Bolstering Youth Community Involvement:

Uncovering the Essential Role of Family and Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores youth community involvement in a geographically defined urban community in the United States. The research approach was qualitative, naturalistic, and ethnographic, and utilized grounded theory analysis. The study included fifty-six participants. In focus groups and interviews with youth and adults as well as with a group of youth and adults working on events in the community (hereby called the "Active Youth Group" or AYG), the characteristics of the community were discussed. Furthermore, the study inquired about the nature of youth adult-interactions. In this context, the categories "family" and "leadership" emerged. The study highlights the importance of family in the lives of residents of the community. Furthermore, the study contributes to the literature about youth adult-partnerships (Camino, 2000; Camino & Zeldin, 2002a; Jones, 2004; Lofquist, 1989) by exploring the dynamics between youth-led and adult-led community work. It discusses some of the factors that may influence whether the youth or the adults are in charge of various components of a youth development program.

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PREFACE

In late October in 2012, I was at the ASU Tempe campus on the way to a class. All of sudden I heard a very intensive chirping coming from one of the trees. Apparently, a flock of small birds had found a new home in front of one of the lecture halls. I took my phone and called my wife to tell her this exciting news. She brought my daughter Isabella on the line "Izzy has something to tell you!" I tried to listen but did not understand it at first so my wife had to translate: Isabella was saying that her plants had sprouted! She has a little garden and she planted different seeds that should grow into pizza ingredients. She was watering the garden every day. And the seeds had sprouted as a result of her action and care – she was excited and felt gratified for her efforts.

When I think of what draws me to studying the involvement of youth in their community, similar – almost magical – moments of meaning, value and appreciation come to my mind. What my daughter experienced with her plants sprouting is something that I wish for and want to try to work towards the possibility for all children to experience. Such enriching moments of deep engagement, hope, and optimism can blossom in the midst of sometimes-difficult times. And while her plants have now long ago decomposed, the same kind of reward, satisfaction, care, and meaning lie underneath all types of community engagement, where the fragile balance between an individual – young or not – and the community is temporarily reached. While this sense of understanding and meaning may vary in intensity and duration, the very possibility of it all makes efforts to reach it worthwhile.

I. STUDY JUSTIFICATION

This dissertation is a contribution to the debate by theoreticians and practitioners alike about meaningful involvement of youth in communities. The study[1] is situated within my own field of community development, for which citizen participation in community life has been an ongoing theme. In Bhattacharyya's (1995) view, participation means to include residents in the work that betters their community. The social sciences in general have come to embrace the term *civic engagement*. Energized by Robert Putnam's work (1995, 2000), research has paid much attention in the recent decades to the question of whether levels of civic engagement have been on the decline. As part of these efforts, multiple definitions of the term civic engagement have been offered. These definitions often come from governmental, academic, or nonprofit organizations.

Acknowledging the importance of involvement, many educational initiatives have made it their mission to promote participation of people in the life of their communities. In Arizona alone, where ASU is located, initiatives such as the Arizona Town Hall or the Justice Sandra O'Connor's iCivics online civics learning project, to name a few, have identified the promotion of civic engagement as a key priority. In the Arizona We Want initiative, promotion of civic engagement is listed as one of the key goals for improving the development of Arizona (The Arizona We Want, 2013, p. 14).

The issue of participation is particularly important in regards to the disparities between children of lower and higher socioeconomic status. Alluding to Putnam and his

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[1] I use the terms "dissertation" and "study" interchangeably when referring to this dissertation / study.

recent publication *Our Kids. The American Dream in Crisis* (2015), we are today witnessing unprecedented opportunity gaps between youth of higher and lower socioeconomic status. Furthermore, as Putnam illustrates through vivid case studies in this book, limited contact exists between neighboring communities of disparate economic conditions.

The work of Putnam and others highlight the significance of understanding the characteristics of communities, in which children's lives are embedded. What does a community look like? What are the community's needs and assets and how do these needs and assets in synergy influence the lives of children and youth? When asking these questions, I echo Evans' (2007) sentiment that, in research on the civic attitudes of youth, "when community does enter into the discussion, it tends to focus more on structured programs or volunteering as the context rather than characteristics of the community setting itself" (p. 696).

The problem is particularly important in the intersection of the youth development and community development literatures. As models of the ecology of relationships between young people and their communities show (e.g., Lerner, 2004), when young people are involved in their communities, positive transformations occur both on the individual and the community level. For example, Christens and Dolan (2011) emphasize in their study the development of youth leadership, sociopolitical development and overall empowerment in terms of youth's psychological factors that are enabled by youth work. Interpreting this further, youth development thus has a political dimension when politics is understood as the inseparability of citizens from a polity – their own

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community. The fact that this political aspect might not be explicitly perceived by youth (VeLure-Roholt, Hidreth, & Baizerman, 2008) does not diminish its importance.

Overall, community involvement is considered to be of value, and as such needs to be supported and enhanced. What is much less commonly pronounced, however, is how the notions of community involvement take into account criteria such as access or ability, especially in regards to youth. VeLure-Roholt, Hidreth, and Baizerman (2008) write:

> We forget that young people, 12-22 years old, are involved in a variety of civic activities as volunteers in their school, neighborhood, and community. Great numbers are also involved in family matters as baby-sitters, wage earners, caretakers of one sort or another... But they are not perceived as involved because (a) the notion of "citizen" is reserved for certain types of engagement, not others; (b) some types of citizen engagement are age-graded and hence not open to young people; and (c) adults do not perceive youth involvement in certain non-age-graded activities as doing and being citizen. (pp. 9-10)

On a similar note, Dalton (2009) pointed out that the levels of community involvement among youth have not declined, but instead have adopted new forms such as participation in the social media. The work of authors such as VeLure-Roholt and colleagues and Dalton raises a call for a more holistic understanding of a young person's life situation and his or her interactions with other community members.

This dissertation attempts to address this issue. To my knowledge, in the community development field, a rigorous qualitative inquiry of community involvement of youth has not yet been undertaken, especially with the intent to analyze the ecology of

the community, in which youth involvement takes place. Such an endeavor is a natural task for the process of community development, which according Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan (2012) "allows people to establish ways to create the community they want to live in" (p. 297).

This dissertation discusses the involvement of youth in a geographically defined urban community in the United States. In light of the emphasis of the field of community development on participation (Bhattacharyya, 1995) and involvement of youth in communities (Christens & Dolan, 2011, among others), the dissertation explores one specific long-term effort to foster youth development and community development. In the process, the dissertation pays attention to the characteristics of the community in which the youth are situated.

II. HAECCEITY OF THIS DISSERTATION

If somebody had handed me this dissertation in March of 2013, at the time of presenting the proposal for this research project, I would have been surprised by its emergent focus as well as by the complicity of my own voice in the narrating of the story. What I present in this dissertation is both a story of youth involvement in an urban community in United States, as well as a story of my researching this topic. It is as much a study of a particularly shaped methodology[2] as it is a study of the particular phenomenon of youth involvement.

In this chapter, I will discuss the basic tenets of this dissertation, with the hope that such introduction will provide readers with the appropriate context for reading the dissertation critically. Borrowing a term used by Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2014), these tenets comprise of the "haecceity" of the dissertation. They are: dynamic research question (section II.1), emergent fieldwork (II.2), immediate experience of the human instrument (II.3), emphasis on the process (II.4), alternative role of the literature review (II.5), and study limitations (II.6).

II.1. Dynamic Research Question

Every research study is guided by a number of questions or hypotheses. The guiding question of this dissertation underwent a number of modifications throughout its development. Initially, I set out to explore the guiding question:

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[2] I use the term "methodology" intentionally, acknowledging that a distinction exists between "methods" (actual techniques and tools that a researcher uses to undertake a study) and "methodology" (philosophical assumptions that that underline a study). In this dissertation I follow Patricia Leavy's (2014) use of the term "methodology," which encompasses methods, theory, as well as the researcher's philosophical assumptions. In my understanding, all three components influence the entirety of a researcher's praxis of inquiry, and they are subject to change, especially in naturalistic studies. I would like to thank Kathleen Andereck for the discussion that has led me to reflect on this issue.

How is youth community involvement being constructed by members of an urban community?

By defining the terms included in this question, I was able to set parameters around my study (see section III.2) and design framing questions for my interviews and focus groups.[3] Responding to how my fieldwork evolved, I later modified and narrowed down the focus to the following research question:

What is the nature of youth-adult interactions in the community?

While the second question is more concrete, both questions share an interest in exploring the relationship between the characteristics of a community and ways how youth are active in their community.

II.2. Emergent Fieldwork

This dissertation is qualitative by nature. In order to answer the research question I used a variety of data collection tools, including focus groups, interviews, and observations.[4] I conducted focus groups and interviews with four groups of participants: youth from elementary schools in the community, adults whose children attend schools in the community,[5] youth taking part in a leadership program hereby referred to using the pseudonym "Active Youth Group" (AYG), and adults connected to the AYG. These four

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[3] The "guiding question" refers to my overall curiosity in the topic and my narrowing down of the scope of the research. "Framing questions" pertain to the question I asked participants during interviews and focus groups (as they were outline in interview protocols). Finally, the "research question" is the main question of this research, which was based on the findings from data collection and analysis (see chapter VI).

[4] My IRB application allowed me to conduct short informal conversations with adults ages 18 and older in the community. I did not consider these conversations "interviews" per se and I only engaged in such conversations during one of my observations (Observation 3 – see section V.3 of this dissertation). In the dissertation, I refer to these conversations as "informal research conversations."

[5] One of the adults was a caretaker for her grandchild. For all but one participant from these focus groups, Spanish was their first language and most did not speak English very well.

groups were not selected *a priori* before my fieldwork began; rather, their selection was, for the most part, emergent and guided by my analysis of the data. The AYG is a structured *formal* group that is guided by a specific philosophy to get youth involved in their community (see sections V.4, V.5, and V.6). Through its focus and structure of programming, it thus differs from the groups of youth and adults connected to schools in the community, which I saw as *informal* groups.[6]

Altogether, 56 participants (30 youth and 26 adults) took part in interviews and/or focus groups. From those, seven youth participated in interviews that were recorded on video.[7] Additionally five youth and two adults were recorded on video during AYG meetings, but they were not interviewed. During my fieldwork I also conducted four observations: one observation of the community and three observations at events organized for the community by the AYG. The interviews, focus groups, and observations are summarized in Table 1.

I utilized grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006 and others) in this study. The selection of grounded theory was made based on consideration that it applies to everyday settings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), is compatible with naturalistic inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; see section II.3) and that it allows the researcher to use existing literature not as a framework to test concepts, but rather to expand the

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[6] A notable exception was a group of youth enrolled in one of the elementary schools who participate in a special School Support Group (see section V.1). The youth from the schools in the community and parents whose children attend these schools were not affiliated with the AYG.

[7] From those seven youth whose interviews were recorded on video, five took part in a focus group later (not recorded on video).

researcher's understanding of possible relationships between concepts (Glaser, 1978; see

also sections II.5 and IV.2.4.6.

Table 1.

Overview of Interviews, Focus Groups, and Observations

	Youth	Adults	Observations
Community	3 focus groups with a total of 23 youth from 2 elementary schools (FGY1-3)[8]	3 focus groups with a total of 22 adults whose children attend schools in the community (FGA4-6)	1 observation of the community (OBS1)
Active Youth Group (AYG)	Interviews recorded on video with 7 youth from the AYG and a follow up focus group with 5 of these youth (INTY1-7 and FGY7)	Interviews with 4 adults who are connected to the AYG (INTA1-4)	Observations of 3 community events organized by the AYG (OBS2, OBS3, and OBS4)

II.3. Immediate Experience of the Human Instrument

The work on this dissertation started, and remained throughout, a fascination with

qualitative research. During the first two semesters at ASU I came to embrace Glaser and

Strauss' *Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) as paradigm-shifting work. Having read

some of the founding books of grounded theory method, I was occupied with the question

of freedom in grounded theory research (Pstross, 2011).[9]

I also attempted to embrace the personal aspect of conducting a research study.

When Barney Glaser (2001, p. 145) writes that "All is data," he highlights the notion in

Discovery that qualitative researchers should be open to including multiple forms of data

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[8] The abbreviation of data sources signifies: "INT" = interview, "FG" = focus group, "Y" = youth participants, and "A" = adult participants. Interviews with youth recorded on video are coded as "INTY".

[9] See Appendix E for more about the roots of my methodology.

in their analysis. It is his understanding that researchers are asked to sort and conceptualize the data by which they are surrounded (Glaser, 1978). Yet, by claiming that conceptual abstractions "are value neutral" (Glaser, 2001, p. 156) and that "they can be applied based on any value" (p. 146), Glaser lessens the role of researchers' personal experiences. As constructivist grounded theory researchers such as Kathy Charmaz (1995, 2006) and Adele Clarke (2003, 2005) show, in so doing Glaser discounts an equally important source from the entirety of available data: the researcher him/herself.[10]

In addition to the calls for the personal referenced above, my decision to bring forth my own experience in working on this dissertation was directly informed by its methodology. In *Naturalistic Inquiry* Lincoln and Guba (1985) thoroughly elaborate on the notion of the human instrument. They claim that in natural (e.g. non-experimental social) settings, the researcher has no choice but to reflect on his or her situatedness in the inquiry. The reasons are the complexity of the social realities studied, the intricacy of meanings that emerge in human interaction in which the researcher partakes, and the fact that only the researcher as human instrument can fully untangle how he or she has influenced a research setting, and reflect on the biases that influence his or her value judgments about the subject of study (pp. 39-40).[11] Put differently, the researcher co-constructs the culture (meanings that are being formulated and shared, according to Couldry, 2000) that is at the core of every ethnographic study (Geertz, 1973).

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[10] The tension between what constitutes the academic and the personal worlds has been articulated in literature. For example, Arthur Bochner (1997) writes: "The sad truth is that the academic self frequently is cut off from the ordinary, experiential self. A life of theory can remove one from experience, make one feel unconnected" (p. 421).

[11] See Appendix E for more information.

The involvement of "self" in the research process was most prominent in the "behind the scenes" underpinnings of this dissertation. In order to record my analytical steps, I engaged in ongoing memo writing. Memos were as much accounts of the topic and study participants' views on the studied phenomenon, as they were accounts about me as the researcher. I followed Birks and Mills (2011) who advised researchers to write memos on all aspects of the research including the researcher's feelings about his or her involvement.

It may be that the reader will feel that my voice penetrates this dissertation excessively. Also, the reader might be surprised by the emphasis of this dissertation on process and method (as opposed to theory). Yet, if the line between ontology and epistemology is blurred in subjectivist studies (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and if postmodern thinking allows for ontology and epistemology to blend together (St. Pierre, 2011), then my knowing of what something is, is inseparable from whom I am as a knower. St. Pierre's argument deeply impacted my thinking about my dissertation work – so much that it shifted my understanding of the relationship between methods and theory (or process and content). St. Pierre conducts a deconstruction of qualitative research:

> [I]f no one no longer thinks of oneself as "I" but as entangled with everyone, everything else – as haecceity, as assemblage – what happens to the concepts in social science research based on the "I" – the *researcher*, the *participant, identity, presence, voice, lens, experience, positionality, subjectivity, objectivity, bias rationality, consciousness*…." (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 619)

St. Pierre's words were comforting to me, because they validated my suspicion of the positivist nature of qualitative research, which often struggles to capture the depth of

relationships between people and their communities. Yet, they were also discomforting. In order for me to present defendable new knowledge, a strong method was needed. By writing memos throughout the research process, I attempted to discern, connect and understand the complex reality of systems that surround my dissertation. Perhaps, this is the drawing board, where serendipity (Lederach, 2005) was welcomed into my work. By means of personal narrative I sought to explain the context in which data were collected, analyzed, and compared against other data and theory. Through this effort, I wanted to shed light into the beliefs and values that shaped my work and allow the reader to critically assess my claims.

II.4. Emphasis on the Process

In this dissertation I presented a more detailed description of my methodology not because I would consider my study to be exemplary and flawless. Rather, I was hoping that transparency would open the door for the readers' critique. Isn't that the point of science anyway, which, in light of Karl Popper's (2005) *falsifiability* notion, is always tentative and incomplete? I invite the reader to accompany me on my inquiry, to the extent that both ethical guidelines and institutional policies allow.

The design of this dissertation was emergent, meaning that the process of doing research was not determined *a priori*, but rather was driven by my interactions with the community, findings, and additional circumstances that were not previously expected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) draw inspiration from a report by Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979) who argue that the 20th century brought about a series of paradigm shifts in a variety of research disciplines. Schwartz and Ogilvy use the term *emergent paradigm* to denote this complexity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) adapted the

notion of this paradigm shift to qualitative research in the social sciences as they developed the idea that qualitative research evolves in a way that cannot be anticipated. And, this happens largely when the researcher is willing to let this emergence and ambiguity to guide the inquiry. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) adopted Schwartz and Ogilvy's (1979) metaphor of the complexity of emergent phenomena, symbolized by a holograph. A holograph is a pattern stored on an optical medium that creates a three-dimensional picture. The technology splits light into two streams, each approaching the photographed object from a different direction. The two beams then converge on a photographic plate and create a pattern that reproduces the photographed object when the same kind of light is shone on it (Schwartz & Ogilvy, 1979, p. 8).[12]

My research built on the notion of the holograph in the following way. I thought of the two beams as the *process* (method) and *content* (theory) of my study. In this metaphor, the photographic plate represents the dissertation and its reading symbolizes the shining of light on the photographic place in order to reconstruct the holograph. What my study hoped to construct and reconstruct was a finding that would help explain a particular social situation. To use the holographic metaphor, in order for my inquiry to stand out as a three-dimensional object, I treated the process and the content as equally important. In the holograph metaphor, ontology and epistemology thus converged in my study based on St. Pierre's (2011) argument. Contrary to most studies I have seen, where writing about method was treated as secondary to findings, my own study emphasized the

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[12] In the description of the hologram, Schwartz and Ogilvy used an article by Rick Ingrasci from the *New Age* magazine. Unfortunately, they did not provide a full reference so I could not retrieve Ingrasci's article.

process and elevated it to the same importance as findings. Thus, the following can be stated simultaneously:

- This dissertation is a study of a particular topic, which I am exploring using a certain method.

  and

- This dissertation is a study of a particular method as it evolved in the process of studying a particular topic.

To be clear, this dissertation is not a methodological treatise. At the same time, in light of a pragmatic intent (see section IV.2.1.3) and in line with St. Pierre's (2011) thinking, I am of the belief that the research process itself is knowledge worthy of an academic elaboration. And, moreover, that the process itself may be useful to those who are dealing with methodological dilemmas similar to the ones I encountered. In this effort, my study evolved unconventionally and serendipitously.

II.5. Alternative Role of the Literature Review

As mentioned above, St. Pierre (2011) welcomed the "assemblage" of her own life to impact her research findings. In her understanding, reading is thinking, theorizing, and analyzing. This also implies that the literature review can no longer be strictly separated from interpretation.

This dissertation followed a non-traditional structure (for exemplary contrast, see Creswell, 2009). This is especially evident in terms of how the review of literature is being treated. Taking a relativist ontological standpoint, I saw literature informing this dissertation as one of the drivers of the co-constructive processes that led to the findings that are presented. Not only the study did not adhere to one objective "Truth" with a

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capital "T" (see section IV.1), but also invited a certain hermeneutics to be at play. The interpretation of literature was dynamic and tied to the specific temporal, special, and cultural context, in which it was written and in which it is being read. In the work on this dissertation, my own reading and interpretation of the same literature over years changed because I, too, changed.

As was posited by Bochner (1997), a theory may create a gap between a researcher and what he or she studies. I chose not to frame my work within a particular theory because it would have blocked my ability to see new things that I did not expect to see. At the same time, I paid attention to my own experiences and existing theories to increase my ability to think "about data in theoretical terms" (Strauss, 1987, p. 11).

For all of these reasons, the literatures pertaining to the involvement of youth in the community are referenced throughout various parts of the dissertation, as relevant, interactive, and co-constitutive of what is being discussed and as interpretations are being made. Importantly, the interpretation of various literatures was influenced by the development of my research question and vice versa. What started out as broad quest for understanding what youth community involvement meant, turned into an inquiry of youth-adult relationships in community building efforts. Accordingly, in the development of my theoretical sensitivity I adapted to these changes of direction.

II.6. Study Limitations

In order to provide greater transparency, I would like to present from the onset some limitation by which this dissertation is bound. As the "research instrument" in this study, my understanding of youth involvement in the community was influenced by the fact that as a Caucasian male, whose benefited from much privilege in my life (economic

and educational especially; see Appendix F), I entered a community that is generally of lower-income and which consists of diverse ethnic groups.

Another limitation has to do with language barriers. While I have lived in the United States for 5 years, I am still a student of the English language. There were times during my fieldwork when I had trouble understanding youth slang. Though I was able to ask others for help and the participants for clarification, in future studies like this, I would most likely work on such a project in collaboration with an English speaker familiar with youth slang. Furthermore, in three focus groups, I used the help of an interpreter to translate the participants' responses from Spanish to English. Given that English is not my native language, a two-fold translation thus occurred.

This dissertation does not claim to be all encompassing. Because of its qualitative nature, only a small parcel of youth (30) and adults (26) participated in the study. A related limitation is that my study did not provide a contrast between different youth programs, which would broaden its theoretical reach. In retrospect, I have come to the realization that one particular limitation of the study lies in the design of observations. The dissertation would have provided more insights and better triangulation of findings if permission had been secured from all participants in non-public settings, such as bi-weekly sessions of the AYG. Because this permission was not sought (see section V.4.3), there is an absence of insights in my dissertation that I would like to acknowledge from the very beginning. However, this limitation also symbolizes to me a lesson learned and an opportunity for future studies.

On the point of sampling, I was not always successful in reaching out to those participants who are not involved in their community such as school dropouts, or youth

who are members of gangs. Along these lines, one of less utilized techniques in this study was theoretical sampling of grounded theory. Though I was intentional in my search for comparison groups,[13] I often relied on convenience contacts. The presented study would have been stronger if I had gotten to interview participants such as adult males or youth who are not at all involved in the community.[14]

Lastly, thorough data analysis did not always immediately follow data collection. The pacing of my research improved rapidly in the fall of 2014 and the spring of 2015, when I have started seeing possible threads of relationships between concepts. But earlier efforts would have deepened my analysis.

In conclusion of this chapter, the areas outlined above created a platform in which my work is presented and interpreted. The six tenets are interconnected: dynamic research question, emergent fieldwork, immediate experience of the human instrument, emphasis on the process, alternative role of the literature review, and study limitations. By emphasizing the role of the researcher as the human instrument, the actual process of doing research needed to come forth and limitations were acknowledged in order for me to provide more transparency into how I advanced as the study was emerging. In turn, the role of the literature review was transformed as well.

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[13] As shown in section II.2, the main comparison groups in this dissertation were youth in schools in the community, youth in the Active Youth Group, adults whose children attend schools in the community, and adults who are connected to the Active Youth Group.

[14] A challenge that I encountered was that these groups were hard to come across and given the parameters of my IRB application, I had to make arrangements beforehand for each interview and focus group to happen. De la Garza (2014b) uses the term "appointment ethnography" for research that is dependent on such interviews and focus groups. It is still ethnographic, none-the-less.

III. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, I will first outline the guiding question of my research and then, using existing literature, I will define key terms that have shaped this study.

III.1. Guiding Question

As noted in chapter I, this study was not driven by a literature review, but rather by a vested interest in youth community involvement and a curiosity to learn more about this topic in the United States.[15] In the beginning of my work, I set out to explore the following guiding question: ***How is youth community involvement being constructed by members of an urban community?*** Based on this question, I constructed interview and focus group protocols. My intent was to sensitize questions asked of research participants as I went along, keeping in mind Glaser's call to investigate "what is actually happening in the data?" (Glaser, 1978, p. 57). For example, I was interested in exploring what forms of youth involvement were present in the community and what youth and adults thought about the involvement of youth in the community. I also wanted to explore the interplay between community involvement and the characteristics of a geographically defined community. My reading of existing literature revealed that a thorough inquiry into what community involvement means to youth within the ecology of their community has seldom been undertaken. Specifically, there was been a lack of in-depth qualitative studies that analyze issues such as access to involvement opportunities, community recognition of youth involvement, and a more comprehensive understanding of the environment in which youth resided.

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[15] See Confessional tales in Appendix F.

This dissertation addresses this gap. I adhered to the notion that the individual and the community were inherently interconnected so therefore in order to understand how a particular social phenomenon was contracted, community influences had to be explored as well. The relationship between the community and youth involvement was at the heart of my curiosity that drove the study. In order to narrow down my research scope, I drew upon existing literature to define key constructs in this study.

III.2. Key Terms

III.2.1. Defining "Youth". This study focused on children and youth, based on an assumption that in one's formative years a youth learns to orient oneself in the institutions of society, including ways in which a person engages in his or her community. Developmental theory shows that citizenship habits are maintained from an early age. According to Astuto and Ruck (2010), "early childhood may be an overlooked or under examined foundation for civic engagement" (p. 250). During adolescence the development of social-cognition goes hand in hand with civic development (Metzger & Smetana, 2010). According to Wilkenfeld, Lauckhardt, and Torney-Purta (2010), the studies of civic engagement can benefit greatly from developmental science theories, which acknowledge that (a) adolescents have agency to shape their development, (b) reciprocity is an inherent component of socialization (c) development consists of both "nurture" and "nature," and can be continuous and discontinuous, and (d) social environments across different phases of life offer different developmental opportunities.

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In order to delimit parameters of this study, I wanted to talk to middle- and high-school youth, approximately 14-19 years old.[16] In my previous work I had learned that this age group was generally likely to have some experience with volunteering with schools and other organizations. In concert with much of the developmental literature, Musick and Wilson (2008) used the term "adolescence" to describe this age group. According to them, educational and nonprofit organizations have an influence on this group by encouraging volunteer participation. This conceptualization allowed my own research to inquire into the descriptions of activities such as volunteer work.

Two points, however, need to be made from the onset. "Youth" is a social construct, whose meaning is not dependent solely on bio-developmental categories (skills and experiences that are correlated with a certain age). According to VeLure-Roholt and colleagues (2008), the category of youth can be understood in social terms as well and, therefore, the social and cultural context should not be omitted. Thus, when I focused on 14-19 year-olds, it was to some extent an arbitrary decision. In order to create comparisons, however, I also included as participants of this study adults that interact with these youth: residents, community organizers, and parents. If reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1999), then it is also co-constructed within a particular community, as was the case in this dissertation.

III.2.2. Defining "Community". A community can be conceptualized in both physical and symbolic terms. Peter Block (2009) writes that community is an *experience of belongin*g: "To belong is to know, even in the middle of the night, that I am among

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[16] It is important to note, however, that youth and adults provided me with examples involving children and youth who were younger than 14 years old. These stories, too, are included in this study.

friends" (p. xii). Hughs (2008) distinguishes between community as space (geographical location), place (perceived physical space), experience (group that has been through the same or similar situation), identity (groups that are bound by certain traits), and market (groups that are connected through a system of financial and other exchange). Theodori (2005) categorizes conceptualizations of community either as *territory-based*, which means that they pertain to "one or more of the following components: territory, common life, collective actions, and mutual identity" (p. 662), or as *territory-free*, meaning that they pertain to more generic groups defined by their members' identity.

This study took a territory-based approach, embracing a physically defined location – specifically, boundaries of an urban community – but also acknowledging that residents in the community share much more than a common geography. The limitation of this definition lied in its arbitrariness. The advantage was that the boundaries of the community helped me to focus this study.

III.2.3. Defining "Community Involvement". As I began my investigation of existing literature that elaborates on how youth are active in communities, I often encountered the term *youth civic engagement*. I will now discuss some of the characteristics of this term, and will also point out its limitations.

Civic engagement is a complex term that escapes a universal definition. In 2010, Lonnie R. Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta, and Constance Flanagan edited the *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*, which provided insights on various dimensions of youth civic engagement. The entries in the book were mainly carried by the philosophy of positive youth development, which identifies young people as the bearers of gifts and talents, and focuses on the development of such assets (see, for example,

Lerner, 2004). The readings in Sherrod and colleagues' (2010) volume also highlighted the relationship between political development and youth civic engagement, summarized developmental theories, and focused on educational settings as sites of civic empowerment. I found the handbook very helpful in my initial review of literature. One quote was especially encouraging to me because it provided a justification for my own study: "The combination of theory and methodological rigor has the potential to drive and advance research in the field of youth civic engagement" (Wilkenfeld, Lauckhardt, & Torney-Purta, 2010, p. 211). What I found unsettling about the volume, however, was that the readings were tied to civic behaviors that were in congruence with the workings of the political system as a whole. This led me to wonder about behaviors that were transformative and posed challenges to the political system and to established institutions.

My review of the term youth civic engagement was a starting point for a larger discussion. What follows is a review of some of the conceptualizations of civic engagement, divided into the following: civic engagement as a broad concept (see section III.2.3.1), civic engagement and citizenship (III.2.3.2), civic engagement and community development (III.2.3.3), and civic engagement and youth (III.2.3.4). In section III.2.3.5, I then share discuss three concerns that I have regarding the term *youth civic engagement*.

III.2.3.1. Civic Engagement as a Broad Concept. Depending on the viewpoints of researchers, different activities may fall under the term civic engagement. Some definitions in the literature are very broad and encompass a wide range of activities. Their advantage is that they draw our attention to other broader concepts. For example, in *Democracy at Risk*, a task force consisting of 19 leading scientists studying the concept collectively introduced the following definition: "[C]ivic engagement includes any

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activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity"
(Macedo, S., Alex-Assensoh, Y., Berry, J. M., Brintnall, M., Campbell, D. E., Fraga, L.
R., … Walsh, K. C., 2005, p. 6). This definition offers an important perspective on civic
engagement. First, civic engagement is located in the domain of activities and acts, as
opposed to the domain of attitudes or intentions. Second, civic engagement is not limited
to associations, but individuals can also undertake it. Third, the effects of civic
engagement can be both positive and negative, a point upon which the authors elaborate.
Lastly, we may ask what constitutes the boundaries of a polity. According to Levine
(2007), Macedo and colleagues' (2005) definition is too broad. Rather, Levine suggests
narrowing the definition of civic engagement down to "action that affects legitimately
public matters' and in which the actor pays appropriate attention to the consequences of
[the actor's] behavior for the underlying political system" (Levine, 2007, p. 13). This
definition contains the issue of defining community boundaries – e.g. what "public"
means in this case. Importantly, civic engagement is reduced only those types of agency,
which consider their own externalities in relationship to the system. In other words, there
is a conscious reflection on the possible outcomes of *civically engaged action.*

Adler and Goggin (2005) emphasize the positive influence of civic engagement
on the lives of other people and communities. Their proposed definition also includes a
temporal aspect: "Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the
life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the
community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 241). The relationship between
participation is interesting and worth exploring. It implies that those who are civically
engaged have certain expectations about how their participation will influence

community life in the long run. The word "participation" may also be linked to belonging (as in being part of something) and to the access to opportunities.

In their summary of other definitions of the term civic engagement, Adler and Goggin distinguish between civic engagement as community service, as collective action, as involvement in the political sphere, and as social change. Each conceptualization represents a different focus and perspective of the definer (Adler & Goggin, 2005). McBride (2003) differentiates between social engagement and political engagement. In McBride's interpretation, the former relates to associational life such as being a member or volunteering for a nonprofit organization, and informal acts of service such as neighboring (helping one's neighbors). These activities are closely connected to prosocial behaviors, which Metzger and Smetana find constitutive for civic engagement as a whole (2010). The latter comprises of behaviors that aim to influence decision-making and political processes: membership in a political group, voting, and activism (McBride, 2003).

III.2.3.2. Civic Engagement and Citizenship. The etymological roots of the word "civic" are drawn from the Latin word *civicus*, which refers to a city or citizens ("Civic," 2012). In everyday language, the word "engagement" denotes commitment, assurance, or undertaking ("Engagement," 2012). Etymologically speaking, civic engagement is associated with the term citizenship, which also stems from the Latin word *cives* (Wictionary, 2012). Legally, citizenship means an acknowledged bond between a person and a country, which guarantees a person rights and freedoms, but also obliges him/her to bear certain responsibilities such as paying taxes.

According to Dalton (2009), citizenship can be understood along two dimensions: as *duty-based citizenship* and as *engaged citizenship*. The former is associated with traditional understanding of a "good citizen" as someone who pays taxes, votes and obeys laws. It presupposes trust in government institutions and values social order. The latter, however, is more critical of the society; it utilizes informal channels of activity and focuses tolerance, social justice and informal protests. Dalton points out that duty-based is more prevalent among the older cohorts and engaged citizenship is more common among younger citizens. Bennett, Freelon, and Wells (2010) use the terms *dutiful citizenship* and *actualizing citizenship* for the same phenomena, pointing out that these concepts should be considered to be ideal types.

 III.2.3.3. Civic Engagement and Community Development. Civic engagement is of particular interest to the field of community development. As elucidated by Phillips and Pittman (2009), community development can be thought of as both a process and an outcome. Furthermore, understanding community development as both process and outcome is pertinent in research values community members as holders and contributors of gifts and talents, reflecting the core tenet of Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD) research. ABCD is useful in efforts that bring about deliberate efforts to find resources and points of pride within the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; McKnight & Block, 2010).[17] The involvement of residents in community affairs is one of

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[17] I have come to embrace the philosophy of ABCD as an important perspective for my own community development work. I am persuaded that all communities, no matter the situation they are in, have assets to build on and develop using their own resources. Though the challenges faced by communities should not be ignored, there is inherent strength in focusing on what works.

these assets that a community can build upon. Furthermore, as Bhattacharyya (1995) showed, participation itself is of value to the field of community development.

A recent article by Shaw, Brady, McGrath, Brennan, and Dolan (2014) reviews literature on youth civic engagement in the community development field. It summarizes some of the main theoretical and practical approaches to studying and promoting youth involvement using 5 main discourses: *democratic citizen*, *positive youth development*, *belonging/community connectedness*, *care*, and *social justice*. The *democratic citizen* discourse pertains to above discussion in section III.2.3.2 of this dissertation, in its embededdness in the public sphere through the political activity of youth. The *positive youth development* discourse speaks of opportunities for young people to practice their skills through engagement in the community. The *belonging/community connectedness* discourse highlight the formation and maintenance of social networks through which youth interact with other community members, including those who are different from them. The *care* discourse emphasizes support that youth receive and give to others in the community, especially in the situations when the community is experiencing vulnerability. Lastly, the *social justice* discourse focuses on how young people bring about social or political change in areas of low socio-economic status.

Social capital theory, which is widely used in community development theory and practice, serves as another bridge between community development and civic engagement. Putnam sees civic engagement as product of social capital, which he describes as "connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2001, p. 19). To support his inferences Putnam used nation-wide surveys to measure indicators such as attendance

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and membership in voluntary associations, participation in elections, volunteerism, sociability such as visiting friends, or social trust (respondents' agreement with statements if people can be trusted or if they are honest). These he then grouped into an aggregate index of social capital in the United States. Putnam then correlated the index with other social indicators. According to Putnam, the more people trust and communicate with their neighbors, and the more they are engaged in their communities, the higher quality of life they can enjoy (Putnam, 2001).

Though inspiring, Putnam's work does not clearly define what social capital actually is: Is it a private or collective good? Is it not even a myth (DeFilippis, 2001)? Is it the reason or the consequence of other quality of life indicators (Sobel, 2003)? Those caveats notwithstanding, social capital theory contributes to the research in youth civic engagement in its focus on the relationships between community members. For example, it can help uncover some aspects of the social "glue" and feelings of togetherness, which in turn influence civic engagement activities.

III.2.3.4. Civic Engagement and Youth. Research shows that civic engagement, community development, and positive youth development are mutually supportive. For example, Christens and Dolan (2011) found that young people involved in youth organizing through the Inland Congregations United for Change initiative in California gained life skills, sociopolitical skills, became empowered and more confident; they also developed a greater sense of community. The positive developmental outcomes of youth civic engagement are also highlighted in the work of Richard Lerner. According to this author, a thriving young person "takes actions that serve his or her own well-being and, at the same time, the well-being of parents, peers, community and society" (Lerner, 2004, p.

4). This statement, which is Tocquevillian in its assumption that individual and collective purposes do not have to contradict each other (De Tocqueville, 2001), takes into account the individual conditions of each young person who provides service to the community. At the same time, it can be interpreted as a need for sensitivity to the context of a particular community and its institutions. As is shown in theories such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1989), there is an interaction between a people and their social environment that influences human development. One strand of literature looks at this interaction using the community youth development framework, which counts on supportive adults to guide the interweaving of youth and community development (Hughes & Curnan, 2000).

Numerous studies have shown that young people are capable of making positive changes in their communities (see, for example, Checkoway, Richards-Schuster, Abdullah, Aragon, Facio, Figueroa, & White, 2003; Putnam & Cohen, 2003). Checkoway summarizes the message that the above research conveys: "Young people can create community change!" when drawn into community development processes (Checkoway, 2003, p. 303).

Community development and political science literatures also use the term "participation" (see, for example, Amnå & Zetterberg, 2010, or Kudva & Driskell, 2009). According to Checkoway (1998), participation is "a process of involving people in decisions that affect their lives" (p. 767). One particular form of involvement in community development is the participation of youth in community decision-making. This type of youth engagement can take many forms: assistance with decisions about financial allocation within foundations (Richards-Schuster, 2012), in planning

(Checkoway, 1995; Frank, 2006), school governance (Koller & Schugurensky, 2010), or community governance (Zeldin, Camino, & Calvert, 2007).

In order to give more specific examples of the types of youth civic engagement activities, I now refer to Wheeler and Thomas (2011, pp. 215-216), who distinguish between the following forms of youth engagement:

- *Youth service*: young people working towards a "greater good" such as in volunteering or service-learning activities;

- *Youth leadership*: young people inspiring others to work for shared goals;

- *Youth in decision making*: young people participating in decision making in organizations and communities;

- *Youth philanthropy*: young people participating in service-learning, volunteer work and in foundations with a fundraising focus;

- *Youth civic and political engagement*: young people exercising their "their political voice," especially through voting;

- *Youth media*: young people participating in news production;

- *Youth research and evaluation*: young people carrying out research studies;

- *Youth organizing*: young people engaging in bottom-up community organizing efforts with the goal of bringing about social change.

These forms of youth engagement share one characteristic in that they neglect the possible confrontation between young people and political and social institutions. The literature on youth activism fills this gap. For example, according to Noguera and Cannella (2006), youth "not only have the ability to critique the conditions that limit and

constrain their lives but… also … how strategic resistance is incorporated into their daily lives" (p. 334).

The discussion in this section provides a starting point for delimiting youth civic engagement. A civically engaged young person cares for the welfare of other members in the community and takes steps to influence local politics and decision-making. Whether one's actions are led by selfish or selfless motives (and most likely by a combination of both, as is elaborated on by Mannino, Snyde, and Omoto, 2011), a civically engaged person enjoys the respect of the community.

III.2.3.5. Three Concerns Regarding the Term "Youth Civic Engagement". The dimensions of civic engagement outlined in the previous section are not without problems. I will now point out three specific problems of the previously listed dimensions of civic engagement: lack of definitional clarity, dependence on established political institutions, and barriers to involvement.

First, broader definitions of civic engagement lack clarity and they are often ill equipped in capturing unique situations in the lives of youth. According to VeLure-Roholt and colleagues (2008), a conceptual misunderstanding exists, which has implications on researchers' conclusions as they consider whether youth are civically engaged or not:

> [T]here is a conceptual confusion in the use of the terms involvement, participation and engagement when contrasted with the notion of "apathy," as in young people nowadays are apathetic, do not care about their school and community, and are doing nothing to make these better. (VeLure-Roholt et al., 2008, p. 6)

These conceptual remarks have methodological implications. As Levine points out, "Despite its popularity…, 'civic engagement' is rarely defined with any conceptual clarity" (Levine, 2007, p. 1). In the effort to bring light into the confusion, survey research has measured and analyzed the relationship between pre-defined aspects of civic engagement. This is a necessary, yet reductionist approach. An example is Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner, and Lerner's (2010) model of active and engaged citizenship, which consists of civic duty, civic skills, neighborhood social connection, and civic participation. Elements in this model are measured as the respondents' assessment of a set of predefined statements. While survey research identifies various aspects of civic engagement (e.g. voting behaviors, volunteering, or motivations to help), it cannot provide a holistic picture. In the conclusion of their article, Zaff and colleagues admit that more research is needed: "[T]o understand how various contexts, whether high-income versus low-income, socially disorganized versus socially calm, or civically promoting vs. civically inhibiting affect the development of… factors [in the authors' model]" (Zaff et al., 2010).

Second, conceptualizations of civic engagement often denote a dependence on established political institutions. For example, Taft and Gordon (2013) found in their research that some youth development programs were seen by activist youth as too complacent with the political system and did not challenge its authority. Another problem arises when we analyze civic engagement in terms of citizenship. The access to various citizenship roles is partly constrained by the legal framework: age (VeLure-Roholt et al. 2008), socioeconomic status (Kahne & Middaugh, 2009; McBride, Sherraden, & Pritzker, 2006) or legal status (Gonzales, 2008). What this means, however, is that forms

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of civic engagement that do not fall under the above definitions may be excluded. Jensen and Flanagan (2008) ask and answer:

> What counts as civic engagement? All too often the answer to this question is narrowly conceived. Engagement is defined by conventional indicators of electoral politics – voting, participating in party-based politics, and staying informed about current events. By and large, this leaves both immigrants and everyone under the age of 18 out of the picture. (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008, p. 56)

These arguments have a bearing on the discussion of what civic engagement might be. Especially, the issue of access must, too, be considered. In this way, definitions of civic engagement touch a more general concept of community membership: if a person is not considered to be a member of a community, then some definitions of civic engagement may also miss how that person is or is not civically engaged. From this perspective, unequal opportunities for civic engagement are both symptoms and causes of disparities that exist in society.

According to Wilson (2005) youth in disadvantaged situations often find themselves disconnected from the community, yet it is precisely they who desire most to be connected. The issue can be analyzed from the perspective of empowerment as a way of enabling disadvantaged youth to be more civically engaged. As Wilson puts it, "It is not enough to invite [young people] into the room" (Wilson, 2005, p. 98).

In their theory of critical youth empowerment, Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger Messias, and McLoughlin (2006) highlight the importance of giving youth a share of power, enabling them to conduct critical reflection, and giving them access to meaningful participation. Kahne and Middaugh (2009) attribute education as playing a part in a

vicious cycle of missed opportunities: "[T]eachers appear to be exacerbating this inequality by providing more preparation for those who are already likely to attain a disproportionate amount of civic and political voice" (p. 43).

According to Levinson (2010), a civic empowerment gap exists in the United States and it is highly manifested in schools. Levinson goes on to show that impoverished, minority and immigrant youth score lower on aspects of good citizenship. On average, they have lower civic knowledge and skills, participate less in civic life and have lower levels of attitudes necessary for activity in the civic arena: political efficacy, civic duty and civic identity. The gap is widest in de facto segregated minority schools (Levinson, 2010).

Lastly, community development programs sometimes lean towards needs-based approaches, which can in turn have disempowering effects. As McKnight and Kretzmann (2012) write, "Our greatest assets are our people. But people in low-income neighborhoods are seldom regarded as 'assets'. Instead, they are usually seen as needy and deficient, suited best for life as clients and recipients of services" (p. 173). Needs-based thinking also negatively influences whether youth are construed as agents in community development. Adultist (Stoneman & Bell, 1988) attitudes[18] may be strong and youth are often thought of in deficiency terms (McKnight & Block, 2010). Barriers to youth participation exist, ranging from the unwillingness of adults to let youth take leadership (Checkoway, 1998; Frank, 2006), exclusion of disadvantaged youth from the

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[18] Like other "isms" that denote a negativistic attitude towards a certain group, adultism involves "those behaviors and attitudes which flow from the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitles to act upon young people in myriad ways without their agreement" (Stoneman & Bell, 1988, p. 35).

community (Wilson, 2005) and the above mentioned larger inequalities in access to civic engagement opportunities (Levinson, 2010). According to Zeldin and Topitzes (2002), the levels of interaction between adults and non-relative adolescents have also lowered. "This isolation is especially pronounced in forums of local decision-making" (p. 648).

This issue can be illustrated in a model that was designed by Sherry Arnstein (1969), which operationalizes participation in planning on eight different levels, based on how much agency is given to citizens. Citizen power is being exercised as control of the participation process, as delegated power or as partnership. On the other hand, there are also varying degrees of nonparticipation – either in therapy or when citizens are being manipulated to act a certain way. There are clear differences in terms of the quality of their participation. Participation may also take place in the form of tokenism, which is merely a symbolic way of engagement; examples of which would be placing some community members on a board of an organization (Arnstein, 1969). The steps of the ladder can be applied to youth participation as well.

The literature suggests that in order to overcome these challenges, places for meaningful participation must be prepared for the involvement of youth in their communities (Richards-Schuster & Dobbie, 2011). Youth-oriented nonprofit organizations provide opportunities for such participation to take place (Kudva & Driskell, 2009). Avenues for such involvement exist within community-school partnerships (Israel, Coleman, & Ilvento, 1993) and youth-adult partnerships (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2012; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008); however, literature also shows that the full potential of youth in community development often remains untapped (Brennan & Barnett, 2009; Israel, Coleman, & Ilvento, 1993).

In order to address the three problematic issues, this dissertation heeds the call for a more holistic approach by starting out more broadly, rather than limiting the concept of youth civic engagement to a definite set of dimensions. While trying to address the issue of an opportunity gap, my fieldwork was conducted in a community that is dealing with economic challenges. Finally, as a result of the above theoretical discussion, this study used the term *youth community involvement* to define the phenomenon to which the initial research question was addressed. In my view, youth community involvement includes a broad set of activities through which youth reach out into the community and interact with others in order to improve – temporarily or long-term – the living situation of others in the community. In this manner, youth community involvement encompasses activities that are both political and non-political, those that are helping loved ones and/or strangers, and those that are situated in the formal institutions in the community (such as schools and clubs), as well as those that are done informally (such as neighborly help).

III.2.4. Defining "Constructed"

In this dissertation I adopted a social constructivist epistemology (see section IV.1 and Appendix E) in its belief that the meanings of concepts of the everyday life are constantly being defined, shared, and negotiated (Berger & Luckmann, 1999; Gergen, 2009). They stand on the moving sands of culture and culture as such experiences an ongoing tension between stagnation and change.

Within this philosophy, I defined the verb "being constructed" in general terms along the lines of questions such as:

- *How do people talk about youth community involvement?*

- *What meanings does youth community involvement have in the lives of youth and adults?*

- *How are these meanings being demonstrated, shared, negotiated, and confronted in a given community?*

III.3. Initial Delineation of Study Location

At my proposal defense in March, 2013, I presented the following version of the research question, which specified the location of my research: ***How is youth civic engagement being constructed in the lives of youth living in an urban area located in the United States?***[19]

The process of community selection is discussed in detail in section IV.4.1. For now, I would like to mention that at the time of my dissertation proposal, I was still undecided about a specific location, but was interested in urban areas with diverse populations such as cities found in the United States.

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[19] At the time, I was using the term "youth community engagement" and was being more specific about how the geographical location will be defined. The question changed as my study evolved.

