"Community-based youth programs utilizing a culturally relevant framework (Educación) to implement impactful learning opportunities for immigrant Latino youth"

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Dedication

My work is dedicated to all immigrant Latino youth and their families who day in and day out strive to have positive educational experiences and make our communities a better place to grow, be educated, and develop as human beings.

I want to also dedicate this work to my parents and my children. My parents because if it wasn't for them I would of never pursued this degree and work. To my children so they can grow up in the world and experience positive learning environments where their culture is valued, appreciated, and built upon by their parents and other non-family adults in their lives.

Abstract

A theoretical perspective of non-formal learning and social and cultural capital is proposed to provide a deeper and holistic understanding of the educational experiences of immigrant Latino youth participating in out-of-school time (OST) programs. An *educación* lens informed by anthropological perspectives on education offers a promising view of how immigrant Latino youth and families have conceptualized notions of learning and education as part of larger global discourses of immigration, transnationalism, and citizenship education. This study aims to shed light on the reasons why Latino immigrant youth join well-structured OST programs and how they enact their agency and motivation to stay engaged and continue to participate in the program activities while reaping the benefits of the experience.

Drawing on qualitative methods of participant observation, interviews and document review, this dual-site case study presents a framework for understanding the role of non-formal learning environments in the educational trajectories of Latino immigrant youth. The proposed framework identifies locally formulated notions of *educación* and recognizes the need for non-formal learning environments, such as culturally based community youth programs, to act as a partner force in considering Latino families' responses to the education of their children. At a time in which Latino youth's educational needs are not sufficiently addressed by formal institutions, the role of these programs must be recognized as a potent and effective democratizing space that can redress educational inequities.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

"The choices that children, adolescents, and parents make about how youth spend their out-of-school time are critical for their current and future well-being. It is only recently, however, that researchers have become interested in studying the OST experiences of children and youth" (Bartko, 2005, p. 1).

"Theoretical explanations of Latina/o youths' academic attainment omit the role that out-of-school time activities may play, and few studies have explored the role of OST programming in the lives of Latino youth" (Nelson, 2009, p. 1).

Situating My Work

Francisco is a 15-year-old Mexican youth who lives with his family in an urban neighborhood in a large Midwestern city. Francisco's parents emigrated from Mexico when he was just 6 years of age; his two younger brothers were born in the United States. The family decided to migrate to the U.S. to provide their children with better educational and economic opportunities. In their time away from work and school, Francisco's mother and her children participate in programming that takes place at a local community organization called Voces Unidas.

Voces Unidas offers various program opportunities that range from parent education, youth cultural groups, arts, and literacy. It focuses on a holistic approach to engage Latino youth and families in meaningful experiences in order to meet community needs. The organization is considered to be an exemplar among others serving the Latino community and it prides itself in partnering with its participants. Francisco attends the after-school program at Voces Unidas several days a week and is involved in program

activities and events that focus on cultural values and traditions of the Latino community and provide opportunities for skill building (both social and academic). He feels a sense of belonging in the group of peers and youth leaders and has been in the program for several months with the hopes to continue participating throughout the school year. He values the relationships established at Voces Unidas and appreciates the various activities offered by the organization. Both Francisco and his parents recognize that participation in the program has positively impacted his social and cognitive development. It has also given him a strong support system that has helped Francisco overcome the challenges of his more formal schooling experiences in the U.S. His academic engagement has improved, he has established meaningful relationships with adults in the program, and he has acquired a strong network of peers and adults.

Francisco's parents participate in the parent education program that is offered once a week and they have also found Voces Unidas to be a responsive and successful organization. The family considers Voces Unidas a place in which their experiences of immigration, education, and community building can come together and provide meaning for their lives in a transnational world.

Francisco's family is one of the countless families in this Midwestern city that have experienced the benefits of non-formal education environments like Voces Unidas. Non-formal education settings aimed to serve Latino youth (and often their entire families) are the focus of this work. Community-based youth development organizations have become places where children of immigration experience non-formal learning that

embraces the Latino definition of *educación* and provides them with both social and cultural supports to be contributing members of the community and their families. In addition, the more programmatic practices of non-formal learning environments along with the aforementioned social and cultural supports offers Latino youth the opportunity to become cultural producers and achieve upward mobility in the U.S.

An anthropological perspective informs the conceptual lens of *educación* in this work. A cultural-structural framework provides a deeper understanding and illustration of how non-formal learning environments are able to respond to the needs of Latino youth. This framework recognizes the role of social capital coupled with cultural capital. In order to understand the reasons and motives of youth like Francisco to participate and continue their engagement with non-formal education. I discuss motivation and agency as outward manifestations of socio-cultural processes that might influence their experience and decision-making. More specifically, I examine how agency and motivation allow young people to deliberately navigate structures in order to achieve a desired goal.

Problem Statement

What is the role of learning beyond school settings for Latino youth, the fastest growing sector of our child population in the U.S.? Suarez-Orozco contends that

> After-school sites have the potential to become effective
>
> democratizing spaces redressing some of the inequities immigrant
>
> children of color face in many of our large inner-city school
>
> districts. This is an important challenge because given the

demographic processes at work, the education of new immigrants

will be fundamental for the kind of cultural democracy we are

hoping to become. Schools and after-school programs will be

strongly implicated in the long-term trajectories of these children

(2003, p. 99).

Here Suarez-Orozco addresses the urgency to not only recognize such experiences as

relevant to the education of these youth, but also states that these opportunities must be

accessible and well-structured for youth and the larger community to experience the

benefits. More importantly, out-of-school time (OST) programs have the potential to

prepare young people as active agents of their development and education. These

programs deliver opportunities for youth to develop skills, strategies, and dispositions for

learning as well as to navigate the complex social realities in which they live.

The present study aims to examine Latino immigrant youth experiences in non-

formal learning environments, reasons why these youth join and participate in well-

structured OST programs and ways in which they actively navigate the social and cultural

structures of these non-formal learning experiences in order to achieve their goals or

future aspirations. More importantly, this study brings about a valuable understanding of

what social and cultural factors account for Latino youth's sustained participation in well-

structured community based programs that promote and embrace notions of *educación*. A

primary assertion of this work is that youth who participate in OST programs which

embrace notions of *educación* allow them to imagine themselves as productive members

of their communities and society at large. Furthermore, such programs provide youth with opportunities to be agents of their own development and have a positive impact on their educational trajectories.

In an increasingly competitive global world, the consequences of not attaining at least a high school diploma are devastating to individuals, communities, and the country's economy. The fact that Latino immigrant youth represent the largest and fastest growing group of youth in the United States has not guaranteed that they have equal educational opportunities and outcomes as their peers. Latino immigrant youth lag behind their classmates in terms of academic achievement, engagement and graduation rates. Over the past 20 years, the number of Latino children under age 18 living in the United States has doubled. By 2035, one-third of all American children and youth will be Latino, and it is projected that by 2050, one-third of the overall population will be Hispanic. Today's 16 million Latino children and youth—92% of whom are U.S. citizens—thus represent a crucial segment of the United States' future workers, taxpayers, parents, citizens, voters, and leaders (Population Reference Bureau, 2010). Yet, the dropout rate among Latino youth in 2012 in the U.S. was 12.7%, compared to 4.3 % among White students and 7.5% among African American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). At a time in which the country faces an unprecedented financial crisis and an aging population that will require greater social expenditures, it is imperative that the social and educational well-being of immigrant youth is brought to the attention of scholars, policy makers, and educators.

Historically, schools and families have been held responsible for the positive development and academic performance of young people (Lee, et al, 2009). However, families and schools alone have not been able to provide the needed supports and opportunities for all youth to successfully transition to adulthood and experience positive educational opportunities. More and more, communities have created OST community programs to supplement the educational experiences of low-achieving students (Lauer, Akiko, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow, & Martin-Glenn, 2006). Participation in OST programs has been linked to youth possessing enhanced self-esteem, increased school performance and aspirations to college, the ability to overcome adversity, leadership skills, and less chances of engaging in negative behaviors (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Junge, Manglallan & Raskauskas, 2003; Villarruel, Montero-Sieburth, Dunbar, & Outley, 2005). In other words, well-structured OST programs are able to leverage important aspects of social capital, such as social trust, relationship building, and the teaching of social norms which can be beneficial for immigrant Latino youth participating in these programs (Khane & Bailey, 1999).

Certain community-based OST programs have actively embraced the cultural lives and identities of Latino youth and families. They have sought to work with these youth from an asset-based approach in which their understanding and meaning-making about education and *educación* are central to the structures of the program. Thus, it is critical to examine the experiences of these youth in OST programs that embrace notions of *educación*.

Explanation of Terms

Educación. Much research on the educational experiences of Latino immigrant youth have focused on their experiences in schools and their academic achievement using quantitative measures. However, a key assumption guiding this study is that there is a need for more nuanced understandings of such experiences, which ought to specifically consider the complexity and creativity involved in "the expressions, definitions, and practices of *una buena educación*" (Villenas, 2002, p. 23). *Educación* (education) among Latino families and communities means educating the mind, the heart, and the soul. In other words, education is centered on the moral education of children which includes *buen comportamiento* (good behavior), *respeto* (respect), *estar pendiente* (being vigilant), and a deep sense of Latino cultural values and traditions. This moral emphasis on education does not see academic achievement as less important or less critical to children's futures; families and communities strive to provide educational opportunities that complement, and often supplement, what children are experiencing in schools.

The *educación* lens offers an opportunity to examine and analyze the educational experiences of Latino youth from an asset-based perspective and promotes a move away from deficit-focused approaches that view these youth as problems to be solved. Deeply understanding how their participation in non-formal learning environments contributes to their sense of self, feelings of belonging and future goals can prove to be a fruitful framework for educators, youth workers, and policy makers. Moreover, such a perspective is critical to a deeper and more effective examination of the reasons youth

and families are drawn to culturally specific community organizations. Such spaces provide the elements of education and *educación* that schools have failed to offer these communities. Out-of-school time programs promise to play an important and influential role in the educational experiences of Latino youth. These non-formal learning environments ought to be examined in order to provide a deeper understanding, influence policy, and inform practice to redress the educational inequities that immigrant youth experience.

Purpose Statement

The present study examines the experiences of Latino immigrant youth participating in well-structured community OST programs that embrace notions of *educación.* An initial illustration of parents' perspectives of the role that these programs play within the educational trajectories of their children provides the foundation for a nuanced understanding of how *educación* can be an impactful framework for implementing these programs. This is followed by a deep analysis of the role of programs and their youth workers, and ends with the youth's narrative of agency within the program experience. More importantly, this work illustrates the social and cultural structures that these youth agentically navigate through their experience in the program, allowing for their sustained participation. Examining how the program's *educación* approach might contribute to youth staying and actively engaging in the program experience is central to this work.

Rationale

The non-formal learning and educational experiences of Latino immigrant youth in well-structured community-based programs have not been extensively studied. Studies have focused on the experiences of the participants and the many benefits they might acquire as a result of their participation (Nelson, 2009; Wing & Wong, 2008; and Brown & Evans, 2002). However, the role of the program as an educational institution and how an *educación* approach can positively serve Latino youth has been absent from research.

Although existing literature suggests that these non-formal learning environments provide opportunities for the development of social capital and the establishment of relationships with caring adults, the relationship between the program, its educational approach, and the youth's experiences within it have not been extensively examined. Hence, it is imperative that we increase our understanding of how Latino immigrant youth experience their participation and how the programs provide environments in which cultural and social processes can become capital and assets for the youth to achieve their goals and aspirations (Khane & Bailey, 1999; Jarrett, et al. 2005; and Nelson, 2009). In addition, it is critical that we better understand how these programs can aid the development of non-cognitive factors underlying success, such as psychological capital, engagement, and a sense of productivity in the world (Demerath 2009).

This study complements the existing literature which focuses on learning experiences within the traditional school setting by exploring OST environments in

which Latino immigrant youth learn and engage in meaningful development activities. OST environments are defined by the National Institute on Out of School Time (2003) as the hours in which school-age children are not in school and they are doing something other than activities mandated by the schools. Such programs are delivered mostly after school or during the summer. OST programs provide youth with access to caring and knowledgeable adults in their communities (structures), create opportunities necessary for school engagement and positive cultural identity development, and empower youth to choose to the activity due to the lack of forced participation (Nelson, 2009; Wing & Wong, 2008; and Camras, 2004).

Preliminary Research

In the spring of 2011, I participated in a pilot study with Proyecto Caminos (Project Pathways), a collaborative research project between the University of Minnesota Center for Youth Development and the University of Illinois Department of Human and Community Development. As part of this pilot, 37 youth (55% Latino) across five different OST programs in Illinois and Minnesota were interviewed. Findings from this pilot revealed pertinent information about youth's reasons to join and continue their participation in the programs. Youth said that their main reasons to join programs were access to technology and skill building, parents' influence to join, academics, their friends' influence to join or to have fun, to belong to a group, and to be in a safe environment away from risky behavior. Furthermore, when asked about why they remained and continued to come back to the program, youth said that it was because of

relationships with peers and staff, resources, a personal connection and sense of belonging, and a safe and trusting environment. However, the act of showing up to a program or event is not indicative of engagement and research shows that sustained participation is key in order for youth to enjoy the benefits of such opportunities (Noam, 2005). This pilot phase provided me with an opportunity to continue a deeper examination of Latino immigrant youth's reasons to join and continue their engagement within the program and its activities.

The two programs selected to participate in this study embrace notions of education and *educación* that are responsive to the Latino community's needs and values which center on providing holistic and culturally appropriate educational opportunities for their children while also promoting academic achievement and success. This preliminary work suggested the promise of such a focus for the proposed study.

Research Questions

This study describes and explains the role OST programs that embrace the cultural framework of *educación* play within the educational trajectories of Latino immigrant, high school youth. As my research design and data collection progressed the research questions I initially set out to answer (mostly related to the youth's experience in the program) shifted to incorporate the perspectives and narratives of parents and youth workers at the two sites. As a result, my research was guided by the following questions in order to inform the field of youth development, youth work practitioners, educators, and policy makers:

1) How do parents of Latino immigrant youth perceive their children's participation in culturally responsive OST programs that embrace notions of *educación?*

2) How does an OST program approach of *educación* mediate the conversion of cultural and social resources into capital for Latino immigrant youth?

3) How do Latino immigrant youth perceive the meaning of their participation in community-based OST programs in relationship to their educational experiences in school?

4) How do Latino immigrant youth enact their agency in OST programs which they consider successful and embracing of their notions of *educación*?

    a. What are Latino immigrant youth's aspirations/goals to join these well-structured, community based OST programs?

    b. How do Latino immigrant youth perceive their experience in the program as relevant to their aspirations and goals in life?

Overview of Theoretical Frameworks Guiding the Work

As I will discuss in the literature review, the frameworks used in this study are a way to accomplish what Jean Anyon (2009) calls an "analytics of exogeny" (p. 2), which suggests that one cannot understand the experiences of Latino youth in OST programs by merely focusing on them as individuals. Anyon suggests that we look exogenously (outwardly) at the context and social forces in which the youth experiences are embedded. I attempt to situate my area of study in the context of the OST program as

both a non-formal educational institution (structural) and an environment in which capital and social (cultural) processes are acknowledged, promoted, and in some cases converted into concrete benefits and resources for the youth who participate. These cultural and structural elements are found in OST programs that offer non-formal learning opportunities based on a positive youth development and *educación* approach.

A cultural-structural framework illuminates the cultural and structural (social) elements of ethnic communities and considers the common cultural heritage and meaning that might exist among youth and other members of that community (Zhou & Kim, 2006). This work acknowledges that ethnic communities include structures such as social institutions, out-of-school time programs, and interpersonal networks that provide a more supportive environment for ethnically diverse youth to do well in school and other settings. These scholars assert that "while community forces shape an ethnic group's orientation toward social mobility and promote specific coping strategies and behavioral patterns, they also mediate the process of social capital formation in the community" (p. 5). Nevertheless, these social capital structures must be supported by tangible ethnic structures in order to create meaningful opportunities for social mobility and inclusion. Such framework also has the potential to explain the complexity of the experiences in non-formal learning environments. This study aims to investigate the extent to which notions of *educación* in program approaches to working with Latino youth foster the conversion of cultural and social processes into capital (both social and cultural) that

benefit the youth participants in their educational trajectories and in seeing themselves as productive members of their community and the larger mainstream society.

Social Capital: The Important of Structure and Networks. In order to highlight the importance of structures and networks within OST programs, I juxtapose Coleman's (1988) conceptualization of social capital with Bourdieu's (1986) notions of the concept. According to Coleman (1988), social capital is tangible and has three forms: a) level of trust, b) information channels, and c) norms and sanctions that promote the common good. He argues that social capital is embedded within social structures and it facilitates the actions of individuals within such structures. In other words, it is in these structures (networks and institutions) that individuals mutually benefit from relationships because of their access to information and other resources that aid their advancement towards personal and societal goals. In culturally responsive community-based OST programs, Latino youth experience these meaningful and influential networks of caring adults that can lead to information and tangible resources (Wing & Wong, 2008).

Bourdieu (1986) on the other hand, conceptualized social capital around theories of social reproduction and symbolic power. He defined social capital as "the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of essentially institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). He argued that social capital could be broken up into two main elements: 1) the social relationship that allows for access to information and resources and 2) the amount and quality of such resources (Portes, 1998). Bourdieu's (1988) definition sheds light on

the processes of sociability that must be constructed in order for individuals to be able to participate in certain social groups and networks. OST programs can be seen as avenues for youth to participate in such processes that expose them to social groups and networks, while at the same time provide spaces for socialization.

Portes (1998) on the other hand, notes that "to possess social capital a person must be related to others, and it is those others, not himself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage" (p. 7). If such relationships provide opportunities for the development of social capital and consequently the accumulation of human capital, it is imperative to dissect how social capital structures are embodied within the contexts of OST programs serving Latino youth and how they might positively influence their educational experiences and attainment.

Scholars in the field of youth studies urge us to consider additional elements within the youth experience when we attempt to illustrate what results for young people in OST programs. For example, Weller (2006) challenges the "theoretical fathers" (p. 559) of social capital to reevaluate the lack of agency given to young people as creators and users of cultural and social capital. She argues that traditional perspectives on social capital have neglected the social capital that youth and children possess within their own networks and communities. Furthermore, other scholars state that research focusing on youth's social capital ought to emphasize young people's own actions and perceptions, instead of adults' perceptions of them (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Weller, 2006). A

particular strength of this work is the recognition and inclusion of young people's agency in navigating structures to achieve their goals and reach their aspirations for the future.

Cultural Capital: The Importance of Cultural Values, Norms, and Symbolic Credit. Education scholars have conceptualized cultural capital in different ways and guided by the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), they have examined the role of cultural capital in students' lives for decades. These scholars defined cultural capital as "cultural habits and dispositions inherited from the family which are convertible, into economic capital" (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, p. 14). Bourdieu (1986) further argued that this type of capital exists in three distinct forms: Embodied (the person who possesses a certain competence holds this capital), objectified (objects themselves may function as a form of cultural capital) and institutionalized (formal educational institutions that issue credentials are giving cultural capital an objective value). A key characteristic of these seminal perspectives on cultural capital is that they represent an economic perspective on society; they assign cultural capital market value in which it can be acquired and exchanged for other things such as opportunities for upward mobility. Another important element of Bourdieu's (1998) conceptions of cultural capital is the connection to social structure and its reproduction. In other words, he argues (and I agree) that cultural capital allows more advantaged members of powerful societies to perpetuate themselves and the power structures. Nevertheless, such an understanding of culture as capital might imply that institutions, in this case OST programs could convert youth's

cultural assets and processes into capital by taking into account local dispositions regarding culture and education.

Lareau and Weininger (2003) offer a shift in the interpretation of the concept. This shift " permits maximum empirical variation" (p. 598) while preserving the main idea that culture can operate as capital and can therefore have exchange value on markets. Lareau and Weininger's definition of cultural capital is "the direct or indirect imposition of evaluative norms favoring the children or families of a particular social milieu" (p. 598). What these authors convey is that more dominant perspectives have focused on this idea of an elite status culture while more contemporary interpretations consider cultural capital in communities that have traditionally not been considered to possess such wealth.

Yosso (2005) has furthered the concept of cultural capital by considering various sources of knowledge that exist among disfranchised communities. She brings forward a more critical view and examination of cultural capital. Her definition of cultural capital includes community cultural wealth which is often unrecognized as valuable and useful to those who are part of that community (p. 70). A key benefit to Yosso's perspective is that it utilizes a positive philosophy and counters deficit perspectives that place minority youth and families at fault for their poor academic performance. Nevertheless, one must remain aware that often, larger systems and market forces determine what has value and what constitutes cultural capital. Such critical definitions of cultural capital are pertinent to notions of *educación* because they assume an asset-based perspective on the Latino community. Yosso presents the different forms of capital that "are not mutually exclusive

or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (p. 77). Culturally responsive OST programs have the potential to recognize and activate these types of capital.

   Agency: A Concept to Bridge Youth Motivation, Their Actions, and Behaviors.
The voluntary nature of community-based OST programs allows for youth to choose to participate or not participate. Ahearn (2000) defines agency as the "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). This definition argues that human action is influenced (in its creation and interpretation) by socio-cultural structures. Youth participating in OST programs make a voluntary decision to participate and engage themselves in the programming content or project due to larger societal characteristics that are currently part of their existence. Youth as agents can be engaged in the exercise of power to bring about effects to re-shape social structures (Karp, 1986 as cited in Ahearn, 2000). For example, youth who are aware of the disparities they face in educational achievement or their lack of equal access to higher education might intentionally participate in an OST program in order to accrue the additional capital that this experience might provide for them. More importantly, agency becomes the "action that propels deliberate movement through a structure by an individual…with the expressed purpose of achieving a goal or desired outcome" (Maslak, 2008, xv). In essence, agency is what provides young people with the ability to make deliberate choices that enable them to engage in program participation, which can help them take intentional steps at reaching and achieving their goals and future aspirations.

Central to concepts of agency and structure is the notion that peoples' actions are shaped by social structures that those actions then serve to reconfigure or recreate such structures. Maslak's (2008) conceptualization of structure resonates with the intent of this study. She argues that social structures are a set of interrelated frameworks in which individuals find the social conditions necessary for action. OST programs act as spaces that provide youth with the conditions for action. She clearly illustrates how communities, families, and OST programs forge social relationships that are structured by organizational patterns. Lastly, if we consider agency as youth deliberately navigating structures with a purpose or desired goal in mind, it is imperative to examine how we can better understand their motive for such deliberate behavior.

Motivation: Reasons for participating. As this study understands motivation from an "analytics of exogeny" (Anyon, 2009), I consider perspectives and ways of understanding motivation that are inclusive of the social and cultural forces involved in the processes of youth deciding to join and stay engaged in a program. Research has suggested that motivation does not occur in a vacuum and has acknowledged that it is social in nature. For example, Walker (2010) suggests that socio-cultural researchers "attempt to explain how motivational goals, values, standards, and interests are socially constructed, how they emerge and develop from social interaction, and are manifested in collaborative and individual action" (p. 712). Thus, examining a motivation framework from a social constructivist perspective demands that we no longer see the individual, in this case the youth, as the sole instigator of motivation. This perspective on motivation is

more fruitful and promising in terms of unpacking the educational role that OST

programs play for Latino youth. Socio-cultural motivation theories give primacy to the

social world as opposed to the world of the individual, while acknowledging that the two

are highly interconnected.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural perspective extends the role of culture beyond that

of just influencing youth's motivation and demands that we look at how context and

culture shape and transmit what people think, feel and do (Siva, 1986). In other words,

this lens allows us to examine the relationships between contexts and people, and to look

at elements within that context that give meaning for youth to act. The relationship

between contexts and people is at the core of this study, insofar as it examines the youth

participants (people) within the program (context), and the interaction between the two.

Walker (2010) also states that culture is considered to play a critical role in the

"construction and emergence" of motivation (p.713). Cultural practices are valued by the

communities that engage in them and are associated with feelings of belonging or identity

and with particular forms of discourse. It is clear that such practices aid in the social

process of the construction of motivation. Walker continues to assert that "they help to

structure learning and thinking activities and have motivational and affective properties

and consequences" (p. 713). This social construction and possible conversion to capital

and resources within OST programs deserves further study.

Organization of the study

This study is organized and presented in seven chapters. The first chapter

provides an overview by presenting the statement of the problem, a brief overview of

literature and theoretical frameworks, and the research questions. Chapter II continues

with an in-depth explanation of the literature and theoretical frameworks that inform the

study. The second chapter also provides a literature review of *educación* as a cultural

framework, cultural and social capital, youth agency and motivation. The review also

explains and specifically defines pertinent concepts for the purpose of this study such as

non-formal learning, OST programs, and the Latino community in the U.S. Chapter III

presents the case study, qualitative data collection, and methods of data analysis used in

the study. The chapter begins by outlining the reasons for selecting a qualitative

methodology and the case study method.

In Chapter IV, I present the first part of my findings, which describe the

perspectives of parents' of youth who participated in one of the programs within this

research. This chapter illuminates the home and community perspectives on notions of

educación. The purpose of Chapter IV is to provide parents' perspectives on *educación*

and their perceptions of programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot as means of support

their children's development and educational trajectories. Chapter V situates the two OST

programs within the literature. More importantly, this chapter highlights the role of the

programs in to the educational experience of the youth participants, and provides an in-

depth illustration of the capabilities that effective, culturally responsive youth workers

bring to such experiences. Chapter VI introduces the perspective of the youth and provides an examination of their agentic role in relationship to their development and education. This chapters sheds light on the benefits that these programs mediate for the youth who participate, which include leadership opportunities that mediate hybrid identities, the ability to see themselves as part of the global and as productive members of society, and providing educational spaces in which youth feel as if they matter. Lastly, Chapter VII presents implications for the field of youth development, program practitioners, educators, and policy makers, and an explanation of the study's limitations.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature that attends to empirical and theoretical explanations of the experiences of Latino youth in structured, community-based out-of-school-time (OST) programs. The literature presented in this chapter focuses on explaining the social and cultural factors that influence Latino youth's educational experiences in non-formal education settings. First, critical perspectives on education in the United States set the stage for understanding the literature around non-formal, experiential learning perspectives. This is followed by a conceptual lens of *educación*, informed by an anthropological perspective related to non-formal learning opportunities. Secondly, theoretical frameworks (cultural-structural and motivation) are discussed and analyzed to further illustrate how experiences in OST programs are opportunities for the development and acquisition of social and cultural capital. This review strives to frame the central research questions of the present study: 1) How do Latino youth enact their agency in OST programs that they consider successful and embracing of their notions of *educación*? And 2) What social and cultural factors account for sustained participation and engagement among Latino youth in well-structured community-based OST programs? (See Appendix A).

In today's interconnected global economy, the competition to succeed is greater than ever before, and formal education credentials are often the key to upward mobility.

However, national statistics continue to demonstrate that schools are not meeting the needs of a growing diverse student population with graduation rates at 52% for Latino youth, 51% for African American youth, and 54% for Native American youth (NCES, 2012). These statistics are not new; we have observed such daunting trends for decades now. As a result of the continuing disparities among youth in our society, communities across the U.S., especially those who have experienced oppression and inequalities have looked outwardly to community organizations, after-school programs, and other non-formal learning environments to provide broader educational experiences for their youth. Research has demonstrated that consistent and persistent participation in high-quality; non-formal learning activities and programs may be one mechanism to decrease the achievement gap in this country. Expanded participation in such programs is associated with positive outcomes such as better school attendance, greater self-confidence, increased civic engagement, and decreased delinquency (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles 2006; Gottfredson et al., 2004).

To further understand and conceptualize how the Latino community in the U.S. has experienced non-formal learning opportunities for their youth, I propose a conceptual framework informed by the concept of *educación*. The Latino community especially has conceptualized education in a much broader perspective than mainstream notions of the term. Latino families view education as taking place in a wide variety of environments, with school being just one of these environments (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996). Youth and their families have increasingly turned to environments that provide

flexibility, inclusion, and positive experiences that aid their development. These environments are often, if not always, found outside of the formal institutions of school. By development, I refer to educational experiences that support the youth's engagement (both academic and non-academic), a sense of belonging, identity creation, and opportunities, which allow them to strive towards their future goals and aspirations and be agents of their own development. From an *educación* and anthropological perspective, this paper explores two things: 1) how Latino youth, as agents, navigate the social and cultural structures of OST programs and 2) the program's social and cultural structures that support Latino youth.

Non-formal learning and formal-learning: A holistic approach to the "educated person"

The existing gap in the literature regarding the educational trajectories of Latino and immigrant youth in the U.S. is due in part to the small amount of theory of non-formal learning and OST environments in comparison to the large amounts of practice that takes place in communities. In other words, non-formal learning practice in community has been in place for decades, however, its value within educational research has not been substantiated by empirical research until recent years. Substantial research has been undertaken within the fields of social work, public health and psychology but not as much in education. An educational perspective on non-formal learning experiences for Latino youth has the potential to offer a comprehensive yet deep understanding of how OST programs can serve as learning spaces that also support youth

as active participants in processes of cultural production. OST programs shift the

emphasis away from just the school and illuminate the interactions between schools,

families, and communities (Wing & Wang, 2008). Futhermore, anthropology as a holistic

lens allows for the multiple facets of human life to be juxtaposed and analyzed and to

bring about the possible connections that exists among them. As a discipline,

anthropology also presents a way in which society can be viewed as a whole and "it

acknowledges the pervasiveness of collectivism" in our lives (Peacock, 1986, p. 14). We

as individuals, live in a society, interact within communities, and give meaning to the

various connections we make with others. In other words, such a perspective provides a

more holistic understanding of the multiple elements that coexist in the educational

experiences of Latino youth, their engagement, and their understanding of education as a

whole.

Non-formal learning has traditionally been considered a less legitimate experience

in the education of an individual. Bekerman, Burbules, and Silberman argue that:

> Formal education has long been the preferred daughter of educational theorizing
>
> while nonformal education has been relegated the position of an exotic poor
>
> relative…Even the rhetoric adopted by those who practice it often seems to
>
> assume this position, defining nonformal education in negative terms, as an
>
> education that is not formal (2006, p. 2).

Non-formal education (NFE) or non-formal learning, as the names indicates,

belongs to the family of education. In other words, NFE is a component of the definition

of education as defined by anthropologists. From an anthropological perspective of education, non-formal learning is part of a broad conceptualization of what learning and education entail. Its existence dates back to the 1960s when the term was introduced as the need for providing OST opportunities for youth arose. NFE is defined as "any organized, systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups of the population, adults as well as children" (Combs & Ahmed, 1974). A key element in the definition put forth by Combs and Ahmed is the notion of the activity being systematic and organized; there needs to be a structure and system in place in order for the learning to occur and programs to be effective.

From an international perspective, the conceptualization of non-formal learning dates back to the early to mid-1900s in Latin America. During the 1950s and 60s Latin America and the Caribbean were seen as sources of much of the innovation that took place within the non-formal education field. In these regions of the world, non-formal education was at the center for change and socio-economic progress for those most disenfranchised from society (La Belle, 2000). Programs ranged from agricultural extension to community development and consciousness rising. Local, state, and international organizations (UNESCO, World Bank, and USAID) worked to provide access to information and skills outside of schools (La Belle, 2000). The Latin American history with non-formal learning is an example of how these opportunities often also worked as a complement to formal education to those already in school, while at the same

time they served as a supplement for those who did not have access to more formal educational experiences.

Literature that operationalizes the concept of non-formal education around the world has reflected experiences from Latin America and has conceptualized the term as a complement, alternative, and supplement to formal education. For example, Brennan (1997) argues that non-formal education is a complement to formal education for those who have not been able to receive education in the formal setting due to formal institutions not being able to deliver their functions. When viewed as an alternative, non-formal education recognizes indigenous ways of learning that existed before colonization and continue to exist today. Lastly, non-formal education viewed as a supplement to formal education is considered a reaction to educational, social, and economic needs that the formal education system has been unwilling or unable to meet. For the purposes of this study, non-formal education is considered a complement to formal education experiences. Learning takes place in a wide array of settings, and OST programs are one example of additional opportunities for Latino youth to learn and experience environments in which their *educación* is embraced.

The U.S. context for non-formal learning

In the United States, John Dewey (1963) is often considered the forerunner of the theory of non-formal education. His theory of oneness connects education and real life experiences and speaks to the importance of non-formal experiences as personal, meaningful, and relevant to daily interests and experiences. This perspective considers

non-formal learning as a complement rather than as an alternative or supplement to formal-learning. Dewey viewed formal education as being disconnected from familiar acts and objects, as abstract and bookish and based on curricula often oblivious to social needs. Furthermore, his concerns with formal education reflect some of the anthropological perspectives that Spindler (1967) and Paul Willis (1990) have presented. Notions of disconnect and disinterest among youth and their experiences in formal education settings are vividly present in these conceptualizations of formal vs. non-formal educational settings.

It is possible that this detachment from the school is what gave rise to concepts of "out-of-school" time programs. In the U.S. such programs are defined as the hours in which school-age children are not in school and they are doing something other than activities mandated by the schools (National Institute on Out of School Time, NIOST, 2003). Programs are delivered mostly after school or during the summer. They include programs such as Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, 4-H, Boy and Girl Scouts, etc. In the context of Latino families and communities, many of these organizations at the local and national level are focused on serving a particular group, and they promote themselves as culturally based, culturally relevant organizations. In other words, the cultural element of the programming (content or approach) is a central part of the organization's philosophy of how to serve their intended audience.

Non-formal education environments are considered to be more flexible and less institutionalized than those in schools. Consequently, programs can easily adapt to the

growing diversity among the youth population as well as the diverse array of youth

needs. Romi and Schmida (2009) argue that "non-formal education aims to help

adolescents cope with their struggle toward forming their personal identity" (p. 266). The

non-formal learning environments are able to provide a safe and secure place for

adolescents to experiment with their freedom and experience steps toward adulthood

without the barriers and consequences of the more "confining" (p. 266) formal education

system. For example, youth might participate in a program in which they collaborate with

peers on accomplishing tasks such as completing art, technology, or entrepreneurial

projects; however, they are seldom graded for their accomplishments, nor reprimanded

when they fall short. As Romi and Schmida (2009) insist "non-formal education has an

element of spontaneity, a tendency towards improvisation and more symmetric and

democratic human relations. Consequently, its participants enjoy feelings of belonging,

and it legitimizes their norms of behaviors, even those bordering on adventurism and risk

taking" (p. 267). Youth who are truly engaged in the program activity gain a sense of

belonging and identity formation that they might not be able to acquire in more

restraining settings such as the school.

A broad conceptual lens of education informed by anthropology provides the

potential to better understand how Latino immigrant youth experience development and

education in these non-formal, experiential learning environments. I view education in a

broad, anthropological sense, distinguishing it from schooling. Levinson et al. (1996)

refer to this broad conceptualization of education as societies, and often cultural groups

within those societies as having complex cultural practices (skills, knowledge, and discourses) by which members of the group can become fully-educated persons. These authors' definition can help unpack a community's point of view about what constitutes an educated person.

Anthropology and education

Anthropologists have illustrated how notions of schooling and education are different. Spindler (1967) once stated:

> The new schools [in reference to more modern and institutionalized forms of schooling], like all institutions transforming cultural systems, are not articulated with the other parts of the changing system. The future is not knowable. Much of the content taught in the school, as well as the very concept of the school as a place with four walls within which teacher and students are confined for a number of hours a day and regulated by a rigid schedule of "learning" activities, is Western (p. 331).

