THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION OF YOUTH: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

by

YVONNE HUNG

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2010

© 2010

YVONNE HUNG

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

___________________ ________________________________

Date Roger Hart, PhD
Chair of Examining Committee

___________________ ________________________________

Date Maureen O'Connor, PhD
Executive Officer, Psychology Department

Supervisory Committee:

Colette Daiute, PhD

Cindi Katz, PhD

Michelle Fine, PhD

Shawn Ginwright, PhD

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION OF YOUTH: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

by

Yvonne Hung

Adviser: Professor Roger Hart

The period of adolescence is strongly associated with explorations of one's identity, values and surroundings. Youth organizations can offer a platform for young people to work collectively on community organizing and campaigns for social justice. Through the process of participating in social conflict and contestation, youth are often engaged in spatial conflict and contestation. The concept of the geographical imagination or critical consciousness about space makes this connection between the social and the spatial explicit. The geographical imagination includes the knowledge and meaning one ascribes to different places, along with an awareness of the social, spatial, political and economic forces that help to produce and maintain these spaces. There is little research that considers the contexts in which the geographical imagination develops in young people and how this relates to their emergent identities as political actors and activists.

Interviews, participant observation and a participatory mapping project were conducted over the course of a yearlong case study at a Harlem-based organization. The findings articulate: 1) how young people learn about the social and material aspects of their neighborhood and the world in an 'education for liberation' context, 2) how they apply 'dimensions' of this spatial lens to trace root causes of issues, analyze the current context and gather perspectives about places, 3) how they enact their geographical imagination using specific 'modes' of engaging the environment and 4) the ways in

which the goals of social justice youth programs could be furthered by fostering the geographical imagination.

This interdisciplinary research clarifies the geographical imagination as a critical construct to analyze the role of space and place in one's biography and as a critical capacity to experience and intervene in the built and natural environment. As young people collectively work to address uneven development, they are learning about the social and spatial relations that affect their lives and taking on new roles as political actors in their community. By extending the concept of the geographical imagination to community engagement, this work contributes to understanding and establishing conditions for young people to not only see things as they are, but how they could be.

Acknowledgements

The work that is detailed in these pages would not have been possible without the young people and staff members at the Harlem-based youth organization where I conducted my research. Their generosity of spirit and energy enrich these pages, and their openness and trust have seeded in me a deeply felt responsibility to honor their ideas, actions, and yearnings for justice and liberation.

I must convey my gratitude for my committee members with whom I have shared this multi-stage process. My adviser Roger Hart has shaped my ideas in innumerable ways and has gifted me with his humor, warm encouragement and his willingness to engage with my ideas many times over. Colette Daiute has helped me to approach storytelling, discourse and narrative with new appreciative eyes. The intellectual gifts of Cindi Katz in her close reading of my work and her own impressive geographical imagination has pushed me to extend my own thinking - for this I am grateful. Finally it may seem that Michelle Fine and Shawn Ginwright have 'entered' the game late, however their work has been with me for far longer than this encounter might suggest.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to feel the love and support of my family, friends, and colleagues near and far. Their good company and warm embrace have kept me moving forward along this academic and personal journey. I know that my parents, Ming-shui and Brenda Hung took many risks in migrating here, and their sacrifice and courage continues to inspire me. My lovely sister and brother-in-law, Ianne and Dave Inzerillo have never wavered in their belief that I could start what I finished. The Söhl Familie have grown dear to me and I delight in their company. My husband, Thomas Söhl has been a constant – a true partner with whom I share the satisfaction of jointly envisioning and realizing plans for our future.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

A. Background and Research Questions 3
B. Literature Review 6
Youth Development & Environmental Context 7
Youth Participation and Political Engagement 9
Environmental Education & Community Settings 12
C. Relevance of the Geographical Imagination for Youth Activists 14
D. Dissertation Chapter Overview 17

CHAPTER TWO: METHODS 20

A. Selecting the Case Study 23
B. An Introduction to the Case Study Organization 25
Organizational History and Programming 25
Developing a Working Relationship with BSU 28
Honing my Research Focus: Liberation Program 30
C. Methods 37
Data Collection Units 38
Types of Data: Participant Observation, Interviews and Mapping 40
Transcription 43
D. Data Analysis Protocol 45
Analyzing the Interviews 45
Analyzing the Place Game and Mapping Exercise 48

Interlude 54

CHAPTER THREE: SITUATING THE ORGANIZATION 55

A. The immediate setting 55
B. Opportunities and Resources offered through Participation 57
Love, support and a sense of home 57
Feeling useful and indispensable 59
Being a Role Model 60
Experiencing New Places 61
C. Consciousness Raising in the Liberation Program 63
Placing Self in Society 65
Placing Self in the World 67
Tension and Release 69
Intertwining History & Biography 69
D. Spaces of Hope and Liberation within BSU 72

Interlude 76

CHAPTER FOUR: DIMENSIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION............. 77

A. Theoretical Grounding... 77
Spatial Relations and Learning 77
Person-Environment Interaction and Environmental Awareness 78
Visualization, Imagination and Transformation 79
Critical Consciousness about Space.. 81
Visualizing and Imaging the Environment.. 83
B. Clarifying the Geographical Imagination: The Case of Activism.............................. 86
C. Ten Dimensions of the Geographical Imagination 87
Patterns.. 88
Alignment (space and time)... 88
Boundaries 89
Proximity and density.. 89
Location and Access.. 89
Environmental Indicators.. 90
Disparities 90
Signs and Symbolic Meaning... 90
Scale 91
Impact... 91
D. Dimensions of the Geographical Imagination from Youth Narratives 91
Patterns and Alignment: Spatializing Race, Class and Gender in the city................ 91
Recognizing Boundaries and the role of Proximity and Density: Public Space 94
Location and Access.. 96
Making sense of Environmental Indicators, Disparities, Signs and Symbolic Meaning.. 97
Scale and Impact: When to Intervene and How.. 100
E. Relevance of the Dimensions for Youth Activists 103

Interlude.. 104

CHAPTER FIVE: MODES OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION 105

A. Theoretical Grounding.. 105
"Space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26) 105
Pedagogy of Place and Black Urban Resistance 106
Spaces of Change and Turns of Identity 108
B. Modes of the Geographical Imagination: Framing Resistance and Transformation 112
Reading and Perspective-taking 115
Narrating and Interpreting... 115
Mapping or Countertopography 115
Inhabiting... 115
Interjecting an-Other Thirdspace 115
C. Enacting the geographical imagination... 116
Mode of Reading and Perspective-taking 116

Mode of Narrating and Interpreting 121
Mode of Mapping or Countertopography 124
Mode of Inhabiting 128
Mode of Interjecting an-Other Thirdspace 131
D. Critical Capacity and Modes of Engagement 135

Interlude 136

CHAPTER SIX: PROVOKING THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION 137
A. Activities that provoke the geographical imagination in youth 137
Mapping 137
Travel near and far 145
Urban Planning and Design 152
Environmental change 155
Making spatial claims 159
B. Synthesizing the Activities 162

CONCLUSIONS: Geographical Imagination and Youth Political Engagement 167
A Place for Critical Geography in Youth Engagement and Development 167
Connecting Environmental Awareness to Action and Agency 168
Connecting Imaging and Imagination to Action and Agency 170
Connecting Critical Consciousness about Space and Place to Action and Agency 171
Conclusions 173

Appendices 176

References 182

Lists of Figures

Figure 1 Nina's Map ____ *42*
Figure 2 Nina's Legend ____ *43*
Figure 3 Close-up of Andrew's map ____ *52*
Figure 4 BSU brownstone on a sunny day. ____ *56*
Figure 5 Ten Dimensions of the Geographical Imagination ____ *88*
Figure 6 Five Modes of Enacting the Geographical Imagination ____ *114*
Figure 7 Upper portion of Harlem map ____ *141*
Figure 8 Red Dot (negative interaction with police) ____ *142*
Figure 9 Green Dot (hanging out spot) ____ *143*
Figure 10 Harlem sidewalk ____ *148*
Figure 11 Southwest corner of 144th Street and Convent Avenue ____ *149*
Figure 12 Southeast corner of 145th Street and Broadway ____ *150*
Figure 13 Southside of 145th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam ____ *151*
Figure 14 Provoking the Geographical Imagination ____ *163*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Trees and plants are growing out of the windows and protrude through the cracked built surfaces of the abandoned school building. Its green shoots of life underscore the lack of human activity that has beset this former elementary school in Harlem. Located on the middle of the block of an otherwise bustling commercial thoroughfare in northern Harlem, it goes unnoticed by the majority of foot, car and bus traffic. A large rusty padlock secures the gate but it doesn't hide the generous front courtyard where recess was perhaps held and lends a hope that somewhere, the caretaker perhaps, the one with the key, will be returning.

For the youth people gathered in a nearby youth organization, this former elementary school and its quiet takeover by greenery holds a special meaning. Part of a community organizing collective at a Harlem-based youth organization, the youth members researched the history of the abandoned school, recorded the stories of their elders and created a Community Museum exhibit in order to raise awareness amongst others. Through their participation in the politics and practice of community change, this exchange of stories and histories help to shore up their sense of belonging to this neighborhood.

The uneven decay and redevelopment they witness is neither relegated to the sidelines nor to adult conversations, even though as teenagers they neither own nor rent their own apartments – rather they weave the history of the place into their own personal narrative about their neighborhood. The young people simultaneously carry the stories of its past students (told by the now more senior residents of the neighborhood) and their own imagined possibilities for this large plot of land. They see the banners depicting luxury condominiums with garage parking, gym and views of the river and know these signs are proclaiming a Harlem that is undergoing another remaking/takeover of space.

As they become more aware and astute observers of the local and particular, they are also more cognizant of historical events and global forces that set the stage for their lives. This youth organization offers key opportunities for young people of color to develop a sense of responsibility to themselves and their community. As they grow in their capacity to care for themselves and one another, and evoke dreams and desires for places near and far, they are slowly shifting the stage design, ever so minutely till the once forgotten school building now takes center stage.

To imagine something that has no physical form is difficult, but to help someone to see something they have seen everyday – *differently* – is more challenging. What staff members at this youth organizations most work towards, is to support African-American and Latino children to reject stereotypical images of urban youth, foster a connectedness as brothers and sisters, and to try out a diversity of roles as they discover who they want to become. They help their young members to look at themselves in the mirror and see a potential to positively influence their own lives and enrich the lives of others. Using an "education for liberation" pedagogy that takes inspiration from the Freedom Schools of the 1960's and Freireian ideas about critical consciousness, these young Black and Latino members learn about their shared history and struggles for justice, how to envision and then participate in creating neighborhood change.

I have observed that as young people grow in knowledge about self and community, they are giving voice to their intuitions about 'how the world works.' They are turning their gaze to the ways in which power is distributed, how this affects the lives of others and what is at stake if things continue in this fashion. Their claims for a society that respects and responds to their needs are manifested in arguments to improve the conditions of their everyday life (i.e., school, streets, neighborhood spaces). In order for future generations to eventually comprehend and tackle issues that exist at a global scale, the knowledge and experience gained in changing themselves and their local environment may be crucial first steps.

A. Background and Research Questions

I use the concept of the "geographical imagination" as a starting point from which to understand how young people's critical awareness about their environment affects how they envision and grapple for social change. David Harvey (1975) defined it to be the knowledge, experience and meaning one ascribes to a place, along with an awareness of the social, spatial, political and economic forces that help to produce and maintain these spaces. It is a way of perceiving how one's biography is shaped by and capable of shaping one's geography.

This idea was as an important counterpoint to the "sociological imagination" as described by C.W. Mills (1959). The sociological imagination is at work according to Mills when it enables people to distinguish between "the personal troubles of the milieu" and the "public issues of social structure" (Mills, 1959, p. 8). Following the logic of Mills' concept, the geographical imagination helps an individual see how one's personal circumstances in life are influenced by forces at larger scales, connected to the course of history and tied to geographically specific differences in resources and power. For instance, one perceives how events or decisions occurring elsewhere, can have meaningful effects on one's daily life, or see how turf and territory are demarcated and enforced in their neighborhood.

Although the names of these terms invoke specific disciplinary domains, they are not exclusive to geographers and sociologists. Harvey argues that understanding the role of history and geography are critical components with regard to how an individual actively reflexively and critically understands herself to be a part of society and space. Adolescence is understood to be a period of life where exploration of self, values and identity occurs; this can have significant and long lasting effects on how they make sense of society (Erikson, 1994). Developmental psychologists have focused on individual factors as well as the role of the social and physical environment of youth development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminfoo, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978).

Settings in which young people learn ideas about themselves and society include home and school. Social scientists have also focused on community settings such as street corners (Anderson, 2000) and youth programs (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993) to suggest these as contexts in which young people distill ideas about how the world works. For youth in less economically privileged areas, the community-based organization can fill an important niche in which young people can expand and explore their identity through interactions with peers and caring adults (Hart et al., 1997).

Youth organizations that follow a social justice framework where youth are involved in bringing about greater equity in the distribution of resources and access heed the call for a broader definition of political engagement (Yates and Youniss, 1998) to define it action outside of traditional arenas of volunteerism and voting. The anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the United States are just two historical examples of how grassroots organizing and social change efforts made use of the political involvement of young people.

When children and youth participate in social or environmental change, this can have immediate (Hart et al., 1997) and long-term benefits for political engagement and civic identity (Chawla, 1999; Irby, Ferber, Pittman, Tolman, & Yohalem, 2001; Youniss & Yates, 1997). Some research has focused on the opportunities offered by youth organizations and how this affects ideas about self and community (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007), but little research has examined how young people's social critique about one specific place can be used to illuminate injustices in another place; for example, how their understanding about gentrification in Harlem can help youth to identify spatial segregation in neighborhoods in Brooklyn.

Through the process of participating in youth organizations and becoming politically engaged, youth are learning about, tapping into and expanding their geographical imagination. In an interview about spatial justice, Mitchell argues that," if ideas about social justice are produced by conflict and contest, then it is conflict and contesting, over and about real space"

(Brown, Griffis, Hamilton, Irish, & Kanouse, 2007, p. 9). For instance gentrification can be understood as conflict and contest about the forces that support the upscaling of a place, the history of housing tenure, and the lived experience of displacement. Up to now, most research on youth political engagement doesn't address this important spatial awareness, that is, the perception of unjust places as comprised of material, physical and built environments shaped by and shaping social, economic, cultural and political relations.

Although the geographical imagination is evident in travelogues (e.g., National Geographic), personal narratives (Moss, 2001), and books written by geographers (Gregory, 1994), these do not offer a model for examining the context in which the geographical imagination develops. Using a social justice youth organization as the site of my inquiry allows me to observe and document the geographical imagination as youth collectively learn and work together on projects of resistance and social change. The specific research questions are:

1) Does a social justice-oriented youth program help participants to absorb and construct ideas about the social and material aspects of their neighborhood? If so, how?
2) What "dimensions" of the geographical imagination are revealed by youth in the course of their activities in a social justice program?
3) What specific modes of enacting the geographical imagination are revealed by youth in a social justice program? How does that inform their emerging political engagement and identity?
4) How could the goals of social justice youth programs be furthered by explicit attention to the fostering of the geographical imagination?

By eliciting stories about the places where youth live, play, learn and work, I uncover how they perceive and explain social and material inequities in the everyday environment. Beginning from the ground up, i.e., their neighborhood, I posit that the imaginative quality of this critical consciousness helps to trace historical root causes, to take on larger scales of power analysis and

to invite radical alternatives and solutions. Rather than seeing crumbling facades near glittering new condos as signs that older residents don't care about their home, another reading might be that real estate pressures from outside and within, the legacies of discrimination, economic disinvestment, low rates of home ownership and lack of organized mobilization also play a role.

In investigating how young people produce new meanings for neighborhood spaces and their multiple ways of seeing and imagining, I am encouraged by Keith and Pile's assertion to theorize a different sense of place that is no longer fixed, passive and undialectical (Keith & Pile, 1993, p. 5). They are critical of the notion of 'spatial immanence' in which there is "a singular, true reading of any specific landscape involved in the mediation of identity" (Keith & Pile, 1993, p. 6). Yet there has been little overlap or exchange between geographers who study the spaces where children grow up, psychologists who consider how children cope with challenges and sociologists who concentrate on social strata that prevail in communities where children grow up. Clarifying and documenting the geographical imagination of youth who have taken up the mantle of social justice can help bridge theoretical and disciplinary divides and offer strategies for achieving social and political aims for those coming of age in a world where local issues are both interrelated and connected to regional and global trends.

B. Literature Review

In order to advance the ability of youth to possess both the sociological and geographical imaginations, one must work at the interstices of various disciplines. In the following section, I will share the research and ideas that form the foundation for my inquiry into how young people understand themselves and comprehend the larger social and material environment. This section focuses on the theoretical context for examining the geographical imagination as it is expressed and enacted by young people. I review literature and background theory about the role of the community and neighborhood context in youth development, particularly in terms of

opportunities for political engagement. I also describe the obstacles, challenges and rewards to fostering young people's political engagement.

Youth Development & Environmental Context

Studying youth in context emphasizes how they negotiate their identity in different places (home, school, youth program, streets) and how by the fact of being there, young people are also shaping these environments. Traditional theories of children and youth development have focused on the stages of learning and growth through successively higher levels of knowledge and competence towards adult competence (Piaget, 1999) and this perspective still lives on in many youth development programs. However, these theories did not take into account how children's agency and active role in learning occurs within a social, cultural and historical context (Vygotsky, 1978).

Lev Vygotsky (1978) posited that child development occurs within a socio-historical context and is shaped by interactions with others. Vygotsky argues that when a child learns to read, he is not only becoming literate, but is simultaneously learning about the society in which he is growing up. In assessing development, one shouldn't take the a measure of what the child can accomplish on her own, rather we should consider the "zone of proximal development," as that which a child can do on her own and what she is able to accomplish with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Context and environment undergo an even more comprehensive treatment by psychologists Chawla and Heft. They weave together theoretical constructs about children's competence and environmental interactions with practical examples of how children's engagement with the environment can be "selected, self-directed and purposive" (Chawla & Heft, 2002, p. 208). Children's agency and participation in environmental activities is predicated on the "ecological resources" within the environment. That is the extent to which "children in a particular community or program have opportunities to experience potentially competence-promoting activities" (Chawla & Heft, 2002, p. 213).

Outside of theories of "community youth development" or "positive youth development" (Irby et al., 2001) with regard to urban children from poor families, researchers argue that sociologists and psychologists are guilty of perpetuating a deficit model for learning and development (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Certainly growing up in an economically poor neighborhood can have detriments and challenges, but any intervention that does nothing to consider the resources within that place or group can have little hope of changing these settings or the unequal power relations that shape it.

In this regard, their model of social justice youth development expands "the current terrain of youth development to include practices that encourage youth to address the larger oppressive forces affecting them and their communities" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 87). Based on their research with youth social justice organizations in California, they found that these organizations make it possible for constituents to engage in critical reflection and action. They argue that youth programs should include activities that encourage analysis of power in social relations, make identity central, promote systemic change, facilitate collective action, and embrace youth culture.

Focusing on the necessity to confront the structural forces that affect young people's choices and relationships, this social justice youth development model supports the idea of youth agency and activism, particularly on the role of youth organizations. However, this model does not address how young people learn to perceive the social and physical aspects of inequality and wield these observations and experiences in their work as activists and organizers.

Unfortunately systematic analysis of the environment in the lives of children and youth, and children and young people's participations in shaping their environment is not common in psychology, with some notable exceptions in environmental psychology (Chawla & Heft, 2002; Hart, 1979). There is a body of research about the importance of children's play spaces (Hart, 1979; Moore & Young, 1978) and the value of public space (Ba, 2007; Wridt, 2004). In recent

years this kind of research has increasingly incorporated the political context in how children have opportunities in space (Aitken, 2001a; Katz, 2004; Ruddick, 2003). But there has been little investigation of how children or youth themselves construct their political understanding through their engagement with the physical environment.

Recently there has been progress in examining how young people use and interpret their neighborhood settings through participatory means of inquiry where youth and researchers work to create multiply situated knowledge. One such example is a participatory action research project in which youth come together with adult allies to confront structural injustice and social inequity in urban education (Fox et al., 2010). Another example is Caitlin Cahill's action research project where she and her co-collaborators use "a cyclical research process" to "draw connections between economic development, unequal distribution of resources and misrepresentation of themselves" (Cahill, 2004, p. 274). Using New York's Lower East Side as the site of inquiry, these young residents did not seek to fuse their diverse perspectives into a unified "we" but put these diverse perspectives to service the larger project of creating a "contextualized understanding of young urban women"(Cahill, 2004, p. 274).

In sum, theories of youth development are taking into account how different environments can offer varying opportunities for young people to learn and participate while also looking at how young people can act as agents of community change. Research on children and youth geographies also provides a foundation from which to build a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between ways of seeing oneself and specific qualities of the environment. The questions that I pursue in this dissertation are located in the promise of this interdisciplinary approach to youth and environment.

Youth Participation and Political Engagement

Political psychologists focused on young people's involvement and understanding of politics are considering a broader range of attitudes, knowledge and behavior. The work of Robert Coles with his young subjects from the United States and abroad spanning 25 years looks at their

drawings and conversations to argue that while children receive direct or indirect messages from their parents about politics, they interpret the ideas from their own point of view, "connected to their own particular experience" (Coles, 1986, p. 51). Coles argues that "children ingeniously use every scrap of emotional life available to them in their psychosexual development and they do likewise as they try to figure out how (and for whom) the world works" (Coles, 1986, p. 41).

However the barriers to the political engagement of children and youth are many. Children are perceived as too young to vote, too incompetent to participate and as only affected by government later in life, but Sapiro (2004) contradicts these canards with considerable evidence of children's capacity to engage in politics. Even when children participate, it is rare when children or youth are the organizing force behind it. In fact, adults don't often structure situations "in which children are empowered to engage in political action in any meaningful way" (Sapiro, 2004, p. 17).

Studies have shown that when young people have had early exposure to community service, this experience has been linked with "lifelong action and to renewed commitment to school and work" (Irby et al., 2001, p. 49). A study comparing those young people who volunteered and then participated in the Freedom Rides to register African-American voters versus those who volunteered but were unable to go, showed how significant this action was for the first group's continuing involvement in social justice work (McAdam, 1990).

School settings are among those in which young people come in contact with opportunities to participate. Yates and Youniss' (1997) case study of high school students in a course on community service examined how the experience of volunteering in a homeless shelter affected how students made sense of the world. The authors used writing reflections over time to assess how students were expressing their awareness of the larger social issues. The authors build on Erikson's proposal that the identity process includes the searching out and evaluating of values, in particular those values that have transcendence. Transcendent values are those "that supersede family and self and have historical continuity commanding respect

from others who have lived and will live after them" (Yates & Youniss, 1996, p. 273). Using Luckmann's scale of transcendence, they found that evidence of transcendent values in the reflection essays students wrote after their first and second visits. Moreover, if the students expressed transcendent values in the first essay, their second essay revealed higher levels and more complex expressions.

Other researchers have explored community-based organizations as settings for youth engagement. These settings can provide a "youth civic space" in which notions about youth, citizenship, participation and the public sphere can be challenged (Richards-Schuster, 2005, p. 15). Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) argue that for the young people involved in two social justice youth organizations in Oakland, their participation offers them an opportunity to build social relationships, develop mutual trust, be exposed to a critical praxis and collectively work towards a common good.

HoSang (2003) relies on his case study work on two youth organizing groups to argue that youth organizations should be seen "as contemporary (albeit underdeveloped) forms of political parties for large numbers of young people of color" (HoSang, 2003, p. 16). These organizations provided youth with a structure within which they could challenge the dominant hegemonic discourse about Black and Latino youth, as well as teaming them with allies to struggle for better conditions for themselves and others.

The increasing interest by researchers in the political lives of children and youth, along with ideas and concerns about the role of the environment have made strides beyond traditional forms of civic life, such as voting, but the questions of how children learn democratic values and develop a passion for the common good remain significant. Empirical research on young people involved in activism or youth organizing suggests that a responsible place to start unraveling these moments, experiences and interactions of political engagement is "in the welter of their daily experience" (Mills, 1959, p. 5). It is then prudent to return to Chawla and Heft's (2002) exhortation to identify and assess the opportunities for engagement in a particular

neighborhood or group to see how young people are engaged and are able to expand their capacity for competence through hands-on experience.

Environmental Education & Community Settings

Beyond the identification of adult-structured opportunities for political and community engagement, it is important to examine young people's ideas and images about places in their everyday life. How do they perceive the opportunities for community improvement? In what ways are they able to imagine their involvement in these collective efforts? These questions are centrally related to the questions of this study on whether a critical spatial lens can extend the ability of youth to analyze how patterns of unequal power and resource distribution shape their biography and the world around them.

Increasing numbers of place-based or environmental educators (Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002; Sobel, 2006) continue to advocate for extending the learning environment from the school into the surrounding community. Support for the idea that school should foster community and social awareness amongst their students appears in a volume sponsored by the Educational Resources Information Center (Coon & Bowman, 1976). In his Introduction, Coon argues that because a growing and significant number of Americans live in metropolitan areas, the task of urban schools should be to enable children to engage more by elevating their "concern for the quality of life in our cities" (Coon & Bowman, 1976, p. 6).

In Chawla's (1999) work on the significant life experiences of environmental activists in the United States and Norway, she learned about the various factors, including childhood experiences with nature as formative to their later activism. She argues that settings both in and out of school can offer opportunities for people to develop environmental competence. Her findings suggest that a broader definition of environmental education outside of school, for instance in the surrounding areas, should be fostered. Her three recommendations include: the availability of natural areas that are accessible to children, outreach to parents to be role models for environmental behavior and support for community organizations where children can work

with caring adults and peers towards collective action (Chawla, 1999, p. 25).

Colin Ward and Anthony Fyson (1978) argue that the neighborhood setting is an appropriate site for environmental education. In school settings, fieldwork implies going to rural settings and conducting observations or experiments with natural resources such as river flow. Ward and Fyson (1978) asserted that cities can be similarly tapped for environmental education, thus they created the term "streetwork." Their pedagogy builds on a 'problem-oriented' approach to studying the neighborhood. They argue that it is important that students raise questions about places that are part of their everyday lives. By conducting "streetwork" they are learning about "citizen participation in environmental decisions" (Ward & Fyson, 1978, p. i).

One example of the application of place-based pedagogy with young people is a New York-based organization that partners with schools, afterschool programs and other nonprofits to focus on "the legibility of the world around us" (www.anothercupdevelopment.org). The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) works with the idea that "the power of imagination is central to the practice of democracy" (www.anothercupdevelopment.org). Among their many projects, is one called "Garbage Problems" where eight high school students worked with CUP collaborators to investigate the question of where garbage in New York City goes. Their methods of inquiry included interviews with people who work with or on the issue of waste (e.g., activists, sanitation workers, experts), site visits and observations of trash infrastructure. "The students learned that garbage has another whole world with larger-scale plans than don't litter" ("Students studying New York garbage create documentary, Fresh Kills design," 2002, p. 184).

In an attempt to merge the field of environmental education with critical theory and social justice work, David Gruenewald (2003) proposes a critical pedagogy of place that he describes as a two-fold learning process. One process originates in the literature on critical consciousness pedagogy (Freire, 1995) and involves identifying and 'decolonizing' ways of thinking that hurt and exploit other people and places. Another process draws from research on

place and placemaking, that is, one should work to create, renew or conserve those places that nurture and protect people and ecosystems. Gruenewald (2003) calls this a process of 'reinhabiting' places.

For urban Blacks and others who are disadvantaged in the city, a critical pedagogy of place can help to recover and create new meanings and uses of cities in a way that holds transformative promise for urban Black resistance (Haymes, 1995). He asserts that their opportunities for place-making and defining space in the city is slowly being eroded by displacement, redevelopment and the shrinking of the public sphere. In order to support an urban Black resistance, "pedagogical conditions" have to emerge that will enable youth to identify the ways in which the production of space controls and regulates "how they organize their identity around territory" (Haymes, 1995, p. 114). Narrating new notions of Blackness and new images of urban space are necessary to situate one's biography and identity in the context of unequal power and spatial practices that reproduce the uneven development.

C. Relevance of the Geographical Imagination for Youth Activists

From the most self-interested lobbying groups to the best community-based environmental advocacy groups, a geographic imagination or the ability to apprehend how economic and social processes unfold in space, is a necessary precursor to being able to effectively change conditions. The geographical imagination is then an important ability for educators to learn how to foster, particularly in the United States where geography is not universally an important part of the core curriculum.

The geographical imagination as first delineated by Harvey is an awareness of the spatial relations that shape a person's biography which includes knowledge about a place, as well as how events in that place are produce implications for other places. However, in the transposition of the sociological imagination to the geographical imagination, Harvey is less explicit about an individual's agency in comparison to Mills. This research attempts to address

this by suggesting that the image one holds of a setting can also include the changes that one could imagine for that place.

Although Harvey's initial definition of the geographical imagination has expanded to a notion of emancipatory geography and Haymes' pedagogy of place works to recover meaning and uses of urban space for resistance, these concepts have been rarely explored in the context of actual political engagement. Wendy Wolford's (2004) research is one such exception. She shows how the spatial imaginaries of Brazilian farmers from different regions affected the way in which they framed their participation in the Movement of Rural Landless Workers (the MST)[1]. She uses the Lefebvre's notion of spatial imaginaries as "cognitive frameworks, both collective and individual, constituted through the lived experiences, perceptions and conceptions of space itself" (Wolford, 2004, p. 410). However in her case, the farmers are not imagining their own alternatives but weaving their spatial concepts in with the existing practices that the MST are already engaged in.

My research explores how the geographical imagination holds value as *both* a critical construct to analyze social and spatial relations and as well as a critical capacity that can shape a young person's sense of political agency. I define the geographical imagination and its application to youth in the following ways:

First, the geographical imagination includes ideas and concerns about how and why social, political and physical inequalities exist in different places, and how place can reinforce these differences. This can support youth who are concentrating their participation efforts in a political arena by presenting a way to uncover the roots of unequal conditions. For organizations that attempt to develop the critical consciousness of youth about inequality and social justice, a focus on the roots of uneven development in different places can situate youth within a historical legacy of struggle. This approach steers youth away from apathy or despair

[1] The Movement of Rural Landless Workers (the MST) is the largest grassroots social movement in Brazil and has worked since its inception in 1984 for progressive land reform and the right of farmers to occupy "unproductive" land (Wolford, 2004, p. 409).

and instead towards considering themselves as one amongst many who are 'making the road by walking.'

Second, the geographical imagination includes an awareness of the possibilities for change that are afforded in the social and physical environment. Particular attention to the physical manifestations of inequality as well as resources to be harnessed can lead to a deeper and more accurate conceptualization of who or what office(s) or groups should be lobbied or connected with in order to achieve the visions of young people. For youth who wish to develop their organizing skills, this aspect of the geographical imagination can provide a means of constructing plans of action.

Third, since the geographical imagination develops through experiences in or knowledge about different places, near and far, it is important to apprehend each place with a certain openness and playfulness. In addition to reading landscapes and neighborhoods for latent meaning (e.g., White House is place, but also represents a symbol of power), the geographical imagination is involved in understanding how these meanings and symbols have ties to historical events as well as the current social, political and economic context, and at the same time exists at a particular location that has significance beyond the local. For young people this spatial awareness may be dulled in places that are familiar in comparison to places that perceived as new or exotic. It is then even more critical that organizations and young people understand how to refresh their capacity to "see through a scene and its many processes" (Clay, 1994, p. 84) within their local setting, as that is the immediate site at which they wish to improve.

The geographical imagination also includes the personal dreams, attachments and images related to particular places and how these conceptualizations affect how one sees oneself in a particular moment. For youth who travel to other settings, neighborhoods, even other countries as a part of their work, any preconceived notions and experiences of that place influence their reaction to it. The geographical imagination gets extended through the

incorporation of new information and sharing with peers and adults. This deeper probing of self and identity within a place (whether it is the youth organization, another neighborhood, a different city, etc.) presents young people with new opportunities to learn about themselves and explore new ways of interpreting the world.

Finally, the geographical imagination is not something that 'one has or one doesn't.' Rather my research suggests that it can be elucidated as a critical construct (i.e., as dimensions of a critical consciousness about space, place and power) and enacted as a critical capacity to experience and intervene as a social or political actor (i.e., as various modes of engaging the environment). The process of invoking, enacting or extending does not occur in a linear manner but involves a *fluid leaping* from 'dimensions' of the geographical imagination to 'modes' of enacting this critical capacity and back.

The intellectual merit of this research is to bring attention to the geographical imagination as an under-theorized aspect of geography, youth participation and political engagement. The creation of a coherent practical framework for understanding how the geographical imagination is learned, expressed and utilized in social/environmental change efforts also has the broader impact of creating organizational awareness and supporting the ability of youth organizations to reflect on their own practice and pedagogy. By extending the reach of the "geographical imagination" to youth involvement in social justice work, this research contributes to understanding and establishing the pedagogical conditions for young people to not only see things as they are, but as they could be.

D. Dissertation Chapter Overview

Chapter two provides an orientation to the case study methodology used during the dissertation research. This chapter also includes an introduction to the organization of the case study and focuses on the specific data collection and analysis process.

Following Chapters Two to Five, I have inserted "Interludes" that are excerpts from either interviews, conversations and written reflection pieces from young participants. I deliberately avoid qualifying or framing the interludes, rather these are meant to function as a transitioning device as well as an invitation to the reader to receive these voices from their own perspective.

Chapter three situates the case study organization in terms of its mission and practices, its relationship to the neighborhood setting, the opportunities it offers, and the ways in which it provides spaces for hope and liberation for youth members to safely bond, heal and resist oppression.

Chapter four describes how the dimensions of the geographical imagination fit with theories of spatial learning and people-environment relations. I then identify the ten dimensions of the geographical imagination and offer examples that illustrate the ways in which youth activists express this *critical construct about places near and far*.

Chapter five addresses the different modes through which young activists are enacting their geographical imagination. I frame this discussion within theories about space and critical pedagogy. I return to the young activists at the case study organization and explain each of these modes as a *critical capacity for engaging in the environment* from five different perspectives.

Chapter six draws on research on various youth organizations to suggest activities through which the geographical imagination can be provoked in young people. I synthesize these approaches by listing the qualities of experiences that can help provoke the geographical imagination.

The last chapter offers conclusions about how this research furthers our understanding of the geographical imagination as a critical construct and a critical capacity. I discuss how this discrete case study extends our existing understanding of the geographical imagination by

showing how this critical construct and capacity is connected to a larger discussion of youth agency and competence.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

The geographical imagination has rarely been documented as it develops in young people, nor has its potential as a critical tool in highlighting issues of place, governance and power to support community organizing, been thoroughly explored. In order to study how the geographical imagination is expressed and enacted amongst youth activists, I elected to use a case study approach. This approach offered me an opportunity to closely document the particular dimensions and modes of the geographical imagination and identify the ways in which young people (within a particular setting) expressed and enacted their critical consciousness about space over the course of their participation.

Education researcher Sharan B. Merriam defines a case as "a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). She shares an example from the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) in which they show a circle with a heart in the center (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). According to Miles and Huberman's 1994 work, circle represents the boundary along which the case will be studied and the heart is the focus of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). Drawing from this imagery, the boundary of my case was a particular community-based organization and the heart of the study was a youth program that provided rich and variegated opportunities to connect ideas about the social and material conditions in the neighborhood to historical and current power relations at scales of the personal and everyday and beyond.