IV. METHODOLOGY

In the understanding of Patricia Leavy (2014), a methodology is the researcher's entire plan to undertake a given study. Methodologies differ from researcher to researcher. "Because of the sociohistorical conditions in which it developed, the qualitative tradition can be characterized by its multiplicity of approaches to research as well as by its focus on *the uses to which that research might be put*" (Leavy, 2014, p. 2). Importantly, a methodology combines methods, theory, as well as the philosophical assumptions or orientations to which the researcher adheres (Leavy, 2014).[20]

As already mentioned, this dissertation puts emphasis on the process of undertaking research as opposed to a theory.[21] At its core, this dissertation is a *constructivist, naturalistic, ethnographic* study that utilizes *grounded theory* analysis. Due to the interpretative nature of qualitative research and because naturalistic inquiry demands that the researcher him/herself be the research instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), each one of these terms: *constructivist*, *naturalistic*, *ethnographic*, *grounded theory*, needs to be explained. In the *Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Leavy (2014) provides a typology of research elements, grouped into three main areas: philosophical, praxis, and ethics. Following this tripartite structure, I will now describe the methodology of this dissertation.

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[20] A more detailed autobiographical description can be found in my confessional tales in Appendix E.

[21] In order to pay due diligence to the philosophical foundations of my methodology, I included a review of some methodological literature that underlines chapter IV in Appendix E. As a qualitative researcher I feel the need to sufficiently discuss the methodology that guided my work, because it itself is a subject of interpretation (de la Garza, 2014a)

IV.1. Philosophy

Leavy (2014) distinguishes philosophical elements from other elements of research by claiming that they are sets of beliefs about "how research should proceed, what can be known, who can be a knower, and how we come to know" (p. 3). The philosophical assumptions of my dissertation are based in relativist ontology and social constructivist epistemology.

Ontological questions deal with the nature of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This dissertation adheres to *relativist ontology* as it sees reality to be multifaceted and deeply embedded in local communities as shared knowledge. Such ontological standpoint is highlighted in how this study analyzes the community, in which youth are involved on various levels. In this context, the relationship between youth community involvement and the community was seen as relative, relational, and transactional.[22] The need for relativist ontology became visible during my initial survey of literature (section III.2), when I pointed how commonly used terms such as youth and civic engagement merit a deeper understanding and when I expressed the need to look at youth involvement in the community more holistically.

Epistemology is the way the researcher relates to the knowledge that is being produced in the process of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This dissertation followed *social constructivist epistemology*.[23] It was written under the assumption that knowledge is not static, but rather is being created and interpreted in everyday communication

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[22] With this in mind, this study ceased to be "evaluative", because it did not establish objective criteria that would allow me to make a judgment on youth programming in the community.

[23] See Appendix E for more information about social constructivist epistemology.

between people. Equally, knowledge was dynamic in the process of the data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings in this study. The constructivist stream of grounded theory carried out by authors such as Charmaz (1995, 2006) and Clarke (2003, 2005) is close to my own understanding of the social realm as something constructed and, in turn, always situated and contextualized. Social constructivist epistemology was at play during my fieldwork, especially in the analysis of questions asked in focus groups and interviews. I was aware that my own questions influenced the framing of the subject matter as well as participants' responses.

IV.2. Praxis

Leavy (2014) writes that "[p]raxis is the doing of research – the *practice* of research" (p. 3).[24] The presentation of my own research praxis is divided into the following parts: research intents (section IV.2.1), data collection tools (IV.2.2), selection of research participants (IV.2.3), grounded theory analysis (IV.2.4) and a section titled "Towards validity and credibility" (IV. 2.5).

IV.2.1. Research Intents. The notion of intents was inspired by Wolcott's (1987) essay "On Ethnographic Intent", in which Wolcott discussed as the focus of an ethnographer's work to describe culture. My dissertation was driven by three intents or orientations: naturalistic intent, ethnographic intent, and pragmatic intent. These are now discussed.

IV.2.1.1. Naturalistic Intent. As mentioned, in the work on this dissertation, I consider myself to be the research instrument. Building on the work of Lincoln and Guba

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[24] According to Leavy (2014), praxis includes the genres of writing research, and theories in action, in addition to methods, which are "tools for data collection" (p. 3).

(1985), this study drew its spontaneity and inspiration from a naturalistic inquiry.

Naturalistic inquiry is embedded in a social setting and adapts an emergent design. In

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) understanding, the term "emergent design" contains an

inherent paradox, because a naturalist cannot specify or anticipate many elements of his

or her study. In contrast to survey research, emergent studies evolve slowly as the

research becomes more knowledgeable, as new findings appear, and as the interaction

with research participants unfolds.[25]

Emergent design allowed me to be flexible in my work. The emergent aspect of

this study can be found in the selection of participants and in the methods used. Though

my overall analysis includes four main comparison groups, this structure evolved in the

process of my collecting and analyzing data. One previously unplanned aspect of data

collection was the employment of a video technique. In synchrony with an ASU course, I

recorded some interviews on video, made a film, and played it back to participants.

IV.2.1.2. Ethnographic Intent. Ethnographers often make a direct and explicit

statement that ethnography is a study of culture. Fetterman (2010), for example, writes:

> Ethnography gives voice to people in their own local context, typically relying on
>
> verbatim quotations and a "thick" description of events. The story is told through
>
> the eyes of local people as they pursue their daily lives in the own communities.
>
> (Fetterman, 2010, p. 1)

Fetterman mentions "communities" as the places where people live the everyday within a

specific cultural context. This is also the notion that frames my own study.

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[25] Trusting emergence has, in fact, proven to be the most difficult part of my research. I reflect on some of these struggles in chapter V, where the fieldwork and findings are discussed.

Couldry (2000) writes that culture involves meanings and their interpretations, as well as their distribution (the political dimension). Building on Couldry, to view youth community involvement as a cultural phenomenon also adds an ethnographic property to my dissertation. How helping behaviors take place among youth and what sense members of the community make of them is culturally determined. Yet, not every qualitative study that takes place in a community is ethnography. "[Ethnography] involves a certain frame of mind, or, I will even say, historically aware sensibility that is very much its own" (Harrison, 2014, p. 225).

This dissertation is not a full-pledged ethnography, but it does focus on the cultural norms of a particular community. In my work, I built relationships with community members and have reflected on these relationships throughout the work on this study. For these reasons, "ethnographic intent" (Wolcott, 1987) was at play. Wolcott (1987) states that "Culture is not lying around, waiting patiently to be discovered; rather, it must be *inferred* from the words and actions of members of the group under study and then literally *assigned* to that group by the anthropologist" (p. 41). This notion invokes the ethnographic intent of this dissertation.

IV.2.1.3. Pragmatic Intent. Grounded theory is pragmatic by nature, which is an aspect stated in *Discovery* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967): a theory needs to be useful.[26] The problem, however, arises, when one considers for whom it should be useful. And, as Wolcott writes, by "providing modest increments in our efforts to understand human social life but not providing a basic for discerning what human should do differently or

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[26] This dissertation is not an evaluative study. But my hope is that its findings will be useful even when evaluative recommendations are not presented.

better" (Wolcott, 1987, p. 53). With this understanding, I intended to provide insights about how youth are involved in their community that would be useful to community leaders and residents as they reflect on youth programs.

Lastly, the pragmatic intent is being demonstrated in the description of methods used in this study. My hope is that they will serve as inspiration to those undertaking similar studies or for those who are formulating questions in various types of research about youth community involvement, including quantitative surveys.

IV.2.2. Data Collection Tools. With the above research intents in mind, I will now discuss how I collected my data. In line with an important tenet of grounded theory that data can come from different sources (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and as explicated in Table 1, I found a variety of data collection techniques helpful: interviews, video interviews, focus groups, and participant observations. For each interview, video interview, and focus group I used a set of framing questions, which can be found in Appendix B.

IV.2.2.1. Video Interviews, Video Solicitation, and Interviews. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I utilized camera recordings to capture interviews with seven youth from the AYG. Using their recorded responses, I created a 12-minute digital video, and used the video to solicit further responses and from these youth and validate findings. This video solicitation technique was only used with the youth from the AYG, because at the time I started to be interested in exploring their work more closely. The technique was similar to an oral history study in Colorado's mining towns, in which Margolis (1994)

composed a video with people's stories.[27] He then used the video during follow-up meetings with residents of mining communities to gather more data.

An important part of my fieldwork was the collection of interviews with adults connected to the AYG. I utilized semi-structured interviews that allowed me to flexibly react to the ideas brought up by participants.[28]

IV.2.2.2. Focus Groups. In a focus group a researcher interviews a group of participants at the same time. Focus groups allow the researcher to pay attention to the interaction among participants as they discuss a particular topic (Morgan, 1996). Yet to take a full advantage of the interaction in a study can be a challenge. Belzile and Öberg (2012) suggest that the use of interaction can be thought of as a continuum. Low levels of interaction use are linked to the facilitation and moderation of focus groups. High levels (useful, for example, in the studies of dialogue) pay more attention to interaction than to content in the analysis phase. In the focus groups conducted as part of this dissertation, I paid most attention to the content of what was said but when there were differing opinions, I considered them in my analysis.

IV.2.2.3. Observations. An observation is a qualitative data collection technique, through which "the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site" (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). The processes studied have a preference to a detailed description of the environment, in which the research takes place (Charmaz, 2006).

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[27] Eric Margolis led a course on visual ethnography at ASU, which I attended.

[28] For more information on interviews, see Appendix E.

In my dissertation I utilized participant observations of community events that were open to the public. On the continuum observation types, designed by Evertson and Green (1986), which ranges from less formal to highly formal observations, this study was closer to the latter. I also incorporated in the analysis a covert observation of when I walked through the neighborhoods of the community and audio recorded what I saw.[29] This observation helped me discover additional information about the community.

IV.2.3. Selection of Research Participants. Unlike statistical survey methodology, the final number of research participants in studies using emergent design is not known beforehand. I used a combination of selection techniques, which allowed me to select "*information-rich* cases for the study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Overall, I selected participants based on (a) their connection to the topic of youth civic engagement (e.g. youth, their parents, teachers), (b) role in the community (e.g. gatekeepers), and (c) based on the findings that contributed to my theoretical understanding of the topic.

I started my dissertation fieldwork with three types of sampling: convenience, opportunistic, and snowball sampling (Patton, 1990). The reason why I used them in the study was because they provided me with an easy way to reach out to participants. Convenience sampling pertains to the selection of groups whose daily experiences include the research topic, but are also most easily accessed. Opportunistic sampling means taking advantage of situations that arise in the field. Snowball sampling is based

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[29] This observation was inspired by the technique of psychogeographic *dérive* (strolls through the city) (see Baudelaire, 1995; Knaab, 2006).

on recommendations of the participants who have just been interviewed or observed (Patton, 1990).

The three sampling techniques allowed me to gather data for initial analysis and establish rapport with participants and gatekeepers in the community.[30] In my fieldwork I followed them with purposive sampling. Though not mentioned by Patton (1990), one type of purposeful sampling is theoretical sampling (Coyne, 1997). During data collection and analysis, based on the findings, I reflected on who the next research participant should be in order to develop the concepts that emerged in the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).[31]

IV.2.4. Grounded Theory Analysis. As was shown by Guba & Lincoln (1985) grounded theory is a natural fit for qualitative studies led by emergent design. Furthermore, the constructivist stand of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) that I used in this dissertation aligned with the philosophical assumptions that I hold.[32] Importantly, grounded theory analysis is rooted in practice; it allowed me to describe processes and to draw conclusions that were embedded in the situations of everyday life and make them approachable to all people, not just scientists (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).[33]

IV.2.4.1. Memo Writing. Following Birks and Mills (2011), this study was guided by memo writing. Memos were my primary tools for thinking about this study and for

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[30] Gatekeepers are representatives of groups and institutions who have authority to permit access to a research site (Padgett, 2008). In qualitative research, gatekeepers can serve as first interviewees, though Spradley (1979) warns researchers that some well-informed respondents could be too analytical in their responses. These gatekeepers can give the researcher advice on whom to contact next and act as mediators.
[31] Theoretical sampling is discussed in more detail in section IV.2.4.3.

[32] See section IV.1. Readers interested in learning more about some of the underlying philosophies of grounded theory are invited to review Appendix E of this dissertation.

[33] For a review of the two strands of grounded theory, see Appendix E.

asking questions related to research implementation. They helped me reflect on coding

and on the concepts that emerged in the study. Memos also proved useful to me as

snapshots of analysis in the making. They allowed me to lead an inner dialogue between

the data and my analysis. While working on this dissertation, I wrote more than 150

memos. This allowed me to sort through ideas, some of which were more than two years

old. By the means of memo sorting, my study evolved as an iterative analytical

movement.

Birks and Mills (2011, p. 42) provide examples of the types of content that can be

included in a memo. Building on Birks and Mills (2011) as well as on Glaser and Strauss

(1967), and Saldaña (2009), I used the following titles to categorize the types of memos

that I used in the work on this study. Most of my memos pertained to more than one type.

Table 2.

Types of Memos Used in this Study

Type	Description
Logistical	Research routines, including the planning of next steps and reflection on the effectiveness of methods used.
Conceptual	Notes from articles and books that I have read in order to increase my theoretical sensitivity.
Analytical	Coding and interpretation of various sources of data. Reflections on efforts to find and describe the core theoretical category.
Fieldwork	Similar to logistical memos but includes notes from fieldwork observations.
Editorial	Memos about the styling and editing of the dissertation.
Existential	Reflections on the struggles while dealing with the dilemmas of the research process such as research ethics.

IV.2.4.2. Theoretical Sampling. Unlike in qualitative studies that have a

preconceived plan of data collection, grounded theory licenses the researcher to select

research participants based on the emergence of data. In the process, grounded theorists

test their hunches using the constant comparative method and *abductive* reasoning. "The basic question in theoretical sampling… is: what groups or subgroups does one turn to next in data collection?" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 47)

Though in this study I did not embark on the development of a grounded theory, I utilized theoretical sampling partially in my selection of research participants. Interviewing the four main groups in this study (youth enrolled in schools, parents of youth in the schools, youth members of the AYG and adult connected to the AYG) was my attempt to acquire this theoretical relevance. While some of the connections were made opportunistically (especially parents of youth enrolled in schools in the community), the inclusion of these exact four groups was not anticipated at the beginning of the study. Rather, it evolved. At the same time, I also acknowledge limitations of my approach (as summarized in section I.6): not being to reach out to youth who are not active in the community, and the underrepresentation of males in the study.

IV.2.4.3. First Cycle Coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "Analysis is the interplay between researcher and data" (p. 13). Saldaña (2009) encourages a pragmatic blending of different types of coding. In my own analysis, I found it helpful to think of coding in two waves, titled by Saldaña (2009) as *first cycle coding* and *second cycle coding*.[34] Among first cycle coding I utilized descriptive, metaphor, holistic, versus,

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[34] In relation to Charmaz' (2006) grounded theory, initial coding falls under first cycle coding; focused coding – axial and theoretical coding – are second cycle coding methods in Saldaña's typology.

and *in vivo* coding.[35] Each coding type allowed me to analyze the data from different

perspectives, which are summarized below.[36]

    Descriptive coding entails identifying and labeling parts of data without

abstracting concepts from the data (Saldaña, 2009). Using descriptive coding, I coded by

hand words and sentences using verbatim expressions of research participants. This

allowed me to gain a better sense of the data; I took notes of these themes in my memos

and later incorporated them into the analysis.

    I also organized data by putting them into larger thematic groups. Building on

descriptive coding of each interview, I used *holistic coding* (see Dey, 2005; Saldaña,

2009) for labeling larger portions of data such as phrases, sentences, paragraphs and

segments of conversations.[37] My study started out with a set of broad questions that

allowed me to explore topics such as the characteristics of community environment and

youth community involvement. Many holistic codes were, therefore, influenced by my

interview and focus group questions, though some emerged without my prompting.

    Versus coding is suggested by Saldaña (2009) as a way to identify "in binary

terms the individuals, groups, social systems, organizations, phenomena, processes,

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[35] While Saldaña (2009) does not list metaphor coding in his manual, I rank it as *first-cycle coding*, because I utilized it during the initial coding of data.

[36] For more information on coding in grounded theory studies, see Appendix E.

[37] I first encountered holistic coding in Saldaña's (2009) *Coding Manual* when I was trying to code transcripts of the focus groups that I conducted with Spanish-speaking members of the community. Because I do not speak Spanish, I hired an interpreter so I could not use the participants' quotes directly. Saldaña's book brought me to the work of Ian Dey (2005), who calls for a "holistic" approach, through which an analyst "tries to grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole rather than by analyzing [sic] them line by line. Broad categories and their interconnections are then distilled from a general overview of the data, before a more detailed analysis fills in and refines these through a process of subcategorization. This approach is more feasible where the analyst already has a fair idea of what s/he is looking for in the data" (Dey, 2005, p. 110).

concepts, etc. in direct conflict with each other" (p. 94). Versus coding also draws inspiration from Clarke's (2005) situational analysis, though Clarke suggests that the differences reach beyond binaries. I used versus coding to identify binary categories mentioned by participants.

Metaphor coding allows the researcher to identify abstract processes that are at heart of seemingly disparate phenomena. According to Todd and Harrison (2008), a metaphor is at play "every time we call something by another name" (p. 479). Foss (2009) shows that the selection of a metaphor defines how we perceive a situation, which means that different people may have a completely different understanding of the cause and meaning of a certain phenomenon. My use of metaphor coding was driven by the belief that metaphors allow social phenomena to be seen in a new light.

Lastly, as was mentioned, *in vivo* coding pertains to the analysis of short excerpts from participants' speech that can become literal codes on their own. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) write, "general relations are often discovered in vivo" (p. 40). Saldaña (2009) claims that interviews with children and youth may benefit from adopting many *in vivo* codes in order to honor the children's voices. Building on Saldaña, de la Garza (2014a) suggests that *in vivo* coding is more appropriate because of the specific nature of adolescent expression. Based on her suggestion I used *in vivo* coding in my own analysis of the responses of youth participants. Since short answers were prevalent in adolescents' speech, interpretative coding would have led to the forcing of data. This was intensified by the fact that English is not my native language.[38]

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[38] My approach was informed by the distinction made in communication theory between high-context and low-context communication (Hall, 1984). See Appendix E for an elaboration on Hall's theory.

IV.2.4.4. Second Cycle Coding. In higher-level analysis, titled "second cycle coding" by Saldaña (2009), the researcher investigates and codes the properties and dimensions of categories, which are "more abstract explanatory terms" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 114). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "whereas <u>properties</u> are the general or specific characteristics or attributes of a category, <u>dimensions</u> represent the location of a property along a continuum or range" (p. 117). Axial coding then examines the relationships between categories and core categories.

IV.2.4.5. Core Category. The core category is an overarching concept that binds a grounded theory study together. As Saldaña (2014) puts it, "If you say you're usin' [sic!] grounded theory, but don't have a core category, you need to bring it down a notch" (p. 979). Though basic grounded theory texts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) generally recommend the use of only one core category, Dey (2005) claims that the use of more than one core category is justifiable in grounded theory analysis.

This dissertation identified two categories – family and leadership – that provide analytical links between various sources of data. Building on Strauss and Corbin (1998), I also identified the properties of these core categories and their dimensions. Following Charmaz's (2006) notion that in grounded theory studies, "we do not gain an autonomous theory, albeit one amenable to modification" (p. 149), I believe that these categories are worthy of hereby presentation, though they invite further analytical development.

IV.2.4.6. Theoretical Sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher's ability to interpret data in abstract theoretical terms (Strauss, 1987), and to use existing theory to gain a more nuanced understanding of the data study (Clarke, 2005; Charmaz,

2006).[39] As mentioned in section IV.1, I took a constructivist epistemological stance in this dissertation. In my interpretation, theoretical sensitivity refers to the fact that as a researcher I am obliged to familiarize myself with literature pertaining to my topic in order to be better equipped (be more sensitive) to the nuances and variations in the data. The challenge for me was to let the core categories emerge without me forcing the data.

IV.2.4.7. Qualitative Data Analysis Software. For coding, I used qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2015). Strauss and Corbin (2008) recommend MAXQDA for the analysis of text, which is suitable for grounded theory. In addition to coding transcripts, MAXQDA made it easier for me to create visual maps of the relationships between codes, which was recommended by Clarke (2003, 2005). Using the function MAXMaps, I was able to format codes in color and facilitate visual representation of data in the study.[40] During my analysis, I used MAXQDA to retrieve excerpts of data based on numerous comparisons. For example, I was able to ask: what does one group of participants say about one category versus what another group says? I ended up coding over 2,000 excerpts of data. MAXQDA also kept a real-time snapshot of my data organization and analysis.

IV.2.4.8. Cacophony of the Selves. One of the issues I struggled with in the work on this dissertation was finding a right balance between following the method on the one hand, and exploring creative ways how to interpret the data, on the other hand. This ongoing dilemma led, among others, to an analytical paralysis that I experienced during

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[39] For more information on theoretical sensitivity, see Appendix E.

[40] All visual maps of codes in this dissertation (Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7) were created using MAXQDA.

the sensitizing of my research question and exploring of the core category and its relationship with other categories.[41]

De la Garza (2013) invented a technique to disrupt the routine of analysis called the *Cacophony of the selves*. The technique involves the researcher asking him/ herself how his or her different selves would tackle a certain dilemma in the analysis. For example, some forms of the self that I used while working on this study were: "Nick starting his PhD program in 2010", "Nick playing guitar at an art show in 2003." After posing a question, the researcher then spontaneously writes how the different selves would answer it and reflects on the subtleties and disparities (thus the name *cacophony*) between the different answers. Conducting this reflective exercise has the potential to bring novelty the analysis and make the researcher aware of new analytical insights. The uniqueness of this method is that it is a structured activity that has the precise aim to disrupt the structures and routines that patterns of analysis may fall into. In the work on this dissertation I used the Cacophony of the selves once in order to focus my study after I had done an initial analysis of all the data.[42]

IV.2.5. Towards Validity and Credibility. In order to be able to present credible and accurate findings, I implemented the following measures:

IV.2.5.1. Reflexivity. Altheide and Johnson (1994) point out that researchers should provide thorough and reflexive descriptions of the multiple perspectives from which a certain phenomenon can be viewed. A researcher's personal biases do not

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[41] My choice to include the Cacophony of the selves as part of grounded theory analysis is because the technique is also based on the making of comparisons.

[42] See section VI.2, where the evolution of the research question is noted.

automatically harm the validity of the findings, but they have to be acknowledged (Peshkin, 1988).[43]

As mentioned, since the epistemology of my dissertation research was social constructivist, I included my own *confessional tales*[44] in Appendix F. Reflexivity helped me to think about my position in the study, including my preconceived notions related to youth civic engagement. These reflections were captured in reflexive memos.

IV.2.5.2. Audit Trail. The second measure is keeping an audit trail. According to Lietz, Langer, and Furman (2006), an audit trail allows the researcher to keep track of all decisions and step and makes him/her more accountable. Memos are particularly suitable for the purpose of creating an audit trail (Birks and Mills, 2011). However, an audit trail does not end with memos. As pointed out by Clarke (2005), the researcher should also make and date copies of all diagrams and maps that emerged in the analysis. As part of my audit trail, I kept and filed formal email and mail correspondence.

IV.2.5.3. Peer Debriefing. Lietz and Zayas (2010) define peer-debriefing as "[m]eeting with mentors or other researchers engaged in qualitative research to dialogue regarding research decisions" (p. 198). As doctoral students work on their dissertations under the guidance of experienced professors, discussions with their committee members about the developments in the study can be thought of as a way of peer debriefing.

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[43] This issue is especially problematic in critical approaches where the researcher may be in a position of privilege. Alcoff (1991), for example, interrogates the researcher's positionality when the researcher is speaking on behalf of marginalized and oppressed groups. Speaking for others (and in defense of others) can, in fact, perpetuate injustices and inequalities that surface in a given study.

[44] Using confessional tales, a researcher tells the story of his or her involvement in a research study (see van Van Mannen, 2011). The Confessional Tales in Appendix E discuss my connection to the topic of youth community involvement and to the methodology used in this study.

Throughout the work on my study, I maintained regular check-ins with all four members of my dissertation committee. The collaboration with my committee worked on both the individual and collective levels. In October of 2011, I wrote a letter to the committee and that stated I was seeking mentors who would provide guidance to me as experienced scientists. In that letter I stated that

> I believe in the collective power of group thinking and work. I would like the committee members to benefit from the experience as well, by the means of establishing an environment that enhances creative problem solving, mutual trust and an informal meaningful exchange of ideas and opinion.

Both functions were fulfilled plentifully and I received much support and encouragement from my committee. Furthermore, in January 2015 I organized a meeting with some members of my committee to discuss progress and ask for advice.[45]

IV.2.5.4. Data Triangulation. Data triangulation is a strategy for increasing trustworthiness of study findings (Padgett, 2008). The idea is that when the same data coming from different sources, they can corroborate findings. In my own study, data were gathered using different data collection techniques: interviews, focus groups, and observations. Data triangulation was strongest when I was able to collect additional data from the same participants using a different technique, as was the case interviews with AYG youth recorded on video and a focus group that followed a year later.

IV.2.5.5. Member Checking. The fourth measure I utilized was member checking, which means asking research participants whether my interpretations were

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[45] While I did not consider myself to be peer in terms of academic experience and rank, I did consider these consultations peer debriefing because of our shared place in the academia as such.

accurate. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), emergent design is dependent on outcome negotiations. Furthermore, since my research was embedded in a particular community, I complemented member checking with prolonged engagement (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006), as way of making sure that my understanding of the social constructs in the community fit the data.

IV.2.5.6. Prolonged Engagement. In some of my early memos, I reflected on the issue of being or not being an outsider to the community. It might be argued that this study is not a full ethnography exactly because of this point – I do not live or reside long-term in the community. At the same time, the two years of my work on the dissertation and previous engagement in the community helped me better understand the life in the community and the work of the Active Youth Group. As a testament to my continuous effort to be actively present in the community, one of the research participants thanked me for my "really passionate engagement in this community" (INTA4, p. 49, ll. 6-7).[46]

IV.3. Ethics

The word ethics is laden with numerous meanings. In the works of my favorite philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas (2001), ethics means being responsible for and giving preference to another person. Ethics start with a simple "after you" when you open the doors for another person (Levinas, 2001). On the point of ethics in research, Helen Simons writes:

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[46] For all participant quotes in this dissertation, the references link a particular quote to a particular excerpt from an interview transcript. The reference has three parts: specific conversation, page number, and a line number. Sometimes the citation may refer to my own question or comment, but it is still marked based on who was participant in a given stage of the fieldwork. The references to direct quotes are based on the formatting in the interview / focus group transcript so the line ordering of quotes may not correspond to the line ordering in the dissertation manuscript.

Ethics is how we behave or should behave in relation to the people with whom we interact. This means establishing throughout the research process a relationship with participants that respects human dignity and integrity and in which people can trust. (Simons, 2009, p. 96)

Both of these propositions greatly speak to me, as they highlight the importance of respecting and honoring research participants, with whom I built relationships both as a person in general and as a researcher. In my work on this dissertation, I learned that ethics in qualitative research is a complex venture; there are not always clear answers and the process is riddled with dilemmas. In fact, in the work on this dissertation, the building of relationships with research participants heightened the importance of my own commitment to the community and of ethical conduct.

Though adherence to ethics had often posed challenges for the logistics of undertaking of this study, I was especially careful not to pose harm to research participants – particularly minors – and their reputation in the community.

I kept my ASU research ethics accreditation (CITI Training) up-to-date and acquired a Fingerprint Card. My adherence to procedures outlined by my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) helped me be more transparent and accountable in my research. At the same time, I had to adapt to new situations as I went along. Since the first approval of the study in the fall of 2013, I filed five modifications and one continuing review, which were in turn accepted by ASU's IRB.[47]

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[47] I would like to acknowledge the very helpful assistance of the representatives of the ASU IRB.

The following ethical considerations guided my work: listening to diverse voices (see section IV.3.1), soliciting informed consent (IV.3.2), ensuring anonymity (IV.3.3), securing anonymity (IV.3.4), and committing to community betterment (IV.3.5).

IV.3.1. Listening to Diverse Voices. I included diverse voices in this dissertation and made a point of including two groups in particular: youth and Spanish speaking adults who live in the community. Being able to talk to youth required extra supervision of ASU's IRB. Being able to talk to Spanish speakers required of me to secure back-to-back translations of consent forms. Talking to both groups posed ethical consideration analysis-wise. I relied heavily on descriptive and *in vivo* coding when I analyzed youth's voices in order to remain true to their unique expression of youth language. In order to understand the responses of Spanish speakers, I hired a professional interpreter. I ended up coding focus groups with Spanish-speaking parents holistically and not *in vivo*, because the translation was not direct (see section V.2.2).

IV.3.2. Soliciting Informed Consent. In light of the IRB permission that was granted to me by ASU, I secured written consent for all interviews and focus groups.[48] At the beginning of each interview and focus group, I explained the basic intentions of the research and solicited voluntary agreement to take part in the interview. Adults were asked to sign an adult consent. I solicited two written letters from minors: one from the youth's lawful representative – parent or guardian (Consent form) and one from the youth (Child Assent form). When possible, I gave participants a copy of their consent letter. A thorough procedure was created for conducting video interviews. While the final product

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[48] An exception to this rule was the conducting of informal talks during community events, for which the ASU IRB provided me permission.

(a 12 minute video) was not intended for public sharing, I requested that those appearing in the video also sign a video appearance release form. Youth and adults who appeared in the video but were not interviewed had to provide me with consent for their appearance.

    IV.3.3. Ensuring Anonymity. Ensuring anonymity presents another ethical concern to a researcher. Becker (1964) points out that the researcher should follow conscience in order to make decisions about publishing findings. On the one hand, there is the danger of exposing unfavorable information; on the other hand, one can run the risk of self-censorship. Becker provided me with words of caution. It was indeed possible that my research would lead to the discovery of discrepancies between what a community claimed to be and what it is. In order to prepare for such a possibility I reflected in one of my memos on the loyalties regarding the dissertation. Reflecting on this issue had been an ongoing process throughout the study.

    In this study, multiple layers of anonymity became salient. Two were most pertinent: individual and organizational / community. On the individual level, participant's anonymity was a requirement stated in my IRB application. For this reason, this study utilizes pseudonyms for youth and adults who were members of the AYG.[49] However, I kept going back and forth between sustaining and not sustaining anonymity on the level of organizations and the community. In the end I decided to refer to the community as an "urban community in the United States," and I did not use names of concrete organizations, because the dissertation is a public document.[50]

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[49] Unlike with participants in FGY1-3 and FGA4-6, I interacted with youth and adults from the AYG on numerous occasions. With three exceptions, the participants themselves selected their pseudonyms.

[50] The decision not to reveal organizational identities resulted from a long reflexive process with which I was engaged. I acknowledge that people from the community itself will be able to recognize that the

There were obvious disadvantages to this decision. In line with the pragmatic intent of my work, the dissertation would have more practical power if it openly acknowledged the name of the community. Importantly, I would be able to openly give honor to those who have participated in the study and let me work with the community.[51]

IV.3.4. Securing Confidentiality. Another ethical dimension is to reduce the risk of exposing the identity and testimonies of research participants. In compliance with federal research policies I maintained a folder in a locked compartment of my office at ASU with signed consent and assent forms and other important study-related materials. Additionally, I password-protected computer files related to the dissertation. I disposed of study material that I no longer needed by the means of shredding. Lastly, I did not grant access to data such as interview transcripts to anyone outside of my dissertation committee during the research process.

IV.3.5. Committing to Community Betterment. This study was guided by the commitment to contribute to the community with which I worked. My hope was to provide findings that contribute to the discussion on youth community involvement within the urban community. Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman (2010) advocate for an "expanded research ethics, in which concepts such as 'do no harm' must be accompanied by a more positive value of seeking to identify and pursue good outcomes for participants" (p. 242). By committing to community betterment I wanted to conduct the

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dissertation speaks about the community and some of the organizations that are active there. In fact, I hope that the dissertation will be useful to them precisely because it speaks about their community.

[51] For this reason the thanks to all those who took part in the research expressed in the Acknowledgements section, unfortunately, had to be kept anonymous as well. Again, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the participants in the study – youth and adults, and to the representatives of the community, and the adult facilitators of the AYG for letting me conduct this study.

study not just for my own personal benefit. This form of personal responsibility continued throughout the study.

IV.4. Research Location

  IV.4.1. Community Selection. Three parameters guided the selection of the research location. I wanted to: (1) overcome conceptual problems that surround definitions of youth civic engagement, (2) explore overall characteristics of the community that impact youth community involvement, and (3) fulfill my personal commitment to a community I had come to know.[52] The combination of the three considerations helped me decide.

  On the first point, in my initial literature review I highlighted three problems connected to the discussion of the term youth civic engagement: lack of definitional clarity, dependence on established political institutions, and barriers to involvement. The opportunity gap and existence of barriers influenced my choice of the research location, as I wanted to work with a community that is dealing with some economic challenges. Furthermore, I was looking for a diverse community that was different from my own.

  On the second point, I was looking for a location that would help me explore the guiding question: ***How is youth community involvement being constructed by members of an urban community?*** The community I ended up selecting was large enough to allow me to see a variety and diversity of responses – direct and indirect – to my question. Especially, I found the following community characteristics salient:

- The community is diverse in regards to demographics such as race and income.

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[52] This last point was driven by the ethic "Committing to community betterment" (see section IV.3.5).

- The area is mostly residential.

- It is a place where youth have opportunities to congregate and be involved in activities that serve the broader community.

- Schools in the community are important community organizations that value youth involvement in the community.

The one parameter I struggled with, however, was my personal connection and past involvement in the community – and in this regard, consideration (3) merited deeper reflection. I debated whether I should continue working in a location that I had come to know during another research project.[53] A summary of what I perceived as pros and cons of conducting research in a known community can be found in Table 3.

Table 3.

The Pros and the Cons of Conducting Research in a Known Community

Pros	Cons
Previous knowledge: it is a place I had come to know well so I was aware of many of the social, economic, and political dynamics in the community.	Shaping the message: I already contributed to the understanding of youth civic engagement and community organizing efforts in the community.
Commitment to the community: I felt that the findings of my study would be helpful to the community and I wanted to help.	Hiding community identity: in spite of the effort that I would put into keeping the community anonymous, people who knew me could infer the location.
Continuing my involvement: I wanted to continue my involvement because of the relationships and personal commitments that have been built.	Contaminating data: people in the community knew my views about youth involvement, which could create respondent bias.
Gaining Access: I felt that representatives of organizations in the community would allow me to do research.	

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[53] In a nutshell, I worked on a report that described the main assets that the community could build upon as it created supportive systems for its children and youth. In the process I learned about the importance that community members and representatives of nonprofits working in the community put on youth involvement in the community.

Considering all of these, I decided to continue working in the community where I was involved previously. I came to view my previous engagement in the community a benefit, because it made me more sensitive to some of the issues that the community was facing. My earlier research involvement not only helped me focus my study, but it also allowed me to establish a network of support that was necessary in order to undertake the study. Most importantly, I wanted to continue to work with the community to which I felt committed, because of the relationships that I had developed with people in the community in the past: residents and representatives of community organizations alike.

IV.4.2. Community Overview. Glaser discounts demographics as being overly influential in grounded theory studies (1978, p. 60). However, statistics can help paint a picture of what a research setting looks like. I will now review information about some general demographic characteristics of the community where I conducted my research.[54]

The community stretches across an area of almost 9 square miles. Pertaining to the age group of youth in my study, the community contains a number of public elementary schools, all of which are Title I schools, and a number of private and charter schools. Also present is a community college that has a four-year (9-12th grade) program and which operates as private charter school.

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[54] In light of my ethical guideline "ensuring anonymity" (section VI.3.3), I contemplated the pros and cons of including statistics. I consulted the issue with a statistician and one of the interviewees who were familiar with the use of U.S. Census data. I ended up including rounded statistics because they allowed me to present a snapshot of the community without directly identifying it.

According to data drawn from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013)[55] the community has a total population of approximately 30,000. About 40% of residents identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino, around 35% as Non-Hispanic white, and 16% as Non-Hispanic African American.[56] Twenty five percent of the population is foreign-born. The community has a large refugee population from Eastern Africa (4% of community residents were born in that region of Africa).

In terms of education, 78% of residents acquired high school or higher level of education, and 27% of the residents hold a bachelor's degree or a higher level of education. Regarding employment status, 32% of those who are 16 years or older are not in labor force. The unemployment rate among those who are 16 years or older in the community is 7%. Of those who are employed, 34% work in management, businesses, science and the arts, 24% in sales and office, and almost 25% in service occupations. The mean income in the community is roughly $46,000. At the same time, there are many individuals living in poverty (almost 35%). The proportion of those living in poverty is even higher for children and youth under the age of eighteen (almost 60%).

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[55] The statistics reported on in section V.1.2 were drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. Since the answers to the ACS were statistically sampled, all statistics but the population count contain a margin of error. These margins of error are available on the U.S. Census Bureau website but are not reported here because of anonymity issues.

[56] The terms "Hispanic or Latino", "Non-Hispanic white", and "Non-Hispanic African American" are drawn directly from the U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In the rest of this dissertation I use the term "Latino" to refer to people living in the United States who are of Central and South American descent.

IV.5. Fieldwork Overview

My fieldwork was conducted between March 2013, and April 2015.[57] I started out by exploring the issue of youth involvement in the community from different angles, centering on the grounded theory question: "What is happening in the data?" (Glaser, 1978, p. 57). In the process I explored the basic characteristics of the community itself.

After acquiring permission from ASU's IRB, I contacted adults who facilitated the Active Youth Group (AYG). I met these adults during my previous work in the community. The AYG eventually became an important focus of my inquiry, but at the start of my fieldwork I thought the AYG would be one of a number of groups to interview. In the fall of 2013 I video recorded interviews with seven youth who were members of the AYG. Using these data, I created a 12-minute video about the AYG.[58]

Furthermore, I conducted three observations in the community: one observation of the community environment and two at events organized by the AYG. Based on permission granted to me by the district superintendent and the District Governing Board, I also conducted three focus groups with a total of 7th and 8th grade youth at two of the elementary schools in the community. I also conducted three focus groups with a total of 22 parents whose children and grandchildren attend the schools.

While talking to the youth in the schools and while talking to the parents I realized that the AYG was quite unique in its work in the community and in the ability of

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[57] Because of the capricious blending of data collection and analysis in my study, the write up of the fieldwork and findings is not completely aligned with the chronology of how the study progressed.

[58] The video comprised of segments from the interviews with youth and segments capturing the community and some working of the AYG. All of the themes presented in the video are discussed in section V.6 of this dissertation. Appendix D contains a log of the video.

AYG youth to describe various community issues. In coordination with adult facilitators

of the AYG, I decided to focus on the AYG in the dissertation. Between the fall of 2014

and the spring of 2015, I conducted interviews with four adults connected to the AYG.

The overall timeline of my fieldwork is depicted in Figure 1.[59]

Fall 2013
- ASU IRB approval
- Video interviews with AYG youth (VINT1-7)
- Video making
- Governing Board approval

Spring 2014
- Observation of community event (OBS2)
- Focus groups with youth (FG1-3)

Fall 2014
- Observation of community event (OBS3)
- Focus groups with parents (FG4-6)
- Key Informant Interview (INT1)
- Focus grouop with AYG youth (FG7)
- Observation of the community (OBS1)

Spring 2015
- Key Informant Interviews (INT2-4)
- Observation of community event (OBS4)

Figure 1. Dissertation Fieldwork Timeline

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[59] A complete list of interviews, focus groups, and observations conducted in this study can be found in Table 9 in Appendix A.

V. ANALYSIS

In chapter II, I outlined how process and content were treated in this dissertation: this study is about a particular topic, which I am exploring using a certain method *and* it is also a study of a particular method as it evolved in the process of studying a particular topic. I also articulated my initial research question, the constituent terms of which were conceptualized by drawing on existing literature. At the close of the chapter IV the philosophy, praxis, and ethics of my research design were presented. This current chapter builds on the previous chapters as the analysis and findings are discussed.

The presentation of findings is divided into six main parts: focus groups with youth enrolled in schools (section V.1), focus groups with parents of children who are enrolled in school in the community (V.2), observation of the community (V.3), interviews and focus group with youth from the AYG (V.4), observations of events organized by the AYG (V.5), and interviews with adults connected to the AYG (V.6). Each section includes a detailed description of research participants in order to introduce the context in which participants' accounts are situated.

V.1. Focus Groups with Youth Enrolled in Schools (FGY1-3)

V.1.1. Overview of FGY1-3. In the spring of 2014, I conducted two focus groups with youth from one of the elementary schools in the community and one focus group with youth from another school. The three focus groups are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4.

Focus Groups 1-3 at a Glance

Data collection	Participants	Length	Semester
FGY1: Focus group	9 youth from Elementary School 1 (3 male, 6 female)	37min	Spring, 2014
FGY2: Focus group	8 youth from Elementary School 2 (4 male, 4 female)	38min	Spring, 2014
FGY3: Focus group	6 youth from Elementary School 2 enrolled in the School Support Program (1 male, 5 female)	38min	Spring, 2014

The focus groups took place in each respective school during school hours. The selection of these groups was based on convenience and collaboration with the administrative staff members at these schools, who selected the youth participants. The youth participants in each focus group were from grades 7 and 8. In one of the schools, a focus group was held with youth who take part in a nation-wide skill-building program. The aim of this program is to support youth who may be in danger of dropping out of school and to equip them with skills to be successful in school. In this dissertation, I use the pseudonym "School Support Program" (SSP) to denote this program. In each of the two schools I also organized a focus group with youth who were not part of SSP.

My questions generally focused on the free-time activities in which the youth engaged, how they described their community, what helping behaviors they engaged in within the community, and interactions they have had with adults.[60] In turn, I wanted to learn what residents in the community did in service to others. All youth participants

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[60] The complete list of these framing questions is reproduced in Appendix B. The precise form of each question varied depending on the nuances and subtleties of each focus group.

spoke English fluently, but sometime used slang expressions, which, as mentioned, imposed some limitations on my analysis.

V.1.2. Analysis of FGY1-3. My analysis initiated with descriptive coding, done by hand on the printouts of transcripts. Holistic coding of the data using MAXQDA followed.[61] Additionally, the data were analyzed using metaphor and *in vivo* coding.

V.1.2.1. Holistic Coding of FGY1-3. The holistic coding of FGY1-3 yielded nine codes.[62] These codes were generally reflective of the questions that I asked (see Appendix B for complete lists of framing questions). The holistic codes are titled: 1. Positive community characteristics, 2. Negative community characteristics, 3. Children and youth, 4. Calling the police, 5. Helping behaviors, 6. Ideas for community involvement, 7. Importance of helping others, 8. Rewards for helping others, and 9. Youth-adult interactions. The holistic codes for FGY1-3 are summarized in the visual map in Figure 2 and annotated in Table 10 of Appendix C.

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[61] The analysis of FGY1-3 was done after the analysis of FG4-6. Because of a language barrier (focus groups 4-6 were held in Spanish), I was not able to use quotes and *in vivo* codes. To overcome this handicap, I used holistic coding (more in section IV.2.3.3.2). In order to mirror the analysis of FG4-6 and because I had preliminary ideas about some of the codes, I used holistic coding in my analysis of FGY1-3.

[62] As mentioned in section IV.2.4.3, holistic codes refer to longer thematic blocks of excerpts.
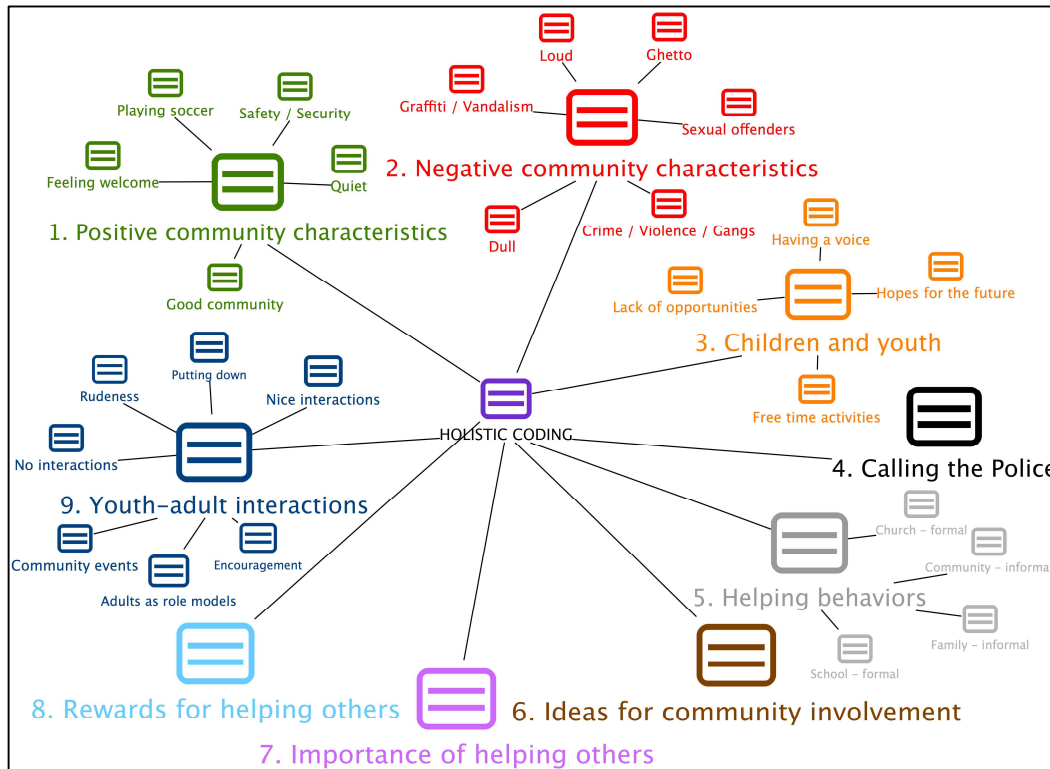
Figure 2. Visual Map of Holistic Codes from Focus Groups 1-3

Holistic Code 1: Positive Community Characteristics. I asked all youth in FGY1-

3 about the good and the bad of their communities. Among the main positives, youth

listed good relationships with their neighbors:

I: …What are the best things about your neighborhood?[63]

Youth 1: That everybody knows each other.

Youth 2: Yeah.

Youth 1: And like we go [indiscernible] and everybody's like hanging out at the

same time.

---

[63] In excerpts cited in the dissertation where there is an interaction between a participant and me, I refer to myself as "I" (Interviewer). In order to distinguish different youth in longer passages, I use the names "Youth 1", "Youth 2", etc. These labels, however, do not carry over across excerpts.

Youth 2: Like we know, like we get on our phones and call each other to play

soccer.

(FGY3, p. 7, ll. 11-18)

Playing soccer was described as a positive thing about the community in FGY1. In

FGY2, another youth expressed a similar sentiment: "I can hang out with my friends, you

know, not worry, 'cause it's… most, most of the time there's parents outside, staying

outside. Not worried that someone's gonna, you know, kidnap" (FGY2, p. 9, ll. 3-5). This

indicated a possible link between relationships in the community and crime. In FGY1,

two youth saw as a positive thing the help of other people. When I asked the youth in

FGY2 when they felt most welcome, a girl described how her friend helped her in school

when she first moved into the community.

Closely related to the neighborliness described above is the low level of noise in

many of the neighborhoods. To many of the youth in FGY1, this "quiet" was described as

a main positive of their community, but this depended on the time of the day. As one boy

put it: "All of our neighborhoods are quiet besides night time" (FGY1, p. 15, l. 8).

Some of the youth described their neighborhoods as a good one in general terms:

"My neighborhood is okay… It's way better from where I used to live" (FGY1, p. 8, l.

11). Furthermore, one youth described playing. Only in once instance across the three

focus groups, did a youth mention that her neighborhood is "pretty safe" (FGY3, p. 5, l.

31) and that "You can just walk around and nothing [chuckling]" (FGY3, p. 6, l. 4).

Other than that instance, the youth viewed the community as mostly unsafe, as will be

shown in the description of the next code.

