YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF STUDENTS' BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CIVIC PARTICIPATION

by

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

2011

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the
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Abstract

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This dissertation studies the impact of after school clubs and service learning activities on students' beliefs and attitudes towards citizenship (civic participation in a democracy), civic engagement, and political and social participation. This study focuses on two different organizations: Spectrum, a Gay-Straight alliance; and AMIGOS, a service learning program. Both environments presented students with opportunities to engage in civic activities, while informing their understanding of citizenship (civic participation).

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, I wanted to better understand the impact of after school clubs and service learning activities on students' beliefs towards civic participation and civic and political engagement. Second, using as my lens such issues as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation, I sought to gauge whether participation in programs like the ones above altered preconceived ideas students held about others.

A mixed-methods approach (quantitative/qualitative) was used to examine the impact of participation in AMIGOS and Spectrum. Data sources included participant interviews, surveys, field notes, observations of training/meetings, and documents. Data were first analyzed separately and then triangulated to investigate consistency in the findings. Data from the observations were analyzed at three different stages: (1) analysis

done as an on-going process while reflecting on what was observed; (2) analysis after the study was completed; (3) analysis performed over the summer, after some time and at some distance from the study.

AMIGOS provided volunteers with ideal opportunities to build a sense of civic and political engagement in youth. AMIGOS integrated key elements identified by current research: it provided opportunities for teaching about civic and political engagement, and provided opportunities for reflection. In addition, it incorporated real activities: students spent from six to eight weeks in a host community trying to effect positive change. Finally, their efforts were supported, recognized and praised by family members, the communities they come from, and the communities they were assisting.

Spectrum also had the potential to build a sense of civic and political engagement in their members. However, they faced challenges that risked lessening their potential impact. The club engaged in "teaching" about civic and political and engagement and provided the members with opportunities to engage in real activities. However, they did not always receive the support and recognition of their communities (school) or families, and often faced opposition to achieving their goal of equal LGBT rights.

Acknowledgements

I must begin by thanking all the participants in this study. I applaud their commitment to civic/political participation and all their efforts and contributions to make this a better society. Thank you for allowing me to observe your work and discuss it with you. I will always be grateful to all of you.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my committee. They helped me shape my research and provided me with the necessary tools to complete this project. I am heartily thankful to my supervisor Dr. Nicholas M. Michelli, who believed in my work and provided me with the assistance to complete this research from the preliminary stages until its completion; to Dr. Susan F. Semel, who taught me how to look at my work from a historical perspective; and to Dr. Ira Shor, who encouraged me to critically analyze my own work.

During the years in which I pursued my doctoral studies, I met amazing scholars and colleagues who became my friends. They helped me in so many ways that I could not possibly describe here. You know who you are! Thank you. I am also grateful to my friends and colleagues at work, Eva, Adriana, and Rocío, who supported and encouraged me to continue with my work; to my friends Hubert and Jimmy for listening to me and providing valuable insights. Thanks to Jimmy for editing drafts of my writing and offering guidance.

Thanks to my family for supporting and believing in me; especially to my mother, who did not complain when I spent so many hours working on this project while visiting her. To my father and my brother José Manuel, who I know would be very proud of me. And my deepest love and gratitude go to my partner Gerard, who has encouraged me to continue working and has been incredibly patient, loving, and supportive.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> *At the most basic level, social movements consist of groups of people utilizing similar practices and discourses in attempts to bring change to some aspect of society … Part of the dialogue of every social movement is to speak about what is wrong with the current state of affairs, to speak about suffering and injustice, and to be critical of those deemed responsible.*
>
> *- Miceli, Melinda, 2005, p. 6*

Youth engagement in civic activities is important. Adolescence can be a critical time to develop citizen orientations. Research has reconfirmed the importance of citizen education and service learning activities to promote a sense of civic engagement (Barber, 1992; Campbell, 2009; Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, &Gallay, 2007; O'Donogue, 2006; Putnam, 1993 &1995; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 1998). Research has also stressed the importance of opportunities to participate in real life activities. Sapiro (2004) indicated that "instead of merely teaching young people about politics, with perhaps some opportunities, civic education explicitly focuses on development of civic skills such as effective communication and cooperation (Kirlin 2002), and where *direct engagement* (my emphasis) is carefully integrated with academic content (McLellan & Youniss 2003)."

This dissertation studies the impact of after school clubs and service learning activities on students' beliefs and attitudes towards citizenship (civic participation in a democracy), civic engagement, and political and social participation.

Citizenship / Civic Participation

Citizenship is a term about which scholars have differing views. Therefore, I will present some of the common notions held by scholars in the field of political socialization. I will then provide a framework that draws on the literature presented and which will be used as a guideline for this study.

> *A citizen is, most simply, a member of a political community, entitled to whatever prerogatives and encumbered with whatever responsibilities are attached to membership. The word comes to us from the Latin civis; the Greek equivalent is polites, member of the polis, from which comes our political.*
>
> --- (Walzer, 1989, p.211)

Merriam-Webster provides several definitions for citizenship. On the one hand, the term is connected to the word "citizen," an inhabitant of a city or town entitled to the rights and privileges of a free man; a native or naturalized person who owes allegiance to a government and is entitled to protection from it. On the other hand, the dictionary defines citizenship as membership in a community (as a college), and the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community. (http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/citizenship) These definitions are partly legal definitions or pertain to the duties involved with being a citizen. However, these duties have not been described in the dictionary definition. (Many scholarly studies have determined that voting is one of the most important duties of a citizen).

Research has acknowledged that citizenship is a contested term. Researchers have conceptualized and defined citizenship in different ways. Citizenship has frequently been connected to democracy in an attempt to hone in on which concepts of citizenship can best advance democracy in our society (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Westheimer and Kahne provide a framework of citizen education that builds on the work of different scholars in the field. Before advancing their framework, the authors offer various alternative theories of citizen education for a democracy. They include the work of Walter Parker (1996), who presented three concepts of citizen education for a democratic society: traditional, progressive, and advanced. The traditional view emphasizes understanding of how the government functions and being committed to core democratic values. The progressive view also emphasizes knowledge and commitment to core values; however, it stresses the role that civic participation plays in the process. Finally, the advanced view builds on the progressive view, but acknowledges the importance of recognizing, respecting, and protecting other groups. Other researchers, such as Shor (1992) and Freire (1990), have underscored the need for social critique and structural change to educate citizens for a democracy. Conservative views of citizen education emphasize the importance of character education that focuses on the deficiencies of people rather than structural problems (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Other writers are proponents of citizen education that prepares informed voters, individuals who can participate and deliberate in the public arena, or students who can critically analyze society (Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon, 2001; Youniss and Yates, 1997)

In Addition, Wilfred Carr (1991) reminds us of the importance of finding core elements in contested terms so that we can understand the rival and conflicted

conceptualization of citizenship. According to him, the origins of the concept of citizenship are to be found in Athenian democracy. Aristotle defined a citizen as someone who participated in public affairs. However, participation was "restricted to a small minority of the general population" (p. 375). Aristotle argued that this had to be achieved through the education of the students, and teaching about their active (ruling) and passive (being ruled) roles in the process. Carr explains that the role of being an active and passive citizen in modern society has changed to one that consists of an active elite that rules and a passive "political majority who only participate in politics by casting votes in periodic elections" (p. 375).

According to Diane Richardson (2000), much of the discussion of citizenship has been dictated by the work of T.H. Marshall (1950). Marshall used three models to define citizenship: civil or legal rights, political rights, and social rights. According to Marshall, the last 250 years of historical events—civil rights, political and social rights—have prompted these changes in the conceptualization of citizenship. In recent years, the definitions provided by Marshall have been criticized for being too simplistic.

Recently, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) studied ten programs that aimed to strengthen democracy through civic education. Their study identified three types of citizens, based on the program's core assumptions, being trained to support an effective democracy. The three different "kinds of citizens" were: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen.

Programs that train the personally responsible citizen are based on the premise that to solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character and be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of their community. Along with

behaving responsibly, they work, pay taxes, and obey the law. This kind of citizen recycles and volunteers in times of crisis.

Programs that train the participatory citizen believe that to solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures. The participatory citizen organizes efforts to improve the community, knows how the government and other agencies work, and knows strategies to accomplish goals.

Finally, programs that train the justice-oriented citizen believe that to solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question, debate, and change established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time. The justice-oriented citizen critically assesses the social, political, and economic structures of their community, seeks out and addresses areas of injustice, knows about democratic social movements, and understands how to effect change.

Citizenship is often connected to the legal status of a person. The United States has frequently implemented measures designed to restrict immigrants' access to American citizenship. It also has a historical track record of race-based exclusion of certain groups from citizenship. Spring (2001) explains that the granting of citizenship "is one indication that a group is accepted by the dominant culture." (Spring 2001, p. 167) U.S. citizenship laws historically denied the rights bestowed by citizenship to groups that were not deemed worth of it, sometimes because of racist beliefs, other times for political reasons. For example, The 1790 Naturalization Act excluded Native Americans from U.S. citizenship. Though the "Five Civilized Tribes" were granted citizenship in 1901, it was not until the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act that Native Americans were granted U.S.

citizenship. Other U.S. groups have been subjected to similar exclusion. The 1965 Immigration Act ended citizenship discrimination against Asian Americans. Mexican Americans and African Americans were not granted full citizenship until the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which finally awarded them "political equality and the right to vote like other U.S. citizens" (Spring 2001, p.219). Citizenship continues to be a contentious issue, with pro-immigration groups working to pass legislation that would grant conditional residency and final citizenship to undocumented immigrants in the US. For example, the House of Representative passed the DREAM Act[1] on December 8, 2010, but it failed to reach the necessary votes to advance to the Senate floor.

New studies on citizenship urge us to look at the impact of culture, consumerism, and globalization on citizenship. Maira (2004) points out that traditionally citizenship has been described in political, economic, and civic terms. However a number of studies are turning to the idea of cultural citizenship as well. Cultural citizenship takes into account power in relation to the normative concept of citizenship. It determines that "the rights and obligations of civic citizenship are mediated by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, as well as religion." (Maira 2004, p.222)

Bryan Turner (1993) defines citizenship in terms of national identity. Therefore, a citizen is someone who is a member of a nation, city, community, etc. Richardson explains that those who are perceived as not belonging to those parameters are excluded from the rights of citizenship. She also problematizes the concept of nation in a changing society that has challenged notions of traditional boundaries, in particular against the backdrop of globalization.

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[1] The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act. First introduced on August 1, 2001.

Richardson also describes the emergence of two new concepts of citizenship: cultural citizenship and citizenship in terms of consumerism. “Cultural rights, institutionalized through the ‘cultural industries’ such the mass media, would include the right to participate in the culture of a particular society and to the representation in the media and popular culture. In these terms social exclusion can be understood partly in terms of the denial or relative lack of cultural space accorded to certain groups in society.” (Richardson, 2000, p. 74)

Maira (2004), citing anthropologist Lok Siu, explains that cultural citizenship comprises "behaviors, discourses, and practices that give meaning to citizenship as lived experience" in the context of "an uneven and complex field of structural inequalities and webs of power relations," the "quotidian practices of inclusion and exclusion." In other words, when examining citizenship, we also need to examine structural inequalities and webs of power relations, not just the political, economic, and civic terms in which citizenship tends to be framed.