Case study approaches have certain benefits. According to Merriam, case studies can offer a holistic and descriptive account of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2001, pp. 29-30) and illustrate the process through which a phenomenon emerges or fails to emerge (Merriam, 2001, p. 33). She describes how the case study comprises a "particularistic" focus on a "situation, event, program or phenomenon" (Merriam, 2001, p. 29) and its "uniqueness" is that it can

reveal "knowledge we would not otherwise have access to" (Merriam, 2001, p. 33). By amassing knowledge about how a phenomenon develops as it unfolds over time, the case study approach offers "vivid, concrete and sensory" material from different individuals and sources of data (Merriam, 2001, p. 31). The complexity of the data and the analytical possibilities suggests that case studies can possess a "heuristic quality" by explaining or extending the reader's understanding (Merriam, 2001, p. 30) and "increasing its potential applicability" (Merriam, 2001, p. 31).

Applying a case study approach also requires one to be aware of its constraints regarding standardization and generalizability. In James Youniss and Miranda Yate's (1997) work on a community service program at a private Catholic school, they did not pretend to offer generalizability in terms of theory and findings, rather they strove to

> generate qualitative data that reflect students' understandings of service, self and society. Findings illustrate the theory by helping to articulate its core ideas. If results are found useful, they can be pursued subsequently in more detailed work with more standard methods. (Youniss & Yates, 1997, p. x)

Case study research is also perceived to be less "objective" than other forms of research however proponents of "strong objectivity" (Harding, 1995) would disagree, arguing that the inclusion of voices traditionally marginalized would generate even more relevant knowledge. Even still, Merriam offers six ways in which a researcher can enhance internal validity: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory or collaborative modes of research and clarifying researcher's biases and assumptions (Merriam, 2001, pp. 204-205). She argues against "objectivity" or "reliability" and focuses instead on what Lincoln and Guba refer to as the "dependability" of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 288), on "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam, 2001, p. 206).

Issues of generalizing from a small, nonrandom sample to a larger population also haunt qualitative research. Merriam takes up this debate about how findings from case studies can be useful by presenting three re-framings of generalizability and external validity. The one

reframing that has guided this research is Cronbach's 1975 work on "working hypotheses" (1975). Merriam writes that this concept helped her to see how "generalizations decay in time" (Merriam, 2001, p. 209). Drawing from Cronbach's ideas, the aim of social science should be to "take account of local conditions" which then enables one to take "some guidance in making choices" (Merriam, 2001, p. 209).

Employing a case study approach enabled me to listen closely for instances and expressions of an expanding geographical imagination. I was able to be present during different points of the young people's participation. Furthermore, the multiple sources of information such as observation in situ, culling information from interviews and reading organization documents allowed me to discern the ways in which young people think and speak about themselves and the world over a variety of settings and situations. Including their voices and experiences of place, power and identity, this research methodology produces a "stronger objectivity" (Harding, 1995) that shifts the standpoint of researcher from a traditionally distant 'expert' stance, to one in which my notions of the geographical imagination are working alongside participants' knowledge.

Over a longer timeframe, I was fortunate to be able to develop sensitivity for the context and an ongoing relationship with individuals in that setting, which allowed me to test and refine my ideas and concepts. During the course of yearlong data collection and months long analysis period, I have shared and received feedback about my initial and tentative findings with young people and adult staff at the organization. In the process of producing and framing my research questions as well as my findings, the value of explicitly sharing my theoretical orientation plays a distinct role, not in saving me from these concerns about validity and perspective but forcing my biases and assumptions to the fore.

Finally it is my hope that the "working hypotheses" I have drawn about the geographical imagination in young people can be useful starting points for reflection and change in theory and practice. By suggesting a typology and grouping of constructs about how young people

develop, learn, express and enact their geographical and spatial understanding, I wish to move "from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 261). The implications for practice could be on the part of organizations in supporting their efforts to identify new youth outcomes or avenues for programming. The methods I describe above have helped me to consider both "the observables" and the "unobservables" and connect "the two with successive layers of inferential glue" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 261).

A. Selecting the Case Study

Drawing from data collected as part of a Ford Foundation-sponsored project entitled "Constructing a Social Justice Framework for Youth and Community Service (Sutton, Kemp, Gutierrez, & Saegert, 2006) in which I participated, I had access to interviews with the staff at 88 organizations nationwide. From those, I selected the ones based in the Northeast (N=24) that revealed in their answer to the survey questions that they were trying to expand the social and environmental consciousness of youth. My goal was to locate programs that were already addressing social inequalities in their communities and that would be likely interested in learning how spatial perspectives currently existed in their programs. Making explicit how youth perceive and understand the relationship between their biography and their neighborhood environment sheds light on activities that help youth abstract from their personal issues to the social, material and structural inequalities in their neighborhood. Ten Northeast programs that fit the following criteria:

-used a social justice approach in work with youth

-worked to engage young people in analyzing, intervening or transforming their neighborhood/community

-attempted to raise youth awareness about how the social, political, and historical forces influence the built and natural environment of their neighborhood/community

-exposed young people to different settings or roles in meaningful ways

-helped them to transform how youth see themselves and their role in the environment

Of these ten organizations, six were based in New York City and four were based outside of New York State. Four of the organizations were focused on youth organizing about social justice issues (e.g., gentrification, education and public space), two concentrated on urban agriculture, two organizations trained youth in certain forms of digital technology (e.g., GIS and documentary production), and the last organization used participatory methods to train young people in community-based research.

With each of the ten organizations, I conducted a telephone interview with a staff member and obtained specific information about how the organization's practices, ideology and activities reflect a critical spatial perspective. [See Appendix for Interview Agenda] Based on the telephone surveys, I detected a final criterion that emerged as important to documenting the geographical imagination. In addition to exposing participants to different settings and roles, three organizations also inculcated a global awareness to their practices; they made explicit references to the connection between places both local and abroad. In doing so, they were able to offer new ideas and images about places that upended notions about the scale at which problems exist and are produced.

Of these three organizations, one organization, Brothers and Sisters United (BSU)[2] consented to offer me access to pursue my line of inquiry with their young people. Of the other two organizations, one already had a graduate student researcher in place and the other was not structured to allow for a researcher to be present at that time.

[2] I have chosen to mask the name of the organization, as well as the names of the interviewees with pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

B. An Introduction to the Case Study Organization

Brothers and Sisters United (BSU) is based in a three-story brownstone in central west Harlem. They own the land that their brownstone is on and consider it to be "liberated land." (Ford Interview, Marilyn). They have existed in varying incarnations for the last fifteen years, growing from a small group of young men that met for peer support and youth development in Rhode Island, to offering a wide variety of programming for children and youth in Harlem. The organization has since evolved to include Black and Latino girls and young women; thus came the name: Brothers and Sisters United (BSU)[3]. They have grown from a 2-man operation to a staff of 17 serving 150-200 youth of color per year[4]. They have a budget of approximately 1.3 million[5] and are fortunate to own the brownstone, in which they have been based since 2000.

Organizational History and Programming

The kernel of the organization began in 1994 by two young men who grew up in Harlem and later attended Brown University together. They realized that the elite setting in which they were being educated was a far cry from the reality of other young men of color living in Providence. They were spurred to do something about that. They began to meet weekly with a group of male high school students. The two founders, Will and Michael and a small pool of fellow undergraduates began mentoring adolescent boys and young men of color in Providence. Upon graduation, they settled back in New York City and resolved to continue their work with Black and Latino males. Their aim was to provide a safe space for young men of color to find love and support against the racism and inequity in society and work to establish how they want to define themselves and live their lives.

---

[3] Not to be confused with Sistas and Brothas United (SBU), a youth organizing group in the South Bronx.
[4] Statistics from 2008-2009 Annual Report
[5] Like many non-profits, there have also been leaner funding moments when the staff have had to work as volunteers for a stretch of time.

> When we started this, at 21, we had just returned to city we were raised in. This gave us an ability to do the work because we are so closely connected with young men. We listened to same music, wore same clothes, and been through a lot of things that young men in the city face. (Ford Interview, Michael/Co-founder)

They are driven by the goal of supporting the positive personal and ethnic identity development of African-American and Latino youth. Perhaps as a response to the tensions between African-American and Latino residents of Harlem and sitting as they do between two ethnically divided drug factions, they seek to provide a safe haven for neighborhood youth. By highlighting the shared legacies of oppression and supporting the social development of Black and Brown children and youth, the organization creates a "liberated" space away from the trappings of ethnic conflict and oppressive power relationships. They wish to establish the brownstone as a caring environment in which Black and Brown children and youth can learn about themselves and their shared history, and develop their dreams.

With regard to their staff, one of the co-founders shared with me that the job application that they send out or post to websites like Idealist (clearinghouse for nonprofit and volunteer opportunities) is very detailed. Potential applicants must be prepared to make a 3-year commitment and be available to youth members 24/7. They also go through a series of phone calls and face-to-face discussions with staff before they are considered for the position. Some of the questions are intended to be open-ended and offer a chance for the underlying attitudes about youth development to emerge. For instance, one question asked previously is what the applicant would do if a teenager approached them with news of an unintended pregnancy. Moreover, the potential applicants have to 'teach' a workshop for the children and youth; and the feedback from their young members goes a long way in determining whether someone gets hired or not.

The organization is funded primarily through private grants (e.g., Ford Foundation, Surdna Foundation), although funds from special events, government agencies (e.g., NYC

Department of Youth and Community Development), along with individual and in-kind donations also contribute to their operating revenue. With these funds, they can offer a broad band of opportunities for African-American and Latino children and youth (with a small minority of Asian youth). There is an afterschool program, a Rites of Passage program building on the model of the male-only chapter but which now also includes several chapters of girls and young women, a Liberation Program where new groups of youth are trained for 4 weeks in the summer by young activists who then join organizing campaigns during the school year, the International Study program which spends 6 months preparing for and one month doing community service in a country in Africa, Latin America or the Caribbean, the Summer Youth Employment Program, and the Lyrical Circle for writers and poets.

Through the wide menu of choices, the goals of the organization to support African-American and Latino children and youth are carried out. The organization has developed a set of ten themes that are used continually as reference points by staff and young members alike when discussing the different programs. These are: Mind, Body and Spirit, Leadership development, Pan African and Latino/a history, Sexism and Misogyny, Sexual Education and Responsibility, Drugs and Substance Abuse, Conflict Resolution and Bias Reduction, Political Education and Social Justice, Educational Achievement, Community Service and Responsibility.

The youth organization has developed their own curriculum following an 'education for liberation' philosophy – that starts from where children and youth are at in terms of what they experience and see – but then offers new critical lenses and a variety of settings within which to explore and be nurtured. The education for liberation pedagogy focuses on learning through asking questions, sharing and creating understandings across (as opposed to top down), giving space to bond over painful and joyful life experiences and creating new spaces for joining in collectivity and community.

Michael, one of the co-founders said,

> They become leaders, not in the sense that they have followers, but we define leadership as making decisions that affect your life. If you can guide your life and have decisions that reflect your wishes, that is the core objective. (Ford Interview)

Developing a Working Relationship with BSU

The programming at BSU presented an opportunity to observe firsthand how staff and other young members help newcomers to cultivate a critical awareness about self and community. The staff members were also interested to develop the range of youth outcomes to possibly include how youth perceive their neighborhood and make sense of themselves in the world. They hoped that by allowing me to approach their work with an eye to the critical spatial themes, this perspective could add strength to their community organizing.

I had spoken several times with my main contact person (the Associate Director) and had met several other staff people at a benefit downtown in Spring 2006. Based on these discussions we had decided that the Liberation Program would provide the most material for me to uncover the connections between power, place and identity. The cycle of the program, beginning with the Summer Liberation School (August), then the Liberation Program (school year) would enable me to observe how the education for liberation pedagogy in the summer translated to the actual community organizing work of the youth activists. It was an opportunity to observe how incoming youth learn from and interact with adult staff, as well as, and perhaps more importantly, other young people.

I was interested in this "zone of proximal development" where incoming youth develop their own forms of reasoning about how social relations (uneven power) and historical events (struggles for justice) influence and shape their community. This is a concept developed by the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky in which the "zone of proximal development" is

> the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

My interest was in documenting the expression and enactment of the geographical imagination of these youth activists by observing the 'zone' in which they learn, absorb, retain and distill the ideas and experiences in their neighborhood and connect them to their personal biographies, larger social context and prospects for improving their lives and the lives of others.

The final consent to grant me access rested ultimately with the young people. I was invited to come to a meeting at the brownstone where several young people would be in attendance. It was there that I should introduce myself and discuss how my research agenda might mesh well with their ongoing community organizing. I recall climbing the stairs up the second floor where the staff sits and entering the meeting room off to the right. The meeting room seats 4-6 comfortably with a sofa and several chairs around a coffee table. Although not a very large room, it has a sense of openness with windows on two sides and a door with glass panes. Older framed photographs of the co-founders accepting an award from Oprah Winfrey, plaques and awards from various foundations, and other artwork adorn the wall. There is a small drum next to the foot of a chair, a lateral filing cabinet in the corner and a handful of extra pillows in warm tones on the chairs and sofa.

I recall four young women were available to meet with me on that spring afternoon. They had all been involved in the Liberation Program for at least two years and had traveled abroad with the International Study Program or would be embarking on such a trip that summer. One young woman shared that she had been involved for four years. They listened politely, asked questions and seemed overall intrigued by the prospect that mapping and different forms of analysis might offer to their work. I described my previous research experiences, my interest in the organization and my hope that I could bring a different analytical lens to the work already being accomplished. The young women described eloquently the different issues that the Liberation Program was focused on, such as gentrification and community development. They expressed their commitment to the organization and their belief that their efforts could help improve Harlem. One shared that the individual and collective

actions within the structure of the program helped her to see how they could shape conditions in their neighborhood. The Tenant Protection Committee was about informing tenants about their rights and helping to stave off displacement. An ongoing campaign to convert an abandoned school building also figured prominently. They talked with passion about how it should be a community space and how it's wrong to have such a large piece of land be vacant and unused.

Towards the end of the 1.5-hour meeting, we thought aloud along with the adult staff members about how I could be integrated into their ongoing work. Although the geographical imagination could have been richly explored in the International Study Program, the preparation had been long underway and the young people were to be leaving for Brazil in July. Therefore, we discussed how I could make myself useful as a "Volunteer" for the Liberation Program. I would act as an extra set of hands during the Summer Liberation Program, jumping in to help the four youth facilitators with their workshop preparation and being present during the school year when the Liberation Program started up again. It is with this configuration in mind that I developed my long-term research focus on the Liberation Program.

Honing my Research Focus: Liberation Program

The impetus to start the Liberation Program occurred when one of the co-founders realized that their young people were participating in rallies with ally organizations but not actually organizing them. He saw an opportunity to create a program where their youth members would be both organizing and participating in social justice campaigns. For the more politically minded of the youth members, the Liberation Program was seen as an opportunity to broaden their understanding and to get involved in more direct forms of participation. The Mission Statement reads:

> Our goal is to develop a cadre of revolutionary youth who will battle against all forms of oppression. As youth, we must work collectively to rise above the destructive negativity in society and free our communities. We refuse to find bliss in ignorance – we will continually educate ourselves and struggle against injustice until we are no longer victims of oppression but threats to its continued existence. Following this path of knowledge and determination, we shall achieve

> the essence of true revolutionaries and reach our ultimate destination – Liberation! (Excerpt from Liberation Program Flyer)

Modeled after the Freedom Schools of the 1960s, the program involved a 'consciousness raising' component. This was conceived as the 4-week Summer Liberation School where newcomers could learn more about conditions and contexts of struggle both here and abroad. The Liberation Program would then offer a platform from which young people could voice their concerns and be supported in planning and executing actions to remedy or address important issues in the community. The Liberation Program was the continuation of the consciousness raising dimensions of the summer workshops but was also a way to funnel the young people into developing and working on different campaigns during the school year. It was also conceived as a way to continue to train the youth organizers and offer compensation in the form of a stipend ($7/hr) to carry out campaigns in their community.

The platform of the Liberation Program is the set of guiding principles and is comprised of a list of ten wishes for the community. These include: quality education for all, immediate end to police brutality and attacks on people of color, decent housing for all fit to shelter human beings, end to capitalist destruction of our community, transformation of the hypocritical criminal justice system, people-driven governing of the community, immediate end to self-destructive tendencies within our community, radical change in government spending, a united youth network to voice our concerns and Liberation for all people as exemplified by the quote "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." (Liberation Program Flyer)

Summer Liberation School (July-Sept 2006)

The August Summer Liberation School is organized by the volunteer **Youth Facilitators** (current Liberation Program members) with support from adult staff members. There had been a general call for volunteers to run the workshops in August 2006 and four members (three young women and one young man) stepped forward. The four Youth Facilitators were paid

during their preparation time and over the course of the Summer Liberation School. During the month of July, the Youth Facilitators review previous workshops, debate which topics to include, research and plan the workshops. They are offered guidance from two adult staff members and additional support from whom they learn skills such as, doing research, the art of facilitation, organizing workshops.

The youth facilitators and adult staff also review the applications for **Incoming Participants**. Young people are recruited through word of mouth, flyers at high schools, community centers, email lists. The application includes questions about their motivation to join, the skills they bring, the community issues that are important to them, any community service experience, future goals and whether they agree with the Liberation Program platform. In addition, they are asked to write a 1-2 page essay about an issue they would like to change in their community and the steps necessary to address the issue. Then prospective applicants are screened to make sure they are available everyday in August and are interviewed personally by at least one Youth Facilitator and one adult staff member.

In August the workshops take place every weekday, beginning at 10:30am with an icebreaker or warm-up activity followed by the first planned workshop (11-1pm), breaking for an hour-long lunch at 1pm, then continuing from 2pm-4pm with a second workshop. The day officially ends for the new Incoming Participants, though some elect to stay and use the computers or hang out in the Teen Lounge. The Youth Facilitators and adult staff regroup for a debriefing about the day's events and discuss the plans for the next days. During the four weeks, there is also a weekend retreat and several movie nights that take place outside of the weekday program.

Those incoming youth who have successfully completed the Summer Liberation School have the opportunity to earn a stipend of up to $500. The four weeks culminate in a Closing Ceremony attended by the larger contingency of **Liberation Program activists**. This is

considered an important rite of passage for the young people as they share their Commitment Oaths and are welcomed with fanfare into the Liberation Collective.

Typically 12-15 youth participate, and in 2006, 10 Incoming Participants were present at the start of August. At the beginning of the second week, they lost one person. He was the youngest of the group (12 years old) and had a summer arts program he wanted to do. The group gained another young woman but she came only to 4 workshops. We later learned that her mother did not approve of her coming. The friend that brought her in initially also stopped coming in the third week. By the last week, of the 7 that were left, 3 Noncompleters missed Closing Ceremony without explanation (at that time)[6]. So only 4 young women went on to graduate the Summer Liberation School, earn the stipend and join the Liberation Program in Fall 2006.

Liberation Program (October 2006-May 2007)

When the Liberation Program started back up in October, three of the four Incoming Participants remained active. The fourth young woman was on her school's basketball team and was unable to come. Later in the fall, two Incoming Participants also stopped coming. One had just started a new school and was feeling stressed about acclimating and academic pressure. The other had begun to attend a weekly meeting at her high school that could help her get funding for college, which directly conflicted with being able to take part in the Liberation Program.

The Liberation Collective consisted of approximately 11 Activists, the majority of whom were more experienced organizers. The group met as a larger collective on Wednesday evenings. This was an opportunity for each the different committees to report back to the larger group. This was also a chance for adult Staff to present different workshops (i.e.,

---

[6] We later learned that one young man had experienced family troubles at home, and he and his girlfriend (both Incoming Participants) were too caught up to attend. The third person, a young man was unable to attend because there was a family illness.

communication, facilitation) that would be relevant for all the youth Collective members. The attendance would range from 7-9 young people and two adult facilitators.

There were three active committees. One was a new committee formed around issues about urban education. The second committee had been in place for many years and dealt with community development (e.g., abandoned school building, gentrification). The third committee was focused on organizing an upcoming conference on education for liberation for teachers, youth, activists and academics to gather.

During the week, there would also be separate meetings for each of the committees. These committees would have one adult staff present and approximately 4-6 young people involved. The young people would keep track of the hours they spent during the week doing campaign work (e.g., going to committee meetings, doing internet research, making phone calls, following up with others) and they would be paid $7/hr (up to 20 hours/week) as compensation for their work.

Five Points Project (February-July 2007)

Since the completion of the Summer Liberation Program and the first half of the Liberation Program, I continued to listen and observe but without directly interviewing the youth. In order to achieve my aim of articulating the geographical imagination, it is appropriate to establish a context in which their ideas about space and place are more directly engaged. Thus the impetus for starting a participatory process for community-based research emerged.

This was in part by choice and by chance. I learned about some funding ($500-$1000) from the New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods to do a 6-month project about neighborhood issues. I decided to elicit participation in developing a proposal with volunteers from BSU. Four young women stepped forward to work with me in February to develop a 6-month project dealing with issues in their neighborhood. The foundation was accepting proposals from small grassroots groups and over the course of three meetings with the 4 young women in January

2007; we developed our ideas for doing a joint project. We settled on three possible ideas: a) political education workshops similar to the summer liberation trainings; b) neighborhood mapping of gentrification and abandonment; c) youth rights guide for high school students in New York City. Given the focus of the funders was land use and food issues, we decided to go with choice b – the mapping project. In fact, it was not my suggestion but one young woman who remembered that I had talked about William Bunge's Geographical Expeditions in Detroit nine months ago and had been interested in learning more about mapping ever since.

Subsequent meetings in January 2006 were spent developing a name for the project, the name for our group and an outline of our activities. We sought $1000 in funding for a 6-month project that would involve training the young female activists to do mapping, developing themes or questions we wanted to know through mapping and then sharing them with community residents in the form of neighborhood tours. Neighborhood tours seemed like it would be a good way to bring the information out to the public and might influence how neighborhood residents perceive the local environment. We named ourselves "The Five Points: Nourish, Learn, Work, Play and Live" – because we five women were interested in understanding how neighborhood settings support these aspects of our lives and the lives of others. Our project was called the MAC project (Mapping Assets in the Community). I took the task of writing up the application and we learned at the beginning of March 2007 that we received $500 to do our project.

In March 2007, we began meeting weekly as a group to carry out the project. One of the original members of the group did not rejoin, citing that time conflicts would not allow her to continue. In the first month, we worked on mapping basics (creating and reading maps). We also discussed how land use issues (types of commercial, businesses, parks, abandonment and rebuilding) had an effect on their neighborhood experience. In April, the discussion centered around differential food access in Harlem and other areas of New York City. We talked about the patterns of pricing and name brands that they witnessed when they travel to Union Square

or the Lower East Side. How a plethora of fast food restaurants and bodegas are servicing the needs of people in poor areas and that their wish for their neighborhood would be fewer fast food restaurants, more healthy food options and better quality of food in grocery stores and bodegas. Comparisons were also made about the frequency of certain types of shops in other countries we have traveled to (e.g., Egypt, South Africa). I also collected data in another area of Harlem (near Columbia University) about the types of shops and costs of everyday items (coffee, bagel, water) and brought the results back to the group.

Due to the decrease in funding, we decided in May 2007 to scale down our community-based research and intervention efforts. It was at this time that I also learned about a separate funding opportunity that would take me out of the country for the summer of 2007. Therefore, rather than conducting neighborhood tours, we decided to focus one particular issue. From our initial work, we were in agreement that the landscape of food access in a particular place seemed related to who the consumers were and the 'kind' of neighborhood we were in. Over the course of the interviews and discussions with young people and adult staff about neighborhood spaces and social justice, many stories about negative police interactions were shared. This led us to speculate about how the landscape of public space interactions might be related to who the people were and the kinds of neighborhood spaces they were in.

In May 2007, two mapping workshops with young men in Harlem were conducted. The mapping workshop consisted of inviting the young men to share the places they like to hang out in and the places where they had negative or positive experiences with police in Harlem. The goal was to examine what if any patterns of hanging out sites and police interaction sites or what factors would arise as important (alone or in a group, time of day, type of place). It was also an opportunity for two of the young female activists to co-lead a mapping workshop and co-facilitate the ensuing discussion.

The intention was to conduct more mapping workshops but timing and lack of funding to continue were constraints to further action. The final report detailing our activities was

written by me with feedback from one of the Five Points members and has been submitted to the funding organization and shared with BSU. Since the completion of the project, I learned that another one of the Five Points members co-lead a mapping workshop in the Liberation Program 2007-2008. Ongoing conversations with adult stuff[7] have also indicated to me that mapping might find a role in supporting their collaboration with other organizations on police brutality and public space.

C. Methods

My methodology traces the process through which young people express and enact their geographical imagination. The Summer Liberation School, the Liberation Program and the Five Points advance this developmental arc by explicitly linking current material conditions to historical events and societal forces, as well as to guiding youth toward realizing alternative images and visions for themselves and their community. Although different forms of geographical knowledge and awareness exist, the particular derivation explored in this methodology is political and strategic. By learning and directly engaging with social and environmental conditions, the young people expand in their capacity to take that which is 'given to them' as that which could be transformed (Freire, 2005).

I pursued this line of inquiry deeper by examining BSU's multi-layered pedagogical approach to place. The Summer Liberation School, the Liberation Program and the voluntary mapping project "The Five Points" enabled me to document instances and narratives where ideas about space and place, power and justice, opportunity and access were expressed. Rather than evaluating youth participation as a construct or outcome, my goal is to situate the discussions about place and power in the context of the youth organization's critical pedagogy and to carefully document the process of how the geographical imagination is expressed and enacted over the course of their program involvement.

[7] Conversations with adult staff in Fall 2007 and Spring 2009 have raised the issue of mapping as a tool for organizing.

Data Collection Units

1) Ford Foundation

a) Telephone interviews with 88 organizations: I used these to cull information about Northeast organizations whose activities suggested an explicit focus on how young people interact with the social and material environment.

b) In-depth telephone interviews with 10 Northeastern organizations about their pedagogy, context and practices. I focused specifically on how they involved young people in explicitly analyzing and acting on the material and social conditions of their communities.

c) Case Study with BSU: The Ford Foundation study had identified BSU as an organization worthy of more in-depth study; therefore interviews were conducted with 5 adult staff members, 5 youth participants and 5 parents.

2) Summer Liberation School (July-August 2006)

a) Pre Interviews with 4 Youth Facilitators and 7 Incoming Participants conducted in July 2006. Informed consent and parental consent were obtained for the interviews. The Youth Facilitators were 3 young women (1 Pakistani-American, 2 African-American) and 1 young man (African America) between the ages of 16-18 years old. The 7 Incoming Participants consisted of 5 young women (1 Belize-American, 3 African-American and 1 Latin/African-American) and 2 young men (both African-American) between the ages of 14-16 years old.

b) Participant observation and notes from workshops, discussions and meetings with youth and adult staff from July-end August 2006.

c) Post interviews with 4 Youth Facilitators and the 5 original Incoming Participants in September 2006. The five Incoming Participants included the four young women who completed the Summer Liberation School as well as one young woman who did not[8].

3) Liberation Program (October 2006-June 2007)

a) Participant observation and notes of workshops, open houses and meetings with youth and adult staff from October-June 2007.

b) Alumni focus group: I invited five young people who were alumni of the Liberation Program to a focus group discussion in January 2007. Two young alumni, a young man and a young woman (both Dominican-American) came to the meeting. Informed consent was obtained although parental consent was not required because the alumni were over 18 years old.

c) Follow-up interviews in May 2007 with 4 Youth Facilitators and the 3 original Incoming Participants to coincide approximately with the end of the Liberation Program. Of the three original Incoming Participants, only one of them continued to participate regularly in the Liberation Program. The other two consented to be reinterviewed nevertheless and offered their reflections on the long-term lessons from their participation.

4) Five Points Project (January-June 2007)

a) Pre Interviews with three 5 Points members. Although four young women helped to develop the proposal and craft the research plan, only three young women actually carried out the 6-month project. They are: Angela, a lively and smart 16 year old African-American woman and longtime member of the organization, Damani, a bubbly 16-year old Latino/African-American woman, and Elaine, an earnest and thoughtful 16-year old Haitian-American woman.

b) Summary notes of meeting, notes from mapping workshops.

c) Post participation evaluation from one Five Points member

---

[8] It was possible to obtain a post-interview with one of the three Noncompleters because she had been and continued to participate in BSU's other programs.

Types of Data: Participant Observation, Interviews and Mapping

Participant Observation

Over the course of the Summer Liberation School, I visited the organization daily, spending nearly the entire day as a Volunteer. I would assist the Youth Facilitators if they needed help setting up and would assume a less active role in the workshops. This left me with a greater capacity to observe the shifting group dynamics, the questions and comments raised by young people and adult staff and the body language of the participants during different activities. During the Liberation Program, I would visit the organization approximately once a week. This frequency would increase as the preparation up to and the carrying out of the Five Points project took place in early January to late spring 2007. The warm reception from adult staff and the young people I knew helped when I encountered children and youth I didn't know. I was accepted as a regular presence in the organization and was invited to attend other gatherings, such as Open Houses[9], Winter Solstice festival[10] or photography exhibits held at the brownstone.

Interviews (Pre, Post, Follow-up) & Mapping

The tape-recorded Interviews follow this loose format:

- Place Game: elicited the different places in their everyday lives and asking young people to reflect on their experiences, images, roles and opportunities in these places. Specific categories that I asked them to consider are: places where they laugh a lot, places where they feel useful to others, places where they feel safe and comfortable and places that are unjust.

-Community and Social Issues: how youth think about social justice, the root causes for injustice, the knowledge that they have about their community. I asked them to think aloud

[9] Members of the public (young and old) are invited to learn more about the organization. They are led on a tour of the brownstone by youth members (from other programs as well) who share personal stories about their participation. Members of the Board of Directors are also present and this is conceived as a form of outreach to the broader community.
[10] Children and young people who participate in the various programs develop and prepare presentations (dance, music, poetry) to share with each other, friends and families. A joyful evening where the brownstone is filled to capacity with the positive cheers and clapping of well-wishers.

about how they might change their neighborhood, the steps they would take, the conditions that might be necessary for them to see results from their actions. Specific probes included: How did it get like this? How could it be improved? Could you help to improve the situation?

-Participation: in the initial interview, I asked them to tell me the story of how they got involved and their expectation for the program. In subsequent interviews, I probed their motivation to continue their involvement and their positive and negative experiences thus far.

-Mapping Game: I offered the young people the choice to draw their own map or to use the New York City MTA map (Subway map) to show me the places of their everyday geography. I asked the young people to reflect on their images of these place, the relationship between one place to another and the experiences they have had in these places. I also asked them to talk about places they've never been to but are geographically close (e.g., Brooklyn) or place they have never been to but wish to travel to (e.g., South Africa). More specific probes included those adapted from the Growing Up in Cities project (Lynch & Banerjee, 1977): Who lives here? What is this place like? Who decides what happens here? How could it ever be different/better? Who could make it better? Could you?

Figure 1 Nina's Map. Nina was one of the youth facilitators for the Summer Liberation School and this photograph depicts the different places she has visited alone, with her family and with BSU. She marks the location of the brownstone as well as the location of other progressive youth organizations such as CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities (also known as Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence) and DRUM (Desis Rising Up and Moving).

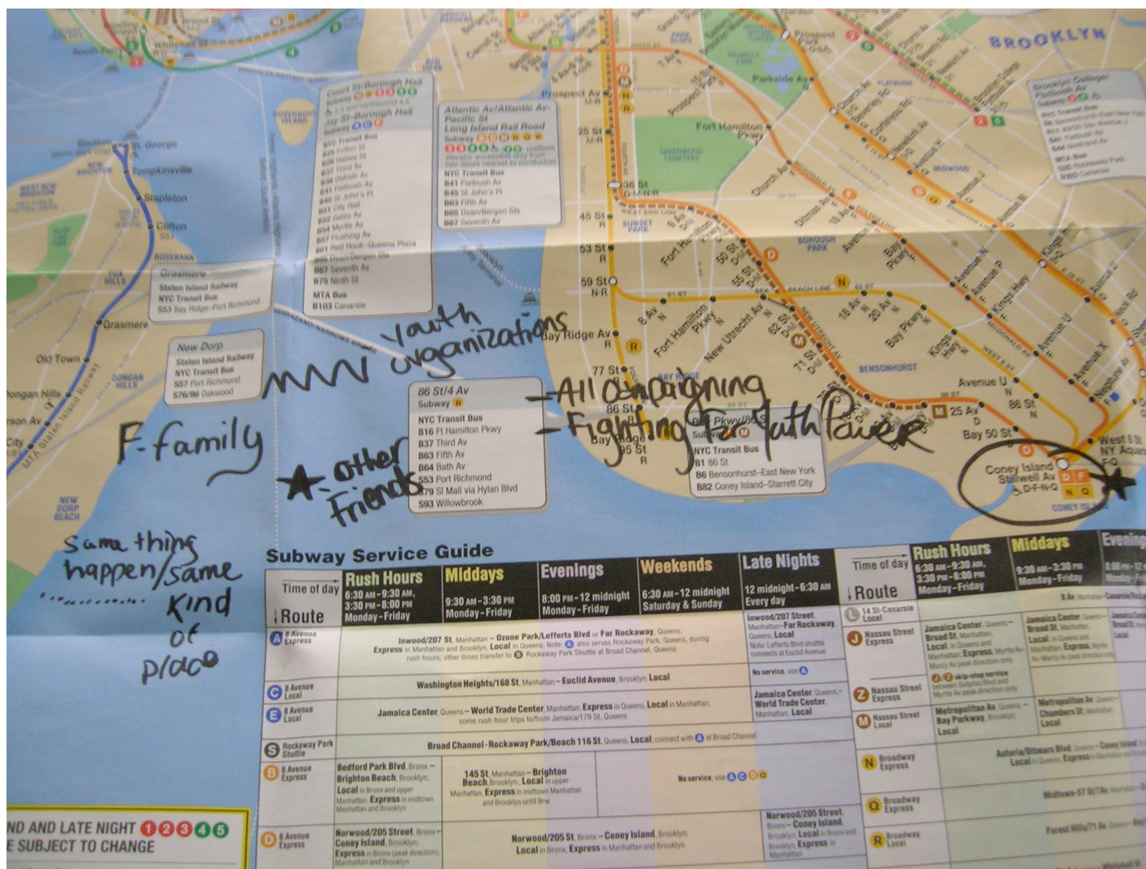

Figure 2 *Nina's Legend in which squiggly lines are used to connect all the youth organizations that are campaigning and fighting for youth power.*

<u>Transcription</u>

The Ford Foundation project's surveys with BSU staff, youth and parents had been conducted on the telephone. The interviews were not tape-recorded and the interviewer had to type the response as the interviewee spoke. The typed responses did not and could not have captured their responses verbatim but rather attempted to stay as true to the flow and content of ideas. When quotes from this set of interviews appears in the text, they are denoted with the following (Ford Interview, Name)

On the contrary, the interviews I conducted with BSU youth were tape recorded and transcribed. I found the protocol of the transcription decisions that Yael Harlap (2005) illustrated in her dissertation on narratives of activist mothers to be a helpful guide for proceeding. Like she, I chose three small and interesting segments from three different interviewees to conduct several forms of transcription. I also relied on the example provided by Steven Stanley and Michael Billig (Stanley & Billig, 2004, p. 173) in which they shared the notation style they implemented in their article about the ideological dilemmas apparent in storytelling.