Holistic Code 2: Negative Community Characteristics. In all three focus groups, the youth expressed concerns about safety in the community. The following excerpt from FGY2 illustrates their stance. A boy mentioned that the neighborhood was scary so I asked why:

> Youth 1 (boy): Because you don't know who might like… somebody might attack you.
>
> I: Yeah, is it? Is there a danger of crime?
>
> Youth 1: It is…
>
> I: Hmm…
>
> Youth 1: Yeah. [indiscernible]
>
> I: Really? Yeah.
>
> Youth 2 (girl): Well, you get a lot of those notices when you live here about when, when the rapist comes back and stuff.
>
> (FGY2, p. 7, ll. 14-27)

Though the receipt of Sex Offender Notifications is not uncommon to communities in the United States (including the community where I live), hearing the youth in FGY2 describe them as something that is part of the everyday was striking and sobering to me. The same issue came up in FGY1. As one girl recalls her experience from walking to the nearby McDonald's at night: "I get scared someone's gonna pick me up [others chuckling]. There's like, there's like a lot of 'pervy' people driving around… and it's scaring me so I carry pens with me everywhere I go [others chuckling]" (FGY1, p. 14, ll. 10-16). In FGY2, a boy mentioned that gangs are operating in the neighborhoods. And a

girl in FGY3, when asked what she would change in the community answered: "Like the violence and the amount of drugs they're [the residents] taking" (FGY3, p. 11, l. 19).

Another negative community characteristic discussed by the youth pertained to the visuals of the streets in the community. One youth in FGY3 noted, "I would change the vandalism" (FGY3, p. 12, l. 19). But it must also be noted that this theme emerged in the conversation of programs through which the youth were active in cleaning the neighborhood (see below).

Lastly, in FGY1 and FGY3, the youth were quick to describe their neighborhood as a "ghetto". This theme will be further elaborated on in the description of metaphor coding (section V.1.2.3), but I would like to note here that the term was used to cover multiple dimensions of community life and the youth themselves differed in their understanding of the term.

Holistic Code 3: Children and Youth. The third code focuses on areas of lives of children and youth who attended the focus groups. In all three focus groups, youth identified sports as a primary free-time activity. Most commonly represented were soccer, volleyball and basketball. Some youth were engaged in music (listening and/or producing); additionally, the youth mentioned reading, drawing, and watching TV as other free-time activities. One boy from FG put it this way: "What I do in my free time is um… be active" (FGY3, p. 1, l. 24). The same youth mentioned later in the conversation that the best thing in his neighborhood is that "everybody's active" (FGY3, p. 7, l. 28). The youth expressed their desire to have more spaces for free-time activities, specifically "having more places to like hang around by or like play areas like a park" (FGY2, p. 14, l. 9). In the same focus group, one boy wished for a gym.

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What also emerged were instances in which the youth were leading others and were being heard by others. In FGY2 when I asked if the youth had been in situations where others listen to them and they were in a leadership position, one youth discussed how she has to take care of her younger siblings. In the same focus group, one youth rationalized why adults in the community might not listen to youth: "Well, we're, we're young. And, and I'm, I'm sure… another person around listen to kids that cuss and I think, you know: For them, we're stupid and we're out of, like I don't know what we're thinking" (FGY2, p. 33, ll. 20-22). In FGY3, youth talked about spaces in which they take on leadership positions: the school success group at their school, where younger students look up to them, and through a parish.

In FGY3 I had the opportunity to ask the youth about their dreams and hopes for the future. All youth in that group expressed the desire to serve others, especially in those in need, in the capacity of a medical doctor, dentist, or youth psychologist. One boy who desired to play football in college added that he wants to "give back to the community" but he did not mention how (FGY3, p. 38, l. 13). These wishes were perhaps influenced by the previous conversation about the importance of helping others and by programs that already exist in the community, but they express the willingness of the youth to help those in need, nevertheless.

Holistic Code 4: Calling the Police. The code, which I labeled "Calling the police" was an unexpected issue that emerged in the conversations in FGY2 and FGY3. It came about when I asked how certain things could be achieved. The following tells the story. One girl wanted "the community to be less of a bad influence because you see people do smoking and doing drugs and stuff" (FGY2, p. 13, ll. 12-13). So I followed up:

I: How do you, how do you think that could be achieved?

Youth 1 (boy): [indiscernible]

Youth 2 (girl): Making it illegal.

I: Aha…

Youth 2: Or, more, or more um… police, you know, moving around the area

more, so like…

Youth 3 (girl): Sometimes, mostly, that wouldn't be fun, though.

Youth 2: Um… like, not like, not like all the time but at least two times

[somebody coughing: a week] to make sure, you know, to check on, you know,

like, you know, just walk around, just surveying area and make sure that there's,

you know nothing [indiscernible].

(FGY2, pp. 13-14, ll. 19-4)

Similarly in FGY3, when a girl mentioned that she would change vandalism, and I asked

how she would go about it, a boy answered: "Like have like more police forces like in the

neighborhood" (FGY3, p. 12, l. 25).[64]

Holistic Code 5: Helping Behaviors. As this was a study of what I tentatively call

"youth community involvement", I asked many of my questions in FGY1-3 with the

intent to explore the ways in which the youth were active in their community by

providing help and service to others. At the beginning of these focus groups I asked about

helping behaviors overall. Many youth offered examples of how adults – family members

---

[64] What I find interesting about this finding is that it reflects the opinions given by parents in FG4-6 in my study (see section V.4.2.1). Though there are certainly initiatives in the community, through which residents engage in self-help activities to get things done, there seems to be a culture of reliance on the institutions of law enforcement. Sánchez-Jankowski's (2009) ethnographic study of low-income neighborhoods reveals similar findings.

in many cases – help somebody else in the community. The extent to which these helping

behaviors can go is shown in the following excerpt of one of the girls from FGY1:

> Youth 1 (girl): We have a guesthouse, like, [my grandmother] gets to like bring
>
> people in that like we don't know. That don't have money, don't have jobs. She
>
> wants to like, she wants them to live with us. And it's weird but she was helping
>
> them out until they get a job or something.
>
> […]
>
> I.: So what goes through your head when you, when you see all of that
>
> happening?
>
> Youth 1: Are they're gonna kill me? [others chuckling] Will they rob us? We're
>
> very old, well, they're very old, and I'm very young and small. It's very scary.
>
> (FGY1, p. 19, ll. 1-25)

With the FGY1-3 participants, community service of youth emerged both as informal

(helping at home or helping a neighbor) and formal (involvement through organizations

such as schools and churches). As one boy from FGY1 recalled: "I will cut my, my

neighbor's grass 'cause he's getting too old and he can't do nothing like that" (FGY1, p.

14, ll. 1-2). Other examples given by the youth included giving a homeless person

something to eat, helping a person sit down on a bus, or helping a stranger move things.

An example provided by one of the girls showed that help could be literally lifesaving:

> Oh…! There was this car coming... and then my, my, my neighbor whose son was
>
> in the street. He was like sitting down and he was just playing with his cart and
>
> then the car was coming and I ran and I picked up the little boy and then I, I

[indiscernible] him … [chuckling] not hard but like I put him on the grass and

then his cart got run over, though. (FGY1, p. 24, ll. 17-22)

Two things came to my mind from hearing this story. First, the small boy was evidently

unsupervised by his caretaker. Second, the girl from the focus group showed great

vigilance and reacted quickly in the situation to save him from the approaching car.

Additionally, some youth mentioned that they help take care of siblings at home

and be leaders in that sense "'cause sometimes your parents are at work or something and

you're… if you're the one that'll do everything in the house" (FGY2, pp. 23-24, ll. 31-2).

On the borderline of formal and informal helping behavior, one youth from FGY1

discussed how he engages in projects with his mother: "I clean like in neighborhoods.

Like we like we go in like the alleys: My mom, her friends out of campaigns and we go

in alleys and stuff. And dirt and trash… all over like... it's crazy" (FGY1, p. 26, ll. 1-3).

As a reward for helping out in the campaign for the mayor's re-election, the boy was able

to attend a celebration.

In terms of formal volunteering, the two avenues that the youth discussed were

school and church. In both schools where the focus groups took place, youth were active

in a local program that engages communities in neighborhood cleanups. The city police

and the schools organize the program. In the words of two youth from FGY2:

Youth 1 (boy): [It] is a program where you help out like clean a…

Youth 2 (girl): …the community.

Youth 1: …yeah, the community and like paint like the graffiti over.

Youth 2: And take care of weeds and stuff like that.

Youth 1: Yeah, and cut the trees and like stuff like that. And then after like, after

you do that the next time you go to [indiscernible] they take somewhere… fun.

(FGY2, p. 18, ll. 8-17)

Similarly, a youth in FGY3 mentioned "it's really like helping out the community, like

we pick up trash and then clean up the graffiti" (FGY3, p. 16, ll. 16-17). It was already

mentioned in the introduction of this section that youth in one of the focus groups were

selected based on their affiliation with the SSP[65] that encourages them to remain focused

academically. In FGY3, the youth discussed the SSP in greater detail:

Youth 1 (girl): It helps you like with the high school like to go on to high school

and…

Youth 2 (girl): [indiscernible – to like, to like] have a better future for you and it's

hard to say. […]

Youth 3 (boy): And also like most other kids like drop out in high school. Like it

helps us to [indiscernible] career till college.

Youth 1: It helps you motivate, it motivates you to like wanna keep going. Not to

just stop like at one point. [indiscernible]

Youth 3: It's like not giving up on yourself.

(FGY3, pp. 17-18, ll. 20-2)

Furthermore, the SSP has a service component through which the youth helped younger

peers in school by being their role models:

---

[65] As mentioned, "SSP" is an acronym of the pseudonym "School Support Program."

Youth 1 (girl): So [the younger students] look up to us and they want to like: "Oh, we wanna be like them" but if you're… they, since they're little, their brain thinks "Oh, we're gonna grow to be like them" so they just follow your steps, but if you're, if you're rude, or like that, they're gonna follow those steps instead.

I: Do you interact with those kids?

Youth 2 (girl): … sometimes when we were planting the garden… we were supposed to get them to help us garden with us.

(FGY3, pp. 19-20, ll. 28-5)

The youth in FGY3 also mentioned that students in the schools in the community annually take part in a fundraising campaign for a nonprofit that helps terminally ill children. "We carry little boxes and we go around the neighborhood" (FGY3, p. 22, l. 31). In one of the schools, some of the youth mentioned that they have also done library volunteering, which included "putting books away, helping with getting kids to return their books or to get them renewed or something" (FGY1, p. 29, ll. 17-18).

In FGY2, the youth mentioned faith-based organizations as a possible venue for community service: "my church… will end up gathering food and then they end up putting them in packets so they can give it to ho… to the homeless people" (FGY2, pp. 31-32, ll. 30-1). In the church of one girl "sometimes when we have a meeting and then we end up helping the community from this neighborhood and then we end up cleaning it" (FGY2, p. 25, ll. 17-18).

Holistic Code 6: Ideas for Community Involvement. In FGY1 and FGY2, I asked the youth for ideas on how to help the community. The students brought up the idea of making neighborhood "look neat" (FGY1, p. 37, l. 10), or engaging other youth in

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cleaning the dirt: "Gather up some of your friends" (FGY2, p. 30, l. 1). In FGY1, a youth suggested organizing a block party: "Yeah, so like, so to get everybody to get to know each other. So it could be more trusting. Like, like doing a block party, it could help support my neighborhood" (FGY1, p. 37, ll. 18-19). One youth in FGY2 suggested asking others for their ideas:

> Youth 1 (girl): You can get point of views [sic] from your neighbors on how they think of the neighborhood and combine that idea with whatever idea you have like cleaning, with mixed with whatever they recommend and then you can all work on it.
>
> I: Interesting [stated quietly]. How would you approach your neighbors in that situation? How would you get their answers to that? How would you reach out to them?
>
> Youth 1: Probably just like ring the doorbell and then like kind of ask for a few minutes of their time… and just kind of ask them a few questions about the neighborhood.
>
> (FGY2, p. 30, ll. 13-25)

Holistic Code 7: Importance of Helping Others. Another questions that I asked was whether the youth thought helping others is important. In FGY1, the youth discussed the importance of being reliable:

> Youth 1 (girl): That gives a good impression of yourself…
>
> I: …can you explain what you, what you mean by "good impression"?
>
> Youth 1: Like in case if anybody else needs anything someday, they know you, they can count on you. […]

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Youth 1: Hmm... Um… It makes you seem reliable. Like, um… um… People will

think that they can trust you.

(FGY1, pp. 23-24, ll. 21-2)

Another reason given was that "other people cannot do certain things so you, you might

have to volunteer to do it for them" (FGY2, p. 27, ll. 21-22). Lastly, in FGY3, one youth

brought up the idea of reciprocity: "What if one day one day you're in that situation, too,

and you would want someone to help you or try" (FGY3, p. 31, ll. 15-16).

Holistic Code 8: Rewards for Helping Others. Another code brought focus to the

existence of rewards in place for community service. For example, one youth observed

that when the youth helped out at the library, they received food and snacks. The

neighborhood cleanup program organized by the city also incorporates rewards for

participants: "And then after like, after you do that the next thing you go to

[indiscernible] they take you somewhere… fun" (FGY2, p. 18, ll. 16-17). Some of the

youth also talked about intangible rewards that involvement in the community gives

them. Talking about the same cleanup program mentioned earlier, one girl reflected: "it

feels pretty good because you're helping do something good in the community. So, you

can kind of get like a good feeling from it" (FGY2, p. 19, ll. 6-8). In a similar vein, when

I asked youth in a different focus group about what their peers think about their

involvement in the SSP, this conversation unfolded:

Youth 1 (boy): Our friends are like, they're just making us feel like, "Oh, like"…

Youth 2 (girl): It's a waste of time.

Youth 1: …yeah, like it's a waste of time, like "Why are you doing it?" and

they're like…

Youth 2: But then they see that we help out and then we get rewards and they're

like "Oh, we wanna be [indiscernible]!"

Youth 3 (girl): Yeah.

Youth 1: Like it's too little, you should have signed [indiscernible]

Youth 2: …and don't work for the reward…

(FGY3, p. 34, ll. 16-29)

Holistic Code 9: Youth-Adult Interactions. One of the concepts that I was

exploring through my guiding questions was the relationship between youth and adults in

youth development initiatives. In this process, eventually, "Youth-adult interactions"

became a code in my analysis of FGY1-3. I used this code to highlight excerpts from

FGY1-3 when the youth discussed interactions between youth and adults in the

community. The code includes the following: adults as role models, nice interactions,

rudeness, putting down, encouragements, community events, and no interactions.

In each focus group, the youth were asked introduce themselves and to state who

their role models were. Many role models for the youth were athletes. In FGY3 many

youth also mentioned that their teachers were their role models. But by far the most

common response included parents and at times other family members. In some cases I

was able to probe why a certain answer was given. As one girl in FGY2 explained: "My

role model's my mom because even though we didn't start with a lot, now she's built up

to support us" (FGY2, p. 5, ll. 27-28). Furthermore, "your parents are your role models

because they, they made you and also like they teach you things like how to be better at, a

better person and teach you from right and wrong and all that" (FGY3, p. 5, ll. 5-7), and

"they support you through everything" (FGY3, p. 5, l. 11). The influence of parents on

shaping the youth's life experiences was also visible in community involvement of youth. One boy in FGY1 took part in neighborhood cleaning and political campaigns together with his mother.

Additionally, many youth have experienced nice interactions with adults outside of their home such as this one:[66]

> I: Do you get to interact with adults in the community? In your neighborhood? Do you talk to adults?
>
> Youth 1 (boy): Yeah, most of the adults are friendly.
>
> (FGY3, p. 9, ll. 5-8)

At the same time, youth in all focus groups also brought up that they've had negative experiences with adults: "Some are nice. Sometimes they can just be *really* angry" (FGY1, p. 35, ll. 18-19). In the same focus group, one boy shared the following story:

> I: How do adults treat… you? Generally speaking…
>
> Youth 1 (boy): Rude! [others chuckling]
>
> I: Rude? Can you give me an example?
>
> Youth: Um… I tried to help some lady one time.
>
> I: Hmm…
>
> Youth 1: And she told me I was to grab her things [others chuckling]… I, I tried to grab her bag for her 'cause she was struggling like the guy on the bus. Struggling so I grabbed it. "Don't touch my stuff!"
>
> (FGY1, p. 31, ll. 16-29)

---

[66] This particular conversation further evolved into a discussion on how some adults treat youth as if they were part of their family. This notion is analyzed in metaphor coding below.

In FGY1 one of the girls mentioned how she talked back to the principal of her school. According to her, students were pushing each other as they were trying to drink water at a water fountain. When the girl finally fought her way to the fountain and started drinking, the principal asked her to leave the fountain too early. She refused and talked back to the principal, which resulted in the incident being put on her school record.

Another situation unfolded when youth in FGY3 were doing the fundraiser for children with a terminal illness, mentioned earlier, and the youth noted that adults did not welcome them:

Youth 1 (girl): Like when you're collecting money but some of them are like: "They're going to die", they're like "There, there's not much for them…"

Youth 2 (boy): Yeah, they put your hopes down like you try to do something good but they're like…

Youth 3 (girl): They put you down.

Youth 1: Yeah.

Youth 1: "Yes I'll help, we'll let gonna help" and then they're just like "They're gonna die, they're not gonna save their lives."

I: Aha. Have all of you experienced…?

Multiple youth: Yeah / yeah.

I: …such attitudes? Are there some other, other things that they say?

Youth 4 (girl): Most of the times like laughing at your face, which is…

[indiscernible]

I: Yeah?

Youth 3: Laughing.

Youth 1: Or just close the door.

(FGY3, pp. 33-34, ll. 17-11)

Yet, some youth also noted that they experienced receiving encouragement from adults in reflection to activities such as this fundraiser. When I asked students from FGY3 what adults such as their parents, teachers, and the principal tell them when they are part of the fundraiser, they said: "That we should be proud of ourselves" (FGY3, p. 29, l. 17), "keep doing it!" (FGY3, p. 29, l. 23), and "they encourage us to do more… for the community" (FGY3, p. 29, l. 31).

A related point is the location of youth-adult interactions. In addition to the collection, youth in FGY3 mentioned a community event at their school, which included the painting of a larger mural and to which "a lot of families came" (FGY3, p. 13, l. 21).

Lastly, in FGY2, some youth mentioned that youth do not get to interact with adults in the community, but with older youth: "Not adults [indiscernible]. Older kids like eighteen-year-olds and that" (FGY2, p. 10, l. 15).

V.1.2.2. Versus Coding of FGY1-3. In May 2015, I searched transcripts of FGY1-3 for versus and *in vivo* codes.[67] Two such codes regarding involvement of youth in the community were found: *being able v. not being able to volunteer*, and *right v. wrong choices*. In FGY2, one girl compared instances of when one can and cannot volunteer:

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[67] As mentioned in section IV.2.4.3, versus codes refer to statements through which research participants provide a comparison between binary concepts. See Table 14 in Appendix C for a complete list of versus codes used in the dissertation.

I: Do any of you volunteer?

Youth 1 (girl): Well, sometimes, it depends what the thing is. If it's something good like helping them like something that, you know, you can do, you can help, but if it's something you can't do, well…?

I: Can you give me some examples of things you can help and some things you cannot do with…?

Youth 1: Well, let me see, for example, like what you're saying about, well um… him about moving, well, you can't help some pack like [indiscernible].

(FGY2, p. 17, ll. 16-26)

In this excerpt the girl was building on the example of another youth who mentioned that he helped a stranger move things into that person's car. In other words her comparison was based on the practical ability to help.

In FGY3, the youth who are enrolled in the SSP made a comparison between making good and bad choices. When I asked if the youth felt they had a voice in the community and if others respect their opinions, the youth mentioned that some might criticize them. I followed up by asking what it does to them and if the criticism makes them want to say more. One boy said: "It just like puts you down" (FGY3, p. 44, l. 4) and his peer added: "it makes you wanna like show them that you can be better than that" (FGY3, p. 44, ll. 6-7). Later into the conversation in FGY3 the youth spoke of negative signals they have received from other youth: "some people like, they dropped out, they want you to go on the same path that they did" (FGY3, p. 46, ll. 1-2). I followed up by asking if the youth feel tempted to drop out. In one response, a youth gave the following hypothetical example:

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Youth 1 (girl): …say you're the drug dealer and you're like the main and everything and then they catch you and you're like: "Why did I do that? I've made bad choices back then and…" [indiscernible]

Youth 2 (boy): And that's what you realize you had, that's when you realize you had those choices between right and wrong. You had that chance to take the right way or the wrong way, but you took the wrong way anyway...

(FGY3, p. 47, ll. 2-9)

This interaction reveals how some of the youth conceptualize decision-making, especially in relation to staying at school.

V.1.2.3. Metaphor Coding of FGY1-3. In the metaphor coding, three metaphors emerged from the data that I would like to highlight. Some of them have already been briefly mentioned above, but I would like to dedicate more space to them as metaphors. Among them, the metaphors of a *ghetto* and *family* were the most widely discussed.[68]

Regarding the first metaphor, the term "ghetto" has its own specific definition in academic literature. For example, *The Encyclopedia of American Urban History* defines the term in the following way:

Ghetto is a culturally loaded term that, like slum, is applied to socially disadvantaged neighborhoods in American cities. Both words are slurs that distort rather than describe the actualities of the places that are so labeled. Ghetto implies

---

[68] As mentioned in section IV.2.4.3, metaphor codes refer to statements made by participants about abstract processes that are at heart of seemingly disparate phenomena. See Table 15 in Appendix C for a complete list of metaphor codes used in the dissertation.

a level of separateness from mainstream society, and of internal homogeneity, still

more intense than that of a slum. (Mayne, 2007, p. 305)

At the same time, a ghetto should not be equated with areas of poverty, or disorganization

(Wacquant, 1997). Furthermore, the term is often used to "exoticize" characteristics of a

location that are most different from a dominant perspective (Wacquant, 1997, pp. 341-

342). Marcuse and van Kempen (2002) define ghetto like this: "*Ghettos* are areas of

spatial concentration in which their residents live involuntarily, even though in many

cases they have adapted to their circumstances and found sources of strength in clustering

together" (p. 8).

In the focus groups with youth enrolled in schools, I came across a more

colloquial or slang use of the term as a way of describing certain conditions in a

neighborhood. In this sense I think of a term as a metaphor. "Ghetto" emerged in FGY1

and FGY3. Below is one example:

Youth 1 (boy): Um… [my neighborhood] is by [name], the other school, and…

it's… ghetto [someone chuckling]

Youth 2 (girl): Ghetto… [ironically] [chuckling]

Youth 1: And it's, it's… [others laughing] it's okay, it's not *that* bad. 'Cause like

my apartments are like huge… and [somebody chuckling] and it's right across

from [a local nonprofit] and um… We have a lot of um… I can't say…. [others

chuckling]. It'd be embarra… you go next.[69]

---

[69] Having familiarized myself with the community, my speculation is that the youth was referring to the presence of prostitution along one of the streets in the proximity of his school, but I did not probe further in order not to embarrass him during the focus group.

[…]

I: …But when you said some… your neighborhood is "ghetto", what do you mean by that?

Youth 3 (boy): Like old…

Youth 2: No, not, like poor learning environments [indiscernible]…

Youth 4 (girl): There's a lot of wannabies.

Youth 2: Messy.

(FGY1, p. 7, ll. 1-25)

In FGY3, similar ideas were brought up at school 2.

I: Tell me about the neighborhood where you live, where your school is or where you live [others chuckling]. How would you describe it to somebody like me who's, who's an outsider, who doesn't live here?

Youth 1 (girl): It's pretty ghetto but… [others chuckling]

[…]

Youth 1: …it's pretty ghetto but like everyone gets along it's probably like… It's like a community that all like everyone knows each other so like if you walk, you can say "Hi" and like you start talking and like if you go like to [neighboring community], you don't know anyone. So basically, this is a ghetto place for you. [others chuckling] [indiscernible].

I: What does it mean when a place is "ghetto"? [others chuckling] What comes to your mind?

Youth 2 (boy): Like [indiscernible] It's not like, it's not worth to visit, like…

Youth 3 (girl): And a lot of stuff has happened here.

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Youth 2: Yeah, like…

Youth 1: Like gunshots, people outside like half naked [chuckling]. It's not the quietest neighborhood ever.

I: Aha.

Youth 1: You see people that smoke. It's not…

Youth 3: It's not that good [indiscernible].

(FGY3, pp. 3-4, ll. 22-23)

Both conversations are telling. In summary, neighborhoods described as ghetto meant to the youth in FGY1: "old", "poor learning environments", "messy", and "there's a lot of wannabies", and in FGY3: "it's not worth to visit", "a lot of stuff has happened here", "Like gunshots, people outside like half naked. It's not the quietest neighborhood ever", "You see people that smoke," and "It's not that good".

The term "ghetto" was not mentioned in FGY2. One girl in FGY1 discussed her neighborhood in the following way: "It's not ghetto… It's like… it's actually nice [indiscernible], it's normal" (FGY1, p. 11, ll. 25-26). But it seemed that the youth in FGY1 and FGY3 were aware of certain negative connotations of their community, and in their answers provided specific examples of what the term means to them.

The metaphor *family* came up in the focus groups. In my attempt to better understand this notion, I reviewed VanLear's (2009) entry in the *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships* about "family", who discussed structural, functional, and process understandings of the term family. This distinction points to the property of biological relatedness to other people. On the one end of the continuum (structural conceptualizations) hereditary relationships can be found. The other end (functional and

process understandings of family) describes the nature of close relationships with those who may not be of one's family.

In FGY3, youth referred to non-familial members of the community as their family. The following excerpt is kept in its original length, because of the thorough elaboration of the youth:

I: …Do you get to interact with adults in the community? In your neighborhood? Do you talk to adults?

Youth 1 (boy): Yeah, most of the adults are friendly.

I: Most of them are friendly?

Youth 2 (girl): Yeah.

I: How do they treat youth overall?

Youth 1: Like they treat us like we're like…

Youth 3 (girl): Family.

Youth 1: …yeah, family.

Youth 4 (girl): They call us *mija* and *mijos*. [others chuckling]

Youth 3: Most of the time we're treated like a family.

Youth 2: Yeah.

I: Okay.

Youth 1: Like nobody's treated differently.

Youth 3: Since we know each other for a long time…

Youth 2: Like you get invited to [indiscernible] kids they have a party, you don't get invited like. You'll see half of the people there like that you know.

Youth 3: Yeah.

I: And what was the word used? *Mija*…

Youth 2 & Youth 3: *Mija* and *mijo*.[70]

I: What does it…?

Youth 2: Daughter and son.

Youth 3: Just daughter and son.

I: Oh, okay, so even when you're not their son or daughter?

[indiscernible]

Youth 2: Yeah, just like…

Youth 1: It is just like: if you show them respect that some people like: To gain respect you have to give respect.

Youth 3: Yeah, they like will totally give you like [indiscernible]… like treat you as their family.

I: So, so this, this is a really interesting point. So: giving respect, being treated as a family as a son and daughter – what, what does it make you feel like when you, when the adults act like this towards you? What does it feel like?

Youth 1: That…

Youth 3: It means like you are like doing good and you're being respectful.

Youth 2: Like you're not being like disrespectful like when they talk to you, you actually say "hi" and not just pass them by.

Youth 3: "Good morning", "Good afternoon", "Good night".

---

[70] Mija: 'mi hija' – means "my daughter" in Spanish. Mijo: 'mi hijo' means "my son".

Youth 1: And like you're not setting a bad example for like many other kids or something.

(FGY3, pp. 9-11, ll. 5-14)

This excerpt reveals a relationship between good behavior, getting along well, being respectful, and being treated as a family member. Adults in the community seem to be using the Spanish terms *mija* and *mijo* in a caring way. Furthermore, these testimonies seem to be rooted in the Latino culture. As many authors have noted (Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Zinn, 1982, among others), the Latino culture puts a high value on family ties and obligations towards members of the extended family. Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) discussed familism as a 4-dimensional attitudinal construct that consists of four sets of beliefs: "the family comes before the individual" (p. 314), it is important to nurture relationships with other family members, reciprocity can be counted on when difficulties arise, and family is considered to be a honorable institution. As was mentioned in section IV.4.2, about 40% of residents of the community identified themselves as "Hispanic or Latino" in the most recent American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The findings from the focus groups with youth thus indicate that the youth's conceptualizations of youth-adult interactions might be influence by Latino cultural norms.

Shoulder to lean on is an interesting phrase that connotes that somebody is either tired or hurt and needs another person to comfort them. In FGY3, when I asked whether it is important to help others, the youth made a connection with the previous metaphor.

Youth 1 (girl): We're there to help them out.

Youth 2 (boy): …yeah, like to have that…

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Youth 1: Back up.

Youth 1: Yeah.

I: Hmm…

Youth 3 (girl): You take a shoulder to lean on like…

Youth 2: Yeah, a shoulder to lean on. That you're there for them…

I: Okay!

Youth 2: To not make them feel like, they're like alone.

Youth 1: Oh, yeah.

I: Interesting. [quietly]

Youth 1: To make them feel like they're the part of the family, too.

(FGY3, p. 32, ll. 5-27)

This excerpt prompted me go back to Marcuse and van Kempen's (2002) definition of a

ghetto as a place where residents "live involuntarily, even though in many cases they

have adapted to their circumstances and found sources of strength in clustering together"

(Marcuse & van Kempen, 2002, p. 8).

  V.1.2.4. In Vivo Coding of FGY1-3. In FGY1-3 the following statements made

by the youth pertinently identify more abstract concepts regarding youth community

involvement. I coded them as *in vivo* codes.[71]

  The first *in vivo* code is included in the statement: "you give somebody

something, you get back in return" (FGY1, p. 22, l. 26). This statement was brought up

when I asked if the youth thought it was important to help others in the community. This

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[71] *In vivo* codes are short excerpts from participants' speech that become literal codes on their own. See
Table 16 in Appendix C for a complete list of *in vivo* codes used in the dissertation.

points to a reciprocity, mutuality and neighborliness in the community that may be driven by non-altruistic motives.

The second statement refers to the family metaphor, which was analyzed above: "They call us *mija* and *mijos*" (FGY3, p. 9, l. 22). The notion of being called "son" or "daughter" by people in the community who are not the youth's biological relatives, was also closely followed in the interview by the *in vivo* code "most of the time we're treated like a family" (FGY3, p. 9, l. 25), and "nobody's treated differently" (FGY3, p. 9, l. 31).

Building on what I had learned from youth in focus groups 1-3, I conducted focus groups with a different group of residents – parents of children enrolled in schools.

V.2. Focus Groups with Parents (FGA4-6)

V.2.1. Overview of FGA4-6. During my fieldwork, I took advantage of the fact that I was working with some parents in the community who attended regular weekly meetings at elementary schools in the community. The parent groups consisted of females, mostly Spanish speaking parents and in one case a grandparent, who are taking care of children and youth enrolled in lower levels of the community's elementary schools. The parents attend the meetings with the goal to receive information about the school, about their children, and about resources that are available to them in the community. Some come to the meetings with the motivation to practice their English or to be more involved in their community. I would describe the parents as active and committed to their children and who are generally active in their community, both of which are demonstrated by the fact that they are attending the meetings in their free time.

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One of the facilitators from the AYG helped me schedule the focus groups. In the fall of 2014, I conducted focus groups with parents at three of the schools. The character and composition of the focus groups are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5.

Focus Groups 4-6 at a Glance

Data collection	Participants	Length	Semester
FGA4: Focus group	6 parents of children attending School 2 (6 females)	67min	Fall, 2014
FGA5: Focus group	6 parents of children attending School 3 (6 females)	59min	Fall, 2014
FGA6: Focus group	10 parents of children attending School 4 (10 females)	74min	Fall, 2014

My questions focused on the participants' connection to the community, community characteristics, helping behaviors in the community, engagement and leadership of youth in the community. I also asked one of the three groups about something I had heard in the community before, which is an informal economic lending system practiced by some people in the community called "tanda" (see section V.2.2).[72]

Because I do not speak Spanish, I enlisted a professional interpreter to provide simultaneous translations of my conversations with parents in FGA4-6.[73] In these focus groups the interpreter translated my questions from English to Spanish and then, in turn, translated the participants' responses from Spanish to English. The interpretation was not done word-by-word, because the parents often talked in longer sequences at a time,

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[72] The complete list of guiding questions can be found in Appendix B. As in the case of all interviews and focus groups, the questions respected the nuances of each set of participants.

[73] Though suggested and contacted by one of the gatekeepers in the community, the interpreter was an outsider to the group and to the community.

which were then translated in sequence by the interpreter. This imposed some limitations on my ability to analyze the data from my talks with the parents, as is mentioned in section V.2.2.[74]

V.2.2. Analysis of FGA4-6. Given that the focus groups were translated from Spanish to English, I was hesitant to do *in vivo* or descriptive line-by-line coding, because both of these types of coding depend on the exact wording of what the participants stated in the focus group. As with the slang expression of youth in FGY1-3, I again encountered the problem of the lack of compatibility between the participants' vernacular and my understanding of what they said. For that reason, in the analysis of FGA4-6, I refrained from using any direct quotes and *in vivo* codes, because the language did not come directly from the parents, but from the interpreter.

V.2.2.1. Holistic Coding of FGA4-6. As in FGY1-3, given that I had preliminary ideas about what to look for in the data, and given that I could not use direct quotes of statements that were interpreted, I used holistic coding to analyze FGA4-6. These codes in many ways reflected the questions that framed the conversations (see Appendix B).

My analysis brought seven holistic codes that provided insight about the community and about children and youth. I titled them: 1. Positive community characteristics, 2. Negative community characteristics, 3. Relationship with other community members, 4. Getting things done, 5. Children and youth, 6. Children and youth helping others, and 7. Adults approaching children and youth. The holistic codes for FGA4-6 are summarized in Figure 3 and annotated in Table 11 of Appendix C.

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[74] The inclusion of Spanish speakers was intentional with regards to the ethic to include diverse voices (section IV.3.1).
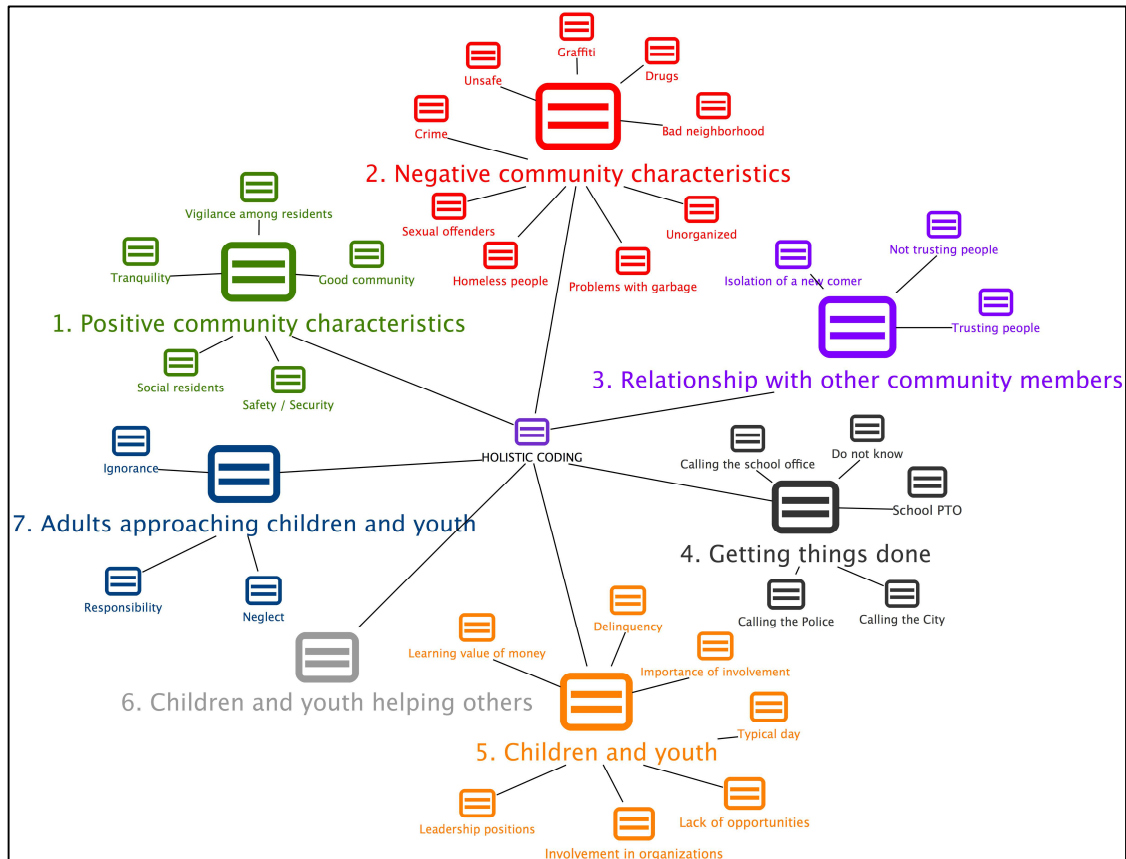
Figure 3. Visual Map of Holistic Codes from Focus Groups 4-6

Holistic Code 1: Positive Community Characteristics. The parents came from various neighborhoods in the enrollment watershed of each school. The most commonly mentioned positives were tranquility of the neighborhood and enriching relationships with their neighbors. One parent made the connection between the vigilance of residents, on the one hand, and the vigilance of the police, on the other hand, both of which keep the neighborhoods quiet at night. In the area of one of the schools, a parent reported that residents visit each other and communicate often. One parent took a particular pride in the fact that she is known and respected in the community and that she had access to information about what her children and other residents were doing. Some parents from the morning meetings live in apartments, which have their own staff dedicated to keep

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the area safe and clean. Altogether, parents talked about the police in a positive light, and saw the police as an agent of safety in the neighborhood.

Holistic Code 2: Negative Community Characteristics. Though the parents described many things they like about the community, they were, at the same time, cautious and aware of some factors of community life that had a negative impact on their lives. They described instances when a person would make them feel unsafe. The example was given of when a man was asking different women to get a ride with him and even followed a little girl for a while until one of the parents intervened and threatened to call the police. Robberies, fights, and the topic of sexual offenders came up in two of the focus groups. Some parents talked about the general looks of the neighborhood and the difficulties in keeping organized in face of vandalism, graffiti, and untidy thrash. In one of the focus groups the issue of youth delinquency came up. Some youth were identified as perpetrators of vandalism or break-ins.

Holistic Code 3: Relationship with Other Community Members. The parents gave mixed responses when I asked them whom they trusted. Some parents described good relationships with their neighbors, which allowed them to ask their neighbors to watch their house when they were going to be away for longer. Also parents appreciated that their neighbors kept a watchful eye over the whole neighborhood. But there were also parents who did not trust their neighbors and who were cautious if their children went to visit another house or their own house, fearing that accidents would happen. One parent even mentioned that she could not trust anybody.

Despite these mixed responses, some residents organize a supportive mechanism in the community that is dependent on trust. It is an economic system called "tanda."[75] As the parents explained to me in FGA5, each tanda gets started by someone in the community who invites about 10 acquaintances to take part. They decide that every month or every two weeks, each participant will add a certain amount of money ($100) to a collective pool. If 10 families take part, then the pool will contain $1,000. Based on the needs of participants, it is determined beforehand, which month someone will get the whole amount. The system is based on each participants and their commitment to provide $100 each time period. If the money is not provided, the organizer of tanda has to supply it. When I asked the parents what this system tells them about the community, one of them answered "unity and trust" [*la unidad y la confianza* in Spanish] (FGA5, p. 12, l. 22). Only some of the parents in FGA5 had taken part in a tanda, but the fact that such mechanism exists in the community is an important finding for understanding the dynamics of relationships between residents.

Holistic Code 4: Getting Things Done. This code was initiated by my own questions about what the parents do when they want to get something done. In most cases, they mentioned outside actors such as the police, the school, or the city. One parent mentioned that she did not know whom to call to get something in the community done, for example, when a fight was happening at the school.

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[75] Wikipedia ("Tandas," 20014) describes tanda as a *rotating credit association*: "Tandas are system of financial stability for Latinos in the United States and Latin America. They originated in Southern Mexico and it is a system that is largely organized by women. It provides a form of financial as well as emotional stability for women. It is a collective pool of money in which people receive the pool on a set date. It has transculturated [sic!] through organizations affiliated with banks in the United States" (para. 1).

My interpretation of these answers is that there is a culture of dependence on formal institutions in terms of bringing up changes to the community. In an informal talk, I was also asked if I would come back someday, because, as the parent mentioned, things would not get done. There was one exception, however. One of the parents noticed that acts of vandalism were being committed repeatedly. Taking an initiative, she set up cameras and she reported the delinquency to the authorities.

Holistic Code 5: Children and Youth. When I asked about children and youth, the main point mentioned in the three focus groups was a lack of opportunities for children and youth to be involved in activities in the community. Parents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of after-school activities, limited access to the one park in the community and to the community's playgrounds, and a lack of spaces for training in organized sports. In the view of one parent, the demand greatly exceeds the supply. One parent mentioned that her 14-year-old child tells her that there is nothing to do in the area.

In one of the groups, the issue of youth delinquency came up. A participant provided a story that young people twice in a row vandalized one of the schools' libraries. Nothing was stolen, but they broke the glass and threw books around.

Holistic Code 6: Children and Youth Helping Others. In all three focus groups I asked the parents to identify instances and examples of children and youth helping others in the community. This question was driven by my expanded understanding of involvement as an activity that reaches out to the community in order to improve the conditions of someone else. Parents mostly provided examples of their own children who helped their neighbors, such as offering to help older adult living in the neighborhood, carrying bags, or visiting a neighbor whose husband died recently. A nine-year old son of

one of the parents pulled the weeds in the yard of his elderly neighbor and when she offered to give him $1, he refused to take it, saying that he was just helping.

Additionally, the parents shared two stories of helping behaviors that went over and beyond neighborly help in their intent and process. One of the parents talked about a twelve-year-old youth from the neighborhood that in her opinion struggled with a mental illness and attended special education classes. Sometimes he would become aggressive to other children and youth in the neighborhood and as a result the other children and youth would not play with him because they were afraid of him. Another boy from the community, who was about 10 years old then, noticed this and visited households in the neighborhood to ask to give the boy a second chance. Since this encounter, the two became close friends, and the other children and youth accepted him more. The second story was about a young college student from the community. According to his mother, searches for volunteer and community service opportunities on the Internet and who engages with nonprofit organizations because, as his mother understands it, he wants to be a good role model for his younger siblings.

In my initial exploration of literature, I pointed out that the term "youth civic engagement" often excludes informal helping behaviors. The two examples of children helping others, which are discussed in this section, illustrate such involvement of youth in the community. They exemplify the commitment of youth to other community members. They also seem to presuppose a mature reflection of the youth involved on the situation of others in the community and their own agency to improve the condition of others.

Holistic Code 7: Adults Approaching Children and Youth. One more code that came up in the focus groups was the attitude of parents to children in the community. In

two of the focus groups, parents discussed the responsibility that they are feeling for their children. They also shared what steps they are taking in order to bring their children to the park in the heat of summer, as well as to gather information to help them.

In one of the discussions, a parent lamented about the "ignorance" [*ignorancia* in Spanish] of other parents who are not educated about how to motivate their children to healthy lifestyles. Another parent agreed with the point on ignorance, but added that the reason is that those parents come from 3rd world countries, specifically from Mexico. This finding was in line with the concern of a few parents that some children and youth in the community were being neglected by their parents, which, according to the parents attending the school meetings, led to delinquencies.

V.3. Observation of the Community

V.3.1. Overview of Observation 1 (OBS1). In the afternoon at the end of November in 2014, I conducted a 2hr 20min long observation of the streets in the community. Following the example of Baudelaire's (1995) *flâneur* (privileged observer of life in the city), I strolled through the streets of the community. The 9.2 mile long journey was partly planned and partly improvised. My aim was to canvass the community from east to west. I walked on both the main streets and residential side streets in the community. During my walk, I recorded voice memos on my phone, such as this one:

> I have passed… a clean and nice looking residential community. It's on my right hand side – east… And I've been seeing a couple of people in the streets but most people are in their cars, passing by. I do not see as many people walking. Somebody just passed me on a bike and two women are going down the street and one of them is pushing a stroller with a child. (OBS1 field notes, around 4:39pm)

What was happening here? And are there places for people to hang out? I looked around for people, but only saw people in their cars. The weather was nice for being outside.

> I have just passed a bar and a sports bar and a store area, where there was a *Halal* meat store. There were also an Indian restaurant and a Mediterranean restaurant. It seems like the place where some of the people would hang out… None of the venues here seem to be venues for young people… nothing like a youth center or any sort of sports facility. (OBS1 field notes, around 4:53pm)

At the end of the street I reached a local park that stretched alongside a road:

> This is a really nice park, except there are cars going by all the time. Some youth has just jogged by me and there have been a few youth that I have seen in the street. This is a good park for dogs. On the right-hand side I see [a] cemetery… And now there are two bikers – an older lady and a young girl going by. (OBS1 field notes, around 5:05pm)

Leaving the park, I walked into a residential area and continued walking to a bigger park that lies in the close proximity of one of the schools:

> There were about 100 people in the park – or so. Softball practice, football game (at least 8 people on each team), basketball, volleyball. Some kids were playing in the playground. But I expected to see more people there – especially given that it's the holiday. I wonder if some of the children and youth are in the school right now? The sun is setting. (OBS1 field notes, around 5:22pm)

While walking into another residential area, I made an observation: "I just saw the first police car on my entire walk and I have been walking for at least an hour I would say." (OBS1 field notes, around 5:25pm)

Furthermore,

> even though there are cars in front the house, which most likely indicates that's somebody is home, there weren't as many lights on inside… Some lights were in the back of the buildings towards the patio, which I saw in some of the houses. As if they were telling the world they were not home. (OBS1 field notes, time: around 5:35pm)

I pass another segment of a grassy area with trees:

> I don't see anybody in the park and it's not very well kept either… There are a few nice trees in some palm trees but it's not like a park with a playground. It's not a place that would be very welcoming…. I would not let my kids play here because I would be afraid that they would run off into the street… And even in the apartment building, I don't see as many lights shining outside… Even though there are many cars in the parking lots, the houses are kind of shielded by the curtains and by the sunshades. (OBS1 field notes, around 5:37pm)

Later on, "I have just passed a family that spoke a language I did not understand. And they had all these beautiful dresses and the heads of the kids were covered" (OBS1 field notes, around 5:51pm). Following that I passed a local community college where the AYG meets on a bi-weekly basis. I walked by cabarets, a grill place, and a local nonprofit that serves the homeless population in the community. There seemed to be a volunteer event there, because I saw through the windows many people who wore the same t-shirts. There was a trailer park on the other side of the street and some children are playing basketball there. Then I passed the official borderline of the community.

V.3.2. Analysis of OBS1. The stroll through the community brought two revelations into focus: (1) Even though the sun was setting when I walked through the community, most of the residential houses did not have many lights on thus they created a feeling of hostility and isolation. (2) There were not many people outside, youth especially, despite the outside temperature being in the 60s of Fahrenheit degrees.

V.4. Interviews and Focus Group with Youth from the Active Youth Group

As already mentioned, I collected my first data in the fall of 2013 in an attempt to produce a video that would illustrate the workings of the AYG. The AYG, which was active between the fall of 2012 and the fall of 2015, was a group of youth and adults working together to serve the community. At that time of my first data collection, I saw the AYG as one possible comparison group for my analysis. But the significance of the AYG and the welcome extended to me by adults and youth in the group persuaded me to focus further on the AYG and explore new questions. Altogether, I conducted 7 short interviews, recorded on video, with youth from the AYG, and one focus group with 5 of these youth.[76] In order to place my fieldwork in the AYG within the context of the community, a description of the evolution and activities of the group follow.

