Learning Between the Lines:

Non-formal Learning and Citizenship Identity Formation in Schools

by

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ABSTRACT

Educational institutions play a key role in how students build citizenship identity. Goals for citizenship education in Alberta are broad, with curricular applications being limited largely to students' basic knowledge of democratic systems. At present, there are few policies in place to support specific learning outcomes in terms of participation, personal relations, and civic identity, and there is no clear evaluation process to assess the kinds of citizenship understandings produced. As a result, the process of non-formal citizenship identity building within schools is not well understood. Despite a growing awareness that much important citizenship learning happens through students' non-formal experiences at school, most academic research in this area focuses on the outcomes of either citizenship curriculum or school citizenship programs. This study explores the ways in which students' capacities and orientations toward notions of justice-oriented citizenship as defined by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) are influenced by their non-formal learning experiences in school. Qualitative methods were used to engage with students' understandings of citizenship, democracy, and non-formal learning. Results revealed that students' non-formal experiences with school structure, hierarchy, and assessment modes often perpetuate feelings of isolation, structural disenfranchisement, and powerlessness. However, in cases where students were able to see themselves as positive influences in their school community, activate their voice, or help others, they began to build citizenship identities that were democratic and valued dialogue, diversity, and a culture of empathy as key components of a healthy democratic community.

PREFACE

This thesis is an original work by Auralia Brooke. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "You Should Read These: Citizenship and Learning in Public School Spaces", No. Pro00037761, April 11, 2013.

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DEDICATION

To my mum, for putting *Deschooling Society* on our bookshelf when I was nine years old, and for always telling me that I was smart enough to figure it out.

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INTRODUCTION

Study Context

This study takes place within the lived experiences of secondary school students and the staff who work with them. Recent research indicates that Canadian youth relate to and define citizenship on different terms than previous generations; these terms are less participatory, more disenfranchised, and involve new definitions of community involvement (Turcotte, 2007). Despite what some would call a pressing need for increased investment in community, politics, environment, and global issues, there is a troubling trend toward non-engagement on the part of young potential voters that indicates the necessity for research to better understand how and why notions of citizenship and democratic participation are shifting in young Canadians.

As the centre of most young peoples' socialization and education processes, school represents a key site of citizenship learning. However, learning goals and outcomes for citizenship within schools are rarely clearly defined or evaluated. Instead there are curricular outcomes for basic learning around democratic systems, supported by a framework of unapplied mission statement values within a largely unexamined system of sociocultural reproduction. Although some curricular attempts are made to address the practicalities of voting and democratic systems, the nature of citizenship learning is non-formal, and non-curricular aspects of the process go unplanned. Students build understandings of their place in the world through a complex set of overlapping experiences with its function and with their relationships to structures of power, influence, economy, and values. The lessons that they absorb through these experiences are lessons about their ability to participate in community, envision collective futures, and understand their own agency within sociopolitical systems.

Critical theoretical work to support the importance of non-formal learning to citizenship identities has been informing educational studies since John Dewey first published in 1882. From the work of Paulo Friere (1970) on concientization to the writings of Ivan Illich (1971), Henry Giroux (1989), and then Antonia Darder (2012), the place of transformative pedagogy in citizenship for a socially just world has been well established. These ideas have been complimented by researchers like Westheimer and Kahne

(2004), whose work has examined the role of citizenship programming in changing students' understandings of agency, power, and community. However, academic studies in this area focus primarily on curricular or planned learning opportunities. Non-formal learning is marginalized or invisible within these frameworks, despite its obvious effects on student citizenship understandings.

Study Purpose

This study is an attempt to address the lack of information on the kinds of learning outcomes that non-formal experiences have on students' citizenship identity formation. Through qualitative investigation, this research explores the ways in which students' capacities and orientations toward notions of justice-oriented citizenship are influenced by their non-formal learning (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). To guide and focus my research, I have used the following questions:

I. What are staff and students' perceptions of the purpose and function of unplanned school spaces with regard to education for citizenship?

II. What citizenship identities are students constructing from their non-formal experiences in unplanned school spaces?

III. How do students' experiences with citizenship projects change their citizenship identity-building process?

Researcher Location

This study begins and ends with leaving a school. The first time that I dropped out, I was nine years old. I grew up outside regular educational systems, on a small boat that travelled where we needed it to be and taught us to fish, bake bread, and trade for vegetables. I learned how to learn on that boat, how to participate in certain systems when necessary, and how to define a place for myself within them based on what I needed from them. When I was nine years old, my mother and I began to talk about my education. What was it for? What did I want from it? Was public school good for me? If not, was there a better way to learn? Quotations from *Deschooling Society* (Illich, 1971) found their way to the dinner table, and I began to participate in the planning of my own curriculum, the selection of my teachers and the methods by which I would be taught.

Each year, I'd think about what I needed most in order to learn and develop, and make a plan for what would work best. Some years, it was public school, and it was about friends and learning what "normal people do". Some years, it was about being able to travel and sail, and I chose learning by correspondence so that I could maintain my grades and stay curricularly connected while moving from place to place. In my last few years, I found mentors who were experts in particular fields, studied with them, and then wrote reports that helped the correspondence school translate my experiences into high school credits. As insurance I sat every provincial exam because I wanted a formal record of my learning in math, chemistry, physics and biology. I'm now 34 years old, and have been designing curricular components for university and secondary school for the past seven of those years. However, my unusual path has given me the strange opportunity to view the progression of my peers through an outsider lens. My research study and its questions have their roots in my personal understanding of the way that attending school changes peoples' knowledge frameworks and citizenship identity.

There are three aspects of my relationship to this research that inform this study, that make it unique and that influence its design and projected results. The first of these is my theoretical perspective with regard to notions of citizenship. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) have observed that the outcomes of citizenship projects depend partly on the political orientation of those involved. I would argue that this also holds true for the design of research in this area. In seeking to evaluate students' progress toward justice-oriented citizenship, I am implicitly and explicitly suggesting that this kind of citizenship should be an essential goal for school program development. This ideological orientation is aligned with that of Alberta Education documents, but the interpretation and analysis of data is also influenced by my personal understandings of how engaged democratic citizenship looks. It is also no doubt influenced by my experiences with the ways that school dampened and deterred certain understandings of student agency and participation, and my outsider perspective that some aspects of un-engaged citizenship are nurtured by time spent in school. It was therefore necessary to augment my strong bias toward understanding citizenship in a specific way with exploration of multiple definitions and theories regarding democratic participation. These are outlined in Chapter 2 of this study in order to better delineate both my own perspective and how my ideological interpretation of the subject matter has informed analysis.

As a volunteer facilitator and mentor within the student-run school space that the study project originated from, my relationship to this research is also uniquely influenced by my understandings of student motivations and my relationships with these students as a facilitator and mentor. This position allows for greater insight into the context and nuance of student responses, but also demands a greater investment in participant wellbeing and project success. That investment has prompted me to build in language and analysis units that are appropriate to original project goals and that may allow project organizers and school staff to use this research to inform the integrity and success of future projects. It has enhanced study credibility and internal consistency by providing numerous opportunities to re-check my interpretations. It has also allowed me to develop a rich understanding of the ways through which students communicate and internalize citizenship knowledge; this was essential information when attempting to code transcribed data. It may be that these relationships have also detracted from this study's transferability. In this case, I hope that the benefits of working with a rich data set and within a context where familiarity with language and subjects were essential to success will offset the disadvantages this may have engendered.

Finally, as a community-involved academic my practice is rooted in notions of equitable and respectful relationships between researcher and research communities. This notion of equitability is not limited to ethics guidelines for participant involvement, but extends into my notions of the purpose and function of research as a resource for all those it involves. While a participatory action research approach was not feasible in this case, its values have informed my study design and purpose. My goal is therefore not only to contribute to academic understandings of citizenship, but also to enact my own version of justice-oriented participation by using my skills as a researcher in ways that benefit both my community of practice and the educational community I inhabit as an engaged democratic citizen.

My connection to study participants has counterweighted my academic interests with an understanding that my data and position as researcher exist because of deep imbalances in the daily lives of youth in my community. Navigating my understanding of privilege and responsibility within this context was part of my analytical process; it was a

constant reminder to ask better questions, to return to the question of why youth want to be involved with research, and of what purpose they saw my process serving. There is a section of research evaluation that each graduate student writes invisibly during our thesis. It is where we tally the significance of our research and its relevance to the academic community against the toll that it takes on the researcher and the researched. Due to a variety of factors encompassing the brilliance and complexity of research already conducted in our field, the regrets we may have about study design and execution, and the graduate school environment, this tally is often negative. In my case reconnecting with student perceptions of my data allowed me to re-write that invisible section numerous times, to realize that my research process and the relationships it formed were in themselves an answer to the problems of isolation and competition evident in my findings. My analysis therefore became more than just a piece of academic work – it became a way of exploring tensions between academic and lived experiences, and a struggle to augment the negative results of the data by investing in the results of the process. In the following chapter, I will begin by outlining some of the critical theoretical perspectives that have been essential to this exploration.

CHAPTER 2: POWER, CITIZENSHIP, AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

International standardization and economic forces are inextricably tied to school priorities, but the importance of school is also linked with perceptions that it is a training ground for good citizenship. My study is focused on this second aspect of education, and must therefore initially investigate what is meant by *citizenship* as it is referred to in policy and theory writing, as well as the possibilities of how it could be taught or learned within schools.

Schooling and Society

While planning, tracking and reporting systems are replete with curriculum and assessments in other core areas, Canadian methods for addressing citizenship understandings are fractured at best. Each public Canadian school system lists citizenship education among its goals and outcomes, but the processes by which this happens and the definitions of citizenship learning itself are often unclear (Hughes et al, 2010). This lack of clarity is in part due to tension between the perceived roles of schools as producers of citizens with the values, habits and skills required by national and international economic markets, and as sites of growth, boundary-testing, critical thinking, and learning. This second understanding of the role of education is where my study is rooted, with acknowledgement that the tension between the two is a significant reality in educational policy and planning. The research framework created for this study builds upon the pedagogical approaches and values of critical educational theorists such as John Dewey, Henry A. Giroux, Ivan Illich, and Antonia Darder, and their understandings of the role of schools in democratic education, something that we could partially define as education for a citizenry that is capable of improving on current national and global inequities and inequalities. This chapter locates the study within the scholarly theories of these experts and others, while defining the key concepts of citizenship, democratic education, non-formal and experiential learning, and student voice.

Defining Citizenship Learning

Tensions between schooling for economic and political manageability and schooling for democratic citizenship are echoed in divisions within policy design and educational institutional history in Canada. In the former approach to schooling, we find a tradition of normative processes specifically engineered to produce appropriate economic actors according to national specifications. In the latter, we find expectations regarding individuals' investment in diversity, creativity, ability to innovate, and engage in critical debate. This leaves us with a spectrum of educational expectation at one end of which we have writers like Ivan Illich, for whom the purposes of a good education include: "to provide all that want to learn with access to resources at any time in their lives; make it possible for all who want to share knowledge etc. to find those who want to learn it from them; and to create opportunities for those who want to present an issue to the public to make their arguments known" (Illich, 1971, p.78). At the other end of the spectrum we have our lived institutional history, about which Llewellyn remarks: "The inculcation of standards for good behavior became a priority in educational programming around the turn of the century. From the 1890s, Canada experienced dramatic growth through immigration and industrialization, and many felt the need to socialize this large group of young, male, semi-skilled workers, many of whom lacked a working knowledge of English or British societal norms" (Llewellyn, Cook, Westheimer, Girón and Suurtamm, 2007, p. 8). These perspectives, diverse though they are, share the assumption that no matter what the goal, time spent in school directly affects students' approaches to citizenship questions.

Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne in their 2004 article, *What Kind of Citizen?* address the problem of defining what we mean when we speak of citizenship education. Specifically, they propose that within the spectrum of educational approaches emerge three kinds of citizenship learning. The first is that of the *personally responsible* citizen, a definition that includes education around formal participation in political systems (voting, paying taxes), lawful behavior, and basic community responsibility in the form of charitable giving, recycling, and other socially mainstream acts of sustainability. Most if not all educators value this kind of citizenship education as a basic necessity for responsible adulthood. Westheimer has observed that this kind of citizenship is welcome

in almost any nation-state regardless of the kind of government present; both democracies and oligarchies cultivate citizens who are law-abiding, timely, polite, and cognizant of appropriate social participation (Westheimer, 2010). According to recent Canadian data, this kind of citizenship is almost always referenced in citizenship education mandates (Hughes et al, 2010). The same is true of the second kind of citizenship learning that Westheimer and Kahne outline, that of the *participatory citizen.* Here, students learn to be active and engaged community members, organizing and participating in a variety of political and social projects, and remaining current with political affairs, economic concerns, and community wellbeing. Westheimer and Kahne point out that these citizens "take leadership positions within established systems and community structures". This group of learners could be defined as those who embrace the normative understandings of social and political hierarchy outlined in the authors' first category of citizenship education (*personally responsible* citizenship), and have the confidence and positive reinforcement to leverage that knowledge into personal growth and participation. This is problematic when we consider the narrow range of students that are encouraged and receive appropriate behavioral and educational cues to achieve this kind of citizenship; essentially, those that are already part of advantaged, majority-culture, wealthy or semi-wealthy society (Darder, 2012).

The third kind of citizenship these authors discuss is that of the *justice-oriented citizen*, which overlaps with notions of democratic citizenship as proposed by Dewey, Giroux, Illich, and Darder in their works of critical theory. This third category is often present in educational mandates as a quotation, a mission statement, or a set of theoretical priorities, but is less often included in the practical realization of curriculum or policy. It is present as inspiration, but not as implementable pedagogy within most current systems, and is often identified by words like *love, passion, inspiration*, and *critical*, and by a lack of budget prioritization or assessment frameworks. This warm and fuzzy characterization of democratic ideology is not due to an inherently emotional or inapplicable quality to this kind of citizenship; democratic and socially just goals have measurable outcomes and are compatible with curriculum and action plans, possibly to a greater extent than many other regularly addressed aspects of citizenship learning. The reduction of social justice to its emotional elements, then, should be recognized as an unnatural process. It represents a deeply worrying oversimplification of important

democratic concepts. If one removes critical thought, struggle, and responsibility from democratic ideals, one creates a useful foundational pillar that inspires without representing a serious commitment to the necessary struggle involved in its realization. By reifying notions of social justice into positive inspiring and emotional content, we are able to adopt attitudes of equality without committing to action that would disrupt hierarchy, individualism, or current social norms. Upon first examination, the positive mission statements of many schools and educational systems may seem like a commitment to equality that is a great first step toward democratic citizenship. In reality however, these statements subvert understandings of equality and democracy as difficult, messy, and contested. They preserve the inspiration and hope that come with democracy without acknowledging the responsibility and work that would make it a reality. Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) understanding of the *justice-oriented* citizen is more useful in its acknowledgement that social justice requires constant struggle on the part of the individual, and it is within this third, transformational understanding of citizenship education that studies of student perspectives and qualitative work into perceptions of citizenship become necessary tools for expanding pedagogical approaches.

Education for Democratic Citizenship

From the perspective of critical theorists, the civic behavior encouraged by personally responsible or participatory notions of citizenship has served us well only in building ordered societies with agreed-upon parameters of behavior (Darder, 2012; Friere, 1970; Westheimer, 2010). It has always contained seeds of inequality and oppression for those without power or privilege to participate in its systems (Darder, 1012; Kovach, 2005). As we become part of an increasingly complex global web of interactions, these seeds grow into poverty gaps and greed; a forest of systematic oppression by and within our economic and political networks, reinforced by parameters of justice that cannot provide a framework for evaluating what is best across multiple contexts. Our experiential understandings of right and wrong, learned through the educational process, fall short when confronted with questions of what is "just" for individuals from different communities whose lives have become intertwined through the workings of capitalism, international trade, and aid (Fraser, 2009; Giroux, 1989). As

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Michael Sandel (2012) describes in his writings of the intersection of market analysis and political justice: "Our reluctance to bring competing conceptions of the good life into political debate has not only impoverished our public discourse; it has also left us ill equipped to contend with the growing role and reach of markets in our lives". Westheimer's justice-oriented notion of citizenship brings this reluctance into the light, and allows us to expand dialogue, to develop new and necessary conversations about what life is and how we choose to live alongside one another. As Giroux (1989) explained, "Citizenship education in this view was defined as a referent not for defending – but rather for transforming – the existing social order" (p. 6). This understanding of what it means to be a good citizen is transformational, and stems from an understanding of citizenship as an interaction with and product of social, political, and economic power relations (Giroux, 1989).

The need for this kind of democratic citizenship is supported by recent research suggesting that the existing global order is not only deeply flawed and unjust, but it is doomed to failure without rapid reassessment and change (Fraser, 2009, Hawken, 2007). As our world becomes more complex, the realities of the global economy more immediate, and our youth more quickly integrated into the public discourse permeating the fabric of their social world through broadband cables, it is imperative that we raise children able to critically examine the information with which they are presented (Meyers & Zaman, 2009). Global indicators of health, wellness, environmental concerns, and justice issues indicate that humanity in the next century will need new, creative, and collaborative approaches to solve old problems (Hawken, 2007). Challenges will include new needs for sustainable practices and environmental preservation, and the needs we've always had to learn how to balance prosperity with equality, histories of oppression with futures that require diversity, multiplicity, and respect. For this we need citizens who, at a minimum, know how to listen and to collaboratively construct knowledge from multiple sources. Concurrently, Canadian research demonstrates that our youth are less politically engaged with each passing year, and are beginning to frame their notions of citizenship and knowledge construction within increasingly limited economic and neoliberal understandings of community participation (Turcotte, 2007). These studies are addressed in some detail in the next chapter. For the time being it is important to note that the research in this study is designed from within the perspective

of critical, justice-oriented theorists who tell us that the inspiration of critical, justice-oriented citizenship is one essential role that an education can and must play in enhancing our lives and our understandings of the spaces we occupy (Abdi & Richardson, 2008; Apple & Beane, 2007; Illich, 1971; Shultz & Abdi, 2008).

To address the increasing neoliberalization of our global economic and political systems and the problems of what Fraser (2009) describes as misrepresentation, maldistribution, and misrecognition arising from this context, we need new frames of reference. Educational systems, with their pivotal roles in the socialization of new citizens, will need a definition of citizenship in a global economy that encourages youth to see themselves as actors in a multinational and multicultural context that may include multiple civic identities. More than that, they will require the cognitive tools to deliberate between paradigms, to analyze and respond to current trends with new ideas. The Frierean claim that, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry [we] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Friere, 1971) is particularly salient here. The democratization of learning is an imperative project not simply as an act of social justice for certain marginalized voices, but because we need multiplicity, all of us, to struggle within.

For a definition of democratic education that includes this kind of struggle we can look to John Dewey, one of the earliest proponents of education for democratic citizenship. Writing in 1916, he defined democracy as

> *Primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the numbers of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (Dewey, 2009, p.87).*

From Dewey's description, students would need more than simply the understanding of how to perpetuate current structures that personally responsible or participatory citizenship implies. Rather, they would require an appreciation for what society could be; an appreciation for diversity and a deep need to create collaborative

and equitable spaces of dialogue within which all citizens can participate in social, economic, and political systems. Giroux (1989) describes this kind of citizenship as one that would "aim at eliminating oppressive social practices, but would also constitute itself as a new movement for moral reawakening and, in doing so, would work toward constructing non-alienating social relations whose goal would be to expand and strengthen the possibilities inherent in human life." Darder (2012) likewise argues for an inclusive, critical pedagogy that would address the shortfalls of our current systems:

> *From the standpoint of critical theory, education must hold an emancipatory purpose and acknowledge schooling as a political process. A key to this perspective is the recognition of the contextual relationship that exists between the cultural politics and economic forces in society and the structure of schools. Hence, critical pedagogy espouses a view of knowledge that is both historical and dialectical in nature (p. 80).*

In light of Darder (2012) and Giroux' (1989) observations on the importance of pedagogy that is infused with and embedded in democratic understandings, it is significant to note here that Westheimer and Kahne's definitions of kinds of citizenship are useful as points of reference for student development but do not make sense as evaluative measures for democratic education unless they are complimented by an assessment of democratic practice as a collective project within the school environment. These categories track the internal citizenship learning processes of individual students, but democratic citizenship is not an individual project. Observations by Darder (2012) and Friere (1971) highlight the ways in which dominant social norms become part of identity for individuals of all kinds – both those who are repressed by the systems they inhabit and those who benefit from them. School environments are no exception to this pattern. While individual students may change, evolve, and practice new kinds of citizenship, unless students have a voice within their school, unless the school environment itself supports their citizenship, democracy cannot thrive. Judith Butler (2005) observes that "There is no "I" that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence…the "I" does not stand apart from the prevailing matrix of ethical norms and conflicting moral frameworks" (p. 8). Butler's observation that for individuals ethics and social theory are inescapably intertwined, suggests that democratic pedagogy

must extend to the social environment within a school as well as the explicit behaviors of its citizens.

The creation of citizens who can take on the challenges of neoliberalism begins, then, with diversity as both a value and a reality within processes of debate. This does not just refer to the age, gender, class and race of school inhabitants, but also to the kinds of learning, teaching, and lived understandings that inform the process. This is essential not only because of the information and perspectives it leaves room for, but also the behavior and kinds of respect that it demands of students. Antonia Darder's (2012) work on critical bicultural pedagogy above highlights the importance of relationships and cultural context, arguing that students, both bicultural and white, learn lessons from the environment in which they study, and from their daily interactions with peers and teachers, that cannot be addressed or corrected through curriculum alone. This non-formal or experiential aspect of school learning requires its own conversation within the context of this paper, but it should be noted here that any truly democratic learning environment must have more than just democratic curriculum; it must demand of its students a certain degree of debate, compromise, listening, and questioning that extends into their relationships to school structures and to one another in new ways.

Non-formal Education: Lived Experiences of Citizenship in Schools

In 1970 Paulo Friere published his watershed work on the emancipatory and transformational possibilities of education, in which he discusses the narrative nature of formal education experiences with a traditional teacher-student dynamic. He observes that education becomes "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor…This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (Friere, 1971, p. 72). Friere explores the relationship that this educational structure creates between student and teacher, a relationship that must presuppose an empty ignorance on the part of the learner, and that can only continue alongside an ideology of oppression in which the individual experiences of the learners do not constitute legitimized knowledge, and their processes of interaction with the world, culturally or otherwise, are not recognized as desirable ways of knowing.

In the context of citizenship education, this process is particularly important. Giroux observes that "the concept of citizenship must... be understood partly in pedagogical terms as a political process of meaning-making, as a process of moral regulation and cultural production, in which particular subjectivities are constructed around what it means to be a member" (Giroux, 1989, p. 6). If, as Friere (1971) suggests, the very process by which we educate disallows certain kinds of meaning-making and deprioritizes some kinds of subjectivities, then the education process itself gives the lie to any pre-prepared curricular information about democratic understandings that it could offer. The experience of hegemony and disempowerment that is inherent in this kind of education has been identified by Aronowitz and Giroux (1989) as a "hidden curriculum" of social and classroom relations whose power lies in their existence as "part of the structured silences that permeate all levels of school and classroom relations" (p. 75). This problematic contradiction between what we teach about democratic citizenship and the way we teach it concerned Giroux: "One of the weightiest problems with which the philosophy of education has to cope is the method of keeping a proper balance between the informal and the formal, the incidental and the intentional, modes of education" (Giroux, 1989, p.19).