Therefore, when examining students’ beliefs and attitudes, civic engagement, and political and social participation in connection to citizenship, we need to pay close attention to the roles played by race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion in students’ understanding and lived experience of citizenship. Citizenship needs to be examined from its legal, political, and social webs.

This study recognizes that citizenship is a term about which scholars have differing views. However, for the purposes of this study, I adhered to a definition of citizenship as a civic participant in society ─ a person who commits to participating in

his/her community, city, nation, and so forth as a way to improve the lives of others and him or herself. In the case of the two groups I observed, the participants expected to improve the lives of two different groups in their respective communities.

The Study

This study focuses on two different organizations. I observed an after school club in a suburban Northeastern high school in which I participate as a co-advisor, and the chapter of a New York City service learning program in which I participate as a board member. Both environments presented students with opportunities to engage in civic activities, while informing their understanding of citizenship (civic participation).

I chose to study an extra-curricular club and a service learning program because they were both grounded in ideals of social justice and democracy. They also provided the researcher with the opportunity to understand the impact of such clubs on the participants' beliefs and attitudes, civic engagement, political and social participation, and citizenship in and beyond school.

The after school club I chose for this study was the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). GSAs are youth-led organizations rooted in ideals of social change in schools and communities. I chose to study a GSA for several reasons. First of all, GSAs have provided a space for sexual minority students. LGBT students see GSAs as spaces where they can talk about their identity, experiences, and struggles. They can ask their schools to tolerate, accept, and protect them in the same ways they accept and protect other students. Second, participation in these clubs, regardless of sexual orientation, allows students to experience the contradictions that minority students face when they deviate

from the norm. Finally, there is not much research on how sexual minorities perceive citizenship. It becomes necessary to understand the development of citizenship with LGBT students in a context where difference is part of the conversations and does not remain in the closet.

According to Stephen T. Russell (2006), Gay-Straight Alliances are "school-based clubs that are based on partnerships between sexual minority and heterosexual students for the purpose of supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students and their allies for promoting positive change in the school climate for these students." In *Queer in America: Citizenship for Sexual Minority Youth,* Russell explains that sexual minority youth experience many challenges in their daily lives. These challenges hinder their opportunities for citizenship development in three "key developmental domains: family, faith, and education" (Russell, 2002). LGBT youth face an important contradiction: "While they are learning about civic life and their role in it as adolescents, they are simultaneously identifying and exploring a culturally stigmatized identity." This, to cite Richardson (2000), creates a group of citizens that are "partial citizens" because "they are excluded from basic rights (and responsibilities) in each of the civil-legal, political, and social realms." This situation clearly prevents many LGBT youth from experiencing key typical developmental experiences in family, faith, and education that prepare them for "fully engaged citizenship." This idea of "partial" citizenship can also be explored in the enforcement over the past few years of DADT[2] (Don't ask, don't tell), which barred openly gay, lesbian or bisexual people from serving in the military.

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[2] DADT was repealed in 2010.

Amigos de las Américas (Friends of the Americas) is an international service learning program that draws participants from high schools and colleges. "AMIGOS Volunteers partner in teams of two or three and spend five to eight weeks living and working in one of eight Latin American countries[3] … Collaborating with local sponsoring agencies and community members, Volunteers help identify local resources and then implement community improvement projects in their community's schools, health clinics, or house-to-house." (www.amigosnyc.org).

Amigos de las Américas provides high school and college students with the opportunity to engage in selfless activities in under-advantaged communities. These students build partnerships with different groups of people from Latin American countries. The experience "empowers young leaders, advance community development and strengthen multi-cultural understanding in the Americas" (www.amigosnyc.org). Students are hosted by local families and engage in projects that address community needs. Adrian Milton, a veteran Amigos volunteer, says, "AMIGOS is a learning opportunity. It is a chance for young people to experience life outside the U.S., enhance their Spanish-speaking skills, help out in places where people aren't as fortunate, and make lifelong friendships while providing community service."

I have studied an LGBT club and a service learning program to assess and understand how two different groups of youth, one made up of "perceived" marginalized youth, and the other made up of "perceived" mainstream youth, benefit from clubs and community service programs. The LGBT club is clearly a club that focuses on the well-

[3] Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay.

being, acceptance, tolerance, and safety of sexual minorities. They are looking to effect positive changes in their school and community. However, Amigos de las Américas has very different roots. These high school and college students are not thought of as marginalized. The focus of the program is not on the students themselves but on the service they offer to other communities. Nevertheless, some volunteers might be also part of a marginalized group; this, though, is not explored. These volunteers are looking to effect positive changes in marginalized communities. Their contact with and understanding of these marginalized groups may potentially change their perceptions of and biases towards other marginalized groups in the same way that LGBT programs in schools and communities may help to change the perceptions and biases that mainstream groups hold of marginalized communities.

Why Is This an Important Topic to Study?

Youth engagement in civic activities is important. Adolescence can be a critical time to develop citizen orientations. Research has reconfirmed the importance of citizen education and service learning activities to promote a sense of civic engagement (Barber, 1992; Campbell, 2009; Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, &Gallay, 2007; O'Donogue, 2006; Putnam, 1993, 1995; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 1998). Research has also stressed the importance of opportunities to participate in real life activities. Sapiro (2004) indicated that "instead of merely teaching young people about politics, with perhaps some opportunities, civic education explicitly focuses on development of civic skills such as effective communication and cooperation (Kirlin 2002), and where

direct engagement (my emphasis) is carefully integrated with academic content (McLellan & Youniss 2003)."

Rosenthal, Feiring, and Lewis, (1998) explain that, "very little research has examined volunteering in political activities or volunteering in general." (Rosenthal et al. p.491) The literature seems to suggest that there is an increase in the lack of involvement or interest by young people in their community or in society's political process. In a climate of persistent criticism directed in particular at youth, it becomes imperative to study the impact of after school clubs and service learning activities to help us determine how to best engage our youth in civic activities.

Flanagan and Gallay (1995) indicate that institutions have encouraged adolescents to learn responsible citizenship, caring, and ethics through service to others. Despite the importance given to these topics, the authors claim that there is a decline in research on the political development of young people.

Billig (2000) also conducted research on k-12 school-based service learning. She encourages researchers to engage in more and better research on service learning, and acknowledges that most of the research that exists comes from service learning program evaluations. There are few studies that use control groups, and a few track whether impact was sustained over time.

In conclusion, in a climate of persistent criticism of young people's declining participation in civic activities, there needs to be more of a research focus on their engagement in such programs.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Putnam (1995) documented a decline of American's political and civic engagement and put out a call for more research on the topic. His previous research showed that "the norms and networks of civic engagement [promoted] social trust and cooperation for mutual benefit," (p. 67) while also determining the quality of governance. Research has reconfirmed the importance of citizen education and service learning activities to promote a sense of civic engagement. It has also stressed the importance of opportunities to participate in real life activities. Barber (1992) has stressed that community service is one of the most important ways ─often the most important─ to reverse a tendency toward civic and political disengagement. Once again, youth become the epitome of hope, and a group to study to help us determine ways to reverse this apathy towards civic and political engagement. This section presents research conducted in the field of youth civic engagement and youth activism, and the implications of the findings for this study. This body of research has explored the kind of impact that participation in citizen related experiences has on youth and discusses the findings of prominent scholars regarding youth in schools, in after school clubs, social environments, and service learning programs that promote civic engagement, political and social participation, and citizenship.

1. Students' Beliefs and Attitudes towards Political and Social Participation

The research shows that attitudes of youth towards political and social participation are more positive and non-cynical than those of adults. It also stresses the importance of explicit teaching of politics and real opportunities that exist to engage in political and

social activities aimed at fostering political understanding and social participation. Research also underscores the need to pay attention to the role of minorities in political and social participation. Minorities learn that they do not have a voice in the political process. However, being aware of this does not mean that they necessarily will become politically active (Flanagan and Gallay, 1995). Finally, we are reminded that childhood experiences have an impact on our political readiness, and that traditionally children are likely to be shielded from politics.

Berti's (2005) review of the literature in children's political understanding indicates that explicit teaching of politics fosters political understanding in both adolescents and children. She also explains that we could also achieve this by creating opportunities where youth need to confront political issues. At the same time, participation in political and civil movements or voluntary services promotes long-term engagement in political and social activities. She presents data that suggest that the most effective way to foster political understanding and participation is by providing opportunities to participate in significant experiences and provides information about the issues involved and about the public institutions. In addition, in a study she conducted in 2001 with Andriolo, she shows that typical misunderstanding and limited political knowledge could be easily overcome by explicit teaching.

However, Berti's research has limitations. Most of the reviews she presents looked at a homogeneous population of white children. She generalizes her findings rather than grounding them in their own contexts.

Both AMIGOS and Spectrum provide students with opportunities to participate in experiences that have the potential to foster political and social participation. AMIGOS

volunteers have to collaborate with the political figures of the communities they are assisting. This encourages them to understand and navigate the political infrastructures of their community. Depending on their commitment to the club and visibility of the club in the respective schools, Spectrum members also have an opportunity to engage in political negotiations with school officials and the community. These experiences inform, bring about change in their lives, and have the potential to impact the development of a political identity for both volunteers and students.

Flanagan and Tucker (1999) contributed to the research on adolescent political identity development. The goal of their study was to correlate adolescents' views about unemployment, poverty, and homelessness to either social or personal attributes. They expected that adolescents' attributions for these problems would be aligned with their beliefs about opportunity in America and the role of the government in providing a safety net; values and views about the relationship between self and society they had heard in their families; and their personal aspirations.

The researchers discovered that higher maternal education and average household income in the adolescents' school district were positively correlated with the likelihood of attributing all three issues to societal causes. However, those who attributed the issues to individual causes were more likely to believe that all Americans enjoyed equal opportunity, that government support encouraged dependency, and were more committed to material goals. Conversely, those young people that attributed the problems to societal or contextual causes had more altruistic life goals, and reported that compassion was emphasized in their families.

Likewise, AMIGOS volunteers and Spectrum members may be led to question, alter, or confirm their own political beliefs by experiencing and understanding the challenges that every group has to face in its quest for a equality and inclusiveness.

In addition, these experiences may potentially prompt the AMIGOS volunteers and Spectrum members to question notions they have about their own government. The volunteers tend to compare their own country to their host country, and Spectrum members learn about the role of the government *via* the LGBTQ experience. Sinatra, Beck, and McKeown (1992) investigated students' concepts about their country's government, and discovered that students' concepts regarding their government focused on structure, with limited understanding of its philosophical or historical roots. Their research also echoed previous findings described in the political socialization literature. For example, children's attitudes were more positive and non-cynical than that of adults. Children tended to see political objects as good or bad. Their responses indicated limited and biased perceptions of their own and other countries. The authors noted that the most striking finding was the consistency in responses of the students over a period of three years. Nevertheless, the limitations in knowledge and the evidence of their conceptual understandings indicated that the problem is tractable. The findings emphasize the importance of the teacher's role in fostering development of understanding complex content in social studies.

Therefore, it becomes important to explore students' understanding of what is means to be political, and the potential impact that their participation in these programs has on their political views, as well as potential long-term engagement in political activities. Flanagan and Gallay (1995) discuss what "political" means in the context of adolescents'

lives. They pay particular attention to the position of minority youth since the demographic trends indicate that minority groups will constitute a majority of the U.S. population by 2050. In general, more attention needs to be paid to young people's perceptions of political system prioritizing members of minority groups. The authors claim that an expanded definition of "political" is necessary, one that expunges boundaries between private and public life.