The first round of transcription focused on the ways in which the interviewee used tonal inflection and sound level to convey her emotions. This included noting laughter, pauses, unsure tones and escalating tones of angry passion when talking about a difficult situation. The second style of transcription focused on the interaction between the interviewee and myself. I took note of the repetitions, false starts and interruptions over the course of the dialogue in both sets of speech. The third style then concentrated on content and continuity, thus removing pauses and emotional qualities in the speech.

I then adapted the three styles to produce a transcription to capture the dialogue as well as the emotional qualities of the interviews. I chose to note laughter (laughs), shorter pauses (-), longer pauses (…), drawn out emphasis (*asterisks*), points of where a word is punctuated with a sharper tone with capitals (MY neighborhood) and exclamations of excitement or anger (!). I transcribed when interviewees said ‘Oh’ or ‘Nah/Naw’ and their repetitions in speech but did remove the extraneous ‘like’ when it didn’t affect the meaning of the text. I also chose to transcribe their exact way of speaking rather than correcting or streamlining for standard American English. For instance, when they say ‘gonna’ or ‘gotta’ or ‘that don’t work,’ I have chosen to stay true to their speech rather than changing it.

D. Data Analysis Protocol

> Narrative discourse organizes life – social relations, interpretations of the past, and plans for the future. How people tell stories influences how they perceive, remember and prepare for future events. (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. xi)

Analyzing the Interviews

Using the transcriptions of interviews and observations, I chose the method of 'open coding' to first categorize what was specifically being referenced (i.e., school, BSU retreat, Chinatown, friends houses, gentrification, etc). This task helped to condense the long interviews into shorter bullet points that I could refer back to easily. I could then compare how the list of bullet points shifted over time (from pre to post to follow-up interview) in one person or based on their role (Youth Facilitator or Incoming Participant) or how their ideas encircled particular issues or phenomena.

Operating from the specific to a more abstract level of encapsulation, I then sorted the specific bullet points and identified more abstract categories that captured what the young person was doing, conceiving or performing in the story (i.e., analyzing neighborhood, connecting to history, nurturing attachment to place, seeing self differently, claiming role in society, etc.). Keeping in line with Daiute and Lightfoot's (2004) argument to consider narrative and storytelling as an "active process" I sought in my second round of analysis to identify constructs that reveal how the stories young people share have "cultural meanings and interpretations that guide perception, thought, interaction and action" (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. x)

These rounds of coding, categorization and abstraction proved crucial to developing the elements and modes of the geographical imagination. I could return to the groupings of excerpts and read them for how young people "produce meaning through language – not the words themselves, but the ways the words act on the world." (Harlap, 2005, p. 36). Analyzing

the narratives allowed me to see how these excerpts about their impressions, experiences and stories in and about different places revealed deeper meaning in terms of how they see society and politics, roadblocks and possibilities, neighborhood and community.

In transforming and abstracting their excerpts into modes of seeing, being and doing youth activism with a spatial focus, my goal was to look at how they perceived, valued and changed their perspectives about injustice. This focus on the stories of young people is grounded in the idea that

> any single position is based, at least in part, on an ideology, the more flexibly and critically young people can engage these positions, the more developed their social relational knowledge will be. (Daiute & Turniski, 2005, p. 236).

I wanted to reveal how their ideas and conceptions, narratives and counternarratives about space could be "positions" they could harness for their projects of resistance. By taking up counternarratives about their neighborhood as a place worth investing in and changing to fit community needs, they were making and remaking their own identity.

Here I will use an excerpt to illustrate the analysis process. It is a 67-line excerpt from a 1-hour 15 minute long interview with Adam (15 year old African-American) who was an Incoming Participant but did not complete the Summer Liberation School. Early on in the pre-interview, I ask Adam to talk about the places where he feels safe and comfortable; among these places are the BSU brownstone ("nobody in here will let anything happen to me"), friend's house, and the Rock.

He elaborates by sharing a story about how he and his friends have adopted a specific location in the local park as theirs. They call it "the Rock" and it is the special place they go to have serious and deep and truthful conversations that are difficult but important.

> When we're at the Rock, no matter how it's gonna make a person feel, well – like if it's gonna make them feel bad, we still have to tell them but we have to find a way, like to help them.

He describes for me how they happened upon this rock. He and his friends had been attending a poetry class after school and one day, the teacher didn't come, "but none of us wanted to go home, that's the little time after school that we spend together, so we decided to go in the park."

They found one rock and they sat on it, but then they noticed it was dirty and had glass on it. So they decamped and walked to the other side. They decided to clean this rock, rid it of the debris. "Of course it's not ours you know, it's always gonna be here for anybody to be here, but let's clean this rock." He describes how one of his friends said something about claiming the rock like Christopher Columbus claimed America. This idea was quickly shot down by Adam who said, "Because—he didn't, he claimed it and he took it from somebody, we're not takin' it from nobody 'cause nobody *owns* the rock."

But they did make it their own special place. They signed the Rock, drew pictures on it and each of the friends put their 'sign' (a graphic image representing the person) on it. "So if you was to go there, you'd see pictures and hearts." There was a time when he and his best friend weren't talking so and they colored their signs black and red to represent their anger. When they started talking again, they used spray paint that was the color of the rock to return the images and signs and drawings to their original state. Also near the Rock is a large slanted tree in which they carved their initials and another smaller rock in the distance that they call the "Alone Rock, so if you feel like something is too much and you just wanna be alone you go sit there."

In my first round of open coding, I coded this excerpt as "special place." But subsequent closer readings of his and other interviewees' "special place" excerpts revealed concepts about place and space, including attachment, memory and dreams. In this long descriptive story, Adam is painting a picture for me, of the setting and its people and the social rules that they have created in that place, how they have suffused that area of the park with meaning, ritual and

storytelling. In sharing with me his relationship to the Rock, he is revealing a complex narrative about seeing, being and doing in that space.

He is aware of how the social and physical elements that create a sense of safety and trust (code 'perceiving social and physical elements of space'), the ways in which he and his friends see the Rock as theirs, though not in a colonial way (code 'interpreting space with historical reference,' 'identity as steward of place'), and how the Rock fulfills a need in his everyday geography because its offers space for retreat, refuge, honest conversation, and support (code 'placemaking' (Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995) which is the act of symbolically and literally making the space one's own). By framing the time they spend together after school as precious and limited, he is also signaling to me the way in which this story about the Rock is how he pushes back on school and home by producing a temporary yet valuable in-between space (code 'producing new/other space').

By reading and re-reading the stories and impressions about different places and settings, I am able to guide my analysis to show how "language creates positions for people to take up" (Harlap, 2005, p. 35) to construct and re-imagine how they see themselves and how they interact with the social and material world. I am guided by the hopeful position that Jocelyn Solis advances, that "if the quality of an individual's activities and narrativity change, so will the directionality of that individual's development" (Solis, 2004, p. 197).

Analyzing the Place Game and Mapping Exercise

In his book on design inquiry, John Zeisel writes how "some cognitive, expressive and perceptual information about respondents' physical surrounding may be better expressed visually than verbally." (Zeisel, 1987, p. 170). Zeisel describes how researchers interested in people's interaction with their environment have tried to access the "mental picture" or "cognitive map" (Zeisel, 1987, p. 22) that people have. A cognitive map as described by Downs and Stea as not a flat piece of paper but rather a "process" through which a person "acquires,

codes, stores, recalls, and decodes information about the relative location and attributes of [...] his everyday spatial environment" (Downs & Stea, 1973, p. 9).

Kevin Lynch's influential book "The Image of the City" (1973) asks respondents to draw maps of the city and their neighborhood as a method to assess their knowledge, perception and attitudes that they have about those places. He asked respondents to draw freehand maps of the city and analyzed the maps for information such as the boundary line of everyday travel, omissions of features, or accuracy of scale.

Along with other researchers interested in children's geographies such as Roger Hart (1979), David Sobel (1998), Kevin Lynch (1977) also conducted mapping exercises and neighborhood exploration with children and young people in cities. His Growing Up in Cities projects in places such as Warsaw, Mexico City and Toluca used participatory methods to engage young people in assessing the urban environment in the hopes that this information would be used to plan and build better cities for children and youth (Driskell, 2002).

Having respondents draw maps can be an excellent way to determine young people's assessments of their neighborhood, however, there are some caveats. According to Zeisel, the variability in terms of drawing ability, willingness to participate and mapping ability produces "unresolved difficulties of interpretation" (Zeisel, 1987, p. 173). Therefore, I have tried to explore the cognitive maps of the young participants at BSU through several methods. These include informal discussions about the ways in which they experience and move around their neighborhood and the city, as well as the one-on-one interviews conducted at various points of their participation. During the interviews, I use two specific methods that attempt to merge the visual and the verbal, the "Place Game" and the "Mapping Exercise"

The cognitive map of the young people's neighborhoods questions were addressed at the start of each interview with an exercise I have named the "Place Game." I ask the interviewee to list the places they visit regularly and I write them each on a separate Post-it sheet. I create a matrix of places and then place another Post-it to the side where I've written, "Places where I

laugh a lot." I ask the young person to move the places from the larger pile to rest underneath the category. A form of pile-sorting from psychological research, its tactile nature and game-like quality is a good way to begin talking about places. I ask them to consider the qualities of places that make it a place where they laugh or not. The other categories are "places where I feel safe and comfortable," "places where I feel useful to others," and "places that are unjust."

Rather than using the data to look at how their place categorizations change over time, I opt to use this exercise to evoke a dialogue about the emotional, social and physical attributes of the places that they regularly visit. They are asked to reflect on the roles and opportunities that are available to them and what caused it to be as it is. To apply a strict before-after approach to analyzing the data might be interesting but it falls out of the boundaries of my research questions. Certainly their participation in BSU might influence their opinions and knowledge about places, but to use a 'before and after' comparison would imply that I attribute any shifts to their participation.

At times, the list of places visited would change because of time of year, which doesn't reflect how one comprehends a place but how one perceives that place in relation to other places currently being visited. One example is when I speak with a Youth Facilitator who can no longer come to the organization as often as she would like (because of her after-school job). Although her feelings toward the organization don't change (feeling safe and comfortable, laughing, feeling useful to others), the organization is not named because it is not a place she visits regularly anymore.

With regard to the Mapping Exercise at the end of the interview, I offered the interviewee the option to make their own map of their everyday places or draw directly on the New York City MTA subway map. Nearly all (except for one young woman) opted to use the subway map. Using the subway map, it was possible to visually assess how much of the city they know and their perception and attitude towards these places. I confirmed with each participant if the subway map was a familiar image of New York City. It was the map upon which they could

all locate themselves quickly and with ease. I asked them to mark their home, BSU, their school and the other places they regularly spent time in. These included Times Square, 125th Street, Chinatown, parts of Brooklyn and the Bronx.

Having the map of New York City also enabled me to ask them about places they have never traveled to. I learned that Tamara (a 14-year old African-American Incoming Participant) who had no interest in visiting Wall Street or parts of Brooklyn, saying, “There's nothing there for me. I don't know anybody down there. I don't really wanna go. What am I going there for.“ In the next breath, she shared that a place she did want to check out was Staten Island. It seemed so disconnected from the other four boroughs that she wondered “What do you DO down there?”

Not having a specific reason to be in a place was one factor that many of the young people stated as a reason to not have visited there (even places geographically closer than other places they travel to). I listened as Nina (17-year old African American Youth Facilitator) realized that all the places she visited regularly were located along the ACE (blue) line. When I queried her as to why, she wasn’t sure but it that struck her, how much she needed to travel to other parts of the city, in fact, to wander.

Working on the map with another one of the Youth Facilitators, 15-year old Andrew, he annotated the map with places he visited previously. For instance, he pointed with his finger to Shea Stadium as a place that he has been to but not *often.* When I asked him what brought him there, he says he remembers going with his father. And with a sweet flourish, he wrote, “memory with dad.”

Figure 3 Close-up of Andrew's map

Using the Place Game and the Mapping Exercise enabled me to understand how young people at BSU experience their neighborhood and the city. More than the sense of their range of travel, the places where they laugh or have experienced unjust or unfair acts, these exercises produced a dialogue about those places. These exercises enabled me to achieve two ends. First, I gained a sense of their images of places and the specific social and physical characteristics of these places. Second, opposing what Sarbin calls, the "ocularcentric" (Sarbin, 2004, p. 10) metaphor of seeing as merely "pictures-of-the-mind" (Sarbin, 2004, p. 9) to an extension where the stories they share comprise their "imaginings" (Sarbin, 2004, p. 11) about these places, what he describes as their "emplotted narratives carrying implications of causality and duration" (Sarbin, 2004, p.

11). These exercises produced a dialogue in which the young people offered their stories about those places, about events that have occurred there, and those situations they wish they could find themselves in.

Interlude

We were talking about something, and somebody said how they don't know what they're going to be doing in the future, maybe they'll be doing this or that. And Will [Co-founder] said, 'Maybe you'll be running this organization' -- and it was just great that he put it!

When he said that, I was like- *Wow* That's crazy. I always imagined that in the organization Will, Michael, Cynthia, Soleil [staff members] - they're always going to be there, but when you think about it –Will's moving to Brazil and - -- and Cynthia- she even said herself, she can't stay here. And it's like crazy that these people will actually be leaving one day.

And then you think, what's going to happen to the organization?! And then you realize that they built this organization- to support, to train youth so they can eventually take care of the organization and they can train other youth. So the cycle continues.

[Interview, Marcela]

CHAPTER THREE: SITUATING THE ORGANIZATION

In this chapter I will describe how the organization situates itself in the neighborhood, what the physical arrangement of the organization offers certain social opportunities for staff and youth. I will describe the education for liberation pedagogy used at the organization and the ways in which the sociological imagination of youth is sharpened through workshops, discussions and informal interactions. I will also share the ideological traces or messages that exist within the organization about youth of color, neighborhood/community and society and how these messages constitute new spatial prospects from which young people can take on new positionalities/stances in terms of how they see themselves but also how they make sense of the larger world.

A. The immediate setting

The organization is a freestanding brownstone between a community garden and a vacant lot used for parking. There is a black metal gate that wraps along the steps that lead to the doorway. A flag hangs from the window. Across the street, and all up and down the block – from corner to corner are residential homes. 5-6 story apartment buildings with external fire escapes are lined up next to each other and there is also a stretch of brownstones – mostly restored or on the process of being restored. The one-way street is wide enough to accommodate parking on both sides. In the summer, the street is blocked off to traffic and the Policeman's Athletic League (PAL) organizes games and activities for children and youth. There is typically on a nice day – a row of plastic folding chairs sitting outside on the sidewalk – especially in front of the garden next to the brownstone. The sidewalks have various inhabitants over the course of the day. These groupings on the sidewalk include clusters of older residents who are mingling together, or clumps of younger children making their way into the

brownstone. There are teens walking alone or in a small group who walk by and stop to greet friends who are working in the garden to the left of the brownstone. As familiar faces weave their way through, there is a nod, a pound on the back between men, and sometimes a hug.

Figure 4 BSU brownstone on a sunny day. To the left, there is a vacant lot that has been transformed into a community garden. To the right, another vacant lot that is currently owned by someone else and is rented out as parking space.

The block sits between two warring drug turfs –one organized by Latinos and another organized by Blacks. There is drug selling on the block but as one 15-year old told me, maybe an outsider wouldn't see it. Towards the Broadway end of the block – there is a very expensive cash-only sneaker and clothing store – adjacent to that is a jewelry store with thick strands of gold chains in the window.

On the southern corner is a Mexican restaurant where one can eat-in but which also does a very brisk take out and delivery service. The Amsterdam end of the block is a little quieter. There is a bodega selling all manner of things from batteries to mops to some limited selection of onions, plantains – many snacks and a sandwich counter in the corner. On the opposite corner there is a phone booth which doesn't work. On top of the phone booth are several milk crates, left there for people to take down and use for impromptu seating.

B. Opportunities and Resources offered through Participation

Although some young people come from as far away as Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn to take part in the program, most of the children and youth are from Harlem. The block that the organization is on is often referred to as a family-friendly block where everybody knows each other. When the organization first arrived, the staff made concerted efforts to let residents know that they were there to invest in the children and youth of the neighborhood. They were greeted with a fair bit of skepticism. One female staff member acknowledged that they had made some mistakes in reaching out but that they had conversations with people, opened up their doors and invested their time and energy in supporting neighborhood activities (e.g., block party, community garden) and have begun to institute a block/parent group.

Love, support and a sense of home

The social and physical setting of the brownstone also lends itself to the feeling of home. With wood floors, brightly painted walls, photography and colorful paintings that reference African art or graffiti lettering, the space envelops the visitor with an inviting atmosphere. Personalized touches abound with work from children and youth as well as inspirational quotes, postcards and posters that invite reflection. As Michael, one of the co-founders said, "You see their art work on the wall because we want them to know their vision is worthy because it's on the walls."

It is not only in the physical reminders of their worth but also in the daily acts of kindness that set a standard of treating each other with consideration and humanity. Marilyn said,

> In our organization, it's about the little things. We have a rule that we have to say "hi" and "good bye" to each other. I've seen it where one young girl gives hugs. We also always celebrate their birthdays. That kind of support and validation, knowing that they matter has them thinking about other people as well. (Ford Interview).

Having staff, children and youth model and echoing back recognition and support is an integral way for bonding to occur. When asked about spaces in which they feel safe and comfortable, several of the youth participants have ruefully shared that they are saddened that it is not their home but in fact, the youth organization or their friend's houses where they feel most safe and comfortable.

Congruent with bell hook's conceptualization of love as a revolutionary act (hooks, 1994, p. 246), the organization seeks to create a setting in which children and youth confront images of themselves, of who they want to become, find acceptance and unconditional love regardless of how they look or dress, and connect with how they hope to contribute to society in their lifetime. Will, another one of the co-founders shared,

> When you come to our organization and see the relationship we have with kids, it is love for our community, love for our young people, and that's the core of why the work is being done. If the love isn't there, it's not cutting to the core of the issue. That's what I'd like to see in more of the programs and all the things that affect kid's lives. That has been lost. So much of public policy has been about institutionalizing youth work that it just becomes another institution and it's a job, but where's the heart to it (Ford Interview).

The attachment and sense of family is appreciated by many of the young participants. One young woman, Marcela, brings a spatial/environmental dimension into her account of how the organization works to create new relationships and a sense of community that is not specifically identified by co-founders. Although the staff emphasize the family-like atmosphere of the brownstone, Marcela makes clear the specific nature of making it "warm" by how the

space is organized, the activities that occur there and the spirit and meaning that is brought into the space.

> Like when you buy a house, it's just a house, but you can make it warm by the way you set it up and the things that you do there and the spirit you bring into it. That's what they've done to the brownstone.

Another young woman, Donna, said that the

> space is designed to feel like home so you can just come in and take off your shoes and walk around, go to the kitchen and get a snack - come and go. For me, it was a space to learn, meet new people and to find yourself. It's the people and the brownstone.

In contrast to another youth program that one of the new members, Janelle had attended, where kids come in, do homework and get tracked in their progress along a 12-phase curriculum, this organization offers her a place to laugh and to be herself. Donna remembers that she used to be the kind of person who bought 100-dollar shoes and just wore 'regular clothes' but being at BSU gave her a sense that being different was also allowed. She now has visible piercings and a tattoo, and can be regularly seen in black t-shirts, skinny jeans and Converse sneakers. She found the courage to be herself in the nonjudgmental environment of the brownstone.

Marcela attributed her burgeoning independence and assertiveness as a direct result of her interactions with the staff and other youth. She says,

> I guess I will call it life skills that they've given me about how to take care of myself and how to go forward in life. I got it from here. I wish I could say that from home. I wish I could say that from school but I didn't. I got it from here and I try to think about what life would be like if I never came here and how different I would be. I imagine myself and I don't like it.

Feeling useful and indispensable

Another aspect that young people relished in the organization was the opportunity to feel useful to others. The members of the Liberation Program, whether working as facilitators during the Summer Liberation School or participating in campaigns during the year long Liberation

Program all voiced pride from helping their community. Building awareness and sharing information with a new cohort of youth or community members was a way of directly reaching to and helping others. Moreover, the Liberation Program offered members a way to give back to the community through their activism and organizing around raising awareness of tenants' rights and neighborhood change.

Another way in which young men and women felt useful at the organization was in the knowledge and experiences that they bring to the discussions. Every person interviewed shared how at the organization, they felt that their thoughts and opinions mattered and therefore it gave them liberty to share with others as well as take in the lessons others have learned. "It's normal to have an opinion and share what you know." Two young women, Damani and Janelle expressed that, unlike in settings in the neighborhood or in the school, they would not be chastised nor would their thoughts and ideas be rebuffed.

To feel needed and useful is a feeling that some youth don't derive from other settings. Donna put it like this,

> I feel like it's my workplace. I come here and I work. And people need me. At the organization, I feel useful 'cause they don't necessarily have to have me, like at school they have to have you, but here they want you here.

She went on to say with pride that her mother had visited the brownstone and was impressed with the work and effort her daughter was putting in and now really understood why her daughter was tired when she came home.

Being a Role Model

Oftentimes evaluations of youth participation place emphasis on the role that staff or other adult allies play in shaping and supporting youth development but Marilyn asserted,

> I think they need a place to be with other youth. To assert positive peer pressure. What they do with each other is really powerful. Probably more powerful than what we do with them. (Ford Interview)

By offering young people an opportunity to be engaged in community change, it is possible for them act as role models for others. It is almost more important what young people learn from each other, than what they glean from staff. Not in the sense that they are perfect and don't make mistakes - or that they are leaders in a traditional sense that implies followers, but by seeing other youth take positions of power and authority, they can expand what they think of as possible for themselves.

Fourteen year old Janelle found that being around others who were smart and engaged helped her to come out of hiding, to show herself as an intelligent young woman.

> I was never antisocial but I mean I was – I would try to hide, not hide but not show my smartness too much because I hear that "Oh you think you are better than everybody" or whatever. So I guess this is the place where I'm not the only smart person so there is other people who are – so I don't have to worry about them thinking I'm some showoff or whatever when I open up, I don't have to hide or anything.

Another extremely capable young woman, Angela, who has been involved in the organization for many years, is now a member of the Board of Directors. She is ably holding her own amongst all the adults in the room who are lawyers, educators, activists and artists. She sees her role as that of someone who is helping to enlarge the network and influence of the organization. The staff members help to remind them of the fact that young people can grow up to take on leadership positions within their community – not just in history or in other places (e.g., anti-apartheid movement in South Africa) but rooted in their communities and in their own lifetimes.

Experiencing New Places

The staff members are adamant that even though growing up in Harlem presents young people with many challenges and obstacles that they also value the positives that the neighborhood offers. They are saddened at the oftentimes blasé attitude that even young children display when confronted with street violence and what they often have to encounter on their way to the

organization. Staff members are also quick to point out that the image of them as 'under-privileged' and 'neglected' children is also inaccurate in that many of the children come from loving and supportive households. However, Michael (co-founder) also acknowledges that,

> If you try to break opportunities and norms and ensure that our young people have good opportunities, that they will hopefully reach a point where they can live their lives with more say and not just get caught up in the systems, then we cannot merely expose them to the six-block radius around the brownstone and expect them to change. (Ford Interview)

Young people feel a sense of pride about being in Harlem, knowing that it's poor but also knowing that "if you're from uptown, that's something that's respected and known worldwide." (Ford Interview, Marilyn) The recognition and adoption of hip hop as a cultural good around the world instill in the young Harlemites a "sense of recognition and respect for where they come from" (Ford Interview, Marilyn).

The International Study Program, which brings youth members to different countries (Dominican Republic, Egypt, South Africa, Ghana and Brazil) is an opportunity for them to confront the "complexity of what it means to be a Black or Brown American" (Ford Interview, Michael). It is an eye-opening experience for the young people to be pinpointed as a rich person when they are abroad, and at the same time they are well aware of the continuing injustices of their reality in Harlem.

> Many of our young people have never left the city, or the state – except to go to the Dominican or Puerto Rico. But to take them in black and brown hands and return them to the African continent – to witness the 4000 years of African history in Egypt, the slave forts of Ghana. To have these kinds of experiences – there is no way they can't come back and believe in something else. When they went to Soweto – the toughest cats, living in the projects – were weeping at the poverty. It blew them away. The trip is not all positive. It's not all glory. But it's about the global awareness and enabling young people to dream in a different way. (Ford Interview, Michael)

The staff are perceptive witnesses to this expanding global awareness, which is a part of their broader mission, yet I argue there is still some latitude to make the connection between social and spatial justice more explicitly in their activities and programs. I take up this issue in more

detail in Chapter Six in which I synthesize the attributes of different activities that provoke the geographical imagination.

One also does not need to travel that far to be in a different setting and to be confronted with a new way to relate to the built and natural environment. During the Summer Liberation School, one of the most memorable aspects identified by the participants was the retreat. Leaving the city and spending the weekend in a nature retreat provided a key bonding experience. Group moral and trust building exercises were also popular among the youth, such as getting every group member over a wall or getting everybody on a large platform that swiveled on a pivot to be balanced and still.

The one activity that nearly all the participants mentioned was climbing the mountain. From their description, they began to climb the mountain in the late afternoon. Intermittent struggling and scrambling, they made it up to the top to watch the sunset.

Janelle had been nervous at first, "I am big, how am I going to make it all the way up there?!" After a while, it started getting easier and she could take her mind off of her fears. The verbal encouragement from others, "Yeah you are doing good" helped because she needed to hear that. When I asked her how the view from the top of the mountain looked, she said, "It was beautiful!"

Tamara also had her doubts. She thought the climb would never end and all throughout, she had to fight her urge to just sit down. But her reward was to revel in watching "the sun go down and see the shooting stars." The lesson she took from pushing past her tiredness was an admission that, "When you work hard you see beauty, and you see other things that come to you."

C. Consciousness Raising in the Liberation Program

The underpinnings of the Liberation Program draws from the practice of Freedom Schools in the 1960s where consciousness raising and critical discussions about race, class and inequality

gave voice and direction to grassroots change. The desire for self-determination and youth empowerment was the motivation for establishing the Summer Liberation School and the Liberation Program.

Fitting with the overall mission, the education for liberation pedagogy reflects a desire for youth empowerment and collective action. In line with the theory and praxis developed by Paulo Freire about conscienticizao or critical consciousness and the Freedom Schools of the 1960s, the staff introduced a new outlet for young people in 2004 to give voice and direction towards social change. The staff met with 5-7 longtime members of the organization to design the Freedom school and in the summer of 2004 it was attended by 15 new teens. These young people then joined the existing collective and so the cycle continues now with 4 newly minted collective members in 2006. As Will, one of the co-founders shared,

> The Liberation Program started because we were concerned with young people being activists and organizers and giving them a way to address the issues. We had been bringing them to rallies but we weren't the ones organizing it. We wanted them to be a part of organizing. (Ford Interview)

The initial entry point is the Summer Liberation Program that draws primarily Black and Latino youth for four weeks in August to undergo an intensive training that is facilitated by existing Liberation Program members. The young people are recruited through word of mouth and fliers that call for Black and Latino youth to get involved in making community change. The application process includes writing an essay and filling out a questionnaire as well as a face-to-face interview with an adult staff and a Liberation Program member. In preparation for the Summer Liberation School existing members are asked to volunteer to be youth facilitators. They work with adult staff to develop a four-week curriculum that gives newcomers an introduction to the organization, youth organizing and Black and Latino history.

Every weekday from morning to afternoon, the youth facilitators guide the new cohort through an intense curriculum that includes sessions on movements of oppressed people, genocide, climate change, health and wellbeing, stereotyping and community service. The

culmination is the last day called the Closing Ceremony where the newest members share their oaths that reflect their emotions and thoughts and development over the four weeks and pledge their intentions to continue doing the work of helping their community. This Closing Ceremony is conducted with great earnestness by the existing members of the Liberation Program and is capped off by a celebratory party with food and beverages.

The program takes a break for September in order to allow adult staff to go on their retreat, and for staff development as well as to allow young people to ease back into the new school year. The Liberation Program begins again in October and members are asked to join an existing campaign or establish a new one based on their interests. Two adult staff members provide support and guidance and access to outside resources (no voting status). Although they definitely have influence, decisions are made amongst the young activists in the Liberation Program. The goal is to offer young people an entry point into the skills, networks and support necessary to initiate and carry out community organizing.

BSU has published their curriculum for the Liberation Program (Wilcox, 2006) and have conducted workshops about 'education for liberation' for teachers around the country. I will share two activities during the Summer Liberation School that illustrate how the 'situationality' of the young person is made palpable. These are the more powerful because one does not realize the pedagogical goal at the outset, rather one is engaged over the course of the 'game.' Through an 'artificial positioning' of the self over the course of an activity, they become aware of how "the body is the specific medium for experiencing the place-world," and how through interacting with the world, they themselves are "emplaced" (Casey, 1996, p. 24).

Placing Self in Society

Grumbling noises were filling the room. Amy was sitting, no she was sprawling on a richness of chairs, while I was stuck sitting precariously on the leg of one young man (Chris). He was supporting with his other leg, Donna. Balancing on my legs was Janelle. We were only through

discussing a few years in the history of our lives and already, things weren't looking good. I'd lost my job and had to work illegally. Janelle had a job but her son was sick and she didn't have health insurance. And poor Chris – he was physically straining under the weight of three young women. But in reality, he was dealing with a much greater problem. He had just gotten out of prison and wasn't welcome back in his family's home. Marcela an illegal immigrant, new to the country, couldn't speak any English. She was sitting next to him and was similarly suffering – suffering under the weight of one other, while simultaneously trying to claim some space on the chair – a task made difficult by the fact that we were all pitching forward and shifting to find a little more space.

We were a loose wobbly pyramid of complaining bodies and we felt some bitterness at the way in which Amy didn't even need all that she had. She was "sitting" on 7 chairs, while the rest of us 10 in total were trying to do with only 3. We were openly grumpy and several of us who had started out this game of life with some privilege – at least a seat – were unhappy at watching her gain more and more - and living out the misfortune of having to now eke out amongst other unfortunate folks what we could with much much less.

So…I hadn't lost my job and wasn't working illegally. Nor was Marcela an illegal immigrant who was bewildered and desperate. In fact, we had all just finished a lunch of tuna fish sandwiches on the first floor of the brownstone. This afternoon, we were learning about class and privilege in society.

In the beginning, we all started out with one chair each. And slowly but surely, with the exception of Amy, we were forced to start doubling up. September 11, 2001 was a particular low point that led most of us to have to sit on other people's laps in order to fit into the already confined space of too few chairs for too many people. The facilitators of our exercise were Cynthia (an adult staff person at the youth organization) and Andrew (a 15-year old youth organizer). And with cries of relief and stampings of feet to relieve the numbness, we settled

back into our seats – one for everyone – and began reflecting on who we were in the fictional society scenario we were acting out.

Cynthia and Andrew led us into a discussion – first asking us about how it felt to participate in the exercise. That was easily answered. "Bad, uncomfortable, shitty." Amy was the only one who was actually smiling through the exercise – it had felt good for her to be the number one – she actually didn't have to do anything to have earned her richness – she inherited most of it.. She maybe even reveled in our discomfort as she took possession of her 7 chairs although in reality even lying horizontally would she have not been able to make use out of them. The facilitators probed deeper - there were some of us who were sitting on others right? Some of us were certainly suffering more than others. Who might we be in society? Did we think about how it felt to have people underneath us?

Through our discussion, we discussed our varying 'identities' and the circumstances that we might have been dealing with. We talked about our own degrees of privilege and precariousness. We also reflected as a group about whether it was fair that Amy had so many seats, even though she didn't need them to be comfortable. What could we have done to make our situation better? Would taking Amy's chairs work? Could we have done it alone, who else would have to be involved? Where is the government in all of this?

Placing Self in the World

When I arrived on the morning of Day 4 of the Summer Liberation School, I found the co-facilitators busily blowing up plastic bags and knotting them at the top. Then they stuffed these loosely inflated balloons into a large black garbage bag. Twisting the top to form a messy but effective knot, this softly bulging black mass about 3 feet in diameter was placed at the back of the room.

The session was about global warming and the environment and the facilitators led us through a series of reflections. The first involved a series of photographs that were pasted on the

wall, each depicting a natural landscape (mountain top, aerial view of glaciers) and next to it was another photograph that was folded up so we couldn't see it. The facilitators had us walk around and carefully un-stick the clear tape and reveal the change in the scenery. Glaciers melting, snow from the mountaintops disappearing and rivers thinning to rivulets. We learned about where CO_2 comes from and how pollution is creating climate change at a rate faster than we could imagine. We discussed how rising population and urbanization across the world was pushing people into cities, poor people into slums.

Our second activity had us all standing, shoulder-to-shoulder. A series of statements were read aloud and we were to step forward and back if we agreed with them. One of the statements concerned if we could do something to change or help the environment. Damon hung back, saying that we can't do anything unless the government does something. Danielle (staff member) asked everybody if they agreed with that. Janelle said that we should change our habits, that we were wasting too much energy. Ana piped up and said that we as a society are too interested in materialistic things and consumption. The activities drew out some concrete ideas but the discussion didn't get extremely heated. Everyone agreed that global warming was a serious problem and had mixed consensus about our individual ability to affect that.

Then Danielle brought out the black bag saggy and bulging with balloons. I recall a few chuckles travel around the room. She gathered us around the bag, which reached about the height of our knees. We were to put one finger on the bag. Nine bodies encircled the black bag, bending a little; we rested our fingers lightly on the surface. We were then asked to put our whole hand on the bag and imagine that this is the pressure that we are exerting on the earth. We were to push down. The bag expanded and contorted at different angles. Push hard! There was more hesitation this time. Two hands! We were again shoulder-to-shoulder but this time we were bent over this inflated black bag – bulging unreassuringly and gasping under our weight. Finally, Amy relented. The unease on her face was apparent to all and she pulled back.

The second she relented, so did we all. Noticeable relief flooded the faces and postures around the room.

We went around the room and shared how the activity made us feel. It was uncomfortable to think about our impact on the environment. We were viewing the earth from the outside and observing how our cumulative weight exerted pressure on the earth. At the same time, we were feeling stirred up from the act of internalizing our own pressure/role on the earth.

Tension and Release

The goal of the experiential pedagogy was to draw out the connections between the Harlem they experience now in their everyday lives, historical events that have played a significant role in shaping society's order and the ways in which our individual and cumulative actions can influence the environment. I retell these activities not only because they were effective in raising one's consciousness, but also because it was actually a really subversive way to learn more about our "situationality." By coaxing us into 'artificial' conditions and provoking emotions and feelings (discomfort, tension, and release), the facilitators successfully helped us to visualize, internalize and then express complicated ideas and relationships. The activities helped us to begin to address and reflect on questions such as: Where we see ourselves and society at the moment, and how we'd like to imagine ourselves and society in the future. As they unravel the social arrangements and spatial relations between themselves and world through these activities, they are compelled to take an agentic role, to peer at the world from above and to consider how the world as it is could be released and transformed.

Intertwining History & Biography

> The blues is grown but the country has not. The blues remembers every thing the country has forgot. (Gill Scott-Heron, H20 Blues)

The focus on pan-African and Latino history and increasing knowledge of self through reflection and conversation enable young people to consider conflicting perspectives and troubling inequalities. During SLS, one of the co-founders, Michael, led an emotional and powerful workshop entitled, "Lions and Historians" based on a African proverb that says, 'Only when lions have historians, will the hunters cease being heroes.'