These concerns were well founded. Writing in the 1970's, Ivan Illich observed the same problems within formal education systems, and began to advocate for de-schooling education, creating an emancipatory and radical process whereby students are able to create their own Frierean "concientization" through independent knowledge-building and knowledge co-creation. Illich (1971) claimed that youths' ability to engage with systemic and political issues is defined and manipulated through behavioral schooling that duplicates larger social structures. In his view, from the moment we send children to institutions, we become complicit in this process and in the patterns of thought and epistemological tools it endorses. If it is necessary, as Darder (2012), Fraser (2009) suggest, to change the way we understand our relationship to others, to address the way that justice issues are framed and who they affect, then we must begin with the way these things are learned in school. Ivan Illich (1971) identified the importance of schools in reinforcing value systems by remarking,

Once people have the idea schooled into them that values can be produced and measured, they tend to accept all kinds of rankings. There is a scale for the development of nations, another for the intelligence of babies, and even progress towards peace can be calculated according to body count. In a schooled world the road to happiness is paved with a consumer's index (p. 56).

Illich's statement points not only to the pervasiveness of values learned in school but also to the kind of values being learned. While family and public life are important areas of socialization for youth, it is through our non-formal experiences with education systems that we absorb our first lessons about rules and hierarchies. In school, children learn the detailed mechanisms commonly referred to as "social skills" that leverage relative power and positionality into individual educational and social capital. It order to embrace these mechanisms, they must first internalize the values of competition, meritocracy and individualism that will motivate them to excel in this system (Dumais, 2002). Individual advancement, grading, punishment, rewards, and curriculum contribute directly to this process. Again, Illich (1971) illustrates this by saying: "The pupil is thereby "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new" (Illich, 1971, p. 1-2). This kind of hidden curriculum directly addresses aspects of citizenship and power that are not easily unlearned in later life. We must therefore consider school environments essential sites of both formal and non-formal citizenship learning that equip youth with the hermeneutics of deciphering their position in relation to society, to each other, and to education and learning. As Illich reminds us:

School appropriates the money, men, and good will available for education and in addition discourages other institutions from assuming educational tasks. Work, leisure, politics, city living, and even family life depend on schools for the habits and knowledge they presuppose, instead of becoming themselves the means of education (Illich, 1971, p. 56).

Unless we intend to reject sending children to school altogether, those of us interested in educating for democratic citizenship must begin to imagine new kinds of critical pedagogy, not just for the classroom, but also for the non-formal learning spaces within our schools.

Non-Formal Spaces. These spaces are both physical and conceptual. They include the cartography of social and power relations within a classroom and the ideological underpinnings of curriculum, but also the powerful lessons learned through interactions in school hallways, lunch rooms, smoking corners, and other non-curricular but quite mappable locations. Any space in which relationships are acted out, in which students experiment with social relations and expressions of identity, become a space of citizenship learning in this context. Because current educational trends focused on measurable academic outcomes, international standardization, and performance measures are echoed in research priorities, little work has been done to trace the mechanisms of non-formal citizenship learning within school spaces.

Unexamined Realities. The supposition that because we have not planned learning into these spaces learning does not take place is obviously incorrect. Rather, we simply have very little data on what is being learned, and how it is affecting the outcomes for citizenship and social justice identity-building among youth. We can, however, infer what is being learned from the formal relationships built into traditional notions of schooling. The pressures of assessment and performance, for example, and the neoliberalization and charitization of community involvement, carry with them lessons about the need for competition and the dangers of collective action (Illich, 1971). Classroom structures reject personal knowledges, squelching diversity in favour of harmony and the majority voice (Darder, 2012).

That these socialized values learned through interaction affect students' approaches to political participation, diversity issues, and problem solving is clear. Their long-term effects on culture and society are less so, beyond our basic understanding that they at best reproduce and reflect current systems, and at worst perpetuate the kinds of prejudice, ignorance, and silences that education for democratic citizenship should disrupt. As the survey of young Canadian political participation and citizenship understandings in Chapter 3 indicates, our youth are becoming increasingly disenfranchised from a participatory democratic model (Turcotte, 2007). While we do not yet have the depth and breadth of youth voice in research to confirm links between their school experiences and the participation statistics, the possibility of a relationship

between the two suggests the need for further inquiry into the unexamined lessons our institutions instill.

Hidden Lessons. The unexamined lessons that take place through experiences with school structure are augmented by the hidden behavioral lessons that students of different backgrounds receive from their teachers and peers in classroom interaction. This is a particular concern for students who self-identify with minority cultures, including those of visible minorities and those who experience discrimination based on gender identity, class, religious or social choices, and behavioral or intelligence-related differences. Both Friere (1971) and Darder (2012) speak to the conflicted nature of these students' experiences with educational discourse that contains messages about their place within social and institutional structures. Of the pervasiveness of these messages Darder (2012) has to say,

> Discursive practices refer to the rules by which discourses are formed, and thus determine what can be spoken and what must remain unspoken; who can speak with authority and who must listen in silence. Thus, discourses and discursive practices influence how we live out our lives and how we interact with others. They shape our subjective experiences because it is primarily through language and discourse that social reality is given meaning (p. 94).

This landscape of hidden experiences must be given paramount importance in research and pedagogical practice for democratic citizenship. If the diversity at the centre of democratic dialogue is to be pursued, then we must resist the dominant classroom discourse that not only inhibits certain voices, but also actively blinds us to racism and discrimination through normalizing unacceptable kinds of marginalization.

Experiential Learning. Experiential education, unlike the unexamined lessons of structural alienation or the covert lessons of marginalization, is receiving increasing levels of interest from academic and teaching communities as a source of positive citizenship learning. Preliminary surveys of students participating in community-engaged pedagogy, service-learning programs, and civic engagement planning are demonstrating positive outcomes in the areas of basic political understanding, enthusiasm for community causes, and possibilities for students to engage in meaningful reflective

praxis (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Llewellyn et al, 2007). These programs are discussed more thoroughly in the survey of Canadian citizenship research in Chapter 3.

Giroux (2005), in his studies of citizenship education, wrote "Education has to be linked to forms of self and social empowerment if the school is to become…a force in the ongoing struggle for democracy as a way of life" (p.5). He also acknowledged the possibilities for positive citizenship learning within the world of student relationships, cultural environments, and power relations:

> Instead of seeing school knowledge as objective and value-free, it was seen as a social constitution tied to the interests, perceptions, and experiences of those who produce and negotiate its meaning. Instead of teachers and students acting as agents of received values and truths, they were now viewed as producers of values and truths. As knowledge became relativized, modes of pedagogy developed that stressed experiences and interpersonal relationships (1981, p.12).

This description of attempts to subvert the reproduction of hegemony and power in the classroom holds within it the hope that school spaces represent a unique opportunity for students from majority and minority cultures to begin to see themselves differently, and to begin to question their positionality and power. With the development of critical pedagogy that "acknowledges the spaces, tensions, and possibilities for struggle within the day-to-day workings of schools" (Giroux, 1988, p. 115) non-formal learning spaces could become a place to push back against dominant worldviews and create experiences of diversity and equity that stay with students of all races. With the right kinds of interactions and relationships, educators could change their approach to collaboration and to the reproduction of unequal power structures they witness in their social and political lives as adults. Darder (2012) calls this "a democratic environment where the lived cultures of working class bicultural students are critically integrated into the pedagogical process. Keeping these principles in mind, a critical theory of cultural democracy emerges as part of a language of possibility and hope" (p. 61). It is here, in the study of what can be, that Darder, Giroux and others have defined the need for student voice to be an integral part of the learning process.

Student Voice

        Giroux (1989) describes student voice and representation as "the forms of narrative and dialogue around which students make sense of their lives and schools" (p. 114). In his discussion of emancipatory curriculum, he identifies student voice, or "The discursive means whereby…students attempt to make themselves 'heard' and to define themselves as active authors of their worlds" (p.114) as central to the project of democratic schooling. Here he states that:

> Student experience must be given preeminence in an emancipatory curriculum...at the heart of any critical pedagogy is the necessity for teachers to work with the knowledges that students actually have. Although this may seem risky and in some cases dangerous, it provides the basis for validating the way in which students read the world as well as for giving them the intellectual content for putting knowledge and meaning into their own categories of meaning and cultural capital…To ignore the ideological dimensions of student experience is to deny the ground on which students learn, speak, and imagine. (p. 197-198)

 This acknowledgement that experience and knowledge building are inextricably linked for students is an echo of Friere's (1970) assertion that **"**Apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human" (p. 72). The insistence that student voice and student perspectives constitute essential parts of the knowledge-building process, particularly around understandings of community and citizenship, suggests a clear need for pedagogical approaches that value student perspectives as part of learning. Darder (2012) expands on Giroux' (1989) discussion of the centrality of student voice to designing such an approach: **"**Central to any theory that seeks to speak to the notion of democracy in the classroom is the requirement that it address seriously the themes of student participation, solidarity, common interest, and the development of voice" (p. 61).

        The requirements that Giroux outlines are necessary not only to support students' individual processes of identity-building, but also as a necessary restructuring of justice frameworks within which students are self-defining. Both Nancy Fraser (2009) and Iris Young (2013) describe modern problems with justice as issues not just of

misrepresentation or maldistribution, but of the justice frameworks themselves –
problems of misrecognition and misappropriation of dominant discourses to set
frameworks of justice that preclude certain kinds of participation. Both authors argue that
justice frameworks, in order to be effective from an ideological and democratic
perspective, must include in the justice process all affected by their existence. At the
school level and with regard to students' non-formal learning processes, this means
practicing a kind of justice that recognizes students as actors with their own perceptions
and experiences to contribute to the justice process. Here, student voice means not only
a space and acknowledgement for student opinions, but also a fundamental recognition
of their place within the school as valuable and contributing individuals. One must make
a distinction here between students' "right" to have a voice – a right that can be granted
by a justice framework and therefore does not represent recognition of a students'
genuine affected place within justice discourse – and student voice as something that
must exist in order for democracy to function within a school.

It is also important to note that the emancipatory and democratic possibilities of
student voice are not necessarily intrinsically linked to *democratic* citizenship education,
and the Frierean assertion that they are integral to learning does not guarantee that
students will learn any specific lessons without thoughtful pedagogical planning. This is
discussed further with regard to study analysis in Chapter 5. It must simply be
acknowledged here that without planned pedagogy around democratic understandings
of diversity, dialogue, collaboration, and social responsibility, the concept of student
voice could become an individualistic process of self-promotion that reinforces or
legitimates normative understandings of what is an 'acceptable' personal identity. While
Darder (2012) and Giroux (1989) point to the notion of student voice as essential to the
struggle for democracy in the classroom, it should be noted that the concept of
democracy as a collective struggle for equity, diversity, and collaboration is essential to
healthy, diverse development of student voice in both research and practice.

The shift to position student voice at the centre of citizenship learning demands a
complimentary shift in the way research design is understood and implemented around
these topics. Without a clear guide to what students are experiencing about citizenship,
teachers and school administrators cannot begin to identify how these experiences are

being translated into political knowledges, social action, or citizenship formation. This study is designed with these priorities in mind. With a review of critical theoretical and pedagogical perspectives now in place, it is now possible to explore the specific educational research currently taking place in the Canadian and Albertan contexts of this research.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study and the public school hallways in which it takes place occupy a critical space between academic understandings and personal experience that lies at the heart of how and why youth in schools enact certain kinds of citizenship. While Chapter 2 explored the theoretical underpinnings of education and citizenship dialogues, to understand the need for further academic work in this area this chapter provides a critical overview of citizenship education research in Canadian contexts.

In the following pages, I survey current research on civic and political participation of Canadian youth with particular reference to voting habits and studies of youth culture and political participation. Much of the recent data in this area has been compiled by prominent researchers who were invited to participate in Canadian Policy Research Network's (CPRN) Democratic Renewal Series, *Charting the Course for Youth Civic and Political Participation (2007).* The work of these researchers lays the foundation for understanding the numbers behind Canadian youths' participation in political processes from an educational and policy perspective. I will then use public policy documents to provide some context for youth civic engagement in Alberta schools, particularly with reference to the theoretical work of Westheimer and Kahne (2004) on citizenship categorization. It is clear from the body of work available that curriculum and program planning, empirically related as they are to school performance indicators, receive due process in terms of academic evaluation and research. Non-formal learning in schools' public spaces, with its less recognized connections to student success, often receives less attention. I will therefore also take some time to explore current research on the links between experiential education and citizenship practice as the most applicable research available on non-formal learning in schools. Finally, I will review a selection of cross-disciplinary research that examines the significance of non-formal learning in the construction of citizenship identity.

Canadian Youth and Civic Participation

Much of our understanding of the importance of education to citizenship identity in a Canadian context centres on the role that schools play in preparing students to

become citizens in particular economic, political, and social contexts. The most researched area of youth civic participation is, of course, formalized political engagement. While it is necessary to recognize that these are measures of a very small, very specific aspect of democratic citizenship as it might be conceived, we might well consider it a benchmark for understanding the relationship of Canadian youth to democratic concepts that voting symbolizes. Do these youth see themselves as democratic participants, as engaged citizens? Can they map out a relationship between themselves and the political, economic, and civil structures that they are taught about in the classrooms, that they are poised to inherit?

There is little disputation of the fact that youth participation in the formal trappings of democratic systems is declining on a national level in Canada (Torney-Purta et al, 2001; Hughes et al, 2010; Elections Canada, 2012; Blais et al, 2002; O'Neill, 2007). In his 2007 survey of youth voter turnout, Turcotte (2007) remarks "in the last three federal elections, more than six in every 10 Canadians between the ages of 18 and 25 could not find a good reason to vote". There was at least a 20% gap between voter turnout of those born in the 1960's and 1970's, and those who were born in previous generations (Turcotte, 2007). This trend has increased in new generations, as is evidenced by Elections Canada's 2012 *Estimation of Voter Turnout by Age Group and Gender at the 2011 Federal General Election,* see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Voter Turnout by Age Group, Federal General Elections, 2004 to 2011 (Elections Canada, 2012)

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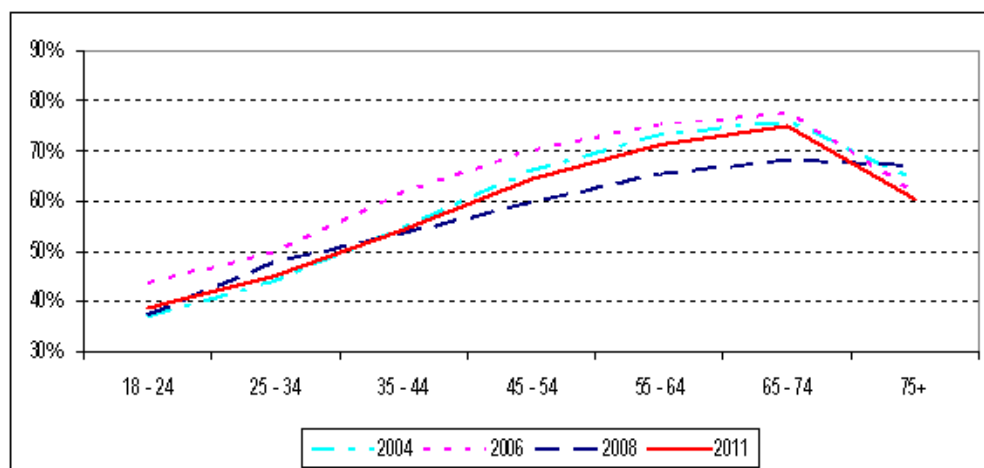
In his 2007 paper *"What Do You Mean I Can't Have a Say?" Young Canadians and Their Government*, Andre Turcotte (2007) delineates three approaches to the question of why youth participation continues to decline. The first of these is rational choice – the notion that young people are determining as rational actors that the act of voting is not beneficial enough to be worth the effort that it requires. The second frames youth as actors with a changed system of value priorities from previous generations. Here Turcotte points to an ISSP study in which youth under the age of 30 on average felt more affinity toward nonpolitical and individualized acts of citizenship such as using environmentally friendly products, joining associations, and helping the disadvantaged over collective political acts like voting, understanding other opinions, and "keeping watch on the government" (p. 13). His final frame of reference for understanding the declining participation of youth in the electoral process is cultural; Turcotte suggests that young Canadians do not have a strong sense of civic duty as part of their Canadian cultural identity to the same extent as individuals over the age of 30. Here he addresses the decline in perceived civic duty evidenced by those under the age of 30 in recent studies. Using the work of Andre Blais, Turcotte (2007) explains that "When obligation or duty is absent, so too are positive feelings of efficacy and trust…findings presented...showed that young Canadians are not only disinterested in politics, but also feel powerless, ignored and less informed than others" (p.14). It is worth noting that this cycle of disinterest and perception of powerlessness mirrors Illich's (1971) predictions for traditional schooling, and is reinforced experientially over time. Much of the qualitative data referenced by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), and by Llewellyn et al (2007) evidences that this erosion of trust between youth and formalized political systems is exacerbated by a sense that their actions have no efficacy within these systems. These studies could indicate that Friere's (1970) understanding of the link between political will, agency, and educational structure is lamentably accurate:

> A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical or dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narration sickness (p. 71).

In a significantly more optimistic approach to youth disenfranchisement, some current research suggests that students may be simply shifting their means of political action from official participation and interest in voting and political parties to individual social justice or activism activities. Whether this is so requires further study, as it is also possible that it is these activist individuals who also still vote and participate in traditional political activity (Gidengil et al., 2004 in Llewellyn, Cook, Westheimer, Girón and Suurtamm, 2007) Even if it were the case that students are abandoning voting in favour of volunteer work, this movement toward depoliticized and individualized democratic involvement indicates a deep shift in the characterization of citizenship by these young people, from the formal processes of democratic engagement to a highly individualized, often charity-oriented approach. The most optimistic interpretations of the data indicate that despite a steady or even increasing curricular focus on formal aspects of democratic participation as citizenship, youth graduating from high school today are less likely to vote, join a political party, or actively engage with the formal trappings of democratic process.

In CPRN's Democratic Renewal Series, *Charting the Course for Youth Civic and Political Participation* (2007), Llewellyn et al remark that "If, as Rousseau asserted, the right to vote should be accompanied by an obligation to be knowledgeable in public affairs, strengthening democracy will require attention to the level of civic literacy and the ability to use civic knowledge in the democratic process of governance" (Llewellyn et at, 2007, p. 1). This series of papers includes work by O'Neill, Turcotte and others and moves beyond the overwhelming evidence that youth participation is in decline, to explore how the reasons for and possible solutions to that decline are deeply embedded within our educational curriculum, design, and policy understandings. Evidence also suggests that curricular initiatives, while often moderately successful, are only half the picture when it comes to youth civic involvement. These researchers argue that students must be given the skills to apply and effectively curate the knowledge that they are taught, and then to use it as a means of political participation. There is, however, an undercurrent of concern that runs through the research on youth participation. Collectively we seem to be asking where there are successes in civic education for youth, but also wondering why, in the majority of cases, youth seem to be simultaneously enthusiastic and disenfranchised when it comes to civic involvement.

Qualitative and quantitative evaluations of youths' enthusiasm for political learning present us with every possible position on the spectrum of desire for information. Perhaps the most interesting point to be drawn from the babble of data is that regardless of their desire to learn, to feel like actors, youth are not acting and that regardless of the successes and failures of curricular activity in this area, even those who wish to participate and are given the tools to do so are still politically disenfranchised.

As Hughes, Print, and Sears (2010) remark in their survey of youth participation across four national democratic systems, when it comes to educational reform for goals related to citizenship skills and identity, "Canada is a dabbler" (p.3). We must acknowledge that if Canadian educational policies regarding civic identity were implemented, rather than just supported in values-oriented descriptive text about education, the situation might be less dire. While this would reduce the generational gap and increase youth participation, we would still find ourselves faced with differences in citizenship identity that are beyond the limits of curriculum and behavioral codes, and extend into how students build civic identity on a deeply personal level. This area of citizenship falls closer to Turcotte's description of the cultural reasons for youth disenfranchisement; where and how do we build that necessary relationship of political trust and civic duty that lead to action? We must begin to ask ourselves what the key difference is between those who self-identify as political actors and those who do not. Within our educational systems, what aspect of civic learning creates students who, when they are given understanding and then skills, also possess the desire and necessary sense of commitment to act? It is this question of motivation, of self-identity as a political participant, that our policy systems fall most short in addressing.

Citizenship Education in Alberta

Discussions about citizenship education in the Canadian context must take into account Canada's history and the history of our educational system, as well as modern demands for democratic participation and skills related to involvement in a diverse global economy. Our definitions of citizenship will always reflect our educational system's roots in a colony governed by British imperialism, and as a colonizing society that as Llewellyn et al (2007) remark, has "always been bounded, inclusive in theory but exclusionary in

practice" (p. 7). Even now, our curricular definitions of Canadian identity leaves much to be desired in its exploration of colonial history and notions of belonging. It is important to make a distinction between notions of citizenship-as-concept that are discussed further in previous chapters of this document, and the working definitions of citizenship currently being discussed within provincial policy documents. While deeper questions of what it means to be a good citizen are embedded within this study's theoretical frame, design and analysis, this section simply provides some context for Albertan student and staff study participants and their relationship to policy enacted for civic learning within their educational spheres.

Most educational definitions of citizenship within Canadian policy documents reference a combination of the skills and knowledge necessary for basic democratic participation, a working ability to navigate laws and social norms, and certain common values and attributes – essentially, they represent a working model of Westheimer and Kahne's *personally responsible citizen* (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). A survey of definitions of citizenship conducted by Kubow and referenced in the work of Llewellyn et al (2007) finds that a working definition for both policy-makers and students is slightly more expanded:

> The ability to understand, accept, and tolerate cultural differences; the ability to work with others in a cooperative way and to take responsibility for one's roles and duties within society; a willingness to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner; the ability to be sensitive towards and to defend human rights; and the capacity to think in a critical and systematic way (p. 27).

These themes are reflected in Alberta Education's (2011) recent *Framework for Student Learning*, in which the goal of citizenship education and education in general is to produce "engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit" (p.2). This involves the curricular and co-curricular development of three aspects of student identity: the engaged thinker, the ethical citizen, and the entrepreneurial spirit. It is not insignificant that the category of "ethical citizen" includes some characteristics that could be described as citizenship education, illustrating an individual "who builds relationships based on humility, fairness and open-mindedness; who demonstrates respect, empathy and compassion; and who through teamwork, collaboration and communication

contributes fully to the community and the world" (2011), but does not include any citizenship characteristics that specifically reference active and thoughtful participation in democratic process. In fact, healthy acts of democratic citizenship such as protest, active debate, and acceptance of the need for diverse dialogue do not fit in this model. One could argue that they are included in the "entrepreneurial spirit" theme, which describes an individual who "explores ideas and challenges the status quo; who is competitive, adaptable and resilient; and who has the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity" (Alberta Education, 2011, online source), but this section describes individual forms of participation, rather than collective duties. If we assume that democratic duties belong in the second theme, we deprive them of tensions, of action. If we place them in the third theme, we move them into the realm of individualized initiative for gain rather than retaining them as core aspects of responsible living. Indeed, the engaged thinker, the ethical citizen, and the entrepreneurial spirit have in common their focus on the individual as the centre, as a decision-maker operating independently of larger units, building relationships as they deem appropriate and operating collectively out of duty when necessary in order to "give back" to the community. The notion of community itself becomes secondary within this set of goals; building the ideal citizenship understanding is no longer about process; it is about product. That product is not a learning community, not a nation or a community, but an individual.