Historically, the vision for the creating the AYG group came from a cluster of stakeholders, representing nonprofit organizations working in the community, who were

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[76] During my time spent with youth and adults from the AYG, I refrained from making evaluative statements about the group. This was most true during the bi-weekly meetings. To be true, I took part in the activities that were prepared by others such as drumming or the making of origami or Christmas cards. But I never offered to lead an activity, because I felt that it would influence the group too much (for the good or the bad). I felt that I had to remain partly neutral as a researcher. During a typical meeting I would sit with the rest of the group, but usually in the back row. Adult facilitators of the AYG adapted to my posture and in some situations did not include me in the activities deliberately, which I appreciated.

collaborating with local schools on developing programs to support children and youth from the community. Emily, who is one of the adults I interviewed for this dissertation attests to the context in which the AYG was founded: "Well, from the very beginning… there was always the vision of having youth participation" (INTA1, p. 13, ll. 27-28). The task to form the AYG was given to another of my interviewees, Deanne. She founded the AYG in 2012 and facilitated the group until its end in August 2015.[77] She recalled the issues that the group was going to address in the community:

> The youth felt they didn't have a voice in the community where they lived, they felt that the adults were afraid of them, and they felt as if they were not honored and celebrated in the community where they lived… One of the things that was also established as far as the objectives was to provide a space for youth that would allow them to be more successful in the community where they lived as a well as academically. (INTA2, p. 1, ll. 25-31)

Meeting on a bi-weekly basis at a public charter school in the community, fourteen- to eighteen-year-old youth and adult facilitators worked on activities inside a classroom and organize events for the community during the school year. About 40 teenagers joined the group in the beginning. Over its three years long history, youth were joining and leaving the group, but a core cohort remained in the spring of 2015, consisting of about 10 youth, most of which were enrolled in the charter school.[78] Youth

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[77] In 2014, Deanne started another similar group at a local feeder high school, whose activities continue as of the writing of this dissertation. Though the activities and the philosophy behind the two groups were similar and youth from both groups recently worked together on some of the community events, the second group was not the focus of this dissertation. Rather, I wanted to get an in-depth understanding of the AYG.

[78] Youth participants were about 14-18 years old at the time of the interviews and focus groups.

and adults such as parents and representatives of local schools have taken part in the group's meetings and projects. The activities of the AYG were provided free of charge to the youth and to the community and an ongoing invitation was extended to potential new members.

The activities of the AYG fell into two main categories: bi-weekly indoor sessions at the community college and events organized for the community. The sessions typically lasted 60-90 minutes. Attendees received refreshments at the beginning of each session. During these meetings, the youth took part in reflective activities such as creating art objects that were personally meaningful to the youth, crafting origami, participating in discussions about art, poems, books, and events in the community, or writing intentions for the upcoming year. Some of the sessions were also dedicated to the making of Public Service Announcements (PSAs).[79] Adult facilitators of the AYG sometimes invited guest speakers to the bi-weekly meetings. Some of the topics presented were personal awareness, respect, planning for the community, civil rights, and personal finances.

A large portion of the bi-weekly meetings was dedicated to the preparation of community events. For example, during one of the sessions in the spring of 2015, a guest facilitator led an African drumming class, which became a key activity at one of the events. During the session the youth learned to drum to various rhythms. At a community event that followed the week after, the guest facilitator and the youth helped community members who joined a drumming circle.

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[79] PSA's "are messages in the public interest disseminated by the media without charge, with the objective of raising awareness, changing public attitudes and behavior towards a social issue" ("Public service announcement," 2015, para. 1). Furthermore, "[o]ften in the form of commercials and print ads, PSAs are created to persuade an audience to take a favorable action" (Bell, 2010, para. 2).

Through events for the community youth and adults in the AYG provided free-time activities and resources to individuals and families in the community. Those events took place in local schools or, as was the case of the first event organized by the AYG, in the local park. At each event, youth took charge of activities for the community. The most common of these were the creation and facilitation of table stations such as those that raised awareness about recycling or safe sex, stations that informed visitors about a healthy lifestyle, and those stations that engaged children and families in activities such as book reading or the making of bead necklaces and bracelets. In a typical school year, the group organized two main events. In this dissertation they are referred to as the Community Health Event (CHE) and the Community Engagement Event (CEE).

V.4.1. Overview of Interviews (INTY1-7) and Focus Group 7 (FGY7). With the intent to value youth voices, I will first elaborate on interviews and focus group that I conducted with youth from the AYG. A summary can be found in Table 6.

Table 6.

Video Interviews 1-7 and Focus Group 7 at a Glance

Data collection	Participants (pseudonyms)	Length	Semester
INTY1: Video interview	Andreas: male youth from the AYG; Nicole's brother[80]	5min	Fall, 2013
INTY2: Video interview	Rel: female youth from the AYG	6min	Fall, 2013
INTY3: Video interview	Mel: female youth from the AYG	6min	Fall, 2013
INTY4: Video interview	Nicole: female youth from the AYG; Andreas's sister	9min	Fall, 2013
INTY5: Video interview	Angela: female youth from the AYG; Monica's twin sister (both sisters attend a school in the community but do not live in the community)	7min	Fall, 2013
INTY6: Video interview	Monica: female youth from the AYG; Angela's twin sister	7min	Fall, 2013
INTY7: Video interview	Naynay: female youth from the AYG	4min	Fall, 2013
FGY7: Focus group	5 youth from the AYG: Andreas, Rel, Nicole, Monica, and Naynay	60min	Fall, 2014

The video interviews took place in one of the offices of the middle school, where the group was meeting. Based on the request of AYG facilitators, one adult from the AYG was present at the interviews with me. Furthermore, facilitators of the AYG gave me permission to videotape some parts of their regular meeting, as long as the youth and their parents would agree to that as well.[81] I also recorded video segments of the streets and parks of the community, together creating a 12-minute video using the computer program iMovie.

The focus group (FGY7) with youth from the AYG took place in the fall of 2014 in a classroom of the community college where the group met. In addition to soliciting

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[80] Andreas left the group during the AYG's last semester in the spring of 2015.

[81] For the purpose of video recording the meeting, I acquired permission from 5 youth and 3 adults, in addition to getting permission from the youth I interviewed. Adults were not interviewed for the video.

more additional responses from the youth, I intended to use the video as form of member checking. At FGY7 I played the video to the youth and then I asked them to tell me more about particular questions, such as how they would describe the AYG to others, who they look up to, who looks up to them, and I also asked them to tell me about some of the events that had taken place since I interviewed them the year before for the video.[82]

V.4.2. Analysis of INTY1-7 and FGY7. In my analysis, I used numerous kinds of coding: holistic, versus, metaphor and *in vivo* coding. An initial analysis of these data took place when I created a video using data from INTY1-7 (see section V.4.2.1). After the video was made, additional analyses were conducted using holistic coding (V.4.2.2), versus coding (V.4.2.3), metaphor coding (V.4.2.4), and *in vivo* coding (V.4.2.5).

V.4.2.1. Making of Video Using Data from INTY1-7. In the making of the AYG video, coding was done on two levels: First, I coded all seven video interviews using MAXQDA using the following codes holistic codes: community definition, future goals, impressions, learning new things, people coming together, reaction by others, stories, voicing opinions, What is the AYG?, and AYG events / projects / activities. These codes were further refined when I created the video.[83]

V.4.2.2. Holistic Coding of Data from INTY1-7 and FGY7. Building up on the analysis through the making of the AYG video, I had redone the holistic coding of

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[82] The usefulness of this technique was validated by one of the youth, who, when I asked participants what they thought of the method, replied: "I think it's interesting, because you get peoples' one-on-one perspective and a then a year later you get their group" (FGY7, p. 44, ll. 23-24).

[83] In order to secure confidentiality and anonymity of the data, the video itself is not part of this dissertation. However, I compiled a video log, which can be found in Appendix D. The video was shown at one of the AYG meetings at the beginning of 2014 and then again at the beginning of FGY7. Adult facilitators of the AYG and I made an agreement not to share it further publically.

INTY1-7 and FGY7 in the spring of 2015. Nine holistic codes were used to organize data

from video interviews 1-7 and from FGY7. Some of them were being more reflective

than others of the questions that I asked (see Appendix B): 1. Community, 2. Description

of the AYG, 3. Characteristics of AYG youth, 4. Learning, 5. Leadership, 6. AYG events

and activities, 7. Youth-adult relationships, 8. Impacting the community, and 9. Reactions

of other people. The holistic codes for VINT 1-7 and FGY7 are summarized in the visual

map in Figure 4 and annotated in Table 12 of Appendix C.
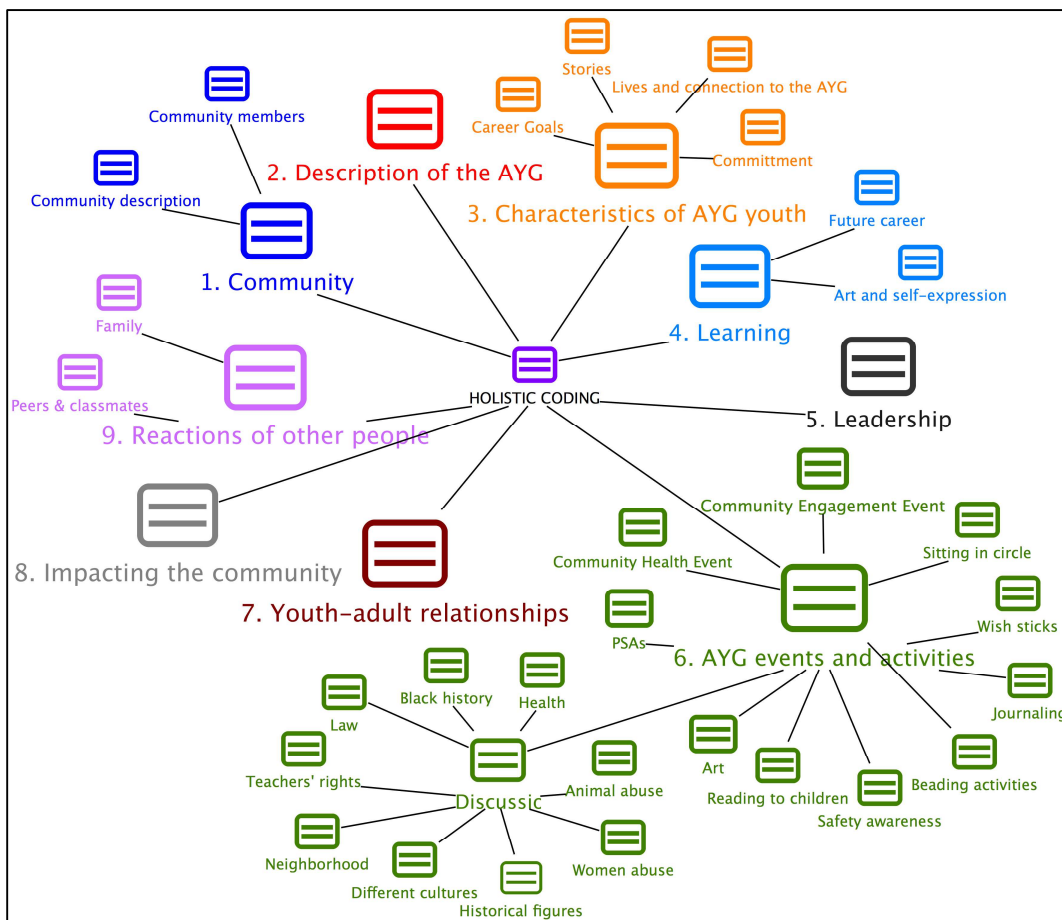
Figure 4. Visual Map of Holistic Codes from Video Interviews and Focus Group 7

Holistic Code 1: Community. The first code refers to what the youth said about

their community. While filming the interviews, I asked Rel what her community was. She

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mentioned, "I feel like the community is like where the [school] district is" (INTY2, p. 28, l. 1). Similarly, Nicole defined her community geographically as the "span of people" (INTY4, p. 5, l. 28) in the area between two schools. Andreas talked about the whole county in which the community is located and then provided insights about some of the community characteristics: "It's a pretty good, pretty good community. It's kind of dirty and stuff like that. They have their problems" (INTY1, p. 1, ll. 24-25).

The youth identified "[p]eople all around us such as like neighbors or community teachers and stuff" (INTY3, p. 2, l. 21) as their fellow community members and even "random people walking around the street, my neighbors, people I may not know, but… yeah, they're all my community" (INTY5, p. 4, ll. 18-19). When talking about residents some of the youth talked about interactions between people in their community. Rel pointed to a certain isolation of people in her community. She wished "that like people feel safer. I like more together. Like 'cause I know that in my specific neighborhood, mostly nobody talks to each other" (INTY2, p. 4, ll. 25-26). She continued:

> And we barely even see each other. You got a house that looks like an empty isle, I feel like it would be better if everybody knew each other's names like you see in like the old movies. The one that a girl would ride a bike down the street and the girls say "Oh, hi Anna!" [said in a funny voice]. (INTY2, pp. 4-5, ll. 30-2)

Similarly, Mel wished for people in the community "To be more involved, because, … I have noticed that many people do not come out and like talk to each other… So they are like more trapped in their houses and just like take care of themselves" (INTY3, p. 4, ll. 6-9). Andreas shared a different experience, when I asked him who belonged to his community: "Many people. This is like multicultural, many cultures like… It's not one

specific culture. Like everybody's there. We're a whole unit" (INTY1, p. 4, ll. 28-29). Furthermore, "You cannot like say 'oh, this is theirs, this is theirs'" (INTY1, p. 5, l. 2).

These excerpts illustrate that the youth in the AYG were sensitive to interactions between residents and to the role communication in community building. As in the case of Rel, who discussed scenes from old movies, they even offered some specific images of what "safer" and "more together" (INTY2, p. 25, l. 4) might look like.

Holistic Code 2: Description of the AYG. During the video interviews, I also learned about how the AYG was understood by the youth. Nicole put it this way: "It's just basically a bunch of kids getting together seeing what we can do to make the community a better place" (INTY4, p. 4, ll. 9-10). Andreas added the importance of being able to voice opinions in the community through the AYG: "From a young perspective showing how we can come together, the group – the way that we throw our ideas, they throw their ideas as a team, a unit" (INTY1, p. 1, ll. 13-15). Mel offered another point: "The Active Youth Group is like… meeting where we come together in one and discuss about several topics such as our neighborhoods and stuff like that" (INTY3, p. 1, ll. 11-13). One youth mentioned how the AYG also included adults: "But we kind of just got together with adults from the [group of stakeholders in the community] and we like tried to find ways how we can help out with the community" (INTY2, p. 1, ll. 15-17).

When discussing the nature of the AYG, Angela added: "It's a lot about art and expressing ourselves and the community around us. We made a mural of people we admired and recognize and so, it was pretty cool" (INTY5, p. 1, ll. 26-28). The youth emphasized unity and coming together as a group and friends or as a family: "My sister

and a lot of my very close friends are in there. I feel like that the group has just become a family" (INTY6, p. 3, ll. 17-18).

An abstract conceptualization was brought up by Monica: "The Group is just awareness… of not just some things that have gone on in history, but things that are going on in the community nowadays" (INTY6, p. 4, ll. 11-12). Mel spoke about the AYG as a "great experience" (INTY3, p. 4, l. 19). Andreas concluded:

> It's a lot of fun… we can have certain activities that we do, like we make Wish sticks and also creativity projects that we do, ideas we throw out. You, you get to state your own opinion and no one can like phase it or anything like that…
>
> (INTY1, p. 5, ll. 16-18)

Lastly, in the video interview Naynay expressed the following: "I really like the program and I hope it lasts like even after I leave because I will leave like next year after senior year" (INTY7, p. 3, ll. 28-29).

Holistic Code 3: Characteristics of AYG Youth. The third holistic code identifies excerpts when the youth talked about themselves, their career goals and when, based on my prompt, they talked about if they are different from other youth in their community. During FGY7, I asked the youth what a typical member of the AYG was like? The following conversation unfolded:

Monica: Weird!

I: Weird?

Monica: Every single one of us is weird. Like, if you go down the hallways and say: "Oh, did you see Nicole or did you see Monica?," they'll have a story to tell. [many: chuckling]

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Nicole: Oh, yeah!

Monica: And somebody will have a story to tell when they hung out with us and when they saw us [R?: aha] and they'll always be like: "Oh yeah, she's cool! She's fun!" And, everyone will always be able to say something about us, so it's kind of a weird popularity thing.

Andreas: I've never said that before… [quietly]

Nicole: Um… I mean like, I can go down a line and say something unique about everyone.

I: Hmm…

Nicole: Um… Andreas, for, for Andreas because I live with him, but working with him inside of the AYG, I see his humor. He's like more humorous in here than he is at home.

I: Hmm…

Rel: Um… Naynay, I would say that she is compassionate, um, she's very driven. Um… I think Rel is straightforward. Um, I love that about her. She just says what's on her mind.

Monica: She's very blunt…

Andreas: You should just say "blunt"

Nicole: And she's blunt [chuckling]. And Monica, I would have to say…

Andreas: Enthusiastic… [quietly]

Nicole: … she is very enthusiastic, yeah. She's very cheerful, she's upbeat, she's

at all the events, she helps out during whatever… Um, I mean she is just

wonderful…

(FGY7, pp. 7-9, ll. 23-2)

This exchange of ideas indicated that the youth had a chance to get to know each other on

a deeper level and were aware of the talents and interests of their peers. Furthermore,

they also appreciated the candidness of one of the youth.

When talking about themselves, some of the youth shared other activities in

which they are engaged and what their career goals are. For example, in the video

interview, I asked Monica, "Who is Monica?" She replied:

She's secretary of Student government. She participates in Active Youth Group,

she's in Poetry club, she's in [a poetry program]... [chuckling] and... I work at my

mom's job. She's a kindergarten teacher… And I work, help her there a couple of

times a week and I play soccer on the weekends. (INTY6, p. 1, ll. 15-22)

During the focus group I asked Monica what connections she saw between the AYG and

her career. Her reply? "I wanna be a teacher and I feel like you have to be able to connect

to people… to be a teacher. And… through connecting with people, you connect with the

area around you and host events that would get your students interested" (FGY7, p. 5, ll.

22-18). Monica is aware of the impact that she is making in the community. When I

asked all the youth participating in FGY7 who they look up to, she replied:

I'd say the freshmen this year. Um, a couple of them have actually told their

parents that I am their mentor and they wanna be like me. And I felt pride,

because last year I looked up to a senior and I was like: "I would never think of

anyone wanting to look up to me and to wanna be like me." (FGY7, p. 23, ll. 11-

14)

R6's twin sister, Angela, wants to become a silent language interpreter, while Naynay

wants to study "environmental engineering… because I wanna find ways to sustain, um,

the community" (FGY7, p. 4, ll. 26-27). Naynay is "passionate about saving the

environment" (FGY7, p. 5, l. 2) and with the help of one of the AYG adults wants to start

a community garden in one of the schools. Andreas and his sister plan to go to college.

Nicole elaborated on the type of program in which she wanted to enroll:

> What I want to major in is just basically helping people… I wanna major in
>
> nonprofit leadership management so that's basically going to be part of my job to
>
> go out there, be active with… in the community, which I *love* doing. (INTY4, p.
>
> 6, ll. 12-15)

Her brother had a different vision: "If I get a degree in philosophy and I get

another degree in something, I'm guaranteed to get that job… It's guaranteed, if I can

think critically about that job" (FGY7, p. 46, ll. 5-10). To him, philosophy meant

"thinking on another level… So, outside of yourself, open up the box, what do you see

besides the sky?" (FGY7, p. 46, ll. 16-18) Rel's vision for her job is to be "staying behind

the computer for a long time" (FGY7, p. 6, l. 7).

During the focus group, I also asked the youth whether they felt they were in any

way different from their peers. Andreas's reply was that "like in general, I'll say we're

not, we're no different from them… but just that we're more committed to certain things

than they are" (FGY7, p. 11, ll. 3-7). Andreas continued: "So, we put forth the effort, and

they drop the effort, step over it, and like walk the other way" (FGY7, p. 11, ll. 7-8). In

Rel's opinion, the other youth were "too cool for school" (FGY7, p. 11, l. 12) to which Naynay added: "Basically, yeah, because you have to be committed" (FGY7, p. 11, l. 18). Furthermore, Naynay mentioned: "You need to want to be able to go into the community, go into these projects, be committed, and like create like – we did the Community Engagement Event or other event around the schools" (FGY7, p. 4, ll. 7-9). The commitment of the AYG youth was also seen in the following excerpt by Rel: "I don't even have to be here anymore. I've completed over 100 hours and yet…" (FGY7, p. 6, ll. 26-30). When I asked "Yet, you're here?" Nicole jumped into the conversation with the claim "Because it's addictive – that's why" (FGY7, p. 7, l. 3).

In conclusion, the youth in the AYG generally perceived themselves as different from their peers. They saw a difference play out in aspects of life such as being "weird" and being committed to the AYG, and through the AYG, to the community.

Holistic Code 4: Learning. This fourth holistic code reveals what the youth said they were learning while participating in the AYG. For example, in Mel's perceptive, the group learned "different activities and such as the historical figures and issues" (INTY3, p. 2, l. 30). When Nicole shared with me that she wanted to study nonprofit leadership. I asked her if she was learning things that help her achieve her goal of majoring in that field. She responded:

> Definitely! … I'm learning how to plan events, I am learning how to, you know, get resources… Last year I filled out my first Donation Request form and that was crazy because I ended up getting the donations from [local supermarket chain] so I was *very* happy. (INTY4, p. 6, ll. 20-27)

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Like Nicole, Monica also mentioned how she intended to use what she learned in the AYG in her future career. She recalled that at one of the bi-weekly AYG meetings she learned "what a student's rights are so future, in like the future when I'm a teacher, I don't overstep anyone's boundaries" (INTY6, p. 2, ll. 15-16). This comments of Monica's reflected her mature understanding of some of the issues faced by teachers.

Art and self-expression provides another area of learning. Monica highlighted the following: "We learned about art and… what art could signify and that everything around you has some kind of meaning… So that, it's just informational and you can just take everything away from it and learn all the time" (INTY6, p. 4, ll. 12-15). In the AYG, art and self-expression were intertwined. A number of youth discussed that the AYG allowed them to voice their opinions and express themselves, but Naynay's elaboration on this topic stood out to me in terms of how it incorporated multiple concepts. Naynay shared with me that she was interested in learning about murals in the community: "when we talk about the murals, so we talk about how our voice really matters in the neighborhood, I really enjoy it" (INTY7, p. 2, ll. 20-21). She elaborated: "'cause I feel like my voice has strength, has a power that not many teenagers realize as much" (INTY7, p. 2, ll. 21-23). Furthermore, "when I go into the Active Youth Group, I have a voice, I have this power and it's not just adults telling me what's wrong and what's… and that you have to follow that" (INTY7, p. 3, ll. 20-22). The point about providing ideas to other community members was also brought up by Andreas. In his view, in various events, the AYG "brings people together. We give them our ideas… how to help them out, we help the community and help their families out and staff like that" (INTY1, p. 1, ll. 26-28).

The notion of "having a voice," which was expressed by Naynay, took other, literal, forms as well. The following story from one of the AYG events was illustrative:

Angela: We had to read a book to a child and mine was on… a baby hedge hock. And I read it to this little kindergarten girl and [smiling] she loved it so much. She paid attention to it and she was like: "Don't forget to describe the, the doggie over here and the cat." And I was like "Oh!" I didn't realize that she was paying attention. And I thought that was really nice.

I: How did you feel?

Angela: I felt awesome! 'Cause she doesn't listen to me most of the time.

(INTY5, pp. 4-5, ll. 25-2)

Self-expression of AYG youth was also unleashed through poetry, music, and journal writing. Rel attested: "I like the journals that Deanne added. 'Cause I like expressing my opinion, but not to like *everybody* in public" (INTY2, p. 5, ll. 10-11). To Rel, journaling opened the possibility of sharing her opinions, though not publically.

Holistic Code 5: Leadership. The topic of leadership came out strong among the youth. Andreas mentioned in the video interview that he was learning "leadership" in the AYG. When I probed for him to elaborate, he stated:

First of all it wasn't so many people that came. Like… still certain people started coming like, it like led, it made them become leaders and it led people to join it too. So more, it made like a more in-depth join, and also so everyone started joining more. (INTY1, p. 4, ll. 8-11)

Andreas's quote became part of the video. In FGY7, which was prompted by the video, Andreas conceptualized leadership on a more abstract level, which stimulated the

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responses of other youth. First, Rel expressed the idea that everyone in the AYG was a leader and that what defined a leader was "some sort of level of commitment that some other people don't have" (FGY7, p. 14, ll. 22-23). But, Rel stated, one is "forced into that position" (FGY7, p. 14, ll. 21-22). To that Naynay added that a leader helps others succeed. As Naynay put it, "let's say they're lazy and actually *try*, then like this, especially, that's when they should be like recognized, and not just the leader" (FGY7, p. 15, ll. 13-14). Monica then talked about leaders willing to get their hands dirty a little bit. "You just wanna make everyone else feel like they had a part in it, that it's special to them, too" (FGY7, p. 15, ll. 24-25).

At that point in the conversation, Andreas noted: "it sounds like chess" (FGY7, p. 16, l. 3). When I asked how this is connected, he elaborated:

It, it makes us sound like we're kings in the game. So we're like manipulating our pieces in a sort of a way. So like everyone in our group if we're leaders, then… if we're all leaders, we all can't be kings (FGY7, p. 16, ll. 15-17).

He further added: "So, that means we all have our own different roles but it's a necessary role. But we're not all just like the main one" (FGY7, p. 16, ll. 23-24). As a response, Nicole, when asked whether it resonated with her, brought up a different metaphor:

I kind of think of it as in like a relay race. Everyone has their most important, you know, job and you're supposed to help each other out. So, let's say one person, their timing was way off and then you have to pick it up and so your job is to help them, "Okay, well, you know, your time was off but I will put that extra, you know… That just that extra energy to make sure that we get to where we gotta go." So, it's all about helping your teammates, and at the same time making sure

that they're feeling confident about what they're doing. And not making them feel

like "Oh, I didn't do my job." (FGY7, p. 17, ll. 3-10)

When I asked if anybody wanted to add something to this discussion, Rel brought up a

notion of leadership embedded in a war scenario. In her words, "I think there was

something like one person once said, where like a leader is the one that stands with the

people that they're with in the front, and the coward is the person with power in the back"

(FGY7, p. 17, ll. 14-16). In Rel's view, one type of leader is "in the frontlines with his

men" (FGY7, p. 17, l. 23) but the other one is scared and is hiding. This notion of

leadership implied the existence of a conflict between two competing sides.

Later in focus group 7, the conversation turned to community events organized by

the AYG. Specifically, I asked about the CEE that was held at the local feeder high

school a few weeks prior to the focus group:

I: Who was in charge at that event?

Nicole: I feel like we all, we all were. I also liked it was[n't] like – you know –

like a certain person, because we all had our booths or projects that we were

working on. And I feel like it's like that for all the events. Like there's like not

like one person who's in charge, and… You know, even at the meetings, there's

no one that's like in charge, you know. We might be asked like lead a discussion

or like lead a project, you know, so... I, I think we're all in charge at some point.

I: Is that the experience of the rest of you as well?

Monica: Yeah, except for maybe at the Community Engagement Event, [the

youth from the high school] had little more leverage.

Nicole: Oh yeah, 'cause we were on their turf.

(FGY7, p. 35, ll. 7-21)

This particular conversation revealed that these youth acknowledge shared leadership in the planning of activities in the AYG. The notable exception was when they collaborated with youth from another group at that group's event. But other than this instance, the youth testified to the importance of the opportunity to be in charge.

Holistic Code 6: AYG Events and Activities. The youth mentioned other activities that they did as part of the AYG, which included the making of Public Service Announcements about community issues, discussing community events in a circle,[84] or making of Wish sticks, about which Rel said that "it was nice to like put something of myself into that. It kind of helps me learn a bit about yourself personally" (INTY2, p. 2, ll. 26-27). Much attention in the video interviews and focus group 7 was paid by the youth to discussions during AYG meetings and to events.

With the help of adults who are in the AYG and guest speakers, the youth discussed issues such as historical role models. Monica and her sister Angela noted how much they appreciated discussing non-mainstream history:

We were talking about Black history and I feel like that is really important because a lot of Black Americans or African Americans would just give up and I don't feel like that's right because there are so many people who fought so hard for everything that we have today. (INTY6, p. 5, ll. 9-12)

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[84] The adult facilitators refer to this setting as the "Circle of Power" (see section V.6.2.1).

Monica's sister Angela brought up Shirley Chisholm: "she went through a lot of hardship… she stood for what she believed in and she wasn't afraid to do what she wanted to do and accomplish her goals. I wanna be like her someday" (INTY5, p. 2, ll. 23-26). Similarly, other influential leaders were discussed such as Cesar Chavez and, in the words of Mel, "how he is like a great person" (INTY3, p. 3, ll. 16-17).

Another topic that the youth recalled was art. Monica explains: "We learned about art and… what art could signify and that everything around you has some kind of meaning… it's just informational and you can just take everything away from it and learn all the time" (INTY6, p. 4, ll. 12-15). I probed further and asked about what the discussion was. Here is Monica's reply:

The discussion was about how... um... quote-unquote… graffiti artist could make a masterpiece but it still says something. Like: "Equality" or "Stop Slavery" – just in a piece of art with no words. So with this you just get so much information out of a picture. It's almost like it's a full textbook. (INTY6, p. 4, ll. 19-22)

Much time in the video interviews and focus group 7 was spent on the discussion of events organized by the AYG: The Community Engagement Event and the Community Health Event. On both occasions, the youth facilitated activities through which they engaged with community members who attended.

As Rel put it: "For the health event that we did that one time, a lot of them don't have like health care so when they came by to [the school], we helped them with that" (INTY2, p. 2, ll. 6-8). Mel recalled: "we got to do different booths and helping families and informing them about several topics" (INTY3, p. 3, ll. 18-19). Mel, Rel, and Nicole wanted to facilitate a booth about sex education: "We just told people… um... 'If you are

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sexually active to make sure… especially women to use birth control… there's like all different types of birth control" (INTY4, p. 2, ll. 15-17). This proved to be difficult: "'cause I am a shy person, so I don't really know how to talk about those subjects" (INTY4, p. 2, l. 18). Mel mentioned, "we were going to do about safe… sex but then at the end we turned out to do bracelets and beading" (INTY3, p. 3, ll. 23-24). Rel also recalled working on a table with beading activities: "I like being there, I like little kids that come up to me to ask to tie it. I like just making random bracelets and leaving them on the table for kids that don't have time to just take it" (FGY7, p. 38, ll. 8-10).

Another activity was facilitated by Andreas. "My brother was part of the stress booth and they did [grabbing hands] stress balls, and they used balloons and flour to make the stress balls – and those are very fun to make" (INTY4, p. 2, ll. 23-25). Introducing the community to stress balls became Andreas's activity at the Community Health Event, too.

> Andreas: And I brought soda, too, yeah. I remember that – so the soda brought [the visitors] in. [many chuckling]. And besides the fact that the stress balls turned into basketballs, but still… and dodge balls and everything else, and there was a bunch of flour on the floor.
>
> I: So, did you talk to the people who came to your…table?
>
> Andreas: Well, some of them… A few people wanted to talk to me about it, um… "How did you make this?" I was like: "Flour, rubber band, funnel."
>
> Monica: You're done [chuckling]

Andreas: They're like: "Oh, that's it!" "It's that easy!" [many chuckling] And I

had Mel tie them, because I like "I'm not tying them now." I did this for like three

or four hours without any sleep.

(FGY7, p. 40, ll. 12-30)

Andreas' description of what happened pointed, first, to the significance of refreshments

in the effort to attract people to participate in a community event activity. Second, it

showed that relatively simple solutions which increase the residents' well-being were

available to the community.

During the second year of the Community Engagement Event, Nicole, Angela,

and Monica came to the local high school facilitated the following booths. "I worked the

bead table and I had people learn how to make their bracelets and just… Like people

actually like had a hard time trying to figure out what to think about while making their

bracelet" (FGY7, pp. 27-28, ll. 30-1). Nicole facilitated a booth about bullying she "had a

great discussion with… one of the people that's on the board of directors for Deanne's

nonprofit" (FGY7, p. 8, ll. 25-26). Her ambition was to lead a school project on bullying:

Me and this lady, we were talking and um, we came up with this… project idea

called "Bullying Anonymous", where it's kind of like Alcoholics Anonymous

[chuckles]… The person comes in if they're being bullied or if they are the bullier

[sic] ... And they say: "Hey my name is blah, blah, blah, and am being bullied or

I'm bullying someone," and, basically, it would be like a group of people um, like

adults… that can help, you know, try to give them resources that they can use.

(FGY7, p. 29, ll. 1-11)

The youth also recalled that the mayor and other officials came to the second Community Engagement Event. This was appreciated by the youth: "It was awesome! I thought it was cool. I got to have a like a full whole conversation with him and he asked me what I wanted to be and like the process of me going to college" (FGY7, p. 31, ll. 2-4).

Holistic Code 7: Youth-Adult Relationships. Regarding the relationship between youth and adults in the AYG, the youth expressed that they valued the support of adults. This following came up in FGY7 when I asked if the youth would like to add anything to what was mentioned in the video:

> Monica: I'd say how much Deanne, and Liz, and Emily, how much they invest in us.[85]
>
> Nicole: Yeah, 'cause I don't like… I don't think the Group would be what it's now if it wasn't for the people that help us run it.
>
> I: Okay…
>
> Naynay: Like they… it was their support [Other youth: yeah] basically drove us to come here every week …their enthusiasm, their love for the community.
>
> (FGY7, pp. 13-14, ll. 31-12)

Naynay expressed her appreciation for Liz: "'cause she has this amazing power to be so enthusiastic and to like give back to the community" (FGY7, p. 18, ll. 10-11). Furthermore, Naynay added empathetically, "I want to be like Liz in my future career, like go around, like helping everybody" (FGY7, p. 18, ll. 14-15). Nicole appreciated the help of all the parents who support them, and the teachers who "try to lead us in the right

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[85] Deanne, Emily, and Liz (pseudonyms) are three adults who participate in the AYG. They were interviewed for this study (see section V.6)

direction and give us the, the education that we need" (FGY7, p. 20, ll. 11-12). Lastly, Nicole talked about Deanne: "She's really pushed me out of my comfort zone" (FGY7, p. 20, ll. 17-18). As Nicole explains, "I started off, you know, like kind of shy… but then like now like I'm not afraid to like get out there and talk and, you know, do what I have to do to make people aware" (FGY7, p. 20, ll. 22-24).

Holistic Code 8: Impacting the Community. In both the video interviews and the focus group the youth mentioned how they have impacted the community. Reflecting on the first Community Engagement Event, Andreas commented: "What I learned is that when you do certain event, it shows like how the community is affected by certain things. How like that it is coming like build our stuff. And it's, it's like a good event" (INTY1, pp. 2-3, ll. 29-1). Summarizing how he felt about it, Andreas adds: "I felt pretty good like everyone coming together" (INTY1, p. 3, l. 6). While explaining what the AYG was, Rel discussed its impact on the community:

> I think we're just trying to like improve like the certain area that we're in, and like the schools that we go to and the like parents of the children that go to the school since most of them are like… um… ethnic… So we can help them out in the ways that would benefit them. (INTY2, pp. 1-2, ll. 30-2)

Highlighting the importance of raising awareness about issues in the community, Nicole explained how the AYG is assisting the community:

Nicole: I just think that we ignore a lot of these issues that are going on.

I: Can you name some of these issues?

Nicole: Um… I think like health... because um... a big one now is Obama-care, because not everyone has really good insurance and like can't afford… you know

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to go to the doctors. Well, you have to go to the doctor, because how are you

going to know if there's something wrong with you?!

I: Hmm...

Nicole: So… um... by doing these events we make people aware of certain things

that are going on.

(INTY4, p. 1, ll. 16-29)

In fact, as emerged in FGY7, the advertising of free resources on event flyers may

have, in fact, attracted some families to events organized by the AYG. This was

important in a community that has many families with of low income. Analyzing a poster

for their second Community Health Event, Andreas suggested: "It's what you put on the

sign. And so it's, it's like: 'Oh, we're gonna get something! Oh!' They, they can care less

if it is the learning, they, they don't care about that. You're getting something – yes!"

(FGY7, p. 34, ll. 4-6) While other youth in the focus group were chuckling, Andreas

continued with his analysis of the poster: "They can care less about poetry reading, or

advocating the organization… There's games and mural paintings, right with 'food and

refreshments'. Maybe get the kids out there, read a book – 'Free Books', right there:

'Free Books'!" (FGY7, p. 34, ll. 18-22) As he said this, the youth chuckled again.

Holistic Code 9: Reactions of Other People. As part of each video interview, I

asked the youth about the reaction of peers and family to their involvement in the Active

Youth Group. Oftentimes, their peers did not want to take part and sometimes, when they

interacted with AYG youth, they discounted the value of the youth's participation. As

Nicole put it: "honestly, [my classmates and friends] think I'm crazy!" (INTY4, p. 6, l. 5)

Rel added that her peers told her "you're a goodie-goodie" (INTY2, p. 4, l. 3). This, in

her own words, meant "a person that's like too good, like too nice and stuff" (INTY2, p. 4, l. 9). Yet, Rel replied to them: "Yeah! And it's fun! And you get pizza – common!" (INTY2, p. 4, ll. 3-4) Some peers expressed interest but then they did not follow through. Angela recalled: "They just like: 'Wow, that sounds cool but I'm busy, you know, I gotta go home'. And I'm like 'Oh, oh, alright – your loss!' I have fun [quietly]" (INTY5, p. 3, ll. 30-31). During the focus group, the youth also shared with me how the numbers of AYG youth had changed over time:

Rel: The first day that we started this year, there was like a ton of freshmans [sic].

Nicole: Yeah, there were sixty…

Andreas: Sixty-four [chuckles]

I: Really? Sixty-four?

Andreas: The, the room was crowded.

Nicole: Yeah, it was really crowded…

Andreas: I had to sit on a desk… [indiscernible – quiet]

Rel: And then it's just us…

Many: Yeah

I: So, what happened to those… 60 people? Sixty-four?

Andreas: Well, I'd say about 45 of them left, left the first day [chuckles]

Nicole: Yeah…

Monica: They saw the word "pizza" [chuckling]

Nicole: Yeah…

Andreas: They, like Rel said: "There's pizza!" Yeah, of course, it's like, like to eat our food [indiscernible] [chuckling]

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Nicole: I think that once they found out what it's about and they realized how much time it takes, that they don't wanna commit.

(FGY7, pp. 2-3, ll. 27-30)

The reaction of the parents varied. For example, Mel's parents believed that the activities in the AYG were "helping [her] to be a better person" (INTY3, p. 3, l. 3). And, in her words, they also thought that "if I get involved, it could also be good for my future education" (INTY3, p. 3, l. 7). But there were also parents that challenged the youth to defend what they were doing in the AYG. Rel elaborated: "[M]y mom is pretty negative. So she's always like, um: 'God is gonna bring about the Rupture' and like 'Cause the world is bad.' And like, then like I see people helping out and I'm like: 'No, there's good people, people who are helping out for free. Mom, you're very wrong!'" (INTY2, p. 3, ll. 2-5) In this particular example, Rel was not afraid to stand up for her positive belief in community service in general. Contrary to Nicole who praised families for their support, Rel's experiences were such that "My parents have never driven me once [chuckling]. I walk, I take the bus, I'm on my own" (FGY7, p. 21, ll. 1-2).

V.4.2.3. Versus Coding of INTY1-7 and FGY7. In the analysis of conversations in INTY1-7 and FGY7, a number of versus statements were brought up: *putting forth one's effort v. dropping the effort*, *working in the entire group v. working in small groups*, *being compassionate v. not being compassionate about leadership*, and *being in the frontlines v. hiding behind one's men*.[86]

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[86] See Table 14 in Appendix C for a complete list of versus codes used in the dissertation.

The first of these versus codes, *putting forth one's effort v. dropping the effort*, was already listed above under the holistic code "Characteristics of AYG youth" and was prompted by my asking if the youth from the AYG were different. As Andreas put it:

> Um, like in general, I'll say we're not, we're no different from [other youth] but just that we're more committed to certain things than they are. So, we put forth the effort, and they drop the effort, step over it, and like walk the other way. (FGY7, p. 11, ll. 3-8)

The comparison here revolved around the notion of commitment and how that notion was exemplified in "putting forth one's effort."[87] When I inquired further about commitment, Andreas conceptualized it as to "commit to the work" (FGY7, p. 12, l. 8) and not being "afraid to say anything" (FGY7, p. 12, l. 9). To this conversation, Monica added:

> Yeah, I think the motivation level's different. Like people… everyone has an idea, everyone has a very strong idea but there are only so few who actually go and… put, like make their idea happen, make it realistic, make it an event, and show everyone what they thought. (FGY7, p. 12, ll. 14-17)

Another versus code came up in during the same conversation when I asked what had changed since the year before. Monica explained:

> Monica: I think all of our ideas have just like…
>
> Andreas: Adapted…
>
> I: Adapted since then?
>
> Monica: No, I think they've blossomed.

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[87] Incidentally, Andreas left the group in the semester after he made this statement in FGY7.

I: And how did they blossom? Or can you give me some example of that?

Monica: Um… Like, I think last year we all had to like sit down and actually work in like as an entire group for each other's projects – individual projects and give out ideas – and now we all can sit in our small groups and figure out: "This is what we're gonna do, this is how we're gonna accomplish it… and get it done." (FGY7, p. 27, ll. 6-19)

The code that identified this difference was *working in the entire group v. working in small groups*, but in my interpretation "blossoming" in Monica's view also signified a transformation from a directed to a more autonomous way of participation in the AYG.

Two remaining two versus codes were related to the notion of leadership. During the focus group with AYG youth, Naynay highlighted compassion about leadership as trait of doing a good job at leadership:

To be a leader, also, you have to be basically compassionate about it 'cause, 'cause if you're not compassionate about it, then you're not gonna do a good job, even if you are the leader. You're gonna let the teams slacking, you're gonna be like: "Oh, whatever, it's their fault." But it's, it's not, it's basically on you also 'cause it's like you're, you're like the leader of this group, you should be like helping them. (FGY7, p. 15, ll. 3-8)

I labeled this versus code *being compassionate v. not being compassionate about leadership*. Rel made another versus statement regarding leadership:

Rel: I think there was something like one person once said, where like a leader is the one that stands with the people that they're with in the front, and the coward is the person with power in the back.

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I: So, who is the person in the power at the back?

Rel: The leader of… Let's say there's two people on the side of the war, one has their leader in the frontlines with his men, the other one is hiding behind his men, because he's scared.

(FGY7, p. 17, ll. 14-24)

I labeled this versus statement *being in the frontlines v. hiding behind one's men*.

V.4.2.4. Metaphor Coding of INTY1-7 and FGY7. A number of metaphors used by the youth intrigued me in the conversations: *becoming a family*, *having a voice*, *getting out of one's comfortable shell*, *leadership as chess* and *leadership* as a relay race.[88]

From all of the segments coded for metaphors, the notion of *becoming a family* caught my attention because it pertained to other sources of data. In FGY1-3, family members were described as role models. In FGA4-6, family was often talked about in terms of caring for children and being responsible for them. In the AYG, Monica brought up the notion of family:

I: And who are the people who are doing the Active Youth Group right now?

Monica: Um... My sister and a lot of my very close friends are in there. I feel like that the group has just become a family.

I: Hmm…

Monica: We just share everything [smiling]

I: So you share things… that's an interesting comparison. So in… how is it, how

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[88] See Table 15 in Appendix C for a complete list of metaphor codes used in the dissertation.

has it become a family?

Monica: I feel like everyone's comfortable with everyone. There is no drama or anything, you know, it's not like: "Oh, I can't believe they're here today…" or everyone is excited to see everyone, we always speak to each other and some of our personal experiences, most of us aren't afraid to share.

(INTY6, p. 3, ll. 15-30)

The family metaphor was conceptualized as "sharing everything" and "everyone's comfortable with everyone." Furthermore, "there is no drama" and "everyone is excited to see everyone." Monica's statements appeared in the video that I made. When I played it to the youth, the metaphor immediately caught their attention:

I: …what did you find the most interesting?

Nicole: …I think it was from Monica when she said that we became a family…

Monica: Yeah, it's kind of like, everyone kind of said something that…

Nicole: Yeah…

Monica: …kind of inputted on that we were a family and that how much we have fun together.

Nicole: Yeah, you know, we, we might not get along sometimes, but… like when we're in here, we're a family, and we do what we have to do to try to plan these events and get things done, so…

(FGY7, pp. 1-2, ll. 23-6)

Nicole added another understanding to the notion of family by saying that they "might not get along sometimes," but when they are at the meetings, "we do what we have to do to try to plan these events and get things done." Not getting along sometimes can happen

in a real family, too. But there is a broader goal that helps overcome difficulties: doing what one has to try to do to plan events and get things done.

Second was the metaphor of *having a voice*. This notion appeared for the first time in my fieldwork in Naynay's video interview, where she stated it directly:

> Naynay: … I really like art and some of the things we talk about are murals around the city to show like the strong empowerment of people. And I… really enjoy that, because I really like painting, I like murals and all that stuff and like the meaning behind them and when we talk about the murals, so we talk about how our voice really matters in the neighborhood, I really enjoy it, 'cause I feel like my voice has strength, has a power that not many teenagers realize as much.
>
> I: What helps you feel this power?
>
> Naynay: Um... Giving my opinion, most of it, because it's not just like the teachers guiding us. No, we come up with the things, we come up with the whole idea of the fair, and stuff like that and it's us, it's like our own ideas, not like… and our slogan – I cannot remember it right now – our slogan: we made that! It wasn't just a teacher.
>
> (INTY7, p. 2, ll. 17-31)

Naynay later added to this when she talked about the AYG:

> I really like talking about empowerment and then when I go into the Active Youth Group, I have a voice, I have this power and it's not just adults telling me what's wrong and what's… and that you have to follow that. No, it's my opinion, it's other people – of the teenager's opinion and I really enjoy that. (INTY7, p. 3, ll. 20-23)

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Given the thorough description provided by Naynay in the quote, I chose to analyze "having a voice" as a metaphor. Somehow connected to the idea of having a voice is the notion of "throwing ideas" that came up in Andreas's talk about what the group did: "From a young perspective showing how we can come together, the group – the way that we throw our ideas, they throw their ideas as a team, a unit" (INTY1, p. 1, ll. 13-15). As an example, Andreas discussed the first CEE where the youth "were out there giving our ideas and like reading to the children while their parents go out, going to the different stations we had there for ideas to give, to help all the community" (INTY1, p. 2, ll. 4-6). Andreas's take on this issue was direct – members of the Active Youth Group "give out ideas" or "throw ideas" from a young people's perspective to other people in the community. Even though he did not use the term "voice", he alluded to the fact that the AYG gave voice to a youth perspective about the community.

The third metaphor was connected to the second and it was related to self-expression: *getting out of one's comfortable shell*. When talking about a teacher in the school that she previously attended, Monica alluded to the fact that she is "such a powerful woman and she just helps everyone get like out of their own comfortable shell" (FGY7, p. 19, ll. 20-24). This metaphor was later picked up by Naynay, who discussed how her boyfriend, who was member of the AYG for a while, too, "put [her] out of my shell" (FGY7, p. 22, ll. 25-30). He challenged her to be creative, which eventually led to her applying to and winning a slam poetry contest.

The final two metaphors used by youth referred to leadership: *leadership as chess* and *leadership as a relay race*. I discussed them already as parts of the holistic code "Leadership," but it is important to note that they are metaphors that the youth came up

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with themselves in order to explain what "leadership" meant to them. In the chess

metaphor, Andreas explained, everyone had different roles, but only some could be kings.

In other words, leadership may means stepping back and not being in charge ultimately.