Awareness of the more shameful and complete aspects of events also gave them a sense of power and advantage in settings where they feel less powerful. Donna and several of the other young members of the Liberation Program relished the knowledge that they were gaining. She says, "I learned stuff that I could use when arguing with my dad. Or I can go to school and argue with the teacher." Andrew said, "I'm more aware and know things they don't teach in school." Nina said, "I feel like I know more than what the teacher is trying to teach me...where it's like I know more about that but you didn't mention it but *I know it*."

This awareness about how history and biography are interrelated is given conceptual form in what CW Mills called the sociological imagination. The sociological imagination "enables the possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individual" (Mills, 1959, p. 5). By locating oneself in history and taking different perspectives, history is understood as reflecting a positionality and a relation to the larger society. This critical awareness and burgeoning sociological imagination gives voice, and lends credence to the existing frustrations or sense of moral injuries these young people have experienced. Mills alludes to the sociological imagination as offering some footing in the struggle for steering one's opportunities in society.

For Damani, learning about history of struggle and oppression was crucial to her self-development. She said,

> Liberation [program] opened my mind and changed how - like I said in my oath, I was always trying to teach people but I hadn't really learned until - I never really had it broken down and given to me in that way.

She derives a sense of power and responsibility from learning about her ancestors.

> I'm really finding out about my history and I'm learning about who I am, where I derived from…With power comes responsibility so then you know that you can't be the same person. You can't be that person that's gonna laugh about certain things, that's gonna let people make jokes about things that are actually serious situations. Once you learn your history you can't be that same person that was so naïve before. You know you have to be different.

This lack of knowledge about one's history is perceived as a barrier for movements of oppressed people. Damani explains the internal oppression or feelings of inferiority by those less powerful to the absence of historical figures that show people who look like her who successfully fought battles against oppression.

> Because they don't want to empower people of color and they want to keep us down and they don't want to tell us our real history 'cause then it's like wow – we did have some influential people that did things – we did have people that looked like us that was strong and fought, that was just as smart. They don't want us to know that cause if you know your history and if you see somebody that looks like you and done something that was really impacting –then you start to grow a backbone – they could do it, I could do it too. Then it's like 'Oohh – nooo, we can't have that. We can't have you guys starting to get stronger.'

Stung by the tensions she witnesses between Blacks and Latinos in Harlem, between Haitians and Dominicans in New York and on their native turf, Damani asserts a geographical awareness about the two groups' intertwined histories on the islands of Hispaniola and Manhattan. She critiques the silences in school history classrooms about Caribbean or pan-African/Latino history and the lack of discussion amongst her peers as further keeping groups divided. She comments about education and identity, "I feel that's how they are treating people as Latino – like 'You guys don't know your history so we could mold you into what we want you to be.'"

It is not only the shared history of oppressed peoples that can be liberating, it is also important to learn the history of those who are privileged. She says,

> Yeah cause then you understand where their thoughts and views are coming from 'cause it's so easy to be like, they're just white and they're privileged. But I feel

> that in order to really know who your opponent is you need to understand how they think.

Emphasizing the exceptional nature of the education she receives at the organization compared to other places, Damani strips away at the hypocrisy of a society that thinks it has finished the task of abolishing inequality.

> I also think it's just good to be here but then go back to school and see how they teach you – and if they're like this person was this and this person was that and it's just like oh wow – it's good to see how they make their history sound so great and so – they did this and they did that. They'll tell you about slavery but it's like there were slaves. There WERE slaves - - like it's over!

At the same time, knowing that people who looked like you accomplished great things automatically loaned one the sense that they could do it too. I asked whether knowing that Adam Clayton Powell Jr. could do it meant that she could imagine herself doing it too, Tamara replied,

> Sometimes - but then sometimes not. Just because one person did it, it doesn't automatically mean that I can do it. But then I DO because, I look at youths and Black males and then I look at women and women don't have as much power as men *over all*. Doesn't matter what color you are. But then I go back to - well he's still - still made a difference in the community and I have better ideas than him so -- Not necessarily better but more to do with this millennium. I feel like our streets should be just as CLEAN- we should have equal job opportunities. We should have our buildings made up not because people are buying them but because *it needs to be done*

Her nuanced reply recognizes that historical examples, such as Adam Clayton Powell Jr. "made a difference in the community" but that gender inequality is still a reality for all women. She is convinced that equal job opportunity, clean streets and better buildings are ideas that have to do with "this millennium" and are morally imperative.

D. Spaces of Hope and Liberation within BSU

The organization offers young members a space of 'deep participation' in comparison with what they might experience in other neighborhood settings. Youth are encouraged by social

expectation and institutional structure to bring in their energy and ideas into the shaping of the Liberation Program. The adult staff members offer resources and feedback, but the ultimate decision-making power lies with the youth. It might be rare but not out of the ordinary for LP's young members to call a meeting for youth-only[11] in order to discuss issues amongst themselves.

BSU is also unlike other youth programs in the area in that youth were relatively free of surveillance. Janelle recounted a program she once attended where students had to take off their shoes in order to keep the carpet clean and were strictly supervised to make sure they were either doing homework or working their way through lesson plans in order to pass a test at the end. In contrast, BSU is a place in which children and youth have access to multiple areas, including the kitchen and community garden, and the staff floor where they are welcomed daily.

The staff are conscious that youth also need their own space and the Teen Lounge on the third floor serves a multitude of functions. In addition to accommodating group meetings and workshops, young people also come to retire on the bench seating or rest on the carpeted floor with a stack of pillows. Michael, one of the co-founders believes that youth need "a safe space" to talk about issues, to "bond and support each other" and to "develop communal human connections."

One aspect of their larger mission is to help young people come to understand and define what it means to be a young Black man or a young Black woman *for themselves* and in relation to their community. Will says that in the Rites of Passage program, "there is a lot of talk about our communities and how people treat each other and what it means to be a brother and a sister" (Ford Interview). If BSU fosters the development of political ideas and social values, it can arguably encourage negotiations of social/ethnic identities (black, brown, male, female) and political agency.

As one co-founder said, they are pushing children to not to settle for scraps, but rather to demand a place at the table. This idea is present in James Baldwin's address to teachers of

---

[11] They made an exception, which allowed me to be present, but I was to listen only.

Black children, in which he says children need to see how "those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded, are criminal" (Baldwin, 1971, p. 179). Baldwin goes on to describe the personal transformation and growth that is part of one's weapons against this criminal conspiracy. He argues that in order to resist and survive, a child must "decide that he is stronger than this conspiracy and that he must never make peace with it" and that in order to destroy it, he must first decide what he is worth (Baldwin, 1971, p. 179). In order to stoke an oppositional consciousness amongst Black children, it is important to teach children to reclaim their worth, reject the status quo and train them to level a critical gaze at everything society presents him.

> [...] I would teach him that he doesn't have to be bound by the expediencies of any given administration, any given policy, any given time - that he has the right and the necessity to examine everything. (Baldwin, 1971, p. 180)

By offering entry points into community ownership and self-determination, the experiential workshops of the Summer Liberation Program and the campaign work during the Liberation Program increase the likelihood that young people will pursue these goals in the future. In his article on youth participation in Germany, Spannring argues that

> the actual practice of everyday democracy strongly influences the perception young people have of participation and the motivation and skills they develop to get engaged in the community, in society and politics (Spannring, 2008, p. 40).

The experiential learning exercises and workshops of the Summer Liberation School are constitutive of a philosophy and ideology related to the power of history as a liberating tool for Black and Brown empowerment. However, these 'encounters' are situated *in a place* that draws ties to a pan-African and Latino Diaspora and plays a role in the identities and subjectivities exercised and expressed by youth participants. Here I draw on William E. Cross's concept of the 'encounter' as an event or a series of experiences through which one develops a new perspective on one's racial or ethnic group orientation (Cross Jr., 1997; Vandiver, Cross Jr., Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002).

The organization seeks to function as what bell hooks would call a 'homeplace' as a site of resistance in which "Black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (hooks, 1990, p. 42). The built and imagined space of BSU provides such a 'homeplace' and an opportunity for young people to take part in 'radical healing' (Ginwright, 2010). Michael (co-founder) describes how all the programs try to meet this basic need of offering a safe space to talk about issues that young people are facing.

> A place where they can have facilitated discussions around the issues that are critical to their development. They need a space to bond and support each other and develop communal human connections. Within that space, they can then have key discussions around key issues and develop their minds and critical thinking.

The actual design of the space and the imagined space of the organization come together in the BSU's understanding of the brownstone as sitting on what Marilyn calls "liberated land." I posit that this image and imagining of the organization supports the idea that *the place in which you sit* matters. The idea of sitting on liberated land invites youth and staff to collectively foster a social and spatial field that is about the beauty of human relationships. Free from constraints that might exist in a setting like a church or school, I argue that BSU is both a space of hope and a space of liberation. It operates as a safe haven to withdraw in order to heal and recover, while functioning as a base from which to promote more conscious acts of brotherhood and sisterhood. The armor they provide is the love and support they offer youth and that youth offer each other. As Will says, "there are young boys and girls over the long course of time who love each other and are not afraid to say that. That's one of the most beautiful things" (Ford Interview). The tools that they provide to launch oppositional activities collectively are lessons from histories from oppression and liberation that expand their critical consciousness, role modeling from adults and other youth, and hands-on experience that engender self-awareness and self-confidence for all.

Interlude

They kind of send mixed messages at Boys and Girls [refers to a high school in Brooklyn] cause one thing - you walk in and see 'The pride and joy of Bed Stuy[12]' on the wall and then you can't even walk in with certain things on, like leather jackets - why - they have these crazy rules for no reason. The reason I transferred out was like 'cause I did not understand the rules.

And I remember one time I was walking to school and I was waiting outside on the line - and I told one of the security guards that I was transferring out and they was like 'Why you don't get the rules? 'Cause they too strict for you?' And I was like 'They not too strict they just ridiculous.'

So it's like a deceiving kind of thing they got there. They say like 'It's the best school in Brooklyn' so why are half the kids transferring out?!

[Interview, Donna]

[12] Short for Bedford-Stuyvesant.

CHAPTER FOUR: DIMENSIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION

> Knowledge must pass into vision, that state of mind and heart which does not merely swallow evidence, but changes that evidence into a judgment, an appreciation, a living picture of a country. Sir Douglas Newbold (Wright, 1947, pp. 4-5)

In this chapter I draw on careful analysis of interview data and readings from person-environment theories to accomplish three goals. The first is to describe and articulate the theoretical influences from which I draw my understanding of the geographical imagination. The second is to describe ten dimensions of the geographical imagination whose constructs suggest specific ways to make apparent the spatial relations in which our individual and social lives are carried out. The third goal is to press the dimensions into the service of social justice and illustrate the emerging and interlocking perceptions about the social and material conditions of young people's environments in Harlem.

A. Theoretical Grounding

Spatial Relations and Learning

Spatial relations are simply the "connection between two points in space or time… between oneself and the environment or between two or more objects outside of oneself" (Stockdale & Possin, 2009, p. 1). The impetus to comprehend our relationship to the outside world begins when we are first born. It is through investigation at the level of the body that we first experiment and test the reach of our arms, the flex and stretch of our legs. As we grow older, we hopefully develop our ability to maneuver ourselves in relation to the larger world to get from "how high is the cookie jar" (Stockdale & Possin, 2009, p. 1) to the point where we can lean against the kitchen wall stirring risotto while chatting with a friend on the phone. Our evolving

grasp of spatial relations can inform and guide our everyday behavior; how *better* to move through a crowded hallway or how *best* to ride a bike from Brooklyn to lower Manhattan.

Person-Environment Interaction and Environmental Awareness

Within psychological theory, interaction with the environment has been constructed as an individually interpreted reaction to the physical and visual stimuli in the environment. Kurt Lewin formulated the construct of the "life space" (Lewin, 1943, p. 307) of an individual as the temporally shifting and psychologically constructed space in which a person interacts with the physical world. James Gibson understood the spatial field of our activities to be marked by "affordances" (Gibson, 1986, p. 140) that are selectively perceived by the person. The perception of these affordances is based on the differential opportunities for the person to satisfy their needs and desires. William Ittelson (1973) asserts that role of affect and emotions also plays a role in how one interacts with the environment; that just as we perceive affordances, we also perceive "affectances," that are intangible and non-material. The very act of perception involves the active sorting of these twin aspects of the environment.

Beyond the act of environmental perception, psychologists, anthropologists, geographers and others have shown interest in how ideas, feelings and meanings are constructed about different places. Environmental psychologist Harold Proshansky and colleagues suggested the notion of "place identity" (1983), noting that just as the individual is embedded and shaped by social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, class), so too is part of the self defined in relation to place. Social psychologists Dixon and Durrheim (2000) recognize the importance of place on identity development but also exhort researchers to consider how conceptions of place are altered through discourse. In their work on formerly segregated beaches in South Africa, they distill the vestiges of apartheid in the discourse of 'pristine beaches.' Their analysis focuses on how people discursively use and produce images of places to define who they are and their relationships to others.

The implication of place meaning in the production of cultural ideas and practices has also been taken up by other social scientists. “Place attachment” is a construct used by Altman and Low argue the role of culture in shaping our relationship to and perceptions of the environment (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 4). It is through a non-material and symbolic relationship whereby people ascribe

> culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual’s and group’s understanding of and relation to the environment (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 165).

Visualization, Imagination and Transformation

The ability to picture a situation from different perspectives is one characteristic of ‘adaptive leadership’. In Ron Heifetz’s (2002) book on adaptive leadership, perspective does not mean opinion but rather different positionalities from which to observe, reflect and act. Heifetz uses the metaphor of being on the dance floor to explain this leadership method. He describes the act of dancing on the dance floor and how this situation posits a particular viewpoint. You see the action of the space unfolding before your eyes, as you are just as much a part of it, swaying with your partner to the music. Heifetz then argues that it is important to go up to the balcony and observe the action from above. From the balcony, you can see which groups are moving in time to the music, which couples have broken away, the larger dynamic that is at work. The ability to image and visualize these different viewpoints and perspectives is at the heart of figuring out how best to lead and act in a situation.

The centrality of our human faculty to imagine goes back even to the classical world where the imagination meant the image-making of divine forms as a way to explain life’s events, society and nature. From the Neo-Platonists to the Epicureans and the Romantics like Coleridge, it is the calling up of real places, people and things in their absence that enables us to create new forms and ideas. For Kant, the imagination was an important tool that can be used

to synthesize disparate ideas as well as a productive faculty to create something new out of the existing.

The transformative aspect of the imagination is also discussed in John K. Wright's address to the American Geographical Society in 1947. He speaks of the siren call of the unexplored territory and how true geographers possess "an imagination particularly responsive to terrae incognitae." He goes on to explain,

> the imagination not only projects itself into terrae incognitae and suggests routes for us to follow, but also plays upon those things that we discover and out of them makes imaginative conceptions which we seek to share with others. (Wright, 1947, p. 4)

Wright does lay a cautionary word about the dangers of a powerful imagination in geography. Certainly one need not delve very far to unearth examples of how geography and cartography can be used as tools and instruments of imperialism and colonialism and war. He does however spend considerable more time refuting the idea that subjectivity is unhealthy to the field of geography. Wright avers that considering things in reference to oneself or being self-referential can lead to "error, illusion or deliberate deception" but he also argues that "it is entirely possible to conceive of things not only with reference to oneself but also realistically"(Wright, 1947, p. 5).

He entreats us to consider the "legitimate and desirable" aspects of the poetic, aesthetic and intuitive notions about certain places towards inspiring the imagination in others. From conversation with key people and consultation of local archives, for instance, geographers can intuit the mixed emotions of farmers viewing the gathering of clouds (with hope of rain and dread of tornadoes). If that can be reasonably surmised, then, Wright argues, it should be allowed to enliven regional and climatological studies.

I find this point of view sympathetic but I also take it to be an illustration of the seductive power of the imagination. The communication and production of images can encourage stereotypes and mask the contradictions or machinations necessary to export such an image to

the broader public. On the other hand, a critical awareness of the production of images and places can reveal the role that images play in shaping our views of self and society.

In his book *The Image* Kenneth Boulding states that we "see only a very small part of our field of vision with anything like accuracy of detail" (Boulding, 1956, p. 53). However we can also employ our capacity for recall, through which we can will unconscious parts of our mental image. More than a storehouse of memories and experiences, "it is a genuine image affecting our conduct and behavior in ways that we do not understand with our conscious mind" (Boulding, 1956, p. 53).

In Richard Sennett's (1992) book, "The Conscience of the Eye" he discusses the path of human development as about the development of our ability and capacity to accommodate ever more complex experiences. He laments the flattening of the complexity in our everyday urban life, for example, through production of spaces that reduce of chances of meeting those with whom we might have conflict with in public space. Conflict, he argues, is a necessary element of recognition and seeing.

> A recognition scene is, more concretely, one form of time's delayed consequences: something implicit in the past suddenly is forced out in the open. A recognition scene is like a border in that it organizes confrontation among previously separated elements. (Sennett, 1992, p. 198)

He offers examples from literature where the main character has to reorganize his way of perceiving and remembering an event because new information sheds important light on how the situation played out. He urges us to hone our visual ability as a way to arouse our conscience, thereby making apparent the lived experience of the myriad 'recognition scenes' in shaping and remaking our view of self and the world.

Critical Consciousness about Space

Alternative visualizations and perspectives about person, power and place, particularly with strains of Marxist and critical theories has been taken up by critical geographers such as David Harvey, Neil Smith, Neil Brenner, Don Mitchell and Cindi Katz. An expanded understanding of

spatial relations makes possible what geographer David Harvey argues to be a "geographical imagination" or critical consciousness about space and place. He describes it as the ability for a person to view the unfolding of his life as shaped by his relationship to spaces and places, near and far. Harvey defines the geographical imagination as that which

> enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in his own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them (Harvey, 1975, p. 24).

Just as Mills exhorts individuals to situate their life within the larger social and historical context, Harvey advocates for the inclusion of the geographical and the spatial as conceptual frameworks that are essential to how we understand ourselves and the world.

Harvey squarely places a critical analysis of spatial relations and the geographical imagination in the purview of achieving social justice in the city. In his Megacities Lecture, he argues that the language of community can suffer from nostalgia masking a politics of exclusion (drawing lines between those who belong and those who are outsiders) and that the language of anti-globalization can be suffocating in its almost inevitable outcome. Therefore, he advocates for the theory of historical geographical materialism to be guide our understanding of "uneven geographical development" thus enabling one to perceive:

> (a) the palimpsest of historically sedimented socio-ecological relations in place, (b) the multi-layered and hierarchically ordered mosaic of socio-ecological permanences (power structures, institutions, physical infrastructures, cultural configurations and aspirations) that order space and (c) the often chaotic motion of socio-ecological (particularly under contemporary conditions capital and migratory) flows that produce, sustain and dissolve geographical differences in the landscape over time. (Harvey, 2000, p. 43)

To expand one's geographical imagination is to involve oneself in regular explorations of spatial relationships through the lens of uneven geographical development as well as repeated consideration of how individuals and groups relate to the larger context. Yet, critical theorist Peter McLaren maintains, that the body is the site of embodied or enfleshed subjectivity,

reflecting the ideological sedimentation of social structures inscribed into it (McLaren, 1991, p. 150). Thus the capacity to empathize, conjure points of connection and relevance across the individual experience requires an ability to manifest what habits of mind and body lurk in the sediment and position one's gaze at different levels.

Eliciting mental maps, images of place and the latent messages can reveal the movement of political bodies, social groups and individuals at multiple scales. It can be effective to interrogate the status quo in concert with young people and ask such questions as: What is happening here? What caused the situation? Could it ever be different? What would that take to achieve an alternative solution? By clarifying the dimensions of the geographical imagination, these narratives, places and processes can become uncovered, understood.

Visualizing and Imaging the Environment

Mapmaking reflects a particular geographical imagination in that it requires a deliberate selection and suppression of information in order to tell a story about a phenomenon (Monmonier, 1996; Wood & Fels, 1992). When a place is called up from memory, maps can be a part of that stock of images. Living in New York, the subway map is often conjured to mind and that act can render conscious the intentions of subway line designers. For instance, when thinking about how best to get from Bay Ridge in southern Brooklyn to Long Island City in Queens, you may realize how easy it is to get to Manhattan and how difficult it is to travel between two adjoining boroughs. It is no wonder that residents in the outer boroughs talk about 'going into the city' even though political boundaries show that they are part of the city.

Maps can also interrupt one's usual way of seeing by presenting an image or story that is not widely known thus prompting new ideas and questions. William Bunge's (1969) work in the Detroit Geographical Expedition produced maps like "Where commuters run over Black children on the Pointes-Downtown track" or a time-lapse account of the Detroit riots from the perspective of a resident. More recent and equally powerful examples include the "Million Dollar Blocks" map that depicted not wealthy districts but rather blocks where the cost to

process and imprison people totals over 1 million dollars (Spatial Information Design Lab, 2008). Their work provokes one to consider the question of how better this money could be spent and dares one to dream about what kinds of positive opportunities could be engendered with the money.

In "Close up: Reading the American landscape" Grady Clay (1980) harnesses his training as a landscape architect to argue for and present a visual analysis of urban America. He creates a vocabulary of visual language that reveals patterns and clues about the social geography of American cities. Based on travel to and time spent in over 100 cities in the United States, he posits that, "

> No true secrets are lurking in the landscape, but only undisclosed evidence, waiting for us. No true chaos is in the urban scene, but only patterns and clues waiting to be organized. (Clay, 1980, p. 11)

He creates names such as 'beats' to capture the life cycle of a certain place, or 'turf' where exclusion is spelled out through privatization, or 'sinks' where undesirables are pushed or dumped. Clay argues that social forces have naturalized these processes of urban development so that we no longer think about 'sinks,' the places where garbage incinerators are located or where stolen cars are dumped as part of our cities. Since undesirables are shunted out of sight (down into the sink), it is even more necessary to enable others to consider how "such hidden facts infuse all scenes" (Clay, 1980, p. 84).

In addition to mapping and identifying metaphors that illustrate how different places are produced by human and natural forces, other approaches have been developed specifically to help children and young people image and visualize the environment. The Growing up in Cities project[13] first launched by Kevin Lynch in the early 1970s has set forth a participatory model for increasing young people's participation in researching, documenting and intervening in their

[13] The original sites included Melbourne, Australia and Warsaw, Poland; the new sites were Buenos Aires, Argentina; Johannesburg, South Africa; Bangalore, India; Northhampton, UK; Oakland, USA; and Trondheim, Norway.

urban environment. Carried out in eight countries, the Growing up in Cities project has helped children and youth develop skills to participate in urban design and planning.

Another exemplary project called the City Building project began in the 1970s with Doreen Nelson. A public school educator, Nelson developed an innovative curriculum to introduce planning and building concepts to her students by directly involving them in designing and creating their own cities and spaces. Each child is asked to share a "never before seen" design and through discussion and guided lessons, this design is refined and improved. Questions such as where do you enter and leave or how do you deal with waste products are all part of the design/refine process which helps students to see the interconnectedness between design, nature and human settlements (Nelson, 1984).

Finally, environmental education has produced contributions ranging from Colin Ward and Anthony Fyson's *Streetwork* book (1978) in which they convincingly argue for students to tackle the urban environment around their school as a place of inquiry. This focus on the neighborhood setting and urban spaces is not a retreat from the learning acquired from fieldwork in the countryside, rather it is about acknowledging the importance of training youth in understanding their everyday spaces. Other influential contributions have been made in the *Bulletin of Environmental Education* (Bishop, Adams, & Keen, 1992) and Anthony Gibson's model of 'Planning for Real' (Gibson & Wratten, 1995), which represent stepping stones in establishing the tenets and practices of heightening a child's perception and interaction with the environment.

Although there are few models of environmental learning that aren't facilitated by adults or teachers, there are researchers who have examined children's play opportunities as mediating their environmental learning (Hart, 1979; Katz, 2004; Moore & Young, 1978). In his work on children's geographies in a small town in Vermont, Hart found that children explored their environment in order "to learn about it, to give it order, and to invest it with meaning – both shared and private" (Hart, 1979, p. 3). The children, age 4-12, showed themselves to be adept at

using "loose parts" (Hart, 1979, p. 349) to manipulate and transform a house of ferns in a bower or cities and airports from the earth. In Moore's work on outdoor play of 9-12 year olds in urban sections of England, he observed the sensory awakening that happens when children can play in "rough ground" – weedy and undeveloped areas in which to observe plant and animal life (Crain, 2003, p. 64).

Unlike blacktop playgrounds or swing sets, these activities can awaken new way of perceiving the environmental qualities of a place and the transformative potential of objects. By fostering creative engagement with the everyday environment, children can work within their own fantasies to produce a world of play or to practice the interpersonal negotiation and social learning that comes from collaborating with other peers. From mapmaking to creating a visual atlas to directly interacting with loose parts or rough ground, these opportunities help children take pleasure in their own remaking of the environment.

B. Clarifying the Geographical Imagination: The Case of Activism

Drawing from this rich array of literature, my research has focused on how the geographical imagination among my youth participants is manifested in how they perceive, inhabit and intervene in their environment. Based on my analysis of participant observation and interviews, I identified the following ten dimensions of the geographical imagination as expressed over the course of a youth activist's participation. They represent a 'conceptual shorthand' for a young person's awareness of different spatial relations in their environment: patterns, alignment, boundaries, proximity, location, indicators, disparities, signs, scale, and impact. When pressed into service for projects of social justice and community organizing, the dimensions of the geographical imagination can reveal the spatiality of community issues.

Below, I offer definitions and excerpts from the youth interviews to illustrate how they express dimensions of their geographical imagination. I utilize the initial open coding of the qualitative material and collected the segments coded 'place' (124 excerpts), 'social justice' (87

excerpts), and 'community issue' (23 excerpts). Amongst these excerpts, I examined specific instances where the geographical imagination was expressed in 'environmental awareness' (28 excerpts), 'critical consciousness about space' (49 excerpts), and 'imagining change' (157 excerpts). I then considered the variety of spatial relations being expressed in the excerpts, particularly when there was overlap between the coding (e.g., excerpts about gentrification would be coded 'place' and 'community issue' and excerpts where gentrification was discussed in relation to unequal housing or material conditions would be coded 'place', 'social justice', 'community issue' and 'critical consciousness about space'). As illustrations of the dimensions, I've chosen six young people whose narratives show a complexity and overlapping of dimensions. This is not meant to function as a rigid pairing but rather to show how interrelated these dimensions can be.

C. Ten Dimensions of the Geographical Imagination

Dimensions	**Brief explanation**
Patterns	Distribution of resources
Alignment	How and for whom is society organized
Boundary	Social and physical territory, turf
Proximity and Distance	Relation between self and others, self and institutions
Location and Access	How place affects opportunities
Environmental Indicators	Clues to social inequity in the environment

Disparities	Gap between how things are and how you want them to be
Signs and Symbols	Explicit and implicit meaning about places
Scale	Connecting local to global; Considering how space-time is socially constructed
Impact	How one's actions have an impact on conditions elsewhere

Figure 5 Ten Dimensions of the Geographical Imagination

Patterns

This dimension of the geographical imagination is expressed in an awareness of the distribution of resources across an area and how that reflects an uneven or unjust distribution of power and privilege of a particular person, group or society. The process by which one adopts a critical consciousness involves "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1995, p. 17). This includes an awareness of how patterns are sustained or influenced by the legacy of uneven power and control or what a re-ordering of this pattern might look like and entail.

Alignment (space and time)

Paulo Freire describes how "human beings are because they are in a situation. And they will be the more the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it (Freire, 1995, p. 90). The concept of alignment refers to how individuals, groups and institutions are organized in relation to nature and the built environment, how organization of society reflects a moral order (e.g. 'us' vs. 'them'), a particular relationship to nature, how history leaves its trace in the organization of society, nature and space. This dimension is expressed in questions such as, what new or different order and alignment of society could be imagined. I use 'alignment' instead of 'order' because alignment implies that it's a coming

together of different forces and actions, and order implies a fixed entity. The concept of alignment also supposes that it is possible to shift with a shifting of forces within that equation.

Boundaries

This dimension refers to the social and physical configurations of territory and turf and the forces that regulate and control and shape its makeup. It is expressed in an awareness of how historical quests for territory shape our understanding of turf, identity and belonging. If as Simmel asserts, "the boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially" (Fearon, 2009, p. 145), then what new or reworked boundaries are possible, with what circumstances and outcomes?

Proximity and density

In Simmel's "Metropolis and Mental Life" he describes how people adapt to the crowded urban condition by regulating their distance and proximity to other individuals and groups (Simmel, 1950). This dimension is expressed in an awareness of how the distance or proximity between oneself and organizations and institutions at the local, societal and global levels plays a role in shaping one's life. Some questions might include: what historical forces influenced or continue to influence the distance and proximity; what distance and proximity would be worth striving for; and to what end.

Location and Access

This dimension is expressed in an awareness of how one's citizenship and place in the world influences what opportunities and resources are available and the kind of experiences and treatment that one can expect. Focusing on the milieu means attending to Edward Casey's proposition that our bodies are "never anywhere, anywhen, but in place" (Casey, 1996, p. 39). The social and material context of that place can help a person to see how his personal situation both shapes and is shaped by uneven slopes of privilege and power.

Environmental Indicators

Grady Clay's (1994, 1980) work on identifying markers and indicators across urban America extends our recognition of how larger societal processes act on different places and how these influence the formation and interconnection between social and material forms of the city. This concept of 'indicators' is connected to seeing how the material environment contains clues and artifacts of historical struggles for justice; how these clues in infrastructure, structure and form can reveal the state or conditions of larger social, political and geographical forces; how these indicators could be subverted or recast to reveal new sociospatial relationships.

Disparities

How one understands spatial relations "relies on comparison to a known standard" which can mean using our bodies to measure size or distance or using symbolic representation such as language in which to contemplate relationships such as cause and effect, overlapping qualities or the distance between objects, concepts and settings (Stockdale & Possin, 2009). The awareness of the disparity that exists between the social and material world as it is, and how one imagines it could aid in the identification of the intervening conditions that might close this gap. This awareness is also expressed in stories about how these gaps have been closed or improved in the past and what these lessons might offer for present and future change.

Signs and Symbolic Meaning

An awareness of being in a particular place, situating an action in a place or using an image of a place can be used to signal messages or meaning. This dimension enables us to see how place is "an organized world of meaning" (Tuan, 1990, p. 179) in which different connotations, emotions, memories and feelings can be read. This awareness also includes how historical meanings attached to place have been used to manipulate or influence how individuals, groups and institutions relate to each other and to the space itself. Further, the process of reading signs and symbolic meaning can help identify new meanings that can be formed and coupled to places to transform social and spatial relations.

Scale

The dimension of scale can be expressed in a multitude of ways. Scale is most commonly understood in terms of mapping. On a map, scale conveys the relationship between what is depicted on a map and how it actually is on the ground. One can also understand scale to be the level at which a process is working, for instance, a local real estate tax increase versus a national progressive income tax. Human geographers argue that scale is "not ontologically given" and focus instead on how "particular scales become constituted and transformed in response to social-spatial dynamics" (Marston, 2000, p. 221).

Impact

This dimension is expressed in an awareness of how one's actions in a particular setting can have an impact on outcomes and conditions in other places. To clarify 'impact' is to examine how historical and current flows of resources and people produce and sustain uneven development in different settings. This awareness can also be harnessed to *re*-envision the flow and direction of individual and group action towards larger projects of change.

D. Dimensions of the Geographical Imagination from Youth Narratives

Patterns and Alignment: Spatializing Race, Class and Gender in the city

Tamara and I are discussing the differences between different areas of Manhattan. As a 14-year old incoming participant from Coop City in the Bronx, she's spent a large chunk of her childhood and adolescence in Harlem. She lives with her mother as an only child, but they often visit family and friends in upper Manhattan. Once in a while, they will go downtown (i.e., Times Square or 34th Street) for shopping and excursions. She sees influence and wealth concentrated in certain areas, and thinks about how these factors elevate the status of place, and therefore, its people.

Tamara: Like - um- downtown - it's real clean and shiny. You could practically eat off the floor. Over here it's - the floors - they got potholes and all that stuff. It's not really, it's not really attractive. If you was a tourist, you would really want to come to *this* side of the town. You would really want to see *nice* buildings and all of that.
Yvonne: So you feel like tourists don't come up here or head up to Coop City?

Tamara: I think they *do* but it's not like, it's not like they gonna remember it, how they would remember the skyscrapers.
Yvonne: So when you go to a new place, do you want to see - the nice shiny clean places or –
Tamara: No. Because - that's not where the real people who live at.
Yvonne: So you want to see where the real people live
Tamara: Like I want to *stay* in a nice place but I don't - I would tour around it but I would also want to see the places that look like my houses.

She goes on to talk about privilege and neighborhoods where wealthy people live in doorman buildings and contrasts that with the lower ranking that Harlem or Brooklyn receives. She recognizes that having money makes certain opportunities possible but that shouldn't mean that they are better than her.

Tamara: I think that sometimes they feel like they could do what they want because - most likely they *can* They have money and they have the right skin tone- and - when – it's you and me, and I *felt* like that, somebody already would have- so - just they live a different lifestyle and they look at it- they look at Harlem and Bronx and other places that are like - under construction - differently. Like theses places are lower than them.
Yvonne: How does that make you feel?
Tamara: It makes me feel upset because- we're the same. We have the same blood running through - our blood is blue, we have hair, we have eyes, we human beings and just because I'm a shade darker doesn't mean you automatically better than me, or just because you get a little bit more money than my mom- you automatically are better than me. Yes you could do certain things that my mom can't but- that doesn't make you a better person.

She also goes on to describe how gentrification is changing the face of Harlem. Having learned in school about the history of Harlem and the different groups that have settled in the area, 14-year old Tamara is surprised at the changes she witnesses.

Tamara: A lot of stores that were open are closed now, buildings are abandoned - then see buildings that are remade with *ridiculous* prices, then white people coming in with money. It doesn't make me angry, it makes me confused, I don't understand it really, why do you wanna move back? Why you wanna be in Harlem?

In discussing how she perceives the alignment of race, class, and gender Tamara discusses how differences in race can be moderated if you come from the same community. She also shares her thoughts about how gender inequality still prevails even for white women and her ideas to improve current injustice.

Yvonne: But do you feel more similar to a Black female than a white female?

Tamara: Yes because- I feel like a Black female, lives in the same community as I.
Yvonne: What if she was a Black African female who lived in - Ghana? Versus a white Puerto Rican girl who lives in Spanish Harlem.
Tamara: I feel like- I feel like, then I feel like it's the same cause she - the white Spanish, she lives in my environment and the Black Ghana, she goes through racism with me, so like, it just all be connecting.