They describe the case of a 17-year-old Chicana who states that before she learned how the American government worked, she realized that Chicanos did not have much of a voice. In other words, she understood that "her personal sense of subordination occurs by virtue of her membership in a particular group or culture, and that other members of that group are similarly oppressed." The authors imply that awareness alone does not necessarily mean that oppressed minorities will become politically active. The authors found that collective action is particularly "important for engaging minority and working-class youth in the political process." The authors urge us to pay more attention to "young people's perceptions of the political system, especially those who are members of minority groups."

Political Socialization

Political socialization refers to the processes by which society transmits political values from one generation to another. Traditionally, society has transferred these values through families, schools, religious institutions, political organizations, and friends. In modern society, the media and emerging new technologies also play an important role in values transmission. In general, the family is the most important agent of socialization (Jennings & Langton, 1969). For that reason, scholars are encouraging new studies on the

impact of family values on political socialization, especially the political development of children. Research underscores education as the most important predictor of civic and political engagement (Putnam, 1993; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 1998). As has been mentioned, research has concluded that teaching about civic and political engagement can have a positive impact on students' attitudes. However, we still do not know how education impacts civic and political participation. Campbell (2009) writes that, "virtually every study that employs education, including this one, treats all types of schooling as equal, when there are obviously wide disparities across high schools and colleges" (p. 785).

This had led researchers to conclude that there is a need to engage in more extensive research on political socialization. This new research should also reconsider the importance of understanding all the means by which we socialize children. Sapiro (2004) discusses three themes: "the construction of a more genuinely comparative field of political socialization, a reconsideration of relevance of childhood to politics following its virtual abandonment by the field for many years, and the importance of understanding the origins of preferences." (Sapiro, 2004 p.1) She explains that in the past, scholars defined political socialization, at the macro level, as "a crucial mechanism for creating a political culture that could allow democratic institutions and practices to function or an appropriate support function on the input side of the political system." At a more micro level, it focuses on individual engagement in "political development and learning" (Sapiro, 2004 p.3), and the individuals' political contextual experiences. Sapiro urges us to examine the contextual experiences that inform our political development, particularly the political development of children. She explains that children are traditionally

segregated from politics when adults deal with politics. Therefore, there is little evidence to support the notion that their childhood experiences will inform political participation or foster political engagement.

Scholars are being encouraged to study the correlation between urban poverty and political socialization, given that current research suggests that there is a correlation between lower levels of political participation and social class or economic level. Hart, Atkins, and Ford (1998) describe the perceived lack of morality of youth in the teen years. They define morality in the context of adolescence and poor urban neighborhoods as a "commitment consistent with one's sense of self to lines of action that promote or protect the welfare of others." (Hart, Atkins, & Ford 1998 p. 515) As a response to this, society has turned to harsh sanctions against particularly urban minority adolescents than those living in majority, middle-class homes. Their analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth demonstrates that urban poverty is associated with few opportunities for development of moral identity. They argue that high priority should be given to foster good individual development and as a means for increasing social capital in poor neighborhoods.

In summary, students' attitudes towards political and social participation are highly influenced by family values, family participation in those activities, and encouragement by families for students to participate in such activities. It is also important to study the role that institutions such as schools and religious groups have on youth, as well as their roles in promoting and encouraging political and social engagement so that we can understand how these institutions impact students' attitudes towards political and social participation.

2. Civic Engagement

"Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes" (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). Amy Gutmann (1987) reminds us of the critical role that education plays in creating opportunities for political participation. Both AMIGOS and Spectrum strive to make a difference in the communities they serve, and accomplish this through member engagement.

Research emphasizes the importance of civic engagement to ensure that we have an informed politically and socially active citizenry (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). Research on civic engagement also suggests that early volunteering leads to later volunteering and that "mandatory community service programs can boost later volunteer efforts, but that socialization into appropriate citizenship attitudes is of equal, if not, greater value" (Janoski, T., Musick, M., and Wilson, J. 1998, p. 496).

It is essential to study young peoples' views on social responsibility and the impact of family values. Bowes, Flanagan, and Taylor (2001) investigated "ideas of adolescents about the relative importance of individual and social responsibility." (Bowes et al. 2001, p.60) They hypothesize that "children's involvement in household work may be linked to cultural values." (Bowes et al. 2001, p.60)

The authors believed that cultures with a more "individualistic orientation" would accentuate "self-care household tasks" and place less emphasis on "family-care tasks". Conversely, "group-oriented" countries would emphasize "values of responsibility to the

group" (Bowes et al. 2001, p.62). They also believed there would be differences according to age and gender.

They found that children from individualistic societies support monetary compensation whereas children in group-oriented countries reject payment. At first, they seem to suggest that these differences seem to suggest differences in values. However, I agree more with literature that suggests that maybe this is due to the "wealth of the participating countries" (Bowes et al. 2001, p.67). It also inculcates materialistic values.

In addition, Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Caspo, & Sheblanova (1998) studied whether family values inform children's developing concepts of a political community and of their responsibilities to the public interest; and if experiences of membership in institutions beyond the family are necessary for the social integration of young people into a political community and for their identification with a common good. The researchers expected youth in the transitional societies to report lower levels of democratic climates in their schools. They also expected females to be more likely than males to report that their families emphasized an ethic and social responsibility in their upbringing. Additionally, they anticipated a consistent gender difference in youth volunteering, with girls more likely than boys to be engaged in such work. Finally, they expected that family values and a sense of membership at school would play a stronger role for males and females in all countries.

Flanagan et al. found that in five out of the seven countries females were more likely than males to report that they had engaged in volunteer work in their communities. Comparing adolescents' reports of civic commitment, school climates, and family values

across countries, they found that Bulgarian youth were more likely than others to consider volunteer work in their communities an important life goal.

As expected, the data on adolescents' perceptions of democratic climates in school indicated that students in stable democracies were more likely than their peers in transitional democracies to report that their teachers encouraged them to voice their opinions. Students in Bulgaria, Russia, and the Czech Republic were less likely to characterize their school with such democratic climates.

Russian youth were less likely than all others to endorse a sense of pride and membership in school. Australians were more likely to feel pride and identify themselves as members of their schools. However, Swedish and Czech youth were more likely than those from Russia, but less likely than all others, to report that their schools were characterized by a general sense of pride and membership.

The data also revealed that adolescents from the United States, Australia, and Russia were more likely to emphasize social responsibility than those in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Sweden. Overall, they found that girls were more likely than boys to report that social responsibility was a value emphasized throughout their upbringing.

To understand why AMIGOS volunteers and Spectrum members decided to become involved, it is necessary to examine their previous views on civic engagement, and whether their participation was in any way a result of family values or encouraged by family members.

Participation in civic activities can also be the result of the students' own beliefs regarding right and wrong, and their readiness to improve society based on their own

belief systems. Flanagan & Campbell (2003) conducted another study on the justice beliefs of a large number of adolescents from four security[4] societies in transition to market economies and two opportunity societies (Australia and The United States). The authors believe that adolescents' views about what is just and right reflect their perceptions of how the social contract works for people like them. The results were examined as a function of type of society, social class, and gender. They found that in the security societies, working-class teens preferred that schools promote student autonomy and competition, but also reported the most negative school climates of any group. In the opportunity societies, working-class youth believed success was based on individual merit, while middle class youth expressed more doubt about this connection.

Scholars have underscored the importance of civic and political engagement to build social capital. "Social capital is an attribute of an individual in a social context. One can acquire social capital through purposeful actions and can transform social capital into conventional economic gains. The ability to do so, however, depends on the nature of the social obligations, connections, and networks available to you. (Bourdieu, 1986)"[5] However, Akom (2006) challenges conventional definitions of social capital. He questions traditional concepts of social theory, and calls for a new conceptualization of social capital, one that includes notions of "race and racism in their analysis of human capital, cultural and social capital, and political economy." (p. 90) He presents a new

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[4] "The first group (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Russia) are labeled security societies because, for the forty years prior to this study, the state guaranteed the basic needs of citizens. Justice was based on the principle that outcomes generally should be equal. In opportunity societies, by contrast, liberal or private market principles have been in place for many years and the state plays a relatively minor role in regulating the economy, in compensating for its vagaries, or in providing social entitlements for citizens. In this study, the United States and Australia represent the opportunity societies." (Flanagan & Campbell, 2003, p. 712)

[5] Quoted in Sobel, J. (2002). Sobel. J., (2002). Can We Trust Social Capital? Journal of Economic Literature. 40(1) March, pp. 139-54.

profile of community leaders that challenges traditional role models. Akom also describes a new kind of civic participation in low-income communities, and demonstrates that marginalized communities have alternative networking organizational structures.

3. Civic Engagement: Schools (GSAs), Youth Organizations and Service Learning Programs

Shelley H. Billig (2000) presents different definitions of service learning. She acknowledges that there exists disagreement about its definition. However, there seems to be a "general consensus that its major components include "active participation, thoughtfully organized experiences, and focus on community needs. The disagreement occurs when service learning is regarded as a "philosophy of education, a curricular tool, or a program design."

Research on civic engagement and service learning programs identifies a number of ways in which schools can help promote a sense of civic engagement in young people. It stresses the importance of building a positive school community that fosters an environment of collaboration and support. Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schpas (1997) indicate that school communities can be enhanced for both students and teachers, with positive outcomes for both the school and the community. However, they acknowledge that there can be negative outcomes. Community values are of critical importance to prevent negative outcomes. The authors define community as a group of members that care about and support each other; they actively participate in and have influence on the group's activities and decisions and feel a sense of belonging. The authors wanted to test whether the implementation of a program, The Child Development project (CDP),

created a sense of the classroom as a community among students and how that sense of a community related to the students' attitudes, values, motivation, and behavior.

The CDP started as an intervention to enhance students' social and ethical development. It attempted to enhance the pre-social and later on the intellectual development of students by providing opportunities to: (a) collaborate for a common good; (b) provide and receive meaningful help; (c) discuss and reflect upon experiences of others to gain an understanding and appreciation of others; (d) develop and practice social competencies; (e) discuss and reflect upon their own behavior and the behavior of others; (f) exercise autonomy and decision making. The program was instituted in classrooms by teachers but also included school-wide and parent involvement.

They found that students' sense of community is not significantly related to school size, but discovered from their sample that teachers' sense of community is positively correlated to school size.

Research also emphasizes the importance of teachers highlighting the value of civic participation and the importance of responsible citizens committed to a common good. They are also called upon to model such behavior. Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, and Gallay (2007) argue that adolescents' perceptions that people who wield authority over their lives are fair and responsive to them and that fellow citizens in their community are committed to a common good are the bases on which young people come to believe that America is fundamentally a fair society, and the bases on which they develop an allegiance to the principles that make democracy work. This occurs via the accumulated experiences of fair (due) process and responsive interactions with adult authorities. Adolescents' sense of trust in the political system is a foundation of identity. Affective

ties to the political system and habits of civic commitment and participation that occur prior to adulthood set one on a civic path that predicts civic participation later in adulthood.

Flanagan et al. (2007) hypothesized that youth would be more likely to believe that America is a just society (equal opportunity) if they felt teachers practiced a democratic ethic at school, and if the people in their community were committed to the common good of the community. They expected that similar processes would operate for both ethnic minority and ethnic majority groups. They found that youth were more likely to believe that America is a just society when they felt their teachers were fair and respectful of all students and insisted that students treat one another in a civil fashion, and when they felt more connected to their communities.