The relay race metaphor revealed a different aspect of leadership: everyone contributes

the a successful completion of the race and if someone does not do a good enough job,

somebody else can step in and make up for the lost time.

   V.4.2.5. In Vivo Coding of INTY1-7 and FGY7. A number of *in vivo* codes that I

found interesting came up in the analyses of INTY1-7 and FGY7 data: *goodie-goodie*,

they think I'm crazy, *trapped in their houses*, *the group has just become a family*, *we just*

share everything, and *how much they invest in us*.[89]

   The first *in vivo* code refers to how AYG youth reflect on the perception that

other youth have of them: "Most of them think like 'you're a goodie-goodie'" (INTY2, p.

4, l. 3). In Rel's understanding a "goodie-goodie" is a "person that's like too good, like

too nice and stuff" (INTY2, p. 4, l. 9) and "like you never do anything wrong. Which is

kind of true" (INTY2, p. 4, l. 13). There seemed to be an irony in Rel's description,

because she actually agreed with her peers when she said "Which is kind of true."

Similarly, Nicole said that her peers "think I'm crazy!" (INTY4, p. 6, l. 5)

   The second *in vivo* code came up when Mel was talking about people in the

community: "they are like more trapped in their houses and just like take care of

themselves" (INTY3, p. 4, ll. 8-9). The notion of people being "trapped in the houses"

referred to people not going out into the community and not being socially involved.

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[89] See Table 16 in Appendix C for a complete list of *in vivo* codes used in the dissertation.

The metaphor of family can be interpreted as an *in vivo* code of its own: "the group has just become a family" (INTY6, p. 3, ll. 17-18). The notion of *becoming a family* was connected to another statement by Monica, who explained that becoming a family meant, means that "we just share everything" (INTY6, p. 3, l. 22).

The last *in vivo* code I would like to highlight is the code "how much they invest in us" (FGY7, p. 13, l. 31), which was made by Monica when she noted the support that the youth receive from Deanne, Liz, and Emily. This support was appreciated by the youth.

The holistic, versus, metaphor, and *in vivo* codes from INTY1-7 and FGY7 will later be incorporated into second-cycle coding and analysis. In the next section I would like to share some experiences from the conducting of INTY1-7 and FGY7. The goals are two-fold. First, I hope it will provide slightly more transparency to my work. Second, my own experiences from the research actually partly contribute to the theoretical analysis that is being developed in the dissertation.

V.4.3. Note on Conducting INTY1-7 and FGY7. Throughout the work on this study I struggled how to approach the youth from the AYG and how to build relationships with them in order to get to know them better. When I conducted my initial interviews, recorded on video (INTY1-7), I was probably more nervous than the youth were. As Appendix B reveals, my first set of framing questions was mechanistic and formal, which prevented me from engaging with them in a conversations that were not awkward. There was also a language barrier since I was not as familiar with English youth slang. But I came to the AYG to learn more about the youth's involvement and perhaps they have got used to my presence. The conversation in focus group 7 when I

played the video to the youth and then asked follow-up questions went far better and I wrote in my field notes after the focus group: "It felt more like a conversation… I felt that the interview was done in a very friendly atmosphere. Everybody was willing to share, they made fun of each other but also they laughed with each other".

What probably influenced the research the most were the policies and restrictions that surround research with minors. Securing parental consent and youth assent[90] for all the interviews was relatively unproblematic. But because at the time of my video interviews there were about 25 youth and adults in the group, I did not attempt to gain permission to conduct observations during the sessions. I felt that it would have disrupted the meetings. Though the bi-weekly sessions were open to the whole community, given that they took place in a classroom setting, I did not consider them public settings as outlined by the IRB application for this dissertation. For that reason, I only conducted observations during the AYG's community events that were open to the public. The making of the video required additional levels of anonymity and confidentiality, because it could clearly identify the youth and connect this dissertation directly to individuals. For that reason, I was not able to share a copy of the video with the youth.

A key constraint in my fieldwork was that all the interactions with youth in the study had to be facilitated by adults who supervised them. An example of it is when one of the facilitators accompanied me at the interviews with youth. I am not writing this as a criticism of the arrangement – I was actually heartened that there was somebody else with

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[90] In the language of the IRB forms, parental or guardian permission for their children is referred to as "consent" and youth permission is referred to as "assent." Both types of permission were granted for all the youth who participated in the study. Adult facilitators provided me with great help with the logistics of acquiring these assent and consent forms.

me in the room who knew the youth – but this constellation did create a level of connection that was different from that of interacting with the youth directly.

V.5. Observations of Events Organized by the Active Youth Group

During the fall semester of 2014 and the spring of 2015 I attended many of the group's regular bi-weekly meetings. Because these meetings were not formally open to the public, I did not use observational data from these meeting for my dissertation. However, there were three public events co-organized by AYG that were open to the whole community that I attended in my role of researcher: 2 Community Health Events (CHE) and 1 Community Engagement Event (CEE).

The two types of events differed in their emphasis (CHE is emphasizes on the topic of wellness, whereas CEE was founded with the intent to increase community involvement of residents).[91] Yet, there were similarities between the two types of events. Both were around three hours long and took place at a school serving the community. Both provided residents of the community with resources – material (food) and immaterial (information) – and they created opportunities for attendees to participate in engaging activities such as artwork, exercise, and games. This especially applied to parents and children since most of the activities were tailored for them. The events contained table stations facilitated by members of the AYG and other organizations serving the community. The topics presented by youth from the AYG included: suicide prevention, healthy relationships, and animal welfare. Each of the three events I observed

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[91] With the support of the city administration, the community used to organize the CEE in the past, but then did not continue. The AYG took over the auspices of the CEE.

also had one or more feature activities such as a Zumba dance session (first CHE), community art painted of a large canvass (first CEE, CHE), painting of a mural (CEE), presentation of Latin American folk dance (CEE), or a drumming session (second CEE).

The three events will now be described in detail using my observations. I refer to them as OBS2, OBS3, and OBS4.[92] In the description of each observation I present my field notes and then included some analytical comments.

V.5.1. Overview of Observation 2 (OBS2). The first CHE event occurred in the spring of 2014. At this event youth presented their ideas to community members about how to lead a healthy lifestyle, which included facilitating information booths and leading health-related activities such as the dancing of Zumba. Here are my field notes from this event:

> There is a beautiful community garden by the school. Then I walk round the corner to get to the gym at around 11:15am. The atmosphere was informal – people were dressed in casual clothes. Many of the youth were in their T-shirts. Some of the adult organizers welcome me and give me a hug. They are smiling. I walk in and greet other people I know and I also say hello to some of the youth who I had talked to before. The venue looks like this: It is a big gym (maybe 50 x 50 yards). In inside, more towards the left of the main entrance are various tables and stations. To the left of me, there is a painting station, a healthy eating station, further down is a station with animals from a nonprofit that takes care of stray animals. In the center of the room is a large table (made of smaller tables) where

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[92] Chronologically, OBS1 took place after OBS2 and OBS3. Given the thematic congruence with other AYG findings, however, I decided not to discuss OBS2 and OBS3 until now.

youth are painting a mural. It is a triptych… There are about 10 youth painting the

piece and they are supervised by a local community artist… Though the youth

seem to be only painting, they are not merely filling out the spots. But I notice

that they are mostly quiet... Their faces show focus and attention but they do not

seem stressed (e.g. they are not going too fast). Would I say that they are serious?

(OBS2 field notes, around noon; exact time not recorded)

Following on that,

Another station is a dancing exercise station. A fitness video is being projected

onto the screen and 3 youth are dancing underneath. But no one else is joining

them. We are in a gym, some people are doing sports on the left, where there is a

basketball. The youth I see are all engaged in something – they are either sitting at

a table talking to visitors, or they are planning various activities. I do not see other

youth of their age (mere visitors). There are a number of smaller children who are

playing with the animals. One of them is a weasel in a basin net cage. One of the

adults whom I met in the past is facilitating a table with seed pots. As people walk

by, they talk about the different spices that can be planted… In the far right corner

there are tables with lunch bags. They are waiting there. I help the organizers

move some of the lunchboxes to another table. It is getting close to noon and I am

told that that is when lunch will be served. Some other tables include a reading

table. When I first walk by I see 2 small children (maybe 3 years old) listen to one

of the youth read them a story. They are looking at her with wide-open, curious

eyes. They are quiet as the story unfolds... There is also table with two [posters]:

one is about healthy relationships. I do not see many people at that notice board,

just the youth who is facilitating it. There is a panting station next to it. (OBS2

field notes, exact time not recorded)

Additionally,

I would say that around noon, about 120 people are in the gym. Many are adults

who organize the whole event, and many are youth organizers. But I also see

some families. The event was advertised for the families... The organizers offer

lunch to me so I take one of the vegetarian bags… I like the idea that food is

being offered. The music on the screen changes to YouTube videos and as I find

out later the screen is being controlled by youth who are behind the screen and

slightly hidden. Many of the songs that are being played have many millions

views (e.g. 'I'm a Gummy Bear'). (OBS2 field notes, exact time not recorded)

An activity at the end of the event captured my attention:

Towards the end of the event around 1:15pm, some of the youth get in front of the

projector screen and try to announce results of the raffle. They first write a

message on the computer "Raffle time." But people are not paying attention to

them. This can be seen especially in the group of youth who are painting the

mural. They continue working. The four youth on the stage try to call others to

watch them, but they are very quiet because they have no microphone. The adult

organizers give them a minute to act on their own but, as if it was expected by the

youth, they step in and make the announcement for the ruffle on their behalf.

After some technical issues are worked out, the youth can draw and call out the

names of people in the ruffle. (OBS2 field notes, exact time not recorded)

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V.5.2. Analysis of OBS2. As I was trying to comprehend and interpret the atmosphere of the CHE, I wrote a poem following the event:

Fish in an aquarium

Moving between tables

All is synchronized

And none is

The busy-ness you would expect

If you wanted to stay entertained

And just spend time with your neighbors

Because then it does not matter where you swim and how

I took away two findings from observing the event. My poem reveals finding (1). It refers to the capricious movement of people – youth and adults – between the table stations of the gymnasium, where the event took place. From time to time there would be organized activities that everyone could take part in (Zumba, raffle). But otherwise people were free to move around from place to place. I saw many different people greeting each other and talking to each other, which I entertained as a definition of community. Finding (2) relates to the notion of who was in charge at the event. The raffle announcement pointed to the fact that though the youth had the responsibility for tasks such as leading activities at the tables, ultimately it was the adults from the AYG who were in charge of the facilitation of the event as such.

V.5.3. Overview of Observation 3 (OBS3). The second event, the Community Engagement Event (CEE), took place in the fall of 2014 at the community's feeder high schools. At the event, four youth from the AYG worked closely with youth from the high

school.[93] Like in OBS2, I, again, saw a lot of tables with various organizations and the visitors interacting with the youth as hosted booths at the event:

> many of the tables and stations were made for people to stop by and interact with people and I got to talk to some more people from different nonprofits: [for example,] a nonprofit that helps people who are struggling with suicides – especially teenagers and young adults – and that brings younger adults into schools and they have them share experiences and the idea is to provide resources. (OBS3 field notes, around 10am)

There was a Mexican folk group, which performed dances. Many children and youth were dancing in festive dresses and suits.

> I saw the little ones looking out to the older dancers and trying to mimic, guess, and imitate what they were doing, especially when they forgot what their next was. And there was a sense of calibration – it all came together piece by piece and yet there were many unexpected movements. (OBS3 field notes, around 10:30am)

The dance was performed during the middle of the event. Other than that, there were people interactive with people hosting various booths:

> And I see tables, people sitting in eating and chatting and even though there weren't as many people and most of them are organizers, I feel like it was a community event in that sense and youth were part of it, the youth were co-creators in the process and maybe they were not always [in leadership positions],

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[93] The youth from the high school were part of another group that is also being facilitated by Deanne.

but… they were being accepted. And what I saw was that everybody had a role. The youth were sitting at tables and youth were organizing the dances.

(OBS3 field notes, around 11am)

Following the conditions of my IRB application, I engaged in "informal research conversations" with some of the adults attending the event:[94]

When I interviewed one of the nonprofit leaders there, he said when I asked him what he sees he said that he sees "a group of students, who are trying to make the world a better place through raising awareness" about some of the issues and he had not known. He had not seen this in his own high school. And basically he and his colleague… said that nobody talked about their issue in high school and social media have a large part in that. (OBS3 field notes, around 10am)

My field notes also included a note about the attendees:

[T]here were more organizers than visitors. Maybe about 100 people who were involved in the organization plus performers. A lot of people were just kind of doing their own thing – no, they were interacting with each other through the issues that were brought to the table. So, for example, [an animal rescue organization] was there and they talked about animals [which] caught people's attention… a young girl was introducing a rat… and I learned how smart rats [were]. Another table was hosted by one… AYG youth who had beads and books for small kids. Another table was hosted by another AYG youth – they were

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[94] As mentioned in the opening section, the nature of these conversations was informal and I did not count them as "interviews". Furthermore, given the low level of intrusion and miniscule risk of harming the participants, participants' written consent was not required by the ASU IRB for conducting these conversations. I did, however, explain that the intent of the conversation was research of youth involvement in the community and that participation was voluntary.

supposed to have a speaker but I have not seen [one] (maybe there was something

happening when I was gone). (OBS3 field notes, time: around 10:30am)

As in the CHE, the youth attending the event participated in the creation of community

artwork. This time, the painting was a mural:

> There are certain themes that the students came up with completely on their own.
> For example, the puzzle, which represents the "puzzle" of people's lives and,
> especially, if they are not sure what will happen. And this puzzle was something
> that the figurines in the mural walked on… the mural artist let the youth take part
> in the making of the mural – not only by allowing them to give a vision to the
> whole mural but also by allowing them to paint in it. I don't see that with the
> painters often. I do not see that people are artistic or skilled or good at something
> will let others interfere with their work. But he was not only willing to do that, it
> was his job it was his vision for the arts and he empowers people by allowing
> them to work with him even though he is more skilled than anybody, but he
> empowers them by giving them leadership in the mural making. (OBS3 field
> notes, time: around 11am)

I engaged in one more informal research conversation at the event. A woman was

facilitating a table with information about human rights curricula:

> I asked her what she sees around there. And she said that the more there is human
> interaction the more care there is and the better to community. She sees a lot of
> young people helping. She says that that the idea of people interacting and caring
> is like with what Gandhi said: "Be the change you want to see in the world." And
> I asked about whether there's interaction – whether she sees a lot of interaction?

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And when I asked if she saw interaction, she said that she sees some interaction and that she's outside of the computer games table. (OBS3 field notes, around 11:30am)

And in fact, one of the stations has a TV with a computer gaming set with a soccer game. Unlike at the other booths, people at this booth – youth and adults alike – were not looking at each other but only at the game.

Lastly, officials from city government, school administrators including the superintendent, and representatives of nonprofits working in the community came to the event. They interacted with the youth and asked about their work for the community.

V.5.4. Analysis of OBS3. While trying to interpret the CEE in OBS3, I hit a symbolic research road bump. While watching the Mexican folklore group perform their dance, the concept of "calibration" came to my mind. At the time, I recalled this concept from Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) book *InterViews*. In that book these author cited Richard Sennett's notion that the craft of interviewing "consists in calibrating social distances without making the subject feel like an insect under the microscope" (Sennett, 2003, as cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 16). The term stuck with me; however, while watching the dance, I interpreted "calibration" differently. The term seemed to have pointed to the ongoing modeling of dance movements that younger dancers engaged in as they were looking up to the older experienced dancers. I wrote a memo about it, in which I asked myself whether this finding could be generalized on the community as a whole. What if there was a certain level of calibration or modeling that occurs in youth involvement in the community? I started exploring under the theme of "relying": Who in the community do you trust? Who trusts you? I also began trying to conceptualize my

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main research question differently as *how is youth community involvement being constructed in the community in terms of "significant others" who may serve as sources of inspiration, role models, and significant influential others?*

Yet, as I realized later, such analysis led me to the "forcing the data" (Glaser, 1978) and not being open to what the youth were actually saying. In interviews and focus groups, the youth from the AYG and youth enrolled in elementary schools never mentioned anything explicit about calibrating. The term "relying" which I came to see as connected with "calibrating", only came up when I directly asked on whom the participants relied. Furthermore, my inquiry was still bound by my original research question. In other words, everything I saw was being filtered by the concepts in the question I posed two years before. This meant not being true to the curious investigation that the grounded theory method embraces. But there was something positive about this particular interpretative experience after all. It cautioned me not to make any premature statements unless concepts really emerge in the data. This proved to be important for the conducting of interviews and in the selection of categories in the study.

V.5.5. Overview of Observation 4 (OBS4). The last community event I observed – the CHE – took place in the spring of 2015. It took place in the same school as the CHE event the year before. By this time I had already narrowed down my research focus to make notes of interactions between youth and adults.

Some youth from the AYG were present at the event. One of them facilitated a table with information about the importance and logistics of recycling. Another was in charge of a table with children's books. Additionally, organizations serving the community had table stations in the gym where they presented their work. In one part of

the gym, children were free to play sports such as football and basketball. I recorded the following in my field notes:

> Some of the tables that I have seen: There was a table on recycling tended by one of the youth from the AYG. Then there was a table with children's books led by one other youth from the AYG. The highlight (at least in terms of its loud presence) probably was the drumming session, which was on the stage of the gym. People were drumming and just kind of coming and going and it was really neat. They were all part of it somehow and I got to drum with them as well.
>
> (OBS4 field notes, time: around 11am)

The guest facilitator who visited the AYG session the week before brought about thirty drums to the CHE. Throughout the event, different people joined the drumming circle made up of chairs. The facilitator taught them different rhythms. I took part in the drumming, too, and it was a powerful experience to be in synchrony with so many other people. The drumming brought people together – youth, adults, and families.

> I now see some people leaving with lunch boxes – when they got lunch, they left. In terms of how it's organized: the main announcements during the event were made by adults and it seems that they were mainly in charge of the event, but maybe more behind-the-scenes than a year ago[95]… But… they were nervous a little bit, which I could tell from how they were mimicking, how they were gesturing. It came off as if they saw it as their thing, their event in some ways. But it was a community event. (OBS4 field notes, time: around 11am)

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[95] The comment from my field notes refers to OBS2, which is discussed in sections 7.1 and 7.2.

Diverse members of the community attended: youth, adults, parents, administrators, teachers. Like at the CEE, a community artist was present who engaged children and youth in the making of a painting. The topic of this painting was African drumming. During the event,

> the atmosphere in the room was not tense at all [kids were playing, adults were walking around]. The parents were just chatting with people at the different tables with resources. [It's much more close together, which is nice, and it seems more spread out.] (OBS4 field notes, time: around 11am)

V.5.6. Analysis of OBS4. One finding from the event corroborates my previous observations, especially OBS2. The youth from the AYG took an active role in the shaping of the second CHE. But having seen the adults be very active and the many organizations being represented and supporting different parts of the program, this observation is leading me to suggest that events prepared by the AYG for the community were more adult-led at this event. This may play out differently with different youth and different adults, but it seemed to me that the adults were still fully in charge in of the choreography and logistics of the event, and when making announcements.

V.6. Interviews with Adults Connected to the Active Youth Group (INTA1-4)

V.6.1. Overview of INTA1-4. The analysis of video interviews 1-7 and of conversations from the focus group (FGY7) with youth from the AYG allowed me to gain a perspective on the AYG from youth involved in the group. At the same time, I wanted to learn about the perspective of adults who knew the AYG. In order to learn

more, I conducted 4 key informant interviews in the fall of 2014 and in the spring of

2015.[96] Table 7 provides an overview of those interviews.[97]

Table 7.

Interviews 1-4 at a Glance

Data collection	Participants (pseudonyms)	Length	Semester
INTA1: Interview	Emily: resident	44min	Fall, 2014
INTA2: Interview	Deanne: adult facilitator of the AYG	85min	Spring, 2015
INTA3: Interview	Christina: parent of youth from the AYG	74min	Spring, 2015
INTA4: Interview	Liz: adult facilitator of the AYG	66min	Spring, 2015

One of the adults, Emily, is a long-time resident in the community and she has

been involved in organizing efforts for schools in the community. In her own words,

I moved into the community… as a child, as a, as a toddler, when my parents

bought a house there. I grew up in the community, I went to seventh and eighth

grades at [one of the district's] elementary school… then I went to high school in

the area. (INTA1, p. 1, ll. 11-16)

Later on, Emily was one of the founders of a neighborhood association in the community

and has been active in numerous organizations, including the cluster of stakeholders who

work closely with the school district office. She attended many meetings of the AYG and

served as a leader, mentor, and advisor to the youth.

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[96] A number of adults have taken part in the activities of the AYG. Among them were representatives of nonprofits working in the community, teachers, parents and administrators, community leaders, and various guest speakers. Most of them have only attended a few meetings or events. The adults interviewed in this dissertation were selected based on their close familiarity with the work of the AYG. They are all women. Also, it is noteworthy that three of them (Deanne, Christina, and Liz) live outside of the community but work with children and youth in collaboration with schools in the community.

[97] All four adults that I interviewed were women; most of AYG youth members were females, too.

As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, Deanne and Liz were facilitators of the AYG. Deanne has been working with different groups of youth for the last 30 years: youth artists, youth in prison, youth in marginalized communities and in other settings. She formed the AYG in 2012 and has provided leadership to the group since then. Liz joined later, when she started working in the community as a school-community liaison. Even though both Deanne and Liz work for organizations active in the community, they did not live in the community at the time of the interview. As Deanne put it,

> Anytime we enter into community from the outside, unless we are curtailing on an individual that is from that community, to recognize the absolute needs of that community not from our perspective, as an outsider, but from an insider's point of view. (INTA2, p. 3, ll. 7-10)

A similar point was made to by Liz, who saw herself in a privileged position in the community: "I think my awareness of my ability to access certain aspects of, um, society that others can't – makes me feel like an outsider" (INTA4, p. 48, ll. 13-15).

Christina is the mother of Angela and Monica, two girls that were members of the AYG. She is a kindergarten teacher in one of the schools. Like Deanne and Liz, Christina also does not live in the community. She explains: "I don't live where I work because it gives me a chance to separate my life" (INTA3, p. 26, ll. 23-24).

V.6.2. Analysis of INTA1-4. I analyzed INTA1-4 using holistic coding, versus and metaphor coding. Also I looked for *in vivo* codes that were illustrative of what the Emily, Deanne, Christina, and Liz were saying about the community and about the AYG.

V.6.2.1. Holistic Coding of INTA1-4. Holistic coding of INTA1-4 yielded the

following seven codes[98]: 1. Positive community characteristics, 2. Negative community

characteristics, 3. Children and youth in the community, 4. Characteristics of youth in the

AYG, 5. AYG philosophy, 6. Activities done in AYG indoor sessions, 7. Events

organized by the AYG, and 8. Youth-adult relationships in the AYG. The holistic codes

are summarized in Figure 5 and annotated in Table 13 of Appendix C.
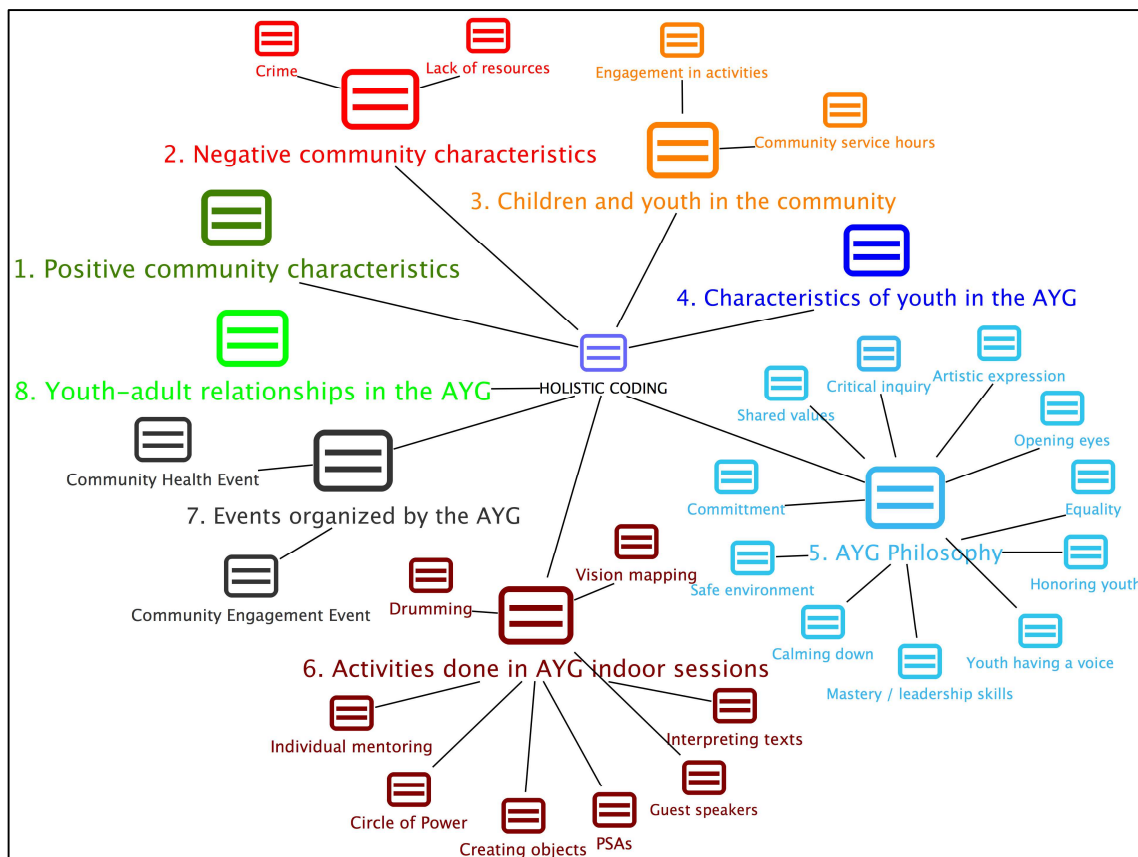
Figure 5. Visual Map of Holistic Codes from Interviews 1-4

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[98] As in the analysis of FGY1-3, FGA4-6, INTY1-7, and FGY7, and as seen in Appendix B, many of these codes were directly reflective of the framing questions that I asked. However, unlike in my previous data collection, adults connected to the AYG were more descriptive and more analytical in their answers, which allowed me to react and probe more throughout INTA1-4.

Holistic Code 1: Positive Community Characteristics. One of the positive characteristics identified were residents and families from the community. Liz elaborated: "The greatest assets truly are the families who live in the community and – particularly, the families that have lived there for, you know, 10-20 years" (INTA4, p. 3, ll. 13-15). Or, in Emily's words, "I'm always proud of all residents and my neighbors and the, and the kids. I mean, we have remarkable kids in our neighborhood" (INTA1, p. 8, ll. 8-9). Christina alluded to the fact that the families "stick together" (INTA3, p. 8, l. 17) and that she oftentimes saw residents help each other by bringing children home from school. Altogether, "we have consistent families that show up and support their children" (INTA3, p. 9, l. 3). Yet, Liz also added "the people – I think that's probably pretty typical to most communities – are the biggest asset" (INTA4, p. 3, ll. 20-21).

Holistic Code 2: Negative Community Characteristics. At the same time, the community is dealing with challenges, two of which were highlighted in the interviewees: crime and lack of financial resources. Emily recalled an unfortunate incident that happened in her neighborhood close to the time of my interview with her. "I don't know if you saw the news last week on Tuesday night. Um, we had a fatal shooting in the neighborhood… it… [pauses] is… very unfortunate. He left behind a pregnant wife and a 10-month-old baby" (INTA1, p. 4, ll. 19-25). "Over the years," Emily added, "we've had a number of very… unfortunate incidents. I mean, one of my neighbors on my street actually was killed with a giant axe" (INTA1, p. 7, ll. 9-11).

The interviewees all acknowledged that many residents in the community are struggling financially. Liz reported:

I think the unfortunate part of our community is that a lot of people are living in poverty, and… although they are strong families and good parents and they want the best for their children, the circumstances… economically… make it really challenging for them. (INTA4, p. 7, ll. 16-20)

This further impacts the access of families, children, and youth to vital resources: "a lot of our kids come to school hungry; a lot of our kids, you know, talk about not having enough food to eat." (INTA4, p. 8, ll. 7-9) Christina and Deanne also mentioned that the area was "high-poverty" (INTA2, p. 2, l. 6) and "low-income" (INTA3, p. 8, l. 11). All the schools in the community are Title I schools, which means that: "the majority of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch" (INTA3, p. 19, ll. 2-3), or put differently, "What Title I suggests, is that the community has many needs" (INTA4, p. 19, l. 8).

Holistic Code 3: Children and Youth in the Community. All four interviewees talked with pride about children and youth. Emily attests: "We have remarkable kids in our neighborhood" (INTA1, p. 8, l. 9), "and it's always a pleasure to watch them grow up and… sometimes it's a little challenging" (INTA1, p. 8, ll. 13-14). Emily makes an effort to "extend positive signals to the kids" (INTA1, p. 8, l. 15). She described some happy moments from her neighborhood in which children had made her happy: "Like last year also, one of our, our residents had a *Quinceañera*[99] and so, you know, last spring, and so it was really fun to watch them practice. I always love that" (INTA1, p. 10, ll. 14-16).

Liz discussed the children and youth that she sees in the community: "they're all wonderful; they're all curious and energetic… but I see them in very small increments"

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[99] Celebration of a girl turning 15 years old, which is typical to the culture of Latino families.

(INTA4, p. 9, ll. 3-4). Similarly, "the older youth I work with… are amazing. They are intelligent, aware. They're committed to their community. They wanna make a difference, and they, uh, want their voices to be heard" (INTA4, p. 9, ll. 8-10). But these children and youth are also facing difficulties. In Liz's words, "I think there's an element of defensiveness that comes out of youth who are facing a lot of trauma in their lives" (INTA4, p. 9, ll. 18-19). Such traumas include families being worried about deportation, or lacking access to "vital human services because they don't have appropriate documentation" (INTA4, p. 10, ll. 2-3). Furthermore, some children in the community are homeless or live in poverty. Some of the families in the community "have gone through refugee resettlement, which, in and of itself… suggests they've experienced trauma" (INTA4, p. 10, ll. 14-19). Liz mentioned that traumas impair "a child's ability to feel safe… and then to trust and… let down their guard and to not feel like they have to be tough and defensive" (INTA4, p. 11, ll. 2-7). According to her, this defensiveness leads to fights and arguments between youth and affects how they are "able to sit still in class, relax, concentrate, respect authority… follow rules, focus" (INTA4, p. 11, ll. 23-24).

Touching on a point already discussed in FGY1-3 and FGA4-6, Liz identified a difference between activities housed in schools and extracurricular activities: "This is always an ask of the community, that there is more meaningful activities for the kids outside of school time. So, within school time, there's an abundance of activities… that the children can engage in" (INTA4, p. 13, ll. 9-11). The call for more extracurricular programming has been heard and as a result of a successful long-term planning done by the district office and partner nonprofits, a national youth development organization has

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entered the community. Organizations working in the community often collaborate with local elementary schools. "There's opportunities, but not enough" (INTA4, p. 14, l. 13).

I also learned through the interviews that within schools, students can take part in numerous activities, some of which incentivize students to do community service hours. One of these programs is the SSP, whose youth participants I interviewed in FGY3. "On each of our campuses, there are projects going on… where certain teachers and students are engaged in some sort of community service activity" (INTA4, p. 20, ll. 19-21). These include community cleanups or fundraising activities such as the one for cancer research that was mentioned in FGY3.

With regard to all children and youth in the community, one last topic needs to be briefly addressed – the existence of community service hours requirements. This theme emerged strongly during my conversation with Emily:

I: Are there some instances or situations you can think of when children helped somebody else?

Emily: Oh yeah, they come and help me every so often, because…

I: How do they help you?

Emily: They come in and they help me in my yard, and they pull my weeds, they try…

I: Yeah?

Emily: …sometimes they help, you know, cutting back [indiscernible] some of the older ones, cutting back [indiscernible], some of the bushes or trees…

I: How do you know, how do you know these children and youth?

Emily: Most of them we've known since they were very small. And then, and

then they need to do community service hours. [chuckling]

I: So it counts as community service?

Emily: Yes, *always*! We love to help them do community service hours if we

can… sometimes they need that for their school, sometimes they need that for

their school because they got into college… [indiscernible]. It's kind of two tracks

at the school for community service hours [Emily and I chuckling]. You know,

but they, we also engage them in doing cleanups in the neighborhood, you know,

or painting out graffiti. Now it counts for their community service.

(INTA1, pp. 11-12, ll. 12-7)

As Liz explained to me in INTA4 later, community service hours are required of high

school students in some classes. But, according to her, "if you're applying to

[indiscernible] college… you have to show that you're engaged in the community in

some way. So, even though it might not be a requirement for all high school students, it's

a subtle requirement" (INTA4, p. 43, ll. 4-7). Liz also mentioned that elementary school

students do not need to provide these hours, except for those participating in the SSP.

Holistic Code 4: Characteristics of Youth in the AYG. So who are, in the words of

INTA1-4, the youth who participated in the AYG? Christina talked passionately about

her daughters, who were AYG members for 2 years: "My children love to volunteer

[chuckles] as you so know. They're in *everything*" (INTA3, p. 23, ll. 27-28). In her view,

participation in extra-curricular activities such as the Student Government at the

daughters' middle school and the AYG "makes them have a different value. They also

come up with different ideas to help. They're always trying to come up with different

ideas to help" (INTA3, p. 24, ll. 1-2). Following up on the conversation with AYG in

FGY7, I also asked Christina if her daughters were in any way different from other youth.

The following unfolded:

> Christina: I think they're typical in the sense they're just like any other teenager.
>
> I: Uh huh.
>
> Christina: What makes them not typical is family, parents.
>
> I: Okay.
>
> Christina: I believe my daughters have the potential to be just as delinquent or
> non-delinquent as any other child.
>
> I: Hmm hmm...
>
> Christina: I'm the person that makes that impact on them.
>
> (INTA3, pp. 45-46, ll. 27-9)

As our interview had shown, Christina was fully committed to the parenting of her

children. Having received graduate college education, she conveyed to her children "We

always say, 'Knowledge is power.' It's not the knowledge that's the power; it's how you

implement what you know" (INTA3, p. 19, ll. 22-23) and she also said that she does not

"promote college in [her] house" (INTA3, p. 19, l. 1). Rather, she strived to create

learning experiences for her children and to prepare them for life. Citing biblical Proverbs

(verse 22:6), she stated: "it's just my personal belief that, when the bible says, 'You train

a child the way it should go,' it's not just talking about Christian principles… it's talking

about how to live life in general" (INTA3, p. 35, ll. 25-31).

A different point about the youth in the AYG was made by Liz: "Of course,

they're youth, and so… they're teenagers. But they're mature in their awareness… I think

they're mature in a sense that they understand how to express themselves in a meaningful way" (INTA3, p. 40, ll. 9-20). Deanne and Liz alluded to the fact that the youth in the AYG had already fulfilled their school volunteer hour requirements and were attending the meetings because they are committed to taking part. To this, Liz added:

> [The youth] come every two weeks, and they don't have to… for a lot of them, it's not a requirement anymore… and they continue to come because they realize that they have a voice, that they can make a difference. They feel proud of themselves, they've articulated this in conversations that we've had with them. They realize… how important it is for them to engage in the community, that they have responsibilities as… intelligent citizens to give back and, and then to promote… this feeling with others. (INTA4, p. 22, ll. 16-27)

As I learned in my fieldwork, participation in the AYG counted towards the youth's community service hours, but many of the youth continued to come even though they have already fulfilled their community service requirements.

Holistic Code 5: AYG Philosophy. It was in interviews with Deanne and Liz that I learned the most about the philosophy of the AYG. Over the years, inspired, among others, by Freire's (2000) work, Deanne compiled a youth development methodology, which she also used in the AYG. According to Deanne and Liz, at the very core of the AYG methods was the philosophy of *honoring* and *celebrating* youth. When Deanne was setting up the AYG, she tried to address a sentiment felt by youth in the community:

> [Adults] don't value my voice, are afraid of me, and don't honor and celebrate me." I honor and celebrate them. Anybody that does this work has to go in with

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the idea that you believe in them and you have to project that from day one.

(INTA2, p. 12, ll. 13-16)

Deanne often reminded the AYG youth that she respected and valued them. Liz alludes to this: "Deanne's strategy to engage… human beings in a way that makes them feel valued and respected and honored is something truly special" (INTA2, p. 22, ll. 6-8). According to Liz, Deanne's approach "should be a model for *all* people who want to engage in a meaningful way with youth and to, um, create a safe environment for them to really… break out of their shells and be able to express themselves" (INTA2, p. 22, ll. 8-11).

Creating a safe environment was another component of the philosophy of the AYG. Deanne recalled the beginnings of the group, when one of the "objectives was to provide a space for youth that would allow them to be more successful in the community where they lived as a well as academically" (INTA2, p. 1, ll. 29-31). Liz observed that activities inside the safe space of the AYG had a calming effect on the youth: "I don't know how to explain it, but [the youth] just sort of calm down and realize that [pause] it's important for them to absorb… what's going on in, in the meeting and that it's valuable for them to share" (INTA4, pp. 40-41, ll. 27-2). How was this space created? According to Deanne, this depended even on the semantics used to structure the meetings:

> There is a difference in thought, when one presents the idea of you're not coming to an Active Youth Group meeting, you are coming to a gathering of community citizens. This is the big beginning point at how you formulate any kind of a community space… Because that's the traditional way that people have always come together to exchange… equally, voices… and to ask questions openly.
>
> (INTA2, pp. 4-5, ll. 29-8)

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In this context, *equality* was a cherished value during the indoor sessions of the AYG. It was exemplified by an activity that the Deanne refers to as the Circle of Power, when the youth and adults sit in a circle: "it's all about a means of telling a story. Honoring their story and it's… an idea of equality" (INTA2, p. 25, ll. 24-25). As Deanne added, within the circle, the facilitation was about "honoring every one of them, letting every one of them know that they are contributor to this process. Everyone that, that has a voice and is to be given opportunity at this time to speak" (INTA2, p. 9, ll. 29-31). Deanne recalled a gathering when the whole group was collectively reading and reflecting on the meaning of the poem *Desiderata – Words of Life* by the American writer Max Ehrmann. She reported that on that occasion, she said to the youth:

> "Okay, now, we're gonna get together in a little Circle of Power. So what have you learned? What is the Circle of Power?" And Angela and Monica say: "Equality" [quietly] immediately. They got it. They've learned their lesson. So coming together in a gathering, coming together in a Circle of Power, immediately it's a metaphor for equality. "Every one of you, every one of you has the right." (INTA2, p. 26, ll. 5-9)

Liz recalled one of the first AYG gatherings that she attended:

> Liz: Deanne forces you into the Circle of Power, and then she forces you to be emotive, and, um, and it's really uncomfortable at first, but then, of course, it's not. And so… even she used the word… like, people think it's hokey…
>
> I: "Hokey"?
>
> Liz: …it's not hokey, though, it's not, like, "Oooh, boy." Because, in the end, it makes such a tremendous impact… on the youth, because they feel honored. They

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feel special. They feel important, and they feel valued, and… and they all know

that they are, especially when they're in Active Youth Group. So… they also…

I: [interrupts] Can I… can I actually, on this point, uh… uh… so, maybe y-y-you

said maybe it might feel hokey at first, but then it's stops being that. I mean,

what… how does that happen?

Liz: I think because [pause]… there's, um, there's an aspect of, of being

vulnerable and being, um [pause]… yeah, being vulnerable that's hard. It's

difficult, it's uncomfortable, at first… but then, once one person shares and then

another person shares, and then it's just this environment. Really, it's a safe place,

and everyone realizes that they're not gonna be judged… by their thoughts or

emotions or feelings or ideas and that it's a safe place and that she's created this

safe place for people to share.

(INTA4, pp. 28-29, ll. 1-3)

As mentioned, providing youth an outlet for *youth expression* was one of the

foundational values at the formation of the group. Deanne believed that the youth in the

AYG "identified having a voice of importance and value" (INTA2, p. 39, ll. 24-25). Two

activities of the AYG, especially, were carried with the goal to giving voice to the youth.

According to Deanne, youth voice was instrumental in the creation of the group's shared

values. "You cannot do community kinds of programming unless you have an absolute,

again, um… shared core value system with the people that you bring in" (INTA2, p. 29,

ll. 2-4). At the first session of the group, Deanne facilitated a dialogue over the group's

core values. The group came up with the following values:

One of the strongest core values that they initially looked at that was "United families" … that they wanted to make sure that their families were kept united. And with all of this that was going on with [immigration law], that was a real big issue. Number 2: "safety". Safety was paramount to them because, again, juvenile delinquency, and crime and everything in that community is a result of being an impoverished community. Number 3 was education… that they all wanted very much to secure good educations. Number 4 was that they wanted to, to have a means of expressing themselves, um… a creatively… [T]hey wanted to, they wanted to have a creative venue, to have freedom to say what they wanted to say and talk about what they wanted to do. And they wanted to do community gatherings, where they brought people together and then the last thing was, they wanted it to be… *fun* [laughing].

(INTA2, pp. 10-11, ll. 14-7)

Another activity focusing on youth expression was the making of PSAs, Emily commented: "I think that is a great activity and I look forward to, hopefully, seeing some… something that maybe we could take out into the community and try to get run" (INTA1, p. 18, ll. 2-4). The PSA made by one of the AYG youth, Nicole, focused on ideas "around poverty in her community and… it's our responsibility to pay it forward and to give back" (INTA4, p. 39, ll. 1-2). Conveying these ideas in a poster, Nicole was recognized by winning a prestigious national award. Reflecting on this process, Liz mentioned that in their work on the PSAs the youth "selected topics that are really, um, important to them individually" (INTA4, p. 39, l. 4).

Another component of the AYG philosophy was the development of *mastery* or *leadership*. Deanne highlighted the importance of this approach as she reflected on her experience from working with incarcerated youth: "That is… the reason why we have so many of our youth in jail today. [They] do not have the tools to have mastered a capacity to have a successful income. So we have to provide them that mastery" (INTA2, p. 24, ll. 4-6). This resonated with Christina's take on the meaning of education: "I believe that education is what drives you to do your best" (INTA3, p. 19, l. 21).

When I asked Deanne how leadership played into the workings of the AYG, she discussed leadership in terms of mastering of the following: "the daily practice of … being present, fully present" (INTA2, p. 44, ll. 23-24), "no fear of getting up and… speaking in front of the public" (INTA2, p. 43, ll. 12-13), gaining "confidence through the exposure of going out into community, being present in community" (INTA2, p. 43, ll. 21-22), "concept of tolerance and understanding for another person's point of view – and listening to it" (INTA2, p. 43, ll. 28-29), "how then you respect and honor that and present it back to the community in a way that you want other members of the community to know about this or have the opportunity" (INTA2, pp. 44-45, ll. 30-2), "critically evaluating what you're perceiving and making a judgment about it for yourself and how it affects you and your activities of daily life" (INTA2, p. 44, ll. 28-29), "having a full bag of resources, community resources" (INTA2, p. 45, l. 2), "the respect of interacting with adults in a level that is of mutual sharing and respect" (INTA2, p. 45, ll. 6-7), and "writing… to interpret something in a thoughtful, meaningful way" (INTA2, p. 45, ll. 7-9). Lastly, Deanne also highlighted the role of documentation. "You can't give

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continuity to the work unless like you, as a researcher, you, you write and you talk about [it]. And you bring this out in public." (INTA2, p. 46, ll. 7-8)

Another component of the AYG philosophy was *critical inquiry*:

We are asking of them always to process information through critical inquiry. And that is interpretation. What does it mean? But it's also many times from already acquired knowledge. Because you can't critically evaluate something, if you don't have the research and the knowledge, that you haven't already experienced. (INTA2, p. 26, ll. 19-22)

In the AYG, the vehicle for nurturing critical inquiry were the arts.[100] According to Deanne, this was a unique feature of the AYG. She understood artistry in a broader sense: "artists are persons that are gardeners, they're healers, they're um… performance artists" (INTA2, p. 41, ll. 29-30) and all those who bring creativity and innovation into the lives of residents, including a nonprofit organization that is opening up a whole food program in the community. Critical inquiry was evoked in a discussion over paintings such as one that she showed me during the interview. The painting illustrated a boy pointing a gun and a girl that looked like St. Mary. Both the boy and the girl had halos and were sitting on a television – the first one from a long chain made up from other televisions. The other end of the chain was connected to an older-looking man and the last TV literally grew out of his head. Each TV had a different station tuned on. Looking at the painting, Deanne asked:

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[100] Through her own organization, Deanne has worked with community artists who facilitate "artistic expression, creative innovation in a way that meets a community challenge. That is as great as poverty, safety, education, the united families, and building communities" (INT2, p. 43, ll. 1-3).

Is it the corporate structure and the power, and the greed that goes out through the

media that causes this, or is it the tendency of this, because of their [indiscernible]

upbringing, it goes back to buy into and support that? (INTA2, p. 48, ll. 2-4)

Holistic Code 6: Activities Done in AYG Indoor Sessions. As mentioned, most of

the AYG's work took place during bi-weekly indoor meetings. One of the activities

engaged in by the group involved the use of artifacts such as toys and various small

objects that Deanne brought to the session. Everyone then selected one object and

discussed what personal meaning that objects had to them. Liz elaborated: "You get the

most intimate, personal stories from the youth on the… artifacts, um, that they've chosen,

and it immediately lets you into not only their psyche, but their personal life, their

experiences" (INTA4, p. 25, ll. 8-14). An activity from another meeting led to the

creation of honoring boxes and Wish sticks. Liz explained:

We ask them to bring in pictures or things that are important to them, and then

Deanne brings in these little small boxes, and then they get to paint and

decorate… and write intentions on letters and fold it up and put it in the box, and

it's… it's their honoring box. (INTA4, pp. 25-26, ll. 27-3)

The youth also made origami and discussed how origami influenced global peace

movements. Deanne also discussed an activity where the youth created a vision-mapping

poster during another meeting. She brought in magazines to the class and had the youth

cut out quotes from the magazines that engaged them. In her words "they just literally

took off and went wild. [I] totally left them to just do this thing" (INTA2, p. 33, ll. 24-

25). Deanne told me that she asked the youth 3 questions: (1) "How do I see myself, my

vision for the future currently and what methodology, tools or skills are needed?"

(INTA2, pp. 29-30, ll. 30-1), (2) "What is my role in promoting my concept for change?" (INTA2, p. 30, ll. 19-20), and (3) "What does the community, school look like, following this concept for change?" (INTA2, p. 31, ll. 22-23) While answering the questions, the youth created collages with their answers that were cut out of the magazines.

Other indoor activities of the AYG have already been described in reference to other holistic codes from INTA1-4: the making of PSAs, working in the Circle of Power, drumming, and others. As a whole, the goals of the indoor sessions were to provide opportunities for self-exploration, self-expression, reflection, community building, and the planning of community events. The community events are discussed in the discussion of holistic code 7 from INTA1-4 data.