Spindler refers to schooling practices implemented in rural communities across the world. What is unique about Spindler's question of relevancy is the fact that it remains applicable to the reality of communities today. He argues that humans, including young people, learn all the time, beyond the school walls and the mandated curricula. Clearly related to what Levinson et. al. (1996) refer to as education occurring in various contexts outside the school.

Education as cultural transmission, acquisition and production

This view of education is multifaceted and inclusive of various processes that occur while an individual is learning (in or outside the school building). Using the anthropological definition of education, I draw from Erickson's (1997) perspective of culture in relationship to education:

> Culture, as it is more or less visible and invisible to its users, is profoundly involved in the processes and contents of education. Culture shapes and is shaped by the learning and teaching that happen during the practical conduct of daily life within all the educational settings we encounter as learning environments throughout the human life span, in families, in school classrooms, in community settings, and in the workplace. (pp. 33–34).

Based on this definition, culture is social: learned, and shared among members of a group. It is not to be confused with individual behaviors but instead is expressed based on shared understandings that guide such behavior. Thus, culture is seen as the way individuals understand ideas and attribute meaning to everyday life. Furthermore, the social construction of culture, as well as its acquisition and transmission do not only take place within the school. Culture should not be seen as fixed, static, rigid; placing boundaries around cultural groups. Instead a tension between seeing culture as fluid, generative, and ever changing, while also conceptualizing it as more rigid or concrete must be acknowledged. Educación as a cultural framework is ever changing by the larger

social forces at play in the lives of immigrant youth and families and the larger social contexts in which they now reside.

The present study recognizes the processes of cultural transmission and acquisition that occur in educational environments (both formal and non-formal) but it also reflects on the idea of culture as being continually produced in these environments as well (Levinson et al., 1996).

Spindler (1967) clearly illustrates that education is a process of cultural transmission and acquisition with the purpose to teach humans how to think, act, and feel, in regards to their interaction in the larger society. For example, he depicts various initiation proceedings taking place among different cultural groups and argues that such events are considered part of new beginnings for youth in those communities. There is cultural transmission of what is left behind and what is expected after having been initiated. In other words, youth are given the message that from the point of initiation, learning will be supported although it will be rigorous and harsh. These community learning experiences, such as initiation ceremonies, informal relationships with elders, and other events, are considered to be key spaces in which culture is acquired by and transmitted to youth and children. Like Erickson (1997), Spindler is furthering notions of culture as social, learned, and shared, not only within the school walls but throughout all learning environments (family, community, and the workplace). From an anthropological point of view, concepts of cultural transmission and acquisition have been key pieces to understanding educational experiences across time and groups in our societies.

Understanding cultural transmission and acquisition can aid anthropologists and educators in fostering common understandings of youth's educational experiences.

Despite these benefits, cultural transmission and acquisition alone assume culture to be static instead of a more fluid process. It is important to note that Spindler's (1967) perspective of education as cultural transmission and acquisition lacks a more nuanced understanding of youth as agents of their learning and creators of culture. Youth are not merely passive recipients of culture; they are actively involved in cultural production. As I discuss later in this chapter, education (both formal and non-formal) offers youth and communities opportunities to produce new meanings and structures. This is not to be confused with cultural reproduction in which institutions and structures of power are continually reproduced and reinforced.

A holistic understanding of education considers the act of schooling as a "calculated intervention with learning," in which "the child is removed from the everyday routine of community life and from observation of the work rules of adults. He or she is placed in an artificial, isolated, unrealistic, unritualized environment," to learn and be educated (Spindler, 1967, p. 331). Indeed, Paul Willis (1990) has predicted that school-centered systems will become irrelevant to the identities and energies of young people and will not be part of their identity development. Furthermore, he contends that popular culture will increasingly replace, in its own ways, the vacated roles of education. This disjunction experienced by youth and communities of color within formal institutions of schooling has been often addressed by culturally specific community-based organizations

that offer structured programming to both youth and parents. This is especially true for organizations serving immigrant communities. Examples of such organizations in Minnesota include Centro Cultural Chicano, La Oportunidad, Familia Guidance Center, El Colegio Education Center, and Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) among many others. In essence, these organizations strive to redress educational inequalities by offering environments that allow youth and families to acquire skills, knowledge, and establish networks with potential for furthering their future goals in society. More importantly, such organizations are able to act alongside parents and youth workers as overlapping spheres of positive influence on Latino youth (Epstein, 1995).

In resonance with Spindler's critique of schools, Latino communities often consider holistic approaches to educate their children fully. From an anthropological point of view, the community offers a "culturally specific and relative conception of the educated person" (Levinson et al., 1996, p. 3). The distinctions between home, community, and school, and mainstream institutions are not as clearly delineated but are "rather part of a web of interacting communities" (Villenas and Deyhle, 1999, p. 425). It is within this web that positive youth development takes place. Before moving forward into more complex theoretical understandings of non-formal learning opportunities I will further describe the Latino community, especially in the U.S. educational context.

The Latino community's response to education in the U.S. The Latino community in the U.S. has been impacted greatly by immigration; either in generations past or in the lives of more recent immigrants to the U.S. More specifically, the literature presented in

this review is closely related to Mexican and other Central American Latinos who have either recently immigrated to the U.S. or their immigration status dates back only a couple generations. Analyses of Latinos in this country have lacked rigor in terms of how this group compares to other ethno-racial groups and have paid little attention to national origin and length of time in the U.S. My examination of youth's experiences in OST programs assumes a focus on communities of Latinos who have not had equal access and opportunities in the formal education arenas, and have turned to cultural and structural forces outside the schools in order to educate their children. It is crucially important to consider how the community has responded to often-called hegemonic educational institutions and systems in the larger society.

Ogbu (1998) developed a cultural model to further explain and illustrate various minority groups' responses to notions of education and learning. His model positions two main kinds of minority populations based on notions of power structures. The two groups are involuntary minorities and voluntary minorities. The first group includes those who have been colonized, enslaved, or conquered into a society (e.g. African Americans in the U.S.), while the second group refers to individuals who have willingly moved to the U.S. (i.e. immigrant communities that have come to this country for better financial or educational opportunities). Ogbu's model differentiates between immigrant groups and undocumented workers, a relevant distinction in regards to Latino communities that are made up of both groups. The distinction between immigrants and undocumented workers is based on their wishes to settle permanently or temporarily in the U.S.; Ogbu refers to

undocumented workers as a group that is not easily identifiable and states that it would be difficult to know if they come to this country to stay permanently or plan to return home. I would argue that those who emigrate for better economic and educational opportunities perceive their immigration as a re-settlement to a new country, in more permanent terms. Zhou and Kim (2006)'s study of supplementary education experiences for immigrant youth reveals that an important characteristic of contemporary immigration is striving for permanent settlement by families and even communities, rather than individual sojourning. As a result, communities that include undocumented workers ought to be considered part of the voluntary minorities according to Ogbu's model.

What's most relevant about this model is the relationship that Ogbu draws between minorities' status and their connection to education. According to this model, involuntary minorities tend to "oppose" the dominant culture's way of life including education and academic achievement. On the other hand, voluntary minorities tend to have better educational attainment due to their choice to immigrate and re-settle into the host society. Ogbu's model would suggest that Latino youth (especially those from immigrant families) would perform better in schools than their peers than involuntary minority groups. He further suggests that voluntary minorities have an "adaptive advantage" over those who have been forced into the society in which they live (Ogbu, 1992). Despite statistical findings suggesting that immigrant youth do better than their non-immigrant minority peers (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Kao & Tienda, 1995), this model has not paid enough attention to the experiences of other types of immigrants, often

undocumented and racially diverse, who tend to not benefit from their formal educational experiences and whose academic achievement has fallen behind their peers'. Furthermore, Ogbu's typology of minority groups does not focus on variability among generations (Gibson, 1997).

Other researchers have argued that one's generation can have a major impact on perceptions of identity and views of the opportunity structure (Suarez-Orozco, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Their work suggests that children of immigrants who are pressured to Americanize themselves more rapidly than their parents and without the ethnic community supports and or cultural and social resources have an increased risk of school failure and downward assimilation (Gibson, 1997). This is contrary to what Ogbu's model would suggest in regards to immigrant youth outperforming their peers. While Ogbu's work is critical in that it addresses cultural and power relationships as they influence youth's educational attainment and opportunities for upward mobility in society, the typology falls short in not regarding other social forces such as generational and cultural differences, class, race, etc. These forces are strongly co-related to how Latino communities perceive and respond to educational opportunities in the U.S. A critical concept for understanding how Latino communities in the U.S. have responded to education and educating their children is the notion of *educación*. Frameworks for such an understanding should be inclusive of larger discourses like immigration, culture, and education, which influence meaning-making on the part of the community.

Norma Gonzalez (2010) maintains that anthropological perspectives of education originated from asking questions about why people and cultures educate the way they do. An anthropologically informed view of the educational experiences of Latino youth can shed light onto how the Latino community constructs its collective identity among the various discourses of immigration, globalization, and transnationalism. Latino youth in this country are the largest and fastest-growing sector of the child population (U.S. Census 2010), and although many of them are born in the U.S., they still represent a larger global movement that affects their lives and more specifically their learning experiences: immigration. In the U.S., the country with the largest number of immigrants in the world (approximately over 40 million), roughly one quarter of all youth are immigrants themselves and it is predicted that by 2040, over a third of all children will be living in immigrant households (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). Children and families of immigration are involved in a complex identity-development process that has *educación* (a concept to be discussed in detail in the next section) at its core. Appadurai's (1991) work titled *Global Ethnoscapes* clearly illustrates how the migration process has allowed youth and families worldwide to imagine different futures. Imagination takes place "as groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic projects" (p.191). Latinos are framing the *educación* of their children in the U.S. based on their past experiences and cultural understandings that were initially generated in their homeland. Furthermore, as they migrate to the U.S. they bring this framework with them. Wortham, Murillo and Haman (2002) assert that Latinos

"bring cultural identities, experiences, and ways of knowing to their new locations" (p. 3). The imaginary futures are created by both elements of past experiences or places and by structures of the new environments. As communities imagine possible futures for their youth, they re-create their community cultural identity. This identity creation includes dynamism of larger societal discourses as well as the community's interpretation of how such discourses define its identity.

The Latino community is engaged in re-creating futures for their youth within these imaginaries that are fruitful and effective at merging complementing perspectives on education. Ngo (2008) calls for us to consider culture and identity as a dynamic process being constructed through discourse and representation. By discourse, Ngo refers to spoken and written language, as well as images used in popular and academic arenas. Ngo defines representation firstly as how communities, in this case a largely immigrant community, are identified by a history of discourses, and secondly, how the community in turn identifies itself by responding to such discourses. For example, in the current context of global migration, Latino immigrant communities are attempting to provide a holistic and multifaceted *educación* for their youth with ethnic-specific community organizations and programs that represent elements of what they left behind. In such a case, the community is identified by the immigration discourse. While, the community sees these organizations as representing what they left behind, the community also responds to the discourse by considering which organizations can help their children to further their educational trajectories in the U.S. In essence, the spaces in which

community organizations provide opportunities that embrace different meanings of education, allow often-distant discourses to blend and create structures and experiences for young people that are responsive to their identities. Examining in more depth a concept such as *educación* allows us to appreciate "the historical and cultural particularities of the 'products' of education" (Levinson et al., 1996, p. 3). The intersection of global and local discourses positions the community to culturally produce new forms of capital that can be acquired through *educación.*

Educación: an alternative lens for conceptualizing Latino immigrant education

In the U.S., family values and ideals influence the way children perform academically in schools (Weisner & Garnier, 1992). Similarly, in the Latino context, family values also impact children's performance and engagement in school. For example, Mexican parents firmly believe that "the moral education of the home serves as the groundwork for the academic instruction that the school would provide" (Reese et al., 1995, 65). Examining parents' educational values and aspirations for their children must be considered in order to frame the educational experiences of Latino youth in non-formal learning environments and recapture the point of view of the community.

Chapter I introduced the concept of *educación* and how little attention this term has received in relationship to examining the educational experiences of Latino immigrant youth. Moreover, much of the empirical work conducted on the achievement of these youth has been conducted utilizing quantitative measures. New perspectives that attempt to understand such experiences from a more holistic point of view ought to

consider the complexity and creativity involved in "the expressions, definitions, and practices of *una buena educación*" (Villenas, 2002, 23). *Educación* is centered on the moral education of children which includes *buen comportamiento* (good behavior), *respeto* (respect), *estar pendiente* (being vigilant), and a deep sense of Latino cultural values and traditions. This moral emphasis on education does not see academic achievement as less important or critical to children's future and the Latino community strives to provide educational opportunities that complement, and often supplement, what children are experiencing in schools.

Families and communities play a major role in Latino children becoming "fully educated" (Levison et al., 1996). Villenas and Deyhle (1999), along with others, offer explanations and findings that more accurately portray Latino families' definition of *educación*. Many immigrant families in the U.S have endured harsh conditions and difficult situations to immigrate to urban, poor neighborhoods. Nevertheless, parents of Latino youth consider the education of their children as purposeful, important, and crucial to their development. Most of all, they see education as vital for the children to become *buenas personas* (good people) and to experience upward mobility in society.

The meaning of *educación* for Latino parents is well-researched. Studies by Delgado-Gaitán (1990, 1992, and 1994), Delgado-Gaitán and Trueba (1991), Suarez-Orozco (1989), Trueba (1988, 1991) and Valenzuela (1999) led the way into presenting uniquely Latino teaching and learning as part of the cultural strengths of this group. The research also exposes a striking difference between the idea of education in American

mainstream society, and *educación* among the Latino population. In Spanish, the term

educación has a much broader meaning, which encompasses not only the academic skills

of an individual, but also takes into account moral values and manners. Valdés (1996)

describes the *educación* process among Latino parents as teaching children how to

behave, how to act around others, and what is good and moral. It includes teaching the

expectations of the roles that they will play in life and the rules of conduct that have to be

followed.

The focal point for Latino parents who embrace educación is to teach their

children how to be good people. Reese, Balzano, Gallimore & Goldenberg (1995) found

that the concept of educación involves moral learning as the base for academic learning.

An educación model emphasizes the knowledge of right and wrong, respect and good

behavior, the importance of family unity, el buen camino (the good path), and good

academic performance (pp. 63-68). Angela Valenzuela (1999), in her work Subtractive

Schooling, argues that educación also goes beyond teaching good moral values; being

una buena persona (a good person) is also accomplished through the formation of

respectful and caring relationships. This merits recognition, especially in relationship to

non-formal learning environments in which organizations tend to become places that

foster respectful and reciprocal caring relationships between youth and staff.

Raising a well-educated child requires educating their whole being in relation to

their family and community, including "teaching the expectations of the roles that they

would play in life and the rules of conduct that had to be followed in order to be

successful in them" (Valdés, 1996, p. 125). This is particularly appropriate as we consider OST program environments as spaces where Latino youth are taught the expectations of the roles they play in life and how to behave and act around others. More importantly, in OST programs they can be taught from a positive asset-based approach. The *educación* lens offers an opportunity to examine and analyze the educational experiences of Latino youth from an asset-based perspective. Deeply understanding how participation in non-formal learning environments contributes to youth's sense of self, feelings of belonging, and future goals can prove to be a fruitful framework for educators, youth workers, and policy makers. Moreover, such a perspective is key to a more effective examination of the reasons youth and families are drawn to culturally specific community organizations. Such opportunities seem to provide the elements of education that schools have failed to offer these communities.

Funds of knowledge

While the *educación* approach to non-formal learning environments provides a potentially illuminating perspective, it is not the only asset-based approach scholars use to conceptualize the education and learning in Latino communities. Nespor (1997) and others have considered a broader theorization for learning and education within Latino communities, namely the use of networks, or webs of interactions (Gonzalez, 2002; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). Similarly, the work of Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore (1993) has conceptualized the learning that occurs in homes of Latino families as "funds of knowledge," which is defined as "the diverse social networks that interconnect

households with their social environments and facilitate the sharing or exchange of resources, including knowledge, skills, and labor essential for the household's functioning if not their well-being" (p. 140). As it is the case with notions of *educación,* this approach is inclusive of the learning that occurs within the family, the home, and often the community. Furthermore, it is not only inclusive, but it provides educators with a different approach for learning from and working with Latino youth.

Understanding youth social structures and the broad elements of learning generated in the home and community are critical to truly understanding the construction of cultural identity and the ways in which Latino youth can learn and achieve both in and out of school. Funds of knowledge are based on the premise that people are competent and have knowledge generated from their life experiences (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002). Such an approach to the education of Latino youth seeks ways in which institutions, both formal and non-formal, can recognize the funds of knowledge that Latino youth bring to their experiences. It also challenges the deficit perspectives that are often associated with the Latino community.

The *educación* lens, informed by anthropological and holistic perspectives of education, is inclusive of both formal and non-formal ways of learning. This view requires us to first contextualize how non-formal and OST opportunities for learning are legitimate ways for youth to engage, develop a deeper sense of identity, and further their efforts to reach future goals.

Attaining a true and comprehensive understanding is nearly impossible, as there are an infinite number of variables in each individual's educational experience. In response, Peacock (1986) proposes that we focus on parts of the whole, and to think of categories as abstractions of the whole. Since studies of formal education experiences among Latino youth are in abundance, I suggest that a deeper examination of their non-formal learning experiences is needed in order to truly apply a holistic *educación* perspective. My work seeks to interpret and understand how the meaning of education for Latino families interacts with other meanings in their ever-changing cultural worlds. Every cultural practice ought to be considered in context of a larger system of cultural beliefs and practices (Mead, 1928).

In her keynote speech at a conference, Margaret Mead (1964) highlighted the value of comparative studies of culture by saying that data from or about other cultural communities can represent parallel developments instead of ancestral or "divergent forms of our culture" (p. 93). Cultures must be seen as a whole, with value systems and meanings as inextricable components. Through this work, I hope to present ways of understanding and cultural perspectives on education that do not compete with more dominant perspectives but instead are parallel to such understandings.

Latino and immigrant youth in OST programs in the U.S.

Latino families in the U.S. have aspired to provide their children opportunities in which educational environments can serve to fulfill their hopes for *jóvenes bien educados* (well-educated youth). Latino communities strive to make *educación* a reality for their

children who are often growing up in environments different from their homeland where informal out-of-school learnings were part of their daily lives.

Although evidence suggests that minority youth have much lower participation rates in community programs (Lee, Borden, Serido, & Perkins, 2009); those who do participate in well-structured and supervised youth programs demonstrate enhanced self-esteem, increased school performance and aspirations to college, the ability to overcome adversity, leadership skills, and less engagement in antisocial behaviors (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Junge, Manglallan & Raskauskas, 2003; Villarruel, Montero-Sieburth, Dunbar, & Outley, 2005). Research has demonstrated what well-structured youth programs look like. The three key characteristics that must exist within the programs are positive relationships with peers and adults, enriching experiences and activities, and a safe environment (Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005). In other words, well-structured youth programs leverage important elements of social capital, such as social trust, social networks, and social norms, which can prove beneficial for immigrant Latino youth participating in such programs (Khane & Bailey, 1999).

In addition, they provide opportunities for youth to engage in meaningful activities related to their interests and offer environments where youth can feel welcomed and safe from negative forces in the larger community. Researchers have also concluded that non-formal learning environments might provide elements that influence youth's motivation that formal settings do not provide. These three elements are: a) a task that is worthwhile, b) a close relationship with an adult/program leader, and c) a sense of social

contribution that learners might acquire when their participation has broader consequences (Siva, 1986). For example, qualitative insights from three OST programs revealed that youth participants gained social capital that turned into knowledge, developmental and social skills, and relationships, which furthered their opportunities for education and career advancement (Jarret, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005). Participation in youth programs provides Latino immigrant youth with the opportunity to interact with adults outside the school and home environments. It fosters the development of extra-familial networks (Portes, 1998) and by becoming members of such networks, Latino immigrant youth acquire social capital that can aid their upward mobility.

More specifically, the following findings represent aspects of how the programs serve as mediators to provide spaces where *educación* can occur. Khane and Bailey (1999)'s study of two Chicago after-school programs (one largely serving Latino immigrant youth) demonstrates the importance of such programs in the creation and acquisition of social capital and educational achievement for the youth. This particular study is of interest here because it exemplifies how an after-school or supplementary education model can create the necessary structures to not only support the youth but also empower the parents to help their children succeed. The program, called I Had a Dream (IHAD), leveraged the key components of social capital, social trust, access to support networks, and opportunity structures for the youth participants. Approximately, 80% of the youth were Latino and attended IHAD outside of the school day on Chicago's West Side neighborhoods. The program provided the youth with mentoring, tutoring, and

college preparation activities as well as opportunities for summer service projects while having community adults (usually high-resource adults) participated in most of the program activities. When compared to the control group, 80% of the youth who participated in IHAD graduated high school and continued onto college while only 37% of those in the control group managed to graduate from high school. Furthermore, Khane and Bailey assert that "the social trust that developed facilitated access to social networks and social norms, to direct services and to monetary resources that helped the youth realize dramatically more than they otherwise would have achieved" (p.340). This is an illustrative example of how structural forces can aid the development and sustainability of ethnic related opportunities that improve the outcomes for immigrant youth in our communities.

Other scholars have also focused on the experiences of immigrant youth in non-formal learning environments. The work done by Zhou and Bankston (1994) found that ethnic churches served as a network focus for Vietnamese immigrant youth in New Orleans and that participation in church programs brought the youth closer to their ethnic community, which resulted in a better adjustment to the host society and increased the probabilities that they would perform well in school, strive to meet goals, and avoid the dangers that confront youth in society. These scholars define adjustment as upward mobility for immigrant youth, and they consider such adjustment as key in the lives of immigrant youth who have settled in the low-income neighborhoods where they may adjust to the local society of underprivileged youth rather than to the larger American

society (p. 21). In other words, immigrant youth should be able to positively adjust to the host society, especially when such an adjustment means upward movement in terms of academic achievement and social inclusion.

Borden et al. (2005) conducted a qualitative study to learn about the processes through which Latino adolescents initiate their participation in programs and either stay or drop out. A key finding from this study speaks to the notion of belonging and its importance to these youth when deciding whether to participate or not. A Latina youth explained that adolescents come to programs "because they want to be part of something" (p.39), they want to be accepted by peers and program leaders, and get more involved in the community.

The findings from Borden et al. (2005)'s work mirror what Brown and Evans (2002) argue in their study of extracurricular activities and greater school connection among diverse student populations. These authors also shed light on how participation in extracurricular and OST programs may facilitate inclusion in peer groups, positive school-related experiences, and a sense of belonging. In addition, what's peculiar about their work is that they found that OST activities such as 4-H, Boys and Girls clubs, etc. were more significantly related to school connection than activities that took place within the school.

Wing and Wang (2008) call for institutions to make the social capital structures of education transparent and accessible, and they argue that OST programs as well as

supplemental education opportunities are more than capable to play a crucial role in such

transformation. Citing McLaughlin and Heath (1994) who affirm that:

> Youth organizations can provide a bridge to mainstream institutions for both
>
> students and their parents; they can furnish schools with important knowledge
>
> about youth and their families. They can furnish families with information,
>
> access, and opportunities to play a positive role in youth's development (p. 295).

Wing and Wang (2008)'s work with low-income Chinese youth and community-based

youth programs illustrate the role that an OST program can play in the lives and well-

being of immigrant youth and families.

Research also suggests that OST programs rely on communal resources to

enhance cultural and educational environments, especially for weaker, often

disfranchised youth (Simkins, 1977; Romi & Schmida, 2009). Suarez-Orozco (2003)

adds that "afterschool programs can work to impart the skills and culturally coded form

of symbolic capital that immigrant children may not be able to generate at home" (p.

101). Furthermore, caring adults in these environments are able to play a crucial role in

creating and transmitting forms of cultural capital that will be required of immigrant

youth to be contributing members of our communities. We begin to see how these OST

programs and organizations can be key players in the upward mobility of Latino youth in

our society by affording them opportunities for the acquisition and use of different forms

of capital (social and cultural). In other words, the non-formal learning environments, in

this case OST programs, serve as the place in which cultural and structural forces provide

motivation for youth to do well in life, get an education, and find a place where they belong.

In order to understand the extent to which such programs facilitate the acquisition of such forms of capital, the following theoretical frameworks are proposed.

Theoretical frameworks

The following section of the literature review aims to illustrate how an *educación* conceptual framework can help illuminate and explain the experiences of Latino youth in OST programs. Furthermore, it presents complementary theoretical perspectives that inform such a holistic undertaking. Researchers interested in examining Latino youth's motivation to join OST programs and analyzing their participation experiences have often drawn from structural and cultural frameworks as well as more individualized motivational frameworks. These theories can help uncover some of the issues concerning youth's educational experiences in such environments and help guide my understanding and presentation of an asset-based perspective of Latino youth's education in the U.S., especially within non-formal learning environments.

As mentioned in the introduction, the frameworks that guided my work are a way to accomplish what Jean Anyon (2009) calls an "analytics of exogeny" (p. 2), which suggests that one cannot understand the experiences of Latino youth in OST programs by merely focusing on the individuals. A critical part of my work is examining the role played by OST programs in shaping the educational experiences of these youth and considering how youth's meaning-making related to education and educación is critical

to acquiring a transparent understanding of their experience. Anyon suggests that we look exogenously (outwardly) at the context and social forces in which the youth experiences are embedded. I attempt to situate my area of study in the context of the OST program as both a non-formal educational institution (structural) and an environment in which capital and social (cultural) processes are acknowledged, promoted, and in some cases converted into concrete benefits and resources for the youth who participate. These cultural and structural elements are found in OST programs that offer non-formal learning opportunities based on a positive youth development and educación approach.

Moreover, following Anyon's recommendations and remaining true to the educación lens, I deem necessary that theories used to examine the topic of study consider both the cultural and structural elements of the experiences as well as the agency that Latino youth participants possess.

A cultural-structural framework: the power of social and ethnic structures

Researchers have examined Latino immigrant youth's participation in non-formal learning activities from cultural (Latino cultural values, socio-cultural approaches, etc.) and structural perspectives. A culturally focused framework emphasizes the role that cultural values, characteristics, and behavioral patterns of a certain group might have in the process of immigrant adaptation and education for both youth and families. This argument assumes that certain U.S. minority groups might not have the necessary values and behaviors to nurture a positive transition into the host society. Nor does it accomplish a holistic understanding of the educational experiences and motivation of the youth.

Furthermore, such a framework portrays an image of the immigrant's culture as deficient (Zhou & Kim, 2006). On the other hand, the structure-focused framework considers broader social factors such as class, racial stratification systems, and labor market conditions in their new home. Nevertheless, this latter framework sees cultural values as conducive to the betterment of a group only when coupled with the necessary structural forces such as class (Zhou & Kim, 2006). In other words, culture alone is not enough to sustain positive transition and development among the youth in the community. Rejecting either the cultural or structural perspectives would be foolish; one must consider a learning agenda that takes into account both elements of the program in order to better grasp the youth's educational trajectories and decision-making in such environments.

Zhou and Kim's (2006) alternative framework for theorizing youth participation in OST programs draws from both the cultural and structural perspectives in order to understand and transform the experiences of immigrant youth. The framework not only observes cultural and structural (social) elements of ethnic communities but also considers the common cultural heritage and meaning that might exist among youth and other members of the community. I would add that their framework recognizes the potential for the community, especially for the youth, to foster cultural understandings in education that are responsive to their needs and experiences. Furthermore, their work acknowledges that ethnic communities include structures such as social institutions, out-of-school time programs, and interpersonal networks as sites of more supportive environments for ethnically diverse (often immigrant) youth to do well in school and

other settings. These scholars assert that "while community forces shape an ethnic group's orientation toward social mobility and promote specific coping strategies and behavioral patterns, they also mediate the process of social capital formation in the community" (p. 5). However, these social capital structures must be supported by tangible ethnic structures in order to create meaningful opportunities for social mobility and inclusion. More importantly, these ethnic structures demonstrate how culture and structure can interact to create social environments that promote the educational achievement and social inclusion of Latino youth.

In addition to Zhou and Kim's work to further operationalize participation experiences in OST programs with Asian immigrant youth, other scholars examining the educational experiences of Latino youth have also integrated the interaction between cultural and structural processes that occur in such experiences. This interaction between culture and structure is highlighted in the research conducted by Stanton-Salazar (2001). His work titled *Manufacturing Hope and Despair* illustrates how recreation centers in the community and kin networks among the youth and others (aunts, uncles, elders, neighbors, and siblings) are key forces that provide a buffer zone for youth and lead them through various developmental challenges of adolescence.

The cultural-structural framework presents a holistic model that integrates both culture and structure, and more importantly, it has the potential to explain the complexity of the experiences in non-formal learning environments. Evidence suggests that researchers have begun to utilize the cultural-structural framework to further examine the

intricacies of youth experiences within non-formal learning environments. To illustrate this framework's potential I now turn to examples from the literature that have utilized this theoretical perspective.

Although some of the empirical work that has utilized the framework at hand has been conducted within schools (formal learning environments), the research findings are still applicable to my work within non-formal learning environments. Conchas' (2001) work on understanding why some Latino students succeed in school while others do not, illustrates the interplay that must occur among cultural and structural forces within the school in order for students to be more actively engaged in learning. For example, the author discusses how he observed programs within the school that provided the needed structure for students to actively participate in school and develop academically. More importantly, his work points out how in addition to structure, the culture of the program also played a major role in how students interacted with one another and how they viewed academic success. It even goes deeper than merely considering structural and cultural elements. This particular work found that intentionally created structures, coupled with the needed cultural frameworks, and clear social and cultural gains proved to be critical in the success or failure of the young students. Although Conchas' (2001) study takes place within the school, it is a useful example of the cultural-structural framework in action. He concludes by stating "these programs' building of strong support mechanisms was the bridge that linked racial and ethnic minority youth with adults and

other high achieving peers, which was necessary for educational mobility" (p. 502). He highlights the bridging power that these programs often provide to youth.

Nelson (2009) argues for a similar framework of cultural and structural forces that aid the positive development of Latino youth. Her research weaves together both personal (cultural) and structural factors to focus on the successes of this youth population. In doing so, she argues that OST programs can facilitate and bring together social capital theory and role identity theory by examining programs as "settings that simultaneously provide access to the social capital necessary for academic attainment as well as opportunities for the social support, relationships, and rewards necessary for young people to construct and maintain" positive identities in the face of adversity (p. 22). Nelson's significance lies on the coupling of these social capital and other structural supports that youth can use to experience positive development and further their growth.

More specifically, OST programs are ways in which youth have access to caring and knowledgeable adults in their communities (structures); they provide opportunities necessary for school engagement and positive identity development. In addition, their voluntary nature empowers youth to choose to participate (Nelson, 2009; Wing & Wong, 2008; Camras, 2004). Nelson (2009) concludes that these programs have the potential to both provide the cultural and structural aspects that alter the youth's path in life. In the study, adult role models who provided emotional support, academic encouragement, and cultural capital were crucial in positively impacting youth's lives and pathways to

college. Furthermore, while they provided a safe and supportive environment with caring and knowledgeable adults, they also offered environments for belonging and competence.

Another study that utilizes the cultural-structural framework to study the positive development of Latino youth examined how cultural norms and social capital within a community can protect youth from the effects of poverty (Denner, Kirby, Coyle, & Brindis, 2001). Denner and her colleagues suggest that social capital can intersect with cultural norms in immigrant communities to provide unique protective factors for youth. This intersection occurs when social networks established among members of the community to find employment and other assistance are coupled with the community's maintenance of cultural norms around notions of education, family values, and parental authority. For example, in communities with lower levels of teen pregnancy, the level of social capital was higher. The fact that social capital formation and distribution was carried out by mostly informally by residents of communities with lower teen births suggested that the community was "seen as part of Mexico" (p.14). Interviews with participants demonstrated that these ties resulted in maintenance of traditional values about family and community, respect for family and family reputation, and close monitoring and protection of girls.

Another example of the cultural-structural framework in the literature comes from scholars who utilized a concept mapping method to identity community-based strategies for the success of Latino youth (Ridings, Piedra, Capeles, Rodriguez, Freire, & Byoun, 2011). Practitioners identified the need of acquiring community support (social capital) in

addition to cultural programmatic efforts in order to implement a successful OST

program for Latino youth. The authors argue that "one major reason why Latino

programs [often] underachieve is that they do not garner the level of community support

needed to be successful and without this adequate community support" programs are

doomed to have limited success (p. 36). In order to avoid such failure, they engaged in a

community approach using a concept system method to lead youth, parents, and other

stakeholders in a process that would identify key interventions related to Latino youth

success. This concept mapping method resulted in the community identifying useful and

meaningful strategies to help Latino youth stay in school (academic achievement),

develop healthy roles (using role models, relationships, etc.), and bridge cultures (by

becoming bicultural individuals). Again, this approach considered both structural and

cultural elements needed in order to achieve the desired impact.

Conchas and Rodriguez (2009) provide yet another meaningful example of how a

community-based organization implemented a truancy prevention program to promote

engagement in Black and Latino middle school youth. The program utilized a cultural-

structural approach in which both social and cultural capital played a role at ensuring the

success of the young participants. For example, the authors point out the importance of

social networks (social capital) that were intentionally created among older mentors and

youth and among peers (youth and youth). Such networks involved members of the

family, the community, and the school. They validated, supported, and empowered the

youth to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Networks were not the sole element

related to the observed success; in addition, the program was built with the assumption that youth and families bring assets and cultural wealth that can not only inform the experiences of youth but more importantly, can be activated to mobilize the cultural capital into benefits and advantages for the youth.

Youth programs are clear examples of intentionally constructed social structures that include the youth as well as non-family adults from the ethnic community. Often, youth programs are structured in a way that promote youth-adult interactions, relationship building, and the creation of social capital, which enables upward mobility among immigrant youth (Jarrett et al., 2005). Zhou and Kim (2006)'s work is one among many studies that demonstrate the importance of both cultural and social structures in the lives of immigrant youth in the U.S. and their participation in OST and supplemental education programs.

I want to further illustrate the cultural-structural framework by analyzing it through two theoretical constructs: social and cultural capital. The structural elements of the above framework refer to notions of social capital while cultural capital relates to the ethnic and cultural components of the framework. In doing so, I hope to provide a deeper interpretation of the framework at hand and gain a better understanding on its potential for application in research studies.

Social capital: The importance of networks and structures

The concept of social capital has been long studied by scholars interested in understanding the educational experiences of youth in the U.S. I juxtapose Coleman's

(1988) conceptualization of social capital with Bourdieu's (1986) notions of this framework. According to Coleman's (1988) definition, social capital is tangible and has three forms: a) level of trust, b) information channels, and c) norms and sanctions that promote the common good. Furthermore, he proposes that social capital is embedded within social structures and it facilitates the actions of individuals within such structures. In other words, individuals mutually benefit from these structures (networks) because of their access to information and other resources that aid their advancement towards personal and societal goals. In culturally based community-based programs, Latino youth experience these useful and influential networks of caring adults that can lead to information and tangible resources.

Bourdieu (1986) on the other hand, conceptualized social capital around theories of social reproduction and symbolic power. He defined social capital as "the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of essentially institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, 51). He argued that social capital could be decomposed into two main elements: 1) the social relationship that allows for access to information and resources and 2) the amount and quality of such resources (Portes, 1998). Bourdieu's (1988) definition sheds light on the processes of sociability that must be constructed in order for individuals to be able to participate in certain social groups and networks. OST programs can be seen as avenues for youth to participate in such processes that expose them to social groups and networks.