In addition, research strongly urges schools to promote civic participation by including classes on civic engagement in the curriculum. Torney-Purta (2002) noted that the IEA Civic Education study claims that schools achieve the best results in fostering civic engagement when they rigorously teach civic content and skills, ensure an open classroom climate for discussing issues, stress the importance of the electoral process, and encourage a participative school culture. Students with lower expectations and few educational resources at home face a particularly difficult challenge.

Torney-Purta concluded that the IEA Civic Education Study's results suggest that schools can be effective in preparing students for engagement in civil society by teaching civic content and skills, ensuring an open classroom climate for the discussion of issues emphasizing the importance of voting and elections, and supporting effective participation opportunities such as school councils.

The participants in the IEA study were approximately 90,000 14-year-old students from the following countries: Australia, Belgium (the French-speaking community), Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong (SAR), Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.

Finally, research shows the importance of creating opportunities for young people to engage in civic activities—opportunities not limited to high school graduation or college admission requirements. Camino & Zeldin (2002) explain that, "inclusive participation is a primary component of civil society." However, there are limited opportunities for youth civic engagement. The authors explain that these limitations are being contested and challenged by youth and adults. They present "five contemporary pathways for youth engagement," and three of the overarching qualities among those five pathways.

The authors claim that traditional pathways of youth civic engagement offer "minimal opportunities for young people to act affirmatively on society." Research demonstrates that "youth voting and interest in politics are an all-time low." Interestingly, youth participation in community service is high. However, many high schools now require that students engage in community service in order to graduate. In the same manner, many universities have as an admission criterion that students have participated in some kind of community service as a requirement to apply. These requirements may explain the increase in community service. However, this does not necessarily indicate that students will engage in civic participation for the rest of their lives. The authors

present some of those limitations, criteria, and beliefs imposed by society, which limit the participation of youth. Thereby, they are able to introduce new "pathways for youth participation."

On the other hand, recent research conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service (2006) collected information on "teen volunteering habits, experiences with school-based learning, and other forms of civic engagement" (p. 1). The survey focused on participation in school-based learning on service opportunities that were either available or required by schools. Of all school-based experiences, 77 percent were part of a course that contained "one or more of the generally accepted elements of high-quality service learning. These elements included:

(1) Planning the service activity (36 percent of all courses)

(2) Participating in regular service for a semester or longer (36 percent of all courses)

(3) Writing or reflecting on the service experience in class (51 percent of all courses). (p. 1)"

The study found that the majority of students reported that the experience had a positive impact on them. However, those who reported current or past participation in service learning that included reflection, planning, and service that lasted at least one semester, "were more than twice as likely than students who participated in school-based service with none of the three quality elements to report that their experience had a very positive impact on them." (p. 2)

Recent research has also identified service learning activities in community-based organizations as having the capacity to play an important role in promoting civic

engagement in youth. O'Donogue (2006) found that community-based organizations can be good places for youngsters to learn and build their leadership skills in order to empower themselves and to have their voices heard. Data analysis identified five factors that impact youth' sense of public efficacy: intentionality, public concepts, decision-making, content and pedagogy, and macropolitical connections. O'Donogue found that adults placed the responsibility of stepping up solely on youth. If we want youth to develop the necessary skills for public efficacy, empowerment, and civic engagement, adults must provide them with free spaces through community-based organizations that are well-structured and have clear missions and goals. AMIGOS is clearly an institution that aims to build those necessary skills for "public efficacy, empowerment, and civic engagement" in youth. The program is well-structured and has a clear mission statement and goals. On the other hand, Spectrum is still striving to become a well-structured program, and is beginning to articulate a clear mission statement and goals.

In summary, research encourages schools and other institutions to create opportunities for young people to engage in activities that teach civic skills. These opportunities can be developed in schools by building a community of support and collaboration among its constituents and by teaching about civic skills. On the other hand, community-based organizations can also help create the same opportunities for young people by generating opportunities that boost youth empowerment and civic engagement.

4. Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and Schools

Arthur Perry is credited with being the first researcher to describe the impact that

school climate has on students and the learning process (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). The National School Climate Center (NSCC) suggests that, "school climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (www.schoolclimate.org/climate). According to NSCC, a positive school climate includes, among other indicators, "norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe" (Cohen et al., 2009, p.180). One of the objectives of GSAs in schools is to ensure that LGBTQ students experience a positive and safe learning environment.

GSAs are student-led school clubs that strive to enhance and support the school experiences of LGBTQ students. Stephen T. Russell (2006) defines Gay-Straight Alliances as "school-based clubs that are based on partnerships between sexual minority and heterosexual students for the purpose of supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students and their allies for promoting positive change in the school climate for these students." Research has concluded that the majority of students frequently hear homophobic remarks and other types of biased language at school (GLESN). Research has also demonstrated that many LGBT students experience bullying and harassment at school because of their sexual orientation and/or gender expression. These experiences have created a negative school experience for many LGBT students. Some LGBT students choose to miss school in order to avoid these negative experiences that threaten their safety.

Kosciw, who has conducted a number of school climate surveys, conducted two major National school climate surveys in 2003 and 2005. The objective was to determine how safe Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) youth are in schools. The surveys also intended to examine how school climate resources that address LGBT issues may affect the academic achievement and educational goals of LGBT youth. It attempted to offer information about the impact of these experiences on academic performance and the effect of interventions designed to address the underlying problem. In addition, they intended to inform educators, policymakers, and the public at large of the endemic problem of name-calling, harassment, and violence directed at LGBT students. The studies reported similar findings. The 2005 survey pointed to an improved situation compared to the 2003 survey. Ninety percent of youth reported hearing frequent homophobic remarks from other students. For most types of biased language remarks, there was a "small but significant" decrease in frequency between the 2001 and 2003 survey. Three quarters reported that they felt unsafe in their schools because of their sexual orientation or their gender expression. The majority of LGBT youth in the survey reported some experience of verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation. Youth were more likely to report incidents to teachers and administrators than family members. However, the 2005 survey also indicated that bullying and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation remained common. LGBT students were more likely to skip school because of safety concern than the rest of the population. LGBT students were twice as likely as the general population of students to report they were not planning to pursue any post-secondary education. The presence of supportive staff contributed to positive outcomes. Students in schools with GSAs and those in schools that had comprehensive

policies reported more positive experiences. The most recent National Survey (2009) found that nearly nine out of ten LGBT students experience harassment in school. A comparison with the surveys conducted over the last ten years indicates that there has been a decreasing trend in the frequency of hearing homophobic epithets; however, LGBT students' experiences with more severe forms of bullying and harassment have remained relatively constant" (p.18).

Similar studies reporting similar findings have been conducted in different areas of the USA. Phoenix, Hall, Weiss, Kemp, Wells, & Chan (2006) conducted such a study in the high schools of North Carolina (Orange, Durham, and Wake Counties). Their study found that the frequency of homophobic remarks and pejorative terms based on sexual orientation heard in those high schools paralleled the findings from the GLSEN national study. The study also found that there was a low frequency of teacher and school staff intervention or interruption of homophobic language by students. In addition, the study showed that schools with non-harassment policies that included sexual orientation reported fewer homophobic remarks than schools without inclusive policies.

LGBTQ Students and Civic Engagement

Research shows that the challenges that LGBTQ students face in schools can encumber their opportunities to actively engage in civic activities, especially activities that are intended to support LBGT rights. Stephen T. Russell (2002) explains that sexual minority youth experience many challenges in their daily lives. These challenges hinder their opportunities for citizenship development in three "key developmental domains: family, faith, and education."

Research has consistently demonstrated that sexual minority youth comprise "a group that is among the most "at risk" during the adolescent years." Russell identifies four possible negative outcomes in the lives of youth minority: victimization, school challenges, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts and attempts. "This risk is attributed to the stresses of adolescent growth and development in a society that marginalizes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people." "Gay issues" seem to be more prominent in everyday public life. However, these issues are generally silenced in key institutions that have a clear impact on youth: family, faith, and schools.

In addition to all this, LGBT youth also face an important contradiction, "while they are learning about civic life and their role in it as adolescents, they are simultaneously identifying and exploring a culturally stigmatized identity." This, to cite Richardson (2000), creates a group of "partial citizens" because "they are excluded from basic rights (and responsibilities) in each of the civil-legal, political, and social realms." This situation clearly prevents LGBT youth from key typical developmental experiences that would prepare them for "fully engaged citizenship."

Nevertheless, Russell provides evidence of two opportunities for citizenship development and civic engagement among LGBT youth: the Internet and Gay and Straight Alliances. (GSAs) These provide LGBT with a "free space" to share interests, values, and foster and develop opportunities for civic engagement and citizenship.

GSAs have helped create safer schools for LGBT students and their allies. Research conducted by LGBT organizations has suggested that:

1. The presence of GSAs help to make schools safer for LGBT students by sending the message that biased language and harassment will not be tolerated.

2. Having a GSA also makes schools more accessible to LGBT students by contributing to a more positive school environment.
3. GSAs help LGBT students to identify supportive school staff, which has been shown to have a positive impact on their academic achievement and experiences in school.
4. Most students lack access to GSAs or other student clubs that provide support and address issues specific to LGBT students and their allies.

(http://www.glsen.org)

Macgillivray's (2007) handbook on gay-straight alliances also identified some of the positive roles that GSAs play in schools and dispelled some of the negative myths about GSAs. GSAs can function as safe places for students to get the support that they sometimes cannot get at home. GSAs are a good way to end the social and emotional isolation that some LGBT youth endure. They are also an effective way to educate schools and communities about equality and diversity.

In summary, it is our responsibility to make sure that we promote and support civic activities in our society. A healthy democracy needs citizens that are politically and socially active. Amy Gutmann (1987) writes,

> Even the ability to think critically about politics is an incomplete virtue from democratic perspective. If primary schooling leaves students with a capacity for political criticism, but no capacity for political participation or sense of social commitment, either because it fails to cultivate their sense of political efficacy, or because of success in teaching them deference to authority, then it will have failed to cultivate s virtue essential to democracy. (Gutmann, 1987, p. 92)

Research has identified different ways in which we can help increase the often-cited decline of American's political and civic engagement in youth. Families, schools,

and other social institutions can help in this endeavor. Scholars have identified family as the most importance agent of socialization. Thus, families play a very important role in promoting civic and political engagement in our youth. There still remains the question, however, of just how to encourage families to teach those values to their children.

Schools and other institutions also play a pivotal role in developing those attitudes. Research encourages these institutions to develop ways to ensure that students can participate in civic activities. Schools can teach about civic and political responsibilities and create opportunities for youth to participate in civic activities. Social institutions, such as churches, non-profit organizations, etc., can help create opportunities for youth to develop those attitudes. Finally, research has also underscored the importance of creating opportunities to engage minorities in developing these same skills. Research is needed that looks at ways in which minority youth, including sexual minorities, are socialized in order to provide them with the same support and opportunities.