Holistic Code 7: Events Organized by the AYG. In INTA1-4, I also learned about the adult's perspective on community events organized by the AYG. Liz, for example, discussed the CEE:

> The Community Engagement Event is an effort… to integrate, um, city services and law enforcement into the community to create… a feeling of… security but also to create a better relationship… to really… break down some of the barriers that exist in, uh, typically marginalized communities with respect to how they're able to interact with law enforcement… That was in a park one year, and then we had it at the [feeder] high school this past year. (INTA4, pp. 30-31, ll. 27-8)

As I learned in the interviews, the first time the CEE was implemented by the AYG was when the group was in its infancy and, in fact, the CEE took place as early as

six weeks after the AYG was established. At the event, youth from the then-formed AYG were in charge of various tables.[101]

Here is Deanne's story:

> One of the things that happened that was very spontaneous that I love was that Nicole and her brother and two other of the youth decided that they wanted to present a whole thing around the idea of crime in their community and so, they did that whole thing about what are some of the possible resources. (INTA2, p. 20, ll. 1-5)

On the day of the event,

> The kids were supposed to come early to do all of the setup. They had to set up the tables that were brought in by the adults … None of the kids had a food handlers' license. I didn't have time to get that for them. So Emily and um… two of the adults went over and we had the food packets all pre-packaged so… they didn't have to really touch anything… Two of our youth came from um… the high school and they saw that because they didn't have a booth, they immediately jumped in and were there to support handing that out as well as the water. (INTA2, pp. 20-21, ll. 29-7)

Deanne gave throw-away cameras to the youth so that they could document what happened at the event and asked the youth to provide short write-ups about the event that were afterwards displayed together with the photos on 4 x 4 canvases.

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[101] I had been in touch with the AYG then and attended this first CEE. This was before my research got underway and before my decision to work with the community, so I did not conduct formal observations.

The tradition of the Community Health Event (CHE) was started a year after the first CEE. In the interview, Liz discussed the goals that drove the event:

It's a chance for the students to, um, invite community partners in, like, a resource fair type… event, but also to engage in different activities that promote wellness. So, the wellness really stands for not only, like, health and wellness, but emotional wellness and then… um, creating strong families… The youth, even in their mission statement that they created, uh, always talk about supporting families. (INTA4, p. 29-30, ll. 29-9)

Holistic Code 8: Youth-Adult Relationships in the AYG. The last holistic code from INTA1-4 refers to excerpts referring to the interactions between younger and older members in the AYG. Deanne described her facilitation process as the creation of safe space, in which there was equality between participants and where the youth were being honored and celebrated. She talked about facilitation as a "[T]wo-way street. 'You are as important…' It's always about: 'I'm going to learn from you'" (INTA2, p. 13, ll. 14-16).

Liz saw her role in the group as a mentor: "I'm present as, really, a mentor and a support. Um… I think that my consistent presence is a symbol of… how much I value them and I believe in them" (INTA4, p. 23, ll. 25-27). She experienced that "[t]he students reach out to me a lot, you know, just for advice… and then, sometimes, you know, to help them plan and organize community service hours and work" (INTA4, p. 24, ll. 5-7). In the interview with Liz, I was able to probe further:

I: What happens between the youth and adults? How do they interact as they take part in those activities?

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Liz: Well… with the adults that are actively engaged in the Group… of course,

the students identify them as, as um [pause] individuals who care about them and

who are invested in them and are respectful of them, who um believe that they

have a… powerful impact on, you know, the quality of life in the community and

that their voice is important and necessary, you know, to have a, a healthy

community.

(INTA4, p. 42, ll. 19-30)

Furthermore,

it's like any adult who shows up in a child's life on a regular basis, they're… that

promotes a sense of um… trust and… and value within the youth that makes them

want to succeed. If somebody is counting on you, you know, then you count on

yourself. You believe in yourself when there's others that are believing in you, I

think. (INTA4, pp. 42-43, ll. 30-8)

Deanne echoed Liz's words. According to her, the building of relationships with youth

was crucial for her work: "I believe in you, I care about you, I'm going to build a

relationship with you" (INTA2, p. 12, l. 16). Having received her academic training in

social work, Deanne saw her methods as different from what is prevalent in her field:

And this is the difference, it's a little bit tough in social services work because,

with the HIPAA code[102] and everything, there's kind of a strident barrier between

allowing um… an individual that's in social services to have any kind of a

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[102] Deanne was referring to HIPAA, The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA, 1996), which regulates confidential use and sharing of personal information and between clients and providers of health and social services.

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relationship that allows the social service individual, or the person that's going into a community, to in… to devote themselves. Um… Of course, I have to be very careful, but at the same time, they know about me as well when it's appropriate.

I: So is that how you navigate…

Deanne: Yes…

I: …that you also share about yourself?

Deanne: Yeah.

I: Are there some other ways how you navigate that situation?

Deanne: And I think this is all about that concept of relationship building.

(INTA2, pp. 12-13, ll. 16-3)

In spite of the notions of equality professed in the philosophy of the AYG,[103] instances existed when equality was not invoked. Deanne told a story of how one of the youth from the AYG, Nicole, wanted to serve as an intern in Deanne's nonprofit organization:[104]

So I had worked on her father, 'cause her father wasn't really crazy about all of this… I also had restrictions. I cannot have a youth under the age of 18 engaged with me without an adult present. So I have to make sure that if I'm outside of the space of the academic setting… Just like you when you had to have the person, you know… you know, Liz in there when you interviewed [AYG youth]. It's for your protection; it's for everybody's protection. (INTA2, p. 34, ll. 9-18)

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[103] See the holistic code "AYG Philosophy" in section V.6.2.

[104] Deanne is officially affiliated with two nonprofit organizations working in the community. Nicole interned in one of them – a small community arts organization, of which Deanne is director.

The statement "It's for your protection" became an *in vivo* code in this study. In the end, because her family was willing to make the commitment and accompanied her, Nicole was able to undertake her internship. The internship work extended beyond the AYG, but it was made possible through the relationships built between Nicole and Deanne in the AYG. Deanne adds: "So that was a big deal getting all of that put together… that we engaged her in a way that she went through a whole process of learning how to deliver a youth program" (INTA2, p. 34, ll. 18-20).

In my talk with Christina, I asked about the nature of an ideal relationship between adults and the youth in a program, such as Student Government or the Active Youth Group. Christina hinted at the existence of two modalities:

Christina: It depends on if it's supposed to be student-led or not.

I: Okay.

Christina: Is this really about the youth…

I: Yeah.

Christina: …and them orchestrating it…

I: Hmm...

Christina: …or not? Or are the youth just a part of this environment that really would be led by adults with input?

I: Oh.

Christina: To me, that makes the difference. If it's supposed to be student-led, then it's student-led, and the adults should be supporting the student-led. If not,

then the adults should be doing most of the facilitating, and the students should be

trying to give in the support as needed. Kinda like parents in a household.

(INTA3, pp. 38-39, ll. 12-2)

The distinction between student-led and adult-led programs had not come up in any

interviews or focus group up to this point. Christina's quote prompted me to conduct a

review of literature on youth-adult partnerships and to become more theoretically

sensitive to the difference between youth-led and adult-led community programs (see

section VI.2).

V.6.2.2. Versus Coding of INTA1-4. Versus coding of INTA1-4 provided me

with a deeper understanding of the methods that were used by adults to facilitate the

AYG. The following versus codes enhanced my understanding of the AYG: *gathering v.*

meeting, *facilitator v. social worker / teacher / instructor, relationships v. the HIPAA*

code, *equality v. having a defined way of functioning*, *youth telling the story v. facilitator*

telling the story, *Ubuntu v. Descartes*, and *physical v. intellectual part of learning.*[105]

The first versus code, compared *gathering v. meeting*. In Deanne's words: "There

is a difference in thought, when one presents the idea of you're not coming to a Active

Youth Group meeting, you are coming to a gathering of community citizens" (INTA2, p.

4, ll. 29-31). Furthermore, "These gatherings are not about the idea of that the person

from the outside is coming in to give them information that would benefit them. It's a

gathering as where there's equal exchange" (INTA2, p. 5, ll. 14-16). This distinction

alluded to the semantic difference designating two approaches to community work. A

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[105] See Table 14 in Appendix C for a complete list of versus codes used in the dissertation.

meeting presupposes a top-down structure, which, according to Deanne, was present in educational institutions. A gathering is "the traditional way that people have always come together to exchange then equality, equally, voices" (INTA2, p. 5, ll. 3-4). It assumes equality: "It's a gathering as where there's equal exchange. So the outsider is also learning" (INTA2, p. 5, ll. 16-17).

The second versus code, *facilitator v. social worker / teacher / instructor*, pertained to the role of adults working with communities: "I am not a teacher, I'm not an instructor, I'm not a social worker. I'm a facilitator of opportunities and resources for them to learn about themselves even more comprehensively" (INTA2, p. 13, ll. 20-22). Furthermore, Deanne shared how she approached the guest speaker and what instructions she gave him:

> I did not coordinate, other than to introduce him, and so he went through and… and you saw what he had to present and also, there was one… there were three things that I asked him to talk about, because we've already discussed this as far as the core values. (INTA2, p. 16, ll. 1-4)

Deanne saw her role as facilitative. In her view, she facilitated opportunities and resources so that the youth could learn about themselves.

Another versus code was already discussed in a different context: *relationships v. the HIPAA code*. What this code denotes is Deanne's understanding of the difference between methods driven by the HIPAA code and her own methods that focus on relationship building. In Deanne's opinion, the HIPAA code created a "strident barrier" (INTA2, p. 12, l. 18) between the service provider and service receiver. A relationship

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was not a "one-way relationship." Rather, according to her, a relationship is created when both sides share with each other and learn from each other.

This brings me to the next versus code: *equality v. having a defined way of functioning*. Deanne discussed the Circle of Power method, which was based on

> allowing each group of people you work with to take signals from them and realize that they have gifts that they are bringing to you. That's the equality. Not acknowledging you have the only defined way of functioning. But still having the structure that you are always working at: the Circle of Power, the critical inquiry, the needs of communication, the creative endeavors, um... the creating of community at the same time in the project that you develop and the, finally, the celebration. That's the structure; the freedom is in strategies and the outcome." (INTA2, p. 52, ll. 2-8)

Another iteration of the same theme can be found in the distinction between *youth telling the story v. facilitator telling the story*. As she described the vision mapping exercise referenced above, Deanne elaborated: "it wasn't me telling their story. It's their story and this comes back to the element of the storytelling" (INTA2, p. 22, ll. 16-28). In Deanne's view, equality meant providing space for everybody to tell their story:

> It's a public participation process. I'm not going in there and designing and programming without them being totally in charge. They're telling me what their values are, I'm not telling them what their values are. They are telling me what their actions are and then they will build out, to take those actions into ways that give them total options for choices of how they will present that… under… all those different categories. (INTA2, p. 15, ll. 1-7)

The AYG is also framed within larger philosophies as the versus code titled

Ubuntu v. Descartes reveals:

Deanne: One of the things that we do is establish the concept of what is respect in

a Circle of Power. And so there's a conversation that comes out about that, and so

it's again, developing the idea of what is respect. 'I respect you, you respect me.'

It's that whole Ubuntu thing… 'I am because we are.' That's a philosophy that's

not a European philosophy again, once again. It's, you know, the whole idea that

'I think, therefore I am' Descartes' statement is not one that I use…[106]

I: Okay…

Deanne: …and not one of the persons I am engaged with in the community use. It

is: 'I am, because *we* are.'

(INTA2, p. 14, ll. 7-21)

Summarizing the above versus codes, Deanne interpreted a gathering as a place where

storytelling takes place, and a meeting is where we are as isolated thinkers.

Deanne also brought up the distinction between different ways of learning:

physical v. intellectual part of learning. In that regard she presented what she called

"whole-person advocacy":

So much in our education system we don't look at the idea that being, that going

into class a classroom to do didactic learning is not just about the *intellectual part*

of it. [said quietly] It's about the *physical part of it*… When we engage, our

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[106] Deanne was referring to Descartes' notion *cogito ergo sum* – "I think, therefore I am" (Descartes, 2001), which embodies the philosophy of the rational and self-standing individual. This is in contrast with the communitarian notion of the Ubuntu philosophy, which has African roots (see Louw, n.d.).

classrooms are fun. I wouldn't make it a structured… they wouldn't come back! It

has to give them joy. (INTA2, p. 27, ll. 4-8)

Liz provided additional insights. She discussed the progression that she

experienced during activities in the above-mentioned Circle of Power as members of the

AYG were sharing stories with each other:

There's an aspect of, of being vulnerable and… being vulnerable that's hard. It's

difficult, it's uncomfortable, at first… but then, once one person shares and then

another person shares, and then it's just this environment. Really, it's a safe place,

and everyone realizes that they're not gonna be judged… by their thoughts or

emotions or feelings or ideas. (INTA4, pp. 28-29, ll. 21-2)

I refer to this distinction *uncomfortable at first* v. *realizing that one is not going to be*

judged. This versus code conceptually links to Liz's overall assessment of the children

and youth in the community:

They want to be treated like individuals that have, um, you know, ideas about…

how to influence not only their own education but their community, as well. But

then, that being said… I think there's an element of defensiveness that comes out

of youth who are facing a lot of trauma in their lives. (INTA4, p. 9, ll. 11-19)

Though Liz was not directly referring to AYG youth, the presence of trauma in the lives

of children in the community led, in her opinion, to the establishment of defense

mechanisms that may prevent children and youth from expressing themselves in positive

ways. For this notion I am using the versus code *wanting to be treated like individuals*

with ideas v. *being defensive*. In this context, as Liz and Deanne claimed, the AYG

provided a safe space that countered defensiveness.

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Emily and Christina enriched the picture about the AYG by highlighting other aspects of working with youth and leadership. Emily discussed a dual aspect of leadership, which I have labeled *big picture v. getting stuff done*:

I think the really successful [leaders], even like [community organizer who worked on the community garden] who came in: he's very charismatic, very charismatic. Very engaging, but he also knows how to get stuff done. He knows all that other stuff, I mean, he does that other stuff to make sure that when he goes out, he speaks in those broad, with the broad language and the big pictures, but when he comes into, you know… but he knows all the little things that also need to be done… and we need to do in order to work on… get to many of those bigger pictures. So I think it's important to kind of start introducing those ideas and engaging the youth because I, I believe youth are very smart, you know, and, and they're many times underestimated [chuckles]. (INTA1, pp. 20-21, ll. 21-4)

Furthermore, in Emily's experience,

as you're trying to develop leaders within your own ranks – that the fastest easiest to do stuff, is often to do it yourself. 'Cause you know what needs to be done and how to do it. It's much harder to have the patience and to have the time and the energy to trying get other people to learn and to actually take those responsibilities and, and do it. And, and so it's always that balance of, I think, of making something, having something be successful so everyone can feel good about it, but also trying to include everyone else and allowing them that growth space so that they can step up and do much more and feel proud of what they've been able to accomplish. (INTA1, p. 21, ll. 19-27)

Christina attested that she had not taken part in many activities of the AYG. But she provided her vision for programming. This notion was strong in her distinguishing between *youth-led* and *adult-led* community work. This issue was already discussed as part of the holistic code "youth-adult relationships in the AYG." Elaborating on this notion, however, Christina also added:

> that's what these structured entities should be doing, not putting them together to… to, uh, forcing your own adult agenda through youth because you know people will receive you, but really ensuring that it's a balance, that you're actually… the Active Youth is being advised by adults on how to be an Active Group. (INTA3, p. 36, ll. 24-28)

Some other versus codes that came up in this conversation were *female v. male perspective* and *committed v. uncommitted person*. To the former, Christina added: "I just believe that there's a different perspective between male and female…and I think the Active Youth Group should have both" (INTA3, p. 54, ll. 5-10). On the notion of commitment, the following statement made by Christina enlightens why her daughter, Monica mentioned this topic: "You could say 'loyalty'; you could say 'dedication'; you could say 'communication'. But, at the end of the day, it is who you are. You can tell a committed person from a non-committed person. It's, it's their aura" (INTA3, p. 32, ll. 27-30). Moreover, "You can tell by the way a person performs their job if they're committed or not committed" (INTA3, p. 33, ll. 3-4).

V.6.2.3. Metaphor Coding of INTA1-4. Metaphor analysis of INTA1-4 data

enabled me to understand better the workings of the groups through four metaphors:

family, *breaking out of one's shell, taking off and going wild*, and *having a voice*.[107]

Keeping in mind that Deanne saw the video in which Monica stated that "the

group has just become a family" (INTY6, p. 3, l. 17), it was interesting to hear Deanne's

take on this metaphor, because she explained the concept further. According to Deanne,

engaging classroom environments gives youth joy and a positive attitude. Furthermore,

> Deanne: Also it gives them a sense of now they've come to belong. They, the
>
> reason we have this core group of about 12 is because they're a family. It's not
>
> said but they're a family.
>
> I: …how are they a family? Can you elaborate on that?
>
> Deanne: Because they, they, they banter with one another now. There is total
>
> openness and whereas before somebody might [indiscernible] nerded out about
>
> feeling that you were, you know, picking on me, or something like: No.
>
> (INTA2, p. 27, ll. 10-18)

In this particular excerpt, Deanne linked family to the notion of "belonging," which, in

her perspective, makes the youth keep coming. Here, the metaphorical family was an

environment of "total openness." Liz offered a very similar account:

> I: …one of the youth mentioned that they've become a family. Um, what does
>
> that statement mean to you?
>
> Liz: [pauses] You know, I think that [crashing noise in the background of the

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[107] See Table 15 in Appendix C for a complete list of metaphor codes used in the dissertation.

hall], to me, it means, that they're… they are each other's ally that they have

created, um… they have spent enough time with each other, that they trust each

other and, um, that they… they know that they can count on each other and on

us… So, I just think it's that sense of belonging, that they're a part of something

meaningful, that there's individuals who are counting on them… But also that

there's individuals that are not judging them, and so… they know that their

presence is important, it's meaningful, people are depending on them, um, but that

it's a safe space and there's a lot of trust with everyone.

(INTA4, pp. 31-32, ll. 28-20)

Liz also used the metaphor *breaking out of one's shell*, when she commented on

Deanne's methods to "create a safe environment for [the youth] to really get out of

their… break out of their shells and be able to express themselves" (INTA4, p. 22, ll. 9-

11). This metaphor provided yet another way how, in Liz's view, the methods of the

AYG addressed defensiveness of youth in the community.[108]

Another metaphor brought up by Deanne was *taking off and going wild*. Deanne

used this metaphor when she discussed the vision mapping activity:

I just grabbed… all kinds of magazines. So they just literally took off and went

wild. [I] totally left them to just do this thing. When they come up and they feed

off of one another… it was such a powerful thing to watch happen. (INTA2, p.

33, ll. 23-30)

The metaphor *taking off and going wild* here is being used to describe the spontaneous

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[108] Interestingly, the Czech verb "vyjádřit se", which means to "express oneself" literarily translates to "to core oneself out."

and autonomous activity of the youth as they were prompted by the text in the magazines to think about their vision for the future, contemplate their role in promoting change and hypothesize what change they might achieve.

Lastly, Deanne, Christina, and Liz all used the metaphor of youth *having a voice*. Christina "raised [her] children, so I know my children are making sure they're heard [laughing] when they voice their opinion" (INTA3, p. 35, ll. 23-25). Deanne's work in the community started with the intent to address the issue that "The youth felt they didn't have a voice in the community where they lived" (INTA2, p. 1, l. 25). In the Circle of Power, "the outcome is that everybody feels that they have an equal voice in what they're saying and nobody is directing the conversation" (INTA2, p. 51, ll. 19-20). In Deanne's view, the youth in the AYG "have impacted their community. They have identified having a voice of importance and value" (INTA2, p. 39, ll. 24-25). Similarly, Liz mentioned in her interview that the youth "continue to come because they realize that they have a voice, that they can make a difference. They feel proud of themselves, they've articulated this in conversations that we've had with them" (INTA4, p. 22, ll. 19-21).

V.6.2.4. In Vivo Coding of INTA1-4. The last round of coding of INTA1-4 data involved an identification and analysis of *in vivo* codes. The following codes emerged in the analysis: *we wanna feel safe in the neighborhood*, *collaborator on the same wavelength*, *good meshing*, *it's for your protection; it's for everybody's protection*, *it's a politics thing,* and *it's not about you.*[109]

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[109] See Table 16 in Appendix C for a complete list of in vivo codes used in the dissertation.

The first code, *we wanna feel safe in the neighborhood*, coming from Emily's discussion on the unfortunate fatal shooting that happened in the community, expresses well how the she feels about safety: "in my neighborhood, people are outside at night a lot of times and… we wanna feel safe in the neighborhood" (INTA1, p. 7, ll. 25-27).

The second code, *collaborator on the same wavelength* comes from Deanne's elaboration on the need of establishing a set of shared values. According to Deanne, the youth "have to understand respect, what you're trying to do, and by the work that they do, they are collaborator that is all on the same level and the same… wavelength" (INTA2, p. 19, ll. 4-6). Referring to the first CEE, Deanne used the phrase *good meshing* to describe a "crossing over" (INTA2, p. 20, l. 1) between youth and adults in the event preparations.

Also discussing the praxis of the AYG, Deanne talked about how when working with AYG youth under the age of 18, she demanded to have a supervision of another adult: "I have to make sure that if I'm outside of the space of the academic setting… Just like you when you had… Liz in there when you interviewed [AYG youth]. It's for your protection; it's for everybody's protection" (INTA2, p. 34, ll. 15-18).

The final two *in vivo* codes both appeared in my interview with Christina. According to her, the AYG "is a politics thing." When I asked how, she explained:

> Okay, your congressmen, your senators, your councilmen, what do they do? They go out into the community, and they're trying to make impacts and decisions that impact what? The community in which their constituents reside. That's exactly what they're doing. They're trying to say, "These are the things that we, as youth, need in our community." (INTA3, p. 51, ll. 4-8)

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The last *in vivo* code comes from the end of my conversation with Christina, when I asked her if she wanted to add anything. Building on the general notion of adult-led and student-led programs that she mentioned previously, Christina pointed out:

> And sometimes, that's hard for adults to let things be student-led, because we're worried about their failure. It's not about you. It's about what we can do for the students, and if it wasn't successful, then what can you do as adults differently to help facilitate it? Or, could it ever be successful because the youth don't have value in it? So then, that means, there needs to be a different perception about how youth are involved in the community. Do they feel like they have somewhere to be involved? You know, so, I think, sometimes, adults take everything so personal for the wrong reasons. If you want to personalize it, personalize it because you need to figure out how you can make it more efficient and productive for the youth, not you personally… you're not able to execute it, 'cause they may not have the skill set. (INTA3, p. 52, ll. 14-24)

Christina general statement did not seem to refer to any specific programs, but in the above excerpt she highlighted why it is important to keep the youth in the focus. The code *it's not about you* thus provides a word of caution to all adults working with youth.

In this chapter, I presented an analysis of data from four different groups: youth enrolled in elementary schools in the community, adults whose children (grandchildren) attend these schools, youth from the AYG, and adults from the AYG. A diversity of coding tools allowed me to see different perspectives on youth community involvement in the urban community. Now it is time to look at what connects the findings together and how it informs the theory and practice of youth community involvement.

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VI. SENSITIZING THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

An emergent study embraces unpredictability. It poses demands on the researcher's ability to improvise as fieldwork and analysis unfolds. At the same time, such inquiry allows the researcher to ask new questions in light of emergent themes and sensitize the research focus as the study is developing. Such was the development of the uniting concepts in my dissertation. The two concepts that eventually became core categories of this dissertation originally came from the youth in the AYG: leadership (mentioned by Andreas when he discussed what he was learning in the AYG) and family (first appearing as a concept in Monica's statement "The group has just become a family" (INTY6, p. 3, l. 17)). Both concepts found resonance among the AYG youth during the focus group that I conducted with them a year later (FGY7).

What stimulated my interest in these two concepts were interviews with adults connected to the AYG. Deanne and Liz, who facilitated the AYG, elaborated on the creation of a "safe space" in the AYG, which resonated with Monica's account. Furthermore, adults connected to the AYG elaborated on the difference between youth being in charge and adults being in charge. Deanne discussed in detail her philosophy of building an environment that is conducive to the creation of *equality* between AYG participants: "It's a gathering as where there's equal exchange" (INTA2, p. 5, l. 16). Furthermore, in contrast to what she viewed as a hierarchical learning environment, Deanne made a particular point of highlighting situations when youth were in charge, as was expressed in her statements such as "[I] totally left them to just do this thing" (INTA2, p. 33, l. 25). These notions reminded me of my own involvement in various

roles in youth development organizations.[110] In this dissertation such notions were predominate in the conversations with adults connected to the AYG.

In order to explore family and leadership further, I reviewed all data that I collected in this study and looked at linkages between them using axial coding. But first of all, I had to formulate the question that drove my study.

VI.1. Evolution of the Question of the Study

In chapter III, I introduced a guiding question that helped me set parameters around my study: ***How is youth community involvement being constructed by members of an urban community?*** I wanted to talk to 14-19 year old youth. Building on a critical review of literature of youth civic engagement, I set out to explore how youth reach out into the community, through formal and informal ways, and interact with others in order to better the living situation in the community. And, in the process, I was interested in how members of the community discuss youth community involvement.

During my fieldwork, the notion of youth and adults working together emerged. This became particularly salient during the interviews and focus groups that I conducted with members of the AYG. I saw a group of youth and adults working together hand in hand in the creation of programs that serve the community. What caught my attention was the philosophy of the AYG, as professed by its adult facilitators, which involved honoring youth creating a safe environment, working as equals with the youth, and providing an outlet for youth self-expression and critical inquiry. In that context, leadership was brought up as a set of skills that the AYG was focused on nurturing.

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[110] See my Confessional Tales Appendix F for some examples of these roles.

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Based on this experience, I posed a new main research question: ***What is the nature of youth-adult interactions in the community?*** I had an opportunity to pursue this question in my interviews about the AYG with Christina and Liz and while observing the second Community Health Event organized by the AYG in the spring of 2015. But I realized later in the analysis that the question was broader and also pertained to my conversations with youth from elementary schools (FGY1-3) and parents of children attending elementary schools in the community (FGA4-6).

As with all reflection on sensitizing concepts, I was led to conduct additional analysis of the data. This helped me strengthen my understanding of the emerging core categories. I compared the data in my study with the literature on youth-adult partnerships. Within this body of work I searched for themes that resonated with the findings listed in the previous chapter. Specifically, I was interested in learning about "leadership" in the work of youth and adults (see section VI.2).

VI.2. Constant Comparison with Literature on Youth-Adult Partnerships

VI.2.1. Defining Youth-Adult Partnerships. The community development literature has long called for the nurturing of meaningful relationships between youth and adults in community work. Richard-Schuster and Dobbie (2011), for example discussed four specific practices that create a framework for understanding young people's engagement. The first practice is the creation of physical spaces and organizational roles for youth, which create a connection and sense of belonging in young people. The second practice aims to provide dedicated adult allies, who help bridge the connection between youth and an organization and who formed authentic partnerships with the youth. The third focuses on facilitating critical education and skill building through formal and

informal opportunities. Lastly, the fourth practice integrates action and reflection, through which the young people's identity as organizers was strengthened (Richards-Schuster & Dobbie, 2011).

The literature on youth-adult partnerships, which comes from the field of youth development, speaks to this very notion.[111] According to Camino (2000), the concept of youth-adult partnership comes from the work of Lofquist (1989), which posits that youth should be viewed by adults as resources and not as objects or recipients of programming. If a shared control of community projects by adults and youth is sustained, a youth-adult partnership is formed. More than 20 years after the introduction of the concept, Zeldin and colleagues (2013) provided the following working definition of youth-adult partnerships:

> Youth-adult partnership is the practice of: (a) multiple youth and multiple adults deliberating and acting together, (b) in a collective [democratic] fashion (c) over a sustained period of time, (d) through shared work, (e) intended to promote social justice, strengthen an organization and/or affirmatively address a community issue. (Zeldin et al., 2013, p. 388)

Youth-adult partnerships benefit from the establishment of long-term relationships between youth and adults who are not their own family members. As Zeldin and colleagues (2005) wrote, "Youth are largely isolated from non-family adults – spatially, socially, and psychologically – in almost all spheres of United States society" (p. 1).

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[111] I first encountered literature about youth-adult partnerships when I began preparing questions for my dissertation. At the time, the concept did not seem crucial for my study, but this had changed in light of the conversation with adults and youth from the community.

Summarizing literature on this topic, these authors point to community-based programs that bridge generations and in turn serve three purposes: (1) provide youth the right to be engaged in community life, (2) foster youth development, and (3) support community building. Each goal may require a different emphasis in the role played by supportive adults:

> Relationships for positive youth development often require and emphasize the provision of opportunities and scaffolding consistent with the developmental needs of participating youth. In contrast, relationships aimed at contributing to building community and civil society generally require a partnership between youth and adults and a focus to be directed outside of their own programs to focus on meeting the needs of a broader community. (Zeldin et al., 2005, pp. 3-4)

The literature on youth-adult partnerships draws inspiration from research on mentoring. According to Rhodes (2002), "Mentors have the advantage of standing outside these family struggles. They can provide a safe haven for teens to air sensitive issues, while still transmitting adult values, advice, and perspectives" (p. 33). Darling, Hamilton, and Niego (1994) highlighted that gestures such as words of praise may be more meaningful when they come from a family member, because the social obligation is lower. Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) pointed to the importance of building competence of mentors' protégés: "Competence, the capacity to do something well, is a goal concrete enough that both mentor and protégé get a clear picture of what kinds of activities are likely to help achieve it" (p. 549). Furthermore, according to Dubois, Neville, Parra, and Pugh-Lilly (2002), mentoring has an ability to increase a youth's self-worth.

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Zeldin and colleagues (2013) also presented four key elements of effective youth-adult partnerships: authentic decision-making, the existence of natural mentors, reciprocal activity, and community connectedness. The latter pertains to the networking and social capital generation that occurs when youth and adults participate in youth-adult partnerships. Camino and Zeldin (2002a) identified strong youth-adult partnerships as one of three ingredients for creating youth civic engagement. The other two qualities highlighted by the authors were youth ownership and facilitative structures of organizations and institutions.

VI.2.2. Locating Leadership in Youth-Adult Partnerships. How leadership in youth-adult partnerships evolves depends on a number of factors. Camino and Zeldin (2002) noted that in shared ventures with adults and youth, a balance must be struck "between values of respect and equality on the one hand, and the realities of age and experiential differences on the other hand" (p. 76). The two authors report on a project in which adults did not provide enough training to the youth, because they put too much emphasis on egalitarianism. Camino (2005) suggested that working for a common good tends to lead towards stronger partnerships between youth and adults. In her experience, youth do not need to do everything of importance and adults sometimes need to embrace a position of power. However, Camino (2005) contends that power is not a "zero-sum equation" (p. 78) and adults and youth can both hold power. She also cautions against thinking of youth in terms of stereotypical categories while celebrating the "diversity" of adulthood.

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Also drawing from the body of literature on youth-adult partnerships, Jones (2004, p. 13) introduced in his work a continuum of youth-adult relationships in youth programs (Figure 6).
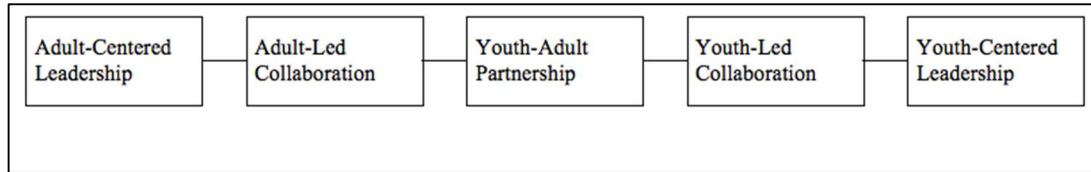
Figure 6. Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships According to Jones (2004)

The continuum addresses the question, *who is in charge in community work*? In another article, Jones (2006) summarizes the dimensions of each of the 5 modalities. These are reproduced in Table 8.

Table 8.

Five Types of Youth-Adult Relationships According to Jones (2006)[112]

Adult-Centered Leadership	Programs that are conceived and driven completely by adults, without employing any youth decision-making
Adult-Led Collaboration	Programs or situations where adults provide guidance for youth; youth have some input in decision making, but adults make final decisions
Youth-Adult Partnership	Point of stasis where youth and adults have equal chances in utilizing skills, decision-making, mutual learning and independently carrying out tasks to reach common goals
Youth-Led Collaboration	Youth primarily generate ideas and make decisions while adults typically provide assistance when needed
Youth-Centered Leadership	Programs or activities led exclusively by youth, with little or no adult involvement

On each pole of the continuum, either adults or youth are completely in control of the program. What is particularly interesting is the distinction between an adult-led collaboration and youth-adult partnerships. In an adult-led collaboration, youth have

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[112] The article does not include page numbers so the location of the table could not be referenced directly.

partial say in how things will be done but adults are instrumental in driving the relationship, for example as mentors. Youth-led collaborations depend on youth leadership with adults serving as helpers, especially in technical tasks such as evaluation. It is in the middle of the continuum where youth-adult partnerships are found. According to Jones and Perkins (2005), such partnership is "[a] fostered relationship between youth and adults where both parties have *equal potential* in making decisions, utilizing skills, mutual learning, and promoting change through civic engagement, program planning and/or community development initiatives" (Jones & Perkins, 2005, p. 1162). Referring to the phrase "equal potential" within this definition of youth-adult partnerships, Jones (2004) acknowledged that certain "factors (e.g., cultural, social, and environmental) may affect how readily members are to become engaged" (p. 10).

In their study of programs for high-school aged youth, Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005) distinguished between "youth-driven" and "adult-driven" programs. In the understanding of the authors, these should not be thought of as two poles of a continuum, but rather should be understood more flexibly as something that varies with each activity in a given program. According to these authors, both youth-driven and adult-driven programs have their benefits; the former emphasizes youth ownership, while the latter allows adults to pass on their knowledge. The facilitation of each requires adults to employ "balancing techniques" – either to provide prompts and monitoring in the case of youth-led programs or to solicit frequent feedback from young participants and "acts of humility, cultivating a culture of fairness and opportunity for youth" (p. 69) in adult-driven programs. Larson and colleagues observed: "trying to judge one approach to be

'better or worse' is the wrong objective. Different frameworks for youth–adult relationships may be suited for different situations" (Larson et al., 2005, p. 70).

VI.3. Emerging Significance of Youth-Adult Partnerships Research for this Study. The research behind youth-adult partnerships made me more sensitive to the issue of who is in charge in community development efforts with youth as participants. Furthermore, it resonated strongly with the accounts produced by youth and adults in the AYG.

The experience shared by Harry Wilson (2005) provides a succinct conclusion to the review of literature on youth-adult partnerships in this chapter:

> When I was a young youth worker I met Dr. Henry Maier (master youth worker) who told me something I've never forgotten: If adults work to be in sync with the young people they work with, to walk next to them and become part of a joint rhythm, they have the potential of being "in tune" with them. This point will mark a turning point in which children and adults will share moments of moving ahead together. (Wilson, 2005, p. 98)

In my dissertation, I now wanted to explore this "joint rhythm" in relationship to youth community involvement in the community. In the next chapter, I will integrate the findings of this study.

VII. TOWARDS THE ANSWERING OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

In reviewing all holistic, versus, *in vivo*, and metaphor codes in the study,[113] two

codes emerged as having broader impact across numerous points of data and in relation to

youth and adults working together and in the answering of the research question ***What is***

the nature of youth-adult interactions in the community? In my interpretation, each of

these two codes denotes a concept that helps answer Glaser's (1978) questions: "What is

happening in the data?" and "What is this data a study of?" (p. 57). Given the

significance of these two concepts in their ability to provide a description and explanation

of youth community involvement in the community, they emerged as the core categories

of my study: family and leadership.[114]

VII.1. Core Categories in this Study

VII.1.1. Family (*core category*). The notion of family – both literal and figurative

– emerged across almost all interviews and focus groups. Obviously, not all types of

interactions between youth and adults in the community resemble welcoming and

respectful interaction between youth and adults.[115] However, in my analysis of the

relationships between concepts mentioned by participants, family was the concept that

brought the study together. For this reason, I interpret family to be one of the two core

categories of this study.

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[113] These codes are summarized in Tables 10-16.

[114] As mentioned, the possibility of having more than one core category was brought up by Dey (2005). In a research that builds on my dissertation, perhaps a uniting one-core category will emerge, but even if that will the case, all grounded theory analysis is subject to revisions and amends (Charmaz, 2006).

[115] Some examples mentioned in this study (see section V.1.2.1) include the adverse reaction of some adults in the community to the youth who collected money for cancer research (FGY3) or the misunderstanding and talking back of one of the girls to the principal of her school in front of the water fountain (FGY1).

VII.1.1.1. Figurativeness (property). In the data, the category of family was

conceptualized by the means of a property that I call "figurativeness". In my

interpretation, this property refers to the distinction between figurative and metaphorical

meaning of the term. This property has two dimensions, which are reflected in the notions

of the word family that emerged in interviews and focus groups in this study: literal

meaning of family, and metaphorical meaning.

Literal Meaning of Family (dimension). In focus groups with youth attending

local elementary schools and parents of children attending these schools, I came to realize

the importance of biological families and their supportive networks in the lives of

residents in the community. Youth in FGY1-3 often mentioned their parents as their role

models. In some cases youth were active in the community because of their parents, as in

the example of the boy in FGY1, who stated that he volunteered with his mother and "her

friends out of campaigns" (FGY1, p. 26, l. 2). Parents of youth in the community also

often provided a moral compass to their children, as was pointed out by a girl in FGY3:

"your parents are your role models because they, they made you and also like they teach

you things like how to be better at, a better person and teach you from right and wrong

and all that" (FGY3, p. 5, ll. 5-7).

In FGA4-6, parents talked with interest about their own children. With

appreciation, they recalled instances when children and youth helped other people in the

community. A mother in FGA4 discussed a situation when her son helped their elderly

neighbor take care of her yard, and how she, as his mother, was proud of him. In another

instance in FGA6 a mother discussed how her son, a college student, actively sought

opportunities for community involvement with various nonprofit organizations.

"Family" was further highlighted by members of the AYG. Liz, who facilitated the AYG, commented: "The greatest assets truly are the families who live in the community and – particularly, the families that have lived there for, you know, 10-20 years" (INTA4, p. 3, ll. 13-15). The significance of families was stated explicitly in the values that were declared by youth in the AYG at the time of the group's inception:

> One of the strongest core values that [the youth] initially looked at that was "United families" … that they wanted to make sure that their families were kept united. And with all of this that was going on with [immigration law], that was a real big issue. (INTA2, p. 10, ll. 14-20)

In their statement of values, the youth highlighted how families – biological relatives – need to stay together; the youth experienced for that not to be the case in the community for various reasons. The AYG tried to address this issue by providing resources to families in the community at its events. As Andreas put it: "We give them our ideas how to help them out, we help the community and help their families out and staff like that" (INTY1, p. 1, ll. 27-28). As a participant observer at a number of events organized by the AYG,[116] I witnessed that members of the AYG, both youth and adults, indeed provided valuable resources to families in the community. And, in fact, the family focus of these events was stated on flyers that promoted them.[117]

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[116] See the description and analysis of OBS2, OBS3, and OBS4 in section V.7.

[117] One other perspective on family that showed up in the data (see section V.6.2.2) was the account of AYG youth about the support of their family for their participation in the AYG. Contrasting experiences were brought up by Nicole (support provided by family) and Rel ("My parents have never driven me once [chuckling]. I walk, I take the bus, I'm on my own" (FGY7, p. 21, ll. 1-2))."

Metaphorical meaning of family (*dimension*). Both youth from elementary schools and the AYG invoked another – figurative – meaning of family. This concept emerged in my metaphor coding.[118] This second dimension came up strongly in the following excerpt:

I: How do [adults in your community] treat youth overall?

Youth 1 (boy): Like they treat us like we're like…

Youth 2 (girl): Family.

Youth 1: …yeah, family.

Youth 3 (girl): They call us *mija* and *mijos*. [others chuckling]

Youth 2: Most of the time we're treated like a family.

[…]

I: …giving respect, being treated as a family as a son and daughter – what, what does it make you feel like when you, when the adults act like this towards you? What does it feel like?

Youth 1: That…

Youth 2: It means like you are like doing good and you're being respectful.

Youth 2: Like you're not being like disrespectful like when they talk to you, you actually say "hi" and not just pass them by.

Youth 2: "Good morning", "Good afternoon", "Good night".

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[118] See sections V.1.2.3, V.4.2.4, and V.6.2.3.

Youth 1: And like you're not setting a bad example for like many other kids or something.

(FGY3, pp. 9-11, ll. 5-14)

In this particular example, "family" was understood beyond the immediate biological family, because the nurturing processes extend beyond one's own parents or relatives. The youth in FGY3 mentioned that this happened when the youth were being respectful to the adults. The relationship in the second dimension can be reciprocal, as the same focus group revealed:

Youth 1 (girl): You take a shoulder to lean on like…

Youth 2 (boy): Yeah, a shoulder to lean on. That you're there for them…

I: Okay!

Youth 4: To not make them feel like, they're like alone.

Youth 1 (girl): Oh, yeah.

I: Interesting. [quietly]

Youth 1: To make them feel like they're the part of the family, too.

(FGY3, p. 32, ll. 15-27)

In this excerpt the youth in FGY3 discussed that older adults in the community may find themselves in need of a helping help and that one should assist these older adults. As one of the youth explained, it is important to "make them feel like they're the part of the family, too" (FGY3, p. 32, l. 27).

As was hinted in section V.1.2.3, the findings from FGY1-3 and FGA4-6 resonate with the norms of familism that are typical to the Latino culture and that include loyalty and sense of obligation towards one's extended family (Sabogal et al., 1987; Steidel &

Contreras, 2003; Zinn, 1982). Perhaps given the large percentage of Latinos living in the community (up to 40% according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2013) these norms extend into the vernacular of everyday interactions between adults and youth.

Taking the interpretation of the figurative meaning of family further, I would like to put forth the notion that the existence or non-existence of "family-like" ties might be applicable to overall interactions between residents in the community. For example, Mel from the AYG noticed "that many people do not come out and like talk to each other. They don't have much communication as they used to… So they are like more trapped in their houses and just like take care of themselves" (INTY3, p. 4, ll. 6-9). Another youth, Rel, also compared the status quo to an impression she had of the past: "it would be better if everybody knew each other's names like you see in like the old movies" (INTY2, pp. 4-5, ll. 31-1).

A different figurative notion of family came up in the conversations with youth and adults in the AYG through an *in vivo* code *the group has just become a family*. Monica from the AYG first brought up this idea:

Monica: I feel like that the group has just become a family.

I: Hmm…

Monica: We just share everything [smiling]

I: So you share things… that's an interesting comparison. So in… how is it, how has it become a family?

Monica: I feel like everyone's comfortable with everyone. There is no drama or anything, you know, it's not like: "Oh, I can't believe they're here today…" or

everyone is excited to see everyone, we always speak to each other and some of

our personal experiences, most of us aren't afraid to share.

(INTY6, p. 3, ll. 17-30)

The phrase "we just share everything" implies the existence of an environment, in which

"there is no drama" and where the youth are "excited to see everyone." Monica describes

an environment that allows the youth to open up and to talk to each other. This point

resonated with another youth during the focus group:

I: …what did you find the most interesting?

Nicole: Um, I, I think it was from Monica when she said that we became a

family…

Monica: Yeah, it's kind of like, everyone kind of said something that…

Nicole: Yeah…

Monica: …kind of inputted on that we were a family and that how much we have

fun together.

Nicole: Yeah, you know, we, we might not get along sometimes, but… like when

we're in here, we're a family, and we do what we have to do to try to plan these

events and get things done…

(FGY7, pp. 1-2, ll. 23-6)

This conversation further enriches this dimension of a family and the importance of

having fun together, and planning events even if the youth "might not get along

sometimes." Deanne, who facilitated the AYG, echoed these points:

Deanne: They, the reason we have this core group of about 12 is because they're a

family. It's not said but they're a family.

I: So, how are they, what, what… how are they a family? Can you elaborate on that?

Deanne: Because they, they, they banter with one another now. There is total openness and whereas before somebody might [indiscernible] nerded [sic] out about feeling that you were, you know, picking on me, or something like: No. (INTA2, p. 27, ll. 11-18)

In her account, Deanne saw a family as a place of "bantering" and "total openness" and acceptance. Interpreting what was said by the youth, Liz conjectures:

Liz: …I don't know exactly what that student was thinking of when they said, "We're like a family… because I think that [chuckles], you know, families are dynamic and, you know, you got ups and downs and people argue, and they might not get along all the time, but it's your family…

I: Hmm…

Liz: …you know, at the end of the day… it's your people. You're there for one another, and ultimately, um…

I: Hmm…

Liz: …you know, that's… that is the blessing and curse of family.

I: Hmm…

Liz: You know, so… I don't know. I think that knowing some of these families, it's probably like that, you know.

I: Yeah.

Liz: They love each other, and they're there, you know, to love and support one and each other, one another even when times are tough and people don't agree

…but I… would interpret, probably, the comment about being a family, because it is something you can count on, you know.

(INTA4, pp. 35-36, ll. 21-29)

Though at first not being sure about her interpretation of family, Liz, like the youth in the example above, discussed the notion of togetherness even in the midst of difficult times.

As discussed in sections V.4 and V.6, the work of the AYG revolved around the effort to create a "safe space." Within this safe space, the AYG became a "family" through the notion of "sharing everything", which allowed the youth to "break out of their shell", and express themselves. This notion was figurative, as it referred to the building of relationships between participants – youth and adults – in the AYG.

VII.1.2. Leadership (core category). It may not come off as a surprise that the concept of leadership was discussed directly by youth and adults in the AYG, which focuses on nurturing leadership. However, what emerged as new to me in the AYG was the distinction between adult-led and youth-led community work. Starting with INTA2, where Deanne discussed the notion of equality, I became interested in leadership also from the perspective of who is in charge. Further analysis of the data also revealed excerpts from focus groups with youth from the schools (FGY1-3) and adults whose children attend schools in the community (FGA4-6) that can be interpreted as signifying the practice of leadership.

VII.1.2.1. Figurativeness (*property*). Like the category of family, in the data pertaining to the category of leadership, literal and figurative meanings of the term were brought up. The property "figurativeness" refers to the difference between literal and

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metaphorical conceptualizations of leadership. These are discussed below as dimensions of this property of leadership.

Literal Meaning of Leadership (dimension). In focus groups FGY1-3 with youth and with parents of children attending schools in the community (FGA4-6), leadership was directly addressed in two instances. However, in each instance, I brought up this concept in my asking of questions. In FGY2 I asked the youth if there were "situations in, you know, everyday life when you are in a leadership position?" (FGY2, p. 22, ll. 3-4) Thinking that I would need to explain the term I elaborated: "that means that you make decisions and, and others kind of follow what you're saying" (FGY2, p. 22, ll. 4-5). In reply, the youth taking part in FGY2 provided me with the following examples: Student Government and taking care of younger siblings. On the second point, one girl elaborated: "like you were saying you're the oldest, you have to [indiscernible] everything's going to be perfect, 'cause sometimes your parents are at work or something and you're… if you're the one that'll do everything in the house" (FGY2, pp. 23-24, ll. 30-2).

In one of the focus groups with parents (FGA4) I asked participants if they had seen children and youth in the community in leadership positions. Again, I was the one who brought up the notion; I qualified it as "To be in charge of something" (FGA4, p. 15, l. 24). One of the mothers talked about her son who, in her opinion, had leadership qualities such as good character and an ability to bring people together. Another mother mentioned in reply how her son informed her when his teacher was running low on supplies. Then she and her friend went to a store and purchased these supplies for her son's class.

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I did not investigate the notion of leadership further in FGY1-3 and FGA4-6, because I felt that the concept was confusing to the participants. Rather, most of my questions were directed at instances of youth helping others in the community. Both youth and adults provided numerous instances of youth helping others. I am thinking of the boy who surprised his mother by helping his older neighbor remove weeds from her yard, as focus groups with parents revealed, or of the girl who discussed in FGY2 how she cleans up the community with other members of her church.

What caught my attention was the role of community service hours that incentivizes youth in the community to help others in the community. Furthermore, youth from FGY3 who participate in the School Support Program, shared with me some of the lessons that they have learned, which I interpret as signs of leadership. One example, in particular, refers to how the youth reflected on having "choices between right and wrong right" (FGY3, p. 47, l. 8) while resisting peer pressure. As one boy described, participating in illegal behaviors leads to strict consequences, as in the case of drug dealing. When caught by the police, "that's when you realize you had those choices between right and wrong. You had that chance to take the right way or the wrong way, but you took the wrong way anyway" (FGY3, p. 47, ll. 7-9).

