participate in SOS next summer? Why or why not?

21) Do you think you will continue volunteering in the community during the school year? *(Why or why not? If yes, ask to describe the projects they plan to participate in.)*

22) What about getting involved in politics? Have you ever thought about if you will vote in public elections after you turn 18? (Why or why not?)

22b) First generation college student?

23) Would you recommend joining SOS to a friend?

23b) [If yes to #22] So what would say if you were going to recruit somebody?

24) Anything you recommend we change for next year?

Appendix G. Staff Pre-Interview Questions

2012 Summer of Service
Staff Pre-Service Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, ICP is conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the SOS program this summer. This includes gathering feedback from the youth, but also the adult staff. I'd like to ask you several questions today— the interview takes about 30-40 minutes. All your responses will be kept completely confidential and only reported in the aggregate. This interview is completely voluntary and you can skip any question you don't feel like answering. Also, I will be tape recording your responses in order to make a transcript of this interview, but I'll also be typing notes as we speak as a back-up. As you probably know, the Summer of Service model is a work in progress. We consider this summer another pilot year, so we really appreciate your honest and open feedback. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Do you have any questions before we begin?

(1) Please say your first name and your position with the SOS program.

(2) Can you describe for me your day-to-day responsibilities with the program this summer?

(3) How many youth participants are at your site?

(4) How many adult staff are at your site?

(5) Can you describe for me the program schedule?
a) How many days per week does the program run?
b) How many hours per day?
c) What is the total number of weeks that the program will run?
d) What is the total number of hours needed for completion of the program?
e) What percentage (approximately) of the program is direct service?
f) What percentage (approximately) of the program is training?
g) What percentage (approximately) of the program is research and reflection?

(6) What do you hope to accomplish this summer? For the youth? For the community?

(7) Do you have a curriculum? What is the curriculum? Have you outlined lesson plans for every week/activity of the program?

(8) Does your curriculum reflect the service-learning framework of research, planning, action, reflection and celebration?

(9) Have you tied any of the curriculum to education standards? If so, what subjects? How? Which standards? How are you using these standards? Which came first the standards or the curriculum?

(10) What will the young people learn about the context or the larger issues surrounding the service work they will be doing? (Will this enable them to connect the dots?)

(11) Can you give me some examples of team building activities that the youth will participate in?

(12) What types of opportunities do young people have to lead to serve as leaders? What aspects of program administration, evaluation and project implementation are the young people involved in?

(13) Do you feel that you've had enough preparation-- in terms of training and orientation -- to deliver a high-quality curriculum this summer? Why? Why not?

(14) How is recruitment going? Are you fully enrolled?

(15) What is the background of the youth who are serving? (predominantly from low-income communities???)

(16) Retention has been difficult for some SOS sites. What are your plans to help support the youth so they can successfully complete the program?

(17) Can you give me some examples of the kind of projects the youth will be involved in?

(18) What do you hope that the young people will learn through this process?

(19) How will you know that the young people will have learned new things? How will you assess their knowledge attainment? What type of reflection activities do you have planned?

(20) Can you tell me a little bit about your background? Your education and your experience?

(21) [*If interviewee has an education background*], how is SOS similar or different from teaching in the classroom? Or how is SOS similar or different from other youth programs that you facilitate?

(22) Do you have any questions for me? Questions about the evaluation plan? Program? Program model?

(23) Do you know how to contact Carrie if you have any questions throughout the summer?
     Carrie Bodley-Bond Email: bodleybond@icicp.org Phone: (202) 775-0290.

Appendix H. Staff Post-Interview Questions

2012 Summer of Service
Staff Post-Service Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Date of Interview:

Interviewer:

1) Please say your name and your position with the SOS program.

2) Number of youth who completed the program: _____ (calculate the retention rate. If it's below 85%, then ask about the cause of attrition and what strategies could help prevent attrition in the future)

3) Can you describe for me what happened in the final week of the program? (Any final service projects? Presentations? Reflection? Recognition events?)

4) Can you please describe one or more of the service projects that the youth completed? (Ask if the project was youth-led or youth identified, and if they did any research or reflection.)

5) Do you feel that this project made a positive impact on the community?

5a) To what extent is this work continuing into the school year?

6) Can you give me an example of academic enrichment in the program?

7) What types of opportunities did young people have to serve as leaders?

8) At the beginning of the summer, you shared with me what you hoped to accomplish: [INSERT DATA FROM PRE-SURVEY]. Do you feel that you accomplished this?

9) Were there other things that you were able to accomplish in the program that perhaps you did not anticipate?

10) Is there anything that you wish had gone differently? Anything that you would of changed if you could?

11) How was this summer different from previous summer camps?

12) Is there anything new you learned about being a camp counselor and an educator from running this summer's SOS program?

13) Do you feel that staff were well prepared-- in terms of training and orientation -- to deliver a high-quality curriculum this summer? Why? Why not? (And what training would you suggest in the future?)

14) Would you be interested in running an SOS program next summer if the funds become available?

15) What recommendations do you have for improvements or enhancements to the model?

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