Yvonne: Do you sometimes feel like 'If Adam Clayton Powell Jr. can do it, I can do it too'?
Tamara: Sometimes - but then sometimes not. Just because one person did it, it doesn't automatically mean that I can do it. But then I DO because, I look at youths and Black males and then I look at women, and women don't have as much power as men *over all*. Doesn't matter what color you are. But then I go back to - well he's still - still made a difference in the community and I have better ideas than him so -- Not necessarily better but more to do with this millennium and-
Yvonne: What are some of your ideas
Tamara: Um - I feel like our streets should be just as CLEAN- we should have equal job opportunities. Um - ------ We should have our buildings made up not because people are buying them but because *it needs to be done*

The unequal material conditions and social standing that Tamara perceives in New York City is related to the unequal wealth and privilege of its local residents. She has images and observations of how wealth expresses itself in litter-free streets, doorman buildings and attractive gleaming skyscrapers. These are the areas that tourists will visit as opposed to Harlem or the Bronx. If she were a tourist, she would want to stay in the "nice places" but would also want to see where the real people live, where the buildings look more similar to her home in Coop City. To Tamara, gentrification is perhaps less of a takeover in the sense that there were white residents in Harlem before, but its appeal to white people with money is confusing to her. Despite the progress made by other activists, she still perceives society as aligned in ways that sustain the privilege of a particular class, race or gender. Yet her comedic qualified assertion that she has better ideas or rather more timely ideas than Adam Clayton Powell Jr. evinces her belief that reworking of material and social opportunities must occur because "it needs to be done."

Recognizing Boundaries and the role of Proximity and Density: Public Space

When asked about places where he feels safe and comfortable, Damon (15 year old African-American incoming participant) is surprised that his neighborhood park is one of them. He had never considered its qualities very explicitly before the interview.

Damon: The park is public but the same people go there everyday so like it's not that many different people that go to the park. So you know literally everybody in the park.
Yvonne: So what happens when you see someone new in the park?
Damon: Everybody stares at them [laughs] – alright we stare at them. We figure they might know somebody. The way it is in Harlem is that you can't just go to a park you'll get beat up or somethin' so we like 'Nah they gotta know somebody over here' and then we'll ask them like 'Where you from' or 'Who you know here'
Yvonne: So you need to have a reason to be there
Damon: Yeah yeah

He shares that the drawing of boundaries is extreme for young Black men in the city. He doesn't dare go to certain places because his clothes would immediately mark him as an outsider. He is incredulous when I share that I am from Brooklyn.

> Oh yeah yeah Brooklyn. I don't feel safe in Brooklyn. I don't feel safe in Brooklyn, specially the way I dress. Like they could tell, there's certain stuff that we wear they identify. 'Oh they wear Nike boots' that's what they call em 'so you from Harlem' … Yeah and they wear like doorags and stuff like that. That's what they like to wear. They still dress like with baggy stuff – that's how you know they from Brooklyn. It's not just like a racist or a prejudice thing, you know it's not from that borough.

Curiously, Damon definitely prides himself on wearing what could be as cutting edge and different from what others wear, even in Harlem. For that, he travels down to Soho and Greenwich Village to do his clothes shopping.

Yvonne: Coming back to where you get the sneakers and also where you go- to hang out and stuff. So where you get the sneakers, do you feel like the Village is really different than Harlem?
Damon: Yeah -- like buildings look like corporate buildings. But -
Yvonne: Do you like it better down there?
Damon: For *clothes and stuff* not to hang out- not to socialize - nah.
Yvonne: Why not to socialize
Damon: Nobody want to be around me cause like I'm Black! It's not that I don't feel uncomfortable, but you could tell that they're not the *friendliest* people down there. Some of them will be - but most of them aren't. They just walk by you like, trying to get out your way. I noticed like- um 42nd Street, I'll be walking straight and we do shoulder each other- so somebody not gonna move you're not gonna move either so you just bump into each other and look at each other and keep going. DOWN there, they hurry up and get out my way. And I'm not

even that big so I'm walking- then they just move to the side and - I'll laugh with my friend. HE does it on purpose, he'll walk down with a mean face. Just playing around. He won't do it that much but- he'll just be like 'I bet you she moves out the way.' AND he looks like, goofy, - I'm like 'They scared of Allen?' Cause he's *not* really that intimidating. I'm small so they're just moving cause I'm Black and they just figure- I'm a do something.

At the same time, he likes the distance between Harlem and Soho because it allows him to preserve his style as something unique.

Yvonne: So would you like Harlem -better- if there were the stores in the Village up in Harlem? Would you like the Village better if it looked more like Harlem or if your friends lived down there?
Damon: Um - well - I- like the way the Village is at 'cause the way I drop - I don't want people wearing the same stuff I have on – it's like, the more people that have it- the more normal I'm gonna look with it. I like to be different- not just like, 'if you get it I'm just gonna do something different,' but I don't like to be classified like other people. They just see us and want to stereotype and I'm not- that- They just see me as being Black. Not just white people but- I don't like to have the same stuff as other people. So if it was in Harlem, then everybody be dressing like it- and then I might really have to be drawin' on my own stuff- so. [Ed. Note: He is very artistic and dreams about being an architect or clothing designer]
Yvonne: Or going to Brooklyn
Damon: Yeah -- nah nah—[laughs] not Brooklyn. I'll go to Queens but I'm not going to Brooklyn.

Damon is aware that perception of boundaries can influence one's decision to enter, mix and linger in particular places. His trepidation at going to Brooklyn is predicated on the danger of not being from the place. It's a boundary that he too enforces in his local park. When he and his friends see someone they don't know, they are immediately watchful and alert. He contrasts his views of Soho and the Village as places where he doesn't feel as safe and comfortable compared to his neighborhood park. He also doesn't mind the distance because it enables him to cultivate a style that is different than other young men in Harlem. At the same time, these breaches result in public space interactions where he is made conscious of race, class and gender. He offers the example of the distance and proximity he has with others as he moves through public space in Times Square versus Soho. He contrasts the game of chicken (facing off, bumping shoulders, staring down and continuing on) with other young men while walking down 42nd Street with the wide berth he and his friends are granted in Soho.

Location and Access

Angela is a self-assured 16 year-old who is a longtime Harlem resident and a veteran member of BSU. She only recently moved up to the Bronx to live with her father but it is in Harlem, particularly the block where BSU is located is where she spends most of her free time. When I asked her about whether the neighborhood you live affects your opportunities or how others see you, she gave a nuanced response about how personal attributes can mitigate the negative temptations in the neighborhood.

> I think it depends because where you live depends on the different resources you have to know about different opportunities. And then um – it depends on the individual insight – I know over here there's a lot of – like if you went to a low income community there's a lotta liquor stores over here and it's real easy for someone to just be like to get caught up in the liquor stores and drugs and stuff like that and alcoholism. But if you then are part different from that or if you're able to see how alcoholism is a negative thing and how it affects everybody then it could be up to the individual to be like 'I'm not gonna do that to my kids' – an alcoholic father and how he acts towards his children and for his children to step up and be like 'No I'm not gonna treat my child like that like how I was treated' or stuff like that – it depends on the different resources that other people have and what kind of insights they may have and the other opportunities they may have in their neighborhood.

Over the course of the conversation about location and opportunity and access, we discuss how particular spots on the block are marked by police with certain associations. She describes the corner as a place where she has witnessed unjust things happening.

> The corner is notorious for drug dealers and stuff like that. At the same time, the drug dealers are part of the community and they are seen everyday. Regular people develop a relationship or they live in the building. For example, my brother and his best friends – they used to sell drugs together. My brother doesn't anymore but his friend I believe he still does. So my brother and his friend – he's like an older brother to me. So if I'm hanging out with him, the police may socialize me with him or just for ex – other people – who are innocent may be socialized just by association. And that happens on the corner on 143.

One particular incident her cousin had told her about took place when people were hanging out on a warm summer evening.

> During the summer time the police come out a lot because of students don't have any place to go to or whatever. They was just telling everybody to get off the

> corner but they wasn't really doing anything and if this is my block, why can't I just stand on the corner if it's hot outside?!

For Angela, the example of people getting pushed off the corner shows her that location, race and time of day are intervening in individuals' right to be in public space. However, she also recognizes that the aspects of the environment can be interpreted differently depending on the individual's insight. That liquor stores may make one vulnerable to alcoholism or drug use but that it can also show firsthand the deleterious effects of addiction thus strengthening one's resolve to resist its call.

Making sense of Environmental Indicators, Disparities, Signs and Symbolic Meaning

When queried about what they learned from the Summer Liberation School, the four young women who completed the program all mentioned gentrification. Their comments bore a note of certainty, whereby they admitted never having heard of the term before but recognized it was happening and were glad to have a term to attach to the phenomenon. The SLS workshop focusing on gentrification was facilitated by 16-year old Donna (SLS Youth Facilitator). She is on the committee that is trying to increase tenant awareness about their housing rights and is passionate about the topic. She used games, discussion and a short video to help explain the concept. She described how it is a process whereby low income neighborhoods experience physical renovation and "an increase," and that this increase led to building owners wanting to get more money for rent. This then produced scenarios where people were getting pushed out or bought out of their apartments and newly renovated buildings attracted a higher income level to the neighborhood. One participant called out and said that gentrification was like imperialism.

Donna used an activity called "Agree/Disagree" where each member of the group was handed two colored pieces of paper. She read out loud a series of statements, and the group was to indicate by color, whether they agreed or disagreed. Statements included ones like "JayZ is the best rapper in the world" to more political ones like "Declaring the war in Iraq was wrong" to

ones related to housing and gentrification. Most participants agreed that gentrification increases diversity in the neighborhood. The statement 'gentrification cleans up Harlem' led to the group agreeing that it "don't clean up the drugs but clean up the streets." Another statement 'gentrification reduces unemployment' produced some division. Tamara felt like gentrification means more building and construction, and therefore more people get jobs. However, Chris (19 yr old incoming participant) disagreed by saying, the companies often hire their own people and that he's had difficulty finding jobs on construction sites in Harlem. Does gentrification increase landlord harassment? There was some agreement but Chris interjected with a negative and emphatically said, "if you pay in full, then he has no reason to harass." This led Adam (15 yr old incoming participant) to offer reasons for both to be true.

Janelle is one of the incoming participants who completed the Summer Liberation School. At 14, she has lived in Harlem all her life. She describes how she noticed the neighborhood changes even before she learned the term gentrification.

> I mean they built a Pathmark[14] on 145th. Like that's good but that was never around here. Now they have more cleaner laundromats. On 145th you go down they are building I think condos with like parking lots inside of them and they have got some new buildings opening up. They are trying to clean up the streets and like they are building more brownstones. So I knew that was happening but yeah I didn't know the word for it.

The indicators signaled more than neighborhood improvement. It's painful and sad for her to admit but her first thought was that "Oh they are doing that so the white people can move in. Because they don't fix it up for Latinos and African American and other races." When I probe her about why she doesn't think that the improvement is for Black people or for people of color, she offers this eerily prescient analysis and prediction.

> Because I guess because you can see the comparison and I guess the rent is a lot. You can tell those. If you see just the outline of how it's going to look, you can tell that it's going to be really expensive and most people here make minimum wage,

[14] Large grocery store chain

> yeah minimum. So there's no way - like they can afford it but they won't be able to have like the extra stuff like a phone cable and all that. I guess they are trying to pressure us, like either to buy it or move on because we are used to our neighborhood. It is fine. Our apartments is good when you see new ones 'oh better go get there' But because you want to be flashy, then you will regret it because you are not going to have any extra money or they try to pressure you out.

Damani, another incoming participant, perceives the gap between the concerns of the community now and how she would like it to be. For her, it rests in the culture of consumption that she witnesses and how it opens up the neighborhood for a takeover from others.

Damani: I feel like, the Black community supports - anybody that comes in - that-they like, so if you're Arab but you have a bodega, you're good. If you are Israeli and you have a sneaker store, you're good. If you're Jamaican and you have a Jamaican spot- you're good - it doesn't matter- if you're African American and you have a health food store- NO. You're not gonna see it - you're not gonna see it! And it's just like 'oh they support anybody that - they feel like-they LIKE.'
Yvonne: Why do they like the person who has the sneaker store versus the person who has the health food store?
Damani: Because --the community is very into - material things. And they're not conscious about- keeping the like - it has - Our community has turned into a very consuming community. And we're not producing- anything. We're just consuming and consuming and we're not thinking about it.

She goes on to talk about how she experienced the closeness of some southern African American communities. That the businesses were not just singular entities but she attaches greater meaning to these daily transactions, in great contrast with what she sees in Harlem.

> That's one thing that I loved about like - African American communities in the South - for a long time, everybody -that were in the communities- look like them - and *lived* in that community. And if NOT, lived in a similar community just like theirs. So it's like I'm putting money in your pocket - and I'm taking - You're putting money in my pocket and I'm putting money in your pocket and it's not like that no more. It's like I'm putting money in somebody's pocket who don't even look like me- who don't even *care* about me - who's like 'Yeah I just wanna make this money - so MY DAUGHTER could move into YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD and take *your* apartment. And that's it.

The blooming of a sense of community is tied to the daily transactions, which in her analysis includes which businesses get supported and how people interact with each other.

Damani: That's how communities get formed. That's how community gets formed. So I honestly feel like everybody that's buying that stuff is NOT, it's not just one business and one business, I feel that they *connected* cause then they gonna form their *own community.* If you're in North Carolina and you have a store and it's a really tight knit closed community and I mean like not even North Carolina, even Jersey- like really - I forgot where I went, I went there one day- it was, the town was like SO small but - *everybody knew each other*. Everybody knew each other. They knew each other's names, alot of people lived around the way - like, everybody knew each other. And I feel like- in NYC, it *could* become that way.
Yvonne: If you live your life that way.
Damani: Yeah… I think it would be *cool* if it was more like that cause then it will make people - even - if not conscious about everything else, *conscious* about sense of community.

For Janelle, the indicators of gentrification and neighborhood change are attached to a larger set of beliefs about how the improvements are a deliberate attempt to attract whites and those with money to the area. Her voice betrays a note of defensiveness when she says "our apartments are good" but that the advertising might challenge that idea, even pushing some to move there. She sees that as boding trouble for those who are moving there "to be flashy" but in reality can't afford it.

For Damani, the neighborhood change she witnesses is connected to the larger issue of who has control over the community. She laments the distance between tight knit neighborhoods with community-owned businesses with the reality that she perceives in Harlem. The fact that "*we are not producing anything*" and the culture to consume is blinding people to the larger toll that it might bring. She interprets the vulnerability of the neighborhood to the fact that money goes into the pockets of outsiders who then finance their children's ability to takeover the apartments of current residents.

Scale and Impact: When to Intervene and How

For 16-year old Andrew (SLS Youth Facilitator), the neighborhood around the organization is where many of his friends and relatives live. I often joke that he is like a mini-mayor of the block. Walking down the street, he is stopped and greeted many times over. It's a recognition status that he doesn't have in the Bronx, where he recently moved with his mother. He is

satisfied with knowing enough about where he lives, the essentials: how to get home, what are the major landmarks and where he can get a cheap sandwich.

We talk about how and when he decides to get involved in conflicts that don't start with him personally. He knows that just as he has friends, so do other people, so he's not going to recklessly start a fight with anybody.

> Out here everybody have some body looking out for them, so like, I wouldn't go to another person's block and start a fight with somebody cause they from they block, it's their block. I guess it's sign of disrespect or whatever. But I don't know. I feel I have to, if somebody mess with my friends, I feel they mess with me.

When fights happen at school, does he get involved if he knows the reason or story behind the conflict?

> Oh you don't never really know the reason. But it's like, what happens, happens. You can't turn back the hands of time. If it happens, you should know - like I can't explain it. But if it happens out here, it happens. It's either you're gonna retaliate or you just gonna ride and not do nothing about it.

But when I ask him about something happening on the block, like a landlord trying to illegally evict his tenants.

> In that situation, that's a different type of unjust, it's not like nobody getting jumped or nothing, somebody just doing wrong so, right there you could take it to somebody higher than the landlord. If the landlord is not the superior, you could take it to the person above him - like you could argue it. I guess you could go to CB 9 or something like that, to argue it.

And when I ask him about making neighborhood level change, he begins to describe the process of gathering grassroots support and appealing to decision-makers beyond the local setting. In an emphatic tone, he argues that you would have to reach everybody, and not just people at the organization but his street friends too. But you couldn't stop at that point. If people see other people doing good, that can also play a role in the scaling up of community pressure and broadening the direction of action. In a way, these steps could be a process that a grassroots community organizer might outline.

Yvonne: People in Brooklyn?
Andrew: Nah you gotta reach the governors - you gotta reach not necessarily people in Brooklyn but you gotta reach the governors, like the people in power! You gotta reach them. Yeah! BSU could do it.
Yvonne: By themselves?
Andrew: Nah, not by themselves.
Yvonne: What else do they need?
Andrew: I mean, in this situation you do need people from the streets like- if you tryin' to change the streets, you need people to start changin like, if everybody got influence, if nobody change you trying to change the streets, that ain't gonna do nothin - but if you like get one person, then another, then they do good, then they do good, then the other person like 'They doin' good, let me try it like that'
Yvonne: It's like a chain
Andrew: Yeah.

We also discuss the issue of police brutality in the larger community. He admits that some people who are not directly affected by it, but everybody is affected indirectly. „It may be *targeting* young Black African Americans but we still, we somebody's grandchild, we somebody's son." He argues that in order to change the interactions between police and young men of color,

> You gotta go to the top. You could argue with a couple police, argue with a couple cops, get it, take a couple cop's badges…But there's still more out there you know what I'm sayin. […] You gotta change the *whole* - the whole system, the whole *trickle down* system, or whatever it is that don't work.

The above excerpts show how Andrew differentiates between injustices or unfair acts that are about personal arguments versus those that are unjust at a larger scale. He would be loath to involve himself in an argument between two people (and their respective friends) unless it directly concerned a friend of his. It is a sign of loyalty at the level of personal relationships and friendship. He does however feel compelled to intervene when injustice is occurring at the neighborhood level. His loyalty and sense of protectiveness about his neighborhood motivates his ambition to be involved. He also recognizes that he must appeal beyond the neighborhood scale (not enough to take a couple of cops' badges) to larger context (To those in power! To the top!). Moreover, that in order to succeed, it will requires the collective action of individuals on the street and in the youth organization.

E. Relevance of the Dimensions for Youth Activists

The critical pedagogy of place at BSU begins with young people sharing their personal situations but then calls on one's ability to visualize overlap in experiences and memories in order to move from the individual to the social or structural explanations. To see beyond intuition with analysis of spatial relations can help identify possible routes towards more just social and material conditions to "abundant opportunities - an extraordinarily varied and unstable terrain - for political organizing and action" (Harvey, 2000, p. 46).

The dimensions of the geographical imagination outlined here can be used to train the awareness of young people about the role of space and place in their own biography. The dimensions can help locate connections between their personal experience to larger systems and structures, as well as the contradictions and flaws within these processes. Moreover, that these processes and relationships to nature have their origins in previous historical struggles for power and resources.

A focus on spatial relations can help youth understand how the spaces of their everyday lives are constructed through a selective perception of the situation and their subsequent behavior choices. Further, that a critical reflective awareness can transform these seemingly fixed equations. By interrupting conventional ideas about the current order of space and society, it is possible to create a framework to critically analyze uneven development in conversation and with contributions from peers and adults. The hope is that this awakening to the contradictions in urban development, or harnessing the connections across disparate settings, has the potential to inform those most affected, thereby transforming future movements for social and spatial justice.

Interlude

African American people and Latino people are at two different ends of the sticks with each other but they're right at the same place when it comes to oppression.

[Damani]

CHAPTER FIVE: MODES OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION

> Coming to consciousness at once denaturalizes that which appears to be given and exposes the enormous work involved in making the world of appearances seem permanent and natural. (Katz, 2004, p. 257)

In this chapter I will review literature about how projects of resistance and transformation regarding space and the production of space have been conceptualized by theorists from geography, urban studies and feminist literature. Second I will expand on the geographical imagination by sharing five specific modes that have emerged from interviews and observations at BSU: inhabiting, narrating, reading, mapping and interjecting an-Other. Finally, I will offer five profiles of young members of the Liberation Program to show how these specific modes inform their political awareness and action.

A. Theoretical Grounding

“Space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26)

The contribution of Henri Lefebvre to contemporary theories of space is considerable in helping to dodge static notions of the environment as acting on the person or vice versa, “instead, identity, place, the social and spatial are seen as mutually constituting one another” (Conlon, 2007, p. 26). He draws our attention to how the production of space is a dialectical process involving three facets: conceived space (representations of space), perceived space (spatial practice) and lived space (representational space). These three facets are involved in the actual production of space and bring “various kinds of space and modalities of their genesis into a single theory.” Conceived space refers to the images and conceptualizations of space by professionals (e.g., planners, architects, urbanists, bureaucrats, etc.) or institutions (e.g., planning boards, city hall, banks, etc.). Perceived space is the constellation of daily activities

that produce and reproduce continuity in society and in doing so "secretes that society's space." Lived space is the dynamic space of users and inhabitants in which dominant images, association and uses of space are contested, transformed or resisted.

Lefebvre conceptualizes space as "permeated with social relations" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 289) and describes these facets as interconnected and simultaneously working to produce the social space of our everyday lives. Helen Liggett asserts that Lefebvre's conceptualization of space as a process helps us to analyze space "as a domain or area of activity rather than an empty void or preexisting area to be filled" (Liggett, 2003, p. 80). By considering space as an activity and a process, Lefebvre's theory offers tools of analysis from which to assert and generate new spaces of transformation and resistance.

Pedagogy of Place and Black Urban Resistance

Lefebvre's propositions supports Stephen N. Haymes' assertion that cultural and historical images and representations of the city are influential to processes of urban development. It is necessary to "take up how the manufacturing of urban meanings structures our perceptions about different living spaces and the political and ethical consequences of those meanings" (Haymes, 1995, p. 3). Haymes elucidates his framework for a 'pedagogy of place' using the work of critical geographers such as David Harvey, Doreen Massey and Edward Soja as well as drawing influence from critical theorists such as Henry Giroux, Rosalyn Deutsche, bell hooks, Michel Foucault and Peter McLaren. Haymes argues that a 'pedagogy of place' is necessary for Blacks to interpret the production of urban space as regulating and controlling "how they organize their identity around territory" (Haymes, 1995, p. 114).

Haymes argues that pedagogical conditions must exist to help Blacks to narrate new notions of Blackness and new images of the city through narrative and memory. These images and representations of self and space should be situated in an analysis of the unequal power relations and practices that produce and reproduce the city as it is. This re-situating of self through an awareness of the complex character of urban development is paramount to the

politics, culture and production of alternative and transformative spaces for urban Black resistance.

Haymes describes the loss of place-making opportunities by Blacks (e.g., from displacement, redevelopment, shrinking of public sphere) as connected to how “the meanings and uses of urban space are naturalized by mainstream white definitions” (Haymes, 1995, p. 126). The struggle for a positive image of place is fused with the struggle for a positive image of self, however Haymes also sees the dangers of one-dimensional images of racial unity and the displacement of the urban poor by other Blacks. He does not shy away from connecting critique by bell hooks of a ‘culture of consumption’ or Cornel West’s ‘market culture’ and adoration of celebrity to the role that Blacks have played in converting “public spaces of the ghetto into private spaces of consumption” (Haymes, 1995, p. 127). The result of creating these alluring spaces of “upscale consumer oriented entertainment and leisure” is that Blacks are less able to develop oppositional stances (Haymes, 1995, p. 128).

Given the shrinking public sphere, it is necessary to establish and sustain what bell hooks describes as spaces of refuge and restoration or ‘homeplaces.’ Spaces that Nancy Fraser (1992) conceptualizes as ‘counterpublics’ for marginalized or subaltern communities to withdraw, regroup and find collective power to agitate and organize. Haymes contends that a pedagogy of place must be linked to a politics of decolonization where alternative and empowered definitions of space and self are considered.

Haymes relies on bell hooks’s formulation of decolonization where the black subject is positioned in complex and contradictory ways. She argues that decolonization is not enough and that the vacant space that decolonization provides must be accompanied by a stance of self-actualization, of becoming anew. Finding a space to leverage feelings of anger and acts of rebellion toward the more difficult task of “becoming subjects” (hooks, 1990, p. 15) is part of taking on a radical black subjectivity.

> That process emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one's own life, as one develops critical thinking and critical consciousness, as one invents new alternative habits of being and resists from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined. (hooks, 1990, p. 15)

Gruenewald's (2003) concept of a "critical pedagogy of place" argues that productive overlaps exist between critical theory and environmental education. Critical theorists such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren are focused on awakening, of conscientizicao through processes of learning and questioning the oppressive conditions within one's life. Critical consciousness is achieved through a pedagogy that engages the participant in a form of awareness of the political and social relations within a system (of language, of society), as well as one's role in creating and producing culture and meaning. However, Gruenewald argues that critical theorists often forsake the productive pedagogical elements in explicitly examining the environment and our relations to nature. Here environmental education and place-based education take up these ecological considerations in education but are "often insulated from the cultural conflicts inherent in dominant American culture" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 4).

These "*silences*" in both critical pedagogy and place-based education result in "missed opportunities to strengthen each respective tradition by borrowing from another" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 4). He acknowledges the important work of "dissident ecological traditions" (Bowers, 2001) and environmental justice (Bullard, 1993) as focusing on "cultural conflict in a multicultural, global society and attuned to the political assaults on both human and biotic diversity in particular places" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 6). To this end, Gruenewald proposes the objectives of a critical pedagogy of place to help

> (a) identify, recover and create material spaces and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments (reinhabitation); and (b) identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonization). (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 9)

Spaces of Change and Turns of Identity

The desire to identify and create spaces of radical transformation has also been taken up by Edward Soja. In his book "Thirdspace" he describes his attempt to reject binaries that "confine

thoughts and political action to only two alternatives, by interjecting an-Other set of choices" (Soja, 1996, p. 5). He compares the concept of 'first space' and 'second space' to Lefebvre's spatial practices (perceived space) and representations of space (conceived space), respectively. First space is about concrete material reality and second space is concerned with mental ideas and representations of space. The thirdspace concept is similar to Lefebvre's representational space (lived space), where the real and imagined join to become

> a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable (Soja, 1996, p. 5).

Soja, like Haymes, also devotes considerable energy to enumerating the spatial prospects in the work of cultural and critical theorist bell hooks. He expounds on the thirdspace possibilities in her stance at the margins and her rejection of binarism. He writes, "she is resplendently spatial, not only in her use of metaphors but in her imaginative material grounding of the powerful force of Black cultural criticism" (Soja, 1996, p. 100). The stance from the margins is altered from being a position of powerlessness to that which holds potential for radical struggle. For bell hooks, reclaiming the margins is part and parcel of a larger project to construct 'homeplaces' where

> all Black people could be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves dignity denied us on the outside in the public world. (hooks, 1990, p. 42)

The theory of 'radical black subjectivity' that bell hooks furnishes us with is both a method and stance employed to subvert the disenfranchisement of Blacks. This form of being, seeing and doing is not a mere pushing back or an opposition to hegemony with the sole purpose of reaping the rights and rewards of patriarchy, rather her motivation is an

> oppositional worldview, a consciousness and identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization. (hooks, 1990, p. 15)

This notion resonates strongly with Haymes' call for a pedagogy of place that pushes those at the margins towards a critical spatial awareness and affirms Harvey's exhortation to transform the language in which the urban problematic is embedded, "if only to liberate a whole raft of conceptual possibilities that will otherwise remain hidden" (Harvey, 2000, p. 48).

Feminist geographer Cindi Katz has also addressed how projects of transformation and resistance relate to critical awareness and political/social identity. In her 2004 book "Growing up global" she describes a more nuanced perspective on resistance (not as a catch-all) but that which involves mutually sustaining and overlapping projects of reworking, resilience, and resistance (Katz, 2004, p. 242). Katz considers how projects of resistance

> draw on and produce a critical consciousness to confront and redress historically and geographically specific conditions of oppression and exploitation at various scales (Katz, 2004, p. 251).

She describes reworking as reacting to a situation and working to redress the gaps in the social or material environment. Involvement with reworking involves "redirecting and in some cases reconstituting available resources" and is "associated with people's retooling themselves as political subjects and social actors" (Katz, 2004, p. 247). Resilience is seen as both steps towards recuperation of dignity and a means of survival. These steps and means can often reveal "intricate ties between landscape and knowledge" (Katz, 2004, p. 245). Resistance in the form of explicit opposition or perhaps organizing may be rarer, therefore Katz mines the everyday with help from Walter Benjamin, "in the ways that consciousness might be "released" in the course of mundane practices that engulf life's magic" (Katz, 2004, p. 258). Katz proposes the construct of "countertopographies" that is

> both a methodology and a political project that links detailed description of social and spatial practices in specific yet divergent locales with abstract social relations, processes, and structural forces. (Conlon, 2007, p. 174)

A topography generally reveals the arrangement of the built and natural features of a landscape. Within the map are contour lines that indicate points of equal height above or below sea level. Katz describes the concept of a 'countertopography' whereby the "contour lines" connect places where the impact of abstract social relations and processes are similarly felt. Beyond "thick descriptions" of the local and particular, Katz advocates for a countertopography with "thick descriptions of abstract social relations and processes" (Katz, 2004, p. xiv). Her analysis of the changing social and spatial practices of rural Sudanese children in response to economic restructuring and global forces traces a contour line to how deskilling and disinvestment affects the lives of New York City children. Her countertopography refuses to let "geography hide consequences" and helps us to see "the importance of imagining and making change across scale, space and setting" (Katz, 2004, p. 259).

Deirdre Conlon deftly weaves Katz's framework for connecting practices of resistance to the formation of political and social identities with the work of Lefebvre on everyday life. Using the accounts of everyday life, Conlon traces how the Irish nation is produced and reproduced through "banal, quotidian and tedious ways" (Conlon, 2007, p. 175) but also how projects of resistance at the scale of daily activities may enable the migrant women to transform the Irish nation. Conlon explores how migrant women in Ireland refashioned the handed-down state categories of 'asylum seeker' or 'refugee,' and dealt with social and material inequity through acts of reworking, resilience and resistance. Katz's concept of 'countertopography' is useful to trace the contour line across the "apparently distinct groups of migrant women" (Conlon, 2007, p. 174) and the larger societal and structural forces of neoliberalism, citizenship and rites of belonging.

The project of examining the local and particular and their linkages to larger patterns and abstract forces must "re-root itself in the organic conditions of daily life" (Harvey, 2000, p. 47). Any focus on the quotidian and everyday would not be complete without a return to Lefebvre as well as a discussion of Michel de Certeau's work. Lefebvre's three facets of social space alert us

to the idea that the space in which we live is socially produced and reproduced. However another aspect is Lefebvre's work on the ground, examining the cyclical rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 8) that connect time, space and energy. Thus urging one to consider how possibilities for change might exist when one considers that which has been taken for granted or 'banal.' He pushes us to see the transformative and radical possibilities for change that can exist at the everyday (Lefebvre, 2004) by asking, "Why wouldn't the concept of everydayness reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary?" (Lefebvre, 1987, p. 9).

Another theorist and observer of the everyday is Michel de Certeau. In his book, "The Practice of Everyday Life" (1984), he trains his gaze on the micro-geographies and individual discrete actions that subvert seemingly ossified structures of power. For those "already caught up in the nets of discipline" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv), he enumerates constructs such as "tactics" and "strategies" that illustrate how users of the city evade, duck and disrupt these relations of power. Katz posits that 'tactics' engage in opposition and "encroach upon in a temporary and often stealthy way – the space of the dominating power in order to recuperate something" (Katz, 2004, p. 253).

As these concepts of local, everyday By examining the political engagement in terms of how they construct their identity around territory, I their everyday life I situate the geographical imagination as a critical construct and extend the debates within geography about the relations between identity and territory by showing the dynamic. social and physical space is internalized in daily life, These theorists support understanding how youth participate in social justice work by using their knowledge and experiences in underserved neighborhoods to encroach upon spaces of dominating power. as influenced by their interactions in everyday places, while also connected to other scales of power.

B. Modes of the Geographical Imagination: Framing Resistance and Transformation

> We must develop our own willingness to explore the continuing, unsettling tug of war between what once was and what is yet to be. We must learn for ourselves how to view the contemporary urbanizing landscape – as our best evidence of the past, entrusted to us briefly to be understood as much as possible, and to be transformed by us into longer-lasting environment for others yet to come. (Clay, 1980, p. 181)

Drawing inspiration from the radical possibilities for transformation in the work of Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Stephen N. Haymes, bell hooks, Cindi Katz, Michel de Certeau, and Edward Soja and a close analysis of the geographical imagination of youth participants, I delineate five modes related to how young people at BSU frame projects of resistance and transformation.

I use 'modes' to designate the active manner in which young people *enact their geographical imagination* as a critical capacity. I observed these modes in the young people as they talked about unjust places in their interviews or in meetings or workshops. I also witnessed how this critical capacity is brought to bear in their actions and activities. Jocelyn Solis eloquently described how participation in a community-based organization helped her interviewees to construct and make use of narratives and counternarratives of illegality as "cultural resources[...]that individuals can use to make sense of themselves and others" (Solis, 2004, p. 197). In this chapter, I explore how the narratives that reflect a critical spatial capacity that can give shape to how young people frame resistance and transformation in their everyday lives.

They are separated here into categories for clarity's sake but they are meant to be seen as interconnected and evolving dynamics of making sense of oneself and the world.
This includes how a youth activist **reads** and apprehends the environmental context and qualities of particular community issue, and how the **mental mapping** of phenomena enables one to see patterns of equity and injustice not previously discernable. This is related to how a youth activist **inhabits** and lives out her daily rounds of life, imagining themselves as occupying

a spatial field that can drum new rhythms and practices in places near and far. This includes the ways in which a youth activist intervenes to **narrate** and re-interpret the neighborhood for others by retrieving old stories or sharing alternative ideas about places. This way of doing also includes how young activists tread the difficult boundary between the neighborhood as it is, and the neighborhood they are trying to realize. In the process of doing so, they work to **interject "an-Other Thirdspace"** by creatively drawing from "two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (Soja, 1996, p. 5).

Modes	**Explanation**
Reading and Perspective-taking	Seeing through a scene and its processes; going from 'dance floor to balcony'
Narrating and Interpreting	Attending to different narratives about place and re-presenting meanings that hold transformative promise
Mapping or Countertopography	Mapping to reveal knowledge, moving beyond 'thick knowledge' to one that addresses abstract forces
Inhabiting	How one takes up space, body as geography closest in, body as moving spatial field
Thirdspace	Reject binary and interject another alternative

Figure 6 Five Modes of Enacting the Geographical Imagination

Reading and Perspective-taking

This mode of engaging the environment refers to the act of applying Lefebvre's conceptualization of space as "permeated with social relations" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 289) when critically perceiving a situation or space, and uncovering "a whole raft of conceptual possibilities that will otherwise remain hidden" (Harvey, 2000, p. 47).

Narrating and Interpreting

This mode deals with the act of attending to one's interpretation and narratives of place, and then translating or recovering meanings and uses of space that hold transformative promise (Haymes, 1995).

Mapping or Countertopography

Mapping and countertopography are modes of engaging the environment that can reveal the "intricate ties between landscape and knowledge" (Katz, 2004, p. 245). By creating an image of a territory that reflects how elements in that area relate to one another, one can connect the local and particular to larger abstract social forces.

Inhabiting

This mode of interacting with the environment refers to how one takes up space, and drums in new rhythms and energies through the body, which is "the geography closest in" (Aitken, 2001b, p. 65) using "tactics" and "strategies" (de Certeau, 1984) to subvert fields of power and construct what anthropologist Setha Low refers to as embodied space, "the body, conceived of as a moving spatial field…[making] its own place in the world" (Low, 2003, p. 14).

Interjecting an-Other Thirdspace

This is mode is focused on the potential for "creative recombination" whereby "the original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (Soja, 1996, p. 5).