Portes (1998) on the other hand, notes that "to possess social capital a person must be related to others, and it is those others, not himself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage" (p. 7). If such relationships provide opportunities for the development of social capital and consequently the accumulation of human capital, it is imperative to examine how social capital is embodied within the contexts of OST programs serving Latino youth and how it might aid their life chances in the larger society, especially for those youth who are immigrants and new to the host community. Relationships are a core element of well-structured OST programs and according to Portes, these relationships are the true source of social capital that Latino youth could acquire and utilize to move upward in society. I agree with both Portes (1998) and Coleman (1988) in their view of social capital as relationships, networks of information and norms that promote the common good. In the coming sections, examples from the literature demonstrate how OST programs are able to establish information-rich relationships and the learning of social norms among the youth who participate.

Beyond the conceptualizations offered by the seminal scholars in the field of social capital the field of youth studies has developed work regarding this concept that directly applies to the experiences and lives of young people.

Social capital within the Youth Studies field. Through a closer examination of how more traditional scholars have defined social capital, researchers in the field of youth studies have pushed for additional considerations when we aim to illustrate the experiences of youth. For example, Weller (2006) challenges the "theoretical fathers" (p.

559) of social capital in terms of the lack of agency given to young people as creators and users of cultural and social capital. In other words, she believes that traditional perspectives on social capital have neglected the social capital that youth and children possess within their own networks and communities. In addition, other scholars state that research focusing on youth's social capital ought to emphasize young people's own actions and perceptions, instead of adults' perceptions of them (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004, Weller, 2006). This work calls for research studies that encompass social networks and interaction, trust and reciprocity, and a sense of belonging (Weller, 2006).

The utilization of the social capital framework by youth studies scholars has been fragmented to some extent. Bassani (2007) suggests that a youth-based social capital remains understudied, echoing what Weller (2006) argues when she challenges the "theoretical fathers" of social capital. These scholars urge those in the youth studies field to utilize social capital theory as a way to understand the development and well-being (behavioral, cognitive, and physical) of young people. Too much attention has been focused on adult (parents, role models, etc.) forms of social capital when in reality; youth-centered groups also contain useful forms of social capital. Furthermore, scholars from the field of youth studies affirm that Coleman "neglected to fully elaborate on youths' social class, ethnicity, and gender" (p. 20). Traditional social capital theory has mainly studied youth within the family as a mezzo group, but research has proven that young people's lives occur in various, often diverse, environments a fact that highlights the potential for studying social capital among youth from a more multidimensional

perspective (Bassani, 2007). A strength of my study is the recognition and inclusion of young people's agency in navigating structures to achieve their goals and reach their aspirations for the future.

In addition, when one examines the lives of youth, especially those belonging to immigrant communities, social capital studies have not reached consensus on the positive relationship between social capital and well-being. For example, scholars such as Zhou and Bankston (1994) found that a relationship exists between closed informal family and community ties to immigrant youth's well being. However, others have demonstrated that this relationship is not always linear; belonging to closely knit ethnic groups might isolate their members from the larger society and can hinder the youth's well-being. This voluntary isolation could prove negative when not coupled with the needed structural elements to turn cultural integration into capital that the youth could later mobilize for their own benefits. The possibility for divergence reinforces the need to utilize a cultural-structural perspective when examining the potential that culturally specific OST programs have for youth.

The potential for understanding the role of social capital within OST programs is immense. Groups bound by shared values and goals, as it is the case with a community-based program, may be more "closely bridged to the family than the school" (Bassani, 2007, 26). The shared values element and voluntary nature of programs are fundamental among members of such groups because youth choose to participate in such programs and are unable to select membership to their family or school. Theoretical attention has

been given to schools and not to non-formal learning settings. Based on the above literature related to social capital and OST programs, one could argue that these programs have activated their bridging functions more effectively than schools have.

Cultural capital: The importance of cultural values, norms, and symbolic credit

As previously mentioned, I conceptualize the cultural element of the cultural-structural framework as being closely related to notions of cultural capital. Education scholars have conceptualized cultural capital in different ways and guided by the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), they have been examining the role of cultural capital in students' lives for decades. These scholars defined cultural capital as "cultural habits and dispositions inherited from the family which are convertible, into economic capital" (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, p. 14). Bourdieu (1986) further argued that this type of capital exists in three distinct forms: Embodied (the person who possesses a certain competence holds this capital), objectified (objects themselves may function as a form of cultural capital) and institutionalized (formal educational institutions that issue credentials are giving cultural capital an objective value). A key characteristic of these seminal perspectives on cultural capital is that they represent an economic perspective on society; they assign cultural capital market value in which it can be acquired and exchanged for other things such as opportunities for upward mobility. Another important element of Bourdieu's (1998) conceptions of cultural capital is the connection to social structure and its reproduction. In other words, he argues (and I agree) that cultural capital

allows members of advantaged societies to perpetuate themselves and the existing power structures.

Furthermore, traditional views of cultural capital analyze the impact of culture on the class system and on the relationship between action and social structure. The original interpretations of cultural capital rest on two principles: A conceptualization of cultural capital that assumes competence or knowledge of high status culture (fine arts, classical music, etc.) and a more traditional perspective that sees the effects of such capital as separated from those of educational skills, ability, and achievement (Lareau & Weinninger, 2003).

Other scholars who followed Bourdieu and Passeron's work also interpreted cultural capital as prestigious cultural practices, often related to an individual's interests in art, literature, as well as their credentials in education (DiMaggio, 1982; Robinson & Garnier, 1985). Throughout the 1990s, the most used conceptualizations of this form of capital centered on notions of appropriate manners and good taste as well as control over cultural resources (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, & Robert 1990), and competencies in the society's high status culture (Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990). Levinson et. al. (1996) interpret Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital as a "kind of symbolic credit which one acquires through learning to embody and enact signs of social standing" (p. 6). The difference between Bourdieu's interpretation and that of Levinson et al. is that the latter does not suggest that such symbolic credit and social standing only occurs in elite or high-class cultural groups. The definition of cultural capital seems to be shifting.

Conceptualizing culture as capital illuminates functions of culture as resource that provides access to scarce rewards. In addition, if culture is seen as a resource, individuals will want to transmit the wealth from generation to generation. Lareau and Weininger (2003) are part of the definition shift of cultural capital, and they offer an interpretation of the concept that is more abstract than traditional interpretations. As it was stated in the Introduction Chapter, such shift is appealing to me because "it permits maximum empirical variation" (p. 598) while preserving the main idea that culture can operate as capital and has exchange value in markets. Furthermore, their definition of cultural capital is "the direct or indirect imposition of evaluative norms favoring the children or families of a particular social milieu" (p. 598). What these authors convey is that more dominant perspectives have focused on this idea of an elite status culture while more contemporary interpretations consider cultural capital in communities that have traditionally not been considered to possess such wealth.

In her work *Whose culture has capital?* Yosso (2005) brings forward an even more critical view and examination of cultural capital. Especially when such capital or community wealth, comes from traditionally underserved and underrepresented communities of color. This author invites us to consider various sources of knowledge that exist among disfranchised communities.

From the more traditional and historical definitions of cultural capital, we observe how high culture, mainstream upper class cultural values, objects, and behaviors are placed in superiority to elements of culture from communities of color. This work is

fruitful in allowing us to broaden our perspectives on what constitutes cultural capital

when the lives and experiences of Latino youth are being examined. Yosso (2005) has

furthered the concept of cultural capital and invites us to consider various sources of

knowledge that exist among disfranchised communities. She brings forward a more

critical view and examination of cultural capital. Her definition of cultural capital

includes community cultural wealth which is often unrecognized as valuable and useful

to those who are part of that community (p. 70). A key benefit to Yosso's perspective is

that it utilizes a positive philosophy and counters deficit perspectives that place minority

youth and families at fault for their poor academic performance. Nevertheless, one must

remain aware that often, larger systems and market forces determine what has value and

what constitutes cultural capital. Although more pervasive views remind us of such

widespread understandings, Yosso's conceptualization of cultural capital provides an

opportunity to place value on often over-looked potential assets within communities of

color. Others have defined cultural capital as the "accumulated beliefs, knowledge,

techniques, technologies, ways of doing, being, and the identities and rituals of a people"

(Gordon et al., 2005, p. 21). Gordon and colleagues also attempt to move away from

assuming that a certain group owns this capital; instead, they see it embodied in the

various elements of the culture of a group, any interrelated and interacting group of

people, despite their perceived class in society.

The difference between Yosso's perspective and Bourdieu and Passeron's notions

of cultural capital is that the latter believe some communities to be culturally wealthy in

terms of cultural capital. Furthermore, traditional views of cultural capital are narrower than more contemporary and critical perspectives in which wealth and capital are seen as a diverse array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and used within communities of color such as the Latino community in the U.S. context.

To provide a more in-depth understanding on these critical perspectives of cultural capital, Yosso lists six forms of capital that "are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (p. 77). These six forms are: aspirational capital (ability to maintain hopes and dreams alive), navigational capital (skills to maneuver through social institutions), social capital (networks of people and community resources), linguistic capital (intellectual and social skills related to being bilingual), familial capital (cultural knowledge nurtured among *familia*), and resistant capital (knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality). These six forms of cultural capital are pertinent to the experiences of Latino youth who often have high hopes for their future and negotiate constantly with larger social and community institutions in order to define who they are.

Critical definitions of cultural capital are pertinent to notions of *educación* and funds of knowledge discussed earlier because they convey an asset perspective in regards to the Latino community. In addition, conceptualizing cultural capital with an anthropological and critical lens challenges more traditional points of view that consider certain groups the sole possessors of such capital.

The research and literature concerning cultural and structural aspects of youth experiences in non-formal learning environments is promising and illuminating of new ideas that can aid our understanding of such experiences. Programs have the potential to serve as the structure that allows Latino youth to create, acquire, and more importantly mobilize both the social and cultural capital elements of their experience. However, the existing literature falls short when one aims to explain how youth themselves make decisions in regards to how the capital will get activated, how they will invest their time in using and mobilizing such cultural and social benefits. This process that makes youth agents is not a given, yet it has not been a focus of existing research within the field of non-formal learning settings. In order for studies to offer a more complete picture of what accounts for participation in such well-structured, community-based programs one must consider two critical components. First, recognizing youth as agents of their behavior and decision-makers has to be a central part of the inquiry and second, understanding the role of the program as it pertains to the youth's culture and goals in life must be further studied.

From an *educación* and anthropology lens one must also consider how youth make decisions in regards to their participation and sustained engagement in these programs. Furthermore, these holistic lenses require us to take into account the role that *un joven bien educado* (a well-educated youth) and a fully educated person play within these experiences.

Despite its holistic and inclusive nature, the cultural and structural framework does not place major emphasis on the power of the young person to shape their experience in OST programs. The framework, although illuminating and fruitful, lacks an examination of the individual youth's perception of their participation and their behavior based on these experiences and perceptions. It is imperative not only to consider the motivation of the young person to participate in the programs, but also to examine why they continue their participation. The following section presents the concept of agency as a bridge to understanding youth's actions and their motivation to join the program and stay engaged. Conceptualizing agency followed by a discussion on motivation are in direct response to the question of what motivates youth to participate, beyond the cultural and structural incentives that the programs provide.

Agency: A concept to bridge youth motivation and their actions and behaviors

The voluntary nature of community-based OST programs allows for youth to be empowered and to choose to participate or not participate. The Latin root of motivation means "to move" and developmental psychologists have studied what moves individuals to act (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998). If we move beyond the developmental psychology notions of motivation and look deeper into how and why youth decide to engage in a program or an activity we ought to consider notions of agency. I view motivation and agency as different concepts. Motivation closely related to the reasons why an individual acts or behaves in a certain way and agency as a valuable tool through which motivation can be further interpreted. Ahearn (2000) defines agency as the "socio-

culturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). This definition argues that human action is

influenced (in its creation and interpretation) by socio-cultural structures. Examining

ways in which agency has been conceptualized and utilized in the field of social sciences

facilitates the externalization of motivation.

Youth as agents are engaged in the exercise of power in the sense of the ability to

bring about effects and re-shape social structures (Karp, 1986 as cited in Ahearn, 2000).

Youth choose to participate and engage in a particular organization or project due to

larger societal characteristics that are currently part of their existence. Youth as agents

can be engaged in the exercise of power to bring about effects to re-shape social

structures (Karp, 1986 as cited in Ahearn, 2000). For example, youth who might be aware

of their increased risk for leaving school or their lack of equal access to higher education

might intentionally participate in an OST program in order to accrue the additional

capital that this experience might provide for him/her. More importantly, agency

becomes the "action that propels deliberate movement through a structure by an

individual…with the expressed purpose of achieving a goal or desired outcome" (Maslak,

2008, xv). In essence, agency is what provides youth with the ability to make deliberate

choices that enable to engage in program participation, which can in turn lead to the

achievement of goals and aspirations. Scholars have defined agency through the idea that

when the individual chooses to act a certain way he "could have acted otherwise,"

(Giddens, 1979, p. 56) either positively or negatively. In other words, the action—in this

case choosing to participate—cannot be elucidated outside the context of "historically

located modes of activity" (Giddens, 1979, p. 56). Furthermore, such conceptualization of agency is inclusive of both conscious and unconscious processes of human action. Both explicit reasons and implicit motivational components lead to agency according to Giddens (1979). It is important to note that in this study, I conceptualize agency from the perspective of positive agency in which youth make decisions as they navigate the social and cultural structures of the program in order to achieve and pursue their goals.

Both Giddens (1979) and Maslak (2008) attempt to breathe life into social structures by connecting them with human action. Key to ideas of agency and structure is the notion that peoples' actions are shaped by social structures and that those actions then serve to reconfigure or recreate such structures. The way that Maslak (2008) defines structure resonated with my research purposes. She argues that social structures are a set of interrelated frameworks in which individuals find the social conditions necessary for action. She clearly illustrates how communities, families, and, OST programs forge social relationships that are structured by organizational patterns. Such organizational patterns derive from groups of individuals associating with structures that promote belonging and associations of membership.

If we consider agency as youth deliberately navigating structures with a purpose or desired goal in mind, it is imperative to explore how we can better understand their motive for such deliberate behavior.

Motivation: Reasons for participating

Youth motivation has been the focus of research in various disciplines ranging from psychology and education, to economic and political areas of research. A field in direct relationship with youth and their educational experiences, even in non-formal learning environments, is developmental psychology. Motivation scholars using developmental psychology perspectives have theorized that individuals' beliefs, values, and goals affect youth engagement in various activities. Motivation is theorized from either an intrinsic perspective, in which the individual is motivated because he or she is interested in or enjoying the activity, or from an extrinsic perspective, in which the individual might engage in the activity because of broader goals and aspirations. Eccles (1983, 1984, 2001) and her colleagues have developed an expectancy-value model that focuses on the extrinsic perspective for understanding motivation. Latino youth might choose to participate in a particular OST program because it directly relates to their life goals; for example, it will help them do better academically and get into college, or it might contribute to their inclusion in the new community (sense of belonging). A key element in Eccles' model is the consideration of the youth's goals and how these might influence their expectations of success and consequently their participation and engagement in certain non-formal learning environments.

Research that extends from developmental psychology ideas on motivation focuses on the individual (youth) as the unit of analysis and center of the decision-making. Deci and Ryan (2000) present definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

solely from the perspective that the individual is either getting a positive experience out of the activity and getting satisfaction from it (intrinsic) or engaging in the activity because of some other separable outcome (extrinsic). Adopting Ryan and Deci (2000)'s conceptualization of motivation would disregard larger processes involved in the youth's decision to participate and stay engaged in a particular OST program.

Despite its contribution regarding what motivates youth to join and become engaged in an OST program, the motivation research in developmental psychology still has not reached its potential for illuminating a more holistic understanding of the reasons for participation and the factors that sustain Latino youth's motivation to stay in OST programs. Motivation in general has been considered an individual phenomenon and theorists of motivation have focused on individualistic terms and emphasized its individual nature and origins. I hope to externalize the concept of motivation from an "analytics of exogeny" perspective (Anyon, 2009). The following perspectives on motivation are inclusive of the social and cultural forces involved in the processes of youth deciding to join and stay engaged in a program.

A social constructivist perspective on motivation. In more recent years, scholars have suggested that motivation does not occur in a vacuum and they have acknowledged that it is social in nature. According to Walker (2010), socio-cultural researchers "attempt to explain how motivational goals, values, standards, and interests are socially constructed and how they emerge and develop from social interaction and are manifested in collaborative and individual action" (p.712). In other words, examining a motivation

framework from a social constructivist perspective demands that we no longer see the individual, in this case the youth, as the sole instigator of motivation. This perspective of motivation is much more fruitful and promising in unpacking the educational role that the OST programs play for the Latino community.

Such conceptualization of motivation departs from the more individualist approach, which I previously discussed in relationship to developmental psychology, and involves complex issues between the world of the individual and the larger social world. Theories of socio-cultural motivation give theoretical primacy to the social world while acknowledging that the social world and individual world are highly interconnected. Furthermore, such framework avoids the simplistic idea that individual motivation can be reduced to social explanations, or that social processes determine the individual's motivation (Walker, 2010). The two must coalesce.

For example, under the notion of socio-cultural motivation "aspects of the social world are selectively internalized by the individual and then externalized in subsequent social interactions" (Walker, 2010, p. 712). This perspective extends the role of culture beyond that of just influencing youth's motivation. It demands that we look at how context and culture shape and transmit what people think, feel, and do (Siva, 1986). In other words, this lens allows us to examine the relationships between contexts and people, and to look at elements within that context that give meaning to youth's actions.

Hickey and Granade (2004) argue that goals and values that support and motivate youth to engage "reside in the practices of knowledgeable communities rather than the

hearts and minds of individuals" (p. 224). Moreover, theorists like Walker (2010)

contend that although aspects of academic learning may be motivating to learners, the

motivation to engage in the learning itself is internalized as learners work together on the

activities. Again, this illustrates a process that occurs beyond the individual.

Walker (2010) also believes that culture is considered to play a critical role in the

"construction and emergence" of motivation (p.713). Cultural practices are valued by the

communities that engage in them and are associated with feelings of belonging or identity

and with particular forms of discourse. It is clear that such practices aid in the

construction of motivation. Walker continues to assert that "they help to structure

learning and thinking activities and have motivational and affective properties and

consequences" (p. 713). This social construction should be further explored in order to

make the case that theoretically, it complements the previous theories and conceptual

frameworks discussed in this paper.

Furthermore, there is a socio-cultural element to this construction; the creation of

concepts, models, etc. does not occur in isolation from social and cultural processes. On

the contrary, the creation is influenced by such processes (Schwandt, 2000, p.197). Sivan

(1986) would emphasize that "motivation is a socially negotiated process that results in

an observable manifestation of interest and cognitive and affective engagement" (p. 210).

Three dimensions of social constructivism elucidate an examination of

motivation. First, social constructivism allows for the consideration of culture and

context as key elements that influence motivation. Second, the theory permits the

examination of intrapsychological aspects of motivation; this is the idea of expectancy value in which the individual places value on the outcome of his/her decisions and behaviors. Third, the theory is also concerned with the interpersonal relations that influence, share, and more importantly, maintain motivation (Sivan, 1986). Sivan's contribution is immense when we attempt to conceptualize Latino youth's experiences in OST programs from an *educación* and anthropological perspective. The fact that this theoretical perspective on motivation considers both culture and structure as well as the individual's role in creating and maintaining motivation is paramount.

Kim and Zhou's cultural-structural framework, coupled with a socio-cultural and social constructivist framework for youth's motivation, offer an opportunity to explore both the youth's motivation for OST attendance as well as the social and structural forces needed for sustained participation. Furthermore, utilizing the presented frameworks allows for an anthropological perspective on *educación* to convert community resources and external forces into tools for individual agency. These frameworks provide a roadmap with which one can examine larger discourses of immigration, education, and social mobility in relationship to the perception of child education in the Latino community in the U.S. as well as the role that community-based, culturally specific organizations play in addressing the youth's view of education and their educational needs.

Conclusion

Understanding both the social and cultural structures that community-based well-structured OST programs offer Latino youth is imperative. Further study sheds light onto how these programs have addressed the emergent meanings of education from the perspective of the youth and their community and demonstrates their potential for opportunities of upward mobility for young people. Furthermore, the presented frameworks, informed by an anthropological perspective and the lens of *educación*, are an effective way to study both theory and practice. OST programs have become spaces where both global and local discourses on education and immigration come together to create new, emergent meanings. The program and its participants establish meaningful social and cultural relationships that have the potential to address the educational needs of the largest and fastest growing sector of our youth population.

In my introduction I used Suarez-Orozco's (2003) words to illustrate the urgency for a deeper understanding of the role of OST programs that serve Latino youth. Non-formal learning environments have become spaces that effectively redress the educational inequalities children of immigration face at times of great need. In the study at hand they do so by embracing what results when culture and structure interact. This interaction of culture and structure allows for programs to be culturally-congruent with the communities they serve, including participating youth and their families. This congruence is observed when program embrace cultural frameworks to education, when they employ culturally responsive youth workers, and when they provide spaces for youth and parents

to imagine productive educational futures and lives in mainstream society. I reiterate the urgency. However, I also recognize that the role of the youth in navigating these structures must also be studied. Latino youth are actively engaged as agents of their educational experiences within OST programs, and understanding how and why they navigate such structures is critical to educators, youth workers, and policy makers. Studies like this one offer promising insights that can inform collaborations between different educational environments, to serve youth and families and together address discourses that affect them in order to be effective, life-changing forces in youths' lives.

CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methodology: A holistic approach to unpacking the cultural framework of educación

A reflective approach affirms the importance of experiential and interconnected ways of knowing the world, and favours more emancipatory and participatory research practices…. It blurs the traditional boundaries and separations between 'knowing and doing', 'values and facts', 'art and science', 'theory and practice', 'subjectivity and objectivity' (Fook, 1996, p. 5).

Introduction

The previous two chapters have presented the different ways that the educational experience of youth in community OST programs has been conceptualized by researchers. More importantly the literature review presented the framework of *educación* and the role that OST programs can play in educating Latino youth alongside parents and community. Community-based, culturally responsive youth programs have played a critical, yet often under-valued role in addressing some of the most important educational needs of Latino immigrant youth. Thus, this study considers the complex and holistic narratives of youth enacting agency as they navigate a new educational landscape. In addition, my work presents the multiple dimensions in which OST programs offer supportive learning environments for these youth.

The present chapter provides an overview of my epistemological assumptions and the qualitative, comparative case study methodology that guided my research. The

chapter also presents an overview of the study participants (youth, parents, and youth workers), a detailed description of how I completed my study including data collection methods and analysis, and a discussion of my positionality, sensitivity, and integrity as a researcher.

A primary assertion of my work is that implementing an OST program framework that embraces notions of *educación* and allows for youth participants to be true agents of their development and future aspirations proves to not only be a meaningful experience for them but it has a profound impact on their educational trajectories. These programs have the potential to allow youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who experience educational inequities develop skills, attitudes, and strategies to be able to achieve socially and academically. Research has demonstrated that in order to be prepared for work and life, young people need to be culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and committed to life-long learning (National Research Council, 2012). If schools are not providing the space for youth to be prepared both socio-emotionally and academically, we must examine how community-based educational programs can play a more active role in preparing young people for a world in which they must understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013).

I strongly believe that the programs that participated in this study provide key insights to the education and youth development fields. This work embraces innovative

approaches to understanding and implementing educational opportunities for youth from diverse and often disadvantaged backgrounds.

Epistemological Assumptions

My experiences as an educator, researcher in youth development, and as an immigrant have deepened my interest and curiosity to understand holistically how Latino youth in OST programs make sense of their world and experiences, and how programs act as mediators of cultural capital and educational support for these youth. It is my assumption that individuals interacting in their communities construct reality. From the perspective of social constructivism theory the meaning-maker role shifts from the individual to a more collectively constructed meaning. One can argue that "human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct it or make it. They invent concepts, models, schemes to make sense of experience and continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197). Latino youth and families create meaning through their educational experiences, especially concerning how they envision themselves in the future, and it is imperative to shed light on this construction of meaning from the perspective of the youth and in relationship to an OST program's structures. This creation of concepts and models does not occur in isolation from social and cultural processes. There is a socio-cultural element to this construction, which this study aims to illustrate by utilizing an exploratory and descriptive approach. More importantly, the *educación* framework has guided the work

of this study from conceptualizing the issue to designing and carrying out the study, and throughout data analysis and interpretation.

Research design and strategy of inquiry

    Qualitative research. Qualitative research was the most appropriate approach for conducting this research study, and there are several reasons for choosing this type of inquiry for my work. Creswell (2003) proposes five different underlying assumptions under the qualitative paradigm:

1) The researcher is concerned with process rather than outcome

2) The researcher is interested in meaning—how participants make sense of their lives and the world around them.

3) The researcher him or herself is the primary instrument for data collection. "Data is mediated through this human instrument" (Creswell, 1994, p. 145).

4) Qualitative research includes fieldwork, and the researcher physically goes to those participating in the study.

5) The process of this research is inductive, meaning that the researcher builds concepts, hypothesis, and theories from details.

    The five assumptions outlined above fit perfectly with the way this study was conducted. Since conceptualizing my topic of interest, I understood it as a process; the development and educational trajectories of the study participants occurred over time and included a multiplicity of dimensions. Meaning and sense-making were key aspects of what youth participants experienced in the two programs studied, through this work and

as a reflective, interpretive, and critical researcher I was able to observe such processes and experiences through my fieldwork. My fieldwork took place over the span of an entire program year (October through May) and I immersed myself in the program experience of both Voces Unidas and The Depot. My findings illustrate how throughout the data collection and analysis processes I conceptualized what Voces Unidas and The Depot were offering young people and the benefits that the program experience had on participants. As a researcher I was able to examine the phenomena studied holistically, making my study broad, complex, and interactive (Creswell, 2003).

The qualitative approach allowed for the lives of Latino youth in the two OST programs to be understood and conveyed in complex ways; it presented an opportunity to interpret their environments in a way that presents a holistic picture of their development and educational experience.

   Case Study. Case study research employs an interpretive approach that asks how people act in context,, why they act the way they do, and how the situation observed can be explained (Kyburz-Graber, 2007). Since this study is concerned with the processes and experiences of the participants and aims to gain a deeper understanding of the situation of those involved, a case study strategy of inquiry was be utilized. According to Merriam (1998), case studies are "intensive holistic descriptions and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p.21). By concentrating on two different OST programs and the selected participants within these programs, my purpose was to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the experience. In more detail, this can

be considered a particularistic type of case study, which focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon.

Conducting this case study research required me, as the researcher, to define a plan and then begin the iterative processes of designing, planning, data collecting and analyzing, and sharing of results (Yin, 2009). My responsibilities as the researcher included Stake's (1994) six "conceptual responsibilities of the qualitative case researcher" (p. 244), which comprise: (1) bounding the case, (2) selecting phenomena of interest, (3) seeking data patterns, (4) triangulating observations and bases for interpretation, (5) considering alternative interpretations, and (6) developing assertions or generalizations about the case (p. 244). In addition, "the case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). OST programs can be complex social units of people, relationships, and the content areas of their programming.

In education, case studies are also effective because they attend to constructs of society and socialization. In this study, constructs are related to youth experiences within non-formal learning environments and include youth motivation, reasons to participate, and agency power to navigate social structures. Scholars engaged in educational case studies are interested in the community, social life, roles that people might play within the community, and meaning that individuals create from social experiences (Merriam,

1998). This is clearly a central aspect of this study, in which local understandings of *educación* act as a lens to view the phenomena at hand.

This case study goes beyond the description by illustrating, supporting, and challenging theoretical assumptions through effective and meaningful interpretation of youth in OST programs. These interpretations inform the theoretical frameworks utilized within the study for further illustration and understanding of the experiences of Latino youth in OST programs and non-formal learning environments. Programs across the country are experiencing an urgent need to work with underserved populations of youth. Findings from studies like this one provide practical and useful information for practitioners in the field (Passel, 2011). This study in particular offers practitioners in the field of education and youth development an opportunity to reframe how we support families in educating their children. The findings provide an in-depth look at the role that programs can play to engage parents and the community in cultural processes such as *educación*, and more importantly, it highlights the role of youth workers within these programs as change-agents that support youth to be agents of their own development and educational trajectories.

Dual Site Case Study. The setting for this study included two differing OST programs; therefore a dual-site case study approach was identified as appropriate. By examining two different cases (program environments) in this study, I provide a more compelling interpretation by comparing similar but different experiences. Merriam (1998) argues that "the inclusion of multiple cases is, in fact, a common strategy for

enhancing the external validity or generalizability of findings" (p. 40). Later in this chapter, I expand on the accuracy of the data.

Setting

The present study was conducted in two OST programs in Minnesota that serve mainly immigrant Latino youth from Central America and Mexico and who come from low-income families. These programs were selected in the spring of 2011, and data collection began in the fall of 2011 and went through May 2012. The criteria for selecting the programs included programs that were project-based, in which youth worked together on a project throughout the program year; programs where youth participated at least 120 hours throughout the year; programs that had low dropout rates; and programs that served a minimum of 20 youth ages 14-19. In addition, the tenants of a well-structured OST program as defined by Gordon Bridglall and Meroe (2005) was used to select these two cases; this criterion included positive relationships between peers and adults, enriching experiences and activities, and a safe environment.

Sample selection for this particular study involved a two-step process. First, purposeful sampling was conducting in order to narrow down on two programs (cases) (Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) argues that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases…[which] are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p.169). Criteria for selection (as explained above) were critical in choosing the cases to be studied; it established parameters. Secondly, once cases (programs) were selected I

carefully considered the sample within the cases. In this particular study I sampled Latino immigrant youth at each case. This is further discussed under the Sources of Data and Study Participants section.

The participating programs

Voces Unidas. Voces Unidas is an after-school, community based program at a local charter school that serves Latino youth. Approximately 75% of youth participants were immigrants from Central America or Mexico. Its mission was to amplify youth voice in after-school and daytime programming. Its focus was on youth leadership, academics, environmental justice, and community development during out-of-school hours. The program ran on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 2:30–6:00pm and served approximately 30–40 youth on a weekly basis. Some of the program activities offered to youth who participated were related to culture and social justice, arts and dance, homework help, and academics.

Voces Unidas is unique in terms of its approach to culturally relevancy in the program. Its staff, youth workers, and program activities are explicitly aimed at serving Latino youth. Its entire staff is bilingual in English and Spanish; they serve both youth and parents in their programming. Content areas of the program included arts, Aztec Dance, family photography workshops, and health and well-being, in addition to academics and language instruction. The program director is a Latina scholar and community advocate who openly embraces notions of *educación* that are responsive to youth and families values on education.

The Depot. The Depot is a community center/music venue operated by the City of Newton. It is a place where young people can be themselves and have access to the resources and tools they need to accomplish their goals. The program focuses on enriching teenagers' lives by expanding their skills and encouraging them to share their talents, give service, and be creative. Adults work with youth partnerships to plan events, run the programs, handle finances, and decide how to make The Depot a better place for everyone involved. The Depot provides a safe, fun, and nurturing environment where participants create their own spaces to interact and acquire a sense of belonging, gain self-esteem, build friendships, explore ideas, and cultivate a capacity to enjoy life through the arts, music, and dance. Within The Depot, youth could participate in art classes, dance, get homework help, help run the award-winning music venue, and have pizza parties. In addition, The Depot implemented a youth employment program in which youth participants could become paid staff members.

At the time of study, approximately 40% of program participants were Latino immigrant youth from Central America and Mexico. This program uses a different approach to working with Latino youth. Although Latino cultural practices are not as explicit as in Voces Unidas, The Depot intentionally offers a culturally responsive youth development environment in which young people are seen as resources and as providing value to the program. Its staff and youth leaders are actively engaged in raising awareness about the educational experiences of Latino youth both inside and outside of school. They address social justice issues that might arise in the experiences of the youth. Culture was

recognized, valued, and considered as a critical element in the participants' lives and identities that they brought to the program. Although The Depot embraced notions of *educación,* it did so in a more implicit way through staff support and program activities. Furthermore, this program provided youth with a sense of community, both within the program and in the surrounding communities outside of the program.

While both programs embrace *educación*, they provided a unique analysis opportunity because of their similar goals and differing practices. The data gathered had the potential to be compared and contrasted between the two programs, which resulted in more nuanced findings on Latino youth participation in certain OST programs. Study findings also shed light on what practices or program approaches most benefit Latino youth and their educational experience.

Sources of data

Study participants. Prior to this study I had conducted research projects with Latino immigrant youth and to this day I remain in contact with the immigrant Latino community through personal and professional relationships. Since I was not be able to interview all youth participants in both programs I conducted purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) to select the participants who were interviewed once I was immersed in the field. The youth who were interviewed for this study provided their time and insights to the research experience and they were instrumental players during field work. These youth also acted as my cultural informants (Johnson, 1990); while others in the programs were not as actively involved but contributed to the study through participant

observations, informal conversations, and a youth survey. Those who were selected to participate in this study were youth between the ages of 14–18, of Mexican or Central American backgrounds, and regularly participated in the program activities.

After my initial introduction to both programs and spending time at each site during the beginning of the program year, I was able to identify youth who would want to share their experience with me through interviews. At Voces Unidas I reached out and was able to have Miguel, Monica, Ursula, Juan Carlos, Pablo, Dora, Dario, Santiago, Isabel and Atsadi (10 youth in total) participate in my interviews. At The Depot I was able to recruit all-female participants for my interviews; these participants included: Carla, Jennifer, Veronica, Julie, and Guadalupe (5 youth in total). The Depot's youth membership is almost all female, which is why the male demographic is absent here.

Table 1: Youth Participants.

Number	Research ID	Pseudonym	Program	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
1	YA1	Carla	The Depot	15	F	Mexican-American
2	YA2	Jennifer	The Depot	15	F	Puerto Rican
3	YA3	Veronica	The Depot	16	F	Cuban-American
4	YA4	Julie	The Depot	15	F	Mexican-American
7	YA16	Guadalupe	The Depot	14	F	Mexican
5	YB	Miguel	Voces Unidas	14	M	Mexican
6	YB	Monica	Voces Unidas	14	F	Ecuadorian
8	YB14	Ursula	Voces Unidas	15	F	Mexican
9	YB26	Juan Carlos	Voces Unidas	16	M	Mexican
10	YB17	Dora	Voces Unidas	16	F	Mexican

11	YB01	Dario	Voces Unidas	15	M	Mexican
12	YB10	Santiago	Voces Unidas	15	M	Mexican
13	YB11	Isabel	Voces Unidas	16	F	Mexican
14	YB22	Atsadi	Voces Unidas	15	M	Mexican-Native American
15	YB25	Pablo	Voces Unidas	15	M	Mexican

As stated above in the program descriptions, youth at both programs represent diverse backgrounds. Those who participated in this study were of Mexican or Central American descent, high-school aged, and either first generation immigrants or members of the 1.5 generation that came to the U.S. before age 5. All youth were bilingual, although a few participants had better command of the Spanish language than English. The sample was representative of the youth population at each program, which included a majority of females, making more difficult to recruit male participants for this study, especially at The Depot.

My initial design did not include parent data, but after having interviewed a few parents at Voces Unidas, I decided to also interview parents at The Depot. I realized early that my theoretical framework of *educación* would require a holistic approach to the educational experience of participants. Such holistic perspective demanded that I consider adults' narratives in the study. I interviewed 3 parents at Voces Unidas (Ursula's, Dora's, and Diego's mothers) and 1 parent (Guadalupe's mother) at The Depot.