As mentioned, instances of practicing leadership were discussed directly in the AYG. In fact, it was my very first interview with Andreas from the AYG that stimulated my interest in the concept of leadership:

I: …Are you learning something as a member of the Group?

Andreas: Yeah – leadership.

I: Leadership? Can you tell me more about what, what leadership is?

Andreas: Like, okay, like, the Group, first of all it wasn't so many people that came. Like… still certain people started coming like, it like led, it made them become leaders and it led people to join it too. So more, it made like a more in-depth join, and also so everyone started joining more...

I: So that'll be leadership? That's how you define leadership?

Andreas: Hmm…

(INTY1, p. 4, ll. 1-15)

Though his account did not provide a concrete definition of leadership, Andreas stated that the AYG enabled its youth participants to become leaders, which, in turn, led to the joining of more people. The adult facilitator, Deanne, brought other examples of leadership in INTA2. According to her, leadership included, among others:

- "the daily practice of … being present, fully present" (p. 44, ll. 23-24),

- "no fear of getting up and… speaking in front of the public" (p. 43, ll. 12-13),

- gaining "confidence through the exposure of going out into community, being present in community" (p. 43, ll. 21-22),

- "tolerance and understanding for another person's point of view – and listening to it" (p. 43, ll. 28-29),

- "critically evaluating what you're perceiving and making a judgment about it for yourself and how it affects you and your activities of daily life" (p. 44, ll. 28-29),

- "having a full bag of resources, community resources" (p. 45, l. 2),

- "the respect of interacting with adults in a level that is of mutual sharing and respect" (p. 45, ll. 6-7), and,

- "to interpret something in a thoughtful, meaningful way" (INTA2, p. 45, ll. 7-9).

Deanne's broad definition of leadership stemmed from her goal to help the youth develop mastery and skills that they could use in the community and in their careers. What united her account of leadership was the emphasis on the building of relationships with other people and the community as whole.

Metaphorical meaning of family (dimension). Also intriguing to me were the two metaphors used by youth in the AYG to describe leadership: leadership as chess and leadership as a relay race. In the words of Andreas:

> It makes us sound like we're kings in the game. So we're like manipulating our pieces in a sort of a way. So like everyone in our group if we're leaders, then… if we're all leaders, we all can't be kings (FGY7, p. 16, ll. 15-17).

According to Andreas, "So, that means we all have our own different roles but it's a necessary role. But we're not all just like the main one" (FGY7, p. 16, ll. 23-24). Andreas's sister brought up the metaphor of a relay race: "Everyone has their most important, you know, job and you're supposed to help each other out. So, let's say one person, their timing was way off and then you have to pick it up" (FGY7, p. 17, ll. 4-6).

Though the two metaphors operate with different imagery, they both refer to the notion of teamwork. In the first metaphor, this means that everyone, like pieces on a chessboard, is assigned different roles. In the metaphor of leadership as relay race, leadership refers to situations when different teammates compensate for each other's weaknesses.

VII.1.2.2. Being in Charge (property). The second property of leadership addresses the notion of who is being in charge in community building projects. In

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particular, it was the interviews with adults connected to the AYG that sensitized me to the difference between you-led and adult-led community work. In order to present how these are dimensions of the category "being in charge", the following excerpt from my interview with Christina was illustrative.

> I: What is the ideal relationship between adults and the youth in a program, whether it's… Student Government or it's an Active Youth Group…
>
> Christina: It depends on if it's supposed to be student-led or not.
>
> I: Okay.
>
> Christina: Is this really about the youth…
>
> I: Yeah.
>
> Christina: …and them orchestrating it…
>
> I: Hmm...
>
> Christina: …or not? Or are the youth just a part of this environment that really would be led by adults with input? To me, that makes the difference. If it's supposed to be student-led, then it's student-led, and the adults should be supporting the student-led. If not, then the adults should be doing most of the facilitating, and the students should be trying to give in the support as needed. Kinda like parents in a household.
>
> (INTA3, pp. 38-39, ll. 8-2)

Though this particular interview was not an assessment of the AYG, it made me aware and interested of the question, ***who is in charge?*** In the literature on youth-adult partnerships, which I then explored, this was a key consideration to make. The data in my

study revealed three dimensions of the property *being in charge*: youth leading, shared leading, and adults leading.[119]

Youth Leading (dimension). The youth in the AYG spoke about how their voice had power in the community and how they are in charge of the program. In the words of Naynay,

> It's not just like the teachers guiding us. No, we come up with the things, we come up with the whole idea of the fair, and stuff like that and it's us, it's like our own ideas, not like… and our slogan – I cannot remember it right now – our slogan: we made that! It wasn't just a teacher. (INTY7, p. 2, ll. 17-31)

Furthermore, another youth, Monica, noticed how leadership within the group had transformed over time:

> [L]ast year we all had to like sit down and actually work in like as an entire group for each other's projects – individual projects and give out ideas – and now we all can sit in our small groups and figure out: "This is what we're gonna do, this is how we're gonna accomplish it… and get it done." (FGY7, p. 27, ll. 16-19)

This movement towards assuming a greater responsibility throughout long-term program participation is found in literature on youth-adult partnerships (see, for example, Larson, et al., 2005). What emerged in my conversations with AYG youth were metaphors of leadership as chess, in which different figures have different roles, and as a relay race, in which all are there support one another, even if somebody does not do a good job.

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[119] The three emerged in the interviews and focus groups with AYG youth and adults (INTY1-7, FGY7, and INTA1-4). See the end of this section for an interpretation of this concept with regards to focus groups with you and adults connected to schools in the community (FGY1-3 and FGA4-6).

Shared Leading (dimension). Some of the adults spoke about how the activities in the group were based upon the idea of equality, especially Circle of Power, which focuses on "honoring [the youth's] story and it's... an idea of equality" (INTA2, p. 25, ll. 24-25). In the Circle of Power, all are invited to take part in the discussion and their ideas are being heard alongside of the adults. Furthermore, one of the youth, Nicole, discussed that during the events and in the classroom settings, "I think we're all in charge at some point" (FGY7, p. 35, l. 14). This notion resonated with the metaphor of a relay race that she brought up in the same focus group where "Everyone has their most important, you know, job and you're supposed to help each other out" (FGY7, p. 17, ll. 4-5).[120]

To label this balance and shared leadership using the *in vivo* code "good meshing" (INTA2, p. 19, l. 21), brought up by Deanne, is useful. In her understanding, this term meant "crossing over" (INTA2, p. 20, l. 1) and a good collaboration between adults and youth, which she had witnessed at the first Community Engagement Event.

Adults Leading (dimension). At the same time, some activities of the AYG outside of the classroom shifted towards the adults leading dimension, especially when it came to the logistics of organizing community events, bearing legal responsibility for the youth, who are all minors, and disseminating stories of the group in the form of a photo narrative. As an example Deanne mentioned in her interview that she had to secure a family's presence when she interacted with the youth outside of the classroom setting. This is characterized by her statement "It's for your protection; it's for everybody's

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[120] As mentioned in section V.4.2.2, this notion of leadership was brought up in contrast to the metaphor of "leadership as chess." Also in FGY7, Andreas explained the chess metaphor in a way that points more to the kind of leading that is not shared: "If we're all leaders, we all can't be kings" (FGY7, p. 16, l. 17).

protection" (INTA2, p. 34, ll. 17-18), which I coded *in vivo,* because the quote captured the gist of the concept.

To fully explore the implications of this *in vivo* code would require additional research beyond the scope of the study at hand. For now, I would like to at least mention that during the study I witnessed a dynamic between youth-driven and adult-driven leadership in the AYG. Ultimately, formal responsibility still rested in the hands of the adults who facilitated the AYG and who both initiated and formally ended the group. The facilitation of the AYG followed methods that were introduced and led by the adults in the group. However, through activities that stimulated the youth's self-expression and in the youth's planning and facilitation of booths for the CEE and the CHE, I witnessed a movement toward the dimensions of shared leading and youth leading in the AYG.

The notion of youth-led and adult-led community work was absent in the focus groups with youth and adults connected to the elementary schools in the community (FGY1-3 and FGA4-6).[121] My interpretation of this absence is based on the observation that the question of *who is in charge?* was theorized in the philosophies that underlined the work of the AYG. These included an emphasis on equality, building of relationships between participants, and the highlighting the importance of the collective over the individual (*in vivo* code *Ubuntu v. Descartes*). However, youth and adults from FGY1-3 and FGA4-6 discussed youth community involvement by providing examples of both youth-led and adult-led community work. In the case of the former, this dissertation

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[121] Similarly, the notion of shared-leading was neither an explicit theme, nor implicit in the focus groups with youth from schools in the community. As with other findings in this study, further work would be required to explore the differences between the work of the AYG and other youth programs in the community.

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presented examples of how youth took an initiative to help other people in the community. School programs such as community service hours requirements for students, represent the latter.

VII.2. Theoretical Integration

In answering of the sensitized research question ***What is the nature of youth-adult interactions in the community?*** I now present a visual model of the core categories that are derived from the data presented in this dissertation (Figure 7).
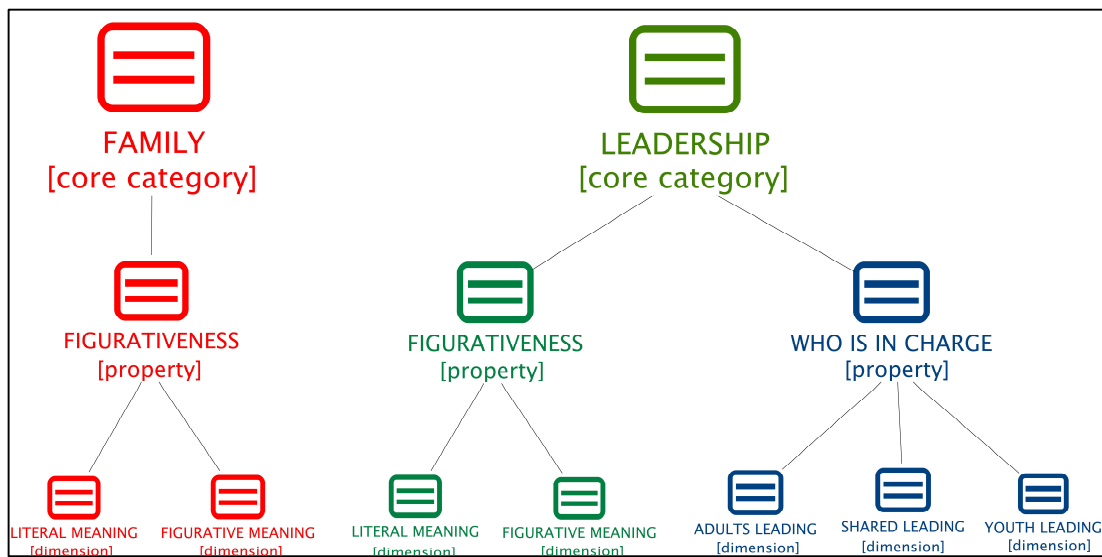
Figure 7. Visual Map of Core Categories in this Study

For each of the two categories, family and leadership, the properties and dimensions are shown. Yet, a question remains to be explored: *what is the relationship between the two categories?*

My tentative answer at this point refers to some of the data from interviews and focus groups with adults and youth from the AYG. The only statement made by a research participant that connects the two categories directly is a statement in relation to the AYG that was made by Christina:

If it's supposed to be student-led, then it's student-led, and the adults should be

supporting the student-led. If not, then the adults should be doing most of the

facilitating, and the students should be trying to give in the support as needed.

Kinda like parents in a household. (INTA3, pp. 38-39, ll. 29-2)

In her view, an adult-led model of community work with youth is more like a household,

which, I interpret in the context of the whole interview with Christina as a family setting.

Yet, there are other relationships between the two categories that can be theorized.

In their figurative forms, leadership and family, as discussed by youth from the AYG,

overlapped. In the words of Monica, the AYG "has just become a family" (INTY6, p. 3,

l. 18). This resonates with the understanding of leadership, which is based on teamwork,

as in the metaphor of a relay race brought by Nicole reveals. And, family and leadership

were also intertwined in the philosophy of *equality* that, as the interview with Deanne

revealed, was instrumental in the methods used by the AYG.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The work on this dissertation started out as an attempt to understand community involvement of youth. I suggested that the term commonly used in literature, *youth civic engagement*, was limiting in its reach: it lacked definitional clarity, it depended on established political institutions, and it did not generally take into account barriers to involvement. In order to overcome these limitations, I put forth the term *youth community involvement* with the hope to investigate the issue more holistically, which was suggested by authors such as VeLure-Roholt and colleagues (2008). I was interested both in formal and informal helping behaviors of youth. Alluding to the research on positive youth development, which focuses on the mutually supportive effects of youth development and community development (Lerner, 2004), I set out to explore community characteristics as well. I wanted to address a gap highlighted by Evans (2007) that these characteristics are often missing in research on youth community involvement.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the community itself, drawing from my fieldwork. Then I will reflect on the two categories – family and leadership – which emerged in my analysis as viable in providing an analytical link between various sources of data. Lastly, I will reflect on the contribution of my study contributes to existing literature.

VIII.1. Community Environment as Perceived by Participants in the Study

The community where I conducted the dissertation is an urban area in the United States. My intention was to explore the environment of the community in order to frame my findings. With its population of about 30,000, the community is a place of both opportunities and challenges. In some of the focus groups I conducted, youth and adults

appreciated supportive relationships with their neighbors. Many participants in my research study identified families and children as the community's biggest assets. Furthermore, youth from schools in the community often mentioned parents and teachers as their role models. As parents in FGA4-6 testified, community members often relied on the help of their neighbors, such as watching each other's houses when they were away from home. The strong links between some residents were also noticeable in the existence of the economic lending system "tanda", which in the words of one of the parents, symbolized "unity and trust" (FGA5, p. 12, l. 22).

Yet, residents in the community also deal with challenges. The youth in FGY1 and FGY3 used the term *ghetto* to talk about the negative aspects of their community. In their understanding, ghetto denoted old, poor learning environments, and messiness. According to them, a ghetto was a place that was not of worth to visit, and where a lot of things happened, including "gunshots, people outside like half naked… It's not the quietest neighborhood ever" (FGY3, p. 4, ll. 16-17). Furthermore, a ghetto had many smokers and, overall, as a place "it's not that good" (FGY3, p. 4, l. 23).

Youth and adults who were members of a youth development program that this study refers to as the Active Youth Group noted some negative characteristics of the community. These included aspects of community life such as lack of things to do for children and youth, the observation that people were being trapped in their houses, and aspects of defensiveness in the lives of youth who are facing traumas. The notion that that there were not as many activities for children and youth in the community was prevalent in the focus groups with youth and adults from district schools but also came up in some of the interviews. Liz, for example, distinguished between activities that were available to

children in school and a lack of extracurricular activities outside of schools. Mel's observation that residents were "trapped in their houses" (INTY3, p. 4, l. 8) was corroborated by my own observations in the community when, during my stroll through the community, I encountered only a few people outside.[122]

Regarding the lives of children and youth, what caught my attention was the notion that some of the children and youth in the community were experiencing traumas. This idea came up in the interview with Liz: "I think there's an element of defensiveness that comes out of youth who are facing a lot of trauma in their lives" (INTA4, p. 9, ll. 18-19). Traumas existent in the community included inadequate access to basic human services, or lack of documentation, all of which were part of "poor learning environments" (FGY1, p. 7, l. 21). Facing trauma, children and youth find it difficult to "let down their guard" (INTA4, p. 11, l. 6) and instead they might engage in fights and arguments with their peers.

VIII.2. Reflecting on the Categories of Family and Leadership

In the community, children and youth are actively helping their neighbors, with or without their families, by tending their garden, volunteering through school and church programs, and by providing "a shoulder to lean on" to those who need help in the community. To some this means acquiring community service hours that help them fulfill school requirements and boost their college application. Many help without thinking

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[122] Yet, there have also been contrary experiences, as expressed by one of the youth from FGY1: "It's pretty ghetto but like everyone gets along… It's like a community that all like everyone knows each other so like if you walk, you can say 'Hi' and like you start talking and like if you go like to [neighboring community], you don't know anyone. So basically, this is a ghetto place for you" (FGY1, pp. 3-4, ll. 22-23).

about community service hours, as was visible in the case of the twelve-year-old who embraced and advocated for his younger peer who struggled with a mental disability.

While hearing these stories, I focused on the concept of youth-adult relationships in community work. I sensitized my research question to: *What is the nature of youth-adult interactions in the community?* While analyzing the data as a whole in the answering of this question, two categories emerged: family and leadership. In the case of both categories, participants of my study brought up literal and figurative meanings.

As a core category, family binds together some of the types of relationships between youth and adults in the community – starting with literal familial and continuing to describe the norms of trust that exist between adults and youth. In the community where I conducted my fieldwork, familial ties seem to be highly valued and their importance is likely to be heightened because of the high proportion of the population being Latino. The evidence is the statement made by one of the youth about adults in the community: "They call us *mija* and *mijos*" (FGY3, p. 9, l. 22). Furthermore, as Liz, one of the adults connected to the AYG recalled, "The greatest assets truly are the families who live in the community" (INTA4, p. 3, ll. 13-14).[123]

The second core category in this study, leadership, denotes mastery or a set of specific skills and attitudes. AYG members discussed leadership directly. Youth in the AYG used two metaphors to grasp the notion of leadership: leadership as chess and leadership as a relay race. In both metaphors, leadership meant teamwork and shared responsibilities of members of the group.

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[123] Interestingly, the value placed on family resonated with almost all participants in the study – youth and adults, and residents and outsiders to the community alike.

Another property of leadership emerged regarding who is in charge. This notion came up in the AYG as a difference between leadership done by youth and leadership done by adults. Interestingly, only adults connected to the AYG discussed it explicitly in detail; youth from the AYG alluded to it only on a few occasions but it was not something on which they put a lot of emphasis.[124]

In focus groups with youth and adults connected to district schools, leadership was discussed explicitly when I brought it up myself through questions such as if there were situations in when youth in the community were in leadership positions? Rather, leadership of youth was implicit in the examples of youth's helping behaviors.

Looking at both categories together, my study hints that a theoretical link exists between them, but more work is necessary in order to fully explore this relationship.

VIII.3. Adding to Existing Literature

The theoretical contribution of my study lies in the way it calls for a conceptual broadening of the range of behaviors through which youth serve as active contributors in the life of their community. By being open to multiple forms of helping behaviors, my work was not limited to studying behaviors tied solely to existing political structures. Furthermore, inspired by authors such as Christens and Dolan (2011) and Lerner (2004), I explored community characteristics to provide a more detailed picture of the environment, in which youth community involvement takes place.

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[124] Two instances, already referred to in section V.4.2, are exemplary. The first is Naynay's statement "when I go into the Active Youth Group, I have a voice, I have this power and it's not just adults telling me what's wrong and what's… and that you have to follow that" (INTY7, p. 3, ll. 20-22). The second comment, "we're all in charge at some point" (FGY7, p. 35, l. 14), was Nicole's answer to my question who was in charge at the Community Engagement Event.

Furthermore, in the answering of my research question, my study offered the analytical categories of family and leadership, understood both figuratively and literally as concepts worthy of consideration in community building efforts and in the research of the community involvement of youth.

By looking at the relationships between youth and adults in community building work, my study provides a new perspective to the literature on youth adult partnerships (Camino, 2000; Camino & Zeldin, 2002a; Jones, 2004; Lofquist, 1989). Specifically, it enriches Jones' model of the continuum of youth-adult relationships (2004) by discussing some of the factors that may influence whether the youth or the adults are in charge of various components of a particular youth development program. As literature on youth-adult partnerships shows, the successful implementation of a youth-adult partnership is influenced by the ability of a youth program to strike an appropriate balance between adult leadership and youth leadership. Larson and colleagues (2005) claim that neither is necessarily better or worse. Within the AYG, I observed a movement between "youth leading" and "adults leading". What is particularly important is the notion that certain factors influence this movement. A movement towards "youth leading" was stronger in activities that focused on self-expression and in the design of events, such as the youth's presentations of issues pertinent to the community. "Adults leading" was more visible in the formulation of philosophy and logistics of the AYG, in the holding of legal responsibility for the youth, and in the founding and ending of the AYG. The movement between youth-led and adult-led community work was not directly mentioned by youth enrolled in elementary schools and adults whose children attend these schools. Further research would benefit from focusing on this issue among these groups.

IX. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In the answering of the research question ***What is the nature of youth-adult interactions in the community?*** my study concludes that a diversity of experiences were expressed by participants. These are captured in the categories of family and leadership that emerged in my fieldwork. In the focus groups with youth attending schools and with adults whose children were enrolled in these schools, the importance of family was discussed both literally and metaphorically. In its literal meaning, both youth and children expressed an appreciation of other family members: the youth generally talked highly of their parents and vice versa. Furthermore, the youth also discussed familial relationship with adult neighbors. The Active Youth Group set "united families" as one of its main values. Furthermore, the youth and adults from the AYG talked about the relationship between members of the group using the concept of family as a metaphor. The second category of this study – leadership – provides another perspective to the answering of the research question through the distinction between youth-led and adult-led community work. These concepts are derived directly from interviews, focus groups, and observations of activities of the AYG; they did not appear directly in the data from FGY1-3 and FGA4-6. My interpretation of the data is that the nature of youth-adult interactions is also connected to the question of who is in charge. As the literature on youth-adult partnerships reveals, in youth development and community development programs where adults are working together, some parts of the programming are more adult-led and some are more youth-led. Building on this literature, I observed factors that seem to influence who will be in charge.

My study highlights the categories of family and leadership as worthy of consideration in efforts that promote youth community involvement. Other researchers have already studied the two categories. However, my dissertation presents them in a new light, as they derived from my analysis of youth-adult interactions. More research needs to be conducted in order to crystallize the relationship between those two categories. Furthermore, these categories have the potential to be used in programmatic evaluations.[125] Building on this dissertation, potential questions in such evaluative study might include:

- *During which events and activities you felt the most that you were part of a "family"?*

- *During what activities did you feel like you and other youth were in charge?*

- *When were adults mostly in charge?*

- *What specific leadership skills are you learning in the program?*

- *What do you wish to have learned that you have not learned during your participation?*

It is my hope that findings in this study will be useful to those working with youth in leadership programs as well as to youth who are participating in them. The living conditions in any given community may be difficult and many youth can find themselves marginalized or in lack of resources. As Putnam (2015) and others have shown, children and youth in many communities across the United States face difficult conditions that

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[125] Adult facilitators of the AYG expressed interest in conducting an evaluation of the program impact of the youth participant's academic achievement. Building on this dissertation, my recommendation is for such evaluation to focus on the categories of family and leadership in the analysis of the program's delivered outcomes.

prevent them from fully participating in the lives of their communities. Fortunately, across the nation, teachers, youth workers, and community organizers are working closely with youth to meet the youth's career and personal goals and to contribute to the whole community in the process. What gives me hope for the future are the countless youth who do want to make a difference and leave a positive mark in their communities. While working on this dissertation, I was pleased to meet such youth and adults, who opened the doors for me and expressed their willingness to learn with me.

IX.1. Questions for Future Research

In the book *Community. The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block (2009) states that meaningful community conversations are carried by the belief that "questions themselves are important, more important than the answers" (p. 75). I am personally much excited that the conversation about meaningful community involvement of youth can continue beyond this dissertation. Alluding to Block's statement, I would like to propose that future studies of youth community involvement explore the following seven questions:

(1) *What are the characteristics of communities where the notion of families – literal and metaphorical – is strongest?* My study focused on one particular community in the United States where the influences of the Latino culture are strong. Would different themes emerge in communities in other part of the U.S. and around the world?

(2) *What are the long-term effects in the lives of youth who participated in the AYG?* My study provided insights into the work of the AYG throughout its 3-year existence. In what ways will participation in the program impact the lives of its

youth participants 10 or 20 years from now? Will they still be living in the community? Will they still be active as volunteers and/or community organizers? A longitudinal study would be able to answer these questions.

(3) *To what extent do categories of families and leadership comply or challenge how established political institutions address youth community involvement?* This question comes from my initial review of literature where I noted limitations of the commonly used term *youth civic engagement* and its political implications.

(4) *What are some historical philosophical conceptions of equality between youth and adults in youth development programs?* The study of the AYG revealed interesting concepts pertinent to this question: Ubuntu, gathering, and facilitation. A philosophical exploration could review and conceptualize notions of intergenerational equality across centuries and cultures.

(5) *What legal barriers exist in the creation of youth-adult partnerships?* This dissertation hinted at some of the implications of rules governing work with youth. Future research could explore in depth the dynamic of how these rules impact the implementation of youth programs. On this note, researchers should investigate the trade-offs between "protecting the youth" and being able to create an environment, in which the energy and spontaneity of youth can be released and which allow youth to take a full ownership of their contributions to the community.

(6) *How does the participation of researcher influence the study of youth-adult partnerships?* In this dissertation I used a specific methodological approach. Researchers studying similar topics could experiment across multiple settings

with taking a fully participant and activist role on the one hand, or a completely uninvolved role in the community, on the other hand. Similarly, how does the status of insider / outsider influence the interpretation of findings in a study?

 (7) *What are the benefits and limitations when facilitators of youth programs are outsiders to the community where they serve?* As was mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the adults working with AYG youth mainly identified themselves as outsiders to the community. Would they engage differently with the AYG youth if they were *from* the community and *of* the community?

(8) *How reflective are participants of youth-adult partnerships about the delegation of leadership roles in each particular group?* This last question excites me most. Having worked in facilitative positions in other youth programs, I often found it difficult to strike a balance between being in charge and having the youth take control. Building on this dissertation, I am now interested in exploring ways how leadership (and its dynamism) could be openly discussed among group members who differ in terms of experience, age, status, or formal responsibility for the group's success. Oftentimes, organizations and individuals enter a community with a specific framework in mind and then adapt it to the particulars of the community setting. But what if the framework itself became the first subject of discussion? How would such a reflection be facilitated? Who should facilitate it – an insider or an outsider to the group? In this context, how might adults go about empowering youth to make administrative and logistical decisions in programs where youth and adults work hand in hand? And how to go about these goals while valuing the unique contributions of both youth and adults?

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X. POSTFACE

"Pay it forward!"

Motto promoted by Nicole from the Active Youth Group

"The Holy One invited the seeker into her cell and offered her a cup of tea. The seeker accepted the drink and watched as the Holy One filled her cup with tea and kept pouring. When she could take it no longer, she said, 'The cup is overfull. No more will go into it.' The Holy One replied, 'Like the cup, you are full of your own truths, ideas and opinions. You cannot be enlightened until you first empty your cup.'"

Reproduced from Mary Lou Kownacki's book *The Nonviolent Moment* (2002, p. 19)

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APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK

Table 9.

List of Interviews, Focus Groups, and Observations

Exact dates are hidden in order to keep the study anonymous.

What	Date	N	Participants	Length
Active Youth Group – video interview	Fall, 2013	3	3 youth (1 male, 2 females)	INTY1: 5min INTY2: 6min INTY3: 6min
Active Youth Group – video appearance only		6	2 youth (1 male, 1 female) 4 adults (3 females)	N/A
Active Youth Group – video interview	Fall, 2013	4	4 youth (4 females)	INTY4: 9min INTY5: 7min INTY6: 7min INTY7: 4min
Active Youth Group – video appearance only		3	3 youth (2 males, 1 female)	N/A (short)
Observation of a community event organized by the Active Youth Group	Spring, 2014	N/A	N/A	OBS2: about 180min
Youth from School 1 – focus group	Spring, 2014	9	9 youth (3 males, 6 females)	FGY1: 37min
Youth from School 2 – focus group	Spring, 2014	8	8 youth (4 males, 4 females)	FGY2: 38min
Youth from School 2 participating in SSP – focus group	Spring, 2014	6	6 youth (1 male, 5 females)	FGY3: 38min
Observation of a community event organized by the Active Youth Group (which included 2 informal research conversations)	Fall, 2014	N/A	N/A	OBS3: about 120min
Spanish speaking adults attending weekly morning meetings at School 2 – focus group	Fall, 2014	6	6 adults (6 females)	FGA4: 67min

Spanish speaking adults attending weekly morning meetings at School 1 with a parent from School 3 present – focus group	Fall, 2014	6	6 adults (6 females)	FGA5: 59min
Key informant interview 1	Fall, 2014	1	1 adult (1 female)	INTA1: 44min
Spanish speaking adults attending weekly morning meetings at School 4 – focus group	Fall, 2014	10	10 adults (10 females)	FGA6: 74min
Active Youth Group – follow up focus group	Fall, 2014	5	5 youth (1 male, 4 females) already interviewed in INTY1-7	FGY7: 60min
Observation of community environment	Fall, 2014	N/A	N/A	OBS1: 142min
Key informant interview 2	Spring, 2015	1	1 adult (1 female) already appeared in video	INTA2: 85min
Key informant interview 3	Spring, 2015	1	1 adult (1 female)	INTA3: 74min
Key informant interview 4	Spring, 2015	1	1 adult (1 female) already appeared in video	INTA4: 66min
Observation of a community event organized by the Active Youth Group	Spring, 2015	N/A	N/A	OBS4: about 120min
Total number of unique participants – video only	Fall, 2014	7	5 youth, 2 adults	
Total number of unique participants – interviews and focus groups	Fall, 2014 – Spring, 2015	56	30 youth, 26 adults	

APPENDIX B

FRAMING QUESTIONS USED IN INTERVIEWS, VIDEO INTERVIEWS, AND

FOCUS GROUPS

Framing questions used in FGY1-3

The framing questions in FGY1-3 generally focused on the free time activities in which the youth engaged, how they described their community, what helping behaviors they engaged in within the community, and interactions they have had with adults in the community.

- *Please tell me about yourself…*
- *What do you do in your free time?*
- *Who are your role models? Who do you look up to and why?*
- *Tell me about where you live: What does your neighborhood look like? What do people say about your neighborhood? What are the best things about your neighborhood?*
- *Who are the people living in your neighborhood?*
- *What do you wish for your neighborhood?*
- *Can you describe the time when you felt the most welcome / at home in your neighborhood?*
- *Can you describe a time when you felt the least welcome / at home in your neighborhood?*
- *How are people helping others in your neighborhood? How are your friends and classmates helping others?*
- *How are you helping others in the neighborhood?*
- *What do other adults say when you help others?*
- *When, in your life have you "made a difference"?*
- *Can you describe a situation in your life when you were a leader?*
- *How do adults in your neighborhood act toward youth?*
- *What activities does your school organize to make a difference in the community? Have you taken part in them?*
- *In what other ways do you think you can help your neighborhood?*
- *Have you ever been invited to any events to discuss your neighborhood?*

Framing questions used in FGA4-6

The framing questions in FGA4-6 were focused on the participants' connection to the community, community characteristics, helping behaviors in the community, and the engagement and leadership of youth in the community. One of the groups was also asked about an informal lending system practiced by some in the community called "tanda."

- *What is your name and what is your connection to the [community]?*
- *What does the neighborhood where you live look like? / What is it like to live in your neighborhood?*
- *What do you like the best about your neighborhood?*
- *What do you like the least about your neighborhood?*
- *What do you wish for your community?*
- *When you want to get something done in your neighborhood what do you do? Who do you call to help?*
- *Who in the community do you trust? Who trusts you?*
- *What are children and youth in your neighborhood like?*
- *What stories can you tell me about how children and youth helped someone in your neighborhood?*
- *Can you share with me some stories of when children and youth volunteered in your neighborhood?*
- *Have you seen children and youth in any leadership positions?*
- *When you see children and youth help others in the community, what do you think about it?*
- *Who else should I talk in order to learn more about children and youth?*
- *Is there anything you'd like to add?*

Framing questions used in INTY1-7

The framing questions used in INTY1-7 were the first questions that I used in my fieldwork. Given that I was making a video about the AYG, I was interested in learning about the AYG in general, which included how the youth defined their community and the AYG, their lessons learned, and the reaction of peers and members of their family.

- *What is your community?*
- *Who belongs to your community?*
- *What is the Active Youth Group?*
- *Who belongs to the Active Youth Group?*
- *What specific projects are you involved in?*
- *What do you do in the Active Youth Group?*
- *What does your family (parents, other family members) think of your involvement in the Active Youth Group?*
- *What do your peers (friends, classmates) think of your involvement in the Active Youth Group?*
- *What news things have you learned in the Active Youth Group?*

I also asked some of the youth:

- *What do you wish for your community?*

Framing questions used in FGY7

The framing questions in FGY7 revolved around the AYG video, which I played at the beginning of the focus group. Additionally, I reacted to some the youth's stories from the AYG and then I explored additional themes such as leadership, participation at events led by the AYG, and the youth's career choices.

- *In the video, was there something that got your interest?*
- *Future careers - are the rest of you also seeing connections between what you're doing now in the Group and your future careers?*
- *What brings you here, then?*
- *How would you describe a member of the Active Youth Group? What is the typical member of the Active Youth Group like?*
- *So what about the other youth? How would you describe them?*
- *Was there anything that you would add to the video?*
- *What do you look up to in the community in terms of leadership?*
- *Is there somebody in the community that looks up to you?*
- *What has happened in the Group since the video was made?*
- *What are some of the examples of the things you've been working on in your groups?*
- *What happened at the Community Health Event? Can you tell me how that was, how that went?*
- *Why did people come to this particular event? How did it create the atmosphere that they came?*
- *Who was in charge at the event?*
- *When you look at people attending let's say the Community Health Event like visitors people who are not organizers what did they do at the event?*
- *I want to talk to people whose experiences may be completely different from yours. Who should I talk to?*
- *What should I do in my research? Do you think the interviews and focus groups are an effective way to stir conversations?*

Based on a prompt that came up, I also asked of the youth:

- *What do you want to do in your career?*

Framing questions used in INTA1-4

Each conversation with adults connected to the Active Youth Group varied in content. This was mainly because of two reasons. First, all four participants had many interesting things to say. I listened carefully as they talked about the Active Youth Group and the community and asked probing questions about things that caught my interest. Second, in the fashion of emergent design, my research questions were sensitized throughout the study, leading to variations in my interview protocols.

- *What is your connection to the community?*
- *What does your work entail?*
- *What does the neighborhood where you live look like?*
- *What are the residents and families that live in this community?*
- *What do you like the best about the community? (What are the community's assets?)*
- *What do you like the least about your neighborhood? (What are the needs?)*
- *When you want to get something done in your neighborhood what do you do?*
- *Who in the community do you trust?*
- *Who trusts you?*
- *What are children and youth in your neighborhood like?*
- *What is it for them to live in the community?*
- *How do adults in your neighborhood act towards children and youth?*
- *Can you share with me some stories of when children and youth volunteered / helped somebody in the community?*
- *In what ways are children and youth involved in the community?*
- *What programs (volunteer, community service) are available to children and youth to encourage them to be active in the community?*
- *What is the role of community service hours in the community?*
- *What is the story of the AYG? What has been happening there?*
- *How are you personally involved in the AYG?*

- *What has happened in the YAC since it was started? Please describe some of the event that have taken place events… Which evens did you participate in?*
- *What are the youth in the AYG like? Are they different from their peers?*
- *What are used in the organizing of the AYG?*
- *You have seen the video that we made in 2013/2014. Did it provide a good illustration of the AYG? What would you add to it?*
- *In the video that we made, one of the youth said that they are learning leadership in the AYG. What does leadership mean to you?*
- *In the video one of the youth referred to the AYG as a family – what is your take on this?*
- *What is the relationship between family and equality?*
- *What is the collaboration between youth and adults like in the AYG like?*
- *What have you personally learned from the youth in the AYG?*
- *Who should I talk to next, who would be familiar with it?*
- *Is there anything you'd like to add?*

APPENDIX C

CODEBOOKS

Table 10.

Holistic Coding Codebook of Focus Groups 1-3

Legend: ⊗ parent code; ∠ child code; ↵ grandchild code

#	Code	Description
1	⊗ Positive community characteristics	Characteristics of the community and neighborhoods in which the youth live or go to school that are seen as positive.
1.1	∠ Safety / security	One instance of when the youth mentioned that they felt safe / secure in the community.
1.2	∠ Playing soccer	Codes that label the instances when playing soccer was given as an example of what the youth liked about their community.
1.3	∠ Feeling welcome	I asked the youth about instances when they felt the most welcome in the community. The answers were labeled with this code.
1.4	∠ Good community	General remarks through which the youth described that their community is good or that other people in the community were nice.
1.5	∠ Quiet	Quietness was discussed as a positive aspect of the community.
1.6	∠ Social residents	Excerpts, in which the youth discussed how friendly or social were other people in the community.
2	⊗ Negative community characteristics	Excepts when youth talked about things that they did not like about the community.
2.1	∠ Not many people go out	Statements when the youth discussed that not many residents go out.
2.2	∠ People hurting themselves	In one case a youth talked about how it is important provide psychic support to those who might otherwise hurt themselves.
2.3	∠ Graffiti / vandalism	Excerpts regarding graffiti and vandalism as something negative in the community.
2.4	∠ Visually unappealing	Discussion about historical figures whom the youth see as role models or who are inspiring in regards to the AYG.
2.5	∠ Sexual offenders	As a negative aspect of living in the community participants discussed the presence sexual offenders. This code is also listed in FGA4-6.
2.6	∠ Crime / violence / gangs	Excerpts in which the youth talked about violence, crime and gangs in the community.
2.7	∠ Ghetto	Youth descriptions of the community as a "ghetto" and the meaning of this term.

#	Code	Description
2.8	∠ Loud	Excerpts when youth mentioned loudness as something negative in the community.
3	⊗ Children and youth	Excerpts about the lives of children and youth as the youth described them in their introductions and elsewhere in the focus groups.
3.1	∠ Free time activities	In the introduction of each focus group, I asked the youth what they do in their free time. The answers were coded with this code.
3.2	∠ Lack of opportunities	This is a code from the parent focus groups that pertains to a desire to have more opportunities for free time activities. Some of the youth expressed the same wishes.
3.3	∠ Having a voice	Replies specific to my questions about whether other people in the community listen to what the youth are saying. I also included under this code situations when somebody was looking up to the youth.
3.4	∠ Hopes for the future	This code pertains to a discussion in FGY3 where I asked the youth about what they would like to do in the future.
4	⊗ Calling the Police	There were two instances when I asked the youth how they would achieve a certain change and some of the youth desired to have more police patrolling.
5	⊗ Helping behaviors	This code was used for instances of community involvement and helping behaviors of the youth in their community.
5.1	∠ Adults helping others	This code pertains to examples and situations in which the youth talked about an adult helping somebody else in the community.
5.2	∠ Children and youth helping others	Helping behaviors through which children and youth (either the respondents or other youth) helped others. This code was used generally to identify volunteering/ helping in the community that was facilitated through the following settings:
5.2.1	↵ School	Activities such as student government, a neighborhood cleaning program, school garden, fundraiser for a nonprofit, donation of clothes, etc.
5.2.2	↵ Church	Activities such as cleaning the neighborhood, helping the homeless.
5.2.3	↵ Family	Helping parents take part in political campaigns or clean the neighborhood, helping at home with siblings.

#	Code	Description
5.2.4	↵ Informal	Examples of helping neighbors (e.g. gardening) or stranger (e.g. on the bus or in the street).
6	⊗ Ideas for community involvement	Ideas for community involvement that currently was not available in the community.
7	⊗ Importance of helping others	Replies to my question about why helping others is important.
8	⊗ Rewards for helping others	Excerpts when youth talked about rewards in relation to being involved in community events.
9	⊗ Youth-adult interactions	Situations or examples from community life, in which youth and adults either communicated with each other or influenced each other's lives.
9.1	∠ Nice	Examples of interactions with adults in the community where the adults treated the youth nicely.
9.2	∠ Rudeness	Examples of situations when youth experienced that adults were being rude to them.
9.3	∠ No interactions	One coded instance in which a youth mentioned that they do not interact with adults.
9.4	∠ Putting down	Examples of ways in which adults discourage children from doing something good.
9.5	∠ Encouragement	Words of support provided to the youth by adults when the youth did something positive for the community.
9.6	∠ Community events	Interaction between youth and adults during community events.
9.7	∠ Adults as role models	At the beginning of each focus group, I asked the youth who their role models were. Most often the following were given: parents, teachers, and sportspeople.

Table 11.

Holistic Coding Codebook of Focus Groups 4-6

Legend: ⊗ parent code; ∠ child code; ↵ grandchild code

#	Code	Description
1	⊗ Positive community characteristics	Positive aspects of the community mentioned by the parents, especially when I prompted them to reflect on positives.
1.1	∠ Safety / security	Some parents mentioned they felt safe in their community.

#	Code	Description
1.2	∠ Social residents	Parents' appreciation of the friendliness and sociability of their neighbors.
1.3	∠ Vigilance among residents	Some parents talked about how they and their neighbors are vigilant and look after the community.
1.4	∠ Tranquility	Quietness and "tranquility" given as a positive characteristic of the community.
1.5	∠ Good community	One parent in FGA5 mentioned that the community is a good community while talking about opportunities for learning.
2	⊗ Negative community characteristics	Negative aspects of the community mentioned by the parents, especially when I prompted them to reflect on things they did not like about their community.
2.1	∠ Crime	Many parents gave examples of criminal activities.
2.2	∠ Graffiti	Some parents mentioned graffiti and vandalism as a negative.
2.3	∠ Drugs	In FGA6, one parent alluded to the presence of drugs in the community.
2.4	∠ Bad neighborhood	One parents mentioned that it is a bad neighborhood.
2.5	∠ Unorganized	Some parents lamented that the community and its people need to organize themselves more.
2.6	∠ Problems with garbage	Some parents experienced problems with dirt and messiness regarding the use of garbage bins and that people from outside of the community use their own garbage.
2.7	∠ Homeless people	One parent mentioned as a negative that there are homeless people who sleep by the canal and are close to the kids.
2.8	∠ Sexual offenders	As in the case of focus groups 1-3 with youth, parents expressed their fear of sexual offenders.
2.9	∠ Unsafe	A number of parents mentioned that the community is unsafe.
3	⊗ Relationship with other community members	This code refers to the relationships between the parents and other community members such as their neighbors.
3.1	∠ Trusting people	Some parents trust and rely on other such as having their neighbors watch them house when they are gone.
3.2	∠ Not trusting people	In FGA4 some mentioned that they do not trust other people in the community.

#	Code	Description
3.3	∠ Isolation of a new comer	One parent who moved into the community recently said was she is struggling to make connections with others.
4	⊗ Getting things done	This code refers to answers to my question: "When you want to get something done in the community, what do you do?"
4.1	∠ School PTO	Some parents discussed how they relied on the school PTO.
4.2	∠ Calling the City	Some parents call the city when they need help with things like garbage.
4.3	∠ Calling the Police	Others shared their experiences with calling the police in cases of emergency.
4.4	∠ Do not know	Some focus group participants said they did not know whom to call for help.
5	⊗ Children and youth	This code refers to the parents' talk about children and youth in the community. I asked them about what children and youth in the community were like.
5.1	∠ Lack of opportunities	In all focus groups, parents commented on the lack of opportunities for children and youth to take part in after-school activities such as sports.
5.2	∠ Typical day	In some of the focus ground I asked what a typical day looked like for the youth. The parents' answers to this question were identified by this code.
5.3	∠ Delinquency	Some parents talked about delinquent behavior of youth such as fighting and vandalism.
5.4	∠ Importance of involvement	I asked the parents if it is important for children and youth to be involved in their community.
5.5	∠ Learning value of money	In one of the focus groups a parent mentioned how she teaches her daughter the value of money.
5.6	∠ Leadership positions	I also asked the parents if any children and youth in the community were in leadership positions.
5.7	∠ Involvement in organizations	One parent shared how her son is very involved in various nonprofit organizations.
6	⊗ Children and youth helping others	Excerpts labeled with this code refer to examples of children and youth's helping behaviors in the community.
7	⊗ Adult approaching children and youth	This code identifies examples of how adults in the community treat children and youth.

#	Code	Description
7.1	∠ Responsibility	Some parents discussed their own responsible behavior and giving advice and nurturing to their children such as looking out for activities for their children.
7.2	∠ Neglect	In one of the focus groups some parents wondered about how others are raising their children and indicated that neglect was happening.
7.3	∠ Ignorance	In one of the focus groups, a parent talked about what she described as "ignorance" [*ignorancia* in Spanish] on the side of other parents who do not know how to provide things such as healthy food for their children.

Table 12.

Holistic Coding Codebook of Video Interviews 1-7 and Focus Group 7

Legend: ⊗ parent code; ∠ child code; ↵ grandchild code

#	Code	Description
1	⊗ Community	Excerpts of data regarding the community.
1.1	∠ Community description	Answers to the question "What is your community?" or otherwise mentioned elsewhere in the interview. Description of the community – where it is and what it is like.
1.2	∠ Community members	Answers to the question "Who belongs to your community?" or otherwise mentioned elsewhere in the interview – people, groups, neighbors who are part of the community. The name of the community was not directly mentioned in the question.
2	⊗ Description of the AYG	Youth discussing what the AYG is and what they do there.
3	⊗ Characteristics of AYG youth	Excerpts of interviews and focus groups addressing who the youth in the AYG were like.
3.1	∠ Career goals	What the youth want to do their wishes for the future.
3.2	∠ Stories	A generic code for stories about the AYG that the youth recalled.
3.3	∠ Lives & connection to the AYG	Connections drawn between the youths' activities in the AYG and everyday life, especially in their interactions with peers.

#	Code	Description
3.4	∠ Commitment	AYG talking about the meaning of being committed to the group and to the community and how this distinguishes them from their peers.
4	⊗ Learning	What the AYG youth said they were learning in the AYG.
4.1	∠ Future career	Youth mentioning that something they were learning had significance for their future plans and careers.
4.2	∠ Art and self-expression	AYG youth's perspective on expressing themselves and voicing their opinion.
5	⊗ Leadership	Excerpts that relate to the notion of leadership and learning leadership in the AYG and leadership metaphors.
6	⊗ YAC events and activities	Answers to the question "What do you do in the Active youth group?" or otherwise mentioned elsewhere in the interview.
6.1	∠ Community Health Event	Excerpts that refer to two Community Health Events and what transpired there.
6.2	∠ Community Engagement Event	Excerpts that refer to two Community Engagement Events and what transpired there.
6.3	∠ Sitting in a circle	The Circle of Power mentioned by one of the youth.
6.4	∠ Wish sticks	Creative self-exploration activity called Wish sticks.
6.5	∠ Beading activities	Creative activities with beads such as making bracelets and necklaces.
6.6	∠ Journaling	Journaling activity as a tool of self-expression.
6.7	∠ Safety awareness	Working with the Police on a safety awareness campaign.
6.8	∠ Art	Activities mentioned by the youth that involve artistic expression and discussion about art.
6.9	∠ PSAs	The making of Public Service Announcements about issues in the community.
6.10	∠ Reading to children	Reading for children in the community.
6.11	∠ Discussions	Activities that involve discussion (topics are listed as grandchild codes below).
6.11.1	↵ Animal abuse	Animal abuse as one of the topics.
6.11.2	↵ Women abuse	Women abuse as a discussion topic.
6.11.3	↵ Historical figures	Discussion about historical figures whom the youth see as role models or who are inspiring in regards to the AYG.