C. Enacting the geographical imagination

In this section, I hone in on five young people who play differing roles in LP, and show how their framings of resistance and transformation emerged from my observations and interviews. Responding to my questions about community issues and neighborhood change, they shared their critical analysis of the social and material world. Through probing about how 'unjust places' or 'places where they've seen or experienced unfair and unjust actions, I was able to elicit complex narratives around themes of self, place, and power.

The five modes of engaging the geographical imagination, through reading and perspective-taking, narrating and interpreting, mapping and countertopography, inhabiting and interjecting an-Other Thirdspace, reflect how they envision themselves and situate their role in confronting the social and spatial injustice in their environment. Rather than showing the emergence of all five modes within one person's narrative, I will describe the particular framings of resistance and transformation in several narratives. I paint portraits of five of the young people, and identify the ways in which they interact with the environment and their ideas about how society works. I don't wish to suggest that each young person is representative of only one way of seeing the world, rather that this mode of interaction is intricately tied with their existing ideological frame and spatial practices.

Mode of Reading and Perspective-taking

At the time of our interview, Elaine (Collective member) was a senior at a private Quaker school in Manhattan. She had been a regular member since she was 14 years old. Her earnest dark eyes light up and with a beatific smile she warmly greets the young people and staff at BSU. Feeling perfectly at home in this Harlem outpost, far from the middle of Brooklyn where she lives, Elaine is a regular presence and an active voice in the Liberation Program.

Commuting from the terminal station of the #2 train in Brooklyn into Union Square where her school is located, she rides in with her "general morning crew" of "really nice old women." She grouses that even these women have their own biases, about the kind of person for whom

they will give up their seat. If a mother and child enter the train, "nobody gets up, except for me or some other lady. NEVER A GUY." She notes with a bit of self-humor that she will give up her seat generally for people of color and more specifically for older women and children. "I think about it and I think it's wrong, but I think that old women of color have had a hard life and in the children of color, I see myself."

Traveling from the middle of Brooklyn to upper Harlem where BSU is located forms the top and bottom bounds of her everyday geography. She once embarked on an epic walk from Union Square to 143rd Street along Broadway (about six miles) because she just wanted to see all that lay between. She shared that along the way she felt a mix of emotions, as she moved from the "busy" spaces between 14-34 Streets, to the residential area of "doorman buildings" after Lincoln Center, to the "creepy" industrial area near 125th street, to the sense of "home" once she neared 137th Street near City College.

> Around here – like awkwardly, I felt like at home. Like I felt like I was okay. Maybe cause it was the last leg but at the same time it's like, hey, I know this place, if anything happens, I can call someone.

She contrasted it with the familiarity she feels in the Upper West Side or near Columbia as marked by gentrification or tarnished by her sister's experiences visiting a friend and a woman in the elevator mistaking her for a babysitter.

Her attention to how space is permeated with social relations (e.g., who gets up for whom on the train, how she senses in her body the change in neighborhood) enters a new level of acuity when we start discussing changes in her life.

> It's just the little things. Like I – I don't like the fact that my school changed, it really bothers me, but I'm gonna come back and have memories in places that don't even exist anymore. And I think that's my main problem with gentrification – how can you DO that – to people who LIVE here?

With her reference to gentrification, she is connecting the physical transformation of her school with how it will affect her attachment and memories of that place. A new spatial form implies a

new social order.

Yvonne: So your school is being moved?
Elaine: No it's being reconstructed- the main building looks completely different. There's a new library new staircase, there's an elevator - like what the fuck is wrong with you!
Yvonne: And it's not nice.
Elaine: It IS but I don't care. I don't want it to be like that. And nobody, and we're the last *grade* that can legitimately *remember* what happened.
Yvonne: So how would you put these two together? Cause on the one hand, it seems like the classrooms might be better or the library might be more furnished?
Elaine: But it's not [name of school]. It's not [name of school].

She recalls how the school used to be considered bad because of its location downtown and its reputation was that it was "very very laid back." But with the changes in the school, the image it projects distances itself from its previous incarnation. It is no longer an authentic 'downtown school' rather the reconstruction harkens an attempt to produce an 'uptown school."

> It's looking a hell of a lot like an uptown school. And by uptown school, not necessarily conservative because they're not really all that conservative. Although they definitely are compared to everybody else. It's more about - athletics now. It's more about where our kids are going and it's more about, attracting people who can pay to be there.

Other changes include the reality of having to find her own sponsorship now to attend the Diversity Awareness conference that she had previously received funds from school to attend. Her frustration is evident in her tone and reflects a sense of betrayal of the values and principles that she associated with the school. They are not isolated incidents or surface changes but these practices signify and represent the remaking of social space.

> Just not [school's name] at all! How like the freshman population [...] are ALL *really skinny* and *really rich*[...] Like the grade below me has NO BLACK PEOPLE. There are two Black girls in my grade- we have THE Black people. We have nothing against mixed people but we have the mixed people who don't really identify as THE race of or the color of one of their parents, that they might be white. How do you go from me - Black power Haitian- unify people of color to like, the girl who doesn't even know she's Latino!

In order to better understand her frustration with the narrowing of cultural diversity and her feelings of exclusion, it is important to trace her educational trajectory to this point. Early on in

her schooling, Elaine had been singled out for her academic aptitude and recommended for the Prep for Prep. It is a program that identifies high performing minority children in the public school system and offers them an opportunity to supplement their education as well as groom them for admittance to competitive private high schools. In the fourth grade, she was selected and tested for the program. Starting in the summer before 5th grade, she would go to a program everyday. During the school year, the program met twice a week. Starting in the 8th grade, participants either go away to boarding school or attend a private school in New York.[15]

She recalls the ease of being with her elementary and middle school friends; the ones who knew her from the first grade and for whom no pretension or need to represent herself in any other way was necessary. It is with a bitter note that Elaine sees that only in leaving her neighborhood school that she would get the opportunities that could help her succeed.

> I KNEW my privilege and it's great and I love it cause of the advantages that I have. But I also knew that it wasn't really fair. And it wasn't fair that I was getting something that everybody around me deserves. But only I was getting it. I thought it was very unfair and sad. Because- I have to leave my group of friends at [name of Junior High], to go to some school, with like white people... And it was kinda weird.

She felt the other 'Prepheads'[16] nurtured an image that would distinguish them from other less privileged minorities. She recalls how one girl was stigmatized for not dating another "Prephead" but rather dating someone who worked at a sneaker store. Elaine felt trapped by the small cloister that Prep created around her,

> It's a Band-Aid fix. You're taking smart kids, putting them in schools so that they achieve, but what about the other kids. I love WEB Dubois but that whole Talented Ten thing. That - a talented 10% of the population is going to save the rest of the population. I don't agree with that.

When I ask her to consider what it would take to change that, she replies that education would be the key. "Knowledge that you're in no way better than anybody just cause of who you are.

---

[15] This program makes it financially possible for families with lesser economic means to afford tuition at these otherwise expensive and exclusive institutions.
[16] Nickname for kids who attended the Prep for Prep program

And if you continue the cycle of oppression, you're not helping the situation." I ask her if she feels she could play a role in changing that, she is unsure. She admits to having withdrawn herself socially from Prep. She shares with me that people at her school live in a bubble and she gets pissed off by their lack of awareness. "People in my school are so uninformed and the stuff that comes out of their mouths is like –wow –" and she continues sarcastically, "I already thought you were stupid, thanks for proving me wrong."

The Elaine I know at the brownstone is so integrated into the field of social relations (from the younger kids to the staff) that it surprises me when she describes how contained a social orbit she travels outside of the brownstone. She is frustrated by the absence of people of color in highly privileged educational settings like her high school, and that the selective grooming of a minority elite reduces the opportunity for the development of a critical awareness of unequal opportunity. Yet the bulk of her time spent outside of home (excluding the brownstone) is in these settings.

In her interviews and our informal discussions, she recounts the large scale changes she has had to contend with, the multiple places in which her family's history flows (Haiti, Boston and New York), the losses of close family members (her grandfather, her father). The events occurred in the past and she has since made her peace with how change is inevitable. However the signs of change she reads in her environment are more fine-grained and are not just a part of her personal history. These 'readings' form the building blocks of a more complex vision of how she views herself and her relationship to structures and possibilities of privilege. Her framing of resistance and transformation is driven by a growing sense that the social relations that organize and produce spaces at one level (Prep for Prep or her school's reorganization) take part in reproducing inequality at smaller scales (i.e., individual opportunity) as well as larger scales (i.e., pitting the "Talented Ten" against the others or creating homogeneous educational environments).

Mode of Narrating and Interpreting

When I first meet Andrew (16 year old Youth Facilitator) in a workshop on conducting research, he has just come from summer school at Thurgood Marshall Academy[17]. Introducing himself to me and affectionately greeting the other three young women, he joins us around the circle. He first sits cross-legged as we do, then moments later, he shifts onto his belly, grabbing a nearby pillow for support, his head propped in his hands, he follows along, watching attentively.

As a longtime resident of the area, with a wide circle of friends, cousins, relatives, acquaintances, he feels himself at home traveling the back streets and the main thoroughfares of Harlem.

> In the streets you're not always gonna feel safe and comfortable *everywhere* but there's some sense of safeness and comfortablitity when I'm chillin with my friends, when I'm in my neighborhood.

His genuine and relaxed demeanor helps him to be a well-regarded person and has earned him a loyal set of friends both in the organization and also outside. He recognizes that being at BSU is not for everyone, "here we talk about slavery and gentrification" while with his outside friends, "we talk about basketball games or – like recent things that happened, like the last fight, the recent things." He knows that being at BSU means that you have to be active about listening and learning, having discussions, listening. For his outside friends (mostly people he grew up with), being on the streets is their "community center" and "they whole mentality, it's different, they live by different codes."

The knowledge he has gained from BSU is something he shares with his friends at school and even with his friends in the streets. He is also quick to offer that,

> everybody have those conversations, the ones that, that's about the community. The streets have conversations about the community. It may not be *often* but, you catch 'em.

He goes on to describe the community issues that his friends on the streets also talk about. As

[17] Not to be confused with Summer Liberation School at BSU.

habitual dwellers in public space, they observe the minute changes in the neighborhood and talk about why the street lights seem brighter, "so cops could see everything" or "why they building new buildings and nobody livin' in them."

The abandoned school building on 145th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam is the focus of one of the campaigns in the Liberation Program. This former public school's condition had deteriorated over the years and was sold by the city of New York to a large youth organization and a local church with the condition that 85% of the floor space would be used for community purposes. The school closed its doors over twenty years ago and nothing outside of the slow creep of human neglect and opportunistic greenery has been introduced since. A focal point in one of the Liberation Program campaigns for the last six years, the collective has put pressure on the owners and raised the local community's awareness of this potential community resource gone to seed. Recently new proposals for the space have been requested but it is rumored that the owners hope to turn the property into a shopping mall or some new commercial space. Had it not been for BSU, Andrew probably wouldn't have given the building more than a passing glance, but for many years youth members have been involved in a campaign to transform the abandoned school into a community center.

From Andrew's perspective, one of the main obstacles is that residents don't see abandoned buildings any more because they have gotten used to them. Or if they do see them, they feel themselves too overwhelmed or cynical to think that it could ever be different. Part of the campaign's work is to amend and disrupt this way of thinking and introduce new narratives about neighborhood development.

Andrew: I guess when you first see something, 'Oh this building burned down' but then you keep walking past and you already know it you're not worried about it any more, it's old news. So you – it's not like like they 'it's an abandoned building, I can't do nothin' about it' and just keep moving. They don't see it anymore. Like it's a part of life now.
Yvonne: Was that how you felt about abandoned building before you came to BSU?
Andrew: Before I came to BSU, I never really -- cared. I never - 'Alright that's an abandoned building' let me get where I need to go. But now that I'm in BSU, 'That's an abandoned building, I need to do something about it.' Like I feel --that's what I have to do right now. If we could turn that into a community center, if that's a place where I can have a basketball gym in the

wintertime, let me do something with it. If everybody need a new library, let me try to make it into a library.
Yvonne: So you can really see yourself in a role to make change.
Andrew: Yeah!

Since his involvement with BSU, he can not walk blithely by the abandoned school, and each time he sees it, he thinks to himself,

> Dag...like it's owned by somebody in the neighborhood and it's *still* lookin' like this. Like they not makin' no efforts-- they say they makin' efforts, but if they were makin' efforts it would have been done by now. Like 20 years right? Like I coulda did it in 20 years.

He counteracts the complacency of others who might say, that if the change to the building had been really necessary, it would have already been done. He says, "But that's not the case at hand. It *has* to be done, nobody just did it yet. Nobody stepped up to the plate." He empathizes with those who don't feel like they can get involved. "Some people can live with a small business being turned into something big" but he's proud to say that as an activist, "if I have a chance to prevent it, I'll prevent it. I'm *glad* to be here and I'm glad to have helped and I'm willing to continue to help."

He also intervenes in the image and stereotypes that people (even in the community) may have of Black young men. He talks about how people have identities based on what they do. Some people say they are ballplayers or baseball players but very few say that they are activists.

> Definitions wise, activism, it has a lot to do with everything. It has a lot to do with leadership. It has a lot to do with organizing. It has a lot to do with what you feel is wrong and what you feel is right and what you feel you have to do to correct those wrongs.

When teachers at school ask him what he does after school, he says, "I'm an activist after school. I'm not just at school. I don't only play basketball. I don't play games, I'm an activist. It's something I feel proud of saying."

In the last few years, the group has been involved in efforts to revive the attention of other residents about the abandoned school building. They have been involved in performing silent

theater outside to raise attention from passersby. The youth members also worked on a Community Museum project in which they interviewed former students of the school and created a public exhibit at BSU to insert the stories and memories back into the public dialogue. At each step, their efforts have helped weave new narratives about that place based on the dialogue between young members and the older former students. They have created opportunities to interrupt the elision of vacant and new buildings so that other residents re-interpret that abandoned building and develop alternative visions for that space.

He has assimilated and shared with others the knowledge about how decisions and change happens in Harlem. Grappled with the fact that even those seemingly most invested in the futures of children can let a building lay fallow in the hopes of creating commercial or other sorts of 'profitable' spaces. Moreover, the work that Andrew accomplishes helps him to shore up his identity as an activist. He is someone who will step up and help right the wrongs. He feels like, "I'm still Andrew," but his participation in BSU was an opportunity to present another side of himself, to meet and surpass his family's expectations. It is in his public work (out conducting surveys, doing community service, or collecting names for a petition) that he is re-casting himself as an aware young man working in communal ways to improve Harlem.

Mode of Mapping or Countertopography

Damani (16 year old incoming participant) describes her frustration with the rift between Latinos, Caribbean-Americans and African-Americans. A petite stylish young woman with glasses, she bounds into the brownstone with energy and passion. Her father is part Dominican but basically identifies as Black and her mother is African-American. She recalls going to a bodega in Harlem and being overlooked by the Dominican storekeeper until she received a call from her Dominican grandmother. Speaking in Spanish she noted the astonished look from the storekeeper who immediately switched over to helping her. It is a phenomenon that several of the other young people have noted the friction between Blacks and Latinos. Elaine, another

Collective member recalled the numerous times she has been told that she was "pretty for a Haitian" by Dominican-Americans.

For Damani, learning more about the shared history between African-Americans and Latinos during the Summer Liberation School helped her to telescope out to a larger historical and geographical perspective. She maps the enmity (despite their shared history) between Haitians and Dominicans who share the same island in the Caribbean on to the enmity between Haitian-Americans and Dominican-Americans in New York (despite their shared experience of and perpetration of racism).

She shares that in school, "they tell you that the Dominican Republic was enslaved by the Spanish and that Haiti was free." And yet there was a time before national boundaries were drawn. There is such rivalry and enmity between the two groups that threats of violence are frequently exchanged. "It's like you're Dominican, you're really disliking a Haitian right now, and there's this Haitian guy[18] that freed your ancestors!" She describes how "the hate is so thick" between the two groups and yet she challenges Dominicans to be able to tell the difference between the two.

> You up here hating Haitians that's on the same island as you. Like "Oh if they come over here, we're going to this and this." You don't even know who is a Haitian and who isn't 'cause if you go to the Dominican Republic, you see people as dark as people from Haiti.

The tension and conflict could be appeased if there was more open communication and education across borders about their shared history.

> They live in ignorance and they don't know. That's messed up cause you guys don't know that you guys had a struggle. That a Haitian guy – if you're Dominican, if it wasn't for that Haitian guy - then you probably be still maybe in slavery or oppressed or something.

[18] Referring to Toussaint L'Ouverture who played a major role in the Haitian Revolution that resulted in the first republic ruled by those of African descent.

More than a shared history, Damani also draws a contour line between the experience of Blacks and Latinos in the United States have overlap in terms of being less powerful.

> African-American people and Latino people don't even know they are going through the same struggle – Latino men and African-American men are both in jail together [...] It's like oh I'm African American or I'm Latino and then that's it. No that's not it! We need to come together and fight the system because if we don't then there's always going to be a fight or a war against who gets the best.

Damani envisions change and transformation through education, although she is pessimistic about the education she receives in regular school. She believes that if people of color were told that, "we did have people that looked like us that was strong and fought, that was just as smart" that they would "start to grow a backbone." Her theory is that there is a larger conspiracy to keep people of color from empowering themselves and joining together.

In addition to traveling to the Dominican Republic, Damani has also been fortunate to visit South Africa with the BSU International Study Program. For young people who have been members for at least a year, they are qualified to apply to visit a foreign country for one month. Before that month of travel, they spend six months as a group meeting and learning about the country's culture, history and reflecting on the points of connection between people there and here in the United States. One of staff facilitators of the International Study Program describes how young people have reacted to traveling abroad.

> When they went to Soweto, the toughest cats, living in the projects, were weeping at the poverty. It blew them away. The trip is not all positive. It's not all glory. But it's about global awareness and enabling young people to dream in a different way. (Ford Interview, Michael)

When she travels abroad, she is confronted with the privilege that traveling as an American offers, as well as the cloak of superiority that such privilege might convey.

> When you're talking to other people in different countries, it's like they're- bowing to you. And you have to- you have to set that relationship, like "Yo you're no better than me, I'm no better than you." As a matter of fact, you might even be slightly better cause- you're ten years old, you already know - eleven languages and I'm 17! And I know I'm working on my third. Working on my fourth.

The way in which she resists and transforms the image of Americans when she is abroad is by telling people the truth. She says that she lives in America but does not live in a big house, nor does she live in California and it's not always sunny. Her tactic is to share stories and share her experiences with others. When she went to South Africa, people were asking her if she knew 50 Cent. "NO! I don't *wanna* know him and I don't know him."

Her most damning contour line between the experience of black South Africans and people of color in the United States is the assumption that just because structures of oppression don't exist as they once did, that inequality and segregation no longer exists.

> We go to South Africa and we think they ALL *united* now cause apartheid is over, but then you go over there and it's STILL really BAD. Like [white South Africans] in your face – staring at you! There is still a separation. People still live in shantyhouses. The majority of Black South Africans still live in townships.

When I ask her if that line of separation still exists here, she replies emphatically, that on the American side, it's not shantytowns but it's the projects and segregation between city and suburb.

Damani's travels have given her the opportunity to come in contact with the assumptions that others have about the United States, as well as her own about other places. She describes with feeling and detail the way it *feels* to be an American ("It sucks"). On the one hand she knows the negative stereotype of Americans as spoiled, greedy and lazy, and on the other hand, she smarts from the fact that as a superpower, the United States operates as though it were superior. By regulating its border and wanting to be seen as a god figure, "the mindset of America is to be in control and I think that's why they attach religion to everything."

Yet she knows the reality of the situation for herself and those in her community. That gentrification is a major issue in her area of Harlem and that poor people still have to contend with poor housing conditions. The similarity and congruence of what she experienced and witnessed in South Africa, i.e., feeling the glare of hostile looks in South Africa, seeing the

shantytowns made concrete in her mind the ever-lurking presence of historical injustices and the current social and material world. She frames her personal approach to change as reaching people through sharing and listening and working to demystify assumptions and stereotypes. A shift in education is necessary in order to help groups to connect their shared histories (e.g., Haitians and Dominicans on the island and in New York) and consider the shared realities of uneven development (ghettos in the United States and shantytowns in South Africa).

Mode of Inhabiting

It is from Damon (15 year old incoming participant) that I learn the other nickname for the neighborhood, Hungry Ham. Slim and smaller-framed, he speaks steadily, with a smooth drawl. When he was younger he used to think, "What does ham have to do with anything? That doesn't represent our block." It wasn't till years later that he learned that the name had to do with the block's proximity to Hamilton Heights (where Alexander Hamilton lived). In his words, the 'Hungry' had to do with the fact that people here are striving and wanting to get money.

When we talk about unjust places, he describes how he finds it unfair that people get labeled based on where they are from. He gives the example of Greenwich Village and the stereotypes that people in his community have about people downtown. He also finds it unjust when people with a particular social status get treated differently. In settings like basketball games where certain players get preferential treatment or how his mother got a ticket for smoking in the train station even though she had put her cigarette out on the steps going down.

When I ask him what he feels he can do in these situations, he replies, "me being the race I am, I can't do anything." He describes how when he was younger and they would see someone get thrown up against the wall, they would protest verbally and the cops would respond, "You better back up or you're gonna be on here too." After that he decided he wouldn't say anything back. He also says, "But I know what the kids do so I won't say they're doin' that to them for no reason."

He perceives himself as different than most of young men who he grew up with. He talks

about how they got seduced at a young age into dealing drugs and hanging out with an older crowd. He observes that they

> don't really take education that seriously because most of them don't see themselves making it out of high school. They just want to make money now and they don't think about the future. It's like, their knowledge is limited to- they can't even fight it out through the system, cause they don't know what to do, they don't know anything about it.

Damon credits his mother for teaching him how to behave in different settings. She pays $500/month for his tuition for an all-boys school and plays a decisive role in shaping the trajectory of her son's life. Encouraging him to continue his passion for the arts while schooling him on how to succeed "in the system." His mother had warned him that he could use slang with his friend but that he shouldn't use expressions like 'yo, or you know what I'm sayin' when he's in more formal settings (e.g., going for an interview). He is also grateful that his private school education might give him opportunities to get ahead. For those who can't afford it, he describes their eventual plight to be

> a different kind of slavery. Now it's financial slavery they put us in. It's not as blatant any more but they'll get you financially cause they'll have all the corporate jobs and the bank jobs and they have the connections.

His goal is to go to college and pursue an engineering or architecture degree and he holds himself to a high standard of personal dress and behavior. He cultivates his style by shopping downtown and dressing in ways that mark him as 'different' and 'cool' and takes care to present himself in a way where he can be positively viewed.

> I know personally I'm not dumb. I know when you're supposed to say certain things and when you're not. Some people call that acting white but I wouldn't say it's like 'acting white' cause I don't change my voice up or anything. I just know when you're not supposed to use slang in certain situations.

In settings where there are a lot of white people, he is aware of how his presence affects others. He worries about the fact that Black people and white people don't have many opportunities to encounter each other and dispel stereotypes. On television, there is already a

lot of negative imagery, “So once they see us do *one thing* in their minds, they’re gonna be programmed to think ‘oh they gonna act crazy, they gonna act rowdy.’” He is withering in his tone as he describes how some people move their hand over their bag when they pass him on the street, as if he was going to try to take it.

When asked during one of the workshops about how often he interacts with non-Blacks, he surprised the facilitators with his response, 10%. He chalks up his interactions as occurring in two domains: in public space and through his school. At his all-boys high school, he is an A-student and he has recently been inducted into the Honor Society. He goes to meetings outside of his all boys school and he describes how he is especially cautious there. He is sensitive because he knows he is one of very few Black youth in the Honor Society meetings. He describes how he is careful not to say ‘Yo.’ Maybe on break, his friends will say ‘Yo come here’ but he still makes sure he is speaking “properly, exactly the way I’m supposed to. […] I’m making sure I don’t mess up.” He says that perhaps if the setting is suitably casual, he will allow himself to slip into slang but he seems to hold himself otherwise in a buttoned-up manner.

> Going in there, they’re looking at us like, ‘Oh it’s a Black kid right there.’ And they could count us off too [ed.: count us off on one hand]. So they’re expecting us to say something ignorant. I’m a perfectionist so I’m making sure if I’m saying something I’m going to be so hard on myself. […]I just want to send a good example for our race that so that they leave there thinking twice, like ‘He didn’t use the n-word I expect them to use it.’

Being one of a few Black kids at an Honor Society meeting evokes a sentient and emotional response. He prides himself on having the ability to distinguish the social expectations of different settings. The way he enacts this awareness of different settings to set a “good example for our race” is by watching how he speaks and carries himself. In the Honor Society meetings, he works against the grain to project the image he wants, that of a confident and smart young Black man. Relying a great deal on his own personal capability “I know how to behave” is one way he exerts a sense of control over a situation that could be uncomfortable. But being a perfectionist carries a weight in that he would be hard on himself if he were to slip

up. This ability to read a situation and understand “when you’re supposed to say certain things and when you’re not” is a quality that he uses to distance himself from others who don’t understand the system. His form of inhabiting the world (e.g., Harlem, neighborhood, educational settings) and his ability to navigate the social expectations in these different settings helps him to feel secure that he can achieve his goals.

Mode of Interjecting an-Other Thirdspace

Marcela (16 year old youth facilitator) is a Pakistani second-generation young woman who feels a strong connection to her culture and country. She speaks Urdu at home, listens to pop music from Pakistan, shops for bangles in Jackson Heights and has relished her rare opportunities to meet and visit family in Lahore. Her dress switches between beaded shoes and a salwar kameez to t-shirt and pants. The one constant is her colorfully embroidered bag with its long strap slung across her body, its small mirrors catching light when she moves.

Devoted to her family, she is sad to realize that the gains she has made to know herself, become more confident and independent have been at BSU and not at home. She describes how her family always warned her about trusting outsiders, but that at BSU she found a whole other family just waiting for her. Her voice betrays a note of pride as she recounts her everyday life. She describes early mornings, paying attention to her studies and then off to BSU or to work and then arriving home late, exhausted and fulfilled.

Growing up in Harlem, near Columbia University, and attending a private Catholic school nearby, the time she spends outside of the house is in the company of Blacks and Latinos. She joined the Liberation Program with the encouragement of two school friends who were also regular attendees. The friends had noted Marcela’s ardent and critical vocalizations about injustice and imperialism in school and thought that she would be a good fit. As someone with a great deal of awareness about her own culture but also identifying herself as a person of color, she never felt out of place in the brownstone. She admits feeling skeptical at first but she found that the program was much more open than she thought.

During the Summer Liberation School, she would offer information about Gandhi's movement in India or about Islamic culture and she always felt it was well received.

> 'Cause the organization's goal is to empower Black and Latino youth but they would never disclude anyone else's struggle, if anything they would bring that in. Blacks and Latinos can fight for that too – and their culture and their history is enriching. Even though I'm Asian I would still want to learn about it.

Marcela also felt that others appreciated her effort to see the commonalities across different movements of oppressed people and to bring a global perspective to the table.

> Once you get here you don't feel that tension anymore. It doesn't seem like -'Oh I'm the only one here.' It's like if anything you feel comfortable here 'cause you're willing to learn from me and I'm willing to learn from them.

In my next interview (second of three) with Marcela, I ask her if it is ever talked about, the fact that she is neither Black nor Latino like the majority of children, youth and staff. She knows that people have noticed her bag "that's a hot bag!" but otherwise, she has never heard it. I offer a hypothetical situation where seven other Pakistani-American youth came to the door and said that they wanted to join because they felt that their struggles were similar to the struggles of other people of color in the United States. I ask her about what she thinks would happen.

> I think BSU would welcome them with open arms and like - if anything, the mission statement we have just says Black and Latino- but – it's always about what the youth says *it should* be and what should change. We're always asked every year if we should update it or anything. And - like if that happened, I'd definitely think they'd put Southeast Asian in there. 'Cause that's the struggle!

In my last interview however, she is becoming more cognizant of the fact that racial boundaries are still meaningful, both at school and at the organization. She is crushed during a discussion at school that her Black classmates didn't feel sympathy for the increasing Muslim discrimination. They were discussing a situation where a Muslim man had been praying in the airport and was not allowed to board the plane. Her classmates responded to that story by

saying that the man should have gone to the bathroom for that or should have expected that it was going to happen.

> I never expected that - from my class. And to hear that just broke my heart 'cause I never - I never expected it. I always thought that they'd stand up for – 'cause they know – 'cause I've been in BSU and we fight for issues against Blacks and Latinos and I've never seen the difference that 'Well I'm Asian I shouldn't care about their issues, I should worry about only mine' but in school I felt like, there, they didn't care cause we were a whole other thing. There was this girl that said 'Well Blacks, we always have to deal with police stopping us and everything and they should have to deal with it too.' It's like 'that's their business and this is ours.' And it really hurt me.

Ever since that moment, she's come to the disheartening idea that "no wonder we haven't been able to get all that's going on. 'Cause not everybody's united."

At BSU she had never been made to feel bad that she was the only Asian there. Whatever issue she brought in to the discussion, she felt like people listened and paid attention and nobody ever said, "We don't want to learn that because we're only Black and Latinos. They listen." Her work at BSU was about bridging that divide. "I didn't take those workshops and we didn't come together and set up the whole SLS and teach everybody just for you to divide us again." The atmosphere of BSU and its embrace of her as a person of color was something she found liberating. She sought and found a community of critically aware and engaged people. She was never made to feel like an outsider or sidelined the way she had in her classroom.

As an organization deeply committed to helping Black and Latino children, they also recognize the importance of global awareness and engendering a critical consciousness and an openness to consider the perspectives and struggles of others. The open-armed embrace of Marcela and the few other young Southeast Asians is a testament to that commitment. Once you have been vetted by staff and recognized as a member by others, you were considered a part of the organization.

This is not a mix without tension however. The number of non-Black or Latino children at BSU is very small. It is interesting though that reflections on that aspect of race and ethnicity

was never explicitly discussed. Marcela recalled in her last interview that she saw a flyer for the next year's upcoming Summer Liberation School and felt surprised at the headline 'Calling all Black and Latino youth!' Had she seen that in the days of her recruitment, she would not have joined. She asked a school friend, "Why is it only Black and Latino – I'm not Black and Latino." Her friend said that one of the staff had given a reason and that she should ask her. But she hasn't said anything about it and dropped the topic.

> I feel like that made me more aware of how I'm the only Asian here. That bothered me a little. I understand that they are an organization that are targeting, that are helping people in their community. And this community is Black and Latino. 'Cause there are groups like Desis are Rising, there are groups that are just focused on – and I think that that's okay – and they're helping their community what's around them.

She feels that it shouldn't say calling all Black and Latino youth because

> you're not including a whole group of people that are willing to commit to the cause and fight for it. Even – 'cause I feel like you have to unite ALL people of color to fight for an issue and if you just put that there -- I feel like you're - you're ruining a lot of chances getting a lot more people on your side, getting you to help.

Marcela felt that if there was an anonymous opportunity where all feedback was invited, particularly about restructuring their mission statement that she would do it, but otherwise bringing it up in the general meeting would be too intimidating. She is also leaving for college in the late summer so her time as a youth member is brief. Marcela reiterated several times more that she had never been made to *feel* unwelcome but it was a strange and uncomfortable realization for her.

The organization focuses its consciousness raising efforts on pan-African and Latino history and the linking up of geographies of oppressed people all around the world. Neither Black nor Latino, Marcela's presence helped to fashion a broader consciousness and add an-Other Other to that mix. She brings her own experience and awareness of unresolved racism and economic discrimination to discussions, and I have observed how her dedication and

presence is valued by staff and other youth. The family-like culture of the organization makes those who cross its threshold feel embraced and welcomed. This has been the case for Marcela up to now.

But this does leave an interesting challenge for BSU, that by developing a particular base around ethnic and racial identity (i.e., Black and brown youth), they are still rooted in a place whose shifting demographics may attract a new cohort of young people (Pakistani youth) ready to join the struggle. Marcela suspects that the organization would be open to this shift of bringing in youth from other ethnic groups however now she is less resolute in her opinion.

D. Critical Capacity and Modes of Engagement

The geographical imagination helps us to move beyond an examination of social inequalities in a particular place, to a critical look at how cities or regions are planned and organized. It proffers hope that abstraction from the individual experience to societal and global scales might clear the way for new interpretations. I posit that when young people critically read their urban environment, they are delineating the strategic opportunities for themselves and others that afforded within that environment. This critical capacity also focuses on the processes through which space and place are produced and how these processes affect how people build relationships to each other and to the environment.

In a setting in which the dominant narrative is to ‘get out the hood’ the organization provides youth practices and possibilities from which to fashion new narratives, perceptions and images about places near and far. Within the actual space of this family-centric organization in which adults are viewed as allies and the imagined space of the organization as ‘liberated land,’ young members are using their critical consciousness to construct new ways of seeing, being and doing connected to projects of resistance and transformation.

Interlude

Walking, we ask questions

Why is this block so much more than ours? Why are the demographics different over here? What is it that makes the exact same apartment worth so much more? What can I do?

Walking, we ask questions
The who? Why? When? Where? How? What the hell is going on? Who lives here? Since when? Where did these developers come from? When are they leaving? Are they taking our apartments with them?

Walking..
The streets speak volumes. If you're willing to listen to the picturesque moments, smell the tension, see the beautiful cacophony you will understand. Until then.. you'll be an outsider.

Walking..
Before this project I've professed to having tunnel vision. I see where I'm going and never look back. People, decorations and beauty wasn't my main priority. Now I want to inspect the specks and identify their origin for they too have meaning. I wish I'd known this before. The freshly painted bodegas, the newly designed street lamps, the colorful flowers, the bilingual signs all spell Gentrification. I 'saw' it everyday, no – I looked at it everyday and now I see the truth. These subtle signs are of a takeover, if only there was a detour.

Maps go the distance. Follow our maps of profiling. We profiled the profilers.

[Reflections on the 5 Points Project by Elaine – 5-17-07]

CHAPTER SIX: PROVOKING THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION

In this section I will describe specific activities that can be used to provoke the geographical imagination. I draw these ideas from the research at BSU as well as my knowledge of other progressive youth organizations that focus on the urban environment. I will conclude by synthesizing specific qualities of this critical pedagogy of place and space.

A. Activities that provoke the geographical imagination in youth

Mapping

Mapping and visually representing a phenomenon in place and time is an activity that can provoke the geographical imagination because maps provide the means of expressing spatially the relationship of organisms to their habitat, or living environment (Hart, 1997, p. 165). Cognitive mapping has been established as one method of ascertaining and identifying children's awareness and understanding of the geographic environment (Blaut & Stea, 1971; Downs & Stea, 1973; Lynch & Banerjee, 1977). Technological advances in mapping, such as Google Earth and GIS (geographic information systems) have made it possible to create, update, and share maps that combine data in new ways.

An increasing number of mapping projects have focused on young people's experiences or impressions of their neighborhood, these include qualitative GIS projects or programs that teach GIS to youth. For instance, Hopeworks youth organization in Camden, New Jersey trains youth in GIS and involves them in carrying out mapping contracts in the area. The GIS trainees develop a marketable job skill and participate in projects that illuminate community issues from a different perspective. A recent map showed the locations of homicides in Camden and was

used to stimulate conversations about where concentrations were located. The staff member saw this as a great learning tool for young people to take action, such as talking to the police or getting the community involved. Another project demonstrated the potential and challenges when youth collect qualitative data about the neighborhood to be incorporated into a community GIS database (Dennis, 2006).