Table 2: Parent participants

Pseudonym	Program	Gender	Ethnicity
Guadalupe's mother	The Depot	F	Mexican
Diego's mother	Voces Unidas	F	Mexican
Dora's mother	Voces Unidas	F	Mexican
Ursula's mother	Voces Unidas	F	Mexican

In addition to the individual interviews I conducted, all parents at both Voces Unidas and The Depot also completed a parent demographic survey. Survey results showed that parents at both programs ranged in age from 28 to 60 years old and 96% of them had no experience with youth programs when they were younger. The survey also indicated that 40% of these parents were born outside the U.S., 56% identified as Latino, while 32% identified themselves as White, 4% as Native American, 4% as Asian and 4% as other. While 40% of the parents spoke English at home, 20% spoke only Spanish and 32% spoke both Spanish and English, and 8% spoke English and another language at home. In addition, 88% worked outside the home and 74% reported their family annual income as being below $29,999.

As mentioned previously, youth workers played a major role in the experience of young people at the programs. It would have been impossible to illustrate and attribute meaning to the role of the programs without including the perspective of the caring adults at each site. Interview data from 2 youth workers at Voces Unidas (Arturo and Jessica) and 2 youth workers at The Depot (Jeremy and Cristina) was gathered and analyzed.

Table 3: Youth workers participants

Number	Pseudonym	Program	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
LA90	Jeremy	The Depot	Early 40s	M	White
LA91	Cristina	The Depot	Early 30s	F	White
LB90	Arturo	Voces Unidas	Late 40s	M	Mexican
LB91	Jessica	Voces Unidas	Late 20s	F	White

At Voces Unidas I interviewed Arturo, a Chicano/Mexican-American male with over 30 years of experience working with youth and art programming at Voces Unidas; and Jessica, a White, Midwestern female that had limited experience working with youth of diverse backgrounds who contributed to Voces Unidas through a partner arts and media organization. At The Depot I spoke with Jeremy, a White, Midwestern male and founder of The Depot with close to 20 years of experience working in the field of youth development, and Cristina, a White female from the Midwest with almost a decade of experience working with youth in out-of-school time settings.

Participant assent and parental consent

I had received IRB approval for my study (Study Number: 1106S01502, see Appendix B) and because most of the youth participating in my study were younger than 18, I had to ensure that they assented to participation and that their parents provided consent to participate. The assent and consent forms were provided to youth at our initial meeting in October 2011 and immediately after that I was able to get parents' consent forms. I conducted a parent meeting at each site where I invited all participants' parents to attend, learn about the study, myself, and ask questions. All forms were provided in English and Spanish to ensure that participants and parents understood what their

participation entailed. Youth workers were also provided consent forms for their participation in the study.

Data collection methods

The methods that this dual site case study included extensive participant observations, interpretive interviews and document review.

Participant Observation. Participant observation played a major role within my qualitative research. Participant observations involve the researcher's participation in the lives and experiences of the youth with maintenance of professional distance in order to allow for accurate observation and gathering of the data. According to Fetterman (1998), participant observation is the "immersion in a culture" (p. 35). Wolcott (1999) takes this definition a step further; he uses a different label for this method, defining participant observation as "experiencing" (p. 46). Experiencing is "information that comes from all the senses" (p. 46) and it plays out in all we see and hear by being present in the settings and environments in which the participants live and develop. For participant observations to produce rich and useful data, the researcher usually sets out to observe for a long period. I conducted participant observations for the entire program year (early October 2011 to late May 2012).

The observation of the lives and experiences of my subjects provided me with an opportunity to conduct refined and specific techniques that came at a later phase of the data collection process. These techniques included semi-structured interviews and document reviews. Through observation, I was able to get a more comprehensive picture

of emerging themes and issues in the lives and culture of these students. These emergent themes, as identified later in this paper, were addressed and explored through the aforementioned refined techniques.

Field Notes. I took field notes from the very beginning of my relationship with the participants and the program. Field notes, according to Emerson, Fertz & Shaw (1995) are written records of the observations and experiences. These written accounts are produced by fieldwork and they are recorded to be later analyzed in search of emergent themes in the data.

Field notes are also a useful and valuable method for data collection in a qualitative study. As Emerson et. al. (1995) state, I "decided when, where, and how to write jottings"; at the same time I did not want the participants to see me as "someone whose primary interest lies in discovering their secrets and turning their most intimate and cherished experiences into objects of scientific inquiry" (p. 20). In order to focus my attention on the relationship with the study participants, I jotted down some notes while at the setting, during program activities for example; however, the more extensive writing of field notes took place after leaving the setting. I began to "look-in-order-to-write" (Emerson et. al., 1995, p. 27) and became more sensitive to the concerns and perspectives of the participants.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews can be one of the most important data-gathering methods for the researcher; they place into a larger context what the researcher sees and experiences through participant observation (Fetterman, 1998). Interviews also

play a critical role in the research design, but interviews are more directed to the data

than participant observation, which takes place as a more general gathering tool.

Additionally, since qualitative research aims to portray multiple views of the case

(program and experience), the interview can serve as "the main road to multiple realities"

(Stake, 1994, p. 64).

Throughout my fieldwork I interviewed fifteen immigrant Latino youth between

the two sites utilizing semi-structured interviews and informal conversations throughout

the data collection period. I had the opportunity to interview youth at each program early

(within the first 1–2 months) in the program year to learn their reasons for joining the

program and how their interest in the program relates to things that are important to them

(See Appendix C). Later in the year, I conducted several follow up interviews with most

of the youth participants. For a few of the participants (Pablo, Dario, and Jennifer) only

one interview was possible because of scheduling difficulties and their work

commitments. Making the interviews informal and semi-structured provided me an

opening to inquire about issues and themes previously observed and emergent throughout

the interview. I asked questions about unanswered or unaddressed behaviors in the lives

of these adolescents. I inquired about their lives, taking on an active role in the

conversation, Wolcott (1999) refers to this as a "constant vigilance one must exercise in

maintaining rapport" (p.51). Interviewing differs from the previously described

participant observation method in which the researcher takes on a more passive observer

role; I played a more active role in gathering the data. When interviewing the

participants, I simultaneously asked questions and observed, always searching for data and emerging themes that assisted me in better describing the participants' experiences.

The interviews were semi-structured, and I had developed a few possible questions for the initial interviews based on previously observed data from the observations. Open-ended questions were asked, allowing the participants to answer freely and open new doors to the study. These questions are useful tools in letting the participants tell personal and anecdotal stories about the program experience, providing me with rich and valuable information. Closed-ended questions were used during the later periods of data collection where I was attempting to confirm information left unanswered. The interviews were audio taped (permitted by the participants) so they could be later transcribed and analyzed during the data analysis process.

Informal conversations with the youth allowed me to not only establish a relationship with them, but in addition, I was able to explore emergent themes and issues relevant to the study and the youth themselves. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or English (participants' native language) and later translated into English.

Document and visual materials review. Another valuable part of the study was the document review. The document review, which be discussed in more depth later in this paper, includes an analysis of student-made artwork and written documents such as journals, letters or diaries, and program-related projects. Due to the nature of both programs participating in this study (arts and education are important pieces of the work they do with participants), there was an ample number of documents and artifacts that

were reviewed for data collection purposes. This particular method offered data in the language, words, and expressions of the youth and was accessible at any time throughout the program year. In addition, this type of data also represents information that is thoughtfully compiled by the participants in the study (either because they have written as part of the program activity or because I asked them to do write-ups or share their art projects and reflections) (Creswell, 1994).

Youth Questionnaire. As part of working with the larger Proyecto Caminos research study, I worked with a group of colleagues in developing a youth questionnaire that was aimed at gathering youth data. The questionnaire focused on subjects' backgrounds, their reasons for participating in the programs, their perceptions on what they were learning and getting out of the programs, their goals and future aspirations, and how they perceived the programs supported their goals and aspirations. I collected the youth questionnaire data at both Voces Unidas and The Depot from Latino and non-Latino youth at both programs would add scope and perspective to my empirical inquiries. When analyzing qualitative and quantitative youth data within this study, I was able to compare the interview and observation data with the youth questionnaire data and add more nuance to my findings. I also believe it is important to highlight that the study's focus and emphasis was approached from a qualitative paradigm perspective. However, since the youth quantitative data was available through my work at both sites I deemed important to include it. Being able to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data allowed me to seek convergence of results and findings and compliment my understanding of the youth

experience; Creswell (1994) states that incorporating both types of data is like "peeling the layers of an onion" (p.175).

Data management and analysis

Analysis is one of the most crucial elements of conducting any empirical study. Even more so in qualitative work in which the amount of data that can be collected can be voluminous. It is important to examine data in a meaningful and useful way in order to bring about the themes that depict how the participants described their experiences. In qualitative research, such as the present case study, a combined inductive and deductive approach to data analysis results in successive cycles of identification and subsequent verification of themes, patterns, and hypotheses (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

Furthermore, in addition to simultaneously collecting and analyzing the data, the process involved data reduction and interpretation in which patterns, categories, and themes emerged. The final goal is the construction of a "larger, more consolidated picture" (Tesch, 1990, p. 97). This bigger picture became clearer as information was reduced into themes and categories that formed the basis for the emerging story and this study's findings. Tesh (1990) provides eight steps to help with coding qualitative data, which include getting an idea of the whole. Tesh (1990) suggests beginning with picking one document or interview and writing notes about the underlying meaning of the information, continuing to do this with several informants, abbreviating topics and themes, finding descriptive wording for topics to turn them into categories, abbreviating

each category, assembling data for each category under one place, and if needed, recoding existing data.

In order to manage and analyze the data collected, I utilized paper journals and notes that were entered into the Dedoose software. The document and visual materials review also included recording the information that is being gathered and noting if the data is primary or secondary data (information directly from youth participants or secondhand accounts of the people or experience).

The youth questionnaire data was analyzed utilizing SPPS quantitative analysis software and I ran an independent t-test to compare Latino versus non-Latino youth at Voces Unidas and The Depot. I analyzed data about the youth's reasons for joining the programs and data about the importance of goals for the youth and how they perceived the programs supporting them in achieving such goals.

The diversity of research strategies (semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, participant observation, informal conversations and the questionnaire) utilized throughout this research study was crucial to the triangulation of data and arriving at an accurate and true picture of the role that both programs played within the educational experiences of youth. In empirical research triangulation is basic; nevertheless it is an important element of the analysis of the data collected. The researcher tests one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations and prove hypotheses (Fetterman, 1998). Triangulation allowed me to juxtapose data, analyze it, and discover emerging themes. The analysis of the data took place as an inductive analytical process.

A process which began with "concepts that are grounded in and reflect intimate familiarity with the setting or events under study" (Emerson, et. al., 1995, p. 166). Through observation and paying systematic attention to my field notes and interview transcripts, I sought to produce as many themes, patterns, and nuances as possible (for a list of codes and emergent themes please see Appendix D).

Data collected from semi-structured interviews was transcribed and as themes were defined, the data were coded according to these themes utilizing Dedoose software. The same process took place with data collected through participant observation. This process improved the quality of my data and the accuracy of the research findings.

Criteria for soundness of data and methods

Qualitative research offers particular strengths and its value is often discredited when juxtaposed with quantitative methods and approaches (Maxwell, 2004). Nevertheless, all research must respond to "canons that stand as criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 144). Lincoln and Gubba (1985) propose four constructs that reflect the assumptions of qualitative research and serve as criteria for establishing the value of the study, its trustworthiness, and soundness.

Constructs-Assumptions of a qualitative study	Definition	Strength of qualitative research	Researcher controls for bias and interpretation
Credibility	The goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure	-Rich description showing the complexities of variables and interactions.	-"Do the data sources (most often- humans) find the inquirer's analysis, formation

	that the subject was accurately identified and described.	-Researcher sets parameters within the setting, population, and theoretical framework.	and interpretation to be credible?" (p.246)
Transferability	The challenge to applying findings to another context rests more with the investigator that with the original researcher.	-Ensure that data collection and analysis are guided my concepts and models. -Triangulation of multiple sources of data.	-Theoretical frameworks apply to topic of study -Triangulation will occur between interviews, participant observation, document review, questionnaires, and program staff interviews.
Dependability	Researcher accounts for the changing conditions in the phenomenon of study and the design as a result of a deeper understanding of the setting.	The qualitative assumption is that the world and realities are always changing, making replication very difficult.	-Constructivist epistemologies.
Confirmability	This concept refers to the traditional concept of objectivity on part of the researcher.	The natural subjectivity of the researcher will influence the study. Awareness is necessary.	-Negative cases -Checking and re-checking the data -Practice of value free note taking (2 sets of notes) -Audit of data collection methods

Table 4: Adapted from Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.*

Trustworthiness of data and access to settings and participants

My work with Latino immigrant and non-immigrant youth in youth programs began years ago when I completed my M.A. Thesis at the charter school that now houses Voces Unidas. I have since worked with community organizations and youth workers who serve and work with this youth population. This study was also conducted as part of a larger collaboration study called Proyecto Caminos (Project Pathways) between the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development the University of Illinois Department of Developmental Psychology. Prior the present study, I had already participated in the pilot phase of the project with The Depot. I was one of two field site directors for the participating programs in Minnesota. IRB approval was received as of July 25th, 2011 to conduct the study beginning in October 2011.

When conducting a research study, researcher access to the culture and environment where the participants are is vital and having access or not can determine the success of the study. Glesne and Peshkin (1999) define access as: "A process. It refers to your acquisition of consent to go wherever you want, observe what you want, talk to whomever you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require, and do all of this for whatever period of time you need to satisfy your research purposes (p. 33)". As the authors imply in this statement, access is a process of negotiation for information; information that can become of great value for the study. Denscombe (2003) states "researchers need to set about gaining access and to do this they need to engage in negotiations that have political, ethical, and practical implications" (p.90). Access to the

programs and trustworthiness of my work from the perspective of the participants was an emotional process, especially with the Voces Unidas program. I had initially received approval from the director to have their program and youth participate in my study; however the summer of 2011 Voces Unidas hired a new executive director. This new director was not impressed with the way universities and academics had conducted research with the Latino community and she wanted to ensure my intentions were authentic and that I would be respectful of the program's cultural and social realities. She questioned the study and demanded a much more reciprocal process and experience from me as a researcher.

As cited in Harrington (2003), Marcus articulates the importance of access to the participants and the environments in which the field work will take place; "access is the defining activity of ethnography, a 'regulative ideal' which defines the field and distinguishes its practitioners from others" (p. 594). Marcus' idea of access as an activity relates to my understanding of access and gaining entry to a culture separate from our own. While I agree with Glesne and Peshkin's (1999) definition of access, I have to disagree with the notion of gaining access solely to satisfy our research purposes. My purpose is not to enter an environment, mine data, and leave; access to complete this study fulfills a larger purpose for me, to stay engaged with the Latino youth community around me. Furthermore, the findings from this study have the potential to make a meaningful and impactful difference in the non-formal learning experience of Latino youth. Issues of youth worker capacity, building resources, program development, and

youth agency are discussed in detail in the coming chapters. Conducting fieldwork for an entire program year provided rigor to the study and trustworthiness to the data that was collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Language and translation of interview transcripts

As native Spanish speaker and a bicultural individual I had the privilege to conduct the study in both English and Spanish. All interviews with parents were conducted in Spanish (their preference) and later transcribed and translated to English. The youth worker and most of the youth interviews were conducted in English, although several youth used both languages during our interviews. At program visits and observations I was able to use both languages; Voces Unidas' youth and staff used Spanish more frequently than those at The Depot.

When developing the interview protocols and consent/assent letters I was able to translate all documents. Most of the study documents that were also part of the larger Pathways study were also checked for accuracy by Spanish-speaking colleagues at the University of Minnesota and the University of Illinois.

Researcher positionality, sensitivity, and integrity

As a researcher, I had worked with both programs participating in this study for about a year. The Depot participated in a pilot phase for the Pathways research project in which I was a field site coordinator. Voces Unidas was part of a charter school in which I conducted ethnographic research a few years early as part of my Masters work at the University of Minnesota. Leaders and youth within both organizations had worked with

me in other community-related projects such as facilitating workshops for youth workers, panels, and collaborative youth development initiatives.

Nevertheless, throughout my fieldwork I was constantly reminded and aware of my role as the researcher, who in this case also happened to be Latina. Researchers should seek out their subjectivity. Not when the data has been collected but while their research is "actively in progress". I recognize that because of my cultural background I shared a great deal with the study participants, their families, and the programs in which they participated. We spoke the same native language, Spanish, we had experienced (although in quite different discourses) immigration to a new land and new communities, and we embraced notions of *educación*. *Educación* was a familiar cultural framework to me. Growing up in Argentina, my parents valued the moral, behavioral, and academic aspects of educación and the importance of being *bien educada* was instilled in me at a very early age. At the same time, I was conscious of the many differences that existed between myself and the participants. I had entered this experience from a university researcher perspective and I came from a position of privilege. Nevertheless, conducting this study was an opportunity to reflect on the reasons why I was drawn to studying these programs and the understanding the experiences of the youth participants. Firstly, my professional and life experience in youth education led me to seek more understanding on the intersections of culture, education, and youth development. Secondly, a theoretical framework of *educación* as well as the concepts of youth agency, motivation, and non-formal learning seemed to me to be commonplace but were rarely included in decision-

making around research and practice. Finally, as a Latina researcher I wanted to make a contribution to the field of youth development and international education to enhance our understandings of culture and education and provide more authentic educational opportunities for both youth and adults in community-based programs. Kanuha (2000) reflects in her piece *"Conducting Social Work Research as an Insider"*, about the complex and inherent challenges of being both an insider with intimate knowledge of one's study population and an outsider as researcher and the opportunity that such positionality provides the researcher.

Acknowledging my role and positionality in this work is crucial, because of the influences it had on the entire research process. Peshkin (1984) states that "These qualities have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement" (p. 17). He adds, "It's like a garment that cannot be removed" (p. 17). Working on a larger research project that housed my dissertation interest allowed me to have a much clearer awareness of who I was and what I brought to the work; both from methodological and epistemological perspectives. More importantly, I often found myself oscillating between the realities of the programs and their participants and the world of academia. Thus, navigated quite different, often conflicting environments that required different approaches at various points throughout the research process.

In order to engage in the ongoing process of discovering my subjective biases, I monitored myself as a researcher at each research site, in this case in each of the

programs and in my relationships with participants, staff, and parents. Peshkin recommends "the enhanced awareness that should result from a formal, systematic monitoring of self…a necessary exercise, a workout, a tuning up of my subjectivity to get it into shape" (p. 20). By monitoring ourselves we create an "illuminating, empowering personal statement" that attunes us to where self and subject are intertwined (p.20). Peshkin also warns us that if this process is not completed, we run the risk of presenting a study that is deliberately biographical.

Limitations of the study

The singularities of focusing on the experiences of youth in only two OST programs can make the findings difficult to generalize; however generalizability is not the purpose of this particular study. In addition to providing rich grounded interpretations of what makes these programs effective, a goal is to include sufficient detail so that practitioners and decision-makers can make informed judgments as to whether these interpretations are useful in understanding similar programs in similar contexts. More importantly, the detail and interpretations can be useful resources for those wanting to implement culturally-congruent programming for youth of diverse backgrounds. It is critical that the researcher conducting a case study clearly links any generalizations within the data to multiple sources because although case studies are aimed at providing rich description and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, they could be used to "oversimplify or exaggerate a situation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981 as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 42).

In order to maintain a certain level of rigor in the study, I include careful attention to details, checking and re-checking transcripts and field notes for accuracy (Creswell, 2009) and conduct a rigorous triangulation of the data. Huberman and Miles (1994) argue that "triangulation is less a tactic than a model of inquiry" that occurs throughout the data collection process by checking the findings using various sources and modes of evidence (p. 438).

Strengths of the study

This study also contributes to providing young people a space to contribute to research and make meaning of their educational experiences. Because of the qualitative approach to this work, participants (youth and adults) acted as key cultural informants to the larger field of youth development. Most of them appreciated having the time to think and reflect on the different aspects of their programs; especially when we conversed about notions of *educación*. Carla and Arturo shared how meaningful it was for them to be able to deconstruct such an important concept in their lived experiences. The relationships that were built and nurtured because of my work with both programs helped me gain further insight into youth development programs. I still maintain relationships with staff members and some of the youth at Voces Unidas.

Last but not least, this study contributes to the conceptualization of the educational experiences of youth who often times are invisible. The Latino community, parents, youth workers, and youth allowed me to pull significance from their new formations of meaning and education in our society. Vavrus (2000) asks for local

constructions of meaning that are often used by non-governmental organization, rather than those proposed through "Western developmentalism" (p.237) and the following findings chapters provide an in-depth examination of how local (and at the same time transnational) communities make sense of the educational trajectories of their children, and how communities have come together to address educational disparities.

CHAPTER IV

EFFECTS OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY: Re-creating educational futures for

their youth within the imaginary

"The moral education of the home serves as the groundwork for the academic instruction

that the school would provide" (Reese, et al. 1995, p. 65)

Introduction

The study set out to unpack the educational experience of immigrant Latino youth

and families in out-of-school time community-based youth programs. More specifically,

this study was conducted to recognize the holistic approaches to education implemented

by youth programs and community. The present chapter provides a deep understanding of

the role the community and children's parents play in the educational trajectories of the

Latino youth who participated in this study. The findings that follow begin with the

broader community context and a brief history of the Latino community in the area where

the study took place. My findings then go on to present the perspectives of parents of

study participants, the role of programs and youth workers, and finally, the resulting

experiences of the youth participants. Parents and community played an integral part in

the understanding of educación as a process and experience that begins in the home and

communities in which the young people live.

The initial design of this study did not include gathering and analyzing parents'

data in order to answer the research questions I set to examine in my field work.

However, the more I engaged and immersed myself in the daily routines of the programs

and study participants the clearer it became that the overall context and parents'

perspectives were essential to an understanding of the educational experiences of Latino

youth. The quote above was taken out of a research piece conceptualizing the notions of

educación among Latinos in the U.S. The author is correct in that moral education, or

being a good person (*una buena persona)*, is a key cultural element of an *educación*

perspective. However, it is important to point out that the new socio-cultural and

economic contexts of Latino communities, particularly of groups that participated in this

study, have seen a shift in the how, where, and with whom this moral education is

transmitted to and created with young people.

Study data suggest that social and material conditions such as immigration,

globalization, transnationalism, and educational disparities have changed how

communities, especially immigrant communities in the U.S., address the educational

trajectories of their youth. Such discourses have opened the doors for community-based

out-of-school time programs to play a critical role in the development of young people

who otherwise might not have educational opportunities equal to their non-immigrant

peers. Organizations like the two that participated in this study have found a way to

engage Latino immigrant youth and their families in meaningful program experiences

that are considerate of their culture, backgrounds, and histories, as well as useful for their

futures in a globalized society.

Zhou (2007) argues that informal social settings and organizations that are

inclusive of the ethnic community they represent generate resources for youth's

educational success. More importantly, parents from low-income communities who face daily struggles regarding employment, immigration status, violence, and discrimination have found a way to cope with such struggles by getting involved and utilizing the services provided by community-based organizations. Together, parents and organizations are creating spaces where the learning and development of the whole child are at the core of the daily program practices.

In my literature review, I described the concept of *educación* from the perspective of the Latino community in the U.S. society and a major part of such framework is the role that communities play in educating the whole child. More importantly, I discussed two levels of structures (cultural and social) that exist at the core of the development of youth in the Latino community. Parents in this study were drawn to the cultural (traditions, knowledge transfer, and values) and social (networking, relationship building, and a sense of belonging) supports organizations like Voces Unidas and The Depot could offer their children. Parents actively provided *educación* to their children through ongoing *consejos*, testimonies, and seeking *apoyo* (caring support) for their children in community-based educational programs. I present the parents' perspectives as a way to begin to answer the following questions: Firstly, how were social and cultural structures present in the non-formal learning experiences of the youth? Secondly, what role did both parents and programs play in providing supports for youth to engage in meaningful learning and development opportunities?

In this chapter, I will present a deeper look at the community context, as well as the parents' role in the youth's participation and engagement in these non-formal learning experiences. This chapter examines my first research question:

1) How do parents of Latino immigrant youth perceive their children's participation in culturally responsive OST programs that embrace notions of *educación* in relationship to their educational experiences and futures?

Subsequent chapters illustrate the role of the programs and youth workers and the resulting experiences of youth participants.

The voices and experiences of study participants suggest that quality, culturally responsive OST programs which embrace notions of *educación* play a critical role in the education and development of Latino immigrant youth in the U.S. Embracing *educación* as a programmatic approach includes engaging parents' goals and aspirations for their children; utilizing culturally responsive, culturally empathetic, and culturally aware staff; and providing positive spaces for youth to focus on their interests, build positive relationships with peers and adults, and gain 21st century skills like communication and global citizenship. These programmatic elements give rise to social and cultural supports, which allow youth to act as agents of their own education and development within a global community. Youth who participated in these programs had opportunities to learn about themselves and their culture through an asset-based approach, they were encouraged to make sense of their social learning, and they built positive and meaningful relationships with adults that supported them as they moved towards their future

aspirations (college, employment, travel, etc.). More importantly, organizations like Voces Unidas and The Depot, which embraced cultural frameworks like *educación*, acted as safety nets for the entire family and community. As mentioned in the literature review, immigrant parents' parenting practices and experiences are often times undermined by the process of immigration in which they lose the "map of experience" necessary to support their children fully in the new society (Suarez-Orozco, 2008, p. 90). In other words, these community programs, assist parents in forming community supports that will help them raise their children. From an *educación* standpoint, seeking out communal supports and networks becomes even more critical in a new environment where extended family members and other community institutions were left behind as a result of migration. To fill this gap, parents work alongside programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot and rebuild the roadmap for their children to become well-educated and successful members of their communities.

Community context

When conducting research with diverse communities and organizations, the socio-cultural context of the study and its participants must be taken into consideration. The findings presented in this chapter are illustrated in the context of community, organizations, families, and individuals. More importantly; the data collection process was nested within a unique context in which data was gathered from program observations, parent interviews, and quantitative parent surveys. The following section presents a description of the community, of the present educational landscape, and of the

parent participants in this study to help contextualize the findings related to the study's research questions.

An educational crisis and a community more than ready. This study was conducted in urban and suburban sites within a Midwestern metropolitan area. The region received its first influx of Mexican and Central American immigrants in the late 1800s and since then, different waves of migration have brought more Latino immigrants to the area. These immigrants have formed families and established themselves as members of a vibrant urban community. The Latino population in the region has nearly doubled since the year 2000, leading the way in the state's population growth when compared to other racial groups (Minneapolis/Saint Paul Business Journal, 2013). Furthermore, in the last two decades, this population has quadrupled in size, from 1.1% of the total population in 1990 to 4.8% of the total population in 2010. The influx of Latino individuals has been so large (140,000 in 2000 to 257,000 in 2010) that in one of the region's largest school districts, Latino students make up 20% of the student population, going well beyond the state's percentage of the Latino children population which is at 8 percent (Minnesota Compass, 2012).

In this school district, 21% of the entire student population is comprised of English language learners, meaning English is their second language. These students are more likely to come from immigrant families whose language at home is other than English (Minnesota Compass, 2012). Despite the large enrollment numbers, approximately 40% of Latino students do not graduate high school, lagging behind their

White, Black, and Asian counter parts. Only 36% of Latino students are proficient in 3rd grade reading, the lowest percentage among all racial groups in the largest school district.

As the numbers illustrate, educational disparities in the region are some of the most pronounced in the U.S. today. However, despite the troublesome educational landscape where only a little over 50% of Latino students graduate high school, educators along with policy makers, community leaders, and the field of OST learning have been strong supporters of providing positive, community-based educational opportunities in non-formal environments for youth who could most benefit from such programs. The state's governor has been a strong supporter of OST programs and has implemented large initiatives geared towards the sustainability of high-quality programs targeting the out-of-school-time experience for youth.

The local community of youth work practitioners have also been actively seeking ways to address the disparities experienced by diverse youth; especially those from disadvantaged and under-served communities. Several organizations, including Voces Unidas, receive 21st Century Learning Center funding to implement their programming, which allows them to focus their efforts on youth building 21st century skills by creating opportunities to thrive, connect, and achieve. This funding structure also allowed programs to provide educational opportunities to families of the participating youth. As a result, a key component in the work of organizations such as Voces Unidas and The Depot has been parent engagement; these organizations are trying to authentically incorporate the perspectives of families living in a world that is often times new or

unknown to them. Together, youth workers, parents, and youth are co-creating new educational spaces. The literature refers to this created reality as a "global ethnoscape" (Appadurai, 1991) and Latinos are framing the *educación* of their children in the U.S. based on experiences and cultural understandings that were initially generated in their homeland. As they migrated to the U.S., they brought this framework with them and blended it with discourses within this society. Immigrant parents look to non-formal learning experiences to continue to foster an *educación* approach while providing their children the best opportunities available.

For parents, part of establishing a new map of connections and securing cultural and social safety nets for their children includes getting engaged in programming offered through local community organizations. Zhou (2009) clearly illustrates the relationship that exists between these organizations and immigrant parents by stating the following: "Neighborhood-based institutions provide a mechanism for restructuring the social life of immigrants and for tying children to their families, especially at a time when many acculturation pressures serve to distance immigrants from their U.S.-raised or U.S.-born children" (p.1154).

Often Latino parents' perspective and educational practices in relationship to their children's experiences are not leveraged for use in educational programming. To remedy this negligence, I studied their perspective a valuable part of my findings that helped me answer my research questions and inform practice within the field of youth development. As illustrated in the literature review, the notion of *educación* within the Latino

community runs deep among families and the community at large. As previously

discussed, Latino parents work to educate the whole human being; to pay attention

beyond formal learning processes and instead to look at the transformation/growth and

development of the whole child through community-engaged experiences. Though

originally not included in my study, it quickly became apparent that parents and parent

data played a major role in bringing to life the notions of *educación* that had helped me

formulate the framework for this study and that were present within the program

experience. Parents provided an often-invisible support system to the experience of their

children who participated in the programs I studied. Main ideas on OST programs that

emerged from parent interviews included encouraging youth to participate in after-school

programs, supporting ongoing engagement, providing opportunities for a better and

brighter future, and fostering productivity. The following sections take into account the

perspective of parent interviewees and their reflections on their goals for their children,

the reasons why they wanted their child to participate, and what they believed was

valuable for their children within the program experience.

The parents in this study shared a similar narrative. Their role in their children's

participation and engagement in the program was framed in their native cultural

understandings of maintaining cultural traditions, learning about their history, and taking

advantage of opportunities they didn't have, while at the same time they hoped for their

children would be productive individuals, be busy, and stay off the streets. Parents

transmitted these different levels of support by providing testimonies and *consejos* (advice) and reflecting on their own positionality within their new, globalized families.

Not a missed opportunity and a desire to not give up: The power of consejos and testimonies

Educación began at home for the parents in this study. Parents of youth participants were keenly aware that they needed to take advantage of every space that would offer their children opportunities for learning and social mobility. *Consejos* and testimonies became an important component of how these parents transmitted *educación* to their children. Though this parental advice was provided in the home as part of the work, care, and emotional labor of parenting, it was done in direct relationship to schooling, the program experience, and the acquisition of useful and meaningful life experience through funds of knowledge. Sometimes *consejos* were the most readily available tool for these parents, and they continually and spontaneously imparted their views, ideas, and expectations to their children. *Consejos* and testimonies demonstrated the power of narrative to teach and transmit values to youth in immigrant Latino families. Other scholars have studied this phenomenon:

> "Consejos are the means by which parents transmit to their children the cultural values and morals that will guide them in good behavior and in making good decisions. In many of these studies, we caught glimpses of the consejos that parents gave their children which socialized them to follow the "right" path." (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999, p. 423).

Parents in this study actively spoke to their children about not giving up and striving to be better than they were. The idea of making sure their children were better off than them came from parents' work and social realities. Parents feared that their children would get stuck in low paying jobs, long hours, and not able to support the family. For example, Dario's mother spoke during one of our interviews about her cleaning job at a local school. She worked a full-time job at a local Perkins' restaurant during the week and on weekends she cleaned a school in a neighboring community. Despite working these two jobs she still could not make ends meet at home. As a learning opportunity for Dario, she would oftentimes take him with her to the school to show him what would happen if he did not finish high school. She wanted to illustrate for Dario what could happen if he did not have an education.

Parents would give youth pointed advice on who to listen to and who to ignore, when to step up or step away from a situation, and when to do their best in order to get the reward. Their children seem to have taken their parents' words of wisdom to heart. Many of the youth interviewed had positive impressions of their parents' advice and influence.

For example, Juan Carlos also reflected:

> Just…if they see me down or something because of school, they say "No te rindas" (don't give up), you are doing your best. You will be a good person. Or, ignore what people say, you know who you are. No matter what people say, you know in your heart who you are and if they are your friend, they will be there no

matter what. If they are not, they will back away. (Juan Carlos Interview, Spring

2012).

Parents in this study, who have faced adversity themselves, could relate to their

children's experiences when they needed the extra support to navigate a difficult

situation. Parents intentionally gave advice to the youth to not give up, and to think

before making decisions. In addition, they actively reflected on others' less fortunate

experiences and provided youth with steps to avoid mistakes to ensure they did not face

the same negative outcomes.

Dora, participant in the Voces Unidas program, has experienced this phenomenon

and talked about the *consejos* she received from her father at times when she felt down

and invisible to others.

Well, my dad is starting to tell me a lot of stuff about like don't give up and like

cause my brother like he's in jail and my daddy used to tell him "no hagas esto

porque te va a ir mal en la vida" ["don't do this or your life will go wrong"]. Like

if you like keep like doing like bad stuff "pues te va a salir todo mal" ["then

everything is doing to come out bad for you"] cause I've been through it and blah,

blah, blah. Like not the same way but I've been kind of through it, you know?

Entonces [so], my dad says todo [all] like "Tu vas vivir tu vida ["you're going to

live your life"] and I'm not always gonna be there, so you have to like learn what

what's—right and wrong—before it's like too late or before you like mess up real

bad. (Dora Interview, Spring 2012).

Repetition is a large part of this tradition. For example, Juan Carlos shares some *consejos*

his mother repeatedly provides: "She always tells me before I left [sic] the house or when

I say I'm going with my friends, she tells me "piensa antes de hacer algo (think before

you do something)". She tells me to think about the consequences of my actions." (Juan

Carlos Interview, Spring 2012). The intentionality of her *consejos* is focused on making

sure her son stayed on the right path and she imparted this advice multiple times to her

son to reinforce the message.

As shown in the quotes above, youth and parents both were often aware that

others who had come before them did not receive or experience the benefits of positive

educational experiences. Most of them reflected on someone else's misfortune of going

down the wrong path, running into problems with the law, etc. Thus the parents'

testimonies and advice provided a credible learning opportunity to the youth. The stakes

for this community are high, and eschewing a positive opportunity with the potential to

further their chances of success is not taken lightly.

Youth knew that these teachings were meaningful resources their parents could

provide. A sense of safety and security outside the home was often times a different

story. The data illustrated the dynamic nature of what Latino parents are experiencing as

they raise their adolescent children in environments that are new to them. *Consejos* and

testimonies proved to be a useful resource that youth received daily from their parents in

the home environment. However, a present concern for the youth's parents was time

spent outside the home; parents want to make sure their children have a safe and positive

space to spend their time. In the interviews I conducted, they were adamant that their

children be kept off the streets and had opportunities to build relationships with caring

adults. When the power of *consejos* was not enough for parents to convey expectations of

their children, they turned to the programs and youth workers to offer caring learning

environments.

Parents place value on the OST program experience

Even though several of the parents had no OST program experiences as youth in

their native countries, they understood the importance and value of such programs for

their children. They made sure to encourage their children to participate, and this

occurred through giving ongoing reminders to their children, supporting them at program

events, volunteering at the program, and instilling in the youth the value of such

experiences for their educational and personal success. The program observations record

many instances when parents were present during programming activities and events.