#	Code	Description
6.11.4	↵ Health	Activities regarding health and wellness education, including stress management and sex education.
6.11.5	↵ Different cultures	Discussion about different cultures.
6.11.6	↵ Neighborhood	Talks about the community and the neighborhoods.
6.11.7	↵ Teachers' rights	The limits of the rights of teachers.
6.11.8	↵ Law	Discussion about the law.
6.11.9	↵ Black history	Discussions about the history of African-Americans.
7	⊗ Youth-adult relationships	Youth talking about the relationships they have built with adults who are involved in the AYG
8	⊗ Impacting the community	Youth talking specifically about helping others and making a difference in their community.
9	⊗ Reactions of other people	Answers to the questions "What your peers and friends think about you being in the AYG?" and "What does your family think about your involvement?"
9.1	∠ Family	Replies specific to family members.
9.2	∠ Peers & classmates	Replies specific to peers and classmates and friends.

Table 13.

Holistic Coding Codebook of Interviews 1-4

Legend: ⊗ parent code; ∠ child code; ↵ grandchild code; ⊂ great-grandchild code

#	Code	Description
1	⊗ Interviewee introduction	Excerpts when interviewees discussed their work and connection to the community.
2	⊗ Community description	Excerpts about the community.
2.1	∠ General description	General statements about the community, which were not evaluative.
2.2	∠ Positives / assets	Positives and assets of the community as viewed by the interviewees.
2.3	∠ Negatives / needs	Negatives and needs of the community as viewed by the interviewees.
3	⊗ Children and youth	Statements about children and youth in the community.
3.1	∠ Engagement in activities	Excerpts about the involvement of children and youth in the community through organizations (other than the AYG) such as schools and nonprofits and informally.

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#	Code	Description
3.2	∠ Community service hours	Discussion about the influence of community service hours.
4	⊗ Active Youth Group	Excerpts about the AYG.
4.1	∠ History and development	This code was used for excerpts when interviewees talked about the context of the inception, development and key milestones in the 3-year history of the AYG.
4.2	∠ Youth in the AYG	Excerpts from the interviews that pertained to a general description of the youth in the AYG and to my question whether they are different from their peers.
4.3	∠ Youth-adult relationships	Segments of data about the interaction and relationships between youth and adults in the AYG.
4.4	∠ Activities and events	Excerpts that describe activities done by the groups and events that the AYG organizes for the community.
4.4.1	↵ Classroom sessions	Content of bi-weekly sessions when the group meets in a classroom at a local school.
4.4.1.1	⊂ Circle of Power	Discussion and activities done within the Circle of Power.
4.4.1.2	⊂ Creating objects	Activities, in which the youth create personally meaningful objects such as honoring boxes and Wish sticks.
4.4.1.3	⊂ PSAs	The making of Public Service Announcements.
4.4.1.4	⊂ Guest speakers	Excerpts when the interviewees mentioned the visits and activities of guest speakers.
4.4.1.5	⊂ Interpreting texts	Activities that are connected to the collective reading and interpretation of texts such as poems and motivational readings.
4.4.1.6	⊂ Vision mapping	Activity that was described to me by one of the adult, in which the youth set intentions and goals for themselves and their community.
4.4.1.7	⊂ Drumming	A drumming activity led by a guest who is a community musician.
4.4.1.8	⊂ Individual mentoring	Mentoring that takes on a one-on-one basis throughout the meetings of the group and outside of the classroom setting.
4.4.2	↵ AYG praxis	The philosophy and methods of the AYG, which are embedded in its activities.
4.4.2.1	⊂ Artistic expression	The intent to facilitate the youth's artistic expression, appreciation of art, and understanding of community art.

#	Code	Description
4.4.2.2	⊂ Critical inquiry	Reflection and discussion on the meaning of art.
4.4.2.3	⊂ Shared values	An emphasis on shared underlying values within all members of the group.
4.4.2.4	⊂ Commitment	The notion and examples of commitment.
4.4.2.5	⊂ Safe environment	The creation of a safe environment that allows the youth to calm down and rest in the midst of a community where traumas exist.
4.4.2.6	⊂ Calming down	Expressing oneself artistically in a calming environment that allows the youth to "break out of their shell."
4.4.2.7	⊂ Mastery / leadership skills	The cultivation of mastery and leadership skills and examples given by adults.
4.4.2.8	⊂ Youth having a voice	Excerpts when the adults mentioned that the youth in the AYG had a voice.
4.4.2.9	⊂ Honoring youth	The philosophy of respecting, honoring, and celebrating the youth through the AYG's activities.
4.4.2.10	⊂ Equality	Equality as a value underlying the workings of the AYG.
4.4.2.11	⊂ Mentoring	Mentoring that the adults in the youth provide to the youth.
4.4.2.12	⊂ Opening eyes	One adult mentioned that participation in the AYG opened eyes of the youth about what they want to do.

Table 14.

Versus Coding Codebook of all Interviews and Focus Groups

#	Code	Source(s)	Description
1	being able v. not being able to volunteer	FGY2	One youth reflecting on being able people in the community help with some activities and not others.
2	right v. wrong choices	FGY3	Youth in the third focus group discussing how they are learning to make the right choice in face of temptations of dropping out of school.
3	putting forth one's effort v. dropping the effort	FGY7	Youth from the AYG distinguishing between the youth in the AYG and other youth and explaining the meaning of commitment.

#	Code	Source(s)	Description
4	working in the entire group v. working in small groups	FGY7	A development of autonomy that one of the AYG members experienced over her 2-year participation.
5	being compassionate v. not being compassionate about leadership	FGY7	One of the AYG youth emphasizing the need of being compassionate about leadership otherwise one will not do a good job.
6	being in the frontlines v. hiding behind one's men	FGY7	A distinction made by one of the youth between two types of leaders, one of whom is brave and the other is not.
7	gathering v. meeting	INTA2	The distinction made by an adult between two modes of people coming together.
8	facilitator v. teacher / social worker / instructor	INTA2	The same adult contrasting her methods with alternatives, in this case emphasizing reciprocity and equality.
9	relationships v. the HIPAA code	INTA2	In this versus code, the interviewee discussed the tension between trying to build relationships, on the one hand, and the existence of institutions that are against it.
10	equality v. having a defined way of functioning	INTA2	This versus code follows the distinction between a gathering and a meeting. According to the adult, a gathering is a space of equality, whereas a meeting is not.
11	youth telling the story v. facilitator telling the story	INTA2	The distinction between youth versus adults being the ones who tell the story.
12	Ubuntu v. Descartes	INTA2	The philosophical distinction that underlined the working of the AYG between individualistic and collective way of being.
13	physical v. intellectual part of learning	INTA2	A contrast between ways of learning, with the emphasis on not just intellectual ways of knowing.
14	uncomfortable at first v. realizing that one is not going to be judged	INTA4	The gradual progression of the effects of the AYG methods perceived by people who take part in.
15	wanting to be treated like individuals with ideas v. being defensive	INTA4	A versus code that denoted the complex reality of the lives of children and youth – on the one hand they wanted to be treated as individuals, on the other hand they were being defensive as a result of traumas that exist in the community.

#	Code	Source(s)	Description
16	big picture v. getting stuff done	INTA1	A distinction of different traits of leadership – being able to see the big picture and hands-on work to get things done.
17	youth-led and adult-led community work	INTA3	Distinction between youth-led and adult-led aspects of youth programming.
18	female v. male perspective	INTA3	Differences between male and female ways of thinking and behaving.
19	committed v. uncommitted person	INTA3	The difference between people who are committed and those who are not.

Table 15.

Metaphor Coding Codebook of all Interviews and Focus Groups

#	Code Name	Source(s)	Description
1	being treated like a family	FGY3	This metaphor pointed to the nurturing functions of a family, which some of the youth from schools in the community experienced as they interacted with non-familial members of their community.
2	the group has just become a family	INTY6, FGY7, INTA2, INTA3, INTA4	A different take on the family metaphor, which emphasizes intimacy, relationships and the creation of a safe space in youth programming. This understanding of the family metaphor became core for this study.
3	having a voice	INTY7, INTA2, INTA4	This metaphor identified a value that was adapted by the AYG at its inception and which signified the intent to create opportunities for youth to express themselves and have their ideas be presented to other people in the community.
4	throwing ideas	INTY1	A youth from the AYG reflecting on events where the group provides ideas to families and the whole community and where the community also throws their ideas. It is a variation of the previous metaphor "having a voice."
5	getting out of one's comfortable shell	FGY7, INTA4	Within the context of the AYG, some of the youth and adults mentioned how through the activities they were able to express themselves.

#	Code Name	Source(s)	Description
6	leadership as chess	FGY7	A metaphor, through which one of the youth compared leadership to the game of chess, where everyone has its own function but "we all can't be kings."
7	leadership as a relay race	FGY7	A different take on the leadership metaphor, which was presented by another youth. In a relay race, everyone participates together as a team and in case someone does not do a good job, others will work to make up for it.
8	taking off and going wild	INTA2	A metaphor that according to the adult denotes spontaneity and autonomy on the side of the youth in one of the AYG's activities.

Table 16.

In Vivo Coding Codebook of all Interviews and Focus Groups

#	Code Name	Source(s)	Description
1	"You give somebody something, you get back in return"	FGY1	Youth discussing helping others when I asked the group if they thought it was important to help other.
2	"They call us *mija* and *mijos*"	FGY3	Expressions used by youth in FGY3 when they talked about how adults in the community other than their family members treat them.
3	"Most of the time we're treated like a family"	FGY3	
4	"Goodie-goodie"	INTY2	These codes were used by AYG youth when they reflected on what others think of their involvement in the AYG.
5	"They think I'm crazy"	INTY4	
6	"Trapped in their houses"	INTY3	One of the AYG youth discussing how people in the community do not talk to each other much and stay home instead.
7	"The group has just become a family"	INTY6	A code that stimulate my thinking about the core category when one of the AYG discussed the dynamic in the group.
8	"We just share everything"	INTY6	A code that follows the previous code. It is linked to the same youth's statement that most of the youth are not afraid to share their personal experiences.
9	"How much they invest in us"	FGY7	AYG youth talking about the attention and care they are getting from adults in the AYG.

#	Code Name	Source(s)	Description
10	"We wanna feel safe in the neighborhood"	INTA1	Adult discussing a basic feeling she had about the neighborhood.
11	"It's for your protection; it's for everybody's protection"	INTA2	AYG facilitator describing the precautions she was taking when she was interacting with AYG youth outside of the classroom.
12	"Collaborator on the same wavelength"	INTA2	The description of the importance of sharing the same values within the group between the facilitator and participants.
13	"Good meshing"	INTA2	The notion of "crossing over" between youth and adults as they were working on the preparation of a particular event.
14	"It's a politics thing"	INTA3	A comparison of the AYG to the work of politicians who also try to bring about change and influence the community.
15	"It's not about you"	INTA3	General words of caution regarding all community work that aims to be youth-led.

Table 17.

Categories Codebook

Legend: © core category; ⊗ category; ∠ property; ↵ dimension

Category	Description
© Family	The core category of the research. It had one dimensions: figurativeness.
∠ Figurativeness	The extent to which participants referred to family in literal or metaphorical terms.
↵ Literal meaning	The literal meaning of family as the relationship between children and their parents.
↵ Metaphorical meaning	A figurative meaning of family such as in the expressions *mija* and *mijo*, or the notion of "becoming a family" brought up by youth in the AYG.
⊗ Leadership	The category of leadership is another category in this study. It has two dimensions: figurativeness and being in charge.
∠ Figurativeness	The extent to which participants referred to leadership in literal or metaphorical terms.
↵ Literal meaning	Leadership discussed literally as a set of skills.
↵ Metaphorical meaning	Figurative notions of leadership such as leadership as chess and leadership as relay race brought up by youth in the AYG.

Category	Description
∠ Being in charge	A property of leadership that describes who is in charge in projects in the community.
↵ Youth leading	Dimension of youth being in charge; in the AYG, this involved activities such as those that allowed the youth to express themselves creatively and brainstorming topics to present at community events.
↵ Shared leading	This code pertains to the shared leadership or "crossing over" between adults and youth, as it was experienced by one of the adults.
↵ Adults leading	Dimension of adults being in charge in the AYG, especially in terms of logistics and legal responsibility.

APPENDIX D

ACTIVE YOUTH GROUP VIDEO LOG

Table 18.

Active Youth Group Video Log

Legend: # - continuation of the same sentence while the visual part of the changed

* - changes in the visual part of the video connected to specific parts of the audio

Time is in minutes.

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
0:00	The community college and nearby streets	
0:10	Hallways of the community college: camera moving towards the door of a classroom, youth sitting there	
0:19	Honoring board – pictures of people the youth honor. One of them is Robin Williams.	People in the room talking "I think it is a really excellent opportunity to do that right in our community" Laughter and chatting in the background
0:26	Rel sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Rel: "Well, I wasn't really sure about what it was when I first got into it. I just like went because I needed community service hours." I: "Um…"
0:33	Video of a group of youth working with an adult facilitator in the community	Rel: "But we kind of just got together with adults from [nonprofits and the schools] and we like tried to find ways how we can help out with the community."
0:41	Rel sitting in the office [camera facing front] *Rel gesturing by fingers the horizontal logo of the school district	Rel: "I feel like the community is like where the [school] district is." I: "Okay" Rel: "And I went to [name] school so I was kind of, kind of excited when I saw the word "[name of district]" on the poster"
0:50	Movement of the district school logo out arms horizontally	Rel: "Um... when, I think we're just trying to like improve like"#
0:54	Rel sitting in the office [camera facing the front] *Rel gesturing by fingers the horizontal logo of the school district	Rel: #"the certain area that we're in, and like the schools that we go to and the like parents of the children that go to the school since most of them are like… um… ethnic… So we can help them out in the ways that would benefit them."

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
1:06	Nicole sitting in the office [camera facing the front]	Nicole: "It's just basically a bunch of kids getting together seeing what we can do to make the community a better place."
1:11	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from the side] Youth 1 moving hand	Andreas: "Well, [the Active Youth Group] has gained another perspective besides the adult perspective about the community."
1:17	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from the front] Andreas moving hand. *Movement of hands together **Movement of his right hand from forehead towards front with the notion ***Movement of hands together ****Movement of hands together	Andreas: "From a young perspective showing how we can *come together the group – the way that we **throw our ideas, they throw ***their ideas as a ****team, a unit."
1:25	Camera moving over a board that has the following notes: "5) Gracious, 6) appreciative – honoring – aware, 7) thankful"	Monica: "[sighs] The [Group] is just awareness… of not just"#
1:30	Monica sitting in the office [camera from the side]	Monica: #"some things that have gone on in history, but things that are going on in the community nowadays. So, like, we learned about art and some… what art could signify"#
1:41	Monica sitting in the office [camera from the front]	Monica: #"and that everything around you has some kind of meaning… So that, it's just informational and you can just take everything away from it and learn all the time."
1:51	Naynay sitting in the office [camera from the front]	Naynay: "In the [Group] we also talk about how we would like to make our neighborhood better. And like, me personally, I really like art"#
1:57	Mural in front of one school showing pictures of people and the title "Community"	Naynay: #"and some of the things we talk about are murals around the city to show like the strong empowerment of people. And I, for one, really enjoy that, because I really like painting, I like murals and all that stuff and like the meaning behind them"#

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
2:09	Photograph of Naynay sitting in front of a painting	Naynay: #"and when we talk about the murals, so we talk about how our voice"#
2:13	Naynay sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Naynay: #"really matters in the neighborhood, I really enjoy it, 'cause I feel like my voice has strength, has a power that not many teenagers realize as much."
2:22	Panorama view over the neighborhood from a nearby high point, camera moving from West to East	Nicole: "Basically"#
2:35	Nicole sitting in the office [camera from her right-hand side]	Nicole: #"um… we're part of the [name of school district] community…" I: "Aha…" Nicole: "…so pretty much,"#
2:41	Nicole sitting in the office [camera from the front] * Hands movement showing boundaries.	Nicole: #"I'd say from *[the community college] to [school] – we have that span of people within our community…"
2:46	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from his left side]	Andreas: "Um, my community is [name] County, [silently] I think." I: "Aha…" Andreas: "It's a pretty good, pretty good community."
2:52	Picture of a fence and one of the nearby mountains behind it.	Andreas: "It's kind of dirty and stuff like that. They have their problems but this,#"
2:56	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from his left side] Andreas gesticulating the whole time	Andreas: #"this... [Group].., this [Active Youth Group]... it brings us together, the whole like events we do, it brings people together. We give them our ideas. We're not like probing them, but we give them our ideas how to help them out, we help the community and help their families out and staff like that."
3:10	Picture fading out, camera shots of a car driving through the streets of the community	

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
3:22	Camera shot of the Park sign	Andreas: "Last year we had a Community Engagement"#
3:23	Camera glancing over a poster for the event it shows the location and time and co-sponsors	Andreas: #"Event. During this [indiscernible] summer and the winter,"#
3:26	Camera showing the park	Andreas: #"um... when we had, um…"#
3:29	Photograph of youth at a table at the event. Andreas and Nicole are in the middle behind a table station (photo provided by AYG facilitator)	Andreas: #"It was like a big, big event like four or five"#
3:32	Photograph of a community leader and superintendent shaking hands (photo provided by AYG facilitator)	Andreas: #"hours we were out there giving our ideas"#
3:35	Photograph of some youth at the event (photo provided by AYG facilitator)	Andreas: #"and like reading to the children while their parents go out,"#
3:37	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from his left side] Andreas gesticulating the whole time	Andreas: #"going to the different stations we had there for ideas to give, to help all the community."
3:41	Angela sitting in the office [camera from the front]	Angela: "We had to read a book to a child and mine was on um… a hedge hock, a baby hedge hock. And I read it to this little kindergarten girl and [smiling] she loved it so much. She paid attention to it and she was like: 'Don't forget to describe the, the doggie over here and the cat.' And I was like 'Oh!' I didn't realize that she was paying attention. And I thought that was really nice."
4:07	Angela sitting in the office [camera from her right-hand side]	I: "How did you feel?" Angela: "I felt awesome! 'Cause she doesn't listen to me most of the time."
4:12	Camera shot over a table with books "Every Human Has Rights"	[Youth from the Group chatting in the background]
4:17	Angela and two other youth from the AYG sitting next to each other reading that book and discussing it.	

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Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
4:21	One of the youth (boy) notices the camera	Youth who noticed the camera: "Oh, God" Angela and the other youth laughing
4:26	Angela takes the book and covers the face of the youth who said "Oh, God" with the book	[The three youth laughing]
4:30	Mel sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Mel: "And last year we also went to [school] and talked about health issues"#
4:38	Mel sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Mel: #"and we got to do different booths and helping families and informing them about several topics."
4:45	Rel sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Rel: "For the health event that we did that one time, a lot of them don't have like health care so when they came by to [school], we helped them with that."
4:53	Rel sitting in the office [camera facing front] * Rel moving hands up and down **Hands put together [indicating shyness / hesitation]	Rel: "Um… I… hmm… *made a stand that was of like information on… um… **sex…"#
5:00	Photograph of a poster from the event titled "Safe Sex" and with text "Birth Control" and other text (photo provided by AYG facilitator)	Rel: #"um... so like… safe sex…"
5:02	Monica sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Monica: "Um… I… what I do is that I provide my input on everything that I feel is necessary. So like, for example, last week, we were talking about our rights as a student and I feel like that is important 'cause I want to be a teacher and to know what a student's rights are so future, in like the future when I'm a teacher, I don't overstep anyone's boundaries."
5:22	Monica sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Monica: "Um… Some of my questions are like: What are the teacher's limits of asking a personal question? Or how far can a teacher push you to do an assignment in class if you are against it or if it's against your religion? And how far like a teacher can say you have to do something certain amount of time and it's unreasonable…"

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
5:43	Angela sitting in the office [camera from her right-hand side]	Angela: "Um… We listen to speakers from"#
5:45	Video shot of a discussion group at an AYG meeting with a guest speaker facilitating a discussion. Two youth are visible.	Angela: #"all different aspects, like I think last week it was a lady on law… Um, it's"#
5:52	Angela sitting in the office [camera from her right-hand side]	Angela: #"a lot about art and expressing ourselves and the community around us. We made a mural of people we admire or recognize"#
6:01	Camera shot over the mural	Angela: #"and so, it was pretty cool." I: "…Who were the people?" Angela: "I picked Shirley Chisholm."
6:07	Photograph of Shirley Chisholm	Angela: "She didn't really expect to win presidency because she knew that everyone would take her as a joke."
6:12	Angela sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Angela: "She really, her goal was to open the doors for other people besides white males to become president, like women, or African Americans in general to become president. She thought that it would be great instead of just like the normal."
6:27	Angela sitting in the office [camera facing front] *Angela closed her eyes and smiled. It gave an impression of being proud.	Angela: "She stood up for herself, she stood for what she believed in and she wasn't afraid to do what she wanted to do and accomplish her goals. *I wanna be like her someday."
6:35	Car driving through the neighborhoods: Waiting for a bus at a busy street. My car is turning right	
6:49	Camera shot over a table with journals, books, and paper glue, and a camera (held by one of the adults)	Rel: "I like the journals that Deanne added."
6:52	Photograph of a poster from an AYG meeting where youth look at artwork and discuss it. Naynay is laughing (photo provided by AYG facilitators)	Rel: "'Cause I like expressing my opinion, but not to"#

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
6:55	Rel sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side] *Rel nodding	Rel: #"like *everybody* in public. Through writing like one person can read it and kind of understand where I'm coming from. I thought that was a good *thing that Deanne added."
7:03	Monica sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Monica: "Um... I listen. I just listen to what everyone else has to say."
7:07	Camera shot of Monica listening and talking to an adult facilitator in a circle of with an adult AYG facilitator and two other youth	I: "Hmm…" Monica: "To be a good speaker, you have to be a good listener, so… to me it's important."
7:13	Monica sitting in the office [camera from her right-hand side]	Monica: "My brother – he's eleven and he learns a lot 'cause I don't shut up at home. I tell him everything so he learns a lot from it and he spreads it 'cause… to his friends to… and then they share it to their friends and sometimes to their teachers so I feel like once I say something to someone, they'll say something and it's just… everyone knows."
7:35	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from his left-hand side]	Andreas: "You, you get to state your own opinion and no one can like phase it"#
7:38	Camera fading away	Andreas: #"or anything like that..."
7:40	Rel sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Rel: "I like more together. Like 'cause I know that in my specific neighborhood, mostly nobody talks to each other…" I: "No… [quietly]" Rel: "… like and we barely even see each other. You got a house that looks like an empty isle, I feel like it would be better if everybody knew each other's names like you"#
7:55	Camera shot of an old photograph (1900s) with three women biking down the street	Rel: #"see in like the old movies. The one that a girl would ride a bike down the street"#
7:58	Rel sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side] *Rel waving a hand and smiling	Rel: #"and the girls say *'Oh, hi Anna!' [funny little girl voice]"

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Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
8:00	Mel sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Mel: [Office noises in the background] "I've noticed that many people do not come out and like talk to each other. They don't have much communication as they used to. So they are like more trapped in their houses and just like take care of themselves. And they don't talk to others."
8:14	Camera shot of an empty lot in the community taken in the evening (the sky is darkening). There is a young person walking towards the camera in the middle of the camera shot and camera zooms in.	Nicole: "What I want to major in is just basically helping people. You know… I wanna"#
8:18	Nicole sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Nicole: #"major in nonprofit leadership management so that's basically going to be part of my job to go out there, be active with… in the community, which I *love* doing."
8:27	Nicole sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Nicole: "I'm learning how to plan events, I am learning how to, you know, get resources, like…"#
8:32	Nicole sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Nicole #"Last year I filled out my first Donation Request form and that was crazy because I ended up getting the donations from [a local supermarket] so I was *very* happy."
8:42	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from his left-hand side] Andreas gesticulating	Andreas: "Leadership" I: "Leadership? Can you tell me more about what, what leadership is?" Andreas: "Like, okay, like, the [Group], first of all it wasn't so many people that came. Like... still certain people started coming like, it like led, it made them become leaders and it led people to join it too. So more, it made"#
8:58	Photograph of a circle of power from the AYG (photo provided by AYG facilitator)	Andreas: #"like a more in-depth join, and also so everyone started joining more..."

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
9:00	Rel sitting in the office [camera from her left-hand side]	Rel: "Sometimes when there's like the new freshmens [sic] that come in, um... when they like wonder like: 'You're supposed to do community service hours?' And I'm like: 'Oh, you can go to… to the [Steering Committee], that gives you community service hours every time you go to a meeting and it's interesting.'"
9:13	Rel sitting in the office [camera from youth's left-hand side] *Rel waving hand down	Rel: "Most of them think like 'you're a *goodie-goodie' but I'm like 'Yeah!'"#
9:16	Camera shot of a greasy pizza from the AYG meeting	Rel: #"'And it's fun! And you get pizza – common!'"
9:19	Nicole sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Nicole: "I just did… I had a friend who was in the Group last year and she just totally did not want to be involved in this year because she's like 'It's a… it's a waste of time'. But for me, I like doing it and I don't think of it as a waste of time."
9:32	Angela sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Angela: "Like: 'Wow, that sounds cool but I'm busy, you know, I gotta go home'. And I'm like 'oh, oh, alright – your loss! I have fun [quietly].'" I: [smiling] "And what do members of your family say about your" Angela: "They think…" I: "… involvement?" Angela: "…it's *great*, because I'm for the first time getting involved in my community than actually sitting at home and watching TV all day."

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
9:52	Naynay sitting in the office [camera facing front] *Naynay waving hands in a shape of a horizontal 8 **Naynay putting hands together	Naynay: "My family really likes it, 'cause it shows that I'm being more responsible *by myself… I'm… taking care of, like helping my neighborhood, I'm… **it's connected to the school I went to – my mom works at the school, my little brother goes to school at [elementary school] [camera beep] so… when we stay there, when I help with that, I really enjoy it."
10:13	Mel sitting in the office [camera from youth's left-hand side]	Mel: "They're helping me to be a better person." I: "Aha!" Mel: "And that if I get involved, it could also be good for my future education."
10:22	Andreas sitting in the office [camera facing front] Andreas gesticulating	Andreas: "My peers and my family think it's pretty good to be involved in the community 'cause like some … maybe they did not have a chance to do that. My dad did, but my… not my mom so... My friends now they're joining me in being in this too."
10:34	Rel sitting in the office [camera from youth's left-hand side]	Rel: "Sometimes I come home and I tell them about the stuff I did… They're like busy with their own things, but like whenever I tell them about like the… like... the free like services that we give… when at the events they always come because that's some of the things they usually attend - health fairs and types of things. So they find it beneficial."
10:50	Camera shot of a gas station with Christmas decoration. Cars are passing on the busy street beneath.	
10:59	Naynay sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Naynay: "I really like the program and I hope it lasts like even after I leave because I will leave like next year after senior year."
11:06	Mel sitting in the office [camera from youth's left-hand side]	Mel: "It's just a great experience."

Time	Visual part of the video	Participants
11:09	Monica sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Monica: "I feel like that the group has just become a family." I: "Hmm…" Monica: "We just share everything [smiling]."
11:15	Angela sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Angela: "Helping people, and making them aware of other things."
11:20	Andreas sitting in the office [camera from youth's left-hand side]	Andreas: "It's a lot of fun."
11:21	Nicole sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Nicole: "I… laugh a lot like – there will be those moments when I just cannot just keep myself contained so like I'm like laughing all the time. And a couple of times, Deanne's still like 'Can you please come down?' but… Yeah, just, you know, asides from that, just"#
11:37	Camera shot of a mural in the community –moving across slightly to show pictures of people faces depicted in the mural	Nicole: #"getting to know a good group of people. There's a lot of people who are willing to go out there,"#
11:42	Nicole sitting in the office [camera facing front]	Nicole: #"you know, and volunteer their time, so... you know, it's meeting people that are willing to like do that."
11:47	Camera shot of a crossroads in the community with red lights on and cars turning on the crossroads.	
11:54	End credits	
12:20	End of video	

APPENDIX E

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Methodological Foundation Overview

During my doctoral studies, while taking courses in qualitative methods, I reviewed numerous methodological resources. The purpose of Appendix E is to complement sections in the dissertation that discuss methodology by providing additional information about the underlying principles of my methods. My hope is that this effort will allow interested readers to review "deleted scenes" of the dissertation and explore the herein-cited literature.

Emergent Design (see section II.3)

Unlike in traditional deductive research, (a) the focus of an emergent study is subject to modifications, (b) theory itself is constructed and not given a priori, (c) the selection of participants depends on collected data and the goal is not to generalize to the larger population, (d) the researcher participates in the study as instrument of data collection and analysis, (e) data are analyzed inductively, and (f) the end of the study cannot be easily scheduled in advance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 224-225). Emergent studies are delineated only in terms of a broad focus of the study, anticipated logistics related to data collection and analysis, and the specifics of selecting an initial group of participants. Another important aspect of emergent designs is the blending of data collection and data analysis. What the researcher learns in the process of the study influences the steps that he or she takes to collect and analyze more data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Social Constructivist Epistemology (see sections III.2.4 and IV.1)

Guba and Lincoln (1994) write that epistemology pertains to the following question: "What is the nature of the relationship between the knower, or would-be knower, and the known?" (p. 108). Social constructivism answers this question in its adherence to the notion that knowledge is transactional – it is created and shared in the interactions and relationships that exist between persons (Gergen, 2009). In other words, knowledge does not exist as an *a priori*, but rather it is "*literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Furthermore, as transactional and subjectivist, social constructivist epistemology assumes that "[t]he investigator and the investigated object are assumed to be interactively linked, with the values of the investigator (and of situated 'others') inevitably influencing the inquiry" (p. 110). Thus, what Sonja Foss (2009) claims about rhetorical analysis rings true for this dissertation: "You are not concerned with finding the true, correct, or right interpretation of an artifact [object of study]. Consequently, two critics may analyze the same artifact, ask the same research questions, and come up with different conclusions" (p. 17).

Two Historical Versions of Grounded Theory (see section IV.2.4)

Since its first formulation, grounded theory has contained within itself a tension between two interpretations or streams of the method (Heath & Cowley, 2004). Glaser's (1978) approach was influential in the original formulation of the method. In *Discovery* (1967), Glaser and Strauss focused on the discovery of concepts, "which will not change, while even the most accurate facts change" (p. 23). Such an approach called for the generation of theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In *Theoretical Sensitivity*, Glaser (1978)

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claimed that in the research the core category would eventually "core out" (p. 95). In other words, according to Glaser, the process of discovering theories that are grounded in data pre-supposed some form of objective reality was is hidden in the data and the researcher's task was to make sure that his or her theorizing fit the data.

Building on Strauss and her own use of methods, Charmaz emphasized data construction over data discovery (2009). In Charmaz' writings, grounded theory is presented as an approach to understanding of data – a theory does not need to be a final product (Charmaz, 2006). She defined theory in constructive terms as "imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon" (p. 126). Through her work on chronic illness, Charmaz (1990) interpreted grounded theory as an attempt to distinguish between discovery and verification (Charmaz, 1990). While the former was based on induction – noting Glaser's aversion to preliminary literature review – the latter lent itself to deductive thinking.

The philosophical tension has practical implications. A researcher influenced by Glaser, on the on hand, is likely to put emphasis on theoretical memos that help him or her capture emerging connections between different data – especially between the core category and other categories and codes. A socially constructivist researcher, on the other hand, chooses to be more reflective of his or her own involvement in the research process, journey of his or her opinions, attitudes, expectations and other biases. Trustworthiness of such research will be increased by the use of reflective methods (Charmaz, 2009). And, as Dey (2005) explains, the researcher him/herself cannot be taken out of the research process.

Interviews (see section IV.2.2.1)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider interviews to be important tools for data collection. Effective interviewing creates suitable conditions for the emergence of data, especially when taking Charmaz's constructivist stance that the researcher is taking an active part in the social construction of what would otherwise remain tacit (Charmaz, 2009). Grounded theory studies share with intensive qualitative interviews that are "open-ended but directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet flexible approaches" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) knowledge is produced in an interaction and depends on a relationship. I understand this to be an emergent aspect of interviews as such, especially in in-depth semi-structured interviews where the researcher can anticipate answers only to a limited extent. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) also claim that interviewing itself can be thought of as a craftsmanship or as something that can be constantly improved. In that sense a researcher's preparedness to conduct interviews is essentially emergent.

High-Context and Low-Context Communication (section IV.2.4.3)

High-context pertains to levels of communication when we are expressing our thoughts in the language that is closest to us, because it already is charged with implied shared meanings. According to Hall, in communication the meaning is being conveyed through two main components: (1) stored information (context), and (2) transmitted information. Hall writes: "Combine the two and it can be seen, as context is lost, information must be added if meaning is to remain constant" (Hall, 1984, p. 61). In other

words, messages high in context can contain less information and vice versa. Hall goes on to show how this differs across cultures (e.g. notions of time) as well as settings.

Memos in Grounded Theory Analysis (see section IV.2.4.1)

According to Birks and Mills (2011), ongoing memo writing is a *condition qua non* of achieving quality in grounded theory studies. Memos allow the researcher to record data analysis, situations that arise in fieldwork, how the researcher feels about these situations, how findings feed (or do not feed) into the emerging theoretical framework, how participants are selected, and how codes and categories link to each other. Additionally, memos are key tools for maintaining an audit trail, which is "a record of decisions made in relation to the conduct of research" (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 173). According to Charmaz (1995), memos can also serve as records of comparisons and questions that were asked during a study. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) write, "[y]ou should be asking questions all along the course of your research project" (p. 59). Memos should also account for the researcher's "positionality" in the study at hand and as such should be understood as data (Lempert, 2007).

Glaser (1978) emphasizes the role of freedom in memo writing. According to him, "[t]he four basic goals of memoing are to theoretically develop ideas (codes), with complete freedom into a memory fund, that is highly *sortible*" (p. 83). "Sortability" implies that memos should be re-visited, as conceptual categories crystallize. Sorting entails categorizing memos, re-reading old analyses in light of new data, revisiting previously discarded theories and recording the process and major milestones.

Coding in Grounded Theory (see section IV.2.4.3)

In the process of coding, grounded theory method seeks to uncover an emergent *core category* (section IV.2.4.5) that is instrumental in explaining what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call *basic social processes* of a particular situation. Through coding the researcher labels and sorts data and looks for theoretical connections between them. A code can have a summarizing and a condensation function (Saldaña, 2009).

In grounded theory, data can be coded initially word-by-word, line-by-line, by incidents or *in vivo*. *In vivo* codes are literal statements made by participants that are expressive of important concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In *Qualitative Analysis for the Social Scientists* and in his later works, Strauss (1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) developed a higher level of coding called axial coding, which the researcher uses to describe subcategories. As far as theoretical coding is concerned, Charmaz (2006) claims that it is implicit in grounded theory studies, though the analysis itself does not always need to pursue theory development.

Theoretical Sensitivity (see section IV.2.4.6)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) stress that "the sociologist should also be sufficiently *theoretically sensitive* so that he can conceptualize and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data" (p. 46). Glaser (1978) later interpreted the meaning of theoretical sensitivity as the attention of the researcher to the relationship between concepts, discarding any preconceived notions that, in Glaser's opinion, would lead to inaccurate interpretations of the data. As he writes, "In our approach we collect the data in the field first. Then start analyzing it and generating theory. When the theory seems sufficiently

grounded and developed, *then* we review the literature in the field and relate the theory to it through integration of ideas." (Glaser, 1978, p. 31)

For Strauss (1987), theoretical sensitivity simply means "thinking about data in theoretical terms" (p. 11). However, Strauss' conceptualization and its offspring, constructivist grounded theory (see Clarke, 2005; Charmaz, 2006), legitimized researchers to bring theories into the analytical process and use them as tools to understand better the emerging concepts and the core category.

APPENDIX F

CONFESSIONAL TALES

Confessional Tales Overview

In *Tales of the Field,* John Van Maanen (2011) introduced a type of reflexive narration that ethnographers (and social scientists in general) use to show their relationship to their research. In these *confessional tales*, researchers show where they are coming from, what inspiration and experiences they have had in life, and how they influence their understanding and interpretation of the phenomena they study. In Van Maanen's words, a confessional tale is "an attempt to explicitly demystify fieldwork or participant-observation by showing how the technique is practiced in the field" (p. 73).[126]

Confessional tales have been used, among others, by Kirsten Broadfoot (1995) and Vern Biaett (2012). Reflecting on her Master's study, Brooadfoot claimed, "This research project has been about understanding myself as much as it has been about the participants and the phenomenon of cultural self in general" (Broadfoot, 1995, p. 189). When done well, research allows for self-discovery; similarly, self-discovery enables research itself. This, however, implies the existence of struggles. Broadfoot testified to the "emotional, physical, mental and spiritual costs as well as rewards" (p. 189).

My own study was guided by a social constructivist epistemology that was transactional and subjectivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In addition to the values stated by participants in the research, this also meant that my personal values shaped the interpretation and findings in this dissertation. Following Van Maanen and Broadfoot's steps, I will on the next few pages discuss the "baggage" that I am carrying with myself on my research journey. I am introducing 2 confessional tales (Van Mannen, 2011) about (1) what made me curious and interested in the topic of youth community involvement and (2) the roots of the methodology that I used for this study.

First Confessional Tale: Curiosity in the Research Topic

Who I am now and the type of work in which I am involved, gives credit to other people who served as caretakers, teachers and mentors in my life. My fascination with democracy and freedom was greatly influenced by my upbringing. I was born in 1982 in the then-communist Czechoslovakia. My family was involved in the underground

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[126] In my understanding, the process of "demystifying" also includes the use of language that is approachable to diverse readers – members and non-members of the academia alike.

movement against communism over a long period of time. Both the Nazi s and the Communists imprisoned my great grandfather for political reasons. A similar fate met my great uncle and my grandfather from my father's side. He died as a result of his unjust imprisonment in the 1960s. My father signed Charter '77, a public document that called the regime to accountability and protection of human rights and freedom, as it was natural for him and my mother to take part in the demonstration during the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 that eventually led to the fall of the communist regime. I was only a child then, but I learned that there were democratic values worth fighting for.[127]

My father worked for the then newly elected president Václav Havel (1936-2011), a former dissident, who led the peaceful revolutionary movement and who was later elected as the leader of the country. Havel's exemplification of 'truthfulness', and critical thinking served as an invaluable example to Czechs and people from around the world, though sometimes he was unappreciated and misunderstood. Between 1994 and 1998 I spent four years with my family in Norway, accompanying my father on his diplomatic mission. After our return, I started attending a high school with American teachers among the faculty and I took an active part in an English debate program.

My inclination towards studying youth community involvement stems from my previous roles as a youth volunteer; debate coach, volunteer trainer, evaluator of youth volunteer programs, and a high school civics class teacher. While working with children, youth and young adults 10-25 years old, I saw a strong desire in young people to receive recognition for their contribution to their communities. These experiences also stimulated a question that became central to my research agenda: What conditions are most conducive to meaningful involvement of youth in their community?

In an unpublished bachelor thesis, which I defended in 2006 as a student of the Faculty of Humanities in Prague, I presented an educational module for high schools. As important components of this module I identified information about democracy, critical and rhetoric skills, and hands-on community service experience. My thinking about a youth's relationship to communities developed in my follow-up work for the Center for

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[127] Being a child at that time, I did not have to face the ethical dilemma whether to participate in the democratic revolution or take any personal risks. If, however, a similar situation arises again, how will I respond? Will I be willing to risk my personal comfort then?

Community Organizing Central Bohemia (2006-2007). I was in charge of a youth website to enhance youth journalism.

I married Samantha Trad in 2007 and with strong encouragement from my wife I refreshed my students' responsibilities in the Masters' program in Civil Society studies at the same school between 2007 and 2010. In my graduate thesis titled 'Levinasian Civil Society', I delved into the works of the Lithuanian-French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who was a proponent of dialogical philosophy. In my thesis, I attempted to explain and justify civil society in Levinasian terms. Looking back, Levinasian philosophy served as a bridge for me from the notion of individual volunteering towards the study of community. While working on this project I became involved in a monitoring and evaluation project of a youth employment and civic engagement program in the Middle East.

These experiences brought me to ASU's School of Community Resources and Development, which I applied to upon the recommendation of an American Fulbright exchange professor, Thomas Holland. At ASU I have taught four semesters of the class 'Voluntary Action and Community Leadership' (NLM 160), where I discussed with the students connections between theory and practice, and the individual and the community in their relation to volunteering and civic engagement. In the spring 2013 semester, this class undertook a community-service project that involved students to work with the seniors at the Salvation Army Laura Danieli Senior Activity Center.

During my studies, under the leadership of Professor Richard Knopf, my classmates and I became involved in the projects of the Partnership of Community Development (PCD). In 2013, we formulated the PCD's new mission statement:

> Our mission is to inspire and empower citizens of all ages to engage in continuous learning, which - through conversations and synchronized action with neighbors and organizations - builds relationships, counters social challenges, and increases quality of life in communities in the United States and around the world.
> (Partnership for Community Development, 2013)

This mission statement has a personal meaning to me in terms of its highlight of the relationship between learning and community well-being. Though they are not mentioned

explicitly in the mission, I understand youth are important community members to whom all of the above applies: learning, conversations, synchronized action, building of relationships, dealing with social challenges, and increasing the quality of life. I think of the mission statement as an important motto for my own work. The values expressed in the statement were also important to my work as coordinator for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Arizona State University. The Institute's main mission is to provide intellectual enrichment and community involvement opportunities to adults ages 50 and older in the Phoenix Metropolitan area.

Second Confessional Tale: Roots of my Methodology

Since a large portion of materials surrounding my dissertation did appear in the final manuscript, but, instead, was scattered across my field notes, memos, emails, interview protocols, and interview transcripts, I would like to present some aspects of my life that influenced who I am and how I do qualitative research.

Family Influences. My family has always been somehow attuned to education and research. I will start with my grandmother Zora who was not able to finish her Law Degree in 1938, because the Nazis annexed Czechoslovakia then. After the war she did not follow up on her studies because of political reasons – the Communist party saw her contacts abroad as a sign of conspiracy and during the difficult times between 1948 and 1989, my grandmother strived hard to make ends meet, especially when her husband was imprisoned. Before she passed away in 2010, my grandmother always taught me the value of education. In fact, the majority of the inheritance that I had received from her helped me pay for my first year at ASU.

My father is a sociologist by profession. In the 1970s he conducted a study in Czechoslovakia, asking people about the environment, which was damaged by industrial exploitation. It was a qualitative study and even though my father had a quantitative background, he was sensitive to what the research entailed and its political implications.

My mother's side of the family also had an interesting history that influenced my way of thinking. Like my father, she also was also part of the underground academic production, specifically through the distribution of manuscripts of Czechoslovak Catholic writers and dissidents. I have a memory of my mother typing loudly these illegal texts on

her typewriter. She had up to 15 pieces of thin paper and as many carbon sheets in between. She was risking much by working for the dissent underground.

There was one family experience that I believe helped me better understand what it is like to make theoretical contrast and that was a 4-year stay in Norway. I had to learn a new language – English – because I was attending an international school there. I also had a lot of free time on my hands that I used to do sports and connect to the nature and reflect on my spiritual life. The roots of self-reflection in my life can be found there.

In summary, my family experience has taught me the value of education as well as the need to pursue values such as dignity, honesty, and courage when speaking truth to power. While I was originally opposed to radical movements, looking back I feel these experiences have planted a seed in me to come to appreciate critical and inclusive approaches to qualitative research later in life.

Other Czech Influences. My first qualitative research commenced in Prague, Czech Republic, in 2005 when I was working on a volunteer project, which was part of a larger international youth development program *Make a Connection*. Tom Leavitt, who is a researcher from Brandeis University came to Prague to do an evaluation of the program and was looking for an assistant. He introduced me for the first time to focus groups as a way to understand a group's point of view. Later in 2009 he invited me to help him with the design of a monitoring and evaluation program in Jordan. What I learned from Tom is the importance of building relationships with participants. Furthermore, I saw that Tom was carefully listening during all conversations. This has left such an imprint on me and he has been my mentor and friend ever since.

The reason why I became an evaluator was because as a high school student and then college student I took part in an English Debate Program in the Czech Republic. This has opened up my eyes to diverse perspectives and the need to argue plausibly. Together with my colleagues I received a grant through local Czech nonprofits from the International Youth Foundation and Nokia for a Make a Connection project to spread debate to other schools. I later became active as a volunteer trainer in that program.

I have to mention one other influence that is extremely important for my qualitative research training. Around the time I turned twenty-six in 2008, I returned to an

old "hobby" of mine: stamp collecting. In one of my memos I wrote that stamp collecting has very much been like a process of sorting and narrowing down a research to a core category. I found a good balance between time, effort and the money necessary to fuel my hobby in the study of Latvian mailing covers (envelopes and postcards) sent to former Czechoslovakia between World War I and World War II. I am somehow replicating this sorting process in my current qualitative research study.

Between 2002 and 2010, I was working on my B.A. in Humanities followed by a M.A. in civil sector studies. Though I originally did not find qualitative research interesting, during one graduate class I first heard about *grounded theory* and even wrote an essay and made a presentation about Corbin and Strauss' book *The Basics of Qualitative Research* (1999), which had actually been translated into Czech by a former student. In 2006 I completed a B.A. thesis about youth civic engagement. The methods in the thesis needed refinement, which was pointed out by the formal opponent of the study. I sensed that the critique was justified, because I based my conclusions on data that were not rich and deep. When I moved to the Masters' program in Civil Sector Studies I became more interested in the works of the Lithuanian-French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1907-1994). While we studied some of his works in my B.A. program, I decided to write a theoretical piece on the relationship between Levinas' philosophy and civil society. With the help of my thesis adviser, Marek Skovajsa, I decided to write the thesis in English because of the availability of sources and my own inability to read French originals of Levinas' works.

Arizona State University Influences. My studies at ASU completely redefined my attitude to methods and allowed me to turn methods into a key focus of my doctoral work. Since 2010 I have been enrolled in the PhD program in Community Resources and Development at ASU. Altogether, I have taken 11 credits worth of classes specializing in qualitative research and additional 3 credits of an audited class.

In my first semester, core classes opened up my mind to qualitative studies: I learned about Thomas Kuhn in Richard Knopf's Sustainable Communities class and through this book and my essay on it, I was able to connect with Richard Knopf around the notion of searching wisdom. He also helped me make sense of some of the

contradictions that I saw as very sharp in my first semester, especially between method and freedom. I first heard from him about the importance of building relationships with communities and the need for research to be applied through community-embedded work. Furthermore, a key topic and inspiration for me has since then become long-term commitment of researchers to communities and individuals. It was also thanks to his encouragement that I began my study of Glaser and Strauss' work and of the academic discussions surrounding qualitative research that have been taking place since 1967 when *Discovery of Grounded Theory* was first published.

In spring 2011 I took my first qualitative research class at ASU taught by Luis Zayas. He taught me about structure in qualitative research. He also introduced the idea of long-term fieldwork to me. Through his class and another class, I worked on a qualitative study in a city in the Phoenix area. This was the first time I filled out an IRB form and had already started noticing some ethical tensions in fieldwork, especially those regarding dissemination and what makes one work publicly available. In 2012 I worked with a community on a report whose aim was to mobilize resources to provide better living conditions for children and youth. In this project I learned that the boundaries between locals' and researcher's ways of knowing are fluid and co-constructed.

Another class taught by Arnold Danzig gave me the opportunity to learn the basics of narrative analysis and about qualitative case studies. In that class, I conducted my first qualitative observations in a study of behavior on public transportation. In the fall of 2013 I took a class taught by Eric Margolis and learned about visual ethnography.

The biggest methodological eye opener for me has been a series of conversations with my qualitative mentor, Amira de la Garza. She introduced me to *auto-ethnography*, *critical postcolonial methods*, and *self-reflection*. I also learned about the constant need for a researcher to reflect on and embrace an *ambiguous* and *liminal* position, as he or she prepares for fieldwork (*four season ethnography* and *mindful heresy*). This training, in turn helped me question my own naïve (though originally essential) understanding of grounded theory as a "free for all" method, which it is not, and broadened my interest in qualitative methods overall.