This literature review has presented a general view of current and past research on youth's beliefs and attitudes towards citizenship, civic engagement, and political and social participation. Scholars have encouraged researchers to engage in more and better research on civic engagement.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Process

Introduction

I began this project with certain hypotheses and research questions grounded in claims of knowledge through an advocacy and participatory approach. This kind of research has to be intertwined with "politics and a political agenda" (Creswell, 2003, p.9). The purpose of this study was twofold. First, I wanted to better understand the impact of after school clubs and service learning activities on students' beliefs and attitudes towards citizenship (civic participation), civic engagement, and political and social participation. My intent was also to understand the impact of such programs—specifically, a high school GSA and Amigos de las Américas—on the participants' community. Second, using as my lens such issues as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation, I sought to gauge whether participation in programs like the ones above altered preconceived ideas students held about others.

Research Questions

For both Amigos de las Américas and the GSA, I wanted to examine whether or not beliefs and attitudes toward civic and political participation and social justice would alter as a result of direct participation in one of the programs. In the case of Amigos de las Américas, the study targeted high school and college students doing volunteer work in underprivileged countries. As for the GSA, the research focused on the impact of participation in Spectrum (a GSA) on students' preconceptions about gays and lesbians.

For both groups, I also wanted to examine whether or not preconceived ideas the participants held of "others" would alter as a result of direct experiential contact with "the other". The study also sought to understand if participation raised questions of empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation. Finally, I drew upon survey data and interviews conducted with GSA members to infer whether or not these respective experiences had been empowering and, if so, for whom.

Table 3.1 Summary of Research Questions

Questions	***How I answered those questions***	***Data Analysis***
How does participation in an after school club or a service learning activity impact students' beliefs and attitudes towards civic engagement? (1)	Interviews – surveys – observations – document collection	Triangulation
What are some of the key differences and similarities between participation in a mainstream group (Amigos de las Américas) and a minority group (GSA)? (2)	Interviews – surveys - observations– document collection	Triangulation
Political socialization is the process, mediated through various agencies of society, by which an individual learns politically relevant attitudinal dispositions and behavior patterns – How do "Amigos de las Américas" and the GSA impact students' attitudinal dispositions and behavior patterns?	Interviews – surveys - observations– document collection	Triangulation
Sub-Questions	***How I answered those questions***	***Data Analysis***
How does participation inform preconceived ideas about the "other?"	Interviews – surveys - observations– document collection	Triangulation

Does experience raise questions about inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation?	Interviews – surveys - observations– document collection	Triangulation
Is this an empowering experience? If so, how? Whom does it empower?	Interviews – surveys - observations– document collection	Triangulation
Does participation impact students' communities? How?	Interviews – surveys - observations– document collection	Triangulation

To summarize, this research examined the impact of an after school program and a service learning program on students' beliefs and attitudes towards civic participation and engagement, why they have chosen this type of political and social participation, and the impact of participation on preconceived ideas of empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation.

Chapter 8 of this dissertation discusses the research findings. The data illuminated for the researcher the similarities and differences that occur when students participate in a program that positions them as a privileged group (Amigos de las Américas) coming to the aid of the "other," as opposed to being identified with the "other" (GSA) and trying to impact the views of the privileged group.

Methodology

This study used both quantitative and qualitative data in a mixed-methods approach to better understand the impact that such activities have on the students and their communities. The use of multiple methods to gather data contributed to the

trustworthiness of the data collected (Glesne, 2006). Data sources included participant interviews, surveys, field notes, observation of training/meetings, and documents. Data was triangulated to increase confidence in the findings.

Summary of Data Sources

Amigos de las Américas

Table 3.2 Summary of Data Sources - AMIGOS

Type of Data	Description of the Data	Purpose of Collecting Data
Interviews	I conducted ten interviews with alumni of AMIGOS. In addition, I interviewed a volunteer before she completed the program.	• To gain an understanding of the experiences of the volunteers, and to assess the impact of the program on the participant. Four participants were recent alumni (2009); the other six had participated at different times in their lives. • To understand why volunteers decided to join AMIGOS
Surveys	I conducted four surveys with former and new volunteers. The first survey was completed by ten returning 2009 volunteers. The survey evaluated the volunteers' overall assessment of and satisfaction with the program. Thirty-six former volunteers completed the second survey, and the 2010 cohort completed the third survey before departing for their destinations. An additional survey evaluated how the volunteers felt about the training they were receiving during the program.	• To gain an understanding of the overall experience of the volunteers • To be able to contrast and compare the experiences of volunteers who trained in different chapters • To have access to a wider pool of participants
Observations of Training	I observed the volunteers while they were training, and joined them in their weekend retreat as well. Occasionally, I participated in the trainings because they	• To gain an understanding of the training process and the activities used to train participants • To gain an understanding

	needed native speakers to help them establish "real" interactions with members of the Spanish speaking communities with which they would be collaborating.	of the participants' commitment to the program • To assess the impact that the training had on the participants
Documents	I collected and reviewed different documents during this study such as the volunteers training and core curriculum handbooks used by the trainers. I also had access to the evaluations of the volunteers conducted by the trainers.	• To assess the pedagogy used to train volunteers • To assess if the training goals described in the handbook were met • To contrast the views of the trainers with my own perceptions of the volunteers, based on the training they had received

Surveys

Surveys[6] were used to measure students' attitudes and beliefs prior to and after their participation in the program. The data gathered from the surveys helped me determine the kind of impact that participation in the program had on the students. Participants completed different surveys over the course of the program and afterwards. A survey completed directly following selection assessed current attitudes and beliefs towards citizenship, civic engagement, and political and social participation. A second survey completed after they attended several training sessions and after they had completed the weekend retreat allowed me to understand how the participants felt about the training they were receiving. Ten of the participants completed a survey upon their return. Triangulation of the different surveys helped me determine the impact that the program had on the students.

[6] See appendix B pp. 228 – 231.

The surveys were also used to compare and contrast the training received by volunteers in different chapters. Two surveys were used to determine why volunteers had chosen to participate in AMIGOS; the kind of impact they thought the program would have on them; how they thought they would adjust to their communities; and whether they felt ready to assume their roles. The third survey evaluated the post-program experience. The volunteers were asked to reflect on whether they had been prepared for the experience, the kind of impact that AMIGOS had had on them, and whether they would continue participating with AMIGOS or similar activities.

Thirty-six former AMIGOS volunteers completed a fourth survey that included ten open-ended questions evaluating their experience and the long-term impact that AMIGOS had on them. In addition, there were two additional quantitative questions to determine the level of preparation the volunteers had before assuming their roles in their communities.

Interviews

Interviews[7] were an essential component of this study in that they allowed me to better understand the views of the participants (Lareau & Shultz, 1996). I interviewed a total of eleven volunteers. Ten had already participated in AMIGOS, and one was traveling during the summer of 2010. I decided to interview that volunteer to contrast a one-on-one interview with the responses to the pre-departure survey.

In-depth interviews took place over a year. The interviews followed a semi-structured model that allowed me to ask additional questions directly related to the

[7] See appendix B p. 227

primary research questions. The interviews were used to measure students' attitudes and beliefs towards citizenship, civic engagement, and political and social participation prior to and after participating in the program. The data gathered in the interviews helped me determine the kind of impact that participation in the program had on the volunteers. Some of the participants were already engaged in training new volunteers, which meant that we were able to informally discuss the impact of their AMIGOS' experience before or after the training sessions. The interviews were taped and transcribed to allow for better analysis of the data.

Observations of Training

Observations took place over the course of two years. I observed the 2009 and 2010 cohorts, but took field notes for the 2010 cohort only. As a board member, I am the training liaison; I liked to be at the trainings to understand what was being done. During my observations in 2010, I recorded my observations on a laptop and helped in some of the training activities.

Documents

Over the course of the two years, I collected and reviewed different documents such as the volunteer training handbook and the core curriculum handbook used by the trainers. These two manuals detail the knowledge that volunteers need to acquire in order to be a successful. These documents allowed me to reflect on the type of pedagogy use to train volunteers. I also had access to the trainers' evaluations of the volunteers, which helped me to compare their (the trainers) views with mine.

Summary of Data Sources

Spectrum (GSA)

Table 3.3 Summary of Data Sources - Spectrum

Type of Data	Description of the Data	Purpose of Collecting Data
Interviews	I conducted ten interviews with current Spectrum members and an interview with the mother of the first president and founder of the school's GSA I also interviewed the founder's best friend, who had assisted her in establishing the GSA, and the former president of the GSA. I also interviewed a student who does not attend the GSA because he does not want others to perceive him as gay.	• To gain an understanding of the experiences of the GSA members, and to assess the GSA's impact on them • To understand why members decide to start or join a GSA • To gain an understanding of why some students decide not to join a GSA
Surveys	I conducted four surveys: two directed at members of the GSA, and two others directed at the school community—students, faculty, administrators, and staff. The initial survey was administered to students who attended the 2009 inaugural GSA meeting, followed by another survey administered at the end of the school year (2010). In addition, I conducted a school-wide survey for students and another one for faculty, administration, and staff.	• To gain an understanding of the overall experience of the members of the GSA • To be able to understand the reasons why students join a GSA • To gain an understanding of the impact of the GSA in the school community, and how the GSA is perceived by the school community • To evaluate the level of safety that LGBTQ students have in this particular school
Observations of the GSA meetings	I participated in the GSA weekly meetings and other events promoted or sponsored by the GSA, such as movie nights and the GSA summit.	• To gain an understanding of the club's activities and how those impact members • To gain an understanding of members' commitment to the GSA • To investigate why members attend meetings
Documents	I collected numerous documents produced by members of the GSA,	• To compare the documents gathered with

	as well as others written by the high school students, faculty, and staff. I reviewed and analyzed diary entries of the GSA members, school newspaper articles that included or referenced LGBTQ issues, and documents provided by faculty and staff members.	the interviews, surveys and observations • To explore the reactions of the school community to the GSA • To explore the school's level of commitment to the GSA

Surveys

I conducted four surveys[8] over the period of a year. Two were used to understand the reasons why high school students joined the school's GSA and their expectations. In addition, one of these two surveys assessed how members felt about the GSA and their school after having participated in the GSA for at least a school year.

The other two surveys were completed by students, teachers, staff, and administrators. The student survey used both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative questions related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, as well as a section to determine how often students used or heard homophobic remarks and the kinds of intervention (or lack of intervention) they may have witnessed. The open-ended qualitative questions investigated the knowledge students had about the school's GSA and the impact on them of the GSA or GSA-sponsored/promoted activities

The faculty, staff, and administrators survey also included quantitative and qualitative questions. As with the student survey, the quantitative questions related to gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as a section to determine how often they used or heard homophobic remarks and the kinds of intervention (or lack of intervention) they have

[8] See appendix B pp. 218 – 226.

witnessed. The open-ended qualitative questions—again, as with the student survey—investigated the knowledge that adults in the school had about the GSA and the impact on them of the GSA or GSA-sponsored/promoted activities.

Interviews

I interviewed[9] a total of eleven students, including two former Spectrum members, the co-founder, and the former president of the GSA. I also spoke with the mother[10] of the founder of the GSA, as well as a high school student who is out only to a few people and who does not want to be associated with the GSA for fear of being perceived as gay.

The in-depth interviews also followed a semi-structured model that allowed me to ask additional questions directly related to the main research questions of this study. The interviews were used to measure students' attitudes and beliefs towards citizenship, civic engagement, and political and social participation prior to and after participating in Spectrum. The data gathered from the interviews helped me determine the kind of impact that participation in the GSA had on the students.