Few projects focus on helping youth to identify how urban space is produced by social, historical, political and spatial relations, and even fewer place an emphasis on the role that youth can play in altering these relations. In this section, I will share my experiences of initiating and facilitating a participatory mapping project "The Five Points" with three young female activists of color at BSU. The maps that we examined and created were used to explore the interrelationship between social forces, historical circumstances, individual and collective action, and the urban environment.

In the Five Points project, I sought to use maps to make the spatial dimensions of their social/political awareness more explicit. BSU's mission is infused with a certain pan-African and Latino-perspective and it was clear that the organization's practices helped to shape and inform the worldview of its youth, but there had been no explicit attempt to provoke their spatial thinking, their geographical imaginations. During the last stage of my research, I learned about a small community research grant being offered by the New Yorkers for Better Neighborhood Foundation. I raised the option of applying for funding and conducting a small research project at one of the weekly Collective meetings and four female Collective members signed up (Angela, Damani, Elaine, Jackie).

We were five women who understood our neighborhoods to be places where we live, nourish ourselves, play, work and learn. Therefore we decided to call ourselves "the Five Points" to signify how we wanted to gather information about these five points of neighborhood connection in order to raise the awareness of others in the community. Initially, we brainstormed possible projects including creating a guide to one's rights as a public school

student or studying food access in Harlem. However it was Angela who suggested we do a mapping project. She had been a part of a previous workshop where a short mapping exercise had been conducted and felt this skill could be advantageous for their community organizing.

> It would just give me specific tools like – specific ways to find different information. Because like surveying may be good for one thing – mapping is good for one thing but may not be good for other things. So it's giving me different methods to find different information.

Discussing possible ideas as a group we eventually decided to apply for funds to carry out a community mapping project focusing on issues of food access and neighborhood change. The young women and I were excited and happy to learn that our application was successful and began in January 2007 to meet on a weekly basis. The $500 dollars would be used for buy mapping materials and the rest would be shared amongst the youth women as a small stipend.

At the outset of our meetings, we reviewed different kinds of maps (subway, community districts, world maps) and examined how the features and scale of a map are used to serve a particular purpose. The young women learned from this that maps are all simply attempts to portray patterns on the land and that all of these representations involve choices by people. They also came to see how different map projects have different types of distortions, such as the Mercator projection, known to them through Google Maps. We chose to create our own maps of our everyday geography and considered both the physical environment and social milieu. We read and reflected on William Bunge's Detroit Geographical Expedition (1969) as well as work from the Spatial Information Design Lab (2008) on Million Dollar Blocks[19]. Several of us also took responsibility for presenting articles and research findings to the group related to food access and food security, the rise of luxury housing in the area, the kinds of stores present in

[19] Maps that traced where prisoners in New York State are locked up and the neighborhoods to which they return when they are released. The Million dollar block refers to a block where a million dollars has been spent to incarcerate residents and poses the provocative question about how better this money could be spent.

different areas within Central Harlem, and what these changes imply for young people in the area.

Inspired by the Zapatista saying, “preguntando caminamos” (walking we ask questions), we also took our discussions to the streets around the brownstone. We went on an in-depth walking tour of both commercial streets as well as the surrounding residential side streets. We created maps of the area and discussed the patterns that we began to notice in relation to food access, local businesses, abandoned and refurbished buildings, and street furniture (lamps, signs, etc). Using the results of our neighborhood investigation, we began to formulate an idea that could link the social, economic and historical forces on the production of Harlem to the experiences of young people on its streets.

At that time, there had been, and continues to be, a growing involvement at BSU confronting police brutality in communities of color. Stories about police brutality are neither uncommon nor unexpected. We chose to use mapping to examine how the locations of these interactions relate to places where young people like to hang out in order to „codify that information“ as Elaine expressed it.

From this impetus, we conducted two mapping workshops with adolescent boys in middle school and young men in high school along with discussions with older young men in Harlem (in their 20s).

Figure 7 Upper portion of Harlem map. Yellow dots indicate hanging out places; Red dots are negative interactions with police; Green dots are positive interactions with police. Blue are schools or youth organizations. Purple tabs are locations of police stations or outposts.

I remember the hush as young men scribbled their stories, pausing pen in hand to recollect, and the deep sighs that commingled with the shaking of one’s head that accompanied the re-telling.

Where collected: I.K. Date: 5/16/07 * * * * * The 5 Points

Public Space in Harlem: Mapping Young People's Experiences with Police

We would like to see where you've had interactions with police (truant cops, security guards, undercover, etc.).

Gender (circle): Male Female Trans Age: 17 Ethnicity: Black

THINK ABOUT AN INTERACTION WITH THE POLICE. Be specific about where it took place

Kind of Place: Basketball Court Street Location: 153rd Macombs Dr. Where on block:

Were you (circle): Alone With a Group

Time of Year (circle): Winter Spring Summer Fall

Time of Day (circle): Morning Afternoon Evening Late Night

Tell us the story of what happened (Continue on back if needed).

I was getting ready for basketball season. I went to Macombs basketball parks to play by myself. The cops came and questioned me for about 10 minutes to try and get info out of me. They questioned me about a murder. One of my friends told me about it, but I said nothing. They kept saying, "Are you sure you don't know anything?". I felt threatened because both of them took my ball. I thought they were going to beat the hell outta me, but they just turned around and left. I was scared because of how they surrounded me.

Figure 8 Red Dot (negative interaction with police): I was getting ready for basketball season. I went to Macombs basketball park to play by myself. The cops came and questioned me for 10 minutes to try and get info out of me. They questioned me about a murder. One of my friends told me about it but I said nothing. They kept saying, "Are you sure you don't know anything?" I felt threatened because both of them took my ball. I thought they were going to beat the hell outta me, but they just turned around and left. I was scared because of how they surrounded me. (17year old, 153rd Street and Macombs Drive)

The placing of the colored dots on the map showing where young men like to hang out and the places in which they have had positive or negative interactions with the police enabled us to transform our "intuition" about the prevalence of police interactions to "proof" (Interview, Angela).

Figure 9 Green Dot (hanging out spot): Bus stop on 141 Street and 8th Avenue (17 year old).

The young women and I shared the privilege of listening to and imaging these spaces of vulnerability where "the negative realities come alive" (Interview, Elaine). The results of this project were shared with BSU staff and helped them to think about how this mapping project connected to ongoing organizing efforts.

Analyzing the story that a map is telling can expose the political claims and issues hovering beneath the surface and reveal patterns that had not previously been known. Our initial goal was to use the mapping workshops to carry out a community-based action. We had in mind to disseminate our findings to community members by staging an intervention in public space; possible ideas included creating neighborhood tours that highlighted the signs of gentrification or putting up posters to inform people about food access or police harassment.

Due to limitations in timing and funding, our project did not carry out community-wide action, but it is gratifying to know that later cohorts of youth activists at the organization were introduced to mapping by one former Five Points member.

In discussions with adult staff and the Five Points members it was clear that this experience helped them to see the value of examining the relationship between the neighborhood's physical form, the opportunities for social interaction, and the resources for change. By conducting the mapping workshops with young men in Harlem, the young women understood how divulging painful experiences was not merely for release, but a form of consciousness raising for all. The larger goal of mapping was to advance the collective efforts of their peers and concerned adults critically assess the balance between crime, safety, and our rights in public space.

The power of cartography goes beyond the making of maps to include seeing the social and political messages ingrained in the process and dislodging "conventional notions in order to actively promote social change" (Gordon et al., 2008, p. 6). William Bunge's Detroit Geographical Expeditions (1969) presented stark depictions of the dangers to urban children by mapping tragic accidents of motorists headed for the suburbs as well the places in the neighborhood where children had been bitten by rats. Bunge's Detroit Geographical Expeditions reveal these complex and multiple layers that comprise people's experience of, attachment to, and memories in place. According to Edith Cobb, mapping is like theory making, not because they discover new territory but because they both portray certain existing relationships in a different manner (Pollock, 1965, p. 47). By creating maps, the Five Points members clarified their own images of the neighborhood, developed some agreements between themselves, and took responsibility for re-presenting their awareness to others. The recognition of shared experience and the added layer of analyzing the factors (location, time, being in a group) helped to make the invisible visible (Sandercock, 1998).

Travel near and far

Experiencing different settings or familiar settings differently can be an important step in expanding one's geographical range as well as one's competence in these different places. As children expand their geographical range, they are discovering new territory and with successive visits, they are testing their knowledge and accumulating a set of experiences that provide greater understanding of that environment (Moore, 1986, p. 18). Traveling alone or in a group to locations both near and far can be a chance for young people to dispense with stereotypes about people and places, and be confronted with other cultural norms and practices. Young members at BSU have the opportunity to attend a month-long International Study Program. Six months prior to their departure, they meet weekly to prepare for the trip. This includes preparing and presenting to each other knowledge about different aspects of the country such as culture, language, and history. In preparation for their trip to Brazil, young members talked about how slavery affected both nations, learned about the issues that youth are struggling for, and shared their hopes and fears about being away from home. The group cohesion that was generated helped them to support each other emotionally once the trip was underway.

During the trip, the group visits different locations and spends time doing community service, meeting other youth organizing groups, visiting cultural and tourist sites, and staying in the homes of families. One activity that puts learning about the country in the hands of the youth is when they conduct ethnographic observations in small groups. For instance, during the trip to South Africa one team decided to learn about children's experiences in the city. They began by watching children play games and then eventually joining in. Later when all the youth re-convened as a group, that team taught the others those same games. Throughout the trip, formal and informal discussions and the keeping of a Group Journal help them to record and circulate their reflections, emotions and impressions about different places.

This program focuses on raising global awareness before and after the travel. By investing time before the trip for preparation, the activities help young people to feel like

informed and culturally aware travelers. The opportunities for expressing and sharing one's emotions and impressions during the trip helps youth to develop their awareness of the place, both from voicing their own opinion and listening to the thoughts of others. When the young people return from their trip, they are also responsible for sharing their experiences with others. This can include doing presentations at a local school, writing an article for the newsletter or creating a calendar with photographs from the trip. By sharing their accumulated knowledge with others, they expose others to rare and intimate images and impressions of other places around the world.

However, travel doesn't have to cross international borders in order to raise significant awareness or critical knowledge about geography. In fact, the local setting can be used to raise questions about how social, political, historical, economic and environmental processes affect opportunities for youth. Using participatory methodology, Caitlin Cahill worked with six young women to create a contextualized understanding of the Lower East Side. The project was grounded in feminist and Freierian praxis and respectful of their multiply situated knowledge about the neighborhood. They confronted damaging stereotypes about urban women of color in order to "speak back" (Cahill, 2004, p. 276) and in the process, reflected on their own "internalized racist and sexist stereotypes" (Cahill, 2004, p. 278). As they delved deeper, they found strength within the group to deal with the unsettling connections between "economic development, unequal distribution of resources and misrepresentations of themselves" (Cahill, 2004, p. 278).

The PAR project with Caitlin Cahill belongs to a strand of research that moves between "social constructions and lived and embodied experiences" (Cahill, 2004, p. 282). Her project resulted in the politicization of personal experiences in the Lower East Side and helped to "recoup emotion at the local level" (Cahill, 2004, p. 280). By putting a name to the urban restructuring they were intimately witnessing, the participants were emboldened to challenge the diminishing space for them and others. The lack of safe spaces for personal expression in

the neighborhood led them to create a website (www.fed-up-honeys.org) to share their ideas. The virtual space gave them a forum to agitate, and to assert their critical consciousness about the Lower East Side.

Another activity that can provoke the geographical imagination is simply moving through space differently. During the Five Points project, Elaine described her motivation to walk from Union Square up to central Harlem as her attempt to know what lies between these two nodes of her life (i.e., her school and the youth organization). Her walk brought her in contact with the changing neighborhoods along the 130 blocks on Broadway that she never experiences from the subway. She noted how the buildings changed, recalled memories and negative associations about different places, and remembered feeling as if she were coming home as she entered the familiar milieu near City College - signaling that she was nearing the organization.

During the course of the Five Points project, one particular neighborhood walk spanned only a five block radius but our unhurried pace and watchful gaze helped us to see the subtle signs of neighborhood change. I recall as we first left the organization for our walk and how the young women bounded away, chattering and taking big strides. I had to call out to them and establish a different pace, slower and quieter. Suddenly the “tunnel vision” that might ordinarily take over gave way to a broader more expansive gaze. We looked up at the signs posted outside of buildings, took note of the different street furniture from one block to the next, imagined the renovations that would be revealed underneath scaffolding.

Figure 10 Harlem sidewalk, taken as one leaves BSU heading eastward.

Figure 11 Southwest corner of 144th Street and Convent Avenue. Harlem sidewalk, taken 2 blocks away from BSU.

Michel de Certeau's classic essay on walking in the city reveals walking as a practice from which to know the city, as well as a performative act that creates the urban fabric (de Certeau,

1984, p. 103). By exerting a slower walking pace with the Five Points members, I sought to promote a new way of knowing the street and a new way of being in the neighborhood. I wished to encourage the young women to read more closely into the micro-spaces of the street (i.e., corner, sidewalk, doorways, signs on buildings). I also wanted to invite them to experience their role as 'street observer' in an embodied way. That is, to fight the urge to speed up and encounter the streets from their more customary perspective. The slow pace allowed us to call up memories of certain houses, images of other neighborhoods and heighten our environmental awareness of how small details fit a larger pattern of urban change.

Figure 12 Southeast corner of 145th Street and Broadway. The street scene as one emerges from the #2 train on the east side of Broadway in the afternoon. To the right, there is often a middle-aged woman with a baseball cap selling warm delicious tamales out of a grocery cart. To the left, another regular presence on weekday afternoons near the subway…

As we walked, we asked each other questions – rhetorical ones, angry ones, ones that we might try to explore as a group. During our extended walk, we also kept note of the different commercial spaces and discussed the frequency of certain kinds of businesses in the area. For instance, common businesses included nail salons, jewelry stores, and fast food restaurants.

Figure 13 Southside of 145th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam. The juxtaposition of various businesses on 145th Street that are trying to meet the diverse needs of the area's residents.

From this process of observing the commercial spaces, two of the young women were incensed later on to see a new game store opening up. During one of our last meetings, they talked about the motives of the business owner to open up a game store (when there was already one across the street), and were upset about the privileging of retail and consumption spaces

over play spaces for children. Angela said with frustration, if there are so many young people in Community District 9, why are so many stores "focused on external beauty? How many day cares are there in Harlem?" Elaine expressed how she hadn't realized that most stores in the area sell nothing of value until we started talking about it. In the same breath however, Elaine realized that the level of her anger about the game store in Harlem in contrast to the new shopping mall in her own Brooklyn neighborhood. For her, the shopping mall seems inevitable and certain. She doesn't muster too much outrage or questioning from her. She attributed this to the depth of her involvement and knowledge about issues in Harlem and her attachment to the area because of the brownstone.

These activities introduced new ways of experiencing the environment at a wide range of scales: one by traveling to a foreign country, another by transecting different neighborhoods (by foot, car, bus, etc.) and a third by changing the perspective and pace at which one experiences just a few streets. Reflecting on one's experiences can reveal how personal connections to place develop; whether from researching it, studying it, traveling there, discussing it, or working to improve it. The purpose of travel is to expand one's critical lens, increase competence in different places and ground images of different places in firsthand experience. This can help one to place one's own place in a different or larger context. Travel is not just about seeing the place, but encountering it as a historical and living document, to be read, remembered and shared with others.

Urban Planning and Design

In this section I will reference the work of two programs aimed at increasing young people's competence and participation in shaping the urban environment. There are exemplary school-based curricula, such as the Young Geographers (Sprague Mitchell, 1963) and City Building method (Nelson, 1984), however I will focus on programs that are situated within community-based organizations. Although the community-based programs are different in scale, location

and context, their methodology nevertheless reveals the many different approaches that can be used to provoke the geographical imagination.

The Growing Up in Cities (GUIC) project was started in the 1970's by Kevin Lynch (1977). It was intended to increase the participation of children and youth in urban planning. This model of children's participation was replicated in the 1990's. The original sites included Melbourne, Australia and Warsaw, Poland as well as Buenos Aires, Argentina, Johannesburg, South Africa, Bangalore, India, Northhampton, UK, Oakland, USA, and Trondheim, Norway in the later project. A comprehensive manual produced by David Driskell (2002) in collaboration with other researchers details the research and offers a helpful Participation Toolkit. The Toolkit describes activities and methods undertaken with youth, such as photography, observation, interviewing and community design workshops. Helping children and youth to learn about the process of urban design and planning in their own cities enables them to take on different roles, including envisioning and expressing their ideas about their neighborhood, as well as exposing them to the political nature of urban change.

A second organization focusing on the "legibility of the world around us" (www.anothercupdevelopment.org) is the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP). Based in Brooklyn, New York, the organization brings design professionals and artists together with students to carry out projects about the urban environment. Working to create tangible outcomes, each of their projects focuses on different facets of urban life. For instance, one project resulted in a report called "Garbage Problems" and examined the flow of garbage in New York City. In doing so, the students talked with different stakeholders (activists, sanitation workers) and visited recycling and sorting sites. Another project based at the Fulton Street Mall in Brooklyn involved high school students in evaluating and offering design alternatives for the open-air shopping mall. Their work involved conducting sensory walks, visits to the Brooklyn Historical Society, and meeting with experts to discuss their designs to improve the mall.

In both projects, the activities provoke young people to consider the images they have of places in their everyday lives. Kevin Lynch most famously dissected the image of the city and explored how certain place attributes (e.g., landmarks, districts, edges) lead to greater legibility of the urban environment, that is, the ease with which people can comprehend the layout of a place. For the designers and architects at CUP, they too focus on increasing youth people's ability to read and make sense of the urban environment. They use this principle to create projects with young people that stimulate new ways of seeing and perspective-taking. For instance, talking with different stakeholders in the "Garbage Problems" project helped young people to think about garbage less as 'waste' but as a commodity that is bought, traded and fought over.

The GUIC project had the goal of enabling children to investigate and articulate the conditions of the environment in relation to their rights. The CUP projects may not ascribe to a particular political goal, but they do try to instill an awareness of the social and built environment of urban places. Both use these activities to expand the capacity of youth to understand and participate in civic processes. For the GUIC project, youth are learning about civic participation by developing tools to evaluate and design urban space. CUP participants are learning about the political processes, historical events, economic forces and civic actors that shape the structure and infrastructure of the city.

Both projects also involve youth in hands-on work in which their ideas are expressed in multiple forms, including designs, models and exhibitions. Although CUP and GUIC participants may not actually produce any of their designs in actual space, they use their reports and exhibitions to communicate with the planning and design world as well as community constituents. By focusing attention on the everyday environments of children and youth, urban design projects can shape the environmental awareness about local resources and opportunities, and foster a critical consciousness about the larger context in which neighborhood development

takes place. They also provide a setting in which young people learn to interpret built forms and visual information as they creatively imagine alternatives to improving their neighborhood.

Environmental change

It is one thing to critically analyze, it is another to go the next step of physically transforming the environment. Children and youth can make changes in their environment in a wide assortment of ways, ranging from decorating one's bedroom, to appropriating spaces to play, working in a community garden or staging a protest in a public square. Young people can also get involved in environmental clubs or programs like the Girls Scouts where they develop pro-environmental attitudes (e.g., concerns about climate change) and learn practices that improve the environment (e.g., recycling).

Involving youth in hands-on activities aimed at changing the built or natural environment within their community can extend the meanings and images attached to that place (Pothukuchi, 2004) and their ability to imagine a role for themselves there (Chawla, 1999). Projects that focus on environmental change and neighborhood improvement have special value in provoking the geographical imagination and critical consciousness. In this section I describe two projects where youth are working collectively with peers and adults in order to achieve environmental change at the neighborhood level.

The first project involves ethnically diverse adolescents in an urban agriculture project called East New York Farms! (ENYF). Conceived by community-based organizations working with a local economic development corporation along with university-based collaborators, the project has benefited from its various partners. For instance, the Cooperative Extension brought expertise in farming, the local community-based organization had longstanding ties within the neighborhood, and the local economic development corporation offered its knowledge about running small businesses. The youth interns, who primarily resided in the

area, are taught how to do small-scale farming in community gardens in the neighborhood and how to market and sell produce at a local farmers market.

The ENYF project successfully improves the greening of this urban neighborhood and contributes to increasing the availability, cost and quality of food in the area. With regard to how young people perceive the environment and nature, the program gave them access to local green spaces, taught them about how fruits and vegetables grow, and made them aware of food systems in and beyond their neighborhood. As the site of my previous research and Master's work, I draw from an understanding that includes interviewing and participant observation in the organization from 2002 up to 2007. I observed how the youth learned about how the practice of urban agriculture exists in developing countries like Cuba and Tanzania as well as in low-income urban areas of the United States (e.g., Detroit, Oakland). Through this project, youth interns also came in contact with older residents (e.g., family members, neighbors) whose ties to the Caribbean or American South meant that they too understood the practice of growing food. The youth interns also had opportunities to reinforce their role as helping to improve their community and no longer looked askance at vacant lots in Brooklyn, but imagined them as potential community gardens from which to support a local and sustainable food system (Hung, 2004).

Another project that focuses on urban environmental change is Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) in the South Bronx, New York. Crisscrossed by major traffic arteries and penned in from access to the Bronx River by industrial brownfields, this faith-based organization has existed to provide youth services for the last 15 years. Working from a model that they call "breathing out of two lungs" their mission is to help youth understand their own power and address systemic problems. They achieve this by offering four centers for youth engagement within the organization: youth organizing, community health and wellness, education for liberation, and community justice. YMPJ does not consider itself to be youth-led, rather they consider intergenerational collaboration to be a hallmark of their indigenous roots.

Rather than "socially engineered situations where youth are only in charge," the Executive Director asserts that as "part of an indigenous community" they are "true to their traditions by not rejecting the wisdom of their elders."

One major environmental justice focus is the Bronx River. The Executive Director discussed a trip that she took with the young people up the river. Just ten minutes north of their home, in wealthy areas of Westchester County, the young people were stunned at the green spaces and how picturesque and accessible the Bronx River was. Some of the young people attributed this contrast to the fact that these are "white neighborhoods" where people "care" about the environment. In saying that, they were commenting on the residents of their own community for not caring. YMPJ works to counter this internalized oppression by demystifying that idea, and showing young people that there are systems of oppression that support the status quo. She pushed them to think whether poor people really want roaches or dirty streets or whether these are connected to other issues. Using Freireian principles of education, the staff encourage youth to ask questions, engage them in new experiences and map the circles of power that affect their neighborhood. Their youth organizing activities have focused on reclaiming the Bronx River, conducting cleanup and tree-planting, and working to redevelop the many brownfields.

Oftentimes, success in their neighborhood is characterized by doing well enough to get yourself out of the ghetto. The youth ministry tries to exemplify a different model of success based on more holistic and communal terms. Using scripture, examples from movements of oppressed people, the history of the South Bronx itself, the organization tries to teach youth the tools of personal transformation and social change. Breathing through two lungs means being conscious of the interdependencies between housing, transportation, education, immigration and health outcomes. As a faith-based organization, they also introduce spirituality into the dialogue; that is, how leaders of change (e.g., Gandhi, Malcolm X) believed they were following a higher order.

In both organizations, the image of the neighborhood is being altered through questioning the basis upon which neighborhood space is used and apportioned. For YMPJ members it is about reclaiming access to green spaces, and for ENYF participants, it is about the use of vacant space for productive means. Through the process of intervening in the environment and improving it from their perspective, both YMPJ and ENYF youth were learning about and shifting the existing tropes about urban youth and urban space. In the case of East New York Farms, the conditions upon which vacant lots first appeared and the basis upon which they were appropriated and transformed into community gardens marked a shift in how residents think about and involve themselves in the urban environment. By having adolescent youth use their hands to work these green spaces and be the purveyors of its fresh bounty in the farmers market, the project creates alternative narratives about urban youth and their role in the community. In addition to environmental awareness, the youth become cognizant of larger globalized food systems to which their contribution is minute and yet salient but also to which they are routinely subjected.

For YMPJ, it is their hope that their outreach, their cooperation with other radical organizations, and the political education of their members can shape a reversal of policies intended to maintain the status quo. The spirituality component of the organization helps them to talk about transcending their own personal experiences to the larger systemic patterns that keep an entire community suffering. The organization distinguishes itself from typical youth service groups because YMPJ activities are not about keeping kids off the streets or providing a safe place. Rather, they are focused on helping youth to identify their own power and define success based on what they can help others to achieve. Rather than leaving a legacy of economic success achieved by 'getting out the hood' YMPJ wants youth to leave a legacy of power within their own community.

Making spatial claims

> "You talk about accumulation by dispossession, our project is to accumulate the dispossessed." Gihan Perera, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Miami Workers Center in a conference on the "Right to the City" in Berlin, Fall 2008

The promise of creating conditions to analyze urban space critically and shape the production of emancipatory spaces is at the heart of the Right to the City Alliance, a coalition of over forty organizations and allies in the United States. Recognizing the interrelation across the different issues these different groups were fighting for (LBGT rights, housing, education, etc.), they wanted to bring together diverse grassroots organizations to create a more powerful base for movement and change. They also invited resource allies (e.g., Planners Network, Urban Justice Center) and concerned citizens to help them establish a platform from which to theorize and actualize the right to the city.

Using critical urban theories about neoliberalism and privatization, they were intent to identify connectivity and interdependence across local campaigns for justice to "build local power toward a national agenda for our cities" (Perera, 2008, p. 12). They view their demands as twofold, first to weaken existing systems of power, and second, to strengthen the rights and conditions of those most directly affected by inequality. In doing so, the concept of the "right to the city" as outlined by Lefebvre as a "transformed and renewed right to urban life" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 158) and expanded on by geographer Don Mitchell (2001) offers a power analysis of the conditions and contradictions of capitalism that provide the groundwork for critical consciousness and critical action.

The alliance seeks the promise of developing a critical consciousness about gentrification and displacement for themselves and others. In practice, their work is stratified into local, regional and national action. The core member organizations continue their grassroots work to educate and develop their base in their local settings. At the regional level, member organizations and resource allies by geographical region meet regularly to discuss regional and

national issues. Finally, the alliance also organizes action to stimulate change at the national level. For example, in 2008, the core members organized nationally by establishing a march and alternative summit during the annual US Conference of Mayors.

One of their member organizations is a radical youth organization called FIERCE (Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment). The group was formed by ten queer and transgender youth of color in New York City (9 in high school and 1 in college). It started as a group of self-described “pier kids” who met and talked informally with other people at the piers. The West Village and the Christopher Street pier have traditionally been associated as spaces for the queer community; they are also perceived by queer and trans youth of color to be a safe place to gather and socialize. However, since the early 2000’s, FIERCE members and other pier kids noticed that access to the piers had become more difficult. Laws about public space use, forces of urban waterfront development, and gentrification have made the waterfront a contested space.

In response, FIERCE members organized rallies, participated in community forums, created a documentary about their struggle, and attended training and development workshops from leading organizing groups. FIERCE co-founders also started an Education for Liberation project and used this as a platform to teach queer and transgender youth about community organizing and public space. They meet with youth members to discuss political education, queer history, imperialism, and gentrification. The facilitators offer youth members opportunities to talk about their struggles for belonging and to channel their energy towards community organizing. Facilitators help youth members enhance their ability to effectively decry the quality of life policies and police harassment tactics that are pushing them off the piers. Similar in structure to many other community-based youth organizations that try to identify constituents and organize around shared issues (e.g., education, jobs, police brutality), FIERCE distinguishes itself in its imagining of the neighborhood - the piers are where they belong and they are fighting for their rightful access to it.

Their spatial claimsmaking is focused on recovering both the natural and built spaces within a neighborhood that are threatened by privatization. By extending their critical consciousness, FIERCE offers a safe haven from which to organize queer youth's agitation. As the co-founder shared, they "know how to survive and won't be apologetic." The spatial claim that they make is grounded in the historical role of the piers having supported the gay and lesbian community against an intolerant mainstream. The quality of life policies introduced during the Giuliani administration to criminalize being poor and homeless, they have been carried out in the surrounding neighborhood with a vengeance and constitute a betrayal of the area's history as a safe haven. The piers reside in the minds of queer and transgender youth of color as a place of refuge, a setting that should similarly shelter them against discrimination and racism. FIERCE members are working within their constituency to raise the awareness about the urban environment, critical consciousness about public space, and working within the larger neighborhood to interpolate the rights of queer and transgender youth of color onto the existing narrative of the Christopher Street piers.

Situating their work at these different levels creates an image of the grassroots that is inflected with global development trends (i.e., neoliberalism and globalization). This geographical imagination sharpens the critical lens of organizers and those in their membership base to effectively mobilize at multiple scales. By creating new institutional spaces for people and organizations to enter into, they are creating opportunities for people to develop "oppositional public stances" (Haymes, 1995, p. 127). They are constructing an urban movement that connects those who are embedded in the everyday material environments of low-income communities with those who are securing a base at regional and national levels. To manifest an oppositional movement that can "have greater potential for pressing their claims" by traveling across scales, taking advantage of "resources at one scale to overcome constraints encountered at different scales in the way that more powerful actors can do" (Staeheli, 1994, p. 388).

B. Synthesizing the Activities

> Intuition alone is never enough to explain what you see. One must learn to trust intuition but also to pursue its leads, to follow hints from peripheral vision but always to dig beyond first impressions, to see through a scene and its many processes, but also to see through it in time, to understand how it came to be, and to guess more skillfully at what it might become. (Clay, 1980, p. 84)

I have described above how specific programs or organizations have worked in ways that help provoke the geographical imagination. From this and from my own research here, I can now offer a generalized set of attributes of activities that provoke the geographical imagination.

Provoking the Geographical Imagination	**Examples of activities**
Critical Engagement	Asking questions
New Media	Mapping, photography, walks, charrettes
Adopting an agentic role	Participatory projects, decision-making responsibilities
Exposure to different places	Allowing contrasts and similarities to be identified
Building from embodied experience	Seeing body as moving spatial field, as geography closest in
Spatial perspective-taking	Consider local, regional, national, global

Deconstructing relations of power and space	Asserting the right to space

Figure 14 Provoking the Geographical Imagination

Critical Engagement

First, it is necessary for young people to come to ask questions about how social forces interact with material conditions. If the focus is a neighborhood, young people should be encouraged to consider how neighborhood space is apportioned and bounded, who plays deciding roles in shaping this milieu and how these change over time. Along with prominent urban development projects, Horton and Kraftl argue that "material things –especially the smallest, daftest, most mundane, everyday bits and pieces" are important to children's geography (Horton & Kraftl, 2006, p. 87). The abandoned school building, having gone unnoticed for 20 years, was resurrected as a place of note by the Liberation Collective. They used that site to produce questions about ownership and responsibility and castigate the actual owners for their lack of action. During the Five Points project, the tactic of walking and asking questions was also helpful in doing what Sandercock describes as making the invisible visible (1998). This activity enabled the young women to identify the connections between cultural and spatial logics of what kinds of retail businesses exist in what kinds of neighborhoods.

New Media

Young people are provided with a variety of media with which to express and communicate their ideas about the environment. For instance, the GUIC projects used photography, walks and community design workshops to generate images, maps, critique and desires about the local neighborhood. The participants in CUP projects were given the tools to re-package their urban research projects into tangible and recognizable works of art, design and architecture. This exposure helps youth to understand how each form of media has its limitations and challenges

in terms of the story it can tell and the information it can offer. As young people become more adept at using these tools for expression, they are also sharpening their ability to interpret and analyze the built environment and visual information.

<u>Adopting an agentic role</u>

The activities create opportunities for young people to take on roles offering greater agency. Participatory projects that are "concerned with shifting power and about bringing new voices into the academy" (Cahill, 2004, p. 283) place greater expectations and responsibilities on young people to conceptualize and implement projects. When the young women of the "Fed Up Honeys" created their report and website, they were offering a cultural resource about the Lower East Side for others to reference. Speaking back to the "economic development, unequal distributions of resources and misrepresentations of themselves" (Cahill, 2004, p. 278) they were creating a platform, and a counternarrative that "individuals can use to make sense of themselves and others" (Solis, 2004, p. 197).

<u>Exposure to contrasting settings</u>

Young people are exposed to different settings in which opportunities for reflection and discussion before, during and after are intentionally carved out. This may include going on trips to different neighborhoods, cities, and countries, and reflecting on differences and similarities among them and what they've known. This may involve activities that establish relationships with other organizations or groups of youth. The International Study Program at BSU or the experiences of YMPJ youth along the Bronx River are examples where exposure to a diversity of places is processed with peers and adults. This can help youth to challenge stereotypes about people and places, and offer new ways of experiencing a place including those most familiar to them. Another consequence from being in different places is that youth have to summon their "street literacy," that is the way in which they understand the "environmental protocol" and how they situate themselves within a setting (Cahill, 2000, p. 251). More than just negotiating the environmental context, Cahill argues that street literacy "comprises a way of constructing

oneself" (Cahill, 2000, p. 251). In terms of BSU's International Study Program, one of the co-founders described how the "toughest cats from the projects" wept at the poverty they saw in the South African townships. At the same time, other youth were coming to terms with the privilege and burden that having an American passport brings. For Damani, being an American abroad means correcting peoples assumptions about her life and engaging people in conversations about her experiences.

Building from embodied experiences in space

Young people's embodied experiences of place are considered important to understanding how a place is experienced and functions for youth. In "embodied space" the body is "a moving spatial field" (Low, 2003, p. 14). When the young men in the Five Points mapping workshops wrote down and plotted on the map their police interactions, it summoned the emotional tension within the room. As they began to share their stories about where they liked to hang out and the places they had police interactions, they were releasing some of the emotional effects of these incidents into the group. The group could free up the emotional burden of one person's singular pain to generate a larger discussion about the spatial fields that young men of color produce in Harlem and beyond.

Opportunities for spatial perspective-taking

Young people are exposed to ideas of scale, location and perspective. Furthermore they are challenged to examine objects, processes and people at different scales, in different locations and from other perspectives. Whether using hypothetical thought experiments or actually tracing out a commodity chain, the act of thinking in extremes or creating new classifications can release the imagination. In terms of scale, young people in the ENYF project began to question the processes of a globalized food system. As they reflected on and experienced firsthand the difficulty of growing fruits and vegetables in one location, they started to consider the flow of commodities that exist at larger scales. When they thought about the effort and

resources that went into growing a single tomato, they started to wonder how it is that bananas in the supermarket from Costa Rica are so cheap.

De-constructing relations of space and power

Ideas, perceptions and images about how urban space is shaped by social relations and relations to the environment are identified and critiqued. In Rousseau's "Second discourse on the origin of inequality" (1992) he challenges the idea of a royal mandate of power by suggesting that inheritance is an accident of birth and history. By eschewing divine fiat as the justification for inequality, he contested the legitimacy of those in power and applied a revolutionary approach to creating societal change. For the young members at FIERCE, their organizing and political education analyzes the production of the Christopher Street piers as a significant place for the queer community in New York. Their work magnifies the contradiction between the cultural and historical significance of the piers with the quality of life regulations that accompanied the upscaling of the area. In doing so, they are challenging the dominant idea that decision-making power and access to the piers should be granted to only those wealthy enough to live in close proximity, they are taking a stand for the restitution of the right to gather, congregate and shape an urban commons.