More importantly, the data also revealed the reasons why parents wanted to encourage

program participation. The following sections illustrate the program elements that were

of most value to the parents for their children; these elements include cultural teachings,

the creation positive supports (*apoyo*), and incentive to meet goals and future aspirations.

Caring support systems to keep youth off the streets. Despite the fact that many of

the parents in the study did not have similar OST program experiences as youth, they

considered such opportunities to be useful resources for the upbringing of their children

in the U.S. In both programs, parents had connected with the adult leaders, either through

resource fairs, at school meetings, or in the larger community, and had received program

information. More importantly, these casual, yet informational encounters with program

staff were critical relationship building blocks that provided parents with a positive

perspective on the programs and gave them information on what they could offer their

children. Parents perceived the programs as safe spaces and program staff as caring

individuals who had the best interest of their children in mind. When they were not able

to be present at home after school due to their work schedules, parents wanted to make

sure that their children were kept off the streets. They often expressed fears of their

children not becoming productive members of the community. Throughout the

interviews, common responses, such as not wanting youth to just hang out in the streets,

wanting to keep them busy, and having them be productive emerged as salient themes.

The relationships built at the programs provide the guidance and resources help ease the

parents' anxiety. The following quote illustrates Guadalupe's mother's appreciation for

The Depot's role in her daughter's development, especially the guidance of a youth

worker (Jeremy):

> I think it's good, because they worry about the youth. Today's youth, my
>
> daughter's age, fourteen years old. Not to be on the streets. Well, yes. I already
>
> see how the girls are on the streets, with the boys; they are stealing, using drugs,
>
> and everything. Who cares for them? No one. So I say that if she's at The Depot,
>
> esta [there's] Jeremy, who is a good person. Like my daughter says, he's her
>
> second father, that Jeremy is her second father because he supports her—helps

her. I feel happy that there are people out there that care for one's own children—

that they are off the streets (Parent interview, Spring 2012).

Guadalupe's mother brings up two key values that she finds in the program. On one hand, she refers to her daughter being kept busy so she can focus on positive things and stay away from negative influences. On the other hand, she points out the role of Jeremy and how he acts as a second father to Guadalupe. She emphasizes that he worries about the youth, and this represents the type of caring space that parents look for in places like The Depot or Voces Unidas.

While parents engaged themselves in giving ongoing testimonies and advice to their children, they also had a clear perception of how the U.S. context was shaping their overall family identity and their children's educational experience. This became apparent when several of the parents and youth in this study spoke about the need to be productive and to stay busy. The notion of making sure youth were kept busy relates back to the concept within *educación* of not going down the wrong path. Parents were aware that the programs and the adults within them could promote positive work ethics and habits of being productive that would be useful to them in the future. Ursla's mother works most of the day and like Guadalupe's mother, the program provides her piece of mind. Ursula expressed in her interview how her mother values the educational and motivating environment that OST programs provide:

She doesn't want me to go to the wrong path. So she wants me to be somewhere educational not like with my friends at the mall…so she wants me to do

something that will help me be better at things…. She wants me to grow up to be someone good. She doesn't want me to end up like other of my friends, like you know…she wants me to graduate and have a good career and she just thinks that maybe here I'll have a good opportunity (Ursula, youth interview Fall 2011).

Parents were particularly worried that their adolescent children would spend time doing nothing or would go to the streets and be exposed to bad behaviors and negative peer relationships. As a result they looked to the programs as a way to keep their youth safe and engaged in meaningful activities. Once children were in the safe space of the program, parents sought out ways in which both the content of the programming and the staff at the programs could provide supports to their children. These supports existed in various ways, from homework help to meaningful youth-adult relationships.

Immigrant parents seek supports for their children. Parents valued that the supports and supportive relationships that their children had access to in the program. These supports ranged from receiving homework help to establishing meaningful relationships with the adults and peers in the program. Because such supports were present in the programs, parents actively encouraged their children to participate. This encouragement however, went further than the *consejos* discussed previously.

Parents were quite supportive of their children participating in the after-school activities. For example, Ursula's mother reflected on the program allowing her daughter to "Desenvolverse [unpack herself]" (Ursula's mother Interview, Spring 2012). In other words, Ursula's mother sees the program environment as a safe space for her daughter to

be herself. This sentiment was echoed by a fellow parent who talked about the program as a way to build self-esteem and hope among the youth participants. She stated:

> The program wants to develop youth who are sure of what they want, youth with set goals, so they don't just go halfway; that while they can, they need to search and climb the big mountain to get to the end (Guadalupe's mother, interview, Spring 2012).

This mother was keenly aware that youth in her community needed spaces where they could assert their identities, navigate complex environments, and overcome barriers; she perceived the program as a safe and positive resource to help youth become agents of their development.

Learning about one's culture is an important piece of *educación*. One mother asserted how important is was for her that the program helps youth maintain their cultural roots while being responsive and inclusive of the youth's culture. She said "Because, they maintain one's own roots. Like the culture, what one teaches them…at The Depot they have that present. The culture of everyone." (Guadalupe's mother Interview, Spring 2012). She's clearly reflecting on the fact that the program her daughter participates in supplements the cultural transmission that happens at home (Levinson, et al, 1996).

Parents and youth talked openly about the ways in which the program also provided a positive space for youth to learn about American mainstream culture and thereby imagine possible futures in American mainstream culture. Youth perceived this as a tool that they could transfer to school and the broader community. For parents

however, this was seen as one way in which their children were losing part of their Latino culture. The following quote was taken from an interview with Guadalupe and illustrates the on-going questioning that immigrant parents face when raising children in a new society.

> My mom [says] "yeah you've been too much with *los gringos* [a term used in Latino culture for English-speaking foreigners], sometimes you don't even give us a kiss". Sometimes I don't even do that…"[She says] you've been with them a lot"…because I'm here more than I'm with her. Or if I don't say hi to her friends…she's like "que mal educada que no vienes a decir hola" [how uneducated that you don't come and say hello]. So it's hard, I always want to. It's weird, because I want to kiss someone in [sic?] the cheek and I can't. It's weird, they will look at me as if I'm crazy or something. Just like…ok. I go home and I kiss and I'm ok (Guadalupe Interview, Spring 2012).

Here Guadalupe provides evidence of how *educación* is enacted at home. The way her mom characterizes a poorly educated (*mal educada*) person as someone who doesn't follow the cultural practice of kissing on the cheek and personally greeting her mother's friend is a key example of the philosophy of educating the whole child. Based on Guadalupe's interview, her mother felt that Guadalupe was losing something as simple, yet important to them as a kiss on the cheek. This is a common gesture among loved ones in the Latino community and Guadalupe's misgivings represent a phenomenon described

by Zhou (2009) when parents experience disconnect from their U.S.-born or raised children.

Despite her mother's encouragement to continue attending the program as evidenced in earlier passages, Guadalupe is reflecting on some of the drawbacks her mother finds in the program. Like any parent, Latino parents have trouble adjusting as their youth become more involved in organizations outside the family environment. However, Latino youth and parents also need to navigate cultural differences within the family unit, which can often create tension when youth adopt some of the mainstream behaviors (no kissing on the cheek when greeting someone). This behavior is adaptive and should help these youth in the future as they get more actively involved in the new society; however, at the same time, this type of adaptive behavior creates more social and cultural distance between them and their parents. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that while there may be some growing pains as parents and youth adjust to the new culture, parents on a whole appreciate and value the cultural learning that their children experience at OST programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot.

In the quote below, Ursula reflects on her mother wanting her to be in a supportive environment and have the *apoyo* (supports) of other positive adults in her life; her reflection clearly illustrates how caring support is an important dimension of *educación*. She brings up a real desire on part of her mother; a desire for her child to have the opportunities she did not have as a youth.

Well, she never graduated so that's like a big thing like she wants me to do, the

things that she couldn't do when she was my age because she didn't have the

same opportunity. She wants me to basically do what I want to do in the future.

But she just wants me to have some type of …*apoyo*…support…. Since she can't

give me the support most of the time because she's working, she wants me to be

here with someone that will give me that support that she didn't have (Ursula

Interview, Fall 2011).

As mentioned earlier, *apoyo* emerged as a strong dimension of the *educación* narrative

brought forth by parents and program participants. However, Ursula's mother is unable to

provide this *apoyo* because of her long work hours and a lack of social networks of

friends and family that would provide childcare back in their native Mexico. The mother

understands the value of such support and looks to Voces Unidas' staff to be able to

provide this for her daughter.

Many parents in the programs echoed this need of support, and more importantly,

iterated the need for cultural support for their children in OST programs. I will later

discuss the concept of "cultural nannies" who provide this unique form of support, but for

now I will focus on how parents perceived the cultural capital that their children were

exposed to during their program experience.

 Parents also spoke to how the programs would help their children achieve their

goals. They viewed the program experience as giving their youth the space to explore and

take next steps towards their future aspirations such as a career, a college application,

employment skills, and even global citizenship. During Dario's mother's interview she

spoke highly of Voces Unidas, the program where Dario participated several days a

week. I asked about her goals for her son and the goals of the program. She responded,

"What I want for him is to have a career not just finish high school" (Dario's mother

Interview, Spring 2012). Dario's mother had not participated in any OST program

experience in her native Mexico, but understood how important it was for her son not just

to graduate high school but also to identify ways in which he could develop a career.

More importantly, she understood how participating in the program helped her son do

better in school and home and as a result make progress towards his future aspirations.

These immigrant parents have transplanted their value for education to their new

homeland in the U.S. They are aware that if their children are educated they will have

access to different opportunities for social mobility. As a result, these parents not only

value the learning, skill acquisition, and relationship building that OST programs offer,

but they also view such experiences as opportunities that cannot be overlooked. Migrants

relocate to seek better opportunities, and most, if not all, parents in this study spoke of

wanting their children to take advantage of opportunities (UN Human Rights, 2014) they

did not have in their native countries.

Latino parents' views on productivity are evidence of transnationalism and

globalization shifting their expectations for their children's success as productive

members of the family and community. One could argue that the U.S. social context has

influenced what immigrant parents perceive as useful and productive for their children

and has shaped parent's expectations of how their children should be spending their free time. Parents of youth in the program wanted to make sure their children were occupied with positive learning experiences. Ursula's mother states, "…what I hope for is that she will have the impulse [sic] of the program to be able to finish or get to her set goal because she has a goal" (Ursula's mother Interview, Spring 2012). The focus on goals and productivity demonstrates a real desire for social mobility. Such mobility could ensure youth to benefit from meaningful opportunities, forge relationships, and develop agency to navigate systems and new opportunities that might arise in other environments such as the school or places of employment.

A sense of productivity

Parents were not only interested in their children to take advantage of opportunities they did not have when they were young but they were also assertive in making sure the youth were not wasting time by participating in the program. There was a sense of needing to be important, needing to be productive, and making sure that whatever time and energy youth spent in these programs that they would be getting something in return (a skill, a relationship with an adult, a resource they didn't have at home, or something learned, either culturally or academically). When one of the participating mothers at Voces Unidas was asked about what she valued most about the program, she brought up this notion of productivity in her answer:

> [The program] keeps them active, thinking about productive things. I believe that
> is important because when youth have nothing to do, leisure is a bad

behavior…they can think about negative things like drugs…and when they are

not active [and] thinking of what they are going to do in terms of school or a

project, they start thinking of silly things (Parent interview, Spring 2012).

At The Depot, Guadalupe's mother echoed this in almost the same words: "I don't

want her to be thinking of things she shouldn't be doing" (Parent interview, Spring 2012).

These parents' perspectives also bring about notions of the need and importance of

psychological capital in their children (Demerath, 2009). Research has demonstrated that

this type of capital includes personal attachment to success and self-advocacy (Demerath,

Lynch & Davidson, 2008; Demerath, 2009). Being able to imagine one-self as a

successful and productive member of society and one's own community is also relevant

for youth to feel a sense of purpose and agency in their development.

Conclusion

Parents in this study reported education as one of the most efficient ways for their

children to become productive members of their community. The data clearly suggests

that parents played a key role in supporting and encouraging their children to join and

stay engaged in the programs through ongoing *consejos* and testimonies. These *consejos*

were instilled in young people through everyday interactions and dialogues with their

parents. More importantly, parents utilized *consejos* and testimonies as a way to

contribute to the *educación* of their children. However, when parents needed safe,

positive, and meaningful environments for their children after school hours, they turned

to programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot.

Parents wanted their children to achieve their goals, to develop a strong sense of self (culturally), and to take advantage of opportunities for social mobility. Having strong aspirations and valuing education is quite different from actually realizing such aspirations and having success. The data suggests that parents have looked to organizations like Voces Unidas and The Depot to help them educate and realize their aspirations for their children. They understand that these programs can offer their children resources not readily available within the family such as homework help, youth-adult relationships, mentoring, and safe spaces that keep them away from the streets and negative influences.

Oftentimes when scholars and practitioners discuss solutions to address the educational disparities in our society they offer an approach that stays at the organization level; usually focused on systemic changes that are needed. Such an approach does not always take into account the perspective of the parent, or even the role that non-formal learning organizations play in addressing educational disparities. The parents in this study have taken it upon themselves to reach out to community organizations; oftentimes in their immediate neighborhood, staffed with caring role models for their children so they can provide the social and cultural supports that equip youth to navigate formal contexts such as school and later, the workplace.

Parents are an important, positive influence for youth. Because of work and other obligations, immigrant parents cannot always be present with their children, and so they must rely on programs and their youth workers to help them raise well-educated adults. I

will now explore these extra-familial, positive relationships with caring adults in an analysis of program and youth worker data to illustrate the necessary structural and cultural components that organizations can draw upon to better serve and work with immigrant Latino youth in their communities. More importantly, the next chapter provides practice-based examples of how programs and youth workers allow immigrant Latino youth to imagine productive futures and productive lives in mainstream society.

CHAPTER V

COMMUNITY YOUTH PROGRAMS: SERVING IMMIGRANT YOUTH AT

THE INTERSECTION OF CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

"Culture and structure intersect to create an ethnic social environment promoting school

success" (Zhou, 2007, p.244).

[E]ducación is more than book learning. Educación is experiential,

is about affirming who we are, it's about identity, it's about

culture, it's about life. Educación is a form of well rounded-ness,

which I think our educational system is somewhat void of. It's

about educating, educación, as a whole human being, not just a

subject (Arturo. Youth Worker interview, January 2012).

Introduction

  This chapter explores components of the two programs in this study (Voces

Unidas and The Depot) that were informed by elements of the *educación* framework and

how they mediated the conversion of cultural and social supports into benefits for Latino

immigrant youth. More importantly, this chapter also explores characteristics of effective,

multicultural youth workers who are able to engage Latino immigrant youth in

meaningful and impactful program experiences. I set out to answer the following

program-related research question:

- How does an OST program approach *educación* and mediate the conversion of cultural and social resources into various kinds of potential capital for Latino immigrant youth?

The subsequent chapter lays out the perspectives of youth in this study as to how these cultural and social resources have become meaningful tools for them to become critically conscious agents of their own development and to fulfill their goals and future aspirations in life.

Voces Unidas and The Depot are vivid examples of how communities are engaging in the process of educating their youth through acquiring, transmitting, and producing knowledge that will help them interpret and act upon the world that surrounds them (Levinson, 2000). The previous chapter illustrated the parents' perspectives on how important and valuable these programs have become for their children. Parents appreciated their children having the opportunity of a safe learning environment that keeps them from being out on the streets; and parents also looked for programs that were responsive and inclusive of their cultural background and their new social realities in the U.S. In addition, parents placed value on the presence of caring adults who provided opportunities for the youth to gain valuable skills for their future. To continue examining the role of the programs, study data throughout this chapter will illustrate how programmatic structures, programming content, and program staff provide avenues for youth participants to be agents of their own development. Such avenues act as ways in which *educación* can be transmitted to and implemented with young people. As Angela

Valenzuela states, "educación is a foundational cultural construct that provides instructions on how one should live in the world" (1999, p. 21).

Implementing an *educación* process does not happen effortlessly; it requires these youth programs to act as vehicles through which youth can navigate complex social environments such as their schooling, community, and a global society. Programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot have embraced cultural frameworks such as *educación* to help participants make meaning of their social realities, their education, and more importantly, their futures. In doing so, programs allow culture to flow throughout the youth experience, both in the content of the programming and within the relationships that are developed between youth and adults and with the larger community.

The Depot and Voces Unidas utilized culture and *educación* in their youth development practice by doing the following:

1) They implemented culturally relevant program models based on positive youth development principles.

2) They played different roles within the lives of the youth participants. These roles included educational supporters, advocates of youth's mobility in society, agents of visibility, and cultural nannies.

3) They employed youth workers who possess a clear sense of cultural identity and competence, and who embrace cultural empathy in their youth development work, and foster empowering relationships with youth participants.

In enacting these three policies, programs were able to act as a staging ground for youth to explore, navigate, develop, and socialize in preparation for adulthood and becoming productive members of the community.

If, as Geertz (2000) proposes, culture is a series of control mechanisms—plans, recipes, rules, instructions—for governing behavior and that humans is dependent on the creation of these mechanisms, then spaces like Voces Unidas and The Depot support young people in coding their behavior into culture. In other words, these spaces provide the opportunity for youth to write up a cultural program code that allows them to navigate the cultural acquisition, transmission, and production, which begins taking place at this time in their lives (youth development). Youth that have participated in OST programs are strong agents of their own development and have clear goals for the future and strategies to achieve them.

Overview of chapter themes.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is an in-depth description of the two programs. The second section examines the programs' guiding positive youth development philosophies and the programs' engagement with community and family. The third and last section explores the role of youth workers in these programs, including how their roles are instrumental in the youth participants' development and enactment of their agency to further their goals and future aspirations.

The Programs

Voces Unidas and The Depot exist within the larger context of non-formal learning programs and large-scale community education initiatives in a metropolitan area of a Midwestern state. These two programs are situated within a social environment that supports non-formal learning and positive youth development experiences for youth. Both Voces Unidas and The Depot provide meaningful opportunities for youth of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds to participate in programming activities that are inclusive of their cultural and social identities. The supportive nature of these programs includes social, emotional, and cultural networks that allow participants to experience positive learning experiences, but also receive resources (tools, space, and skills development) that they can turn into useful capital for their educational futures. These programs are different from other after school programs and the findings of this study illustrate how unique, yet impactful, their work can be.

The literature review chapter included various research-based examples of what well-structured youth programs look like. As stated before, the three key characteristics outlined in the literature that must exist within successful OST programs are: positive relationships with peers and adults, enriching experiences and activities, and a safe environment (Gordon, Bridglall, and Meroe, 2005). Voces Unidas and The Depot take these characteristics a step further by constantly engaging culture throughout program implementation. Positive relationships with peers and adults include cultural understanding, cultural appreciation, and cultural discussions. Cultural learning enriches

youth's experiences, and the program environments are culturally responsive to youth's cultural identities. These programs make culture explicit and embrace it as a resource. More importantly, these two programs have implemented practices that view their youth participants through the different spheres of family, school, and community, and they actively seek overlapping positive relationships among the different spheres.

Because Voces Unidas serves largely Latino youth, as discussed in Chapter 3, Latino culture is a centerpiece of their cultural programing. Even when visiting the area around Voces Unidas' host organization, 21st Century Community Learning Center, one gets the sense that the Latino community has been integrated into the urban fabric.

Figure 1. Patio dedication at Voces Unidas. (Stubbe, 2012)

Voces Unidas' purpose was to amplify youth voice in after school and day time programming and its programs focused on youth leadership, and community

development, cultural exploration, and academics during the out-of-school hours. During

the time of the study, the program ran on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from

2:30-6:00pm and served approximately 30-40 youth each week. Various program

activities offered to the youth participants were related to culture and social justice, arts

and dance, homework help, and academics.

Voces Unidas' approach to youth development is infused with explicit cultural

elements that often times differed from other youth programs. The below notes following

taken during an observation of the Day of the Dead celebration, which takes place the

evening of the first Friday in November every year, illustrate the unique, cultural

landscape and approach to learning that Voces Unidas provides to its youth.

Tonight the program along with its partner high school celebrated

Day of the Dead (*Dia de los Muertos*) and there were close to 300

people in attendance including youth, entire families, youth

workers, teachers, funders, and community members. When I first

walked into the building, the smell of incense was inescapable. It

was everywhere and the same could be said about the bright-

colored decorations. Youth and staff were dressed in bright purple

t-shirts, and Aztec dancers were getting ready for their

performance as part of the evening's festivities. The gallery where

youth exhibited their *ofrenda* [offering] projects in which they

commemorated the life of a loved one who had passed away

included *ofrendas* [offerings] to relatives, friends, and even the late

Steve Jobs. (Field notes, October 2011).

Figure 2: Day of the Dead celebration at Voces Unidas (November, 2011).

Ofrenda to Steve Jobs and Aztec dancers.

The quote above is a first glimpse into this particular program and its programmatic

philosophy. There is a marked contrast between *ofrendas* to family or community

members, and a commemoration of Steve Jobs, but this positive mixing of cultures

allows immigrant youth to explore their cultural heritage and apply their previous

experiences to the culture of the new society. The notes and photographs above

communicate the sense of pride among staff and participants of Voces Unidas. In

addition, they present two important benefits for those youth who participate:

1. Positive integration of what are often separate cultural elements (e.g., Latino religious traditions and United States pop cultural icons).

2. Avenues for positive cultural identification for youth (Banks, 2006) by exhibiting positive and festive traditions, knowledge, and behaviors from their community.

The Depot building is located right across the street from city hall and it is in the midst of a large suburban neighborhood, surrounded by a park, churches and businesses. The building does not appear to be a youth-serving organization at first glance; however, the physical and social environment of The Depot welcomes all cultures and they are celebrated, not ignored. The sign that welcomes people as they walk into the door reads "All different but all equal." I vividly recall an interview with a Latina female participant in which I asked her about what clicked with her at the program and she responded "the way they treat people that we are all different and all equal and I felt good, they made me feel comfortable here" she later reflected on the environment of the program and said

"Well there's no really demanding rule, because it's just—you just basically have to respect people if you want to get respect, it's just a place where just go and you talk to everyone equally, it doesn't matter how different they are, you know, we accept everything as it is. (Guadalupe Interview, Fall 2011).

The same notions of respect and equality came up during program observations. The following quote comes from observation notes at The Depot:

Jeremy [youth worker] explained to the group that was meeting that he wanted everyone in the room to get a chance to speak and said to the group "I want to know what you stand for." Some youth responded by asking "what does that mean?" Jeremy said that he wanted them to "take a stance"—for them to think of an issue they don't like and "take a stance on it." He announced that he wanted everyone to share three pieces of information: 1) their name, 2) how long they have been volunteering at the site, 3) what they stand for. Some youth may have begun talking among themselves at the same time the young person to Jeremy's left was preparing to address the three items. Jeremy told the room: "give her some respect." In general, the youth seemed to be comfortable in the room. A few female youth were slouched over, and leaned across the lap of their neighbor. Two had their shoes off and walked around the room in their socks during the activity that followed the introductions.

As the introductory statements continued, young people said they stand for "acceptance," "equality," "animal rights," "respect," "friends," and "accepting that everyone's different." One volunteer who had been at the site for seven months said "I stand for bullying" and the room broke out in laughter. At instances like these, many young people shouted "Be respectful!" to each other, and as Jeremy's signal for quiet went up into the air, they also displayed the signal, in what seemed like an attempt to regulate their own behavior (Program Observation, December 2011).

The Depot was a place where young people could be themselves and be challenged to think critically. At the same time, they had access to the resources and tools they needed to accomplish their goals. The structure of the program intentionally included youth voice during program planning and implementation. A way in which youth voice was reflected is through The Depot Advisory Board; a group of youth was elected to serve on this board and make decisions as to what programing the organization would offer its participants. The board would meet every other Monday evening throughout the year. The following excerpt from my notes exemplifies how the advisory board ran its meetings and involved youth throughout:

> Youth were gathered around a table in the center of the computer room, and were eating catered sandwiches when I walked in. There were name cards made from green construction paper before people. The man who sat behind a name card that identified him as a council member asked the youth whether she was waiting on someone to begin, or whether someone was sick. It was about ten minutes after 6:30pm. The youth ran the entire meeting, and occasionally turned to Cristina for advice. (Program Observation, April 2012).

The program focused on enriching teenagers' lives by expanding their skills and encouraging them to share their talents, give service, and be creative. This was done by establishing youth-adult partnerships, in which they shared responsibility for event planning, program implementation, handling finances, and deciding how to make The Depot a better place for everyone involved.

The Depot implemented a different approach to working with Latino youth. Although Latino cultural practices were not as explicit as they are in Voces Unidas, The Depot intentionally offered a culturally responsive youth development environment in which young people were seen as resources and as providing value to the program. Culture was recognized, valued, and considered a critical element in youth' lives and identities. For example, in the quote below, The Depot's leader (Jeremy) never mentions the word culture but he refers to focusing on something underneath the youth's behavior, and explains parents can see improvements in their children.

> "[T]he research we base our practice on, shows that through this way of learning in a diverse community, self-esteem often goes up and the parents see that in our annual surveys […] they see that and they like that. And they see their behaviors; […] even though we don't focus on behaviors, the parents say the behaviors and attitudes are better. […] [W]e're focusing on something probably underneath that, but they're seeing what they want to on the surface, and how we get there doesn't seem to be as important. I think I just get kind hung up on how we get there…everybody else is "hey you wanna call it youth development, you wanna call it critical pedagogy, whatever you call it, if you get there, you get there" (Jeremy. Youth worker interview, Fall 2011).

The practice that Jeremy is referring to above is a clear example of how the program served as a space in which youth can use culture as a control mechanism for their behavior and decision-making in other environments. In this case, the parents saw a

positive difference in the home environment, and the program clearly recognized that youth bring such cultural identities and assets to the program. Nevertheless, The Depot went about embracing notions of *educación* differently than Voces Unidas. For example, while Voces Unidas focused on providing clear and positive opportunities for cultural identification for its participants (danzantes at Dia de los Muertos celebration), The Depot instead had opportunities for youth to see themselves as members of the larger mainstream community through which they could develop a stronger sense of national identification (Banks, 2006). Carla, one of The Depot's participants, referred to the program teaching her various things about American culture and how to be American (quoted later in Chapter 6, Youth as Critical Conscious Agents Developing Hybrid Identities, p.).

Although Voces Unidas and The Depot were located in different parts of the larger metropolitan area and their programming was not identical, study data suggest that the two programs shared a positive youth development philosophy that embraced e*ducación* as a cultural framework infused throughout the program experience.

Embracing Educación: The Programs' Positive Youth Development Philosophy

Both Voces Unidas and The Depot intentionally fostered opportunities for youth where the programming was empowering and culturally responsive, and where youth had a voice in the design and implementation of the program experiences.

During an interview, Jeremy, the lead youth worker at The Depot spoke about giving youth the space and opportunity to redefine themselves and to use the program as

a tool in the process of youth development. Jeremy says that the goal of the program was to empower youth to reach their goals. He continues:

> […] To help them, like I said, to figure out how they want to develop. Who do they want to be? What do they want to do? And can I help give them the resources to make that happen? And sometimes it's just teaching them how to negotiate moving between spaces like school and The Depot and home, but I don't think in developmental terms. I'm more of a critical psychology guy, so I think it's more giving them the space and opportunity to kind of get out of the rest of world and where their age has been constructed, and they've constructed their identity accordingly and give them a chance to redefine themselves and figure that out (Jeremy. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

During conversation with Arturo, at Voces Unidas, he also emphasized the importance of making sure youth could implement their own ideas, that youth would think outside the box, and take risks.

> I try to promote risk-taking in the work. I think that that's pretty important, that they think outside of the box, that they even think beyond of my instruction, that if they have certain ideas, that they implement them, and be willing to take those risks without a need to necessarily ask whether they can or not. Being in that we're working in a creative field, I want to promote their creativity (Arturo. Leader Interview, Spring 2012).

Both programs offered youth participants on-going opportunities to decide, plan, and implement what they perceived as important opportunities. For example, Jeremy provided the following explanation to their process at The Depot:

> We call it participatory programming and that is young people, we try to have as many opportunities from the idea, through planning, the implementation, to reviewing programming, for young people to be involved as much or as little as they want in each of those steps. So it takes longer to do things because as staff we spend more time teaching how to do a program than doing the programming. (Jeremy. Leader Interview, Spring 2012)

Intentionally engaging youth participants in the programming cycle meant that youth workers considered the youth's entirety when they came to the table to help. Study data suggest that these two programs allowed Latino immigrant youth to bring their entire selves to the experience, including their cultural identities and social histories.

Inclusive of youth's cultural identities and social realities. Taking a deeper look at both organizations uncovered another shared aspect of their youth development philosophies. Both programs zeroed in on the cultural identities and realities of the participants as a way to understand how such identities and societal forces influence young people and provide avenues for young people to respond to problems, address social issues, and generate ways to develop positive academic mindsets (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). For example, the following notes taken from my observations illustrates how language and culture were positively embraced in program practices.

"A youth Latina Advisory Board member (who was involved in an incident where a banana was thrown at her) began to speak on the issue. She hadn't spoken very much until this point. She began with "I fight a lot with my sister…", then she had long pauses in her speech, and seemed hesitant. Jeremy said "You can say it in Spanish if you want to." She spoke in Spanish, and as soon as she finished, two GAB members interpreted what she'd said into English, and they spoke in English at the same time for what seemed like a long time. Jeremy chose one to continue interpreting. Despite the fact that he is not a Spanish speaker he allowed for the youth to communicate in her native language and for the other participants who were bilingual to interpret her message (Program Observation, November 2011).

The ability to switch between languages and to have the freedom to express herself in her native language (Spanish) provided a more comfortable and meaningful experience for the youth involved. Research has demonstrated that language plays a vital role in group communication, cultural development, and knowledge generation, and it serves as a mirror of ethnicity and culture (Garcia, 2005). For these youth to be able to communicate in both English and Spanish and to translate to those who were not bilingual, represents an opportunity to share their cultural selves with the larger group. In addition, it mirrors the practice of code switching that youth engage in as they navigate multiple environments such as home, school, neighborhood, and community.

At Voces Unidas, where all staff members were bilingual in Spanish and English, bilingualism was observed throughout; from oral, informal conversations to written communication and programming content. Youth and staff spoke to each other in the two languages; however, youth often reflected on being understood better in Spanish and valuing the fact that staff spoke their native language. The following quote exemplifies how one participant felt better understood in her native Spanish. Even though she's bilingual she believes she can express herself better in Spanish. This is highly important as anthropological and educational research has demonstrated that youth learn more effectively when they have a positive perspective on their own identity and feel better understood when they are able to communicate in their native language (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Delpit, 1995). Dora reflected, "[They speak] the same language as me, which is Spanish. I think that's great because sometimes, well my English isn't bad, but I just feel like I can express myself better in Spanish." (Dora. Personal communication, Spring 2012). Considering youth's cultural identity throughout the program was not only important to the youth participants. During an interview, Arturo shared his perspective on why a particular young person had connected with him in a positive way once she got to know him better. Arturo said "I think that that acknowledgement is important for her [referring to the youth] as a person. I think it creates pride and I think it builds awareness for her that I'm aware about culture (Arturo. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

A final component of both programs' perspectives of positive youth development was incorporating in their practice constant check-ins with families and the larger community.

Parent and community engagement. As the term implies, community-based youth programs are rooted in the local community that surrounds them. Participation in youth programs provides Latino immigrant youth the opportunity to interact with adults outside the school and home environments. It fosters the development of extra-familial networks (Portes, 1998) and provides a bridge to mainstream environments that are often times inaccessible to diverse youth and families (McLaughlin & Heath, 1994). In addition, engagement between youth programs and other institutions in the broader community presents an opportunity to enhance communal relationships, information sharing, and resource allocation.

At Voces Unidas and The Depot, the sense of community was felt within the program and in the surrounding communities outside of the program. Youth were actively involved in confronting community issues, such as addressing the City Council on funding proposals, environmental education, and social justice issues. In addition, both programs were connected with larger community institutions. For example, Voces Unidas established and maintained a strong partnership with the Chicano Studies Department of a neighboring Research I university. Through this partnership, youth were not only more actively connected to Latino college students but they were also involved in planning a fundraising art event during the winter months. Voces Unidas in particular

placed high value on working with institutions that would provide more access to higher education opportunities for its participants. The Depot on the other hand, had an active relationship with the local city council and this provided an avenue for youth to engage in local the policy-making process.

Both programs were also intentional about engaging the families throughout the program experience. Program staff were aware of the importance of engaging parents in order to be successful at providing positive learning experience to youth. This awareness was reflected in how both programs engaged parents. Even though parent engagement looked differently at each site it was present. Voces Unidas provided parent programming as part of their approach, and as a result, parents were more actively engaged in program events. More importantly, Voces Unidas oftentimes had reached out to the parent before the youth were aware of the program offering. For example, Dario's and Ursula's mothers learned about Voces Unidas' youth programming through relationships they had built with the youth workers, and it was after they knew about the opportunity that they encouraged their children to participate.

On the other hand, The Depot also valued the relationship and communication with parents though families were not as active in program activities or organization-wide events. Parents were present during the program open house in the fall, but throughout the year they connected with staff mostly via phone. Through informal conversations with youth and staff at the program, I learned that they considered the program space strongly youth-focused and parents respected it as such.

With an overall understanding of the programs' guiding positive youth development philosophies and the context of community engagement, the following section focuses on what became a critical finding of this study: The roles played the youth workers at both organizations. A theme that emerged strongly throughout data collection and analysis is the critical role that youth workers play within this web of program supports and networks. Without effective, caring, and culturally empathetic youth workers, implementing an *educación* framework to a youth development program would not be possible. The following section explores examples of the ways in which youth workers at Voces Unidas and The Depot were effective educators, change-agents, and role models for the youth.

Youth workers as change agents: committed to culturally responsive youth development

In trying to illustrate and conceptualize the daily practices of youth workers in this study, three distinct aspects of culture and youth development emerged from the data. Effective youth workers at Voces Unidas and The Depot possessed 1) A clear sense of cultural identity and competence which then allowed them to have 2) cultural empathy towards the youth they work with and such competence and empathy gave them space for 3) empowerment relationships which help young people act as agents of their own development.

James Banks (2006) has studied multicultural education and multicultural teachers, and he proposes a framework to understand the teacher as a cultural mediator

and as an agent for change. Youth workers at both programs in my study match characteristics presented by Banks (2006).

Banks (2006) proposes the four main elements in effective multicultural teachers which can be applied it to youth workers in OST programs. In order for youth workers to be the primary agents for change in communities, and more importantly for youth workers to be able to provide spaces for youth to become change agents in their communities, the following elements must be present. An effective youth worker has

- Knowledge (social science and pedagogical knowledge)

- Clarified cultural identification (a reflective and clarified understanding of their own cultural experience)

- Positive intergroup and racial attitudes (positive attitudes towards different cultural and racial groups)

- Pedagogical skills (skills to make effective programming decisions, to reduce intergroup conflict and to formulate strategies and activities to facilitate learning and development among youth).

This typology for teachers [youth workers], proposed by Banks (2006), was evident across the youth worker data collected in this study.