While Alberta does not have a specific civics class in its secondary school curriculum like that of some other provinces, much of what would be in such a class can be found in either Social or Career and Life Management (CALM). Of the non-curricular aspects of citizenship, Alberta Education's handbook on citizenship education, *The Heart of the Matter*, states that "Whether they are conscious of it or not, schools are involved in teaching cultural and societal mores and values…. Schools help students to develop civic responsibility, healthy attitudes towards themselves and others, and a commitment to lifelong learning" (Alberta Education, 2005, online source). Using Westheimer's (2004) categories of citizenship, this resource for Alberta schools outlines the connection between active, participatory understandings of community and educational experiences that add depth to the development of thoughtful, responsible young adults. Briefly touched upon in Chapter 2, Westheimer and Kahne's study of ten

schools' approaches to citizenship education provides the foundation for this division of citizenship characteristics into three categories: the *personally responsible* citizen, the *participatory* citizen, and the *justice-oriented* citizen. Westheimer and Kahne argue that if we are to pursue a more socially just society, we must support students' shifts from the first category to the third through citizenship education programming. However, this seminal study produced a myriad of results regarding the effects of different program approaches to these citizenship goals. As these authors conclude:

> Varied priorities–personal responsibility, participatory citizenship and justice oriented citizenship–embody significantly different beliefs regarding the capacities and commitments citizens need in order for democracy to flourish; and they carry significantly different implications for pedagogy, curriculum, evaluation, and educational policy. Moreover, since ways educators advance these visions may privilege some political perspectives regarding the ways problems are framed and responded to, there is a politics to educating for democracy – a politics that deserves careful attention. (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004, p. 263)

This politics of citizenship goes under-explored in *The Heart of the Matter* and other local resources. The resource asserts that

> As understandings of citizenship expand…citizenship education is becoming more centred on the concept of inclusion and respect for diversity. More recently, citizenship education began explicitly recognizing the role of developing skills and processes. Strategies such as inquiry, literature studies and case studies develop the cognitive and critical-thinking skills associated with active and participatory citizenship (Alberta Education, 2011, online source).

It is evident that *The Heart of the Matter* (Alberta Education, 2005) provides useful tools for program evaluation and curriculum building, but it is not evident that it supports critical inquiry into the complexity of democratic education. Furthermore, while the resource is a considerable contribution to program planning, the responsibility for its implementation and follow-up has dominoed down through channels of power to rest with individual boards, schools, and teachers without the resources or structural support to adequately evaluate the results of their program changes. The local result is a flurry of reports that illustrate multiple projects within, for example, the Edmonton Public School

District's non-formal learning spaces implemented each year, with inconsistent degrees of research and program evaluation on their relative successes and drawbacks (Edmonton Public Schools, 2013). School reports from 2011 make reference to the implementation of a myriad of programs, but the impact of one approach over another with regard to citizenship outcomes is left largely unmeasured on a provincial scale. While Edmonton Public Schools (EPS) tracks the number of citizenship programs implemented in schools, program assessments are completed individually rather than collectively or comparatively (Edmonton Public Schools, 2013). This lack of cohesive process suggests that research and critical inquiry into the implementation of this resource is becoming rapidly more necessary if Albertan school citizenship conditions are to be understood.

It should also be noted that of the programs currently being implemented with the support of *The Heart of the Matter* and other resources, the most easily evaluated are curricular. While the idea of schools as communities is positively reinforced, the abstract nature of public space within educational institutions requires extra energy to assess and responsibly program, and goes largely unattended with regard to citizenship outcomes (Alberta Education, 2005; Blum et al, 2004). It is therefore necessary to explore the possible impacts of these spaces on citizenship through research into their effect on student experience and learning.

Non-formal learning and Educational Policy

As is evidenced above, much of the available research into education's role in democratic understandings focuses on formal aspects of learning; on the curricula presented in this area, and youths' retention and application of the information presented. However, education for citizenship takes place in both formal ways mentioned in these studies, through curricular learning and preparatory career and life programs, and in non-formal ways through students' daily interactions with school ideology, education structure, and the normative processes of school life (Darder, 2012; Friere, 1970; Giroux, 1989; Illich, 1971).

Some of the best recent data on Canadian citizenship education is from the CPRN's Democratic Renewal series (2007). In this collection, several notable Canadian scholars examine non-formal learning through behavioral codes of conduct and compare and contrast the often-conflicting messages that students receive between the two (Llewellyn et al, 2007). These authors remark that:

> aside from formal curriculum, civic literacy has always been taught through a broad range of "habits of mind" through classroom process and pedagogy, including the discipline of choral speaking and individual elocution, the practice of standard penmanship, punctuality in school attendance and work assignments, orderly queuing and the acceptance of educational authority trumping familial or even community standards of behavior. (p. 10)

Of this practice of non-formal learning, Alberta Education's definition of character and citizenship education includes the note that:

> Character and citizenship education is a deliberate effort to encourage ethical behaviors and personal qualities that our society values, such as respect, responsibility, fairness, empathy and self-discipline. Character and citizenship education is not a course. It is a way of nurturing these attributes by promoting, modeling, teaching, expecting, celebrating and consciously practicing them in everyday actions. It is woven throughout the school day for all students, through classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and school policies and practices (Alberta Education, 2011, online source).

This emphasis on the non-formal aspects of citizenship experience is key to understanding the social purpose of schooling, and yet as Llewellyn et al (2007) observe,

> Given the evolving conception of civic literacy discussed earlier in this report, it is curious that little attention is given to the skill required to make political knowledge useful. For those teaching reading and writing, it is important to know that students not only can read or write specific words but also that they understand the usefulness of these words and know how to use them in sentences, in short, that they do read. It would seem no different for civic literacy. (p. 25)

This distinction between students' curricular knowledge and the confidence and ability to apply that knowledge to their lives highlights the centrality of non-formal learning to the development of citizenship.

A lack of planning for specific non-curricular outcomes in our policy documents is evident in most Canadian research data (Llewelyn et al, 2007). By acknowledging behavioral guidelines as an aspect of under acknowledged education for citizenship, these authors allow us to explore the policy edges of students' largely invisible non-formal experiences within school walls. When we place the curricular initiatives and civic rhetoric explored above next to the behavioral mandates outlined in Alberta policy, we have two pieces of the citizenship education puzzle. We could imagine that these two pieces could represent citizenship *knowledge* (through curricular engagement) and citizenship *skills* (through socialization in school spaces). What then is the missing ingredient that motivates civic *participation*, that encourages students to make the link between themselves and the systems they study? These policies and procedures create knowledge and skills, but where is the educational planning for strong democratic citizenship identity? It does not and cannot exist within behavioral standards that are reinforced and focused on notions of individual performance, nor can it be activated through planned curricular knowledge transmission. Rather, it depends on a complex web of experience that dictates how students shape their own identity as citizens in relation to the political and economic structures around them (Darder, 2012).

The ideological, behavioral, and community-engaged experiences that students have with educational systems goes unexamined in our current research narratives. To understand what is happening in these areas, we must explore the subjective experiences that students have in the schools' unwritten policy zones; their relationships to the system that is meant to steward them into citizenry, to each other through competitive processes and collective subjugation to educational standards beyond their control or participation, and to the political, economic and educational systems that they are meant to be learning about in the classroom but whose lessons they are also absorbing as learned experience.

Experiential Learning and Citizenship Skills

A comparison of data from Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) work in Ottawa schools and Llewellyn, Cook and Molina's (2007) research clearly indicates that that participatory and experiential approaches to citizenship knowledge-building in general have high success rates in terms of political knowledge retention, and more importantly in terms of democratic citizenship-identity building in secondary school youth. As the latter remark,

> one of the teachers…reasoned as follows: 'It's probably no accident that the people who are most involved on an issue are the most aware of the processes, but I would guess that activism comes before knowledge. I don't think people get involved in the homelessness issue because they understand how city council works. It's the other way around.' While we identify a positive correlation between political knowledge and political participation, there is little evidence that increased political knowledge is the cause of increased political engagement. What seems to connect both political knowledge and participation is political interest (p. 23).

This idea that those who are more interested in politics tend to be more politically informed, to further educate themselves and then to participate in increased political activity is corroborated in a study by Brenda O'Neill (2007) which demonstrates a relationship between voting turnout and political interest: "While 81 percent of young respondents with some political interest reported voting in 1997, the rate drops to 55 percent among those reporting little or no interest" (p.7). It is also a common theme in American research on political participation and civic literacy (Turcotte, 2007).

We know that for strong civic education we require a component of policy and planning that addresses how students build civic identity for themselves. We can also see from the research that this experiential learning plays a key role in how students self-identify as citizens (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). What we must ask and what currently remains unexplored is the question: What sorts of citizenship knowledge are students building through their current non-formal experiences with school? It is dangerous to assume that because non-formal school experiences remain unplanned in policy

documents that students are learning nothing; on the contrary, as explored in the work of theorists from Chapter 2, it must be assumed that they are learning lessons of citizenship from each other, from their experiences of the system itself and of themselves as actors within it. What those lessons look like, and what citizenship identities are being constructed from them, is only evident as unintended qualitative data from our studies of formal learning. Llewellyn et al (2010), for example, mention that

> Despite the use of some of these activities, most students believed that, to effect change, they would need to find someone "smarter" or "with more power" to speak for them. For many students, this figure was their teacher, but the teachers expressed the desire to empower their students. Four of the six teachers repeated "confidence-building" as one of their primary objectives in educating their students (p.17).

Here, then, an unintended lesson is being learned from students' experiences with hierarchy and structure. Somehow, their experiential understandings of incapacity, of subordination, have affected their identity building with regard to citizenship action. In acknowledging the power of non-formal school space to dictate citizenship identity, we are faced with two tasks. One is to better understand what the current experience of students is, and how it affects their citizenship identity. The second is to examine how cultures of citizenship and socialization are built within these non-formal spaces.

For a grasp of non-formal learning in Canadian school spaces, there is very little literature that can directly address understandings of citizenship. This in itself is an indication of the need for research. The next section of this literature review therefore draws its sources from a combination of formalized citizenship education program analysis based in the USA, and current studies of non-formal learning in Canadian secondary school spaces. The ways in which hallway experiences inform school learning is also explored based on findings from the research of Blum et al (2004), Ollis (2012), and Kennelly (2011) on the importance of non-formal learning to schools as safe communities of practice. While these programs are focused on the safety aspects of citizenship, rather than on participatory or democratic aspects of citizenship, they do confirm the centrality of non-formal spaces as places of citizenship action.

Schools as Communities

Over the past decade, a framework for discussion of understandings of place and space as they relate to citizenship learning has arisen across multiple disciplines. The tacit goals of citizenship for educational spaces are clear within Alberta resources like Heart of the Matter, but the methods by which we measure success are not yet defined for non-formal areas. The connections between non-formal learning, justice, and personal interaction that play out in the public areas of institutions can, with some time and care, become the conscious core of students' lived understandings of citizenship.

Our understanding of public school space as a key factor in the development of schools as communities is only recently evolving into the research necessary for program support. The cross-disciplinary nature of this work is both an asset in its wealth of approaches and a drawback in terms of the lack of a cohesive body of research. As a special report from the American Journal of Public Health puts it,

> While a significant body of research exists, the literature is spread across the health, educational, psychological, and sociological fields. Additionally, researchers have used a plethora of terms to explore similar constructs. Given the current policy focus on accountability and standards, without a clearly identified empirical base, school connectedness may seem like a "soft" approach that could not possibly impact the measures to which schools are being held accountable (Blum et al, 2004, p. 5).

This is not the case; in fact, Sheila Giesbrecht (2011) eloquently describes the centrality of public spaces and school connectedness in this discussion of her work on architectural theory and education:

> If schools are to promote democratic ideals, they need to provide spaces where students can explore what it means to be a citizen within society. These spaces may be events (coffee drinking or cookie eating) or places (gardens and lunchrooms where you want to linger). They may also be something completely different…new schedules (open times for exploration and social interaction), curricula (fort-building for inner-city kids), ideas (schools organized around social justice or citizenry themes), and professional learning directions. In an increasingly fragmented and pressured world, the spaces on the edges of fields,

on the edges of our classroom schedules, and on the edges of our daily routine, provide centering and democratic possibilities for our children, our youth, and ourselves (p.44).

This kind of experiential citizenship learning, characterized on a pedagogical level by the tensions, values, and active resistance present in Darder (2012) and Giroux' (1989) critical pedagogical models, is referred to as embodied learning within postcolonial studies, and as the creation of communities of practice within adult education theories (Ollis, 2012; Wiskneski, 2007). Its extension into students' experiences of high school is evident as subtext in citizenship goals, but rarely articulated with direct reference to the physical space it inhabits. Ollis (2012) applies Lave and Wenger's theories of adult learning to describe students' experiences in this space as "learning …recognized as a social phenomenon constituted in the experienced, lived-in-world, through legitimate peripheral participation in an ongoing social practice". Ollis goes on to explore the legitimacy and value of such learning for social movements, but its roots in Frierean understandings of sites of struggle as learning sites have further applications for those studying cultures of safety in Canadian schools. Just as De Certeau's understandings of the relationship between body-subject and urban planning altered the deep grammar with which we understand urban environments, so the work of Ollis, Giesbrecht, and others will affect our acknowledgement of a relationship between learners' individual experiences in school hallways and their understandings of themselves as justice oriented citizens (De Certeau, 1993). This kind of work is acknowledged in new studies of schools as communities by authors such as John (2003) and Wisneski (2007), who each acknowledge the function of physical space in the creation of positive learning environments. Adding a physical dimension, Wisneski's study, like Friere's work, uses teacher and student experiences to explore tension as a source of learning for citizenship. This tension arises from negotiation of lived understandings between classmates, and the juxtaposition of multiple narratives within a single space.

Recent research conducted on citizenship, identity, and space by Tupper et al (2008) references the theoretical perspectives of Cogan and Derricot (2000), who suggest that citizenship, as part of the process of growth into adulthood, includes multiple understandings of community and responsibility with mutable frames of reference. This study on the interaction of physical space and citizenship learning is part of a growing but

scarce set of resources through which we can begin to paint a picture of non-formal interactions and their significance to citizenship understandings and outcomes in schools.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed current educational research within Canadian and Albertan contexts focused on aspects of the kind of democratic citizenship outlined in Chapter 2, including political participation, notions of democracy and community, and experiences with active citizenship projects in schools. By summarizing the literature in these areas, this chapter also identifies gaps within the work; these are particularly visible in the area of non-formal citizenship learning that is not tied to experiential citizenship projects. Following the critical democratic approach of theorists like Darder and Giroux, this literature review attempts to place youths' school experiences at the centre of the knowledge-building process. In acknowledgement that the environments in which they study and the physical spaces in which citizenship narratives are acted out carries its own impact on the learning process, a brief survey of some of the cross-disciplinary work on physical space and community-building has been included.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Studies surveyed in Chapter 3 indicate that youths' non-formal experiences with citizenship affect their participation and place-making process in social, political, and economic systems when they leave secondary school (O'Neill, 2007; Llewellyn et al, 2007; Turcotte, 2007). While some data is available on curricular citizenship education, understandings of how the structure and design of education affect outcomes in this area are incomplete. O'Neill (2007), in an exhaustive study of youth civic engagement, identifies this as a priority area for future research, recommending specific focus on "political socialization and, in particular, the role of...peer groups and associations in shaping political interest, political knowledge and political activity" and "The shift to new individualized and private forms of engagement and the related shift in the conceptualization of citizenship among younger generations" (p. 29). This study, combined with the critical theoretical work surveyed in Chapter 2, suggests that if we wish to design effective pedagogical approaches to democratic citizenship education, we must first understand the kinds of knowledges that students construct through their non-formal experiences with schooling. My research is an attempt to contribute to that work and address the above priorities by mapping non-formal citizenship understandings and experiences at one Canadian urban school site. From an ideological perspective, it is clear that a study designed to assist with the creation of democratic citizenship must have as its centre the unique experiences of individual students, and must acknowledge these experiences as a source of learning for researchers into how what is taught, the methods of teaching, and the location of learning affect the knowledge that students build. This study was therefore designed to gather rich descriptive data of the daily lived citizenship experiences of students, and of their perceptions of how these experiences are translated into citizenship understanding.

My work in this area is characterized by both the constructivist ontological acceptance that "reality is not absolute, but is socially constructed and that multiple realities exist that are time and context dependent" (Mertens, 2009, p. 237) and by the transformative notion that there exist within these realities dynamics of power and agency

that can only be understood in relation to the specific worldview of the individuals involved (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). The nature of these experiences is personal, context-oriented, and embedded in the relationships and unvoiced learning of students. My goal with this research was to design instruments that could make space for student experience in a way that preserved and acknowledged what Kirkhart (2005) describes as the "multicultural validity" of their understandings of citizenship (p. 2). In this context, multicultural validity is a reference to the idea that data collected is both individual in its context but applicable across multiple frames of reference. I discuss this further near the end of this chapter, but it is significant that in order for this data to retain its applicability, it was necessary to preserve not just the findings but also the voices through which they were expressed. This level of complexity required an in-depth qualitative approach that acknowledged multiple perspectives and approaches to building citizenship identity. My research tools were designed to focus on collecting this specific, in-depth data within a single study population. This work is a case study, bounded by the physical parameters of the school. My hope is that some of the findings might be generalizable to other study sites.

Study Design

Approaches to study design were informed by the work of Mertens (2009) on educational research and by my particular research focus, as well as by practical considerations such as the recognition that student participants may be less motivated to take part in a study that requires paperwork resembling their school assignments. The study employed a qualitative approach to allow for more complexity and nuance of individual student response and language than might be obtained from quantitative methods. The small number of participants and the relative depth of data this study sought to acquire were better served by the kind of long answer that students do not necessarily have the will to engage with on paper through, for example, complex surveys. The two methods chosen for this study were focus groups and interviews. For both methods, responses were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Transformational perspectives on the nature of experiential knowledges as individual to students made it necessary to select a study site that would provide diverse

experiences of citizenship and include youth from multiple socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds (Mertens, 2009). The study site selected was therefore a large Albertan urban secondary school (pop. 2400) with a student population that included individuals from a variety of income brackets, cultural backgrounds, and citizenship identities. In addition, the goal of the study was to capture experiences both of students engaged in citizenship work and those for whom extracurricular engagement activities were peripheral or non-existent. This too required a larger study site with a variety of students with different levels of citizenship participation, and the school's mix of students together with its student-run citizenship centre provided a broad range of perspectives. I was able to use prior relationships with the school to connect with key staff while designing the study. This allowed me to enter the field with a minimum of disruption, and to increase student participants through multiple tools within the school (sign-up sheets, class presentations, staff recruitment).

Study Participants

Turcotte (2007) and O'Neill's (2007) suggestions that there may be links between student engagement activities and the non-formal citizenship identity building were taken into consideration during study design. Participant categories were designed to better track the effect of citizenship programming on identity development within the school; study participants fell into three categories based on their kind of involvement with citizenship initiatives. Group 1 included students who designed and implemented a citizenship project in school as part of the student-run centre. This group consisted of three youths in Grades 11 and 12, two male and one female. These students could fall into Westheimer's categories of either *participatory* or *justice-oriented* citizenship, depending on their activities, but in general were selected to represent a more consciously engaged and citizenship-oriented perspective, and to provide perspective on motivations and barriers to citizenship action and identity building within an engaged peer group. Group 2 consisted of students who engaged with the initial project as participants but not organizers, and totaled 15 individuals, 9 female and 6 male. Participation in the study was open to any student who wished to give feedback. Participants from this group were encouraged to take part in focus group conversations by school staff and through posters in the school hallways. This group was intentionally inclusive of students with a

wide variety of engagement levels, and included those for whom participation in citizenship activities was peripheral at best. These participants were included to provide data on how and why students might become participants in acts of citizenship – their motivations for doing so and their reflections on what their own participation means within the scope of their identity as citizens. Group 3 consisted of school staff and administrators, 2 female and one male, who were aware of the citizenship initiative and open to participation. These staff members were interviewed to provide a context for and contrast to the student experience, juxtaposing perspectives of those with relative power with the perspectives of those whose voice is often hidden. As Darder (2012) and Giroux (2005) suggest, it is useful to compare these experiences and read them for an understanding of the hidden dynamics of power and privilege present in school spaces. Their inclusion became key to understanding and interpreting school relationships during research analysis.

Context

While almost all schools run some sort of citizenship programming, be it through clubs, leadership activities, or other co-curricular opportunities, it should be noted that this case study is unique in its inclusion of students involved in a special student-run centre within the school. Full-time staff work in the school space to support and develop projects brought forward and organized by students. These could range from technical, practical, or science-based projects to curriculum recovery, as well as activism, political action, or projects focused on social change. With over 2000 students, the school's population is diverse. Only about 10% of the school uses the student-run centre, but for those 10%, the effects of the centre on their world view are profound. Participant groups were therefore designed to acknowledge and explore these effects while also including the opinions and understandings of students who had no connections with the centre.

The nature of the narrative citizenship project with which student participants were engaged merged into their approach to concepts presented in interviews, and into the analysis of their responses. The idea of story as a vehicle for engendering empathy and communicating lived experience has been an ongoing aspect of this research. Youth often use anecdotal or narrative approaches to explain how or why they understand a

concept; the process of seeking to understand knowledge within their stories required careful reflection and prompted additional research into knowledge composition through experience in youth demographics.

Method

Research was conducted over a period of 3 weeks with multiple school visits. Six 60-minute interviews (three with students and three with teachers) and two 2-hour Group 2 focus groups were conducted during this time. For all methods, responses were audio-recorded and transcribed. To ensure that participation was voluntary, participants were recruited through a school staff liaison. As the school's point-person with the original citizenship project, this individual facilitates and supports the students involved. As a staff member who is not part of assessment or evaluation of students, this person represented neutral territory in which students could make the choice to participate or opt out without repercussions to their performance record. The intermediary verbally reinforced that participation was voluntary and that students could stop participating at any time. Parents of volunteering Group 1 and 2 participants were given Information Letters and Consent Forms prior to data collection. Participants also received Information Letters and Assent Forms to sign prior to participation.

Questions in both focus groups and interviews were designed to spark guided discussion around topics related to citizenship. These topics fall into five broad themes, each related to justice-oriented citizenship and non-formal learning that participants may experience. Theme 1 investigated participant contexts and vocabularies for conversations about citizenship. This allows for more accurate analysis of further responses by providing insight into participant frames of reference. Theme 2 focused on student engagement and participation. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) suggest that student progression toward *justice-oriented* citizenship can be assessed through understandings of their relationship to participation in structural change. Questions in Theme 2 were therefore included to provide this kind of understanding. Theme 3 highlighted participant relationships to justice-oriented perspectives. Specifically, it attempted to assess participants' abilities to empathize and extrapolate learning from the experiences of others in ways that Westheimer and Kahne suggest can become

indicators of *justice-oriented* citizenship participation. Theme 4 addressed participant relationships to the idea of active, democratic engagement in order to directly assess their understandings and experiences of *justice-oriented* approaches. Finally, Theme Five addressed participant relationships and perceptions of public school space as citizenship space. Each session included at least one question from each theme depending on discussion and time constraints. Question lists are provided for each research method in Appendices.