Observations of GSA Meetings

Observations have been ongoing. In 2007, I began attending some of the meetings that the GSA held on Fridays. However, it was not until 2009 that I committed to attending all meetings and became a co-advisor to the GSA. I have been involved with the school's GSA since that time, and have attended other GSA-sponsored events. During

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[9] See appendix B p. 217.
[10] Her daughter passed away two years ago.

the past school year, I recorded field notes on a laptop. As a co-advisor, I make sure that there is a climate of respect, and help the members run their meetings. As an insider, I have the respect and trust of the members. Because the GSA is a student-led organization, however, I intervene directly only when needed.

Over the past two years, I conducted formal interviews with the students. We also engaged in many informal conversations.

Documents

I collected and analyzed documents produced by GSA members, high school students, and staff. At the end of the school year, graduating members of the GSA elected to create a memory book for new and remaining club members. Two graduates produced a document describing their GSA experience over the past four years. I also collected and analyzed three issues of the school newspaper featuring articles on LGBTQ issues.

Selection of Participants

Amigos de las Américas

Before volunteers decide to join AMIGOS, the program offers information sessions where we describe the program, the cost, the benefits, etc. During those information sessions, I introduced myself and described my role as a board member and researcher. Then, I discussed my research with parents and volunteers. Once we had a group of volunteers and the training began, I again described my project to the volunteers and asked if they would like to participate in the study by completing a few surveys throughout the year. I wanted to interview former volunteers, and connected with them in various ways. Relying on our database of former volunteers, I sent out a mass email describing the study and asking for participants. I also put out a call for volunteers via our

monthly newsletter. Ultimately, ten volunteers were selected based on their availability, location (some of them lived in other states), and finally my objective of interviewing volunteers who had participated in the program many years before in order to assess the long-term impact of AMIGOS.

Many of the volunteers that I could not personally interview participated in the online survey—open to any US volunteer and completed by former members of the New York City chapter as well as members of many other chapters throughout the US.

Spectrum

At Spectrum's first 2009 meeting, I discussed my research and asked for volunteers to participate in the study, either by responding to the surveys or agreeing to be interviewed. I repeated this process in the next three meetings.

Ultimately, ten students participated. (There were a few others who volunteered, but it proved difficult to schedule interviews.) It was also difficult to discover the origins of the GSA; current members had no knowledge of previous advisors. Once I finally identified the first advisor, this individual was not willing to provide much information. Luckily, I was able to track down the mother (a school employee) of the student who had launched the GSA, and she agreed to speak with me, though not on tape. She provided me with the name of her daughter's best friend, co-founder of the club. Another gay but closeted student with whom I had spoken informally on prior occasions also agreed to participate in the study.

An email was sent out to school faculty/administration/staff to recruit volunteers to participate in the survey process. Since all students are required to take a foreign

language, I asked the world language teachers to permit me to inform students about the survey and provide them with a link to participate.

Data Analysis

I collected four different sets of data for both groups: interviews, surveys, observations, and documents. Data was first analyzed separately and then triangulated to investigate consistency in the findings, thereby adding another layer of validity and confirmation of the findings (Weis and Fine, 2000).

Data from the observations was analyzed at three different stages: (1) analysis done as an on-going process while reflecting on what I had observed; (2) analysis after the study was completed: analysis performed over the summer, after some time and at some distance from the study (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999).

After transcribing the interviews, I read and listened to them many times to look for recurrent themes. Once I identified these themes, I started to create coding categories based on the data.

The surveys provided two different sets of data, quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative data was analyzed in the same way I analyzed the interviews. I re-read the data many times, looking for recurrent themes that, once identified, were the basis for coding categories for the data. I used the quantitative data to run simple descriptive statistics, which allowed me to become familiar with the data (Picciano, 2004).

Documents were used as supportive data. These allowed me to identify and validate some of the recurrent themes that the other data sets were providing. Finally, all four data sets were triangulated to look for consistency and validation of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

Amigos de las Américas (AMIGOS)

AMIGOS Context

This chapter will describe AMIGOS current goals and objectives to train volunteers before they engage in community work in Latin America. It begins with an introduction and a historical overview of AMIGOS. Then, it will discuss the AMIGOS New York City Chapter, where the researcher volunteers and where he has been conducting research for the last two years. Finally, There is a description of the training that volunteers undergo, based on the researcher's observations and the assessment of trainers and volunteers themselves. The findings described in this section are supported by surveys completed by volunteers and veteran volunteers[11] as well as in-depth interviews with the volunteers.

Introduction

Amigos de las Américas (Friends of the Americas) is an international service learning program that draws participants from high schools and colleges. "AMIGOS Volunteers partner in teams of two or three and spend five to eight weeks living and working in one of eight Latin American countries … Collaborating with local sponsoring agencies and community members, volunteers help identify local resources and then implement community improvement projects in their community's schools, health clinics, or house-to-house." (www.amigosnyc.org).

[11] There are 6 surveys completed by volunteers that will be participating in 2010 and 37 surveys completed by veteran volunteers who participated before 2010. I conducted 10 in-depth interviews with veteran volunteers and 1 with a volunteer who will be traveling in 2010.

Currently, AMIGOS has projects in North America, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America[12]. It is present in eight countries: Costa Rica; The Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Honduras; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; and Paraguay. It has forged partnerships with fifteen agencies in six of the countries, and is working to develop new partnerships in Costa Rica and Ecuador. AMIGOS is involved in different projects, depending on the area and the nature of the partnership in a given country. The projects range from community nutrition and health, environmental health, gardening, the Arts, reforestation, sports, leadership (www.amigosnyc.org).

Historical Context

Amigos de las Américas was founded in 1965 in Houston, Texas. It is an International non-profit organization that provides opportunities for leadership and community service for young people in the US. The Amigos mission statement states that they "value and encourage youth leadership, multicultural understanding, service and the development of projects that address community priorities." (www.amigoslink.org).

According to the Amigos *Volunteer Training Handbook,* in the summer of 1965 Guy Bevil, a Houston youth minister, recruited 285 young people to fight an expanding polio epidemic in rural Honduras. That summer, new relationships and friendships flourished between the people of Honduras and the United States. This first group of volunteers traveled under the name "Amigos de Honduras". They succeeded in immunizing thousands of Hondurans. Upon their return, the personal impact of that

[12] The International Office has announced the creation of a new project in Peru for 2011.

experience on the volunteers became very noticeable to parents, guardians, and other volunteers that the consensus was that the volunteers had returned home " much more mature, appreciative of other cultures, and aware of the personal benefits of helping others (community service). Their success underscored that young people can make a positive difference in the world." (www.amigoslink.org). A group of community leaders decided to continue making this opportunity available for youth. Later that year, they formed a board of directors and chartered Amigos de las Américas as a non-profit, non-sectarian, private, voluntary corporation.

Until the 1980s, Amigos de las Américas devoted its time and efforts primarily to immunization campaigns, and administered more than one million vaccinations against smallpox, polio, tetanus, measles, and other diseases. AMIGOS grew nationally and internationally and partnered with non-profit and government agencies in Latin America. These partnerships allowed AMIGOS to shift the focus of its projects to address the needs voiced by the partnering agencies, communities, and AMIGOS project staff working in-country. In the 1980s and early 1990s, volunteers focused on the construction of latrines and water wells. In the mid-1990s, projects began to include environmental concerns such as reforestation and family gardening. Now, AMIGOS continues to focus on these same projects and others that address community needs. In the last 10 years, AMIGOS has begun to move into what it terms "community capacity-building projects," focused on educational workshops for youth, and community-based initiatives.

AMIGOS claims that although the focus of its programs has evolved over the years, the mission and spirit of the program have remained unchanged. The mission of Amigos de las Américas is "to build partnerships in order to:

- Empower young leaders
- Advance community development
- Strengthen multicultural understanding in the Américas (www.amigoslink.org)

AMIGOS Today

AMIGOS headquarters, known as AMIGOS International Office (IO), is located in Houston, Texas. There are twenty fulltime staff members who work year-round to assess, evaluate, plan and implement the summer programs. Before the volunteers arrive at their destinations, IO staff members travel several times during the year to the communities where volunteers will spend their summer to assess old and new projects, and to guarantee the continuity of the programs. They also maintain and build new partnerships with other Latin American agencies that will support the volunteers during the summer. The rest of the IO staff members engage in administrative and fundraising responsibilities.

There are twenty-nine AMIGOS chapters in seventeen states. Of the total number of volunteers that apply to AMIGOS each year, approximately three quarters are recruited and trained in local chapters. The remaining 25 percent are known as "Correspondent Volunteers (CV)". Correspondent Volunteers have applied to participate in AMIGOS in cities where there are no chapters, or they are unable to participate through their local chapter due to a conflict with the training dates. Correspondent Volunteers receive a volunteer training handbook and are required to participate in online training activities. They are also required to attend an intensive training workshop during

the week prior to their summer departure. The International Office manages the training of all Correspondent Volunteers.

The New York City Chapter

The NYC chapter of Amigos de las Américas was founded by Patricia Selcke Grad, a former AMIGOS volunteer. Patricia started the chapter in 2002 and served as president until 2008, when she resigned to pursue a Masters in Business Administration. John Hahn, a former volunteer, supervisor, and project director, is the current president.

Patricia moved to New York City in the summer of 2001. Prior to moving to New York, she had been living in Boston, where she served as fundraising chairperson for the Boston chapter. In early 2001, she was elected chapter president, but declined the position in favor of a New York City job offer.

In 2002-2003, the New York City AMIGOS chapter did not send any volunteers into the field. Instead, during the fall of 2002, they held various information sessions (most of which were in a former member of the international board's living room) and the volunteers, if interested, participated through the CV program[13]. They also held similar information sessions with former Amigos volunteers interested in becoming active on the board.

The New York City chapter began having board meetings in the fall of 2002. In addition, during the 2002 annual meeting in Houston, the New York City chapter was officially declared a Chapter-In-Development (CID), for which they received financial

[13] The Correspondent Volunteer program allows volunteers who want to participate but do not live near a chapter or can attend training to train online and attend an intensive training program before traveling.

assistance from Houston for the first three years as a chapter.

The first time that they recruited for the New York chapter was the fall of 2003, and the first time that they sent volunteers into the field was during the summer of 2004. The chapter grew steadily and attracted a small number of volunteers every year. In 2008, the NYC chapter experienced its highest growth in volunteers since its inception in 2002, with forty-two volunteers in training. The training staff decided to split the group in two in order to better facilitate the training and to provide more individualized attention to the volunteers. During the last two years, the chapter has felt the financial crisis that has hit the global markets, attracting fourteen[14] volunteers in 2009, and only twelve in 2010.

Board Members

Currently, the New York City chapter comprises fifteen board members[15], most of whom are former volunteers. There are only three board members, including myself, who have never been volunteers. The other two, parents of former volunteers, decided to join the board after they witnessed the impact that AMIGOS had had on their children. Ms. Giles, the communication director, explains that "seeing our volunteers buzzed with ideas on community-based volunteering after their summer spent with AMIGOS is the reason I give my time to the board. The volunteers enthusiasm is a good thing to catch." (www.amigosnyc.org).

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[14] One of the volunteers was unable to depart due to an unforeseen event. She returned in 2010 and left for her destination. The other returned for not adhering to the standards of conduct set by AMIGOS.