A critical element of the OST program structure is the role that youth workers play in bringing such structure to life. Youth workers are oftentimes behind the scenes designing, planning, and implementing the programs, and thus are not seen as change agents. In the case of these two programs, the youth workers played an active role in

empowering youth to navigate different environments, and provided safe spaces for youth to make sense of their educational experiences and future aspirations. Salazar (2010) writes about non-family adults agents (i.e.: youth workers):

> Empowerment agents not only understand the power of institutional support and social capital in the lives of youth from historically-oppressed communities; they carry a vision of a more just, humanistic, and democratic society, deeply committed to an enlightened and fair distribution of societal resources, and to dismantling the structures of class, racial, and gender oppression. To alter the destinies of these youths, is not only to empower them with institutional support, but also to empower them with a critical consciousness and the means by which to transform themselves, their communities, and society as a whole (p. 47).

The following section of this chapter delves into the central role that youth workers at both programs played in empowering and equipping young people with ways to transform themselves and their surroundings. Salazar (2010) sheds light on the importance of having youth workers who can enhance youth experience by providing more than just safe, positive learning environments and consider the larger social structures that are often oppressive to youth from diverse backgrounds as well as address issues of culture, race, and educational disparities.

Youth workers at Voces Unidas and The Depot acted as "conductors or coaches" (Gloria Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 25). They shared the responsibility of achieving excellence with parents, community, and youth themselves. In order to successfully

"coach" youth in the program environments, the youth workers in this study had a sense of self-awareness which proved to be essential to successfully interacting with immigrant youth.

1) Youth worker's cultural awareness and self-identification

Youth workers engaged self-cultural exploration, had a strong sense of social justice, and understood other's perspectives and lived experiences. For example, Arturo shared a description of how he views himself in terms of his culture and background

My background, my culture. I guess I'm a bicultural male. In other words I'm Mexican-American, so I lived in the border, so I learned about not only Mexican culture but also American culture, the United States culture. And I am, I don't know, middle class and not highly educated. I don't have a secondary degree […] In my particular case they can identify, they can speak either English or Spanish they see, you know, a Latino or a Chicano, you know, so that helps a lot. They can talk about things culturally, and I understand them. I don't have to, you know, negate or ask deeper questions that might make them feel uncomfortable about what that means because I know what it means[…] (Arturo. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012)

Arturo shares a cultural framework with the youth and parents at Voces Unidas. He is able to apply an *educación* lens to his work in the program, and he understands *educación* as a way of being and learning.

Jeremy on the other hand, who was White, intentionally focused on working with parents, community members, and the youth participants in particular to guide their development and learning. In the following quote, he reflects on the underlying values that affect his decision-making when working with youth and parents of diverse backgrounds:

> Underlying values…well respect. Respecting her culture, her parent's culture. To not say, "I'm this well-educated white guy who knows what's best for your kid and this is what it is," but to say, "I am here to work with and for you. How can I help you help your child reach her goals?" (Jeremy. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

Jeremy brings up the notion of respect, and in doing so, he is making the distinction between doing something for the youth and doing something with the youth and her parents. When he says "I am here to work with and for you…to help your child reach her goals" he illustrates an understanding that his work is not his work alone but instead is a collaborative, intentional, and culturally appropriate process that involves him, the parents, and the youth. More importantly, he understands how his educational background, race, and ethnic background might be perceived as imposing or imperious to the parents.

Jeremy does not use the word *educación* when explaining his belief in working collaboratively with the youth and parents in his program, but by engaging values of

mutual respect, collaboration, and humility, he is able to effectively reach and engage the youth and parents in a way that is consistent with an *educación* framework.

It is important to note that the youth workers' cultural or ethnic background were not always similar to that of the youth in these programs. The qualities these youth workers possessed went beyond being from the same cultural or racial community as the youth. Instead, it was their knowledge and the reflective understanding of their own identity that allowed them to connect and make a different for the youth in the program. It was their lived experiences of cultural understanding and cross-cultural relationships that equipped them to authentically relate to the youth in the programs. The following vignettes illustrate a White youth worker's and a Latino's (Native American/Mexican) sense of cultural identity and cultural empathy in relationship to their work with youth.

Although the examples above clearly demonstrate a personal cultural awareness on part of the youth workers, this was not the case with all adults working at the programs. Jessica, the White, female youth worker in her late twenties struggled to verbalize her cultural identity and those of the youths she works with. When asked to describe her own culture and background, she answered "It's a big question, it's been interesting […] I'm White" (Jessica. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012) but did not go on to explore her role in the lives of these youth. She had difficulty finding answers when asked about how youth have gained a different perspective of their own culture from her background and experience, and when asked to reflect on the strengths that youth bring based on their cultural backgrounds. Jessica demonstrates a lack of a clarified

cultural identification (Banks, 2006), and seems to be in a different stage of her own cultural exploration and understanding. As she is still working on her self-development process, her ability to be an effective multi-cultural youth worker is somewhat hindered. For example, if a youth worker does not adequately recognize youths' cultural assets, he/she might not be able to draw on those assets as he/she designs and implements programming for the youth. Nevertheless, she demonstrates a level of understanding about the different perspectives and worldviews and seems be learning from the youth though she cannot yet articulate it.

> I think, I being a white person, though I have currently have these leaning very left ideas, I came from a very right leaning family, and so I have these two voices in my head. So when we're talking about issues, I can say, "someone might feel this way but I know my brother for example, feels this way," so it personalizes it a little bit more and makes it so that people can put a face to these issues and thinking about them." (Jessica. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

Youth workers like Jeremy and Arturo used their cultural awareness and development of cultural competence to have cultural empathy towards the young people. By cultural empathy, I refer to being able to put themselves in the shoes of the program participants and parents; to be able to see things from various perspectives, and more importantly, to help young people make sense of things when contradicting messages came up.

Clifford Geertz stated in 1975: "the Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic

center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures. (p. 48)" In an individualistic society like the U.S., people tend to define themselves in relation to demarcations of the self, in contrast, other cultures like the Latino culture, look for relationships, linkages, bonds, and connections. To honor a community-based cultural perspective, youth workers engaged themselves in reciprocal exchanges with the youth and their families. This reciprocity in relationships goes back to notion of *educación* and caring. Jeremy's, Cristina's, and Jessica's, experience at both programs illustrates the ways that non-Latino youth workers can be effective (acting as a mainstream cultural resource, mediating conversations about culture and race, and providing positive attitudes towards youth and families from backgrounds that are different from theirs). At the same time, unless they have experienced their own cultural-exploration or cultural-identification process, they might have certain limits to becoming effective multicultural youth workers.

2) Cultural empathy

Cultural empathy refers to the ability to understand an individual's culture. Arturo, being from a similar culture as many of the youth that participate in the program, was able to connect and convey concepts to the youth effectively.

Well, being from the same culture, that's just the way I need to teach, is by having those expectations, bringing things that are relevant to them, I think that's

important in the relationship with our Latino students. I don't think I could teach

this if I wasn't Latino, or have the same success as I do. Although I could teach it

in a predominately-White school, but there's a special connection that goes a little

further from both the teacher and the student being Latino with Latino. (Arturo.

Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

My initial reaction to experiencing their practice during program observations was that

these youth workers truly understand the youth they work with. . Throughout my data

analysis, I made sure to explore how cultural empathy was part of their ability to relate to

the youth. I also believe that it is important to highlight or further illustrate what these

youth workers understand. What is the "it" from the saying "they get it"? They

understand the assets that youth bring as part of their cultural backgrounds; they have a

familiarity with the lives and realities of the youth's experiences. Arturo elaborates:

Obviously their strengths, their cultural strengths are super important. Their dual

language is very important, because they can feel comfortable in communicating

with one another. They can get instruction in both English and Spanish; I see that

as a skill. And in my particular class, culturally, it's a hands on class so I think

that we tend to be more of apt to work hands-on rather than getting directions

through a book. Which is a skill we all need to learn from my perspective and in

our culture. But definitely, we have an ability to be creative with our hands, with

our minds, and we put more heart into it and that's all part of the family and our

culture and who we are. (Arturo. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

When asked to define the cultural strengths mentioned above, Arturo clarified:

> Cultural Strengths….[T]here are important aspects of traditions that we have that
> are brought into the classroom, certain respects that are somewhat challenged at
> times, [that] I feel are getting lost, [respect for]…our elders...[and] our church is
> important so therefore we know there is a certain amount of respect we can't
> cross. So these are cultural values I think are strengths.

If we take apart this youth worker's reflection on his views of the youth participants'
backgrounds and cultures we clearly see how elements of dual language, artistic
dispositions, and respect for elders among others, are all strengths that youth bring to the
program. He also recognizes the risk of losing cultural elements and strenghts.

> Being able to be empathetic to the youth did not only involve the adults
> understanding multiple perspectives and see youth in a positive light, it also included
> making sure the program gave youth the opportunity to systematically work through
> issues and make sense of things (sense-making). Youth workers acted as racial
> interlocutors (Ladson-Billings, 1997) and opened up their space for youth to converse
> and discuss issues of race and culture than in other environments might not be possible.
> Jessica shared how conversations often times took place with the young people she
> worked with:

> It is funny, because our conversations just go wherever they want to go. I
> wouldn't say we've had anything super structured about that, at least not recently,
> not this year. So I would say no, but sometimes we do end up talking about those

things just because. Like There was a [thing] in the hallway a couple of weeks ago that said, […] "black power," but one of the teachers had come up to one of the students […] and he [the teacher] was saying, "you can't do that because you're not black," […] and she said, "Well, why not?" So we got into this big discussion about when is it okay to stand up for other races and when is it not, and can you show solidarity or is that crossing the line? So I didn't plan to have that discussion, and don't know that we came up with anything conclusive about it, but it was definitely an interesting conversation and we talked about that. So we will talk about those things occasionally, and I think definitely being in an all-Latino school, and all the kids in the Voces Unidas program are Latino, that it comes up a lot. Just that it's who they all are and it's something that they all have in common so it comes up often… I think it builds this safe space and a space where you can talk about these things without feeling stupid or feeling ignorant. Like I said, I came from a really small town, and I had to ask those questions, and I had to be ignorant because that's where I was coming from. But because I had those people that I could talk to about that and not feel threatened, and not feel like I was stepping over a line, that that made me a more aware person and I think that's important for everyone to have those opportunities to learn about other people in a place that they feel safe asking those candid questions. (Jessica. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

Jessica's example provides an illustration of how conversations on difficult issues such as race can be conducive to a positive learning experience among young people and the adults in the program. In her role of youth worker she was able to have more flexibility and openness to speak with youth about issues of race that teachers often times did not address in school (Pollock, 2001).

Jessica continues:

> I think it's interesting that being a different race than my students has been really interesting in that I think they're able to ask me questions and feel safe asking those questions that they maybe wouldn't be able to ask other white people. And that we have this rapport, so they can joke about it and know that my feelings won't be hurt, and we can go back and forth about that. And I think vice versa, so that they like when and if I ask them a question about their culture or their family or whatever, that it is almost this friendship where we can share these things and feel safe sharing these things and get those questions asked in a safe space (Jessica. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

In the above vignette Jessica provides a rich example of the role that a White youth worker can play in acting as a mainstream cultural resource for youth of diverse backgrounds. More importantly, she acknowledges her disposition to mediating cultural capital among the youth who participate in her program. Cristina echoes some of Jessica's sentiments:

I think it is a good mix of different cultures, so I think just engaging in just

everyday things helps open up conversations about other people's cultures, like

we'll talk about... like in Girls Group we'll just talk about stuff and the way

people do it differently in their own families, and so they'll share like, "Oh,

because I'm Mexican this is what we do," (Cristina. Youth worker interview,

Spring 2012).

Arturo elaborates:

I always say, "Hey, you know, here's the deal: I'm going trust you know and

hopefully you trust me and were going to do the best that we can and accomplish

our, uh, projects. I don't, I try not to come with doubt about that, and so

consequently, the kids know me and respect me. Trust builds respect and it works

both ways (Arturo. Youth worker interview, Spring 2012).

Jessica, Cristina, and Arturo all spoke in relationship to their cultural identity and

awareness as a tool for being more effective youth workers in their programs. They all

reflected on ways in which culture played a positive role in the youth experience

(conversations, topics, ways to understand things, and establishing trust).

Those like Cristina and Jessica who were White, even saw themselves as

mainstream cultural resources. Jessica further discussed this during her interview:

But one thing I think, like I said, that is interesting, is that being from a different

town than my kids, growing up in a very different environment, being white, it

makes for really interesting conversations—that they can ask me things like,

"This white guy the other day did this, why did he do that?" And not that I can

speak for all white people any more than they can speak for all Latino people, but

that we can talk about these things and if they're confused about something, they

can ask about it. And like I said, I think story-telling is a huge thing, not that if

you're of the same culture as someone else you can't bring that to the table either,

but I think it does make it an interesting dynamic where you can talk about these

different experiences coming from different places, just like one of our kids who

grew up in New York can talk about that and bring that to the table. I think the

more diversity you have, makes it a more interesting program. (Jessica. Youth

worker interview, Spring 2012).

Salazar (2010) writes about the importance of non-family adult agents in how young

people experience socialization. As diverse youth are learning to negotiate and participate

in multiple sociocultural worlds that are often culturally different from one another,

developing relationships with adults from different cultural and racial backgrounds

becomes critical. These relationships bring about access to forms of modeling, cultural

capital, and cross-cultural relational competencies that help young people navigate the

different social worlds in which they live. More importantly, such relationships with (in

this case) White, educated youth workers might mediate access to social mobility in

which youth are learning how to be and socialize in the mainstream cultural world.

The reciprocal relationships between the youth and the youth workers also

included a sense of empathy on part of the adults. The exchange below during my

interview with Pablo in which he reflects on how he feels about the youth workers in the program exemplifies the empathy and care that these adults bring to youth experiences. The empathy and care is felt by the youth participants and makes a remarkable difference in how youth perceive their relationship with the adult staff:

Pablo: I feel like they hear me like I'm not like…how do I say it?

Josey: You want to say it in Spanish?

Pablo: No me rechazan…[they don't reject me]

Josey: They accept you

Pablo: Yes, they don't ignore me.

(Pablo. Personal communication, May 2012).

3) **Opportunities for youth empowerment and agency**

These adults provide the opportunities for youth to learn about themselves, question reality, explore important issues, etc., to choose their own development trajectory in a safe space and with guidance. For example, in the quote below Jeremy speaks of empowering youth as a strategy for agency and risk taking:

What I want them to have is a safe opportunity to figure out their own development, however they define that. I want them to have a safe space and some guidance to help them think about things in new ways so they can empower themselves. It's clear…that they empower themselves, not for me to empower them. (Jeremy. Interview, Spring 2012).

Implementing such strategies at the program can help create an empowering program culture. This is often not the case in other learning environments where diverse and disfranchised youth spend most of their time. In the below excerpt, Arturo describes his responsibility in empowering youth:

> My role is to keep motivating them so that those highs and lows aren't quite as I drew them on the graph (See Graph on Appendix D). What I need to do is to try to stabilize that build in things of interest, even going into my own performance in order to motivate them. What I mean by performance is using almost like theater to perform while they're in class so that they can release some of the stresses, so that they can engage again and they can also feel motivated from a whole other level. (Arturo. Interview, Spring 2012).

These two quotes present powerful assumptions and beliefs on part of these youth workers. They clearly see the power within the youth to identify and work towards future goals and aspirations. The statements above illustrate how the adults do not view the youth participants as powerless individuals; instead, they reflect on their own role in motivating youth use their power to navigate their development both within and outside of the program structure.

Youth workers' strong cultural identification and self-awareness provided them with useful knowledge about the youth and families they work with. This knowledge included knowing and considering cultural norms and understanding youth's social and economic backgrounds. Youth workers also had had opportunities to develop cultural

empathy through which they transmitted positive intergroup and cross-cultural attitudes towards the youth and parents in the programs. Both the knowledge and empathy that they brought to their practice in youth development permitted them to provide opportunities for empowerment and agency to young people. They were able to apply their cultural and youth development skills to the implementation of effective programming.

Conclusion

Voces Unidas and The Depot were able to provide Latino youth and their parents a culturally responsive learning environment, which included a strong cultural and structural program approach. Both programs possessed strong, positive youth development philosophies that understood the role that culture plays in the education and upbringing of Latino youth from immigrant families.

It is important to highlight how particular attributes of the youth workers seemed to support positive outcomes for youth in these programs. The support that programs and youth workers provided their participants, allowed young people to make sense of their socialization and development by engaging in reciprocal, caring relationships with youth workers. Participants experienced ongoing opportunities for cultural exploration, questioning of power and cultural structures, and positive cultural affirmation of their identities. Youth workers allowed young people to set goals and work towards achieving them; more importantly, the program experience opened the door for youth to generate positive academic mindsets and constructive outlooks for the future of their education.

       The next chapter presents findings related to how youth participants became agents of their own development and had opportunities to develop critical consciousness skills to navigate differing socio-cultural worlds.

CHAPTER VI

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS AS CRITICALLY CONSCIOUS AGENTS

Latino immigrant youth at the intersection of culture and structure: developing

grounded hybrid identities

Juan Carlos: *"I was born in Morelos and I don't know*

anything about it, I left when I was pretty young but

Morelos is still my hometown. I'm proud of being from

there. Sad…pues I've been through sad times, my grandma

leaving, and not knowing much about Morelos. My

grandma would teach me about Morelos" (Youth

interview, Spring 2012)

I think that, you know, all students bring individual

perspectives to that. I think one of the reasons they get

involved is to try to bring up their grades, to do better in

school, to have an extended social interaction with other

peers and hopefully to experience new things. (Jeremy.

Youth Worker Interview, Fall 2011).

"We live in an ever more miniaturized world that is whole and interdependent—

either we take planetary challenges head on, or together we will face the consequences"

(Suarez-Orozco, Sattin Bajaj, & Suarez-Orozco, 2010, p.1)

The previous chapters examined the roles and perspectives of parents, programs, and youth workers in relationship to the educational experiences of Latino immigrant youth in both Voces Unidas and The Depot OST programs. These chapters illustrated the intersections of culture and structure, and the positive outcomes when youth development programs incorporate elements of a culturally responsive framework to the opportunities they provide to youth and their families. With the support of parents' ongoing *consejos* and testimonies for their children, culturally responsive youth development philosophies, and the work of culturally responsive and empathetic youth workers, Voces Unidas and The Depot mediated concrete benefits for immigrant Latino youth. These programs opened doors for immigrant Latino youth; they had access to opportunities for social mobility, resources for academic achievement, and the supports to develop critically conscious skills. The present chapter further explicates the influence that programs that embrace notions of *educación* have had on the development of the young people they serve. In addition to the benefits outlined above, youth participants at both programs in this study had the opportunity to become critically conscious agents of their own development and educational trajectories; to develop hybrid identities and experiences; and to imagine themselves as truly global citizens living productive lives. Youth felt that they mattered, and the programs bridged educational spaces, acted as spaces for social mobility, and became cultural nannies by taking an active role in the cultural transmission and acquisition that youth were experiencing as part of their education and socialization in society.

Youth today, like those who participated in this study, are experiencing their development within a context of globalization, immigration, and steep educational disparities. Researcher Marcelo Suarez-Orozco (2003) poses the following question: "How do we raise children to grow up and thrive in a world where global forces will increasingly come to the fore in structuring and shaping their opportunities, their identities, and the kinds of lives they will lead?" (p. 97). Immigrant youth in the U.S. are in great need of positive educational experiences to help them improve their educational attainment, to experience positive identity development (group identity), and to be allowed to own creative cultural capabilities. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot provide cultural spaces that nurture hybrid identities, yet they allow for Latina/o emerging identities to flourish as well. These programs were poised to engage youth and families' cultural frameworks of *educación* and their programming structures and networks of support were illustrated in the previous two findings chapters. The present chapter seeks to share the perspectives of youth themselves and attempts to answer the following youth-related research questions:

1) How do Latino immigrant youth enact their agency in OST programs, which they consider successful and embracing of their notions of *educación*?

    c. What are Latino immigrant youth's aspirations/goals to join these well-structured, community based OST programs?

    d. How do Latino immigrant youth perceive their experience in the program as relevant to their aspirations and goals in life?

2) How do Latino immigrant youth perceive the meaning of their participation in community-based OST programs in relationship to their educational experiences in school?

Overview of the chapter

This chapter is divided into four sections. The initial section presents youth's views on *educación* and their differentiation of the concept with the term education. More importantly, this section highlights the importance that youth participants placed on being exposed to elements of *educación*. The second section goes into depth concerning the experiences of youth participants in these two programs as they develop hybrid identities and critical thinking capabilities. Within the conceptualization of youth's hybrid identities, data is presented to illustrate the development of critical thinking and global citizenship skills that youth are experiencing as a result of the programs. The third section illustrates the different benefits that programs provided to the educational experiences of the participants (educational support, spaces for mobility, and cultural nannies). The fourth section focuses on youth's future aspirations and goals, and the ways these programs have contributed to their ability to set goals and take intentional steps towards meeting them. Lastly, the chapter concludes with youth's reflections on the difference that these programs have made in their lives.

Programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot are positioned to mediate the creation of cultural and social capital for the youth who participate in them. Thus, they engage youth in developing skills and capabilities to navigate problems, opportunities, and their

educational futures. As Suarez-Orozco points out, "After school programs cannot solve all of the problems facing children of immigrants, but they can work to impart the skills and culturally coded forms of symbolic capital that immigrant children may not be able to generate at home" (2003, p. 101). More importantly, these two programs, as discussed in the previous chapters, found ways to complement the learning and cultural transmission that was taking place in participants' home environments and take it a step further in the program experience. Voces Unidas and The Depot are examples of programs that align the socialization and educational experiences of immigrant Latino youth by bridging the often culturally different environments of the home and other institutions (i.e.: schools).

Youth notions of educación

Exploring how parents, programs, and youth perceived notions of *educación* was central to this study. This desire to better understand how *educación* was enacted throughout the program experience led to several conversations with participants about their perspectives on the concept of *educación*. A female youth participant at The Depot reflected on the concept of *educación* in relationship to behavior: "*Educación* for me sounds a lot like more like *tienes educación para tu sabes como comportarte con adultos sabes como respetar y hablar con otra gente* you just, you are well mannered. *Bien educado*".

[Education to me sounds a lot like you have education, like you know how to behave with adults, how to respect and talk to other people and you are just well-mannered. Well-educated"] (Dora. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Dora defines the *educación* in terms of behavior around others, especially around elders in the community. *Educación*, from her perspective, helped her know how to act and conduct herself.

Based on her experience being raised by her grandmother, Mónica was also able to differentiate between *educación* and education. Sharing a similar sentiment to Dora, for Mónica possessing good manners is central to *educación*.

> *Educación es como ser respetuosa y también hay otra educación de la escuela. Mi abuelita me enseñó que educación es respeto, porque yo creí con ella. Me enseñaba que educación es respetar a los demás, a tu familia y a ti misma y buenos modales, y la otra educacion es la de la escuela.*
>
> [Education is like being respectful and there is another education, that of the school. My grandma taught me that *educación* is respect, because I grew up with her. She would teach me that *educación* is to respect others, your family, yourself and good manners and the other education is at school. [Mónica. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

The fact that several youth in the programs were able to define and openly talk about *educación* as something that had been part of their existence since they were quite young is significant. Words and phrases such as "respect," "well-behaved," and "being a good person" came out in almost all youth's reflections of *educación*. Awareness of such framework reflects the ways in which *educación* was shared with youth and emphasized by the adults teaching them to be well-educated persons [*personas bien educadas*]. It also

highlights the fact that meaning-making occurred throughout the family structure. The concept of *educación* did not stay with the adults. It permeated the youth's conceptualizations of *educación*.

The previous chapter included a quote from a youth worker at Voces Unidas in which he stated:

Well *educación* is more than book learning. *Educación* is experiential, is about affirming who we are, it's about identity, it's about culture, it's about life. *Educación* is a form of well rounded-ness, which I think our educational system is somewhat void of. It's about educating, *educación*, as a whole human being, not just a subject." (Arturo. Youth Worker interview, January 2012).

Arturo's idea of *educación* describes an overall framework about identity, culture, and a way of life. Even using the word "educating" communicates an understanding of *educación* as an action, a process, a fluid movement of considering the entire human being to be educated not just portions of content knowledge (subject areas). In addition, he points out of the lack *educación* in the larger education system.

As described in the previous two chapters, both Voces Unidas and The Depot implemented elements of *educación* in their youth development practice. Such elements emerged through congruence with parents' goals, use of cultural supports and learning, respect for one another, and   young people to experience meaningful youth-adult relationships with culturally empathetic adults. Those youth who participated in this study and who were aware of cultural frameworks such as *educación* were able to utilize

this awareness and cultural knowledge as they became agentic of their own development and navigated the environments of the program, school, community and family. Their development occurred in various ways, from forming and exploring hybrid identities, to making intentional efforts to set and achieve educational goals.

Youth as critically conscious agents developing hybrid identities

Program leadership opportunities as avenues for agency development. The implementation of leadership opportunities for young people (employment opportunities, governing board membership, and opportunities to play an active role on issues that went beyond the program) led to youth becoming critically conscious agents able to transform their worlds and develop hybrid identities. Using Ahearn's (2000) definition of agency as the "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112), it is apparent that programs such as Voces Unidas and The Depot provide the necessary cultural spaces; educational supports; and empathetic, competent youth workers to implement programming, for young people to experience agentic growth, which helps them progress towards their educational goals and future aspirations. In addition with the support of effective OST programs, youth are better able to understand social, political, and economic contradictions and to act against them (Akintola, 1980). Programs and youth workers have taken the cultural assets that youth, parents, and the larger community bring to the youth development experience and combined this with culturally responsive youth workers and program content, turning such assets into concrete benefits and opportunities for these youth.

Youth in this study became agents who were critically aware of the social realities surrounding them and who possessed skills for social action. Particularly in a world in which minority youth's social development is plagued with oppression and inequality, it is critical that they understand the world can be transformed through their actions. "They must know that such social realities are not inevitable or immutable" (Harber, 1990, p. 27). For example, The Depot implemented a youth employment component to their programming structure. Youth participants were able to have a probationary period interning for the program and then they were hired on as staff members. They were paid and had staff-related responsibilities. This employment component was put in place to address the financial needs of youth but also as a learning opportunity for them. It required a great deal of support on part of the youth workers, but it also allowed youth to gain useful employment skills (dealing with money, enforcing rules, following-up with people, and teamwork were among some of these skills). In addition, youth had opportunities to connect their work and learning at The Depot to larger social realities. There was a time during program observations when youth and leaders at The Depot took part in the local city-council meeting in defense of city funding for their program, which was at risk of being cut. Youth presented their experiences and spoke to council members about the leadership opportunities they had because of participating in the program. Furthermore, youth and leaders spent countless hours during the program reflecting on why the city was attempting to cut their funding; the youth were aware that a few city-

council members were not supportive of tax dollars being spent on opportunities for diverse youth of color (Program Observation, Fall 2011).

Through leadership experiences such as being employed by The Depot, participating in the Youth Governing Board (GAB), or presenting at city-council meetings, youth were actively engaged in developing critical thinking skills. "Critical education…. means involving students in their own learning and interpretation of the world-dialogue, questioning, participation and discussion" (Harber, 1990, p. 28). As a result of their experiences, youth began to clarify and develop a strong sense of identity and address their educational futures.

Agency among youth participants became the "action that propels deliberate movement through a structure by an individual…with the expressed purpose of achieving a goal or desired outcome" (Maslak, 2008, xv). The program experience influenced youth's capacity to act and to navigate various environments, including home and school. For example, phrases like "since I started coming here I don't give up that easily" (Youth interview, Spring 2012), "they [leaders] always find a way to make it so that if fits into school lives" (Youth interview, Spring 2012), and "I learned a lot of new [English] vocabulary" (Youth interview, Spring 2012) were common among youth participants during interviews. Youth often reflected on how their experience was useful in school or in other settings. Even the parents I spoke to on a regular basis could observe a positive change in their young people as a result of participating in the programs. For example, Ursula's mother talked about how much more organized and responsible her daughter

was at home because of what she was experiencing in Voces Unidas. She believed that the method used at the program helped her daughter transfer some of the learning and benefits to her home environment (Ursula's mother. Personal communication, Spring 2012).

Leadership opportunities mediate hybrid identities

The two youth quoted below (Carla and Juan Carlos) demonstrate a sense of cultural pride that resulted from positive influences at home and in the program. Both of them were actively engaged in leadership opportunities (Carla was a staff members at The Depot and Juan Carlos was a key danzante at Voces Unidas' Aztec dance group) at the programs. Here they discuss the struggles they face due to others' perceptions of their race.

> The fact [is] that many people are negative. Many people are always like, they don't tell me, but in general they always say, "It's more and more every Mexican won't get nowhere in life," and it's not like that. You have to not be negative about it. It's, like, hard sometimes to get out of that. (Carla. Youth interview, Spring 2012).
>
> Juan Carlos: Yeah, I tell my friends to be proud of who they are. No matter what other people say about you being brown, forget about it. Don't try to fight, be proud of what you are and tell them. (Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Part of the process to become more agentic within program activities or out in their local community included youth exploring their identities within hybrid experiences. For

example, youth had on-going opportunities to be in culturally different worlds where behaviors and expectations shifted depending on where they were (school, home, community, or program). In addition, oftentimes these culturally differentiated worlds overlapped with one another creating opportunities for hybridity. The data illustrated that the negotiation between these different contexts resulted in youth having a better understanding of their identities. Their reality in mainstream society had been shaped and transformed by larger societal forces such as immigration and globalization. These youth had grown up in a different context than their parents had and were experiencing education differently than their white, native-born U.S. peers. By navigating their identities, youth were able to fight against pre-conceived societal notions of them based on their ethnic backgrounds and imagine successful productive futures in mainstream society. As Bahabha (1994) describes,

> Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (p. 2).

Difference was unique to each youth in the program. Being different from the mainstream community (in terms of language, culture, ethnicity, and personal history) was seen as a positive aspect of one's identity and it difference was supported throughout the programs'

written and non-written rules. Guadalupe voiced approval on The Depot's egalitarian

principles.

> I feel as if they respect how the garage is equal, everyone's equal, so even if
>
> you're Hispanic, or African American, or white, or anything they respect who you
>
> are, and they respect your culture, and they respect difference. (Guadalupe. Youth
>
> interview, Spring 2012).

Youth in this study began to describe their identities as comprised of hybrid experiences

and not so much as binary concepts that included only the terms Latino, immigrant, or

even Mexican-American. They truly felt that their experiences as members of an

immigrant community were often more than just Latino, just immigrant, or just Mexican.

Their immigration experience, both the action of migrating to a new country and their

lived experiences in the new community, influenced how their perceived themselves.

More importantly, they were able to express such identity development process in the

context of programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot.

For example, Dora at Voces Unidas, is fluent in both English and Spanish, had

been in the U.S. for several years, and did not see herself entirely as Mexican. She

reflected on conversations that came up among youth in the program when they talked

about their backgrounds and identities. Dora said, "That's when I'm like oh, I'm a

Mexican. Pero [But] like if I just said oh I'm Mexican, like I'm proud of it, I don't think I

really, no se [I don't know], I don't feel Mexican. (Dora. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Carla echoes Dora's sentiments and elaborates,

I consider myself Chicana, so in a way more Mexican, obviously. But I still have

my American in there. Like obviously a lot of the Latino kids in school I don't

associate with many of them because I don't. I've tried associating with them and

talking with them, but—it's not that I'm stuck up—but if they don't have good

futures for themselves how am I going to? Like they are always skipping. Why

am I going to associate with someone that's a bad influence for me? (Carla. Youth

Interview, Fall 2011).

Carla's experience and reflection above sheds light onto the hybridity of her identity:

feeling "obviously" Mexican but also having her "American in there," and it

demonstrates the tension she experiences because she's perceived by her Latino peers

(mostly in school) to be a stuck up. She also shows a strong sense of agency by knowing

and stating that she will not associate with those who can be a bad influence on her.

Seeing and imagining oneself as part of the global

At times when immigrant, often disenfranchised youth, are not provided with

positive environments in which to explore and reflect on their identity, the role of these

programs remains critical. As I will later convey under the section "Program benefits to

youth participants" youth in these programs felt that they mattered in the world. Their

existence was valued, considered, and utilized in shaping their positive development.

These programs' mission was to allow young people to acquire 21st century skills,

which include communication, critical thinking, teamwork, adaptability, and global

citizenship.. Research demonstrates that youth who possess 21st century skills and

knowledge have the ability to take advantage of opportunities to learn more about the world in which they live, to travel, to create relationships beyond borders, and to pursue their goals in an ever-expanding society and global landscape (Partnership for 21st Century Skills- P21, 2014). The youth data gathered through this study revealed that youth participants were engaged in developing adaptability and global citizenship. Because they felt as though they mattered, they were able to imagine and envision themselves as part of the global society. Brownlie (2001) elaborates below on global citizenships and the different forms that it can take,

> Global citizenship is more than learning about seemingly complex 'global issues' such as sustainable development, conflict, and international trade—important as these are, It is also about the global dimension to local issues, which are present in all our lives, localities and communities. (p. 2)

Considering the social imaginings of immigrant urban youth and their vision of a brighter future with possibilities relates to notions of global connections proposed by transnationalism as youth embedded themselves into more than one society (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Blanc 1995). Nevertheless, critics of transnationalism as "transnational flows and unfettered connections" (Vigh, 2009, p. 93) represent a more realistic perspective on the restricted nature of social and global mobility experienced by diverse immigrant youth. In this view, the role of OST programs in offering youth who experience social or financial restrictions to mobility becomes even more important. As this and the following section illustrate, participating immigrant youth at Voces Unidas

and The Depot have already realized some mobility due to their families' migration to the U.S., and they are now imagining their futures in global spaces.

Participants wanted to find ways to belong to the larger world and expand their horizons. Their family experience of immigration had given them an opportunity to know the world as a bigger and more complex place. They constantly experienced situations in which they understood that they existed in a world much bigger than their local geographic community. All participants spoke of their families' immigration experience to the U.S., and throughout the interviews, they brought up examples as to how such global experiences impacted their daily lives. Cristina, youth worker at The Depot shared how she often saw young people in the program relating to each other under common immigrant experiences, despite the fact that their individual stories were sometimes different from one another.

> [T]here's a girl that's having a hard time because she's getting criticized for having such a strong accent, because she's recently immigrated within the past two years. So then her having a conversation with someone who has been here for about […] six years[…], they had a lot of similar ones (experiences) even though they were from very different, distinct cultures. Just having the experience of coming to the United States and making that transition, they're able to talk about that and one is able to say, "It gets better and you'll figure it out." (Cristina. Youth Worker Interview, Fall 2011).

Youth like those in Cristina's anecdote have discovered their sense of belonging to the larger community and the world. During one of the youth interviews at The Depot, Carla brought up a clear example of how her program experience had also allowed her to learn more about American, mainstream, culture. Between her home, school, and program environments, Carla successfully navigated the worlds of her strong Mexican family, her school's sports teams, as well as, The Depot's leadership roles for youth participants. Carla stated:

> It actually teaches more about American culture. It's like it's the only time I felt I was learning a lot about my culture was when we had the Latinos Unidos. It was a group like a youth group, similar to girls' group and we would talk about what we liked, and how we had struggles—about what it felt like to be Mexican-American and Chicano, and everything. Like that was the only time that I felt like I learned. We met once a week for 1-2 hours and we would take field trips […] We would learn a lot about it other kids and us being Mexican or Latinos, and it was really fun. […] and once it stopped because a lot of kids stopped coming. I'm the only Latina girl that's always here. (Carla. Youth Interview, Fall 2011).