Focus groups

Each participant took part in a 1-2 hour focus group during school hours. The purpose of these focus groups was to assess multiple understandings of citizenship and justice within school culture. By using the group as a unit of analysis, I was able to compare data regarding how participants embedded in citizenship action (project organizers in Group 1) interact as a group and how those who have only just been exposed to notions of citizenship (Group 2) might approach group participation regarding these topics. In this way, the focus group structure provided information about school norms around citizenship, competing notions of justice, and approaches to group process. My approach also provided information on whether approaches to participation seem to shift depending on the length of time and depth to which participants were involved in a social justice project. My choice to use methods based on personal conversation is supported by Mertens' (2009) observations that focus groups can be a way to mediate participation barriers based on gender, literacy, or written language skills. For many secondary school students, this last factor can be particularly discouraging to participation. As the unit of analysis for this method is the group itself, focus group responses were transcribed without individual participant differentiation. Focus group participants are not identifiable in transcripts, and therefore were not offered the opportunity to individually review their responses.

Interviews

Participants from Groups 1 and 3 participated in 60-minute semi-structured one-on-one interviews during school hours. These interviews focused on student and staff

perceptions of the relationship between experiences of citizenship and hallway spaces, as well as student experiences with attempting to influence their school community through a participatory, justice-oriented project. The interview format allowed for expression of personal opinions on justice and citizenship that might have been inhibited during group process due to peer relationships or shyness. Secondary school student vocabulary around citizenship and justice varies based on individual cultural and social contexts. It is therefore possible that students might identify with aspects of participatory citizenship without using the phrases researchers might expect. Mertens' (2010) suggestion that interviews can be an effective method for fully understanding an individual's impressions or experiences becomes particularly salient in this context. The full conversational format of interviews allowed me to better understand participant vocabulary and context in ways that affected my analysis of both interview and focus group responses. Interview participants were given copies of their transcribed responses to review and edit if they so chose. This allowed for additional responses that participants thought of after the interview ended, and also allowed students some control over data that they may have wished omitted in retrospect.

Study Trustworthiness

The credibility of this study is predicated on multiple strategies for what Mertens (2009) describes as internal consistency and study integrity, the qualitative equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research. Mertens refers to several aspects of study credibility including engagement with the study community, member checks and peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity, and triangulation (Mertens, 2009). For this research, my prolonged and persistent engagement with the study community and with specific study participants took place over the course of one and a half years through pre-study relationship-building, check-ins, post-transcription debriefing, and continued contact with both student and staff participants. Peer checks and debriefing were used to pre-test and re-think interview questions and focus group discussions throughout the research process. Triangulation of perspectives on the same issue from multiple sources was built into the study through the careful choice of three different groups of participants. Finally, Mertens describes progressive subjectivity as the need for researchers "to monitor their own developing constructions and document the process of change from the beginning

of the study until it ends" (p. 212). Explicit recognition of my place within the research and my influence on the process, results, and interpretation is written into each phase of the study. Additional reflection took place through personal creative writing to document process and reflect on my place within the work as it evolved.

Yin suggests that correlating case studies like this one with extant theories can lead to generalization from case study research (Mertens, 2009), thereby increasing the transferability of a study. While the specific relationships that were built during the course of the research obviously do not lend themselves to transferability, it is my hope that the data retrieved could be used to better understand the context and experiences of other youth and teachers within Canadian secondary school contexts, and the way that they may go about the process of building citizenship identity. The study itself is replicable in other schools with student-led citizenship initiatives and is modeled on the larger research pieces undertaken in other Canadian school contexts (Llewellyn et al, 2007, Print and Sears, 2010; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Similarities between theoretical principles underlying multiple school contexts also increase the transferability of research. For example, Darder's (2012) theories of power in the classroom can be used to understand student experience and apply it in new ways to the experiences of teachers and policy makers, and while the data may differ from site to site, the kinds of power dynamics created by structure and approach could contain important similarities.

Qualitative data in this study has been tracked through processes put in place during the design phase. All raw data is confirmable from transcripts and audio recordings. Confirmability was also enhanced by attempts to delineate my position within the work through researcher reflection and open dialogue about the specific ways in which my bias has informed my study. This process is reflected in the structure of my thesis, with sections for researcher location and reflection built into the theoretical, analytical, and methodological chapters.

Ethical Considerations

This study was done with approval from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board as well as local school board ethics approval. To ensure that the study fell

within the bounds of reasonable and useful research for the school, an Information Letter was given to the school principal and formal approval sought before research began. To avoid skewed data or mismatched expectations, it was made clear to participants and parents on multiple occasions both verbally and in writing that their participation had nothing to do with school performance metrics, grades, or other academic evaluations.

If participants had chosen to withdraw from the study (none did), their information and contributions would have been deleted from recording devices and digital/paper files immediately. Personal identifiers for all groups were removed during transcription. After transcription, interview participants were given typed copies of transcripts to review and respond to. Participants were given 3 weeks to respond to, revise, or remove the information. To support participants who might have delayed reactions to reading their own transcripts, I met with each Group 1 and 3 participant in person to be certain that they were comfortable with the raw data, and to discuss their responses to that data.

I acknowledge Denzin and Lincoln's assertion with regard to qualitative study that "writing is not an innocent practice" (2005, p. 5). Any attempt to position myself as an objective researcher would only cloud the ways in which my choices are tied to my own ontological and epistemological understandings, and the ways in which this has influenced by study design and the interpretation of the data. Instead, I have attempted to be as explicit as possible in each phase of research about the relationship of my own experiences and identity to my research.

Data Analysis

This data was prepared for analysis through transcription by the researcher. Interacting with my own data in the "intensive and intimate" manner that emerges from this process was an essential aspect of later analysis (Mertens, 2009, p. 10). The ethics process also required that I connect with each Group 1 participant post-transcription for feedback and revision. While few transcript changes were made, the process of reflecting on the data first while transcribing and then again through the eyes of participants going over their own statements allowed me to examine my assumptions

about the meaning of their statements with participants themselves. This provided an important system of checks and balances for my analytical framework, and contributed to the trustworthiness and validity of the study. It also required me to reflect upon what the data set as a whole meant for the lives of the individuals involved.

Data from the study was explored and reduced through a cyclical process of old-fashioned cut-and-paste coding, research into and revision of emerging themes, and re-coding. Memos made during transcription were used to track themes emerging from the data. These themes were then compared with the five original themes outlined in the questions, and based on the results categories for coding were revised. Data was coded twice – once using the original five themes and once using the revised categories. The following chapter provides a summary of these findings based both on initial and revised themes. The final revised, categorized and coded data was then compared with relevant literature in the areas of citizenship education, non-formal learning, and education for social justice to provide insight into the subject areas of the study. The results of this secondary analytic interaction with the revised data are reported in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5: STUDY FINDINGS

This chapter is an organized summary of data that emerged from the research process. Findings are ordered through final categories that were a combination of initial coding processes and themes that arose from the data. The original number of themes significantly decreased and the number of sub-themes increased due to interconnection and repositioning of themes in relation to each other. These changes became part of the findings; the understanding, for example, that the theme of collaboration/competition was a subset of student experiences with isolation/belonging was key to evaluating how hallway experiences affect students' abilities to construct positive, active citizenship identities. In cases where it is relevant to analysis, findings have been broken down by participation group as well.

There were several key themes that emerged throughout the course of the study. The most significant trend was an overwhelming prevalence of experiences with and reactions to structural and personal isolation and disenfranchisement within school walls. These experiences are referenced throughout student and staff responses to questions regarding citizenship, learning, empathy, confidence, anonymity, and teaching. No matter what the topic, findings from this study show that these kinds of experiences play a key role in shaping student understandings of their place in society with regard to school, politics, learning, and each other. The second most common theme was the tension students experienced between a deep need for connection and support, and a perception that relationships and collaboration are dangerous and counterproductive. The question "Why isn't it safe?" came up frequently in interviews and focus groups as I struggled to understand how students' senses of vulnerability, of powerlessness, of isolation, were related to their experiences in school and then how these experiences consequently changed the ways in which they self-defined as citizens of their school community and their politico-economic spheres. Other key themes to emerge were the relationship between students' experiences of collaboration or isolation and their constructions of citizenship identity, and the link between internalized citizenship learning and experiential learning.

Student-Defined Themes

One of the most important findings to emerge from this study is that for students, the categories I chose are interrelated in specific and significant ways. It was easy from the beginning of the coding process to see that each piece of data could address multiple research questions; what was not easy was working with participants and then with the data set as a whole to unravel the ways in which citizenship identity construction was predicated differently by each set of themes. Because this study was approached from the ontological perspective that each students' experiences constitute their own reality (Mertens, 2009), my attempts to understand the language and purpose of their comments were central to my decisions about where to place them thematically.

Thematic elements originally corresponded to Westheimer and Kahne (2004)'s citizenship learning qualities and their antitheses; students' senses of empathy/judgment, participation/apathy, belonging/isolation. These qualities seemed to differentiate social justice-oriented citizenship understandings from more neoliberal or conservative definitions, and could be the building blocks from which students build new understandings of their place within citizenship structures through experiences (Darder, 2012; Llewellyn et al, 2004). However, it became apparent that for students each of these qualities has its own specific part to play; each quality is a different type of building block that precludes or allows the positioning of further blocks. I have therefore arranged findings in the order that they seem to relate to students' citizenship process, rather than in order of what seemed to me most significant or extraordinary. By presenting the data in this way I hope to preserve student voice and build a picture of the paths that students take during their time in secondary school as they learn, grow, and build self-conceptualizations that form the basis of how they understand their roles as citizens. Sections in this first portion of the chapter therefore correspond to these basic building blocks of citizenship understanding, in the order in which they were outlined by students themselves.

Confidence and insecurity in Citizenship Identity-Building. The most surprising of these building blocks was confidence which, from the results of both students and staff

participants, is the base platform on which most other qualities depend. One student, when asked what the most important aspect of their citizenship project was, said, "*Basic confidence.*" When prompted on why this was important, they identified that students with confidence are less at risk for self harm, and more likely to feel that they are part of a community. The student then went on to link the notion of schools as safe communities with students' ability to absorb lessons:

> "*It can relieve stress, it can make feel people less alone. I mean a lot of people that don't have the same amount of confidence, because they've been shut down by other people, are the people that don't do so well at school, because they don't want to be at school, they want to stay at home, miss class, whatever, marks go down, so this is good for them, gives them a little bit of confidence, that makes them feel a little bit more at home at school, and hopefully it allows them to actually learn more. So, anything that makes a kid feel at home, helps them, helps overall learning. So I think this is one of the ways that can be done, is to help with confidence" (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

Study responses also indicated that without confidence, students are less likely to reach out, collaborate, or self-conceive as having a role within school or community dynamics: *"(I) am really confident, I'll talk to anybody, but there are a lot of people that aren't like that. So they need a first step. They're not just going to spontaneously be like 'right, I can talk to anybody I want'. That's never going to happen" (Group 1 Participant, Interview)*. In this comment and others like it, students suggest that until they have a sense of personal value to themselves, they cannot build an identity that includes contributing to the health of a group; they simply self-conceive as having nothing to offer.

In these cases, it is important to note that the working definition of confidence includes not just a sense that they are competent or skilled in a particular area, but the basic notion that they are recognized as actors that affect and are affected by their community. Both staff and student comments indicate that while confidence is an individual characteristic, it is the product of a relationship to the school environment. Here, we could interpret confidence both as a characteristic of specific students, but also as an environmental and pedagogical characteristic that affirms the place of students as

valid actors within the social and educational structures of the school. Participants who self-define as not having a place experience a decrease in confidence, and find it difficult to imagine their presence having an impact on the systems around them.

This is a vicious cycle for youth – one in which their lack of participation increases their isolation from their communities, and that isolation reinforces their self-identity as a non-contributor. There is also evidence in student accounts that youth-led citizenship projects create an opposing cycle – one in which youth see their actions as community contributions, gain confidence, and then participate in further acts of citizenship as a result. This was reinforced by staff responses, which both highlighted divisions of power within socioeconomic groups in the school, and supported students' claims that confidence engenders further participation in civic life. One staff member, when describing a student who had been an unlikely first-time participant in a citizenship project, illustrated both the power divisions and the importance of confidence:

> *His words were important enough to be put into a place that allowed other people to hear what he had to say…the investigation of when you put it out there and that transforms your personal experience to something that is more meaningful. Something important. He belonged to something, that was part of the whole school. I think it was huge. We pay lip service to 'oh, let's have every kid feel a sense of belonging, blah blah blah, and I think this made him belong to the enfranchised part of the school"* (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

In describing the benefits to students of becoming involved in citizenship projects, one teacher acknowledged that it allows them to start

> *creating something meaningful and powerful for them to call their own, and that allows them to help others and gives them a sense that their experiences are meaningful. The (citizenship) stories that they told were given highlighted meaning or new meaning based upon the fact that they could tell those stories"* (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

This teacher went on to observe that *"the bottom line is good citizenship is only possible when the majority of people are happy and at peace. Stress-free enough for them to actually go and express their happiness."* Another staff member observed this

connection between confidence and participation by sharing that citizenship projects are, *"for them honestly a confidence builder. An outlet to attempt taking a risk to use their voice, in a lot of ways. It was their first chance to tell something vulnerable in a way that was safe for them. So it wasn't as much about connecting to other people for them as it was an empowering thing for themselves" (Group 3 Participant, Interview).* One should also note that here, as with almost every research conversation, the notion of safety and of the school public space as generally unsafe for youths is embedded in staff understandings of the benefits of citizenship work.

These kinds of observations about confidence and participation were echoed in student findings, where every Group 1 participant identified confidence and belonging as the most important aspects or impacts that their work on citizenship projects could have for their peers. When asked why confidence is important, most participants identified it as protection from isolation:

> *It became my habit to be happy. And then I found I had a lot more people, became a lot more confident, did a lot more things that I wanted to. I started acting different, opening my mind and looking around to see what was going on around me. Through that I made tons of friends, I have so many best friends. A lot of people are very, they will close off the world I think when they're alone. And they just kind of get upset. And you want to be happy in life, I feel like it's a human goal almost that we have. And you can't do that alone, you need other people. And I think it makes them feel more like they belong in their high school." (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

Again, the description of school as a place where students do not feel at home, the assumption that without active change the individual does not self-define as part of a community of practice, is embedded in responses.

The notion that confidence and happiness lead to active participation extended beyond basic participation in events or programs and into participation in democratic debate. One student voiced this by acknowledging the ways in which their background contributed to their ability to self-identify as part of a democratic conversation:

> *I was very fortunate in having that kind of upbringing and I think that's why I'm able to question things and able to feel secure and safe when I question things.*

> *Not a lot of people have that same kind of opportunity growing up (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

Another (male) participant voiced the perspective that confidence is necessary for females in particular to see themselves as strong contributors in the face of social pressures to focus on appearance and sexuality. In a conversation about girls being worried about their reputation and specifically *"being worried about being called a slut or a whore"* at school:

> *Me personally, I can take cyber bullying because I look at things in a humorous light, because I was raised to believe that my inner worth is based on far more than whether someone said I was an ass or something like that. Don't take it to heart. Maybe principals should start enforcing that. It's not going to work for everybody but it's a start, to remind us of the lessons that we were taught when we were so young, that you're worth more than anybody says you are (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

That these lessons are necessary and lacking within informal contexts is a ubiquitous assumption throughout research responses. This last response also begs the question of what happens to the citizenship identity of those individuals whose upbringing has not been filled with the kind of positive reinforcement present in this student's home life. One student pointed out that citizenship projects level the playing field for these students, not only allowing them to build confidence, but forcing students who have strong home support to recognize their privilege:

> *So I guess it works both ways. If you're very confident, over-confident and judgmental and stuff like that, it helps you realize that there's people that need help, and if you're one of the people that need help, it can help you get confidence. So it almost brings a little balance. (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

This was not uncommon, and most responses originally themed around participation or apathy contained a reference to students' confidence as key in their ability to begin the process of creating a positive citizenship identity. In many academic studies of citizenship participation, the notion of confidence or happiness and the role it plays is underexplored. This was true also of my research design. However, the interactive and rich context of interviews allowed participants to place their priorities for

citizenship participation front and centre. For each participant group, confidence, happiness, and self-worth were inherently tied to students' abilities to identify, practice, and understand citizenship.

Finding a Place: Isolation, Belonging, and Citizenship Construction. The centrality of confidence to successful participation is particularly important in light of findings regarding loneliness and isolation within school experiences. This theme was not a predicted set of findings – rather, the idea of feeling alone or isolated, and the effects of that experience on every aspect of citizenship, ran through all conversations with staff and students regarding all other themes. By far the most pervasive and disturbing aspect of my study was this deep undercurrent of alone-ness and personal isolation within students' notions of how to be human, how to treat one another, how to participate. Within these conversations usage of the word "safe" was frequent; students used metaphors of conflict, violence, and drowning to describe their understandings of relationships to peers and teachers. It must be noted that in almost all cases, these notions of isolation and its effects were coupled with observations that staff and students wished things were different.

Students particularly told stories of isolation when asked questions about relationships with peers and teachers. Observations from students about the school environment in this context, for example, included the following:

Truth be told, it's hard to do things (in school) because it's really easy to get thrown out here. Socially, I mean. People will go along with things because that's just the way it is. It's really hard to change an established way of thought (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

I'm sorry, but we treat each other horribly. We are purposely mean. We purposely go out of our way to hurt each other" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

I think that being mean in high school is almost like a defense mechanism cause you don't really know who's genuine here, for sure…And so when someone says something you automatically revert to being mean instead of taking the high road,

because it's like you want to weed out who's not real and who you can't trust (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

He began calling me a super nerd and said he was going to beat the crap out of me. And so that got me thinking what if (mean-ness) is not so much a defense mechanism as an attack mechanism, to make yourself look bigger. Because it's easier to rule by fear than being loved. Because people fall out of love but they'll always be afraid of you. They use it as a control mechanism (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

Honestly what I'm seeing is that people stick. What I'm seeing is that people just stay in their zone and stay with their little group of friends that take the same subject as them. Like it's not showing students to go out there and put yourself out there (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

It kind of burdens my mind, like they're acting like they're happy and all good but they needed to tell someone this because it was bugging them, and they're very good at keeping themselves closed in (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

When I asked one focus group what the goal is of navigating hallway spaces and making friends, I received the answer, *"You want to keep yourself safe, almost."* This sense of loneliness was echoed in teachers' assessments of what students learn about themselves and others:

Kids are learning diddly-squat about a lot of things. They're learning nothing about themselves as beings at their essence. Who they are at their essence is unknown to them...I really hate that kids are hiding stories. They don't really tell you what's going on in their lives. And some of them unfortunately have too big a story to keep inside (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

Teachers also acknowledged that in many cases they know that students are self-isolating, and that the structured relationships within the school don't allow them to provide the support that students might need. Observations from staff about student isolation included the following:

At the end of my formal teaching career, 30 years of this, I think I can definitively say we have done nothing for the child. The child is drowning. As much or more than ever (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

I really hate that kids are hiding stories. They don't really tell you what's going on in their lives. And some of them unfortunately have too big a story to keep inside. (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

It's these kids from war-torn countries, where else are they going to talk about what's happened to them? They need to get it out; they don't want anybody to know. (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

We need at all costs to preserve individuality and right now we're still creating very careful kids (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

With regard to teacher relationships, students exhibited mistrust combined with a wish that there were more emotional or relational support in the school. One student, speaking about counselors, remarked, *"I'm not saying that they don't help. I'm just saying that it's not open. Like I bet if you went up to someone in the hallway and said like, 'what is the counselor for?' they'd probably be like, 'finding a job or going to university' (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).* Simultaneously, all participant groups expressed the importance of overcoming isolation to developing the confidence and social skills that are at the root of citizenship participation. I began to feel that in every conversation I was hearing both that individuals are isolated and that each participant felt they needed others in order to be successful in life and in school. One Group 1 participant described her motivation for participating in a citizenship project by saying:

> *I wanted to do it because at the time I was going through something and I just felt really alone, and I just thought it's not fair in a school so big that we don't have something...we can learn from the experiences around us, because I see my friends and I know people that go to my school, and they're feeling alone and they want to express themselves or they want to tell someone something's going on and they can't do it because they feel alone. I find it changes character, when*

you feel alone and have no one to turn to versus as if you could tell someone or
someone knew that you're not alone. (Interview)

One Group 3 participant also described her citizenship teaching as a way to combat isolation:

If it's a course that actually has an explicit curriculum that will deal with the
personal, spiritual and economic and career based decisions of a child, then I
have a little bit more freedom and I model authenticity, so I tell stories that are
very free, very open, and I'm not at all embarrassed to share, tastefully, private
experiences to see that they're not alone.

The necessity of community to students' success as learners was also raised by this staff member, who later observed, *"most of us are on this planet because the learning we need to do is best done through interactions with other people."*

Relationships and Risk. Despite the above acknowledgements of the importance of relationships, fear of ostracization from social groups trumped the desire to connect in most, if not all, cases. One Group 2 participant got murmurs of agreement from an entire focus group when she said wistfully,

I wish we were all really nice. It's also sometimes weird to be super nice to your
friends, because you feel almost creepy or superficial…so it's easier to just joke
around with them and be sarcastic…You don't want to seem, like, vulnerable and
like weird and needy of them (Focus Group).

Another student simply stated, *"People are normally afraid that they can be harmed by sharing something, which is too bad" (Focus Group).* These observations were echoed by a staff member who commented:

Safety is created when vulnerability is respected. And you have to be able to take
a risk and be vulnerable, and not have that mocked publically, for you to ever do
it again. In high school especially, you take a risk by wearing a piece of clothing
that's original, you make yourself vulnerable by doing that, and often you are
slandered for it by your friend group. You even stray from the status quo and it's
agony for you for a few weeks, and often builds some horrible amounts of pain for
your soul that you have to heal eventually. School's kind of horrible that way
(Group 3 Participant, Interview).

Comments like this highlight the conflict of students' needs for closeness and positive relationships without vulnerability, something that came to the forefront of findings when we discussed anonymity as an aspect of one of the citizenship projects.