[15] There are additional parents/guardians that serve on the board every year. Once the volunteers have been accepted, parents/guardians are asked to serve in the board as liaison to the rest of the parents. The number of parents/guardians varies from year to year. The board encourages the participation of at least one parent/guardian.

Encouraged by one of my students who had been a volunteer in Mexico, and also by a former board member who worked with me, I decided to volunteer for the chapter in 2007. Board members do not simply meet once a month to only deal with that day's agenda items, but also give their time to the chapter in various other ways. Each board member is assigned a role based upon his/her qualifications and interests. Because of my 15 years of experience as an educator, it was determined that I was best suited for the training liaison role, in which I ensure that volunteers get the best training available. Luckily, the training coordinator and her assistant are former volunteers and have been part of AMIGOS in various capacities, such as volunteers, supervisors, and project directors. The training coordinator and her assistant are the only board positions that receive a small stipend. The training staff meets one a month from December through May, along with having other responsibilities that regular board members do not have. They train volunteers for at least three hours each month, plus plan and participate in at least two service learning activities in New York City.

The AMIGOS Timeline

The AMIGOS timeline varies among chapters. All AMIGOS chapters use the Volunteer Training Handbook in their training sessions and are required by IO to include at least two service learning activities before the completion of training. Obviously, training has evolved as new ideas and in-country experiences of volunteers, supervisors, and project supervisors are infused into the core curriculum of the handbook. Some chapters train more regularly than others, and others also include a language component.

Tania[16], a former volunteer of the Chicago Chapter who volunteered twice in the 90s, remembers that training occurred once a week for three hours, a higher average than is the case with most chapters today.

> I was a volunteer twice in high school, junior and senior years. I went to Ecuador the first summer and Mexico the second summer. After that, I started volunteering with Amigos right away helping with the training, the weekly trainings. In our chapter we had three hours of training every week. Then, separately, on Sundays the training team would meet with me at our trainer's house and we would have breakfast in the morning and kind of plan for the next week's training. Once a week is really ambitious. At the time we did an hour of interpersonal training, an hour of language training, and an hour of technical training. If you were going to be building latrines, you would be learning either the vocabulary, how to build a latrine. Our Spanish training wasn't like a Spanish teacher. It was vocab, role playing, just things to get you talking.

The New York City Chapter conducts its recruitment efforts from late September, through November. Board members and former volunteers help recruit new volunteers. We usually visit high schools and colleges to which we have access and make short presentations about AMIGOS. We also look for opportunities to be invited to talk about AMIGOS in other schools. After the presentations, students are invited to provide an email address where we can send information about future chapter sessions promoting the program. Parents and guardians are also invited to these information sessions, where they are able to meet former volunteers and learn more about the program. If they are interested in the program, they may sign up for an interview. Interviews usually occur during November, and are conducted by board members. In order to qualify to become a volunteer, there are a number of requirements that must be met:

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[16] A pseudonym

- At least sixteen years of age by September of the year in which they intend to travel.
- At least two years of Spanish at the high school level or demonstrate the equivalent level of Spanish
- Provide a medical history and, for volunteers under eighteen years of age, parental consent.
- Commitment to AMIGOS' standards of behavior, training attendance and financial commitment. (www.amigosnyc.org).

Once volunteers are selected and notified, their training schedule is sent out. Training begins in December and concludes in May. During the months of June and July the first volunteers travel to Latin America. The volunteers spend their first three or four days in their host country as a group, and meet with the Latin American project staff. This is called "in-country briefing". It is an opportunity for volunteers and staff to get to know each other better and to learn more about the host country. During these meetings, volunteers are assigned to host communities with at least one other volunteer. Volunteers will learn more about their specific project from theirs respective project supervisors. Project supervisors are veteran volunteers who are responsible for the support and supervision of eight to ten volunteers in different communities. Project supervisors visit volunteers at least once a week, depending on needs.

Halfway through their summer, volunteers have another opportunity to reconvene with the larger group to share their experiences and to describe the challenges they are encountering in their communities. This is also a time to plan the remaining weeks of

their projects. During the final weeks of the project, volunteers complete paperwork that permits AMIGOS and the partnering agencies to evaluate the success of the project and plan for the future.

During the last few days of their project, volunteers reconvene once more with the larger group for what is termed "debriefing, " during which they have an opportunity to share, reflect, and evaluate their work. Feedback sessions provide an opportunity for volunteers to make recommendations for the coming year. During these meetings, some are also nominated to continue as AMIGOS Latin American project staff for the coming year.

Once all the volunteers are back in the US, the New York City chapter, with the help of parents and guardians, hosts a welcome party at which volunteers have yet another opportunity to greet each other and share experiences of the year just completed.

The Participants: A Profile

The New York City chapter trained fourteen volunteers in 2009 and twelve in 2010. In 2008, the chapter experienced its biggest growth since it started in 2002. There are usually more female volunteers than male. The 2008 AMIGOS national survey indicated that 74 percent of the participants were female and 26 percent were male. For the last three years, AMIGOS has had an average of 60 percent female volunteers and 40 percent male. The New York City chapter, however, has been trending differently, having experienced over the last two years a growth in the number of male volunteers. However, there are still more female participants than male.

AMIGOS only collects demographics on age and gender. The average volunteer is seventeen years of age, sixteen being the age of the youngest volunteer. Nationally, there is a very small percentage (5 percent) of volunteers above twenty years of age.

The New York City chapter grants money to volunteers who can prove that they need assistance. In 2009, the chapter gave two grants of $500 to two volunteers. In 2010, no volunteers applied for assistance, suggesting that the typical volunteer family can afford to spend an average of $3,500.

The Interview Participants

I interviewed a total of eleven volunteers. Ten had already participated in AMIGOS and one of them would be traveling during the summer of 2010. I decided to interview that volunteer to be able to contrast a one-on-one interview with the responses of the other six volunteers who had completed the pre-departure survey.

Of the ten veteran volunteers that agreed to be interviewed, six had trained at the New York City chapter; four of them participated in 2009 and the other two in 2006 and 2007. Two of the other four participants trained at two different chapters[17] in the US. One of the volunteers was initially a correspondent volunteer and, the second time, trained at the Peninsula chapter. The last volunteer only trained as a correspondent volunteer. I decided that it was important to try to interview volunteers who brought a range of experiences, had trained at other chapters, and had participated at different times. This would facilitate the assessment of the long-term effects of the program. However, much

[17] The Chicago and the Seattle Chapters

would depend on who responded to my call for volunteers. Luckily, I was able to interest a good cross section of volunteers.

Peggy, Gloria, Angela, Andrew, Anita, and Dennis[18] were New York City volunteers. Gloria, Angela, Andrew, and Anita are high school students who live in Connecticut, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and New Jersey respectively. Peggy and Dennis are college students and are still connected to AMIGOS. They both help in training and are currently in Latin America as supervisors. All these volunteers identified as middle or upper middle class[19]. All their parents are college graduates.

Anne, Robert, and Tania[20] are college graduates. Jessie[21] is a student at New York University. Tania has participated in AMIGOS four times. She is first generation American, her parents being from Eastern Europe. She works for a non-profit in New York City. Robert is a lawyer in New York City and Anne is a teacher in the Bronx.

Training in the New York City Chapter

My responsibilities as the training liaison for the New York City chapter are to ensure that the training component meets the goals and objectives set by the International Office. For the past two years, I have participated in the training as a board member and as a language and educational resource. Board members, parents/guardians and volunteers knew of and welcomed my presence as a researcher as well. I also assisted during previous years but during those periods I did not keep field notes. My

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[18] They are all pseudonyms
[19] Two volunteers identified as middle-class and four as middle/upper-class
[20] They are all pseudonyms
[21] A pseudonym

commentaries and views are based on the last two years of training. As a chapter, we make sure that we listen to the challenges and successes of our volunteers and incorporate this information into the training. For example, some of the returning volunteers of 2008 indicated that they would have liked to have had more training on lesson planning, since some of them were expected to lead educational activities in their host communities. The following year, I made sure there were a number of training sessions devoted to how to create a lesson plan, provided examples of lesson plans, and had volunteers design and implement different lesson plans with the group.

AMIGOS' general project goals and objectives are included in the volunteer handbook that each receives at the beginning of training. The training is aimed at providing volunteers with the skills and information that they need to actualize these goals:

> GENERAL PROJECT GOAL FOR ALL AMIGOS PROJECTS: to build leadership and life skills of youth in the Americas through exchange, civic engagement, and collaborative community development.
>
> GENERAL OBJECTIVES:
>
> 1) Increase active youth involvement in communities
>   - Work with community youth to facilitate educational activities (summer camps)
>   - Hold workshops with local youth
> 2) Increase knowledge and awareness of cultural, environmental, and health issues
>   - Facilitate educational activities (summer camps) with children and young people with a focus on culture, health, and environmental education, social skills, group leadership, and creative expression
>   - Work on community projects related to these themes
> 3) Collaborate with community members on Community-Based Initiative (CBI) process
>
> (2010 Volunteer Training Handbook)

The first group of volunteers leaves in mid-June, depending on when they finish high school or college terms. Training takes place once a month for three hours from December through May. There is a weekend retreat in February; this is one of the most important training sessions. Volunteers spend a weekend together and engage in one of the most essential components of the training: the letter writing campaign[22]. Volunteers send out at least a hundred letters to family and friends, describing what they are doing that summer and soliciting a monetary contribution to help with the expenses of the program. There are two service learning activities, which may vary from year to year. The training session in April lasts from 10 am to 5 pm.

Training Sessions

> It is incredibly inspiring to witness AMIGOS volunteers grow their confidence, their respect for people as competent, sensitive global citizens, and their lasting commitment to social justice. (Staci Hyman, Training Coordinator; www.amigosnyc.org).

Training sessions begin the first week of December. There is a training coordinator and an assistant to the training coordinator. Each year former volunteers[23] who want to remain connected to AMIGOS join the voluntary training staff. Some of the volunteers I interviewed expressed an interest in assisting with training if time permitted. In 2010, three of them were helping out.

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[22] Volunteers are asked to submit at least 100 names of family and friends who might assist them in raising money towards the total cost of the program. Volunteers are not allowed to pay in full, but are required to fundraise. The chapter assists them by conducting a letter writing campaign. It is a standard letter that will be personalized during the weekend retreat. A board member merges the names provided and creates self-adhesive address stickers to make the envelope stuffing process easier. Usually, volunteers receive half their expenses via contributions. Any amount above the requisite one half goes towards the total for the group and subsidizes those who were unable to achieve their fundraising goals.

[23] Also known as Vets.

Both the training coordinator[24] and her assistant are former volunteers. The training coordinator was a volunteer in 1998 and 1999, supervisor in 2000 and 2001, and a project director in 2002. The assistant was a volunteer in Mexico in 2008 and will be a supervisor this summer. She is "excited to be involved with training for a third year." (www.amigosnyc.org).

The first training session began with an introduction of the training staff and volunteers. The training staff talked about their connections and experiences with AMIGOS and the volunteers stated their reasons for participating in AMIGOS, echoing the reasons shared in the interviews I had conducted with veteran volunteers, the responses to the survey that thirty-seven veteran volunteers completed, and the responses to the pre-departure survey completed by six of the volunteers that would be leaving in 2010. Some volunteers indicated that they had witnessed the impact on siblings who had participated in the program earlier, and how this had motivated them to want to have the same experience. Some wanted to broaden their worldviews and to experience new cultures. Others wanted to improve their Spanish while at the same time fulfilling a love of volunteering.