One could argue that adaptability and global citizenship skills go hand-in-hand for individuals who have to adapt to and navigate global ethnoscapes (Appadurai, 1991). Youth who have had to adapt to differing cultural worlds have practiced being adaptable. More importantly, in a world in which global spaces are often near and accessible through travel, technology, and social networks such adaptability is a critical skill for any

global citizen. As social scientist, Charles Cooley pointed out long ago; "other people are the mirror in which we see ourselves" (Cooley in Tatum, 2003, p. 18). In the quote below, Jessica reflects on the youth's role in being adaptable and having an understanding of how their race and culture may impact how others view them.

> I feel like the youth I'm working with right now are super adaptable. I think they could fit in anywhere, but I mean […] if you don't look like the majority race, culture, whatever, you are going to have trouble. And I think it's interesting, because they all know that already and that's maybe why they're already looking at things through this lens and being very cautious about how they're treated and how they're viewed based on the color of their skin or the way they talk or whatever. (Jessica. Youth Worker Interview, Spring 2012).

The "lens" Jessica references is important to recognize. Anthropology and education research have demonstrated that minority youth are able to learn more effectively if they have a positive understanding of their own cultural identity (Delpit, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). Being able to reflect on and be aware of their cultural identity allows these young people to know how to respond to others' perceptions and expectations of them. Because of their diverse, non-white racial and cultural backgrounds, these youth are aware of how this lens (their experiences) allows them to form a worldview that includes the racial and cultural experiences in their day-to-day lives.

However, effectively mitigating inherent biases in their new society does in no way mean that immigrants should homogenize themselves to fit mainstream expectations.

Ursula at Voces Unidas, shared the importance of not forgetting her culture (even though she grew up in the U.S.) and how her culture is palpable within the program environment she says:

> [M]y mom, she's really into our culture, and this is kind of a really artistic place; she really likes that. She knows that by being here, I'll be surrounded by my culture and I just won't forget it, you know? It will always be here even if we are not in Mexico. (Ursula. Youth interview, Fall 2011).

Youth experiences of immigration and growing up in a society in which they are an ethnic and racial minority have influenced their development. If their lived realities are not considered nor included in a positive way, educational institutions run the risk of doing more damage than good. That was not the case at Voces Unidas or The Depot. These programs and their youth workers were able to use youth's social identities as assets to build upon through reciprocal relationships, and the content and structure of the programming.

OST programs also have the capability to expand youth learning experiences to issues of global relevance through hands-on experiences. More importantly, programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot are able to incorporate the role of culture in their work. Global learning took place at these two programs through project-based learning (mural project at Voces Unidas); field trips (to the University's campus, city council meetings, an artist's art studio and the local institute of art); festivals and celebrations (Day of the Dead at Voces Unidas); and guest speakers and artists-in-residence (social justice speaker

at The Depot and a youth worker-artist at Voces Unidas). These experiences led to positive ideas about their culture and as a result, encouraged youth to have a positive view of the futures in the United States.

Youth's future aspirations. During the interviews, youth were asked to reflect on their future aspirations, including what they hoped to do in the future, and where they saw themselves 10 years from now. The youth talked about wanting to be business owners, translators, teachers, and maybe join the military. They believed that forming a family and having children was also in their future, and some considered moving to another country, either the country where their family was from or a completely different one. The duality of their aspirations, which as stated above ranged from forming a family and owning a home, to traveling abroad to experience a different culture reflects how the youth in this study constantly navigated hybrid realities.

Career choice. Many of the youth's plans for their careers and future employment included traveling abroad, learning another foreign language (even though all of them were already bilingual), and becoming chef and owner an ethnic-specific restaurant. Carla said: "I would like to be in a position where I'm like a business person, I travel and translate and be fluent in French and more fluent in Spanish." (Carla.Youth Interview, Fall 2011). Jennifer hoped to own a Puerto Rican restaurant, go to college, and become a chef (Jennifer.Youth Interview, Fall 2011). Isabel on the other hand had hopes to engage in entrepreneurial efforts to make some money for herself. She had worked in her Mexican hometown and wanted an opportunity to make bracelets and sell them.

> [I]n South (another school), when I went they taught me how to make bracelets.
> […] And with this I would go home and I had the material. And could do them
> and I sold a couple of them. Yes. I wanted something like that, which would help
> me to sell (Isabel. Youth interview, Fall 2011).

Like Isabel, Juan Carlos hoped to make money after high school so he could return to
Mexico. These diverse, ambitious career goals demonstrate a level of resourcefulness that
these youth strove for in order to influence their future and overcome barriers.
Resourcefulness, as described by Ramirez (1983), is survival in new environments while
searching for new beginnings and surmounting obstacles.

Traveling, returning to home country. In the programs studied, youth developed
competencies and confidence in their abilities to form these new beginings that Ramirez
(1983) references. Many aspired to one day travel abroad or return to their home country.
While Mónica hoped to join the U.S. military and travel to Brazil (she is from Ecuador
originally, but Brazil intrigued her, she said), Juan Carlos yearned for the opportunity to
have papers and be able to return to Mexico, a place he considered his hometown even
though he had no memory of it. He elaborates,

> I would like to go see my family that I haven't seen for a long time. Maybe stay
> for a while, and coming back is what I hope to. I don't got papers…if I had papers
> I would go down and stay for a while, but since I don't, I have to choose wisely.
> (Juan Carlos. Youth Interview, Spring 2012).

Guadalupe spoke of wanting to travel and learn more languages (Guadalupe. Youth interview, Spring 2012). These desires to go abroad either as a way to further their horizons, learn a new skills, or return home reflects the world in which participants lived: a world that, as mentioned previously, is getting smaller and smaller. Such desires are linked to the benefit of mobility that these programs can offer immigrant youth.

Adapting to changing realities and navigating the complex transition to adulthood will require young people to develop skills for setting and achieving goals (Larson, 2011). OST programs have the potential to allow young people to practice goal setting and making progress towards an objective. Often this can be done through planning events, taking on leadership roles, working on project-based opportunities, and receiving feedback about their work and progress. These programs can act as intermediary institutions between homes and schools, and the next section of this chapter outlines the educational benefits that these OST programs are able to deliver as such intermediary players in the educational trajectories of immigrant Latino youth.

In addition to allowing for the creation of hybrid and global identities and critically conscious agents Voces Unidas and The Depot mediated the conversion of resources into concrete benefits for the Latino immigrant youth who participated in this study.

Program benefits to youth participants.

Programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot are spaces that provide youth participants both supportive environments and meaningful youth-adult relationships. A

common thread that emerged from the program data illustrates that Voces Unidas and The Depot treated young people as though they matter. It is important to highlight how programs implemented approaches that resulted in youth feeling valued, and that they can make a difference in their educational trajectories. The following section illustrates the main underlying benefits that Voces Unidas and The Depot provided their participants. Four main benefits emerged during data analysis. Both programs 1) Acted as bridging spaces between formal and non-formal learning environments, 2) Provided a space for youth mobility, 3) Increased youth visibility, and 4) Became cultural nannies that gained families' trust to teach their children about their culture and be part of the process of cultural transmission and acquisition. The following sections illustrate each of these benefits utilizing data collected from observations and interviews.

Supportive and bridging educational spaces. In the literature review, concepts of youth agency and socio-cultural structures were discussed in the context of Latino youth navigating programs and opportunities to acquire a more holistic, positive, and culturally relevant educational experience. The programs in this study were intentional about providing such structures in their program planning and their implementation of these structures made the experience relevant to the youth's lives, culture, and aspirations for the future. Providing supportive program environments began (as explained in the previous section) with the programs' positive youth development philosophy. However, it did not end there. The two programs created spaces where youth could experience authentic participation and receive support to complete school-related work to stay

motivated to continue with their schooling. For instance, Arturo, one of Voces Unidas'

youth workers reflected during an interview:

> I think the program itself has created enough what would be the word? Not vision.
> But certainly [the youth] have goals in place that will support them succeeding in
> school and in high school by having, you know, advisory models put into the
> program. By having social support networks, in other words, connecting with
> their parents, connecting with the student on the one-to-one basis, having tutors
> here, is also supportive from that aspect (Arturo. Youth worker interview, Fall
> 2011).

These OST programs realized the need to provide supports that both reinforce the formal

aspects of the youth's education such as academic supports, and also compliment these

experiences with opportunities to build positive relationships and gain 21st century skills.

As quoted above, Arturo clearly outlines both the supports needed to help youth

academically (advisory models), socially (social support networks), and culturally

(*educación*). Furthermore, the bridging benefit that these programs provided to their

participants was evident when youth reflected on their support needs for homework help:

"I stay here to do my homework because if I go home, I don't concentrate a lot" (Mónica.

Youth interview, Spring 2012).

A male youth participant, named Pablo, spoke about the opportunity to find

support with school work, and how the program provided a different way for him to

learn:

I think I sometimes come and get help here with other people because is not as overwhelming as if you are in class and you just don't understand something; you don't want to raise your hand and look like the dumb kid that doesn't understand anything. When I'm at the program I can be like "Yeah, can you help me?" and it's like a more one-on-one and they are at your same level, and they actually answer your question. Teachers sometimes don't really… [They ask] "Didn't you take notes?" And it's really hard because some people learn differently, and programs sometimes help you visualize things, more than at school. (Pablo. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

This youth distinguishes how learning can happen differently at the program versus at the school, and when he references the one-on-one support and the difference between youth workers and teachers, he illustrates how people and spaces within the program make learning possible.

Pablo further emphasizes that youth workers differed from his teachers at school, "Like teachers, they're more like serious. And she's [the youth worker] a friend. She's friendly. You can talk to her and she'll be like your friend. She's going to be there to listen to you and encourage you. Whatever problems you are having" (Pablo interview, Spring 2012). In this instance, the youth worker not only is friendlier and more caring than the teacher in the traditional school environment, she's also there to listen and motivate the youth. This is increasingly important, especially when oftentimes youth of color do not find caring and encouraging adults among their schoolteachers. Angela

Valenzuela (1999) refers to this youth-teacher [in this case youth worker] relationship as embodying the concept of authentic caring which the cared-for person (youth) responds to the youth worker initiating a relationship based on the youth's welfare. Once the youth responds to this caring approach, the mutual reciprocal relationship is complete.

In another example, Juan Carlos reflected how his learning became more fun when adults, in this case the youth workers, paid attention to him and offered guidance to complete the task at hand. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). He highlighted receiving direction and attention from adults (Larson, 2000). He said:

> "The program is more fun than the school, because no one really helps you in the school. Because you have to figure out what to do after they give out directions, but in the program, like when they give directions and stuff, they still come around and try to help you out. Or they see that if you got lost or something. So they pay more attention to you in the program" (Juan Carlos. Youth interview, Spring, 2012).

Youth participants in these programs found a reason to care about school. At both sites, youth received positive, reinforcing messages about continuing their education, graduating high school, and staying engaged in their current school.

When asked about the influences that the program experience has on their schooling/education, participants stated that it inspires them to stay motivated, to do their homework and turn it in, and to actively participate in school. Youth were provided both space and time to do their homework, and had help with their questions while forming

positive youth-adult relationships that inspired them to not give up. Overall, youth perceived that their participation in the program made them better students in school.

> Like before I came to this program, I didn't really have the resources to do
> my homework. Sometimes at home I didn't have a computer, and I couldn't
> do my homework there. I had to type. And now that I came here, my grades
> went up. Because I have the resources! And I have people that can help me
> with my work. (Pablo. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Pablo highlights both the material and human resources that are available to him at the program. Something as minor as accessing a computer and having someone else help with homework provided this youth with the opportunity to complete his homework and improve his academic performance at school.

These two programs also fostered an opportunity to bridge educational spaces and structures that youth navigated on a daily basis. For example, at Voces Unidas there was a close relationship between the after-school program and its host organization, the high school. At The Depot, the connection took place between staff and teachers in the various schools that participating youth attended. Staff paid close attention to youth's academic performance and tied their performance to their participation in the program. If a youth had weak or declining grades, staff made sure a conversation took place with the youth, parents, and the teacher. Joyce Epstein at the National Network of Partnership Schools refers to this bridging as schools needing to be more like families and families needing to be more like schools (Epstein, 1995). The bridging Epstein refers to is called the theory

of overlapping spheres of influence, in which schools [in this case programs], families, and communities act as partners in the education of the children they share. Because these programs have embraced a cultural framework of *educación* that allows them to see their participants simultaneously as youth, learners, and citizens within their communities, programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot are better equipped to have positive influences on the youth they serve.

Research has demonstrated that when this bridging and overlap of spheres of influence takes place, young people receive common positive messages about their identity, about working hard, thinking creatively, and the importance of doing well academically. These programs seem to be leveraging their relationships with parents, youth, communities, and sometimes the schools, to reach, engage, motivate, and nurture their youth participants to be agents of their own development.

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995) is not merely an abstract concept in this work; the practical application of this theory was apparent in the program, participant, and parent data. In analyzing study data, the code *Relationship with youth worker* described the type of bridges that youth workers were building with youth participants. Such codes included *trust, respect, like-family, always there, listens, expectations*, and *caring.* A youth spoke directly about the program being a family-like space:

> It plays a really major role in my life…it's obviously impacted me a lot when I
> don't know who to talk to. Obviously, The Depot people [are] my number one

people to always talk to. It's seriously like my favorite second home. Sometimes

when I'm having those off-days with my family I just want to be here (Ursula.

Youth interview, Spring 2012).

The programs acted as motivating engines for youth to do well academically and socially

by understanding their needs, and overlapping the different resources that youth needed.

In other words, the programs were able to provide academic support and have caring role

models for youth to engage with as they worked on their homework and learned new

skills in the program. Because they received positive feedback from the youth workers

while completing schoolwork, youth participants felt motivated to continue going and

doing well (or improving) in school while staying engaged in the program environment.

One youth elaborates on how her work habits have changed since joining the

program:

I just used to give up on things, and now since I started coming over here, I don't

give up that easily. So it's like if I have a homework that I don't know, or

something I used to give up, but here they teach me to not give up. They tell me,

"Keep going, keep going, you'll do it," and if I'm not 100% sure about what I'm

doing, at least I tried (Jennifer. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

The access to resources, including positive attitudes, is a possible reason for continued

engagement in program activities and events. Youth and parents have found that the

multiple types of resources in these programs provide youth with opportunity to improve

their grades and job prospects, resulting in social mobility and development.

Spaces for mobility. During the immigration experience these youth and parents physically moved to another country searching for a better future and better education. However, the need for mobility was apparent beyond the physical migration. Social mobility and the hopes to create a better future for their children were both motivators for parents. The second benefit of these two programs visible in the data was the ability of youth participants to experience mobility as a result of their participation. By experiencing mobility, I refer to two different aspects of the youth's lives and development. First, youth were able to be "on the move" as agents of their own development, and second, youth experienced opportunities for social mobility through some of the partnerships that the programs nurtured in the larger community.

For example, both programs created spaces and opportunities for the youth participants to be agentic. In doing so, youth were able to experience real opportunities to learn about and navigate new, and oftentimes conflicting, or seemingly distant environments. In one instance, Juan Carlos enjoyed being able to learn about his hometown in Mexico through his relationship with his grandmother, and through the Danza (Aztec Dance) program at Voces Unidas. More importantly, he felt proud of what he had learned:

> I take my Aztec stuff to school sometimes and people are like "What is that?" and I said "It's a chimali"…and they say "Oh, I really like that" and I tell them they should go and get involved. Kinda encourages people to do it…in education, *pues*

[well], it helps me not to go in the wrong direction, where I was going before.

(Juan Carlos. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Another benefit youth experience through their participation in programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot was the opportunity to experience upward mobility in society. For example, youth reflected on having the opportunity to improve their grades and do better academically as one way to being someone in the world. However, participants also recognized informal socializing in the program as a benefit that led to upward mobility. Guadalupe shares her experience,

I'm different because when I chose to come, I was a really shy person, and I could really not talk in public in front of a lot of people. And I set a goal to be more social, and try to meet more people, and be more open, and I actually—I think if I never came here I wouldn't be as social as I am now. Because I opened—there's a lot of people here, so I met a lot of friends, and lot of people, and I met a lot of older people who I could talk to (Guadalupe. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

While Guadalupe valued the program as a way to obtain new skills that would lead to advancement in the U.S., other participants framed their program experience as preventative measure that promoted upward mobility through the discouragement of behaviors that would lead to trouble with school, their families, and the authorities. When asked where he would be without Voces Unidas, Juan Carlos stated, "Honestly, I would be in jail because the way I was back then, or maybe going back to Mexico. The work and the people here have helped me a lot" (Juan Carlos. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Regardless of their backgrounds or parents' social situations, participating in these programs afforded the youth included in the study a real opportunity to experience benefits and create goals to accomplish greater things than their parents had. This agentic behavior, fostered by a positive learning environment, allowed young people to advance socially and academically without losing their culture by ensuring that viewpoints were heard and visible.

No longer invisible: Spaces where youth feel like they matter . At a time when Latino youth are encouraged by schools, media, and other powerful societal forces to give up their culture and abandon practices that contribute to their identity and sense of belonging, the role of community-based programs is more critical than ever (Montero-Sieburth & Villarruel, 2000). Voces Unidas and The Depot also acted as spaces where youth are seen; they are no longer invisible as in other public spaces, like the school. Larger institutions should further examine how these programs make youth feel as though they matter and intentionally consider which elements of the youth development practice they could implement in the larger environment. For example, something as small as greeting youth when they arrive to program and recognizing their presence can turns into a trusting relationship between the youth and the youth worker.

Valenzuela (1999) has examined the concept of caring from the student [youth]'s perspective and explains that youth's definition of caring is a sincere search for connection (p.263). The following excerpt from the youth worker interview data illustrates how Cristina notices the difference in young people's perceptions and

predispositions if they know that the adults care for them and see them. She also has an understanding of how other environments might not be as welcoming to these youth.

> […] I think if you get to know them and show interest in them as a person [the youth] they're going to trust you, almost 100% of the time as long as you guys get along. There are some kids or staff the kids don't like because they don't spend enough time with them or what not. But I think if you are able to spend time with them and it doesn't have to be 100% of the time, just make sure you even say "Hi" to the kids when they come in and by when they leave or just, "Hey, how you doing?" Like, I know a girl was mad at me one day because I didn't say, ask her how she was doing that day. So even asking, "Hey, how are ya?" […] is a big step for some of those kids. (Cristina. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Youth participants reflected on their relationship with the youth workers and pointed out similar things such as greetings, being noticed, and being cared for. This participant sheds light on her perception of a welcoming program/youth worker:

> [E]verybody was very welcoming and they were like "How are you?" "How was your day?" or if I wasn't there one day, and I came back they were like "Where were you?" "We missed you," and they were just really welcoming, and then just like that, you want to always come. It just made me, specially [sic] the college liaison she was always supporting me and she was…she told me that I was able to do so many things that I never knew about, so she really like helped me get involved a lot. (Carla. Youth interview, Fall 2011).

Carla's experience was not unique. A more introverted youth participant, who was often

quiet and reserved, spoke during her interview about being seen in the program;

something that is not common in her school experience. She felt inspired and motivated

by the fact that people in the program would intentionally look out for her presence and

would notice if she was absent one day.

> Like they care about you. Like *si no vienes like un dia* [if you don't come one
>
> day] they're like "Oh why weren't you—why weren't they here?" Like they
>
> actually ask for you and are trying to look for you…Like at my school *no vienes*
>
> [you don't come] it's like "Oh, okay. Whatever, they didn't come." No one really
>
> notices. (Dora. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

These programs took it upon themselves to be resourceful organizations for the larger

Latino community and to help create well-educated adults that feel as though their lives

matter and their opinions are important. The benefits outlined above in relationship to

youth educational spaces, experiences for mobility, and opportunities for visibility were

complemented by a final, yet important, benefit; Voces Unidas and The Depot supported

youth's cultural learning.

Cultural Nannies

The last benefit that emerged from the data analysis refers back to an *educación*-

like component of the program in which programs acted as cultural nannies for the youth.

Parent and youth data illustrate a unique role/function that these two OST programs

played within the lives and educational experience of their children. Parents in particular

reflected on the role of the programs as to what I refer to cultural nannies. Many of these parents not only worked long hours and were juggling all the family needs, but they were also aware that because of their migration to the U.S., elements of their native culture had been left behind. They wanted to continue to teach their children about their culture back home but felt that they lacked time and tools to do so. Consequently, these parents found in the programs the space and content for cultural acquisition and transmission to take place. For example, a single mother of four talked about how the program provided cultural teaching for her son:

> *Es bonito porque los mantienen como todavía, como ósea a un*
>
> *ellos están sabiendo lo que es la cultura hispana, algo que no*
>
> *hacen en la escuela. Pienso que esta bien. Como le digo, en las*
>
> *escuelas no lo hacen. Entonces, ellos ven ahí y saben. Por ejemplo*
>
> *yo no tengo el tiempo para decir al "en México hacemos así y así"*
>
> *no lo hacemos porque aquí tampoco ya no lo hago. Pero ahí es un*
>
> *buen lugar, porque a mí me sorprendió mucho con la calaverita*
>
> *cuando me dijo "mami vamos hacer una ofrenda" y él me*
>
> *preguntó que es eso.*
>
> It's nice because they keep them, like, they are still learning about
>
> Hispanic culture, something they don't do in the school. I think it's
>
> good. Like I said, they don't do it at the schools. So they go there
>
> [to the program] and learn. For example, I don't have time to say

"in Mexico we do this and this." I don't say that because I don't do

it here. But there [the program] is a good place, because I was very

surprised with the decorative skulls [*calaveritas*, associated with

the Day of the Dead celebration], when he [my son] said "Mom,

we are going to do an offering [*ofrenda*]," and he asked me what it

was. (Dario's mother. Parent interviews. Spring, 2012).

Taking care of four children and providing for her family left Dario's mother unable to

provide as much cultural teaching as she would like. However, the program helped to

initiate a conversation about Dario's culture in the home, when Dario asked his mother

about the *ofrendas*. In this way, the programs use culture as a connecting force in families

and communities. The programs also help participants maintain their cultural heritage.

Guadalupe's mother reflects on this.

Porque, mantienen las raíces de uno. Como la cultura. Lo que uno le enseñan…

como el Garage…tienen bien presente eso. De la cultura de cada uno. De no

perder, como le digo, no perder las creencias de uno. Lo que los uno le inculca los

hijos. No se, muchas cosas, no le puedo explicarla.

Because they maintain one's own roots. Like the culture. What one teaches

them…like The Depot, that is very present there. Everyone's culture, not to lose

it, like I said, not to lose one's own beliefs. What one teaches the kids … I don't

know, a lot of things, it's hard to explain. (Guadalupe's mother. Parent interviews.

Spring 2012).

Both these parents spoke about the fact that their children's schools were not teaching

them about their native culture and the programs did just that. They value this for

different reasons. The first parent reflects on how pleasantly surprised she was when her

son asked her about her the Day of the Dead celebration, and she could further her son's

understanding of the cultural teaching by relating it to her experience as a child in

Mexico. The other parent spoke of maintaining roots and that the program was intentional

about having the youth's cultural roots present. Despite the slightly different contexts, it

is clear that the cultural programming at Voces Unidas and The Depot create closeness in

the family unit and within the program as well.

One youth compared the closeness of the program environment to her family. She

cites shared cultural experiences as a method by which she develops close relationships

in the program.

> Hmm…well this is really like you stick together. Personally with my family, you
>
> always stick together, and everyone is really close here, so that's a thing that I
>
> value—that everyone gets along and everyone stands together and that we always
>
> do something towards culture. Like it's *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), it's
>
> like a tradition and just things like that that I really like. (Ursula. Youth interview,
>
> Fall 2011)

Ursula and speaks of how close program staff and participants are with each and how

much she values and likes spending time on cultural learning. Valenzuela (1999) refers to

educación as a "foundational cultural construct that provides instructions on how one

should live in the world (p. 21). When parents of Latino immigrant youth find themselves

trying to inculcate *educación* onto their children, but the social and cultural environments

have changed (due to migration and globalization) they seek out other supports that can

help them in teaching their children how to be in their new social contexts. This is one of

the main reasons why parents of these youth have reached out to community-based OST

programs and youth workers to act as extensions of their family unit.

Both Joyce Epstein (1995) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (1997) investigated the

family-like role that schools and teachers can play when serving minority and

disadvantaged young people. Ladson-Billings writes that teachers are able to reconfigure

the social relations within their classrooms and among teachers and students to mirror

that of the families and communities and to extend the networks beyond the classroom

walls. Epstein refers to effective partnerships between schools and families as those that

encourage family-like settings. These programs are doing exactly what both Ladson-

Billings and Epstein call for; they have set up family-like environments and have taken it

one step further to include culturally-relevant learning and meaning-making within the

program activities. For parents, who often have minimal time and resources and who face

financial, emotional, and social challenges, having support systems that help them

transmit cultural learnings to their children is invaluable. This also highlights the

importance of these programs as a surrogate homes for the youth.

Another way in which youth workers tried to implement a family-like

environment at the program level was to have clear goals and expectations for the youth.

More importantly, they made sure these goals were in-sync with that of parents. Program

leaders tended to seek goal congruence with the parents. By goal congruence, I refer to

the idea of being in-tuned with what goals the parents had for their child in the program

and to be accessible to support parents in working towards those goals with their children

(through the program). The following quotes exemplify how Jeremy wants to learn about

the parents' expectation of the program and their youth:

> But let's say her grades weren't very good or she…sometimes I don't even know
>
> for sure, I think sometimes it's the parents are just nervous she's there too much.
>
> And her parents don't speak English, and so it's hard for us to communicate to
>
> say "what are your expectations so that we can help make this fit?" (Jeremy.
>
> Youth worker interviews. Spring 2012).

On a separate occasion, Jeremy makes direct reference to parents' goals: "to say 'I am

here to work with and for you. How can I help you help your child reach her goals?"

(Jeremy. Youth worker interviews. Spring 2012). This demonstrates the intentionality of

programs like these to work with parents as surrogate sources of culture.

Programs helped youth participants identify selves future goals

Since the focus of this study was to better understand how OST programs that

embrace cultural-educational frameworks support the long term goals of those who they

serve, part of the data collection involved conducting a survey which included asking

youth participants about how the programs (either Voces Unidas or The Depot) supported

their long term goals. Survey results show that youth participants perceived that the

program helped them to prepare for a meaningful career and to follow family traditions or

heritage. Data analysis contrasting Latino and non-Latino youth at these programs

revealed that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant ($p <$

0.05). In other words, Latino youth at both programs perceived the programs helping

them have a meaningful career and follow family traditions and heritage. This analysis

echoed a tension that emerged throughout the youth and parent interviews and represents

a strong link to an *educación* framework shaped by immigration experiences and

mainstream expectations of success (career attainment). This tension was illustrated when

both youth and parents spoke about developing aspirations for mainstream success while

needing to stay connected to their Latino culture and spaces.

The survey was conducted with youth participants at the two programs and its

purpose was to examine youth goals for participating in the program and how the

programs supported these goals. The table below illustrates the responses of all youth

participants at Voces Unidas and The Depot (Latino and non-Latino youth). An important

finding from the quantitative data, which is also supported in the youth and parent

interviews, is that Latino youth selected "To follow family traditions or heritage" as a

long term goal for them and one that the program helped support. When these data were

analyzed, the difference between Latino and non-Latino youth identifying the goal "To

follow family traditions or heritage" was statistically significant ($p < .050 = .044$). Even

though the difference on their perception of how the programs supported this goals was

not statistically significant ($p < .050 = .102$), the Latino youth mean was relatively higher

than that of non-Latino youth. Furthermore, Latino immigrant youth perceived the

programs supported their goals "To have a meaningful career" and "To achieve material

success" in numbers that were statistically significant when compared to non-Latino

youth ($p < .050 = .031$ and $p < .050 = .017$, respectively).

Table 1: Youth's score on importance of goals and program's support for goals: Mean levels and differences by ethnicity, age, and gender.

Long-term goals	Mean (Latino youth)[a]	Mean (non-Latino youth)[b]	Significant Differences by Ethnicity
How important is this goal to you?			
• To have a meaningful career	4.39	4.51	
• To be an independent person	4.51	4.39	
• To follow family traditions or heritage	3.47	3.17	L > NL
• To enjoy life	4.42	4.62	NL > L
• To contribute to the community	3.92	4.14	
• To achieve material success	3.85	3.67	
Does this program support this goal?			
• To have a meaningful career	4.02	3.74	L > NL
• To be an independent person	4.00	4.04	
• To follow family traditions or heritage	3.05	2.77	

• To enjoy life	4.19	4.39	
• To contribute to the community	4.26	4.48	
• To achieve material success	3.32	2.93	L > NL

[a] 1 = *Least* to 5 = *Most*
[b] 1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *Very much*
Alpha set at $p < .05$
Note: In the ethnicity subgroup comparisons, initials L = Latino and NL = Non-Latino
N=45

Although not statistically significant when comparing Latino and non-Latino youth, the

Latino participants ranked (in a scale of 1-5) goals such as "To have a meaningful career"

"To be an independent person" and "to enjoy life" as very much important.

Programs allowed for youth to set goals and work towards achieving them, which

also emerged during the youth interviews. Pablo had no goals prior to participating at

Voces Unidas but remembers that after beginning to participate in the program that he

was able to determine that he wanted to become a role model for other youth.

When I started coming, I really I just came. I really didn't have any goals, but

slowly I saw that kids my age where really involved and I was like "Oh I want to

start doing something; I want to become like one of those people that kids look up

to" so I started getting goals as becoming a role model. Like working here was

never my goal, but I just got hired. But my goals were obviously to be like a

really good role model for all the other kids. (Pablo. Youth Interview, Spring

2012).

Santiago illustrates the importance of caring, on-going, and intentional relationships with

the youth worker at Voces Unidas. More importantly he describes how one youth worker

checking on him and talking to him influenced his ability to identify graduation as a goal.

> Well, I actually had no goals, and then…now my goal is to...because there is this
>
> one teacher [referring to youth worker] that he comes and tells me if I'm doing
>
> better in school, or if I'm getting there on time or something, and then he helps
>
> me out and then he starts checking up on me once in a while. And then we had a
>
> talk and he made me wanna study hard, because not a lot of people make it
>
> through high school, so he made me want to try hard, so now my goal is to try to
>
> finish high school. (Santiago. Youth interview, Fall 2011).

Carla, at The Depot, examines in-depth the importance of what she learned at the

program, especially in regards to her future. She also compares the educational aspects of

school versus the educational experience of the program, and she explains how important

the life skills she gained in the program have become for her. Carla identied these life

skills as "[…]leadership skills, I've learned a lot of like how to communicate with other

people….How to handle money, I learned how to do that here and a lot of responsibility"

(Youth interview, Spring 2012). At a later date, she reflected on her future and her

learning experiences at The Depot:

> Everything is educational but for The Depot I've learned how to do real world
>
> like how you would be a person, in the future. And so in school they just kind of

prep you for college and not life after college. So The Depot really helps me learn what I want to do after college. (Carla. Youth Interview, Spring 2012).

Earlier it was mentioned how critical it is for young people to be connected to their learning; for participants to have a meaningful and impactful learning experience, the programming content must be related to their life circumstances. At both programs I was able to observe a core group of young people (those who participated in this study) continue to return week after week (Program observations, Fall 2011-Spring 2012). Participation was seen as a privilege more than a right; these youth authentically wanted to be present and experience what both Voces Unidas and The Depot had to offer, which in large part was illustrated in the Programs and Youth Workers chapter. However, I was intrigued to learn more about how both organizations kept youth motivated to return and be engaged in the activities.

Motivating Latino immigrant youth to stay engaged in the OST programs

Allowing youth to set goals and work towards achieving these goals required programs to motivate youth. The previous chapter provided in-depth detail in explaining the structure that programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot put in place to provide meaningful and engaging opportunities for youth. The perspectives of parents and youth workers were also presented in great detail. This section illustrates youth perceptions of how the programs motivated their on-going engagement and participation.

When youth were asked about the reasons why they joined Voces Unidas and The Depot they ranked things like "I like the activities we do here", "to have fun", "to help

me towards a job", and "to help on my college application" as important to them.

Furthermore, when the data was analyzed to differentiate between Latino and non-Latino

youth, results showed a statistically significant difference existed between Latino and

non-Latino youth joining because they wanted help on their college application ($p < .050$

$= .025$).

Youth considered participating in these programs as a valuable support for their

future goals of going to college, which highlights the role of programs like these in the

formal educational experiences of the youth they serve.

Table 2: Youth Scores on Reasons for Joining the Program: Mean Levels and Differences
by Ethnicity, Age Group, and Gender

Reasons for Joining	Mean (Latino)[a]	Mean (Non-Latino)[b]	Significant Differences by Ethnicity
Indicate why you joined/ have participated in the program in the last 2 months:			
• To help on my college application	3.13	2.76	L > NL
• To help me towards a job or career	3.53	3.25	
• To have fun	3.93	4.18	
• I like the activities we do here	4.40	4.60	NL > L
• I had friends who were also participating	3.49	3.51	
• My friends wanted me to participate	2.52	2.67	

• To belong to a group	2.38	2.63	
• To fulfill a school requirement	1.64	1.57	
• Because I was getting paid	1.85	1.57	
• My parent(s) wanted me to participate	1.73	1.15	
• Program leader(s) wanted me to participate	2.23	2.24	

[a] 1 = *Least* to 5 = *Most*
[b] 1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *Very much*
Alpha set at $p < .05$
Note: In the ethnicity subgroup comparisons, initials L = Latino and NL = Non-Latino
N=45

Having a clearer understanding of the reasons why youth might join an OST program can help those implementing programming to create programs that fulfill youths' needs. This information in addition to youth-adult [leader] relationships, concrete homework help, youth resiliency, and concrete rewards and recognition can engage and motivate youth to stay in the program.

When in a caring, supportive environment, youth have been able to motivate themselves effectively. Cristina reflects on the academic motivation she has seen from minority youth in the program:

So I think it's pushed them to be a lot smarter and more responsible than, I mean some kids just kind of give up but I feel like a lot of them are like, "No, I'm going to prove you wrong. Just because I'm Black, or just because I'm Latino and English isn't my first language, doesn't mean I can't do this homework and I

can't be an 'A' student and I can't be in this sport" or stuff like that. (Cristina.

Youth Worker Interview, Spring 2012).

Almost all young people interviewed who participated in this study pointed to the

importance of having a space and support to complete homework assignments. As much

as they valued the other programmatic aspects of Voces Unidas and The Depot, they

made sure that they could complete their homework and make a difference in their

academic performance at school.

Some, like Mónica and Pablo, did not have physical space available at home to do

homework; others, like Juan Carlos and Ursula, appreciated having English-speaking

adults who could help them through more difficult school assignments that their parents

were unable to help with (Program observation notes, November 2011 and March-May

2012). This demonstrates once again the vital niche that these programs fulfill, especially

in the U.S. where the school day ends so early, before most parents are home from work.

During homework help at both programs, youth had the opportunity to ask

questions, receive feedback from volunteer tutors, and work through assignments.

They tell me things like I'm going to be the first one to go to college if I do, I am,

because I'm going to get there. They tell me to not give up, that I'm almost there.

Don't give up. Just get there. And then, you're going to be proud of yourself, and

we're going to be proud of you too. (Pablo. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Another way through which youth remained motivated was through concrete rewards

(getting paid for example) or through recognition (awards). Youth felt that they would

gain a concrete benefit from participating. Arturo describes why he thinks youth join the program.

> I think youth join the program because they probably have a belief that is going to help them, number one. So that has to be through their own understanding and exploration of what the program has to offer. They must have a sense that they are going to improve in their school and grades, so I think that's the number one motivator. Number two is that again, it's a social extension of their day, and I think that they feel productive being involved with this program. Some students have jobs, some students don't. The ones that may not have as much work, probably have a sense of need to continue to be productive. That's my belief. (Arturo. Youth Worker Interview, Fall 2011).