Anonymity as Risk Mitigation. Because one of the school's citizenship projects centred on positive anonymous experience sharing, many of the students identified anonymity as a form of safety, a way to explore identity without being vulnerable to the overwhelming amount of peer pressure they felt within their school interactions. These observations became significant as a sub-theme because of their implications about the dangers of normal daily interactions, and the need for risk mitigation that many students feel is essential for them to practice and experience positive citizenship identity. For example, an interviewee commented, "*it gives them somewhere to give up information in a way that it can't actually harm them. People are normally afraid that they can be harmed by sharing something*" (Group 1 Participant, Interview). Similarly, a staff member observed, "*You put yourself out there without being marked for disaster or whatever some of these kids think you can be if you say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing. That's nice. It's nice to be able to experiment like that and participate without any risk, you know. No really big risk, anyway*" (Group 3 Participant, Interview). Despite the cited risks, however, most students saw anonymity as a bridge, a first step toward becoming more confident and being able to participate in face-to-face interactions in a more authentic way. As one student put it,

> It is really hard to open up and share with someone, even your best friends, so I think to take a step and just write anonymously is a big step for people. And so if they take that step then eventually they'll be open enough to talk to someone face to face. And I think that's a big thing, to be able to talk to someone on such a personal level (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

These comments also highlighted the differences observed above between what students wish their hallways and non-formal experiences were like, and what they actually see taking place. The drive toward positive citizenship, and the acknowledgement that their reality did not mirror their understandings of what would be healthy, was almost universal. In an interview, one of the more involved students

referred to his definition of good citizenship and then expanded on the notion that anonymity and risk mitigation can transition students through their anxieties:

> *What I said earlier of needing to have diverse opinions and stuff like that, you've got the regular way people are interacting with each other, that you see in the hallway, and then this kind of like underground thing that's going on that is how people interact with each other anonymously, and you see just anyone could see the difference from the sincerity there is… Because all of a sudden if they can't be hurt from it, what is there to fear? They can say whatever they want…they are just deeper without the attempt at trying to be what people expect them to be (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

Another student organizer expressed that the function of the anonymous project was primarily to give students that safe outlet for identity experimentation:

> *I think this is just awesome for kids that need someone other than the usual people to speak to, to ask, to question, to express their emotions to…if you have very conservative parents, but you have come to realize that you aren't straight, you're gay, who are you going to tell? Who can you possibly say that to? There's no one. You could tell the project. You could tell it anonymously and we'd take it for you and they would take some confidence from that, they would say 'okay, there's someone who knows that I am, they don't necessarily know it's me, but information that I am gay is out there, and someone knows that.' And they might take a little heart in that, they might take a little courage in that. So I think that's what it's good for (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

The notion that anonymity gives students a chance to be themselves in a more authentic fashion was also raised by students who felt that their identities had become racialized within the school: *"I can easily say that I am a black student, and already I am offering myself up for judgment. But if I write that out or even just write an experience about me where it's not visible that I'm black, I become an everyman, like an idea, I'm a symbol or something"* (Group 1 Participant, Interview). For these students, the opportunity to represent themselves and their opinions without also representing all black students was unique in a majority white school. As one individual remarked,

> *"Growing up as a black individual I had to dress a certain way, I had to dress contrary to what was expected of me, because if people saw me in a nice shirt, maybe a polo, and a good clean pair of pants as opposed to throw away jeans*

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that sling around my hips and a wife-beater, people will see the same person but two different judgments will be made" (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

Several responses from teachers and from students representing other visible minorities also supported this perspective that their colour or perceptions of their identity were linked to judgments about what they could accomplish, and as in the quotation above, that there are initial negative expectations about students of colour that those students feel they must work to undermine. One teacher confirmed that visual identity plays a role in how students are treated when she described one of her students: *"He's so disenfranchised, it doesn't matter if his dad works here, his dad is disenfranchised too, right, cause he's part of the lower echelon of the work force here. And I think the kid knows it. He's got spiked hair, he's got bleached hair, he works in cosmo, he's got the earrings, he's got the bling, he's a wannabe"* (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

These experiences of discrimination, power dynamics, and isolation, together with the hopes expressed through them for better ways of relating, supporting one another, and building confidence, represent important categories of my research findings that were not originally planned for. Because of their pervasiveness, and students' constant reinforcement that these experiences were at the centre of their awareness of citizenship and their participation in their school community, they have been included first. Further findings are categorized by the theoretical orientation of the study, but have been interpreted through the data above as results and complexities of student experiences with the themes above.

Structural Disenfranchisement.

Early in the transcription process, it became obvious that personal isolation occupied a central place in student stories. However, before long it also became apparent that those experiences of isolation were being generalized into understandings of identity and place making both within the school walls and in students' approaches to graduating and leaving society. This structural disenfranchisement was also observed by staff, who seemed to view it as an unintended byproduct of school that was immutable and rather mysterious. One teacher evoked both the isolation and its larger social context and consequences by saying:

[the students] feel like they're just a small thing, somehow. Just a small thing that has to get by in the world, they're not connected to anything, they don't wield any power... I think school is meant to teach the opposite, but I just don't know. I mean the way we teach in school is kind of idealistic, right. If you go to social, this is where you learn about society, and our role in society, the individual in society, all that stuff. That's our job, right, is to make people feel aware and then make them feel like they're a contributing member to society and that their vote counts and all that lovely stuff. But I don't know, maybe they just say 'okay, well I know how it works now, but I don't believe that I make that much difference.' Do we teach that? Maybe we teach that. I think it's bigger though than school, I really do. I think the general message, the social message, must be that 'yeah, you're not going to make that much difference.' And that who you vote for is not going to really make a difference. Or what you have to say about health care or whathaveyou isn't going to make that much difference. Because things go on as they do. (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

The sense of helplessness and cynicism that pervades comments like this from staff represent their own data set; where teachers identify that society is affecting students' ability to find a place for themselves with agency, students felt the opposite. Where teachers express that society is teaching students lessons in apathy and cynicism, students identify school as the place where that is learned through non-formal means, and they identify themselves as carrying that attitude out into the world when they graduate. One focus group participant when asked if they felt they had a place to participate in society observed:

I agree that a citizen is being part of a group and all that. And I don't think school really encourages that at all. I know that me personally, when I walk through the halls, I'm completely alone. And I think that's why when we go out into the world and such, we don't really get along with people, because in high school we're treated so badly because everyone's focused on themselves (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

The learned helplessness that this student described was framed as a result of feelings of powerlessness or lack of relevancy within school structure: "*a lot of kids at our school feel like they're not important, like they have no buy-in to the school. They*

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think that they're just 'I am a student here, I'm here just to make my school money.'…It's just everybody else's school and they're just there" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group). For many students, this powerlessness was rooted in the student-defined themes of confidence and isolation defined above, and played out through peer-interactive dynamics. As one student observed,

> *People are afraid to be a citizen, they're afraid to go against what's already there. We're going right between the stage of being children to being adults living on our own, so we're coming from living in a world that what we're told as a kid, that's true. We've been almost indoctrinated. So now we're actually at the point where we can question it, but people are afraid to question it, because they've just been so sure of what's around them up until now* (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

When asked how this fear of questioning looked at school, the student outlined a complex arithmetic to normative behaviors:

> *So because other people are, say three people are afraid of it, one person becomes a little bit less afraid and says something, those two other people who are afraid will tell them not to do that because they're afraid, then that third person steps back again and you've got three people that are just twice as afraid now* (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

These peer dynamics and the perceived risks involved in stepping away from ideological and behavioral norms lay at the centre of students' senses of disenfranchisement. One student framed his understanding of what he was capable of contributing within his experience being treated as a younger person:

> *That might be part of why people aren't involved, this whole responsibility thing. As a kid, you're not really given a whole lot of responsibility. Everyone around you is responsible for you. And high school's where you can get out of it, I like to think that I question things and I like to think that I try to influence things, but not everybody does, not all my friends do, and I didn't always, I wasn't always like this. When I was younger, I didn't break a whole lot of rules, I just kinda did what people told me was right and was happy with it* (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

Another student voiced the same concerns about transitioning from a position of powerlessness to active citizenship without any practice:

> *My biggest problem with the school system is that until you're about in grade eleven, they talk to you like you're three years old and talk down to you and then*

once you hit grade twelve they're like 'Okay, you're an adult now, go do something with your life'. I know a lot of people who get stressed out during their grade twelve year and it's kind of a really toxic formula, especially because we're so used to it, and teachers talk down to us in ways, but when teachers actually start treating you like humans, they ask about you, they talk to you in a way that you understand, it's a lot more effective. (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

The implication above that students don't feel that they have power in the school environment was reinforced by staff, who were adamant in their assertions that the physical spaces students occupy outside of class but inside school add to their feelings of powerlessness:

"*The hallways are hostile to students. It doesn't feel like it's their space. They feel rushed in it; they're always getting kicked out of it. During class time, they are not allowed to be in our hallways. They will get yelled at by every single adult that passes them by, including custodial staff, 'why are you in the hallway? Go back to class or go somewhere useful.' The hallway's not a useful part of your time. We need to have some respect for the experiences that they do have in those places, and the micro kind of aggressions that they do experience …I think they're very actually unsafe, hostile places*" (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

These observations regarding the space itself are significant in their unanimity and continuity with student experiences of isolation and hostile peer interaction. In conversing with students about definitions of citizenship, I found that many of these experiences had become part of their working definitions of what it means to be a citizen.

Experiences of Citizenship

Without a solid theoretical and epistemological discussion with each student, it was difficult to assess whether the word "citizenship" as it is used in this study held similar connotations for high school students and staff. I therefore took time in my research to frame questions about citizenship in multiple ways that allowed me to understand not only how they defined the term, but also what their experiences might be of citizenship as I would define it. Findings in this section therefore became relevant not only to understandings of democratic citizenship, but to curricular concepts of citizenship as it is

currently taught to students. Responses in this section have been grouped into non-formal and interpersonal understandings of citizenship, and taught/learned understandings. There was a significant third category of responses around definitions of citizenship, and it is that of student voice. By far the most prolific of the responses to notions of how citizenship could be taught, learned, and understood placed the student in a key role as the knowledge-builder through the expression of student voice. I have therefore chosen to discuss these findings in their own section of this chapter, together with other responses on that topic.

For many students, the concept of citizenship evoked understandings of what it meant to be a 'good person'. This nebulous concept was recurring, with multiple definitions that seemed to centre on empathy and care for others. For example, one student voiced the idea that citizenship is:

Not making it hell for everybody else, and being nice to people. Because yeah, you can follow the line, you can follow the rules of the law, but when it comes down to it, it's not being a total asshole. Because a lot of times life sucks, and if you're going to be a dick about it people aren't going to respond by being either rude or upset. And if they're rude to you it's just creating more problems and it becomes a really bad negative chain reaction. I think it's just being nice to people and acknowledging that other people are around you, and realizing that it's okay to meet them (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

This was supported by another student, who commented that writing graffiti over someone else's graffiti, taking over their ideas or expressions with your own, was a form of "bad citizenship". While this definition of citizenship as basic 'niceness' may at first seem like a passive version of citizen participation, it is significant that for this student, the original act of graffiti was also an act of citizenship. For these students, citizenship was partly just about treating each other well, and most responses indicated that this kind of behavior ran counter to social survival. Responses on this issue indicated that behavioral lessons learned in the space were being used by students to generalize about what it means to be human based on hallway experiences:

"Being human in general I find is very hard. People just don't feel like doing it. Literally the only thing you have to do to be a decent human is just, like, be nice.

Being nice is not hard at all. It is way harder to be mean than to be nice. But for some reason people just want to be mean more often" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

Here, hallway experiences with unkindness are directly translated into understandings of what it means to be human. Given the hostile, unplanned nature of these spaces, this has many implications for citizenship learning.

For the student quoted above and others, the citizenship they were seeking was a participatory, active understanding of their place in the world. This was also true of teachers. So, although the school did have curriculum focused on political participation and other traditional markers of citizenship, both staff and students identified the word itself with a more holistic, interactive conceptualization that involved relationships and was missing from curricular programming. One student said:

I don't think we've ever had a time when we've learned about citizenship in high school. Everybody's just expected to know what it is. We reinforce it so much in junior high, but really the people you should be telling it to are the people in Grade 11 or 12. They're the ones that are 16, 17, 18, they're the ones that are getting ready to go out and vote. Like if you want to drill active citizenship into somebody, do it into them. (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

This was also addressed in a focus group, where students identified ethics as a key area of citizenship. Here, a student observed:

I'm trying to think back to the last time that I've ever been taught anything like ethics or anything like that but...we haven't. The only other time is bio, when we want to do labs sometimes they say there's ethical guidelines we have to follow. They never tell us what those are; they just assume that we've picked them up from somewhere. Cause someone wanted to do a lab of depriving someone of food for five days, and we had to talk about why we couldn't. (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group)

After a short but very necessary discussion about the history of ethics guidelines, students acknowledged that the problem wasn't necessarily that they're not being taught all the right things, but that they have learned to divorce rules from responsibility. Because there was no discussion of ethics or responsibility as it relates to scientific study, students were able to simply memorize a set of guidelines without internalizing

lessons about making ethical decisions. Through passive learning and by embracing the role of an "empty vessel", students could follow ethics guidelines without encountering problematic or personal responsibilities, asking relevant questions, or positioning themselves as responsible for reasoning through their own behavior on a moral level. Areas that should be citizenship learning were addressed through rule making, creating a situation in which they could not distinguish important moments for participation and dialogue from simple rules or assessment expectations.

Staff participating in the study spoke about citizenship as something they teach through modeling, and reaffirmed that it goes unaddressed in their curricular goals:

> *I think the best thing I do to teach citizenship is just simply to own my own stuff, and to model that, and never to preach but to just hold them accountable to their own behavior. This has nothing to do with curriculum, by the way. I mean I try to blend the curriculum into it but I mean…the kids are so institutionalized that you have to be very careful. If you get too earnest with every single assignment you give them, it's almost too hard for them. Their lives are very compartmentalized. Their courses are compartmentalized (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

When asked what this meant for defining citizenship in schools, this staff member remarked:

> *Citizenship becomes how to maintain stasis and autonomy in a world where you aren't even close to finding all the answers, how do you live your life simply and honestly for the betterment of you, those around you, and the world. It's a huge question (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

I asked what students are learning outside of the classroom, in school hallways, and received the answer, "*Survival skills",* and when I asked if this were different from citizenship, one teacher said:

> *Yes. It's diametrically opposed, because it's not guided. It's not overseen by a benign wiser council. It is haphazard, it is dangerous, it is uncharted. It has its own code. Parents and adults are often excluded from it. Kids have always had their own secret lives. I think the best an adult can do is activate their voice in a safe venue (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

This conversation becomes significant as a finding across multiple categories, as it carries within it embedded understandings of the teacher as a wise knowledge-

dispenser, and of the learners as unable to identify information and build knowledge without council. Here, citizenship is subtly defined as complicity in school hierarchy, and the hidden life of students is some other, non-citizenship experience. Despite this staff member's desire to see students engage in positive, open, interpersonal acts of citizenship, she was unable to envision them learning this on their own. It is also significant that although she would have described the positive outcomes of her modeling as forms of citizenship, she did not recognize the non-formal lessons of the hallways as a different kind of citizenship education; rather they are defined as some other category altogether. This inability to identify non-formal or negative lessons as citizenship knowledges of their own was not uncommon in staff, and echoes most Canadian educational policy structures around this kind of learning (Turcotte, 2007).

It is important to note that both student and staff responses above describe a highly individualized understanding of citizenship participation, in which each student learns and performs alone. In this context, interpersonal acts of empathy are seen as extraordinary outcomes linked to kindness, rather than radical attempts to shift power, work in solidarity, or create new dialogue around privilege, power structures, and right and wrong. It is my belief that previously discussed findings on the isolation and individualization of student experience are linked to these results.

Democracy and Citizenship

In both interview and focus group scenarios, the idea of democratic citizenship provoked slightly different responses than generalized questions of what it means to be a citizen. Here, notions of personal action and responsibility came to the fore. More students than I might have anticipated made links between active participation, dialogue, and democratic citizenship. It should be noted however that the bulk of these responses came from Group 1 participants who were already engaged with citizenship projects. It was rare that focus group participants raised these conversations or alternative definitions of citizenship. One engaged student described the difference between passive and active citizenship by saying:

> *There's empathizing with somebody and being like 'I get what they're going through', and then there's seeking to make sure that nobody has to go through*

that again, if it's a negative experience. If it's a positive experience, why don't you seek to make sure that other people feel that positivity, why don't you seek to make sure that you push that positivity out (Group 1 Participant, Interview)?

Another student also described democratic citizenship as involving personal agency with the words:

Some people say it's obeying the law, and that's the right thing, and doing everything you're supposed to do, but maybe if that's what citizenship is then I don't want to be a citizen. Citizen, what it should be, is being an active person in your community, trying to have an influence on what's going on around you (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

A third put this in a global context, and observed that Canadian citizens have a unique opportunity, in theory, to participate in basic political activities:

"As a citizen you have a responsibility to vote. If you have this right to vote you also have a responsibility to vote. If you are in a society that allows you to do it, you have to do it pretty much. Even if you personally are lazy and don't care, there are people around the world that you owe it to, to use your freedom, and you have been graced with the ability to do this, whereas other people were not so lucky, where they were born or whatever. They don't get to do it, but you can do it, and it's disrespectful to everyone that can't if you don't do it (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

It is key here that students with these kinds of citizenship definitions took the positive one-on-one interactions that defined other categories of citizenship and generalized them to socio-political contexts. These students saw themselves as having an active role in society's structure and organization. As one remarked, *"I think that a citizen should be someone that is influencing what's around them, trying to be part of their community, part of everything, anything that affects their life, they're affecting as well. That's a citizen."* However, many students also recognized that their school environment is less conducive to this kind of citizenship activity, and that without stewardship, they begin to experience participation fatigue. One determined student described the attrition of his peers' involvement in citizenship projects by saying,

It could go 50-50 where some of us get disillusioned with the activeness of it, we realize that hey, what we're doing, there's no immediate results. We just stop

being active citizens and just become cynical about the whole process of activism and active participation. And another half of us will just keep going and keep going and keep going, and maybe we never see the results of what we do, maybe somebody in a lab like 50 years from now pulls up the work and is like 'hey! What these guys did was pretty sick. Let's see if we can put that on a wide-scale basis and try it out', maybe something new comes out of it (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

A few students acknowledged this fatigue as a barrier to student agency. While they wanted to be active members of their community, they couldn't effect lasting change on their environment. A staff member also identified these experiences as an obstacle to positive identity-building in this area, saying:

They need to feel like they have control over something. And if everywhere in their lives, every project they do is basically they know there's a right and wrong answer, and they know that there is, you know, this sort of limit to creativity that they have on them, they're not as inspired to do something about it (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

These negative experiences were then generalized to society, where students observed that although they were taught that citizen action is effective in democratic environments, the world wasn't mirroring their expectations:

One thing that's in the textbook in Grade 8 was that if public opinion ever is against something the government decides, we have the power to stop it. There's a lot of things that probably if you would ask the public, do you agree with this, a lot of them would say no. Did anyone step up? Maybe two percent of people who said they didn't like it, they might have said something. A lot of people are like ah, there's nothing I can do about it. That is Canada. 'Eh, there's nothing I can do about it.' That is Canadian politics (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

This interplay between students' observations of the political world and their educational environment is not something that seems to be discussed as part of their education; many students' observed that they are taught a kind of a-political politics, bereft of dialogue around values, democratic tensions, and representation. One student summarized what he felt school was trying to teach him, and then what he was observing on his own, by saying:

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If I could sum it up with an image, what you're taught is this person with a Canadian flag sewn onto their shoulder, chest out, chin in the air, looking at Parliament Hill, that's what we're being taught about citizenship. Voting, that is a big part of what we're taught citizenship is. They don't say like "go protest when you feel like you need to protest". They don't teach you that. They don't teach you to come out of your shell, they teach you to trust that the government will do its job and if it's not doing its job then everybody will vote and it will be fine. How often does that happen? I don't think I've seen that happen once. I've only been paying attention to politics for four years, so that's not…politics has been around a lot longer than four years. But you'd think that someone might have screwed up in those four years, and that there might have been someone that might have made a public attempt at changing things, but no no. Government will handle it. Someone will get it. So do we actually have that power that they teach us that we have? They tell us Canada's government is great because as soon as the public doesn't agree with things, they can change it. When has that happened? Ever? So we're taught that we have all these powers and all of these rights and stuff, but we should pretty much just let the government handle things, obey the law, make sure you don't do anything stupid, that's what you're taught. That's Social 8. I guess we aren't really taught what is citizenship (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

These comparisons and contrasts between the world outside of school and the lessons in their textbooks could be valuable sources of class discussion and dialogue around democracy and citizenship. Instead, this student and others simply graduate with the knowledge that these unresolved conflicts exist, that they're being taught something that clearly does not relate to their life experience. One of the staff members who runs citizenship projects expressed that students' best learning came from moments of tension, tensions that she felt were explicitly and intentionally avoided in classroom situations. Expressing some anxiety about her response, she said:

I'll probably get fired for this answer...Citizenship is being learned at moments of dissent. I think that friction points where you come across boundaries and you come across these choice points, whether it's trouble for skipping class or you disagreed with the teacher and their lesson, or you had a moment of tension with your friend group, I think all those moments of how you acted and how you

decided to grow from those is where citizenship is being learned. It can be learned depending on different contexts and different events that we hold that create that discomfort for people. And whether their friend circles that are eating lunch together are going through some of those things. It's often taught in ways that aren't structured lessons (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

These unstructured lessons, both positive and negative, are where students seem to be building the most knowledge about their place in citizenship activities. As non-formal, personalized areas of learning, the epiphanies and experiences that students engage with as part of their daily school lives therefore bear examination as key sites of citizenship learning.

It is important to note that in all cases the project of citizenship, its successes and its struggles, are framed in terms of a single student. Participation fatigue, passion, learning, and knowledge-building are described by participants as individual to the student. As has been noted in other chapters, critical democracy is at its core an expression and process of group dynamics – an individual by definition cannot and should not represent democratic anything without an examination of their relationships, environment, and movement within communities. The significance of a lack of responses that address democratic understandings in terms of the collective will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Non-Formal Learning and Citizenship

I think they're learning: Be a volunteer. Volunteering is not political. Volunteering and being a good neighbor, so mow your neighbor's lawn, shovel their walk. Charity, especially. Charity as citizenship in a lot of ways. And then I think on the very other basic level, I think they're learning that citizenship is, you were either born in Canada, or you went through some immigration paperwork and then became a citizen of Canada, but there's a very much depoliticized aspect to what they're learning about citizenship (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

The above comment by a staff member illuminates some of the kinds of non-formal learning that can affect students' understandings of citizenship. Because if its experiential nature, research findings that pertained to non-formal learning were often related to interactions between students and their environment, rather than to any specific set of questions about learning. Students and staff spoke of non-formal learning as a product of experience. This ranged from experiences with the structure of school, its hierarchies and pre-determined modes of operation, to peer interactions and citizenship engagement projects. Responses about non-formal learning experiences also shared common characteristics; they referenced an opportunity to reflect on the personal in light of the academic, and they allowed or demanded that students translate their own experiences and position within the school into learning.

Experiential Learning. A teacher that I spoke with near the beginning of my research referred to the world of knowledge that students build from experience as something that took place *"in the other school. The other school that goes on in the hallways and the bathrooms and the locker rooms and fields when no teacher is looking, no adults are there to supervise. It's what's really going on" (Group 3 Participant, Interview).* For this staff member, student experiences represented a private world that she couldn't engage with, something that was markedly outside of and distinct from curricular learning. This blindness to the learning that students create on their own from school experience, and the inability to address it, makes it difficult to teach to the conflicts and power differentials that they experience and leaves students to draw their own conclusions about the kinds of citizenship action that are safe, acceptable, and appropriate. For example, one staff member described the specific way that assessment structures around students' engagement choices influences their understandings of citizenship by noting:

> I think they're picking up on the things that are accepted. So they're picking up on the fact that parents are like, 'good job, you raised $5000 for Water for Life, wonderful.' That's really good, positive feedback. And it looks really good on your resume. So they're learning that the more random things that they get involved in, the more it looks like they're an active citizen, because they participate in these. But they're not taught any kind of critical aspects of what those things actually

produce, or where does that money go if you follow it further. Or what does that action extrapolate to. They're not taught any kind of follow-up, it's just sort of: the act means good for resume, good for job, parents happy (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

When asked what knowledge students take away from this lack of critical engagement, she said:

They're learning the status quo. There is a status quo that's rarely challenged, it's very privileged, it's not questioned, and people are uncomfortable to tell people off when they tell a sour joke that's not funny, and those things are not what's being taught. You're not taught that to be a leader in society means that the standard that you walk by isn't the standard that you accept. You're not being taught that. So there's no kids in leadership that are being taught to intervene when someone's being called a slut in the hallways. That's not being taught. So I have to then kind of extrapolate that a little bit to say that what is *being taught is to be status quo. To be the people that aren't challenging, that aren't dissenting, that aren't creating a different world. They're taught to be non-challenging of what could possibly be argued as what's wrong in our society.*

Student responses echoed this observation in simpler form by highlighting further inconsistencies between what is taught and what lessons are absorbed from the structure of the teaching. One student illustrated this by saying that she was learning the wrong lessons. When asked why, she said, "*I think because they always say that we're going to be the future and all that, we're the ones coming up and all that, but they barely ever listen to what we say about moving forward*" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group). Another student identified the gap between school rhetoric and citizenship outcomes by pointing out that:

When you graduate there's always a graduation speech about how we're going on to become better leaders in the world. Well clearly, if you take a look at the last 50 years, something's gone wrong because those grad speeches haven't worked. The empathizing that we're supposed to do clearly hasn't worked. So what's gone wrong? People have been hearing all these feel good stories or stories with positive endings and people have been thinking 'oh that's nice. It's a

good pat on the back story' and then walking away with no thought to 'how do I apply this to my life'.