In summary, I have described practices and possibilities gleaned from my research on progressive youth organizations about how the geographical imagination can be provoked in youth. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list rather they are suggestions for program activities that involve environmental awareness, imaging and imagination, critical consciousness and action. Inspired by C.W. Mills' appeal to let the "mind become a moving prism catching light from as many angles as possible" (Mills, 1959, p. 212), I present these findings to raise awareness about organizational practices that extend the geographical imagination.

CONCLUSIONS: Geographical Imagination and Youth Political Engagement

This dissertation examined how a group of young people in Harlem involved in projects of resistance and transformation expressed and understood their changing perceptions of their neighborhood and community. I examined how their ideas and ways of seeing the world are tied to how they see themselves and how they position themselves as political actors. By closely documenting their questions, observations, actions and ideas over the course of their yearlong participation, I identified how young members of a social justice organization expressed dimensions of the geographical imagination and their modes of engaging the environment. In this concluding chapter, I will describe how this research has extended my understanding of the geographical imagination in the development of young people as agents of change. I will conclude with suggestions about how this discrete case study extends the literature on critical geography, youth engagement, and identity development.

A Place for Critical Geography in Youth Engagement and Development

My aim has been to produce a conceptual framework with which to clarify the geographical imagination as a construct. Given that much of geographical knowledge has been used in projects of empire and colonization, economic restructuring and unsustainable development, it is necessary for an "emancipatory geography" as well (Harvey, 2005, p. 250). A critical understanding of space can expose alternative radical plans and geographical practices "tied to principles of mutual respect and advantage rather than to the politics of exploitation and domination" (Harvey, 2005, p. 250).

To this end, the implications and conclusions I draw from this research contribute to the linking action to environmental awareness, imagination, and critical consciousness. One aspect

of the sociological imagination that has not been explicitly explored in Harvey's conceptualization of the geographical imagination is the idea of 'agency.' Mills describes how even as a person is made by the push and pull of history and society, he is also ever minutely acting on the world (Mills, 1959, p.6). In this dissertation I have sought to extend our conceptualization of the geographical imagination as a critical construct (with dimensions) and as a critical capacity (with modes of engaging the environment).

In this chapter, I sketch out how a young person's understanding of their environment is learned, adapted and re-presented in their way of inhabiting and engaging their environment. I will return to the abandoned school building that I opened the dissertation with and show how the task of building knowledge and awareness about the physical environment is intimately tied to the political actions and community interventions taken on by youth activists.

Connecting Environmental Awareness to Action and Agency

I posit that an environmental awareness builds on the perception and awareness of affordances (opportunities for action) and affectances (feelings and attachment to place). One example of environmental awareness is how young people perceive boundaries or turf/territory, and how they discern the norms and practices in that place. Another example is how young people develop and perform certain roles and responsibilities in specific settings and whether they abide by or transgress the perceived range of social behavior. This environmental knowledge and awareness can help a young person identify opportunities to boost their responsibility to others (family, friends, teachers, etc) or to a larger social good (fighting for affordable housing). This awareness can also deepen one's relationship to nature and objects in the environment and shift or confirm how one views the broader society and the world. Environmental awareness can also be understood as the keen and discerning way in which individuals relay and receive cues and prompts in the environment and how cultural norms are produced and sustained through these interactions.

The Liberation Program campaign used the abandoned building, PS186, as a focal point to raise the awareness of local residents about neglect and renewal in their neighborhood. In order to do that, they had to engage in tactics and strategies that forced a different perception of the long-abandoned building. Andrew described how the abandoned building may have been news to residents when it first closed down, but attention has faded. Although it has certainly been transformed over time, the pace of change is slow. The change is neither dramatic nor stirring enough to raise attention from longtime residents inured to its signs of neglect. In an interview for a BSU podcast about the abandoned building, residents who were interviewed offered their mixed thoughts about the building. One lamented its decline, another was angry that nothing has been done, and a third was apathetic about the lack of renovation.

The psychology of perception informs us of the selective attention that people pay to their environment and contexts. With regard to environmental awareness, this suggests that how the physical environment is attended to, internalized, or ignored by people is also selective. What can remembering or digging up old stories about the school serve? Perhaps it can serve the political claims of a small group of impassioned people. What can heightening residents' environmental awareness accomplish? By helping others to take notice of the building, young activists are stepping into expanded roles and identities.

For Andrew, the project of awakening the attention of residents about the building is one among many commitments he makes to the community as a youth activist. He takes pride in sharing with teachers at school that he doesn't just play basketball but that he is involved in helping to transform his neighborhood. It is exactly his ability to speak authentically to different circles that makes him a particularly adept messenger for action and intervention. He slips adroitly between two seemingly disconnected circles of friends, the ones in the 'streets' who drink and smoke and hang out, and his friends at BSU who are focused on history and liberation. He sympathizes with those residents who cast little attention on to the building and admits that he too was once so. It is with this understanding that he approaches the task of

helping people to notice the conditions of everyday places and producing openings that rouse people's attention about their environment.

Connecting Imaging and Imagination to Action and Agency

Our ability to image and imagine helps us break with the past and current conditions and propel us into the pursuit of new or contrasting possibilities. As Ittelson asserts, "without material perception we would cease to be alive; without the perception of the nonmaterial, we would cease to be human" (Ittelson, 2007, p. 282). The imagination can allow for whimsy and dreams to enter and enliven and also transform our ways of seeing. The "recognition scene" as Sennett described is one way in which new imaging can burst forth, that is through the re-sorting of previously held beliefs or ideas (Sennett, 1992, p. 198). The creation of hypothetical situations can allow one to compare and contrast a host of seemingly disparate ideas.

By eliciting images and uncovering sunken dreams for a place or a group of people, one can establish the conditions for seeing things as they could be. Audre Lorde admits, "To acknowledge our dreams is to sometimes acknowledge the distance between those dreams and our present situation" (Lorde, 1984, p. 153). This process of imaging and imagining can help to subvert, or re-configure the status quo in ways that can direct us to span the gap. Yet it is important to acknowledge the risk of pain, ridicule or disappointment involved when setting out alternative visions for change, be it personal change or neighborhood change.

The organization deals with this by offering ways to counter these risks in the form of love and encouragement. They want youth members to dream differently, to see the boundaries of community differently. For Damani, one of the quotes she holds most dear is from Nelson Mandela. It reads, "our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." For her, it speaks to how human potential can be squashed by fear. As a youth activist, she wants to help people see themselves and their neighborhood differently, so that this heightened awareness can be used for community change.

With regard to the abandoned school building, much of the work has focused on giving voice back to the community residents. The Collective members recognized early on that it was not enough that LP activists felt strongly about the place.. They needed to get a wide range of community supporters. For the last six years, they have employed silent theater, held rallies outside the school, attended Community Board meetings, and created an art exhibit called "Dreams Deferred" to slowly shift the public's attention to the building. They have also renewed the ranks of supporters and organizers with each successive cohort of youth activists to the Liberation Collective. Using the emerging public support, they publicly pressured the owners to either give up ownership or finally fulfill the condition of the sale, that is, to develop a building in which 85% of the floor space would be used for community purposes. Inserting and re-introducing new images of what that community space could look like and creating a forum for residents to offer their own imaginings were essential to propelling the campaign forward.

Connecting Critical Consciousness about Space and Place to Action and Agency

To a heightened environmental awareness combined with an imaginative orientation to space we now add the quality of a critical consciousness of one's identity as a political agent. This is a potent mixture of experiences because it captures how inequality in the material environment is related to patterns of social inequality constituted at various scales. To seek these patterns can help one to see how global developmental trends affect seeming disparate places. Further, this geographical understanding can reveal how places are rich with the vestiges of previous struggles over power and influence, and can be altered by local embodied action.

Over the course of their participation, Liberation Collective members analyzed not only how unequal power relations played out in particular places but also how social inequality has produced material consequences in different settings. When reflecting on her travel to South Africa with BSU, Damani is quick to note that even though slavery and apartheid are over in the U.S. and South Africa, there are still poor people living in ghettos and shantytowns. Her critical

consciousness about the footprints of historical inequality is used to level criticism at those who don't consider root causes or question current unequal societal and material configurations.

When discussing the abandoned school building, Andrew shared with a bitter tone that the owners sought proposals from developers to turn the lot into a commercial space. He suspected that the long delay in any development was a result of greed. He inferred that with housing prices in the area increasing due to gentrification, the owners may have held back from doing anything in the hopes of selling it for a large profit. This realization that the owners were in fact a youth organization and a local church was also a shock to his notion of who is implicated and who must step up to take responsibility. He remembers thinking with frustration that the site is owned by "people from the community" and "it's still looking like that?!" He offered that if someone or some group had dedicated himself or herself to changing it, that twenty years would have been enough time. For emphasis he adds, "I coulda done it in twenty years." It was clear to him that in order for change to happen, other residents needed to know that the owners took possession of the site with the caveat that the new space would be used for community purposes. The vacant lot is actually an unfulfilled promise to the community.

This idea that neighborhood change (e.g., gentrification), is enmeshed in a more complex set of interactions and desires was also echoed by other Collective members. One young person likened gentrification to imperialism, while another talked about how it was not a problem as long as people weren't displaced. There was recognition that in the fight for justice, there is not one easy target. A poem by Elaine (Interlude, p. 157) describes how gentrification involves a set of players that included longtime residents, outsiders, developers and herself. That is, combating gentrification means removing her own "tunnel vision," she recognizes how walking and asking questions, spurs her to take more action.

Conclusions

This research provides new insights into the ways in which urban youth draw upon and reference spatial concepts over the course of their participation in activism and organizing. Extending Harvey's concept of the geographical imagination, I explore how young people's critical understanding of places near and far emerges over the course of actual political engagement. This research is admittedly focused on a small set of highly motivated young people, but these findings point to the outcomes of heightening environmental awareness, producing alternative images of places and extending critical consciousness about social and material inequality toward political action and community intervention.

These shifts in ways of understanding oneself and politics that accompany an extended geographical imagination also mean a different relationship to the environmental context. These new stances can produce alternative images of oneself and the environment. For instance, filling with a pride of place, seeing the strengths of a place or holding onto glimmers of self as strong, in the moral right, and positioned against difficult odds.

Taking on an identity as an activist or a revolutionary implies that one has a particular stance towards politics and self. The first is recognizing the power of one's actions and decisions as capable of effecting change (Freire, 1995). This requires a substantial degree of self-knowledge and self-confidence. The second is to 'make the personal political' (Miley & DuBois, 1999), to see how politics has direct repercussions on one's life and how the contexts they grow up in are a result of political processes (Giroux, 2003).

It might seem contrary to one's intuition about becoming an activist, that one condition of being liberated begins with a sense of one's 'oppression' however it can also be understood as a process (Freire, 2005). Young people require help to deal with their anger and betrayal at the ways in which their lives seem to be dictated at a distance from an all powerful other. At the same time, they are learning that circumstances are not so fixed or inevitable. By sharing

historical and current examples of efforts and agitations for greater social justice both here and abroad, they can instill hope in others.

James Baldwin describes the paradox of education, that with an expanded consciousness, you find yourself at war with your society. However, this stance should be translated into a responsibility to change society (Baldwin, 1971, p. 179). By engaging their knowledge and analysis to interpret urban space, an explicit focus on the geographical imagination can help young people to think differently about their identity and place in the world.

It must also be noted that theories about critical consciousness are also cognizant of the phenomenon of false consciousness, or as Jost describes it, ideological dissonance "may be 'normal' social and cognitive responses to material and ideological domination" (Jost, 1995, p. 400). Marx optimistically hoped that the contradictions of capitalist production would eventually produce a working class that was conscious of exploitation and organized to fight it. However social psychology research on consciousness shows just how much contradiction people are able to rationalize, as well as the influence of those in power to shape dominant ideology. This could also be suggested for spatial skills and geographical understandings which tend to be "stubbornly recalcitrant to change and ill-adapted to the heightened fluidity demanded by contemporary processes"(Harvey, 2005, p. 236). How the geographical imagination is learned, expanded and used to make spatial claims and ground political action deserves greater scrutiny and investigation by researchers and practitioners.

Returning to the idea that research about "the interdependency of the production of "space" and "self" as a vital process of resistance " as wanting (Ruddick, 2003, p. 343), this dissertation seeks to fill this gap. Drawing from a yearlong case study at a social justice youth organization, these findings add greater conceptual clarity about the role of the geographical imagination in young

people's political engagement. This work shows how young people make sense of the uneven development in their community and in turn wield this critical consciousness and emerging political identity in producing the city of their desires and new understandings of themselves as social actors.

In explicitly focusing on the geographical imagination, I wish to assert the possibilities for alternative perspectives on the landscape and power. The findings and analysis proffered in this dissertation extend the reach of the geographical imagination as a critical concept and a critical capacity. I offer that to help young people become politically engaged and realize new ways of perceiving self and the world is to awaken a revolutionary spirit. My findings suggest that clarifying the geographical imagination can help arm this revolutionary spirit with a greater ability to discern and deliver these emergent spaces. The efforts we make towards clarifying this relationship between the world as it is and the world as it should be - can inform young people's efforts to claim their right to a society that responds to their needs, and to help bring that society into existence.

Appendices

Appendix A. BSU Legend 177

Appendix B. Staff Interview Schedules 178
-oral script for telephone interviews
-staff interview outline

Appendix C. Youth Interview Schedule 179
-youth pre- and post- interview
-youth f/u interview

Appendix A. Brothers Sisters United (BSU) Legend

Youth Programs
LP – Liberation Program
SLS – Summer Liberation School (involves Youth Facilitators and Newcomers)
ISP – International Study Program
Rites of Passage - Brotherhood and Sister Sol chapters
ASP – Afterschool Program

Staff
Will – Co-Founder (on leave in Brazil)
Michael – Executive Director and Co-Founder
Marilyn – Program Development
Danielle – Associate Director and LP Coordinator
Cynthia – LP Coordinator
Sonia – LP Facilitator, Sister Sol Chapter leader

Liberation Program Participants

Summer Liberation School Newcomers (August 2006)
Janelle – 14 yr old African American
Damani – 16 yr old African-American/Caribbean-American, also participates in Sister Sol, ISP South Africa, 5pts
Damon – 15 yr old African-American
Tamara – 14 yr old African-American
Amy – 15 yr old African-American
Adam – 15 yr old African-American
Chris – 18 yr old African-American
Ana – 15 yr old African-American

Summer Liberation School Youth Facilitators
Marcela -16 yr old Pakistani-American
Andrew – 16 yr old African-American
Donna – 16 yr old African-American
Nina – 17 yr old African-American

Liberation Collective Activists
Angela – 16 yr old African-American, also participates in Sister Sol, ISP Brazil, South Africa, Ghana, 5 pts
Elaine – 16 yr old Haitian-American, also participates in ISP Brazil, Ghana, 5pts
Jackie – 17 yr old African-American, participates in Sister Sol, 5pts

Appendix B. Staff Interview Schedules

Oral Script for Staff at Potential Organization

My name is Yvonne Hung. I am a student in Environmental Psychology at the City University of New York.

I am working on my dissertation research and was wondering if you might have 30 minutes to speak with me about some of the ideas I have. I am interested in how young people develop a critical consciousness through participation in social and environmental change. What is really special about _____________ is that you define community change a little differently than other youth organizations -- in that you try to deal with the young woman as a whole. I would like to understand how ______________ successfully works to support young women in developing a sense of the world that includes challenging the 'taken for granted' within their communities and working collectively with others to achieve tangible solutions to issues they care about.

Based on what I learned about _______________ from your website, I'm wondering if you would be willing to help me learn more about your particular philosophy, practice and process.

Any time you might have would be incredibly helpful.

All the best,
Yvonne

Staff Interview Outline

1-Can you describe your philosophy with regard to working with youth in this community? What changes would you like to see once youth become involved in the program?

2-What is your definition of social justice? How do your activities lead to creating social change in the community?

3-What activities are connected to raising the critical consciousness of youth?

4-In what ways do you use the surrounding neighborhood as a resource for learning and raising the critical consciousness of youth?

5-What are the different ways that youth learn from each other? How does the staff support this kind of interaction?

6-What are some ways to improve the program?

APPENDIX C. Youth Interview Schedules

PRE- AND POST-INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Warm up
Pre and Post: Place Post it. Use to get a sense of different places and how they feel in and about these different places. I will close by asking them to reflect on the sorting – what did they learn, did anything come up that surprised them.. as a way to transition into the more traditional question and answer part of the interview.

Involvement with Bro/Sis
Pre: How did you hear about Bro Sis? What did you know about the program before you got involved? Why did you decide to get involved? What do you hope to gain from this experience?
Post: What did you gain from this experience? What have you learned about yourself through being at Bro Sis? [probe: What lessons do you think you would share for other young people? What have you learned about how to improve your community? Who else do you think would benefit from the knowledge you have gained?]

Post: Involvement with Bro/Sis with Summer Liberation (Summer) and Campaigns (Fall/Spring)
Can you describe for me what your involvement has been like since the end of the Summer Liberation Program? Did you join a campaign?

> -If yes, what has being in the Liberation Collective working on the campaigns been like for you? Has being involved in LP influenced how you see yourself? How you see the world? Are any of your thoughts related to improving the community? Why or why not?
> -If no, what other activities have taken a greater role in your life?
>
> Thinking back over the last year – from the Summer Liberation Program up to now, do you feel you gained something from this experience? If so, can you share your thoughts? Are you ever reminded of some of the events or workshops or experiences from the summer or during the year? What lessons do you think you would share for other. How could Summer Liberation and Liberation Program be improved? What could the staff or youth do to increase participation from other youth? What could you do?

Pre and Post: Describe Harlem or the neighborhood where they are from. What are the differences between Harlem and other neighborhoods they are also familiar with (i.e., what they offer young people/children/adults, what they look like, what it feels like to be there, who else is there?) What are the similarities between these places?

Pre and Post: How could Harlem be improved for young people? What would it take to make it better? What could your role be?

Pre and Post: What do you know about the history of activism in Harlem? What actions and events and people were important? How does this knowledge important today? What lessons do you take from the lives and actions of these people and groups?

Pre: What are the different responsibilities you have at home, school, church, work, neighborhood, etc? How did you come to take on these roles and responsibilities? How did it affect how you see yourself? Did people treat you differently?

Post: What are the different responsibilities you've had at Bro Sis? How did you come to take on these roles and responsibilities? How did it affect how you see yourself? Did people treat you differently?

Pre: What are some places you've been to before (whether it is in NYC, US, etc)? What are some powerful experiences you've had in these different places? What did you learn about yourself? How does this knowledge and experience affect your life today?
Post: What are the different types of places that you've been to with Bro Sis? Did you travel outside of Harlem, NYC, US? What kinds of experiences did you have in these different settings? What did you learn about yourself in these places? How does this knowledge and experience affect your life now?

Individual Mapping to have them visually represent places and talk about a bigger picture of their geography
Pre and Post: Let's return to the places we talked about in the Place Post It, lets add any new places you talked about in your interview, can you draw a map for me that includes these different places?

Let's use these different colored pencils to mark how you feel about these places [use red to symbolize dangerous or unsafe place, use blue to show places where you feel good and comfortable, use yellow to show places that are important to you], any memories you have in these places that are important to you. Also, mark on the map if there are places where overlapping things happen (for instance, lets draw a dotted line between home and school, because you do your homework at home and you bring it to school – so somehow, what happens at home is related to school). Are there any other connectors that you can draw?

So let's look at the map that you've drawn. What can we learn about the different places you go to in your life? What patterns can you see? Can you think of reasons that explain these patterns?

FOLLOW-UP INTERVEW SCHEDULE

Part 1 // Places that are a part of my everyday life
List all the places you go to (example: home, school, library, etc)

<u>Places where I feel safe and comfortable</u>

The #1 place where I feel safe and comfortable is:
Why?
Other places where I feel safe and comfortable are:
Why these places? What do they have in common? What do the places where you don't feel safe and comfortable have in common?

<u>Places where I laugh alot</u>

The #1 place where I laugh alot is:
Why?
Other places where I laugh alot are:
Why these places? What do they have in common? What do the places where you don't laugh a lot have in common?

Places where I feel useful to others

The #1 place where I feel most useful to others is:
Why?
Other places where I feel useful to others are:
Why these places? What do they have in common? What do the places where you don't feel useful to others have in common?

Places that are unjust

The #1 unjust place is:
Why?
Other places that are unjust are:
Why these places? What do they have in common? What do the places that are not unjust have in common?

Part 2 // Think about an issue facing your community

What is the issue? Where does this issue take place?
Why is this issue important to you? Why is it important to your community?
Who does it affect? Who is not affected?
What are some of the root causes of this issue?
How could this issue be improved?
Can young people be a part of the change? How could you be a part of the change?

Part 3 // People, places and activities

a) List the people, places and activities that are your sense of power and self-worth	Give a score from 1-4 1-little influence 2-some influence 3-more influence 4-a lot of influence
example: My old boss would make me feel powerless and useless	3 – because it influenced me a lot in the past

b) List the people, places and activities that influence My knowledge of social issues	Give a score from 1-4 1-little influence 2-some influence 3-more influence 4-a lot of influence
example: Brotherhood Sister Sol influenced my knowledge of social issues	4 – because I learned a lot from being there

c) MAKE UP YOUR OWN CATEGORY!

List the people, places and activities that	Give a score from 1-4 1-little influence 2-some influence 3-more influence 4-a lot of influence

References

Aitken, S. C. (2001a). Global crises of childhood: rights, justice and the unchildlike child. *Area*, *33*(2), 119–127.

Aitken, S. C. (2001b). *Geographies of young people*. London: Routledge.

Altman, I., & Low, S. M. (1992). *Place Attachment*. Springer.

Anderson, E. (2000). *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (Reprint.). W. W. Norton & Company.

Ba, H. (2007). *Children's place exploration: The geographies of ten-year olds in New York City*. Unpublished dissertation, Graduate Center/City University of New York.

Baldwin, J. (1971). A talk to Harlem teachers. In J. Clarke (Ed.), *Harlem USA* (pp. 171-182). New York: Collier Books.

Bishop, J., Adams, E., & Keen, J. (1992). Children, environment and education: Personal views of urban environmental education in Britain. *Children's Environments*, *9*(1), 80-109.

Blaut, J., & Stea, D. (1971). Studies of geographic learning. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *71*(2), 387-393.

Boulding, K. E. (1956). *The Image*. Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press.

Bowers, C. A. (2001). *Educating for eco-justice and community*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.* . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown, N., Griffis, R., Hamilton, K., Irish, S., & Kanouse, S. (2007). What makes justice spatial? What makes spaces just? Three interviews on the concept of spatial justice. *Critical Planning*, *14*, 6-27.

Bullard, R. (Ed.). (1993). *Confronting environmental racism: Voices from the grassroots*. Boston: South End Press.

Bunge, W. (1969). *The first years of the Detroit Geographical Expedition*. Detroit: Society for Human Exploration.

Cahill, C. (2004). Defying gravity? Raising consciousness through participatory research. *Children's Geographies*, *2*(2), 273-286.

Cahill, C. (2000). Street Literacy: Urban Teenagers' Strategies for Negotiating their Neighbourhood. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *3*(3), 251–277.

Casey, E. S. (1996). How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prologemena. In S. Feld & K. Basso (Eds.), *Senses of places* (pp. 13-52). Sante Fe: School of American Research Press.

de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Chawla, L. (1999). Life paths into effective environmental action. *Journal of Environmental Education*, *31*(1), 15–26.

Chawla, L., & Heft, H. (2002). Children's competence and the ecology of communities: A functional approach to the evaluation of participation. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *22*, 201-216.

Clay, G. (1994). *Real places: an unconventional guide to America's generic landscape*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

Clay, G. (1980). *Close-up, how to read the American city*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coles, R. (1986). *The political life of children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Conlon, D. (2007). *The nation as embodied practice: Women, migration and the social production of nationhood in Ireland*. Unpublished dissertation, Graduate Center/City University of New York.

Coon, H. L., & Bowman, M. L. (1976). *Environmental education in the urban setting: Rationale and teaching activities*. Columbus, Ohio: ERIC Center for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education.

Crain, W. (2003). *Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Cronbach, L. (1975). Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. *American Psychologist*, *30*, 116-127.

Cross Jr., W. E. (1997). Encountering nigrescence. In *Multicultural counseling* (pp. 30-44). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Daiute, C., & Lightfoot, C. (2004). *Narrative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Daiute, C., & Turniski, M. (2005). Young people's stories of conflict and development in Post-war Croatia. *Narrative Inquiry*, *15*(2), 217–240.

Dear, M. J. (2000). *The postmodern urban condition*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Dennis, S. (2006). Prospects for qualitative GIS at the intersection of youth development and participatory urban planning. *Environment and Planning A* , *38*(11), 2039-2054.

Dixon, J. A., & Durrheim, K. (2000). Displacing place-identity: A discursive approach to locating self and other. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *39*, 27-44.

Downs, R. M., & Stea, D. (1973). *Image & environment*. Chicago: Aldine Transaction.

Driskell, D. (2002). *Creating better cities with children and youth*. Paris: Earthscan.

Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Fearon, D. (2009, June 2). Georg Simmel: The sociology of space. Retrieved from http://csiss.org/classics/content/75.

Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 109-142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Freire, P. (1995). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (M. Ramos, Tran.). New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Freire, P. (2005). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Fox, M., Mediratta, K., Ruglis, J., Stoudt, B., Shah, S. & Fine, M. (2010). Critical youth engagement: Participatory action research and organizing. In L. Sherrod, J. Torney-Puta & C. Flanagan (Eds.) *Handbook of Research and Policy on Civic Engagement with Youth*. NJ: Wiley Press.

Gibson, A., & Wratten, E. (1995). *A practical handbook for 'Planning for Real' consultation exercise*. Telford, UK: Neighborhood Initiatives Foundation.

Gibson, J. J. (1986). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Routledge.

Ginwright, S.A. (2010). *Black youth rising: Activism and radical healing in urban America*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ginwright, S. A., & Cammarota, J. (2007). Youth activism in the urban community: learned critical civic praxis within community organizations. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *20*(6), 693-710.

Ginwright, S. A., & Cammarota, J. (2002). New terrain in youth development: The promise of a social justice approach. *Social Justice*, *29*(4), 82-96.

Giroux, H. A. (2003). *The abandoned generation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gordon, A., Paglen, T., Rogers, H., Lewison, S., Casas, M., Price, J., et al. (2008). *An Atlas of Radical Cartography*. Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press.

Gregory, D. (1994). *Geographical imaginations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(4), 3–12.

Hall, S., Morley, D., & Chen, K. (1996). *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*. London: Routledge.

Harding, S. (1995). "Strong objectivity": A response to the new objectivity question. *Synthese 104,* 331-349.

Harlap, Y. (2005). *Protecting and preparing children: Peace activist parenting in a post-9/11 world*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan.

Hart, R. (1979). *Children's experience of place*. New York: Irvington New York.

Hart, R. (1997). *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. New York: UNICEF.

Hart, R., Daiute, C., Illtus, S., Kritt, D., Rome, M., & Sabo, K. (1997). Developmental theory and children's participation in community organizations. *Social Justice*, *24*(3), 33-63.

Harvey, D. (1975). *Social justice and the city*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Harvey, D. (2000). *Megacities Lecture 4*. Amersfoort, Netherlands: Twynstra Gudde Management Consultants.

Harvey, D. (2005). The sociological and geographical imaginations. *International Journal Of Politics, Culture and Society*, *18*(December), 211–255.

Haymes, S. N. (1995). *Race, culture, and the city: A pedagogy for Black urban struggle*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Heath, S. B., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). *Identity and Inner-City Youth: Beyond Ethnicity and Gender*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leading*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

hooks, B. (1994). *Outlaw culture*. London: Routledge.

hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Horton, J., & Kraftl, P. (2006). What else? Some more ways of thinking and doing `Children's Geographies'. *Thinking*, *4*(1), 69 –95.

HoSang, D. (2003). Youth and community organizing today. *Social Policy*, *34*(2), 66–71.

Hung, Y. (2004). East New York Farms: Youth participation in community development and urban agriculture. *Children, Youth and Environments*, *14*(1), 56–85.

Irby, M., Ferber, T., Pittman, K., Tolman, J., & Yohalem, N. (2001). *Youth action: Youth contributing to communities, communities supporting youth*. Takoma Park, MD: Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation. .

Ittelson, W. H. (1973). *Environment perception and contemporary perceptual theory*. New York: Seminar Press.

Ittelson, W. H. (2007). The perception of nonmaterial objects and events. *Leonardo*, *40*(3), 279-283.

Jost, J. T. (1995). Negative illusions: Conceptual clarification and psychological evidence concerning false consciousness. *Political Psychology*, *16*(2), 397-424.

Katz, C. (2004). *Growing up global: economic restructuring and children's everyday lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0421/2004017577.html.

Keith, M., & Pile, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Place and the politics of identity*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. (D. Nicholson-Smith, Tran.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rhythmanalysis: space, time and everyday life*. (S. Elden & G. Moore, Trans.). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Lefebvre, H. (1987). The Everyday and Everydayness. (C. Levich, Tran.)*Yale French Studies*, (73), 7-11.

Lefebvre, H. (1996). *Writings on cities*. (E. Kofman & E. Lebas, Eds.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lewin, K. (1943). Defining the field at a given time. *Psychological Review*, *50*(3), 292–310.

Liggett, H. (2003). *Urban encounters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lincoln, D. Y., & Guba, D. E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. New York: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Trumansberg, NY: Crossing Press.

Low, S. M. (2003). Anthropological theories of body, space, and culture. *Space and Culture*, *6*(1), 9–18.

Lynch, K. (1973). *The image of the city*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press.

Lynch, K., & Banerjee, T. (1977). *Growing up in cities: Studies of the spatial environment of adolescence in Cracow, Melbourne, Mexico City, Salta, Toluca, and Warszawa*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Marston, S. A. (2000). The social construction of scale. *Progress in Human Geography*, *24*(2), 219-242. doi: 10.1191/030913200674086272.

McAdam, D. (1990). *Freedom summer*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McLaren, P. L. (1991). Schooling the postmodern body: Critical pedagogy and the politics of enfleshment. In H. A. Giroux (Ed.), (pp. 144-173). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Miley, K., & DuBois, B. (1999). Empowering processes for social work practice. In W. Shera & L. Wells (Eds.), *Empowerment practice in social work: Developing richer conceptual foundations* (pp. 2-12). Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press US.

Mitchell, D. (2001). The lure of the local: landscape studies at the end of a troubled century. *Progress in Human Geography*, *25*(2), 269-281.

Monmonier, M. S. (1996). *How to lie with maps*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moore, R., & Young, D. (1978). Childhood outdoors: Toward a social ecology of landscape. In I. Altman & J. F. Wohlwill (Eds.), *Children and the environment* (pp. 83-130). Plenum Publishing Corporation.

Moore, R. C. (1986). *Childhood's domain: Place and place in child development*. Kent, UK: Crook Helm Ltd.

Moss, P. (Ed.). (2001). *Placing autobiography in geography*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Nelson, D. (1984). *Transformations: Process and theory*. Santa Monica, CA: Center for City Building Educational Programs.

Perera, G. (2008). Claiming the right to the city. *Urban Habitats*, *15*(1), 12-13.

Piaget, J. (1999). The stages of the intellectual development of the child. In A. Slater & D. Muir (Eds.), *The Blackwell reader in developmental psychology* (pp. 35-42). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Pollock, T. C. (1965). *The nature of literature*. Gordian Press.

Pothukuchi, K. (2004). Hortaliza: A Youth "Nutrition Garden" in Southwest Detroit. *Children, Youth and Environments*, *14*(2), 124-155.

Proshansky, H., Fabian, A., & Kaminfoo, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical world socialization of self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *3*, 57-83.

Richards-Schuster, K. (2005). *Creating civic spaces for youth: The possibilities and potential for democracy*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan.

Rousseau, J. (1992). *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. (D. A. Cress, Tran.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Ruddick, S. (2003). The politics of aging: Globalization and the restructuring of youth and childhood. *Antipode*, *35*(2), 334-362.

Sandercock, L. (1998). *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History* (1st ed.). University of California Press.

Sapiro, V. (2004). Not your parents' political socialization: Introduction for a new generation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *7*, 1–23.

Sarbin, T. (2004). The role of imagination in narrative construction. In C. Daiute & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), (pp. 5-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Schneekloth, L. H., & Shibley, R. G. (1995). *Placemaking*. New York: Wiley-Interscience.

Sennett, R. (1992). *The conscience of the eye*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Simmel, G. (1950). The metropolis and mental life. In K. Wolff, *The sociology of Georg Simmel* (pp.409-424). Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

Smith, G. (2002). Place-based education: Learning to be where we are. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *83*, 584-594.

Sobel, D. (2006). *Place-Based Education*. Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society.

Sobel, D. (1998). *Mapmaking with children*. Portsmith. NH: Heinemann.

Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Solis, J. (2004). Narrating and counternarrating illegality as an identity. In C. Dauite & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society* (pp. 181-200). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Spannring, R. (2008). Young people's multidimensional relationship with politics. In G. Spannring, G. Ogris, & W. Gaiser (Eds.), *Youth and political participation in Europe* (pp. 55-86). Opladen, Germany & Farmington Hills, Missouri: Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Spatial Information Design Lab. (2008). *Architecture and Justice*. New York: Columbia University.

Sprague Mitchell, L. (1963). *Young Geographers*. New York: Basic Books.

Staeheli, L. A. (1994). Restructuring citizenship in Pueblo, Colorado. *Environment and Planning A* , *26*, 849-871.

Stanley, S., & Billig, M. (2004). Dimensions of storytelling and identity. In C. Daiute & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society* (pp. 159-176). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stockdale, C., & Possin, C. (2009, June 2). Spatial relations and learning. Retrieved from http://www.newhorizons.org/spneeds/inclusion/teaching/stockdale.

Students studying New York garbage create documentary, Fresh Kills design. (2002, June 7). *Solid Waste Report*, 184.

Sutton, S. E., Kemp, S. P., Gutierrez, L., & Saegert, S. (2006). *Urban youth programs in America: A study of youth, community and social justice conducted for the Ford Foundation*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.

Tuan, Y. (1990). *Topophilia*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Vandiver, B. J., Cross Jr., W. E., Worrell, F. C., & Fhagen-Smith, P. E. (2002). Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *49*(1), 71-85.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ward, C., & Fyson, A. (1978). *Streetwork*. London: Routledge.

Wilcox, S. (2006). *Brother, Sister, Leader: The official curriculum of the Brotherhood/Sister Sol*. New York: The Brotherhood/Sister Sol.

Wolford, W. (2004). This Land Is Ours Now: Spatial imaginaries and the struggle for land in Brazil. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *94*(2), 409–424.

Wood, D., & Fels, J. (1992). *The power of maps*. Guilford Press.

Wridt, P. J. (2004). An historical analysis of young people's use of public space, parks and playgrounds in New York City. *Children, Youth and Environments*, *14*(1), 86-106.

Wright, J. (1947). Terrae Incognitae: The place of the imagination in geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *37*(1), 1-15.

Yates, M., & Youniss, J. (1998). Community service and political identity development in adolescence. *Journal of Social Issues*, *54*(3), 495-512.

Yates, M., & Youniss, J. (1996). Community service and political-moral identity in adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 6*(3), 271–284.

Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1997). *Community service and social responsibility in youth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zeisel, J. (1987). *Inquiry by design*. Monterey, CA: Brooks Cole Publishing Company.