Often times, recognition came through in more abstract ways than those mentioned above. Carla shared an example of how being recognized motivated her to try harder.

> Yeah, in the beginning I was motivated, but I wasn't as motivated I thought. "Alright, I'm just gonna do this," but no one is going to recognize anything. And then, one time two summers ago, I went to a Boys & Girls Club camp and my friend and I helped a girl out, and we got an award from the city. That impacted me a lot, sometimes you don't even know how I helped this person but people recognized us and it motivated me. And not to get awards, but just to make people feel good. I like that, so I just keep trying harder. (Carla. Youth interview, Fall 2011).

Parents spoke about their desire for their children to be productive members of the

community and found program spaces as positive influences for their youth to remain

active and productive. There was a sense of not wanting them to do nothing; this

resonated with youth as well.

> Well, here it's like really, I guess everything is so organized, and like everyone
>
> gets something done. It's not something that you just get here and do nothing and
>
> just socialize, but you get things done. There is always something productive and
>
> positive coming out of the program. And I used to be really, like, I didn't want to
>
> do things, and I wouldn't clean my room or I wouldn't organize my clothes and
>
> stuff. And now that I've been in the program, I'm so used to getting things done
>
> here that I want to get them done at home, because it bothers me now that I don't
>
> get things done. So now I get things done at home and it's easier for me. (Ursula.
>
> Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Programs make a real difference in the lives of youth participants

The previous sections portrayed the ways in which both programs affected young

people's ability to set goals, to work to achieve those goals and to motivate them to stay

engaged in positive learning opportunities. I took the opportunity to ask youth directly

about the difference they felt the programs had had on their lives and their answers were

beyond insightful. Their answers ranged from growing socially, to becoming more

independent, and to staying out of trouble. Especially for those who had negative

experiences at school, bad influences from peers, or parents were not as present; the program made a lasting impact on them.

The Depot provided a space for some youth to socialize. Guadalupe had worked really hard throughout the program year to become more social and to be able to relate with more of her peers and adults in the program. As stated earlier in this chapter she felt that "if I never came here I wouldn't be as social as I am now" (Guadalupe. Youth Interview, Spring 2012).

Juan Carlos pointed out how he had improved in handling emotions, and how the Danzantes group had become his outlet at times of emotional distress. He shared his experience by stating:

> Yeah, handling my emotions better. I used to be very emotional; everything would get to me. It's still kind of there, but with dance I learned how to be stronger in a way, like, dance was my—I would run to it. Yeah, that was my way out of things. It's made me stronger physically and mentally. (Juan Carlos. Youth Interview, Spring 2012).

Pablo always wanted to be a role model for younger youth in the program. He appreciated the support he received from youth workers and homework help volunteers but he wanted to give back. Voces Unidas had also made a difference in his personality and sociability towards others. "Now I talk more. I tell people what to do. I try to like encourage them. You know, when you're losing, you get down. But I encourage them to not give up." (Pablo. Youth Interview, Spring 2012). In addition, Pablo's experiences at

Voces Unidas affected his aspirations to attend college after graduation. It helped him imagine attending college. He was able to see other youth leave the program to attend college and come back happy because of it:

> [B]efore I got to high school, I didn't really know if I wanted to go to college. Then I got to high school and I met people here [Voces Unidas]. Then I saw how people were getting up to college and they were like happy because they were in college. And I started looking at it and I wanted to get to college. Now I'm like really interested in it and I really want to go to college. (Pablo. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

For some participants their program experience meant a true life change and they understood that the adults in the program and the activities they were engaged in kept them away from really negative influences. Juan Carlos was especially grateful for the programs influence.

> I was going towards bad ways, you know? Doing drugs and all that, but just coming here, it was meeting new people and started fresh. It made me a better person. I had to change. (Juan Carlos. Youth interview, Spring 2012).

Conclusion

Latino immigrant youth at Voces Unidas and The Depot perceived their program experiences in relationship to their cultural framework of *educación* and their preparation for college, career, and various kinds of mobility. Youth were not only able to talk openly about *educación*, but they valued program components that contributed to the implementation of the framework in their learning experience. Because of the

relationships they built with culturally aware, competent youth workers, youth had opportunities to enact their agency, develop critical thinking, and acquire global citizenship skills.

For example, youth actively engaged themselves in issues and events that were of a global nature; they were able to do so because of opportunities, provided by the programs, to explore and develop their hybrid identities. In addition, youth benefitted from being able to set goals and define ways to achieve them, especially goals related to their future aspirations and educational trajectories. Youth were able to develop a strong sense of identity that included an ability to shift between diverse environments and successfully navigate different structures, barriers, obstacles, and opportunities that were presented to them.

Implementing a youth development and *educación* approach proved to be beneficial to youth participants at various levels. Youth received the opportunity to experience positive, culturally relevant activities and supports. Such supports came in the form of homework help and meaningful caring relationships with adult role models. In addition, these role models were effective change agents, because of their distinct characteristics. They had knowledge about the community they were working with, they possessed a clarified cultural identity, they embodied positive inter-group and racial attitudes, and they were able to implement pedagogical strategies to facilitate learning and development among the participating youth. Programs and their staff sought to connect with parents on their goals and expectations for the educational trajectory of the

young people. In doing so, they built a stronger safety net for participants to navigate new environments at a time in their lives (adolescents) when they most need positive, overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995).

Last but not least, programs invested time, effort, resources in motivating youth participants to continue their engagement throughout the program year. Youth rarely dropped out of program activities, and week after week they participated in one way or another. Programs either implemented an employment component so youth could acquire skills and make money, or they created infrastructures for youth to actively participate as decision-makers (Youth Governing Board); and they provided safe and nurturing environments were youth could make sense of the hybrid experiences, the world around them, and as a result, take action to make change.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The real challenge facing policy makers and educators

today is articulating a theory of education for the twenty-

first century that meaningfully relates individual citizens to

the larger societies in which they live (Suarez-Orozco &

Sattin-Bajaj, 2010, p. 196).

The present study of two OST, community-based programs that embrace notions

of *educación*, and which investigated parent engagement, youth worker practice, and

youth agency in youth development, contributes both scholarly as well as practical

perspectives to the fields of non-formal learning, education, and immigrant youth. The

study was carried out between the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012 and focused on

examining how these OST programs implement positive, culturally responsive,

educational opportunities for immigrant Latino youth and how such opportunities

mediate concrete benefits for these young people as well as enhanced their future

prospects. The research questions framing this work focused on three main points. I

researched how youth were able to enact their agency in these programs that they

considered successful and embraced notions of *educación*; what their aspirations and

goals were, and how the programs helped them work towards achieving these; and how

the youth workers' and programs' *educación* approach mediated the conversion of

cultural and social resources into benefits and positive outcomes. The research questions were laid out as follows:

1) How do Latino immigrant youth enact their agency in OST programs which they consider successful and embracing of their notions of *educación*?

   a. What are Latino immigrant youth's aspirations/goals to join these well-structured, community based OST programs?

   b. How do Latino immigrant youth perceive their experience in the program as relevant to their aspirations and goals in life?

2) How does an OST program approach of *educación* mediate the conversion of cultural and social resources into capital for Latino immigrant youth?

In this conclusion chapter, I first summarize the study findings. Next, I focus on the contributions of the study to the field of positive youth development and youth worker practice. Finally, I make recommendations for practice and future research on culture and education, immigrant Latino youth, and youth development.

At Voces Unidas and The Depot parents of youth participants played an active role in the youth's participation and engagement. Despite the fact that they often faced adverse social and financial conditions, parents possessed resources that allowed them to be supportive of their children's educational aspirations. These resources included valuing education, understanding the value that OST programs brought to their children's experiences, and sharing testimonies and *consejos*. As Villenas & Deyhle (1999) summarize,

Consejos are the means by which parents transmit to their children the cultural values and morals that will guide them in good behavior and in making good decisions. In many of these studies, we caught glimpses of the consejos that parents gave their children which socialized them to follow the "right" path. (p. 423).

Parents in this study utilized *consejos* on a regular basis to communicate to their children the values of respecting others, being *una buena persona* (a good person), behaving well, and working hard to achieve their goals and aspirations. More importantly, data demonstrated that youth realized the power that these *consejo*s had on them; they were reminded of their parents instilling in them a culture of *educación* and aspirations for social mobility.

Parents also valued the role that OST programs played in the lives of their children. They appreciated having caring youth workers as role models for the youth and they sought out supporting learning environments for their children; environments that would complement what youth were doing at school and home. In addition, parents appreciated the fact that because their children participated in programs like Voces Unidas or The Depot they were kept off the streets and away from negative influences. Parents perceived program participation as a way for young people to remain productive in their community.

Participants at Voces Unidas and The Depot experienced a holistic approach to their education. Both programs were intentional at embracing the cultural framework of

educación in their programming content and structure and more importantly, they mediated the conversion of cultural and social resources into meaningful benefits for the youth participants. These benefits included:

1) The programs acting as bridging spaces between the formal and non-formal learning environments that youth participants experienced,

2) The programs providing a space for youth mobility,

3) The program allowing for youth to no longer be invisible, and

4) Programs acting as cultural nannies that gained families' trust to teach their children about their culture and be part of the process of cultural transmission and acquisition, enabling them to envision future productive lives in mainstream society.

This study's findings also demonstrate how youth themselves were able to articulate the value of *educación* in their upbringing and in their motivation to reach their goals in life. Several of the youth participants could not only describe what the term *educación* meant to them, but they could also relate back to an experience or a conversation they had had with a family member about the difference between education and *educación*. This illustrates how the cultural framework of *educación* was actively transmitted to and transformed by the youth's new experiences in the U.S. and the OST programs. More importantly, it spotlights the programs as spaces where youth could make sense of *educación* and could experience it in the program's practices and approach to positive youth development.

Both programs also provided the youth participants spaces and a program experience that allowed them to develop hybrid identities and critical thinking capabilities. For example, at both programs youth had the opportunity to discuss, reflect, and learn about their cultural identities and positionality in a global world. They were afforded the opportunity to make sense of their lived realities as immigrant Latino youth in the U.S. Carla's reflection about being able to learn about American culture at The Depot, or youth at Voces Unidas who felt comfortable asking Jessica (White youth worker) about mainstream culture, are important instances in this work, which demonstrate that spaces were open to conversation about contested topics. More importantly, these spaces allow youth to more positively navigate the tension between staying connected to their Latino culture and imagining a future in mainstream society.

In a world in which minority youth's social development is plagued with oppression and inequality, it is critical that they understand the world can be transformed through their actions. As Harber makes clear, "They must know that such social realities are not inevitable or immutable" (Harber, 1990, p. 27). Within the conceptualization of youth's hybrid identities, data was presented to illustrate the development of critical thinking and global citizenship skills that youth experienced as a result of participating in Voces Unidas and The Depot. Youth saw themselves as part of the global community, and the programs afforded them opportunities to imagine their future in terms of career attainment, travel, and social action. Youth became agents who were critically aware of the social realities surrounding them and who possessed skills for social action.

The immigrant Latino youth in both programs had opportunities to become agents of their own development and educational trajectories. Youth also enacted their agency in the by setting goals and making intentional efforts to achieve them. This took place throughout program activities and by youth workers setting expectations for youth. Setting goals and working to meet them was also facilitated by young people working on projects together and tying programming content to larger social issues that affected participants.

Last but not least, both programs had a meaningful impact on the lives of those who participated in this study. These impacts ranged from youth growing socially and becoming more independent to staying out of trouble. Especially for those who experienced negative influences before attending the program, the program made a lasting impact on them.

This study also provides an in-depth examination of the role played by effective youth workers at both programs. Youth workers at Voces Unidas and The Depot proved to be effective, culturally responsive and committed change agents. These caring adults possessed 1) A clear sense of cultural identity and competence that allowed them to have 2) cultural empathy towards the youth they work with and such competence and empathy gave them space for 3) empowering relationships, which help young people act as agents of their own development.

Utilizing James Banks (2006) typology of effective multicultural teachers I was able to juxtapose the characteristics of such teachers to the role of youth workers at

Voces Unidas and The Depot. Those youth workers like Arturo, Jeremy, and event programmers Jessica and Cristina also demonstrated having the following capabilities:

- They possessed knowledge (social science and pedagogical knowledge) about the field of youth development, education, and more importantly about the community and the youth whom they work with.

- They had lived experiences that allowed them to develop clarified cultural identification (a reflective and clarified understanding of their own cultural experience)

- They brought positive intergroup and racial attitudes (positive attitudes towards different cultural and racial groups) to their work in the community and the programs

- They utilized pedagogical skills (skills to make effective programming decisions, to reduce intergroup conflict, and to formulate strategies and activities to facilitate learning and development among youth).

These capabilities allowed the youth workers to act as positive change-agents in the lives of the youth. More importantly they acted as racial-interlocutors (Ladson-Billings, 1997) that allowed youth to experience positive sense-making of their cultural and racial identities. These adults also acted as "conductors or coaches" (Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 25) by providing positive spaces for youth to learn about and question the socio-cultural worlds in which they lived. These adults shared the responsibility of achieving excellence and educating young people with parents, community, and youth themselves.

Contributions of the study to the field of education

The present study makes two important contributions to the field of education, more importantly to notions of informal education and its role in complementing formal educational experiences of immigrant Latino youth. First of all, the study's findings identify what seem to be important non-cognitive skills and dispositions that arise outside of school, but seem to support immigrant students' ability to attain mainstream success and experience positive educational experiences. One well-known non-cognitive factor is school belonging and these programs help youth participants imagine and attain a certain degree of societal belonging (National Research Council, 2004). When these youth are able to see themselves as part of the larger society, often times as part of the professional class and broad global communities, the have a more positive disposition to set future goals for themselves and to work harder in trying to achieve these goals. Programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot provide spaces of mattering that support students' self-worth, while allowing them to imagine successful futures. Secondly, this research contributes a kind of additive informal education (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011). The findings provide insight into an educación-based conception of positive youth development in OST programs that very importantly links both formal and informal learning, in the best tradition of anthropology of education. As it was demonstrated in Bartlett and Garcia's (2011) work titled *Additive Schooling in Subtractive Times,* models of additive education based on reciprocal relationships between students and teachers, bilingualism, and high expectations can foster the development of social capital, and

improve academic performance and socio-emotional outcomes for immigrant Latino youth (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011).

Contributions of the study to the field of Positive Youth Development

This study holds three important implications for the field of youth development. First, the importance of culture, race, and class are under-theorized in the field of youth development. Researchers argue, "The positive youth development model has been successful in challenging the problem/prevention model of youth" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 84). However, current approaches do not go far enough at taking into account powerful social, economic, and global forces that affect young people today and "We are left with an over-romanticized, problem-free view of youth" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 84). This study contributes to a growing body of literature on culture, education, and youth development programs by laying out the critical components of effective programs and youth workers. Nevertheless, future research is still needed to attend to notions of culture, education, and youth development; this is of particular importance as the field of youth development strives to serve more urban and diverse young people (Landrieu & Russo, in press 2014).

Second, supports and resources are not the only factors necessary for positive youth development; social and community forces can also limit or create opportunities for youth to learn, and become agents of their own development. Programs that intentionally consider and incorporate youth's cultural identities and social realities have the potential to instill positive outcomes on their participants. In order to do so, programs

must employ culturally aware, empathetic and competent youth workers who can guide young people through a socialization process that in the 21st century is plagued by culturally different worlds and educational and social inequalities. In order to do so, not only additional research will be necessary to continue to understand the role of these non-family adults in youth programs, but these youth development professionals will also need to be provided with field-based opportunities to allow them to gain the understanding and skills necessary to work with youth who are different from them.

The third implication for the field calls for a more systemic response from institutions. Programs will need institutional support from larger funding organizations as well as policy makers in order to ensure the sustainability of their work. Having to secure funding for programs that serve diverse youth on a yearly basis is unreasonable and hinders the ability of program staff to focus on designing and implementing effective programming for those who need it most. In order to secure the needed institutional supports, the field of youth development must make a stronger case for the importance of culturally responsive programs and the benefits they can mediate for diverse young people; especially those from immigrant communities. Research that demonstrates how these programs are able to make a difference in the educational trajectories of these young people needs to be more widely shared and translated into best practices for youth development professionals to implement.

Last but not least, this study has presented a holistic perspective of all those involved in the educational experience of Latino immigrant youth in community-based

programs. Parents, youth workers, and youth themselves were able to share their

perspectives, ideas, and questions about what it means to embrace notions of *educación*

and complement both formal and non-formal ways of learning.

Contributions of the study to conceptualizations of effective youth workers

This study makes important contributions to the field of youth worker practice.

Firstly, it outlines the characteristics of effective youth workers who can work alongside

diverse young people as they navigate complex development and socialization processes.

Youth workers must possess a strong sense of cultural identification, which includes

cultural awareness and knowledge of youth's cultural and social backgrounds; they must

also embody cultural empathy towards the youth and families they work with. This

empathy includes having positive inter-racial and inter-cultural attitudes towards groups

who are different from themselves. Finally they must be able to create empowerment

opportunities for youth to become agents of their own development, to develop critical

consciousness skills, and to navigate culturally differentiated social environments.

Furthermore, in a field where the majority of youth workers are White and

English-speaking, it is critical that we examine the role that these individuals play in the

educational and program experience of diverse, often poor young people. This study

highlights the contributions that nonfamily adults, especially those from mainstream

American backgrounds bring to the experience. They act as cultural resources for youth

to learn and navigate environments in which they must understand the mainstream

cultural dispositions while staying connected to their Latino values, traditions, and

beliefs. These youth workers are also able to provide safe spaces for youth to have conversations about race, inequality, oppression, and opportunity. Youth appreciate having role models that mirror themselves. Effective youth workers are able to navigate different cultural worlds, a trait that is applicable to both Latino and non-Latino youth workers in this study.

Recommendations

For too long in the field of education, culture has been conceptualized as either rooted in the origins of groups (Hall, 1990) or as unfinished and having to be continuously produced (Hall 1990 and 1996). It is imperative that both research and practice in the field of non-formal education and positive youth development incorporate nuanced ways to understand and operationalize the cultural frameworks that immigrant youth and families bring to their educational experience in the U.S. This study addressed an often silenced or invisible discourse in the educational experience of immigrant Latino youth: the communal perspective of parents and community leaders (youth workers in this case) on notions of academic achievement, success, and being a good person. As Stevens (2008) sums up,

> Disadvantaged young people and their families often creatively "resist" the machinations of oppression in schools by creating alternative conceptions of themselves and their circumstances…This meaning-making resistance can sometimes engender real change in oppressive social structures…It can also foster

> promising innovation at the fringes of conventional schooling…In this tradition, culture oppresses but it can also liberate, at least potentially. (p. 101).

The *educación* framework acted as useful lens to recognize how the immigrant Latino community in an urban U.S. context perceived and enacted ways to educate their young people. More importantly, such framework provides a programmatic example for other program leaders and youth workers wanting to better serve this community.

This study illustrates how these programs act as supportive malleable networks that allow for young people to explore and build their hybrid cultural identities. The programs are situated in cultural and social contexts that are familiar to the youth who participate; they also make sense to the parents (who then support and encourage their children to be part of these experiences).

These programs can fill an urgent opportunity gap that diverse underserved and under-represented youth face in our communities. They are the missing link to educational disparities. If done correctly, these programs, their staff, their programing, and the participants themselves can fill a huge void in our educational context by addressing what formal schooling institutions have not, the development of the whole person.

It is important to remind ourselves that the context of this study is different from the borderlands, where the immigrant communities are distinct from that of this urban Midwest region. Immigrants living in the location of this study still have that sense of the there-and-then vs. the here-and-now, and youth are starting to make sense of their hybrid

existence. They live in a world that is larger than their immediate setting, community, or family. Some of them see themselves living a mainstream life. Others want to travel abroad, learn another foreign language, help their communities back home (although they might have never lived there). Youth in the Voces Unidas and The Depot programs represent a rapidly growing population of urban, diverse young people across the country.

We are compelled to situate the experience of social mobility, adolescent development, and education of Latino immigrant youth in a sociologically sophisticated way. Programs similar to Voces Unidas and The Depot not only understand the power of supportive networks and cultural and social capital in the lives of the youth they serve, but they communicate a vision for a more just, democratic, and culturally responsive society. Such programs empower youth both with institutional support but also with a critical consciousness to transform themselves, issues that affect them, and the world that surrounds them.

At a time when educational institutions are racing to incorporate socio-emotional learning programs into the daily practice of their teachers and students, it is critical that the role of culture is not overlooked in such approaches (Jones & Buffard, 2012). Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) argue that a social justice and a culturally responsive approach to youth development not only results in a healthy transition to adulthood for young people, but it also allows youth to experience healing as an outcome through the process of fostering emotional, spiritual, psychological, and physical wellness. "Young people heal from the impact of racial and economic suffering when they comprehend and

address the complex hidden social and economic forces fomenting their everyday challenges" (p.92). Programs like Voces Unidas and The Depot are uniquely positioned to act as laboratories where innovative youth development practices are operationalized, evaluated, and improved upon in order to provide effective learning opportunities for immigrant urban youth in the U.S. In addition, such spaces have the potential to make sure these learning opportunities are contextualized within the cultural worlds of these youth.

Like in any research, additional questions emerged from this work. The role of parents and youth workers in the ways that they support young people's development and socialization processes was central to the study. Yet, a future study could focus solely on non-family adults and how they mediate social and cultural capital for immigrant youth. Additional research needs to be carried out in order to understand the connections between youths' agency and long term educational success. Longitudinal studies of agency and educational outcomes may be more useful to explicate the ways in which agency and the positive development of hybrid identities fosters educational attainment among immigrant Latino youth.

EPILOGUE

After the work of this research project ended I kept in touch with most of the youth workers at Voces Unidas and Jeremy at The Depot and I was able to continue building collegiate relationships with them and their programs. At the same time a few of the youth participants stayed in touch with me for the last couple of years; I have been impressed with where life and their development has taken them.

Ursula

Ursula participated in Voces Unidas for a year prior to the beginning of my study and after completing her second year she decided to enroll in one of the city's largest public schools and stopped attending program. She said she wanted to try something different but her change did not last long. After a few months away from Voces Unidas she decided to return to the program and re-enroll in the smaller Latino focused high school that shared the building with Voces Unidas. Ursula graduated high school in May 2014 with her mother by her side. Her mother had started to volunteer at Voces Unidas several hours per week. Ursula enrolled in college and as of November 2014 she is attending a community college with plans to transfer to a larger university in the area and pursue a pre-med major. In her words, Ursula credits places like Voces Unidas for helping her graduate high school and feel like she belonged; she says "Not once did he give up on me" when talking about a youth worker at the program.

Carla

Carla was a staff member at The Depot while this study took place. She was a busy young lady, involved in school sports, AP classes, and The Depot. Carla had a strong and supportive family at home that encouraged her to pursue her dreams. Early on in the study she spoke about her future plans to travel abroad, to major in business in college, and more importantly about the ongoing balancing act she engaged in about her identity as a Latina/Chicana American young lady. Carla continued to stay involved with The Depot until high school graduation. She then travelled and spent time abroad living with a host family in Peru and learning about environmental education. Upon her return to the U.S. she had applied and was admitted to three different higher education institutions. She visited them all and took the opportunity to decide where to enroll seriously. Carla is today a freshman, majoring in business, at a private four year university in the urban area close to where she grew up. In her own words she says "I'm living my dream" (Personal communication, Fall 2014).

Juan Carlos

Juan Carlos graduated high school as my study was ending. He had been admitted to a local community college where he began taking classes the following fall semester and he stayed involved in the Aztec Dance group at Voces Unidas as a college student. Throughout the study Juan Carlos spoke frequently about his hometown of Cuautla in Morelos, Mexico and his desire to return. After two years at the local community college, he returned to Morelos to be with relatives and work. As of November 2014 Juan Carlos

remains in Morelos working and spending time with his grandmother and other relatives. His mother stayed in the U.S.

Guadalupe

Guadalupe was one of the youngest participants in the study. She was a high school freshman at the time. Guadalupe's participation in The Depot evolved quite a bit throughout the study and afterwards. She had initially been a participant, moved on to be an intern and then a staff member at the The Depot. Her parents were supportive of her involvement but a few months into these new roles she decided to go back being just a participating member of the program. She felt overwhelmed. Guadalupe is now senior at the same public high school she attended while in the study. Her parents are quite involved in her education and continue to support her. Guadalupe has applied to attend college in the local area and hopes to enroll in 2015 after graduating high school.

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Appendix A
Research questions and methods

1) How do Latino immigrant youth enact their agency in OST programs which they consider successful and embracing of their notions of *educación*?
   a. What are Latino youth's aspirations/goals to join these well-structured, community based OST programs?
   b. How do Latino immigrant youth perceive their experience in the program as relevant to their aspirations and goals in life?

What methods will help me answer this question?
- Semi-structured Interviews
- Study questionnaire (youth goals and reasons for joining the program)
- Participant observations

2) How does an OST program approach of *educación* mediate the conversion of cultural and social resources into capital for Latino immigrant youth?

What methods will help me answer this question?
- Interviews
- Participant observations

3) How do Latino immigrant youth perceive their participation in community-based OST programs in relationship to their educational experiences in school?

What methods will help me answer this question?
- Interviews
- Participant observations

Appendix B
IRB Approval Document

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus	*Human Research Protection Program*	*D528 Mayo Memorial Building*
	Office of the Vice President for Research	*420 Delaware Street S.E.*
		MMC 820
		Minneapolis, MN 55455
		Office: 612-626-5654
		Fax: 612-626-6061
		E-mail: irb@umn.edu or ibc@umn.edu
		Website: http://research.umn.edu/subjects/

07/25/2011

Kate Walker
UM Ext Ctr for 4-H Youth
Room 270   McNamaraCtr
200 Oak St SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

RE: "Pathways Project"
         IRB Code Number: **1106S01502**

Dear Dr. Walker:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval at 45CFR46.111 and the requirements set by the IRB, final approval for the project is noted in our files. Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes assent form, received June 23, 2011 and the letter of invitation, parent consent form, and staff consent form, all received July 20, 2011.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 570 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

For your records and for grant certification purposes, the approval date for the referenced project is July 13, 2011 and the Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal; approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems or serious unexpected adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

Sincerely,

Christina Dobrovolny, CIP
Research Compliance Supervisor
CD/ks

CC: Josey Landrieu, Emily Rence, Siri Scott, Joanna Tzenis, Abby Wagner, Sara Wagner

Appendix C
Intreview protocols for initial interview

1. When did you join [PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION]?

2. What was it about [NAME OF PROGRAM] that made you decide to join?

   Why did you choose [PROGRAM] over other ones available to you?
3. Were there particular things <u>you wanted to get out of</u> the program?

4. What do you want to get out of the program this year?

5. What was your first impression of the program, when you first joined?
   - What did you like about it? What "connected" with you?

   - How was this different from or similar to other programs or activities in school?
     How do you feel about the program now?

6. Overall, in what ways did <u>your decision to participate</u> this year/session <u>relate to things that are important</u> to you – like what you value, your personal goals or aspirations?

Interview Protocol for more in-depth semi-structured interviews with youth

Maybe the big question for you is, which piece of information is most important to you – the overall motivation for participation (ideally, but not necessarily, with a link to culture) or the understanding of the youth's culture and family and how they experience these influences (ideally, but not necessarily, with a link to the program)?

Dissertation: Title!
Interview Protocol

ID _____   Date _____
        Name of Program_____

Rapport-Building

Before I ask you about the program….
        [Take a few minutes to get acquainted and ask about things <u>other than the program</u>. You could ask about:

- What they like to do, their <u>favorite activities</u>, how they spend their time, or <u>what they do for fun</u>.
- <u>How their day is going.</u>]

[Allow them to talk about themselves on their own terms]

First of all, I want to <u>thank you</u> for participating in this project. I'm looking forward to talking with you <u>getting to know you</u> and hearing about your experience in [Name of the program].

There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. I am interested in your experiences and ideas – and that makes you the expert!

Before we get started, I want to make sure you understand (1) that you <u>don't have to answer questions</u> you would rather skip (you can just say, "I'd rather pass on this one" or something like that); and (2) the responses you give will be <u>confidential - I won't share them with others.</u>

Is it okay if I record this interview?
    [After you start the recorder, cite the following:
    "This is <u>interview number</u> (same ID #, today's <u>date</u> is XX, the <u>interviewer</u> is XX)"]

GOALS

When did you get involved at [Program/Organization]?

What was it about [NAME OF PROGRAM] that made you decide to join?

<u>What</u> have you been doing recently?

What role do you think that [program] plays in your life?

What did you want to get out of the program this year?
    Were there particular things <u>you wanted to get out of</u> the program?

So in the big picture, in what ways did <u>your decision to participate</u> this year/session <u>relate to things that are important</u> to you – like what you value, your personal goals or aspirations?

    Sometimes the reasons people stay in the program are different from the reasons that they joined. How have your reasons for coming changed or developed?

What happened that caused this change?

How well do you think you are reaching your goals you had at the beginning of the year?

Probe: Could you explain?

What are the most important things you are learning at [program]?

AW: What skills or abilities do you feel you have learned by participating in [program]?

How would you describe your experience in [program] compared to your experience at school? What's different? What's similar?

PEDAGOGY

Do you think that participating in [program] helps you be a better student in school? If yes, how so?

Probe: In what ways does participating in [program] add to your education?

Do you think that [program] influences your educational experience in and outside of the school? How so?

I've noticed that several of the youth I talked to at [program] feel that doing better in their academic (grades) is a very important thing for them…why do you think that is? How are academics important to you?

-Do you think that participating in [program name] motivates you to continue your schooling? Do you think participating in [program name] helps you stay in school? Finish? Work towards graduation?

MOTIVATION

How has your motivation or interest in the program activities grown or changed since you first started?
Were there specific activities that changed your motivation?

Probe: What was it about those activities that got you interested?

a. So, tell me about what happened that made your motivation change.

Probe: Did something special happen? Or was it something you did?
Probe: Was there something <u>someone said</u> that helped change your motivation?
Probe: Or <u>something you told yourself</u> that led to your change in motivation?

Since you started at [program name] have any <u>barriers or challenges</u> gotten in the way of your being fully involved?

AW: Were there things that made it difficult to <u>do your work</u> or <u>attend</u> the program?

Probe: If yes, could you tell me about them?

FAMILY

Now I want to talk to you about your family's background and culture.

Could you list a few words on this paper that you would use to describe <u>your family's background</u>? (Sheet of paper and pencil to the interviewee…give them a couple of minutes to do this)
AW: Like words that describe your family's culture, history, ethnicity, race, religion, or language?

AW: How would you describe your background (family's culture, ethnicity, race, religion, or language)?

Are you learning things in the program about your own or other's culture? Can you give me an example?

AW: Some youth feel that a program allows them to learn and explore their family history, cultural traditions, or ethnic background. Do you feel this way about your program? Tell me about it.

How does participating in the program influence/help you understand how you see yourself as a Latino/a youth?

ASSETS

You made a list/drawing describing your background and culture. Can you tell me more about that list? [Pause to give the youth time to think]

What are some of the things you enjoy the most about your background/culture?

How do you think your background/culture has influenced how you work or what you do in the program?

AW: Think of youth in the program from different backgrounds. How is what you do different?

How has your background/culture affected your motivation in the program?

Probe: Do you feel like your motivation, at times, comes from some of those things you listed about your background?

How has your background/culture affected how you relate to peers in the program?

How has your background/culture affected how you relate to the adult leaders/staff?

(If you are a recent immigrant)- Have you participated in similar programs back in your home country of (country)?
How was that experience similar or different from participating in [program]?

TESTIMONIES/ADVICE

Some parents give advice to their children--like on how to behave, or about doing work, or how to treat people.

Did your parents have a role in your decision to join the program?
What do you think your parents want you to get out of the program?

Have your parent[s] ever given you that kind of advice (or dichos)?

AW: Like something they say to you that they think will be really helpful to you?
Probe: Can you give an example of what they say?

Is this advice important for you? If so, why?
AW. Has it helped you in any way?

Does that advice influence what you do in the program? If so, how?
AW. Like does it affect your work or how you act towards other people?

Where would you like to be in 10 years from now?

Where do you think you'll be in 10 years from now?

LEADER-YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS

Do you feel like you have something in common with the adults in the organization? How so? (what's similar/different?)

Do you feel that they understand you? Why? How so?

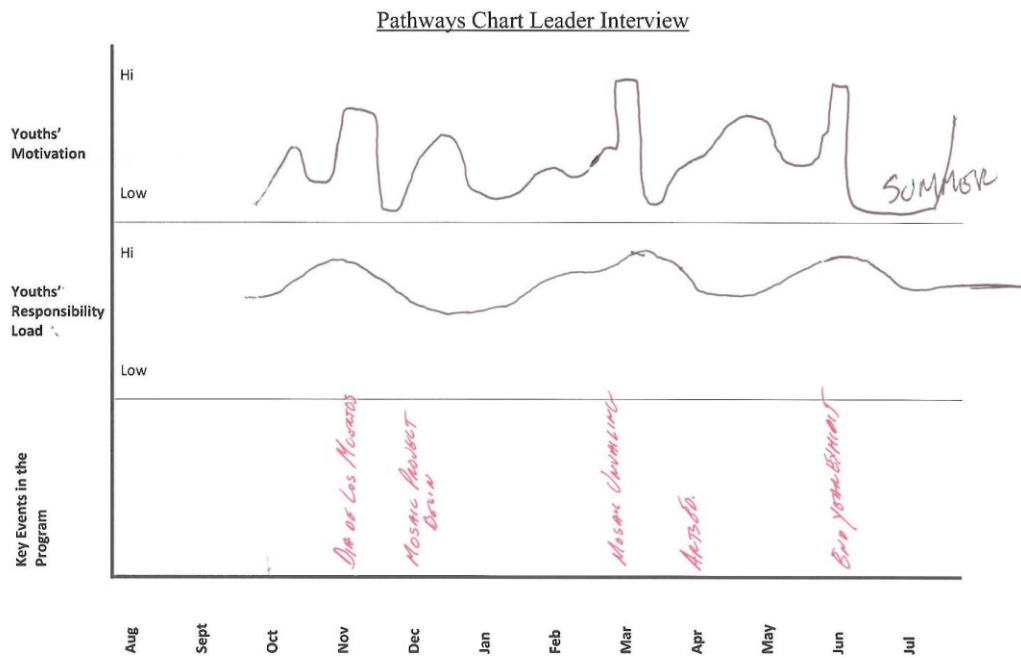How does that make you feel (getting at the trust thing, among other possible feelings).

CONCLUSION

Do you have any questions for me?

Could I contact you if I need to clarify any of your answers to make sure I understand

what you told me?

I want to thank you so much for taking the time to participate and talking to me about

your experience.

Appendix D
Arturo's graph

Pathways Chart Leader Interview

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ID: LB.90.21

(Please scan and load on S drive)

Appendix E
Timeline for data collection, analysis and writing, and defense

IRB Approved on July 19th, 2011.

October 2011
- Initial observations
- Initial interviews with participants

November 2011-January 2012
- Continued observations
- Transcribed and code first interviews
- Developed interview protocols for more in depth interview with youth towards the end of program year.

February 2012
- Continued observations
- Selected participants for end of program year interviews

March 2012-May 2012
- Continued observations
- Conducted interviews with participants

June 2012
- Began member checking for themes from interviews and participants observations
- Continued DEDOOSE coding from collected data

August 2012-October 2014
- Ongoing writing

October 2014
- Dissertation defense