A third participant when asked if students were learning the positive citizenship qualities she had described (equality, student voice, treating people well), said:

Honestly, I don't really see it (learning to be a citizen), because high school students have their own cliques and stuff like that, and we assume that we're just kids and that's not how the real world is, but honestly the teachers have all this, and like, if that's what we're supposed to model ourselves after, it's not really teaching us to be accepting of everyone (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

This last observation speaks not only to a break between school policy and citizenship ideals, but also to what students learn about acceptable peer interactions from watching those around them.

Peer Interactions. The link between non-formal learning outcomes and peer interaction was ubiquitous within student anecdotes and difficult to extrapolate, because the lessons were so embedded that students couldn't explain them in words. Every student interviewee could recognize that they were learning from peers. As one said, "*It's the knowing and knowledge you get not just from what you're learning in school but from the people around you" (Group 1 Participant, Interview).* However, each reached a point in trying to explain their understandings of citizenship learned from peers where they voiced an inability to explain followed by a long anecdote about their friends, enemies, or someone they'd heard about. These stories were obviously important, but the interpretation of their meaning was difficult for me as an outsider, and I have foregone many that are too ambiguous to include as learning outcomes. A relatively clearer example of one of these stories came from an interviewee who was mulling over the tensions between personal wellbeing and social norms, and clearly experimenting with where those boundaries lay:

A lot of things that I learn, some of it I learn from my friends, some of it I learn from my past, some of it I just learn because I will sit there and I think, and when I try to organize my thoughts they go crazy. And some of the things I think about, like the rule of not dating your best friend's ex, well it's like if she's over him then why the hell not? You shouldn't be basing your choices on what makes other people happy, you should be basing your choices on making yourself happy. And

it's kind of like, one of my rules, you should be happy. I like making other people happy I really do, but I mean we shouldn't be basing our choices on other people unless it's affecting them. So, I was friends with a girl, and if I started dating her ex, and it was affecting her in a way where she was really offended by it, then yeah, I would not necessarily break up with the guy but talk to her about it, make sure she's okay, find a good way to see if we can work through it, and if not figure out whether she's worth being my friend etc. But yeah when she's completely over the guy, and she didn't mind, I would still go out because it would make me happy, and it's not affecting her, so why shouldn't I be happy?

In this story, she identifies a social "rule" that to her only makes sense under certain circumstances. It's not difficult to conclude that this is a non-formal learning moment, that she has absorbed an understanding of how to respect someone else's relationships through her interactions with peers. It is also clear that from her perspective, this is commonly understood as a rule and as applicable to everyone. It is as legitimate as any school rule. She struggles with the problem that the rule is too broad to fit every hypothetical, as many rules are. Like many students presented with deadlines, classroom behavior requirements, or enforced study techniques that are at odds with their reality, she mentally bargains, moderates the rule with her own understandings, and reaches her own conclusions. This is a learning process, and one that could apply to many kinds of social participation. Further, it is an important opportunity for her to engage in empathy, open dialogue, and conversational techniques that allow for the perspectives of her friend and other peers. The large quantity of stories like this within my research illustrate that there are many moments where students build new understandings of themselves in relation to others. By acknowledging that these moments exist, I believe those of us in education may begin to better grasp through dialogue with students how peer learning affects citizenship. We could then better support students in reaching healthy, collaborative, and democratic conclusions. This would require a level of detail and specificity beyond the range of this study, but its ubiquity within my research demands acknowledgement. More importantly, the process of active reflection that this quotation frames is central to study findings regarding the necessity of reflection to knowledge building in non-formal contexts.

Reflection. Student and staff comments regarding their best non-formal learning and teaching moments often centred around conscious reflection on experience leading to new understandings. For some students, this could be expressed as an ambiguous sense of consciousness throughout their daily activities. As one student said, "*it's feeling something. Not just feeling your typical day at school but feeling what's going on. It's a stronger feeling than just walking through your hallways."* For others, it was the understanding that their own reflections gave them the ability to analyze and change negative situations, for example, I spoke with a student whose reflection on the importance of well being and of focusing on positive aspects of her life had resulted in concrete healthy changes. She said, *"What if I had never realized what was making me upset? And it wasn't even the fact of what I'd been through or what I was going through at the time, it was the fact that I was focusing on it that made me upset. I wasn't even trying to get over it."* For this student, bringing personal experience into the realm of analysis gave her a level of control over her life that she hadn't felt she possessed. As one teacher put it:

> *The idea that you take your experience, which is this unshaped ill-defined thing that you just think back on 'oh my god what happened?' you know? And then you write it down, which seems to start to define it, and then when it becomes something that other people can read, it becomes more real. And it becomes a unit of something, something you can actually see from outside and call your own, rather than something that just happened to you. So I think there might be a transformative element to that kind of publishing or putting out into the world. It's transforming something that's ill-defined and kind of oppressive, often, I bet, because I bet you kids write about things that are kinda scary or bad, and it's creating a shape to it, being able to look at it from the outside, creating a kind of truth about it or reality that might be really good for the person who writes the thing, puts it out there (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

Here, non-formal learning is described as the transformation of the oppressive into the empowering; it leads to learning, but also to identity-building and essential aspects of citizenship construction. This teacher described the non-formal ways that his literature class could help with the process by expressing that he wants students:

to be able to live meaningful lives. And I do see that a big part of that is them being able to make *meaning out of their lives. That doesn't mean that everybody starts from some different place to do that, I think that we have certain things in common that we also try to teach through literature that help us to find certain truths about how you go about living a meaningful life (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

He also acknowledged that the isolation and peer pressure of school environments, the perceived lack of safety described by students, inhibits this process. For him, prompting student reflection was a careful balance between allowing them to maintain a jaded and non-vulnerable emotional position while encouraging them to branch out:

You're in classrooms selling these ideas, you don't sell the big stuff, you sell that which will get you through, and you sneak in the other stuff. Because if you try to sell them empathy or compassion, fuck, it's just one ear and out the other. But if you tell them, look man, I'm going to get you through, we're going to get you the best mark you can get, you see it's all about leveraging your capital, right? And then along the way, you surprise them with stuff that's kinda cool. And with thoughts that are bigger than them, or that help them to see something bigger than themselves. I'm trying to make the point though that that's not what you sell. You sell the practical shit, right? And then you surprise them, sneak up on them with the other stuff. Because they won't buy that. They won't buy "I'm going to talk to you about empathy now", are you kidding me?

As is evidenced in other sections of this chapter, assessment and grading structures combined with a lack of critical engagement can lead to situations where students reject open-minded exploration in learning if they think it will affect their bottom line. Situated within a school culture of individualism and alienation, both students and teachers are struggling for ways to address meaningful learning without seeming vulnerable. When asked if he felt it was possible to penetrate the shared cynicism and protective normative behaviors of school culture, one staff member suggested that inspiration was the key. And what difference does it make when students are inspired?

All the difference. That's my big goal. That's my big goal. I want them to feel like there's something exciting going on in their own thought process, in their own hearts, like there's something interesting, right? And that's about their own thought process, it's about them discovering meaning and value, so. It's not about

citizenship at all, it's more about the individual, just the individual. But I guess it's
all connected, it's part of a community I guess always. You can't help that (Group
3 Participant, Interview).

This statement represents the hope that those within the school system feel about inspiring education, but also the legacy of neoliberal thought; that community comes second to the individual, that inspiration and learning are no longer, at their best, the collective and multifaceted community project that theorists like Illich, Darder, and Giroux envision. However, it also contains positive messages about the role of student experience in authentic and passionate learning, and places student voice at the centre of learning.

Student Voice

Within the broad spectrum of student participants, there were a range of understandings of what student voice is and how it should be part of education. Group 1 participants were organizers of citizenship projects, and had been working closely with staff that focus on voice. Most of these students raised the concept on their own, and placed it at the centre of their understandings about a range of citizenship concepts. They also identified student voice as a key way to overcome isolation and address issues that they felt were at the core of their ability to participate. As one student put it, *"Student voice is important because it builds your confidence and your character"* *(Group 1 Participant, Interview).* Group 2 participants who were not part of citizenship projects never used the term "student voice", but many identified that students need a place where they feel heard. The assertion that students need a safe space to practice unsafe aspects of identity was quite common: *"The outlet is like, everyone needs...it's always been said that it's bad to hold things in, and it is. You need to have somewhere to go to, or someone" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).* However, students also expressed the need to simply be seen and acknowledged by both their peers and their teachers without grades attached. One girl expressed this by saying, *"I kinda wanted my story to be out there and to be read. And I think a lot of people want that. To be read and heard" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).* Another peer expressed this as an aspect of citizenship, saying, *"I think a big part of being a citizen is having your voice be heard. So if it's in something like this or just the programs the school puts on, it's just helping you*

have your voice be heard to people" Group 2 Participant, Focus Group). Many of these responses implied that students needed to feel valued as individuals, and acknowledging student voice was key to creating spaces where they felt heard. A third set of responses suggested that student voice was simply something they had a right to; something without which education was unequal, unfair. One student described this by saying, *"They're like oh, respect the government, respect the police, but that's different I think. That's respect, but they should respect you too" (Group 1 Participant, Interview).* Another simply asked, "*It's our students' school, it's our students' futures, it's our students' lives, why can't you give it to them? (Group 1 Participant, Interview).* Finally, many students identified student voice as something that helped them learn from each other. This was expressed by one student with the comment, *"everybody's got a story, and because everybody has a story, that makes that story much more unique, because one person's story might help another person make better decisions, really" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).* This was echoed by a staff member, who also described the connection between student voice and positive peer learning:

> *…creating something meaningful and powerful for them that they can call their own, and that they can feel is their expression of their authentic stories in a manner which allows them to help others and gives them a sense that their experiences are meaningful. I guess my understanding now is that the stories that they told were given heightened meaning or new meaning based upon the fact that they could tell those stories (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

For those who had encountered the concept before, student voice was one of the first things that they cited as a missing piece in the school, but one that was key to student success. I asked each person who raised the concept independently to define it for me. One staff member told me:

> *It's not preaching anything. It's just telling how you feel. That's quite compelling. It looks huge, are you kidding me? Because these are all little outpourings, and outpourings are good for the soul, aren't they? It is so personal and lovely, really. These are really good. Amazing little snapshots. And they're not even really so much stories as just outpourings. It matters a lot (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

Another described student voice as

> *…being able to share your opinions in an authentic way. A lot of what our school system does is tells you there's a right answer and a wrong answer, and shapes*

your opinion to be somewhat of a fence-sitter. You need to be able to argue both sides of the argument, you need to be able to say...you know, there's not a whole lot of teaching about stand your ground and be confident in your own opinion. There's more teaching of dabble in everything and be open to everything, and it doesn't really foster an environment of "I know who I am as a person and I'm okay saying this is my opinion and being able to feel confident that I am okay as a person in my friend groups and in my friend circles". It's more like people have a very generic way of relating to each other that's constructed for them as safe. (Group 3 Participant, Interview).

Her affirmation that students are learning to hide, rather than share, their most radical ideas and non-normative questions and identities, correlates with student responses. One of the most engaged students I spoke with described a citywide protest that he had helped to organize, and what it had taught him about his place within larger educational structures:

The difficulties and struggles we had just to get through to people (in power), they really don't listen. My favourite was when we went to the legislature because (a local MLA) wanted to meet with us. We talked to him for like two minutes and he got what he wanted and then in the legislature when we were sitting there he read us back the one little detail that he took from the whole thing that was nothing to do with us. The people behind us, there was an elementary class, a typical elementary trip to the leg(islature). The teacher was explaining to them before it started, "remember don't speak because the people down there speak on behalf of you" And I started to laugh because really, they don't. They have the voters' best interests at heart. And because everyone who's in K-12 can't vote, really, the only people considered are the parents. So I feel like it's not very open at my age to voice my opinions and stuff like that (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

This student's experience speaks to schools' ineffectiveness in transitioning youth from non-voting children to politically participatory adults. This was raised as a student concern in findings on structural disenfranchisement, and is supported by another student, who said "*I think student voice is taken away a lot, and it's being moderated, so it'll be like, sure you have student voice, but you can only answer these questions, you can only do this with that student voice*" (Group 1 Participant, Interview). In these cases,

the moderation is a message to students that they are "*service-takers*", as one staff member put it, subject to rules and powers beyond their control; it is an affirmation of other non-formal school lessons that teach passivity and obedience rather than participation and critical dialogue. These messages are central to students' understandings of citizenship. One staff member commented, "*I don't think that they're being taught what leadership is.*" When I responded with, "*But they're in a program called "Leadership"*", she said,

> *Yep. And they're given a 5-credit course that is basically some journal entries. And they're given a bunch of tasks for certain events, meaning you're going to set up this table, and you're going to take cash from people and sell these things for $2, and you're going to put on a fundraiser and you're going to advertise for it, so you're going to make some posters and tell people to come to the basketball game and buy these things for $2. And then you're going to pick out a charity and hold a big fundraiser dinner for them, and you're not going to learn about what charity, or why, or what the consequences of doing charitable work are, or if the charity is hurting communities, or anything like that. You're just taught that you're doing something really wonderful because you're participating in this. But your participation and the way you participate doesn't matter. So you get some check marks and five credits for completing a checklist of tasks, basically (Group 3 Participant, Interview).*

One student illustrated the importance of changing these programs and allowing spaces for genuine student voice in building confidence, participation, and citizenship identity by saying:

> *Citizenship to me I guess has a lot to do with authentic voice. I think being a citizen is knowing yourself and then knowing how to use your own skills and power to the service of other people, in a lot of ways. So, not everyone has the same skill set, but using what you do have to contribute to making the world better, I guess, is what I would view it as. But it's also just sort of...being you and being happy being you (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

Another asserted that student voice also helped with the trauma of teenage years in general, both because it limited isolation:

I think schools should really support student voice, because it is a large space and it's your day and when school sucks it makes you, you don't want to go to school, you don't want to go to class, but you're having a bad day, you can hear that someone else feels how you feel, it kinda makes it more bearable because you're like, well they are making it, so can I (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

This comment, like the others in this section, implies a fairly hostile school environment. More importantly, however, it connects students' perceptions of their place within school with their ability to attend class and remain functional learners. The final section of this chapter addresses participant responses to questions regarding the kind of educational environment that would allow and encourage new kinds of democratic citizenship identity.

Building a Culture of Empathy

Throughout the research process, I asked students and staff how they felt schools could better encourage the kinds of democratic citizenship that they were describing. Almost every answer that wasn't related to student voice addressed the creation of better relationships within the school. These relationships, identified earlier in this chapter as a source of stress, isolation, and individualistic outlooks, are identified by respondents as holding the key to making students feel less alone, more connected to their school community, and more engaged as citizens who feel that they have an active and positive role to play in the experiences and learning of others. Collectively, these responses reflect the need for a culture of empathy, a word that came up frequently among all groups of participants. The first time this phrase was used was by a more jaded student who, when asked what it meant to be a good citizen responded with *"Not being a douche? Yeah. I don't know. Can we create a culture of empathy?" (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

I asked many participants to describe how experiences of empathy affect them. One participant referenced his experiences with moments of vulnerability through the anonymous sharing project and said,

Probably what changed is the way I treat people. Everybody has a story to tell, I haven't known that story yet, and I don't know whether that story has made them

into who they are in a negative way, or if they are the way they are because of the things in life they had, or because of the way they were raised. I can't assume that everything is the way mom and dad taught me. Things have changed since I was a little kid, and I have to constantly change. My morals are staying the same, but the way I process my morals onto other people is what's changing (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

This was supported by other students' acknowledgements that they are more patient and less judgmental with peers after these experiences:

It teaches, not to be cliché but I guess that you can't judge someone based on who they are face to face, everyone has something deeper and you need to remember that. Because sometimes you forget when someone's acting a certain way towards you that you don't know what's going on behind the scenes in their life, so you can't take everything to heart that people say sometimes. You need to keep perspective both ways. (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

Another student described the rich emotional experience that she has when she tries to actively empathize with and understand her peers:

You gain more of a healthy respect for everybody around you, because you realize that everybody around you is carrying some sort of a burden, and it can be a good burden like a happy memory that they love, and their heart is so fat with love for that memory, or like a really terrible memory that they have trouble getting rid of (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

When asked how that changed her experience of school, she said, "*It opens your mind a little bit to realize that things going on around you are important and it's not just you, so you become more aware of your surroundings, people around you, and your relationships become tighter with people.*" Both focus groups also provided useful feedback on the way that empathy affects their school relationships. Students would inevitably vent about their experiences with school staff, and frequently cite positive interactions with caring teachers as moments of profound learning and belonging. I asked one group if it made a difference to have people that you trust and care about in school, and the answer was practical and seemed obvious to the students:

Oh yeah, because we spend most of our time there in a week or in a day, so if it's going to be like our second home, we need people there who will treat us as if it

is. We need teachers who care about us, that we can have those open
relationships with (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

The creation of a culture of empathy is uniquely linked to student voice and confidence because it allows students to transform their moments of vulnerability into resources for others. This fundamentally alters their position within the school as helpless or disempowered, and re-frames experiences that they might previously have categorized as moments of weakness into areas of strength. As one student put it:

It would have been cool to know that somebody could have benefitted from my
experiences. And sometimes there is no resolution, sometimes it's "I'm still
struggling, I might be still cutting" or something, but maybe that's just what
everyone looks forward to. Maybe that's what everyone wants, we all want, all we
ever ask is that you're still going strong. So that's what I'm taking from it, I'm
taking from it that there's a lot of strong people out there. I like to think that I'm a
strong person but some of the stuff that other people are going through,
compared to what I'm going through, I feel like we should give them an award
because I cannot take it (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

These reflections on the strength of others turned into opportunities to work collaboratively. Another student, speaking about her opportunities within the school's student-run centre, said,

I think it's because I had support that I was able to do it. I knew that if I brought
the idea forward to my school and said I want to do this, I want to open people
up, I'd be able to do it. Because I have that support system where even if the idea
wasn't the strongest at the time, someone would support me and help me get
there.

Students also recognized that if they became empathetic, they had a role to play in helping others who might be struggling with discrimination. A particularly touching moment of insight from one student brought this to light:

Recently there's been this student in one of my classes, and he was always a
little annoying, and like, off a bit. He'd miss social cues and stuff like that. And
everyone used to pick on him. But the other day in Bio, we were talking about
autism, he said he had autism, and it never dawned on me that it's not his fault,
but I had never got the whole story, and it changes how I view that individual now.

I've tried to get other people to realize this, but they still pick on him for his autism. Like his voice sounds a little off as well and one person said straight to him, 'Do you ever realize how sometimes you sound like a robot?' And the teacher said like, 'okay, don't say that', and then no one else noticed, they just continued studying and the person who'd said it laughed, but the person with autism, he left the room and when he came back he was like, clearing his eyes, like he made him cry. That shouldn't be okay in high school. And they didn't realize, it's not his fault for how he sounds.

Many aspects of this story highlight the troubling lack of safety in school, and the role that empathy can play in creating safer communities. The student's comment that this "shouldn't be okay in high school" is a powerful endorsement of the power of an empathetic culture to allow students to stand up for their beliefs, resist dominant power relationships, and create space for others. And what effect does this have on student well being? One student responded, "*I think once you've realized these stories, and that you're not alone, you start to think hey, I'm not alone, life will always have someone there to support me. And then with that, that makes you happy. And it kind of gives you happiness*" (Group 1 Participant, Interview).

When asked why happiness is so important to her, this student said,

I think the reality is that some people, especially when it comes to self harm, some people can do it by themselves, they can get over it, they can do that. But I think they need that support, even if they don't want it, to just be like "You know what? I know you do this to yourself, I want you to stop it" To let them know that other people care about them, that they're not alone.

Empathy and Learning Outcomes. For those who might perceive student happiness as secondary to student performance and learning outcomes in schools, it is important to note that this research found strong links between the two. One of the strangest examples of this was a short conversation I had in a focus group with a student who answered the question, "*What are you learning from other kids?*" With the answer, "*Math.*" Looking for clarification, I asked her to continue. She explained, "*I think most particular in my math class I have this one friend who I learned more from him because he's very caring. You know what I mean?*" Assuming she was referring to non-formal behavioral learning, I asked for clarification, "*Are you learning math from him?*" Her

answer was *"Yeah. But he's doing it in a way that's helpful. And a way that's caring, and a way that's kind, and way that's not, I don't know, really harsh like a teacher, you know what I mean?" (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).* I did know what she meant, and had seen it reflected in other students' anecdotes. One student explained that he switched his study focus because he found a teacher who took the time to empathize with him, and find learning techniques that he could relate to:

> *last semester I used to go to his classroom during my third block spare, and he would teach me all the stuff that I didn't learn in class, and I learned more than I ever would even in a 30 level class because he connected with me, he told me on a personal level how to do everything. Not just this is how you do it, but this is how YOU should do it, because YOU know how to do it this way. (Group 1 Participant, Interview).*

Another focus group participant highlighted the way that empathy can change student-teacher dynamics and affect classrooms:

> *It may open the student up more in class. I know there's a lot of people in class that literally sit at the back of the class for 80 min every day and don't do anything. But it may open them up if they can actually relate to their teacher and trust that it's an open environment like teachers always say they try to create but they don't.*

For those teachers who have managed to create that kind of open environment, empathy was providing lessons to their students that they couldn't teach with just words. One said, "*what it's teaching them is that taking a stand and taking risks often is beneficial for being part of something. So in a sense it creates dissent, I think in some ways, and a lot of community in other ways" (Group 3 Participant, Interview).* Finally one student suggested that if empathy was not an intended learning outcome, it should be. When asked how she would change her learning environment, she said:

> *It kinda relates back to what we're learning and what we're not learning in school. I don't know if everyone's elementary school did this, every month we'd have like a different character trait, and I know empathy was one of them. And I mean, you can't do this but this is things that we were taught when we were little and we would all go into the gym and have like an assembly and talk about empathy and what it means to be empathetic. And not so much try and make people be empathetic but try and remind them that like, that's something that you need to*

know and you need to learn and keep in mind. And then it's like you suddenly forget that in junior high and high school, which is a time where you start to understand your problems and they're more prominent I feel, and this is when we need to be empathetic with each other and it's like, you should remember that from elementary school. But a lot of us have forgotten it (Group 2 Participant, Focus Group).

All the comments in this category express a need for schools to directly address negative aspects of the non-formal environment. However if as Illich (1971) and others suggest, the environment itself is a partial cause, change to the system must be all-encompassing and include not only pedagogy and curriculum, but also the social and political environments that schools create.

Summary of Findings

Research data from this study demonstrates that students perceive experiences with confidence and insecurity, isolation, belonging, and vulnerability as key to how they build and process citizenship identity. Findings also illustrate the ways in which structural disenfranchisement within schools changes how students perceive their role in community with regard to active, passive, and democratic understandings of citizenship. Responses in interviews and focus groups revealed multiple understandings of citizenship among youth and school staff, spanning a range of definitions that correspond to each of Westheimer's categories of citizenship participation, including that of the *justice-oriented* or democratic citizen. Study results also indicate that non-formal learning in school spaces is key to students' place making and identity building and affect each of the student-identified citizenship themes of confidence, isolation, belonging, and risk. These non-formal experiences teach students that relationships are risky, and positive democratic citizenship learning is often obfuscated by peer interactions, perceptions of power and hegemony, individualism, and competition. Both teachers and students identified the importance of mediating these non-formal learning experiences with critical reflection. Finally, research results also indicate that student voice occupies a central place in staff- and student- identified responses to the need for democratic education. The concept of student voice was central to active and participatory notions of citizenship, but requires a greater amount of vulnerability and

safety than are currently present within school walls. Study data shows that the creation of a culture of empathy is central to the creation of spaces for democratic citizenship, and that with student voice, can change the way that students build their identity as community members with active roles to play in their own growth and development as well as that of others.

These qualitative study results were rich in depth and complexity, and can provide important insight into a range of educational questions and experiences. For the purposes of this study, I will spend the next chapter analyzing the ways in which this data set can be combined with important theoretical perspectives and applied to my original research questions regarding citizenship identity-building and non-formal learning in school spaces.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This study's research findings are important in their specifics. However they also stand alone as a unique collection of experiences, the reading of which demands a shift in the way we understand the spaces between classes we teach and programs we plan. The stories that youth chose to share as part of their understanding of citizenship represent a view of the world that has them in the spotlight, their experiences as the centre of how we interpret and build schooling frameworks. And why not? At the root of our educational obsession with assessment and funding is student performance, the youth themselves are keenly aware of this. Data from this research illustrates that in the area of citizenship, performance is complicated by interactions with far more than just curriculum. The way that relationships are formed, the power dynamics within a school, the methods of teaching, and the expectations that we have with regard to student participation all play key roles in the kinds of agency that students are able to envision for themselves with regard to their community upon graduation. This chapter explores the ways in which findings support an understanding of the school environment as its own series of citizenship lessons. It investigates the nature of these lessons, and how they affect students' citizenship identity building.

Unearthing Dominant Discourse

Internalizing Injustice. Study results suggest that non-formal experiences within schools constitute their own lessons in which students learn to accept and reproduce dominant social conditions and understandings of power, class, and acceptable behaviors. These findings compliment Antonia Darder's (2012) suggestion that "Schools play a major cultural role as sites where ideologies are produced, reproduced, and perpetuated in society. It is this function of schools in the production, interpretation, and effectivity of meaning that must be understood in terms of a dialectical relationship between culture and power" (p. 80). Students experience the reproduction of current sociopolitical inequalities as daily marginalization, judgment, and ostracization taking place along specific cultural and class boundaries.

The power of these experiences to reinforce and teach negative stereotyping lies in their deeply personal nature. Youth in this study identified the centrality of confidence to their ability to interact with their community in meaningful ways, and they identified fear of loneliness and escape from isolation (the product of social marginalization often associated with transgressing normative cultural understandings) as their main motivators in social performance and citizenship participation. These experiences are more than just negative moments in a day; students see them as related to their long-term identity and their ability to succeed academically and personally. A collective longing for meaningful relationships presented itself through multiple stories of moments with teachers and peers, stories of learning as a result of kindness or connection, rather than reading the right books. This need for others did not translate into proactive relationship building, however. Instead, students' awareness of the danger of transgressing isolation and normative understandings to empathize or create connections with others was not worth the risk. Fears of further isolation, of rejection and stereotyping from both school staff and peers, combined with feelings of powerlessness, outweighed their need for healthy relationships. The prevalence of this lack of safety in the learning environment is a strong incentive to accept inequality and ignorance when they are presented as acceptable understandings of the world. This is particularly salient when these understandings are transmitted through figures of power like school staff or through the structuring of education to favour the histories, learning styles, and participation of those from backgrounds of privilege.

Beyond the social inequalities outlined by critics such as Antonia Darder, there is a new set of lessons around capital, accreditation, and individualism currently being absorbed by students in schools. These lessons were predicted by Illich (1971) in his assessment that schools had the potential to occupy a key role in the marketization of education. They are now being played out through increasingly constrictive budgeting and evaluation requirements. Students are aware that school funding is dependent on student success, and more than one voiced the understanding that the right kind of student makes the school money. This contributed to cynicism and a sense of disenfranchisement with the role of schools as nurturing learning environments. Instead, they were characterized as arenas in which students were expected to put their humanity, history, and opinions on hold in order to accomplish a set of irrelevant tasks.

The amount of pressure to do well in these arenas increases annually, resulting in students like JK Rowling's famously overzealous Hermione from the Harry Potter books, who expresses all the priorities that bright immigrant students in particular absorb about the importance of performance over wellbeing: "I hope you're pleased with yourselves. We could all have been killed - or worse, expelled!" (Rowling,1997, p. 120). When combined with staff understandings of the dominant role of assessments in determining a youth's future and staff success, this pressure and the resulting disenfranchisement was something that both students and staff reflected on with cynicism and a sense of powerlessness. Each felt as though due to circumstances beyond their control, schools could not afford to nurture students as whole people with a variety of needs that went beyond academic assessment.

The isolation that this systemic disenfranchisement causes is also present in both student and staff assertions that success is an individual quality, unlinked to one's community. Every area of evaluation that students understand as affecting their opportunities in later life can be completed without critical thought, engagement with the struggles of others, or problematization of their place in larger systems. In fact, it is often to their benefit both socially (see above) and academically to avoid these areas of interaction. Illich (1971) observed that "an individual with a schooled mind conceives of the world as a pyramid of classified packages accessible only to those who carry the proper tags" (p.3) In our current system, those tags are purchased through a series positive performance ratings that favour the privileged while allowing them to feel as though their accreditation has been earned by jumping through the hoops of formalized assessment. Through this process, students are taught that the privileged have the right to their status, and that failure to succeed in a rigged game is the fault of the individuals who fail. Furthermore, they absorb the lessons of individualism over collaboration; relationships are risky, and helping others is something one does for a resume, through raising and exchanging capital, not for a shared result through work with others.

Power and Hierarchy in School. The implication that one succeeds or fails alone is reinforced for these students through school hierarchies, and has consequences not just for the reproduction of unjust citizenship understandings, but also for the way that students build knowledge. Illich (1971) writes, "Schools are designed on the assumption

that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends on knowing that secret; that secrets can be known only in orderly successions; and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets" (p.3). Responses from this study indicate that students have more than absorbed this lesson; they have absorbed its companion lessons that reflection and experience are not approved/advantageous sites of knowledge and that learning is memorization, not process. These students understand the practice of learning in a fundamentally different and compartmentalized way; solutions become something that someone gives them to check their answers, rather than a new understanding of something they've struggled through.

These lessons are at odds with students' experiences of reality outside the classroom, and in addition to teaching them to reproduce dominant hierarchies, it teaches them cynicism about the systems in which they must learn to function. For many students, the obvious disconnect between what they think is right and what schools frame as acceptable creates a sense of disenfranchisement that they carry with them into their conversations as adults about politics and community. The message that they are told one thing and see another was present in most conversations about citizenship, and plants seeds of doubt in even the most optimistic and confident students about whether they have agency within their communities to engage with issues of importance. This doubt mirrors the perceptions of even the most privileged students that the powerlessness they experience within school hierarchies is a reality that undermines any curricular assertion that they have a voice within larger systems.

Darder (2012) and Giroux (2005) have both observed that lessons of powerlessness are taught through school hierarchies that marginalize students' experiences and constantly prioritize a-political curriculum over the varied and contested understandings of culture, history, and politics that bicultural students and students from other marginalized backgrounds experience on a daily basis. Darder (2012) describes this process by saying that "Within these approaches, classroom knowledge is viewed as independent of human beings and as independent of both time and place. Curricular content and design reinforces a universalized, absolute, decontextualized, and ahistorical knowledge, which deceptively camouflages its hidden motivations" (p. 20). Youth I spoke with experienced this process as a de-valuation not just of their histories

and identities but of their ability to responsibly learn about and debate serious issues. For many students, the way that curriculum was presented was a constant affirmation that they were not yet adults, not yet worthy of a more participatory form of citizenship. Combined with their understanding that classrooms were not safe spaces for honest debate, this limited their ability to become inspired or find curriculum personally relevant. Instead, they recognized that the stories being told were not part of their own experience and therefore not meaningful, and they understood through the method of teaching that their observations and contributions were not valued as part of learning and discussion.

Staff echoed both the prejudices and power divisions present in student experiences, and the understanding that students were not able to be vulnerable or open in their learning environments. All school staff said that they felt students were hiding identities, life-changing moments, and important experiences. Several also expressed that students' guarded social behaviors prevented them from openly discussing topics like empathy and quality of life in class. While staff spoke of attempts to "sneak" lessons about citizenship into teachable moments, students told me they felt that no one in the school wanted to teach them these things. In a system where no one is willing to give up power or to be vulnerable, both students and staff expressed a longing for safe spaces to discuss identify while being unwilling to risk social death (or in the staffs' case, loss of power) to create them. Each expressed disbelief and surprise at the notion that the other group might want the opportunity to be open and safely discuss questions of citizenship from a personal, emotional perspective. Without the spaces for students to ask real questions and take risks, this awkward silent unity of vision on the part of teachers and learners remains invisible.

Effects of Internalized School Understandings on Citizenship. The non-formal learning outcomes above have an indelible effect on students' ability to build relational knowledge of where they might fit into society as active participants. The citizenship identities that students construct in these spaces bear little resemblance to any stated policy goals for citizenship; in fact, these identities most resemble the disengaged, apathetic, and individualistic citizens that a pessimist might envision while reading current studies of voter apathy and youth engagement with politics:

Young Canadians have less respect for the media, the federal government, the civil service, unions, the armed forces, organized religion, the Supreme Court and the police than Canadians over the age of 40. In contrast, they hold public schools, provincial government and big business in higher regard… younger voters are different; they have different issue priorities, different ideas about civic duty and what it means to be a citizen, and different values. Such differences lead young Canadians to interact differently with the political system that they consider largely irrelevant or, at least, not worth the trouble of voting (Turcotte, 2005, p.16).

By highlighting the links between these attitudes and school experiences, study responses make it clear that non-formal learning spaces and the experiences that students have in them are not neutral with regard to citizenship learning. They carry weight far beyond what educational planners might have anticipated, and require attention if schools are to achieve any of the kinds of positive citizenship education commonly stated in mandates and mission statements.

For those wishing to further education for democratic citizenship, non-formal spaces are doubly important because they access a more personal and meaningful area of students' lives. For marginalized students, internalization of their identity as problematic, deprioritized, and irrelevant sends the message that they are not only powerless, but unwelcome within the larger sociopolitical structures that school represents and explicates in textbooks. For all students, experiences with competition and assessment foster a narrow understanding of success that is individualistic, privileged, and identified by the accrual of specific educational and financial capital. These understandings not only devalue diversity and collaboration, they delegitimize those very concepts through daily reinforcement of a set of priorities that are fundamentally at odds with notions of equality and justice. In an environment where relationships are risk, collaboration becomes a recipe for disaster with no tangible (academically assessable) benefits. Because schools occupy a sacred space in the majority of students' experiences as the arbiters of truth, the realities they uphold greatly influence students' ability to imagine what is possible outside of the frames of reference that school provides. Thus, a school framework where collaboration exists only in sports inhibits students from imagining what they could accomplish together, because

"together" is no longer something they perceive as possible, let alone desirable, as an approach to building knowledge. Llewellyn et al (2007) observed that

> To be able to pursue change in matters of social justice, it is clear that civic engagement demands not only leadership attributes but also skills in the collective process. To encourage students to practice democracy, such skills may include the ability to run a meeting effectively and fairly, conflict management, critical reflection, decision-making and civil protest (p. 27).

It is clear that in a system where collaboration and dialogue are seen as obstacles to effective curriculum delivery, this kind of education becomes not just impossible, but almost unimaginable for students who have not experienced it.

The accreditation system with its pressures and priorities also sends messages regarding what kinds of citizenship behavior are desirable and respected. Society's obsession with being able to count and quantify program results combined with a deficit of funding for proper class sizes and teacher support has led to community engagement programs that focus on charitable giving, rather than problematic co-investigation of social scenarios. The insidious substitution of a charity model of community involvement for community engagement opportunities has a profound affect on the way these students understand local and global systems. This change produces a remarkable effect on students' perceptions of their role in the society. Rather than seeing their own potential to empathize, respect, and discuss with marginalized groups, they are taught to assume a position of relative power that resembles a benevolent, helpful, remote, and a-political approach to helping others that classroom dynamics have taught them to aspire to. From a safe distance, they earn citizenship points by redistributing capital without consultation with those to whom it is offered. At the same time, they monitor their own and each others' behavior to ensure order, docility, and efficiency in the classroom in ways that deprioritize and further detach their personal experiences from their knowledge of what it means to be a citizen.

This process is reflected in students' doubts about their ability to engage with sociopolitical issues and their cynicism about democracy, and short-circuits any interest they have in investigative learning; as Illich (1971) suggests, the sterilization of education from any contaminating personal experience divorces it from students'

realities until they can no longer perceive any relevancy or personal relationship to the information. For those who somehow retain an interest in the subject of citizenship, conversations centre on the tension between their desire to contribute to the world around them and actively change their community for the better, and the imposed view that they are helpless and powerless within the structures they inhabit.

Transformative Pedagogy and Non-Formal Spaces

Throughout the course of this study, students provided examples of the kinds of learning that changed their understanding of democratic citizenship in positive ways. These examples, like those of negative citizenship learning, were centred primarily on relationships to others and to their own place in the learning process. Just as students internalized moments of isolation and competition as negative place markers in their growth as citizens, they recognized moments of agency where they were able to directly help others or take on responsibilities as moments of positive growth. Many of these moments diverged from the stereotypical active leadership that is understood as student success within many educational paradigms. Instead, they were simply instances of recognition. It is key here to recognize reflections of Illich's (1971) work in students' experiences of isolation, and the work of Darder (2012), Fraser (2009), and Young (2011) in their positive experiences with recognition, the simple acknowledgement of their significance as an actor within school walls. Axel Honneth (2004) argues that Fraser's (2011) justice frameworks from Chapter 2 should be expanded and complexified to include experiences with social esteem and even love as a form of mutual recognition. The comments of these students on the importance of compassion in their relationships and of different kinds of recognition support this understanding of recognition as both necessary and multifaceted.

Student voice as one aspect of recognition had a key part to play in these scenarios of positive learning. When students had experiences that were deliberately personal, ascribing agency to the students themselves and placing the responsibility for building knowledge or programming within their sphere of influence, they learned more; and not just about citizenship, but about academic subjects and ways of knowing. The acknowledgment of student voice gave them new parameters within which to envision

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their accomplishments, and lead to increased participation, confidence, and feelings that they were part of a larger community. According to students, it did this in two ways. The first is that it simply counteracted some of the isolation and marginalization already present in the system. The simple experience of being seen and heard, for some youth, changed everything about their ability to communicate with others, actively participate, and understand their own ability to contribute to community. The second was that student voice created space for tension, respectful negotiation, and disagreement. As one staff member acknowledged, many of the best lessons that students learn are born of moments of discomfort that they experience within the system. This is a very Frierean understanding of democracy as requiring "dialogue, participation, political and social responsibility, as well as a degree of social and political solidarity" (Friere, 1970, p. 28). By creating space for individuals to approach learning from personal and unique perspectives, projects that prioritized student voice also created space for healthy debate. From this process students learned the value of dissent in creative problem solving, and learned to value the perspectives of others from different backgrounds. Diversity, in this context, had value. Instead of being a distraction, it was an asset both for presenting multiple ways of tackling an issue and allowing students to have a personal stake in educational outcomes.

These moments of being heard and recognized occupied a central place in students' positive citizenship learning. However, it was when they were paired with moments where students were able to help someone else that they became something more. When used as a resource for others, experiences with student voice allowed students to see connections between how they use their voice and the effect they can have on the lives of their peers. For many, this was their first recognition that if they want to make the world better for someone, they must listen, then speak out as a responsible member of the community they want to change. These understandings came from their own relationships, and were therefore more real to the youth than any formal lesson could be. They were also a valuable counterpoint to the charity model, where students could see the value of their fundraising reflected in their accreditation, but still felt powerless, isolated, and invisible. Experiences like this speak to the importance of recognition *in situ* – not just as an act, but as a practice and a policy that applies to all citizens of a school community. Students learn through these experiences not only what

it means to them to be seen and acknowledged, but also what it can mean to do this for another. They begin to understand that recognition is more than just a right, but a responsibility that when enacted in small ways enriches their community and their ability to contribute. What they refer to as learning to empathize, we might see as a dimension of love, a kind of mutual recognition and caring that both enhances an individual's experience and fundamentally alters the character of a social environment. Through this process, by creating a culture of empathy, these students begin to embody Cornell West's (2008) popular observation that "justice is what love looks like in public".

School as Community

The non-formal learning contexts described above and their effects on citizenship understandings in students are complex and embedded in the relationships, shared environment, and commonalities of the student experience. The existence of these commonalities implies that schools could be understood as communities, with their own internal standards for participation and citizenship. Like communities, this study data shows that school environments and the relationships they contain are dependent on the characteristics and values of their citizens, and these values can be affected by shared understandings, goals, and behaviors. Jean Lave (1991) suggests that to envision communities of practice requires a "rethinking of the notion of learning, treating it as an emerging property of whole persons' legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice (p.1). By applying this understanding of learning to citizenship, it is possible to see student identity as an overlapping set of participatory moments of belonging. Understanding that the moments change knowledge creation allows those of us in education to create different kinds of opportunities for learning. By acknowledging the necessity for students to have safe spaces and understanding what they need, it might be possible to re-think the classroom as an investigative space in which the pedagogical approaches of Darder and Giroux could be refined and explored using students' desire to build a culture of empathy as a shared goal for the learning environment.

Such an educational transformation would have as its compass a set of citizenship values that could look much like Alberta Education's current mandate of "respect, responsibility, fairness, empathy and self-discipline that transcend

socioeconomic and cultural lines" combined with a participatory framework in which students learn through embodying justice in their lived school experiences (Alberta Education, 2005). Ollis (2011) compares this process to a Frierean concientization, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) describe it as a transition from one kind of citizenship to another. Both conclude that this entails students applying justice frameworks to their own choices and to the structures they see around them in an educational process best described by the poet and academic bell hooks: "To be changed by ideas was pure pleasure. But to learn ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone. Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else's image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self and, through ideas, reinvent myself" (hooks, 1994). The process described here involves active acts of deconstruction and reconstruction on the part of the student; a deep investigation of the relationships between the social, the political, and the personal.

The changes necessary to transform school communities extend beyond characteristics that are measurable at the individual level. Collectively, through pedagogical and social change, schools must become places that transform how we understand and enact justice within our daily lives. This requires resetting the frameworks of justice present within current non-formal interactions and consciously modeling a more all-affected practice. Beyond that, it involves changing the relationships between students, teachers, and administrators to include a shared recognition of one another as essential and important pieces of an educational process. Democratic debate and participation is a piece of this puzzle, as is student voice, but at its core it must embody an understanding that justice and democracy are collective projects that can only be furthered through mutual acknowledgement that extends beyond rights and into responsibility and care for a whole community and each individual present within it. From this basic understanding, we can begin to plan different kinds of classroom and learning experiences in an environment that reflects some of the non-formal lessons we hope youth will absorb.

Study results indicate that of multiple possible strategies for re-thinking the classroom, those that address power, individualism and notions of diversity will have the

greatest effect on reconceptualizations of social justice. Broadly speaking, these are strategies that directly address schools' systems of reward and punishment, systems of problem solving, and approaches to curriculum rather than changes to curriculum itself. The idea that strategies to combat youths' structural isolation as evident in these studies are appropriate only for those seeking to shift schools toward a social-justice oriented paradigm is unsupported by this data; research from this study as well as those referenced in Chapters 2 and 3 shows that these active, applied moments of learning positively affect students' progress in all aspects of the educational system. These moments and the programs creating them have in common a youth-centred approach that requires individuals to assume a variety of roles, practicing and performing citizenship identities from multiple perspectives in the process. This in turn positively affects their identity construction, reaffirming curricular notions that they have a place of influence and responsibility within community, political, and global systems. Zimmerman et al (1995) observe that when students participate in these programs,

> It is their growing sense of self-efficacy and purpose that serve as major personal influences in their ultimate level of accomplishment. To enable these youth to reach…the goal of self-education, schools must go beyond teaching intellectual skills – to foster students' personal development of the self-beliefs and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout a lifetime (p. 202).

Not only would this kind of educational experience affect factors specifically related to citizenship, it would also allow students to bring forward their priorities as whole individuals with multiple concerns and experience that they are beginning to explore. For the students I spoke with, this might include discussion of what it means to be happy, how to be safer, and how to better care for one another.

Discussion Summary

> When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life. (Attributed to John Lennon).

Study findings from this report indicate that John Lennon was partially right in his comments above; those of us building educational systems do not fully understand the lives of the students who inhabit their learning spaces. Students internalize important non-formal lessons from the structure and relationships that schools demand. The function of schools in maintaining inequalities through reproduction of social order plays itself out in the individual lives of students for whom issues of peer pressure, power, assessment anxiety, and fear of isolation become motivators for hiding identity, re-creating dominant power structures, and making oneself invisible within the system. At the same time, students are absorbing powerful lessons about the meaning of success, the place of capital in mediating issues of equality, and the kinds of political and social participation that are desirable within a specific set of marketized, capital-oriented, individualistic, and competitive values. However, deliberate transformational pedagogy can leverage the power of non-formal experiences to help students build different, social-justice oriented understandings of citizenship. Through building cultures of empathy, addressing the kinds of relationships that students have to each other, to teachers, and to the learning process, and creating safe spaces for student voice, schools can begin to address priorities for student wellbeing that go beyond (but profoundly affect) academic learning. The following chapter will summarize the ideas presented by this research, and provide recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

Study Summary

While Canadian schools have multiple goals for citizenship education, policy and planning for specific citizenship outcomes is fractured at best. Definitions of citizenship are often unspecific and focused on producing students that are described by Westheimer as *personally responsible* citizenry, most suited to functioning within and reproducing current sociopolitical contexts. Studies on the political understandings and participation of Canadian youth indicate that they lack investment in democratic systems, and maintain a sense of disenfranchisement with traditional political participation. This, combined with traditionally educated students' inability to articulate complex aspects of democratic citizenship, seems to indicate that schools are not neutral zones for this kind of citizenship learning, but are in fact teaching negative and non-participatory citizenship lessons through the experiences that they provide.

From Dewey's work on educational philosophy, Darder and Giroux' approaches to transformative pedagogy, and the writings of Ivan Illich on educational possibility, we can extrapolate not only tools but pressing moral reasons to change our school systems (Darder, 2012; Dewey, 1916; Giroux, 2005 and 1989; Illich, 1971). These authors suggest that the provision of skills needed for students to critically analyze social contexts and information delivery systems is essential if we value a just school environment. This study focused on citizenship identities that Westheimer and Kahne describe as *justice-oriented*, and investigated student experiences with non-formal citizenship learning and understandings of participatory citizenship. Using a student-centred framework, study tools were designed to provide rich qualitative data on students' experiences with non-formal learning, citizenship models, and understandings of their relationship to sociopolitical systems and to community.

Study findings were grouped according to participants' perceptions of important themes. The most surprising themes to emerge from the data were those that were most personal to students. The first was that confidence and citizenship participation are intrinsically linked, and when related create their own feedback loops of positive or

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negative reinforcement of participatory citizenship behaviors. Students who were confident enough to engage with their school found the experience affirming and were more likely to build relationships, join in dialogue, and see themselves as agents of change within their community of practice. Those who did not have this confidence experienced isolation and ostracization that further disempowered them and engendered more doubt about their ability to belong, affect change, or even be themselves. All students experienced overwhelming personal isolation within their school environment, and perceived school as extremely unsafe for those who belonged to visible minority groups, as well as students who needed to express emotion, explore non-normative identities, or embody value systems that ran counter to dominant culturally acceptable histories, understandings, and behaviors. Students linked this lack of safety with the effectiveness of peer pressure in an environment where they cannot afford to be further disenfranchised than they already are. This isolation also manifested as a deep disillusionment with school systems that was extrapolated to sociopolitical systems they studied in school, and became reflected in their understanding of their future place in these systems.

Research results indicate that students are internalizing citizenship lessons from the non-formal experiences that school provides. Rather than being neutral learning spaces, each experience with school structure, assessment, and hierarchy carries with it a curriculum of non-participation, survival, and maintenance of behavioral and value-based norms that in many cases are narrow, competitive, individualistic, deeply prejudiced, and unjust. However, students also expressed that empathy and moments of collaboration were central to their positive experiences. Participants expressed touchingly optimistic understandings of the role of empathy in creating a different, safer, and more just school environment. In all cases, students voiced the need for a culture of empathy within school walls. The importance of relational safety and support was reaffirmed by students' acknowledgement of many of their successes as linked to their abilities to ask for support and to be a support for others. For many, this began with a focus on student voice as key to the process of change. By centering students within their own learning process, the provision of spaces for student voice creates safety, but also opportunities for dialogue and critical dissent. Participants observed that this democratic approach to diversity and debate re-framed their understanding of their own

agency, contributing to key factors like confidence and reducing isolation. This process allowed students to build more participatory and democratic understandings of themselves as citizens.

Analysis of the data suggests that students, through non-formal learning, are internalizing sociopolitical discourse that reproduces current inequalities and prejudices. Important experiences with power, hierarchy, and approaches to lessons teach students a non-participatory and apathetic approach to personal involvement in community, the well being of others, or larger sociopolitical systems. Concurrently, non-formal learning from assessment pressures and classroom structure reinforces approaches in which individualism, prejudice, and self-preservation are key to successful navigation of sociopolitical arenas.

Data on positive citizenship understandings indicates that it is also possible to envision a transformative pedagogy centred on creating cultures of empathy and places for student voice that could positively affect citizenship learning outcomes. This could include, for example, involvement of each student in setting the consequences of actions that negatively affect the group's ability to build knowledge. An all-affected approach to classroom management gives students experience with collaborative problem-solving and supports empathy in school spaces. The careful negotiation of multiple understandings allows students to see process as part of solution; participation and sharing can often ease feelings associated with wrongdoing and clear up misunderstanding in a way that provides new options for overcoming conflict (Kholberg, 1975). A collaborative and critical approach to curriculum material could be one in which students are asked to examine the information presented from multiple perspectives, to reason through the points in their text book and together determine if there is information missing.

This kind of Frierean pedagogical practice encourages students to personally involve themselves in learning. In such a system, each student's values and frameworks for judgment are subject to alteration by the introduction of new concepts. Over time, learners begin to view their values and moral frameworks as part of a collective process, and their decisions as acts of citizenship. Research results around this process highlight

the concept of democracy in education as relationship-centred. Students understand their position in society, learn about how to take and give space, and practice behaviors of inclusion or competition through their relationships with peers, teachers, and friends.

Theoretical Applications

There is need for a better theoretical model that maps the interaction between relationships and democratic identity-building. While Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) theories can help us to understand what the ideal learning process might look like for these individuals, there are two key factors that they obscure. The first is the prevalence of democratic relationships within a school space – it could be that a certain percentage of students in every learning environment is influenced enough by culture, family, certain systemic advantages, and their own background to build a justice-oriented approach to citizenship without encouragement. It is also possible that democratic understandings have become the province of the privileged – certain students almost certainly find it easier to self-identify as having a role within social systems, being able to leverage power, and having a right to create change in their community. A measure of who has access to the creation of a justice-oriented perspective, and whether those students are somehow qualified for that experience through grades, ethnicity, or other personal qualities, is therefore essential. The second factor obscured by studying the path of an individual student is the degree to which school space allows, encourages, supports or demands relationships – not just individuals - that are democratic in nature. We cannot speak with individuals who have justice-oriented perspectives and assume that they behave and model democratic behavior in their relationships – we can only assume that for a variety of reasons, they perceive themselves as agents within society, and strive to participate, alter, and improve their community. This self-perception could correspond with our understandings of democratic behavior, but it could also be the blissful ignorance of social privilege causing students to believe that many experience the rare confidence that they take for granted.

To better ascertain the possibilities for democratic education, we must therefore move beyond assessment of students at the individual level and acknowledge that democracy exists in the spaces between individuals – it is inherently relational,

interconnected. To understand its progress within educational spaces, we must look at a whole population, we must ask who is becoming justice-oriented, and to what degree their progress is supported or hampered by group dynamics. From this perspective, there is little use in interviewing individuals without also assessing populations. Unless we interview these students with the goal of discovering how their relationships have supported or shifted their understandings, unless we determine whether these students already possess certain traits that facilitate their justice-oriented outlook, we cannot evaluate the environment in which they learn to determine its success as a democratic space.

Research questions that highlight these communal aspects of the democratic environment could include whether conditions such as high grades or majority ethnicity predispose students within a school to incorporate justice-oriented perspectives. If so, this environment may not necessarily be democratic and the lessons that students are learning, while empowering for those individuals, also reinforce traditional hierarchies and power dynamics that simply work better for these students than for others. We could also ask students to what extent they see their peers from different backgrounds exhibiting similar democratic outlooks. We might begin to design school processes that directly undermine certain kinds of exclusion based on school data around participation and student self-identification as agents of change or sources of empathy for their peers. We might encourage students to identify moments where they contributed to a culture of empathy, made room for someone else to speak, or became a source of valuable alternative perspectives. All of this, however, requires a movement away from the individual as the source of data, as a measure of the success of an educational system.

Current funding models and assessment structures overtly and covertly teach administrators and teachers that individually successful students are the product of a successful school. However, if as a society we strive for social change, for new and diverse perspectives, our policies need to clearly define what it takes to be successful within the kinds of non-formal understandings we have provided for our students. Collaboration, listening, dialogue, and empathy are already necessary qualities for a happy student life; we need to make them a requirement for the success of all students,

not just those who otherwise might not survive the isolation, hostility, and competition of our current systems.

Study Recommendations

Study findings provided insight into many possibilities for further investigation as well as opportunities for changes to citizenship education in schools.

Non-formal Learning. Educational policy and practice should include plans for non-formal aspects of citizenship learning. These plans should address school culture, power relations, approaches to curriculum delivery, and peer relations. They could be executed through new teacher training, peer-mentoring programs, collaborative and experiential learning projects, and non-formal teacher-student interactions. Provincial and national goals for citizenship education should be complexified to include more than just practical understandings of democratic systems, and address notions of participation, inclusion, values, and community.

Pedagogical Approaches. Study data indicates that educators could create more democratic learning spaces through approaches that create room for student voice and student-driven knowledge building. Findings regarding the non-formal learning environment indicate that current approaches to curriculum should be moderated by the understanding that classrooms carry within them power dynamics that educators must actively disrupt through inclusive inquiry with students.

Student Engagement. Study data suggests that student participation in educational planning and school governance is an essential part of positive democratic citizenship identity-building. There is a roll for students to play as advocates for education, activists within the systems they inhabit, and collaborators in learning design. While this roll may sometimes be counterproductive to curricular outcomes or efficiency of process, the engagement and collaboration it requires build, for students, a sense of place within socio-political structures that is essential to their development.

Further Research. Further citizenship education research should include examinations of students' non-formal experiences**.** More information on the relationship between physical school design and non-formal learning would be useful to understanding how to disrupt negative non-formal learning patterns in schools. Educational research should include opportunities for students to contribute their priorities and the factors that they see as relevant to the research. This process allows researchers to broaden our understanding of the relationships between academic outcomes and students as whole people experiencing school on multiple levels. Finally, new theoretical understandings of group dynamics in democratic process must be developed and applied to school studies in order to begin to assess the ways in which relationships influence student citizenship identity formation.

Closing Reflections

The kinds of change recommended above would require a massive re-structuring of traditional classrooms, as well as a great deal of careful policy support for participatory and inclusive educational methods. It would require new teacher training, and new kinds of teachers. It is not a small project. However, it must begin with small spaces. These are the spaces for which many of our answers have already been written, in the literature supporting collaborative and democratic classroom practice (Darder, 2012, Giroux, 1989). These are also the spaces in which, if we change a few subtle structures, learning takes place most easily. Ivan Illich, one of the pioneers of change in school spaces, told us thirty years ago that "Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting" (Illich, 1971). Schools designed for this purpose already exist on the margins of our educational systems. These are spaces in which students grapple with the problem how to build knowledge together, how to negotiate multiple understandings of what is important in learning and the best way to study it. In these spaces, inclusion and representation slowly become visible in basic classroom process. While there is no guarantee that this is a perfect solution to problems of inequality, it experientially validates participation and process as a key component of citizenship. Ball and Heath (1993) describe these learning spaces:

The social and discursive practices that originated in activities in informal contexts were not the setting for learning but the medium through which learning occurred, the way that learning happened. Adults and youth used a 'language of practice' that rang 'with a sense of family' to support shared decision making along with shared responsibilities in sustained tasks and joint work (Ball & Heath, p. 81).

The authors also note with regard to these programs that "relationships were a medium of learning that enabled program participants to grow in ways that they themselves might not have anticipated, often meeting and surpassing the goals set for and with them" (Ball & Heath, 1993, p. 81). This research is a beginning with which to build school spaces that become places for active citizenship, and it reflects our great need for better understandings of how to build safe communities in which students can construct new, different relationships to each other and to the world around them.

Our theoretical tools for understanding how these spaces work need their own healthy expansion. While theorists like Darder and Giroux can point us in the right direction, some of our most frequently referenced practical tools for assessing democratic education at the moment are Westheimer and Kahne's student-based analysis of learning patterns and democratic identity-formation in individual students. While these are helpful in understanding from a pedagogical perspective what a student could or should experience within a democratic learning environment, a careful distinction must be made between a democratically-oriented individual and a truly critical democratic environment. It is easy for the privileged to feel active, participatory, and engaged. In charting the progress of students from one state of citizenship to another, we learn much about the individuals being tracked and much less about their learning environment.

There is one resource for change that sometimes goes unwritten in academic discourse on education for social justice; it is the untapped intelligence, ingenuity and open-mindedness of the students who will ultimately embody these practices. Fraser (2011) says, "Wotherspoon (2002) points out that thus far, little attention "has been paid by educators, policy-makers and researchers to the hidden reserves of knowledge and capabilities that children and youth possess" (p. 11). The essence of democratic education is that it increases numbers of thoughtful, engaged citizens exponentially. Hope for researchers embroiled in this work lies in the knowledge that every success of

new practice multiplies itself through the young people it affects. The re-structuring of participation then includes these new voices as a resource for better school practice. Jonathan Kozol (2005) wrote:

> I have been criticized throughout the course of my career for placing too much faith in the reliability of children's narratives; but I have almost always found that children are a great deal more reliable in telling us what actually goes on in public school than many of the adult experts who develop policies that shape their destinies (p. 12).

It is possible that those of us raised within traditional schools can only begin to address their effect with the help of those who have not been similarly indoctrinated. If we can teach our youth that citizenship is an active process of struggle for understanding, we can then ask them to teach us how that struggle should look.

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APPENDIX A: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT (for school liaison)

Study title – You Should Read These: Citizenship and learning in public school spaces

I, _____, the _____ of

_____ have been asked to _____

_____.

I agree to –

1.   keep the identities of potential participants and all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher*.

2.   keep all identifying information of potential participants (e.g., names, contact information, etc.) secure while in my possession.

3.   after consulting with the *Researcher*, erase or destroy all identifying information of the potential participants for this study.

_____   _____   _____
(Print Name)   (Signature)   (Date)

Researcher

_____   _____   _____
(Print Name)   (Signature)   (Date)

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

I am doing research on staff and student responses to a [redacted] called "[redacted] If you participated in the project and are interested in contributing to research about its effects, please write your email below.

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER AND ASSENT FORM A
(Interview)

Study Title: You Should Read These: Citizenship and learning in public school spaces

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
Auralia Brooke	Dr. Lynette Shultz
Department of Educational Policy Studies	Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education	Faculty of Education
7-104 Education North	7-104 Education North
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5	Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
auralia@ualberta.ca	lshultz@ualberta.ca
1(780) 862-3000	1(780) 492-7625

I am doing research on staff and student responses to an engagement initiative run through a student-led school space in [school name] called [space name]. As a former high school student, I think it's important that we listen to student experiences, and provide safe opportunities for them to be leaders and to inspire each other. My research focuses on how work with a specific [redacted] project has affected students' understandings of their potential and of school spaces. The results of the study will be used in the completion of my thesis for my Master of Education degree at the University of Alberta. While there are no direct benefits to you for taking part in the study, your participation may help schools to design better programs that may benefit other youth.

If you agree to participate, I will interview you one time at your school for 30 minutes to 1 hour. The interview questions will be about your educational experiences and your beliefs about school and learning. During the interview, you can choose not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable discussing. You can even stop the interview if you wish. I will audio-record the interview so that I can type up your answers. If you do not want to be recorded, you can tell me and I will simply take notes. About two weeks after the interview is done, I will give you the typed transcript. This will allow you to review your responses to the questions and correct or change any parts that you wish.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate at any point, even after the interview has been done, up until the time that your answers are joined with those of the other participants. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your information will be removed and destroyed.

Information from this study will be used to complete my thesis and for potential research articles and presentations. No personal information about you will be released in any of these and you will be able to create a pseudonym that will be used in any reporting. All of your information and responses will be kept confidential and only the researcher and the

researcher's supervisor will see the data. Data will be kept on an encrypted digital device and/or stored in a locked cabinet for at least five years after the project is completed. If you would like to receive a copy of the final report of the research findings you can contact myself.

Please Note: If youth disclose information about sexual assault, the researcher is obligated to disclose this information to the appropriate authorities as stated by Alberta law. For more information about this, please contact me directly.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Auralia Brooke: 1(780) 862-3000 or auralia@ualberta.ca   OR
Dr. Lynette Shultz: 1(780) 492-7625

Respectfully,

Auralia Brooke, University of Alberta

I, _____ have read and understood the above and agree to participate in this study.

I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.   ___ Yes ___ No

Signature: _____   Date: _____

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant, or how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

APPENDIX D: PARENT INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM A (Interview)

Study Title: You Should Read These: Citizenship and learning in public school spaces

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
Auralia Brooke	Dr. Lynette Shultz
Department of Educational Policy Studies	Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education	Faculty of Education
7-104 Education North	7-104 Education North
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5	Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
auralia@ualberta.ca	lshultz@ualberta.ca
1(780) 862-3000	1(780) 492-7625

I am doing research on staff and student responses to an engagement initiative run through a student-led school space in [school name] called [redacted]. As a former high school student, I think it's important that we listen to student experiences, and provide safe opportunities for them to be leaders and to inspire each other. My research focuses on how work with a specific [redacted] project has affected students' understandings of their potential and of school spaces.

A school staff member has put me in contact with you and your child and I would like to invite your child to participate in this project. The results of the study will be used in the completion of my thesis for my Master of Education degree at the University of Alberta. While there are no direct benefits to you or your child for taking part in the study, your child's participation may help schools to design better programs that may benefit other children.

If you agree to participate, I will interview your child one time at his/her school for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews will be during school hours, outside of the student's scheduled class time. The discussion will be about his/her educational experiences and his/her beliefs about school and learning. During the interview, your child can choose not to answer any questions he/she feels uncomfortable discussing. He/she can even leave the interview if he/she wishes. I will audio-record the conversation so that I can type up responses. If your child does not want to be recorded, he/she can tell me and I will simply take notes. About two weeks after the interview is done, I will give your child the typed transcript. This will allow him/her to review his/her responses to the questions and correct or change any parts that he/she wishes.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child can choose not to participate at any point, even after the interview has been done, up until the time that your child's answers are joined with those of the other participants. If your child chooses to withdraw

from the study, his/her information will be removed and destroyed. There is no penalty to withdrawal from the study.

Information from this study will be used to complete my thesis and for potential research articles and presentations. No personal information about your child will be released in any of these. All of your child's information and responses will be kept confidential and only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will see the data. Data will be kept on an encrypted digital device and/or stored in a locked cabinet for at least five years after the project is completed. If you or your child would like to receive a copy of the final report of the research findings you can contact me directly.

Please Note: If youth disclose information about sexual assault, the researcher is obligated to disclose this information to the appropriate authorities as stated by Alberta law. For more information about this, please contact me directly.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Auralia Brooke: 1(780) 862-3000 or auralia@ualberta.ca
OR
Dr. Lynette Shultz: 1(780) 492-7625

Respectfully,

Auralia Brooke, University of Alberta

I, _____ have read and understood the above and provide my consent for my child, _____, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant, or how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER AND ASSENT FORM B (Focus Group)

Study Title: You Should Read These: Citizenship and learning in public school spaces

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
Auralia Brooke	Dr. Lynette Shultz
Department of Educational Policy Studies	Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education	Faculty of Education
7-104 Education North	7-104 Education North
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5	Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
auralia@ualberta.ca	lshultz@ualberta.ca
1(780) 862-3000	1(780) 492-7625

I am doing research on staff and student responses to an engagement initiative run through a student-led school space in [school name] called [redacted]. As a former high school student, I think it's important that we listen to student experiences, and provide safe opportunities for them to be leaders and to inspire each other. My research focuses on how work with a specific Global Café project has affected students' understandings of their potential and of school spaces. The results of the study will be used in the completion of my thesis for my Master of Education degree at the University of Alberta. While there are no direct benefits to you for taking part in the study, your participation may help schools to design better programs that may benefit other youth.

If you agree to participate, I will invite you to participate in one group conversation at your school for 30 minutes to 1 hour. The discussion will be about your educational experiences and your beliefs about school and learning. During the focus group, you can choose not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable discussing. You can even leave if you wish. I will audio-record the conversation so that I can type responses later.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate at any point, up until the time that your answers are joined with those of the other participants. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your information will be removed and destroyed. There is no penalty for withdrawal from the study.

Information from this study will be used to complete my thesis and for potential research articles and presentations. No personal information about you will be released in any of these. All of your information and responses will be kept confidential and only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will see the data. Data will be kept on an encrypted digital device and/or stored in a locked cabinet for at least five years after the project is completed. If you would like to receive a copy of the final report of the research findings you can contact myself.

Please Note: If youth disclose information about sexual assault, the researcher is obligated to disclose this information to the appropriate authorities as stated by Alberta law. For more information about this, please contact me directly.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Auralia Brooke: 1(780) 862-3000 or auralia@ualberta.ca   OR
Dr. Lynette Shultz: 1(780) 492-7625

Respectfully,

Auralia Brooke, University of Alberta

I, _____ have read and understood the above and agree to participate in this study.

I agree to keep the identities of potential participants and all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., text message, conversation) with anyone other than the *Researcher*.

___ Yes ___ No

I agree to be audio-recorded during the focus group.   ___ Yes ___ No

Signature: _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX F: PARENT INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM B (Focus Group)

Study Title: You Should Read These: Citizenship and learning in public school spaces

Research Investigator:
Auralia Brooke
Department of Educational Policy Studies

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I am doing research on staff and student responses to an engagement initiative run through a student-led school space in [school name] called [redacted]. As a former high school student, I think it's important that we listen to student experiences, and provide safe opportunities for them to be leaders and to inspire each other. My research focuses on how work with a specific [redacted] project has affected students' understandings of their potential and of school spaces.

A school staff member has put me in contact with you and your child and I would like to invite your child to participate in this project. The results of the study will be used in the completion of my thesis for my Master of Education degree at the University of Alberta. While there are no direct benefits to you or your child for taking part in the study, your child's participation may help schools to design better programs that may benefit other children.

As part of the You Should Read This project, your child agreed to participate in one focus group conversation for 1 hour at school. The discussion was about his/her educational experiences and his/her beliefs about school and learning. I'd like to use this feedback to inform my research. The focus group was audio-recorded and responses were typed. If you or your child wishes their responses to be removed, we can strike them from the record. There is no penalty for withdrawal from the study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If your child chooses to withdraw from the study, his/her information will be removed and destroyed.

Information from this study will be used to complete my thesis and for potential research articles and presentations. No personal information about your child will be released in any of these. All of your child's information and responses will be kept confidential and only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will see the data. Data will be kept on an

encrypted digital device and/or stored in a locked cabinet for at least five years after the project is completed. If you or your child would like to receive a copy of the final report of the research findings you can contact me directly.

Please Note: If youth disclose information about sexual assault or violence, the researcher is obligated to disclose this information to the appropriate authorities as stated by Alberta law. For more information about this, please contact me directly.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Auralia Brooke: 1(780) 862-3000 or auralia@ualberta.ca
OR
Dr. Lynette Shultz: 1(780) 492-7625

Respectfully,

Auralia Brooke, University of Alberta

I, _____ have read and understood the above and provide my consent for my child, _____, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant, or how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP QUESTION LIST

Study Title: You Should Read These: Citizenship and learning in public school spaces

1) What is your understanding of the word "citizenship"? In other words, what does it mean to be a good citizen?

2) Have you participated in a project that you would consider community-oriented?

3) Why did you decide to participate in this project?

4) How was your participation important to you?

5) Are you glad that you participated? If so, why?

6) Did this project change your perception that you can make a difference to other students and to your school? If so, how?

7) Did this project change the way you feel about being in school hallways, or the way you treat others in the hallway? If so, how and why?

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST

Study Title: You Should Read These: Citizenship and learning in public school spaces

1) What is your understanding of the word "citizenship"? In other words, what does it mean to be a good citizen?

2) How did this project relate to your ideas about citizenship?

3) What was the most important thing you learned from your work on this project?

4) What was your favourite moment in the process?

5) What did you hope this project would accomplish in the school?

6) Why did you want to accomplish this?

7) What inspired you to help organize this project?

8) Do you think you'll do more of this kind of thing?

9) Did it matter that the project took place in hallways and outside of class? If so, why and how?