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[24] Staci has a BA in Community Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz and holds masters degrees in Bilingual/Dual Language Education (Bank Street College) and International Affairs (Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs). Staci also completed portions of her degrees in both Mexico and Spain. She is an alumna of Teach for America and has worked for six years as an educator and advocate for immigrant families in New York City. Currently, Staci serves the Bronx as a bilingual educator. (www.amigosnyc.org).

Volunteers were introduced to the Core Curriculum[25], which is organized into four sections: Amigos 101, Community Development, Youth Leadership, and Multicultural Understanding. The trainers' Core Curriculum includes detailed lesson plans on how to achieve the goals of the unit. In 2010, the International office published another handbook for trainers, with additional activities for each component.[26]

On their first day, the volunteers learn about the AMIGOS mission[27], history, and organizational structure. The volunteers are also reminded of the multiple roles they are expected to assume in their host countries: ambassador; role models; friend; family member; guest; health promoter; motivator/catalyst; team member; teacher/trainer; student/learner; and leader.

The volunteers attended three additional training sessions, each lasting three hours, and a fourth that is usually scheduled to last seven hours. Homework was assigned after each of the sessions. The homework consisted of volunteers' reflections on what they were learning, or related to online readings that dealt with health and safety. Additionally, they were required to attend a weekend retreat, and to participate in two service learning activities. In all sessions, volunteers were always highly engaged, motivated, and participative. The activities dealt at least with two or more of the components of the Core Curriculum. To better present the types of activities that

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[25] Updated annually. Activities meet certain objectives to reinforce knowledge and preparatory experience for carrying out community based projects and initiatives. Developed with input from many AMIGOS stakeholders by the International Office Director of training. (2010 Volunteer training handbook, p. 19)

[26] This handbook is divided into 13 sections and has more than 100 new activities.

[27] The mission statement is articulated in both English and Spanish. The mission of Amigos de las Américas is to build partnerships in order to:

- Empower young leaders/ fomentar el liderazgo juvenil
- Advance community development/promover el desarrollo comunitario
- Strengthen multicultural understanding in the Americas/ fortalecer el entendimiento multicultural en las Américas

volunteers engaged in, I will describe them in relation to the component they aimed to address.

AMIGOS 101

AMIGOS 101 activities[28] are designed to help volunteers articulate the AMIGOS mission and history, and to learn about the organizational structure of the institution. AMIGOS volunteers are expected to have to speak frequently about who they are and what they are doing in the community. The 101 activities are also designed to help volunteers understand the different roles attached to them while they are in their host community.

An important component of AMIGOS 101 is the Standards of Conduct[29], presented to the volunteers during the January training. The volunteers learn why these standards exist and to illustrate them, they are given different scenarios[30] of volunteers violating the standards. They were provided different takes on the same scenario: the volunteer's perspective, the supervisor's and local agency's perspective, and AMIGOS' perspective. The volunteers and staff engaged in a discussion about the facts and in the end there seemed to be consensus that the volunteer had acted in an irresponsible manner detrimental to the community, to the program, and to the volunteer.

AMIGOS 101 also prepares volunteers for the work they will be doing in their host community. They are introduced to the projects for that specific year. These may

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[28] For a complete list of activities see appendix A pp. 197 – 201.

[29] The Standards of Conduct are: 1. Will not engage in any behavior that may be harmful to the health and safety of the volunteer or others, nor will the volunteer engage in any behavior that may be detrimental to the program. 2. Will not use or possess any drugs which are illegal under the laws of the United States or the host country. 3. Will not consume any alcoholic beverage. 4. Will not leave his/her assigned work area without prior permission form a member of the AMIGOS Latin America program staff. 5. Will not engage in amorous conduct. 6. Will not operate any motorized vehicle or ride on a motorcycle. 7. Will not handle firearms. 8. Will not use tobacco products.

[30] The scenarios ranged from drinking, leaving the community to amorous conduct.

change from year to year since they are based on partnerships with the host community and other local agencies. In addition, this section also deals with basic packing and preparation tips, as well as issues of health and safety while in their host communities.

Community Development

Community Development activities[31] focused on ways to work with the community, how to incorporate teambuilding techniques, and the need to be culturally sensitive. One of the activities introduced volunteers to Latin American fundraising. The training staff encouraged volunteers to be enthusiastic and creative about their community fundraising efforts, and shared some of their own fundraising experiences.

Another activity, the Virtual Community, gave volunteers the opportunity to apply ideas and concepts that they had been learning. The activity was executed in Spanish and provided volunteers with the opportunity to immerse themselves in a "real community" environment. The Virtual Community allows volunteers to practice some of the "real" interactions that they will have with their host communities as they prepare to conduct the community assessment. The trainers are assisted by a number of Spanish speaking friends who take the role of different community members: the town mayor, a teacher, a parent, a minister, and a child, to name a few. These conversations will lead to a final assessment and the preparation of a town meeting where the volunteers will present the ideas that the town has for a community-based initiative, (e.g., what health

[31] For a complete list of activities see appendix A pp. 197 – 201.

and environment topics would be most appropriate for the children to learn, or what materials will be available for use).

AMIGOS also strives to familiarize volunteers with the Community Assessment Tool (CAT). This is a set of three tools that will help volunteers become familiar with their communities. The tools also establish a foundation for summer projects and for the implementation of the community-based initiatives. This activity teaches volunteers to map community resources, including how to access the resources the community has to help them initiate the community-based initiative. The volunteers were also introduced to two community development theories: Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The volunteers were told that ABCD requires that they consider the local assets of their communities as the foundation of sustainable community development. AI requires that the volunteers ask questions that focus on positive change. Volunteers were reminded to discover the strengths and positive characteristics of their communities when collaborating with community members on community based initiatives.

Youth Leadership

Youth leadership activities aim to prepare volunteers to fulfill their roles as leaders in the community. Volunteers will likely engage in teaching the youth in their community. Volunteers learn about lesson planning, leading classes, and educational activities. In addition, there was specific focus on working in partnerships (required of volunteers), effective communication skills necessary for interacting with the community, and setting goals and objectives for the summer. The activity I observed focused on different methods of giving and receiving feedback.

Multicultural Understanding

Activities that dealt with multiculturalism allowed the volunteers to understand that we are the products of our own cultural programming and that this programming might be different in their host communities. Volunteers were asked to explore their own definitions of the term "multicultural." The trainers also reminded them of the need to be culturally sensitive and to be open to different cultural norms. The volunteers read a description of the body rituals among the Nacirema, and were asked to respond to a series of questions about what they had read. [32] They were asked to read the description a second time and to reflect critically about their responses.

The Weekend Retreat and Two Service Learning Activities

Since the time that I began to volunteer with AMIGOS, the weekend retreat has taken place in February. We meet in New York City and travel to Upstate New York for a full weekend of activities. Volunteers spend a lot of time together and begin to develop a sense of community. They may not forego this training.[33] It is particularly important because at the retreat volunteers engage in the letter stuffing.

There were two service learning activities in 2010, both of which took place at El Museo del Barrio in New York City. The first one included a Spanish language tour of El Museo del Barrio's permanent exhibit, which underscored the Latino experience in New York City. This was followed by a light meal in a Mexican restaurant, where recent

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[32] Sample questions: Do you think the rituals among the Nacirema are strange? What are your general thoughts and feelings regarding the article?

[33] Volunteers are allowed to miss one training session but are required to do make up work. If a volunteer misses many training sessions, he or she will be required to attend the CV training at their own expense if they want to remain in the program.

volunteers connected in Spanish with veteran volunteers. At the end of the meeting, the volunteers were given a homework assignment[34]. This activity seemed aimed at a need to immerse volunteers in environments where Spanish is spoken rather than reinforce the idea of service learning. However, it also was an opportunity for them to reflect on their motivations for becoming volunteers.

The second service learning experience involved volunteers actually helping out in the museum. This event, a day of crafts and storytelling, was part of the "Super Sábados (Super Saturdays)" sponsored by Target. Visitors had access to all the exhibits and events taking place during the day. The volunteers assisted kids in a creative workshop involving Styrofoam sculptures.

Reflecting on Training: A Trainer's Perspective

Training is one of the most important components of AMIGOS. I have included a section on training in this dissertation because it is necessary to understand how volunteers are being prepared to assume their roles in Latin America. I believe that proper training can positively impact their experience in Latin America, enhance their volunteer experience, and provide for more opportunities to volunteer in the future. However, it is equally important to investigate the ways these volunteers are being trained and the opportunities they are given to sustain the learning that is taking place.

[34] Volunteers were asked to offer their thoughts, opinions, and reflections about the event. They were also asked to share why they wanted to volunteer in Latin America when there was so much need to volunteer in New York.

Anne[35], a current trainer and former volunteer, has a degree in international studies. She acknowledges that it was her experience with AMIGOS that prompted her to pursue international studies in college. Currently, she is a teacher in the Bronx. Anne explains that:

> Amigos helped me understand the problems of other countries, but I didn't know much about my own country. The reason I wanted to teach in the Bronx was to try to understand the systems of poverty that exist here and also understand education more fully. I'm also interested in the role that education can play in all this. That's why I didn't go straight to graduate school. I wanted to figure it out first.

Anne's reflections on training have important implications for improving the training that volunteers receive. She believes that "AMIGOS has done a good job of bringing the ideas and rhetoric of positive community development and participatory development into trainings," and refers to the learning objectives for volunteer training as an indication[36]. These learning objectives emphasize that volunteers need to understand the work they do and what their roles are. Anne believes that volunteers would be better served if there was a full exploration of "the theories behind participatory development and what they mean in relation to the work they do at the community level."

Anne observes that AMIGOS' training has a number of shortcomings. Her thinking has been informed by the work she did in Organization Development at the university level. She asserts that the training is brief, especially "in terms of the amount of time spent on ideas related to the role of the volunteers in fostering participation and empowerment." According to her, the training concentrates on methods rather than "behaviors, attitudes, and principles." In addition, the training seems to be considered a one shot experience or course after which the volunteer is supposedly prepared to "foster

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[35] A pseudonym

[36] She refers to objectives 5, 6, 7, 13, and 15. For a complete list of the objectives, see appendix A p. 206.

participation and empowerment." She believes that training needs to be an ongoing process. AMIGOS should create opportunities for the volunteers to reflect on what they have learned at the same time that they are experiencing and working in their host communities. Ehrlich (1999) explains that the integration of academic study and community service offers students opportunities to reflect on what is important to them.

Anne has two recommendations to improve the training that volunteers receive. First, there should be more "focus on attitudes and philosophy of participation." She means that there should be more activities that help volunteers "gain awareness of their existing attitudes" so that they can begin to build new ones. Second, AMIGOS should "implement systems for fostering experiential learning while in community."

Volunteers Assessment of Training

I conducted two surveys to assess volunteers' satisfaction with the training they had received. One survey shows the responses of six of the volunteers that will be in host communities this summer (2010). The second survey was given to thirty-seven veteran volunteers who had participated in AMIGOS at some time in the past. Obviously, the first set of responses are based on the volunteers' own assessment of the training they received in 2010 without their being able to compare their ideas with the reality of being in the community. However, the data can show how confident they feel about the work they are about to do, and it can be contrasted with the responses of volunteers who have done training and have already been in a host community.

Figure 4.1 Amigos Pre-departure Survey: Training Assessment

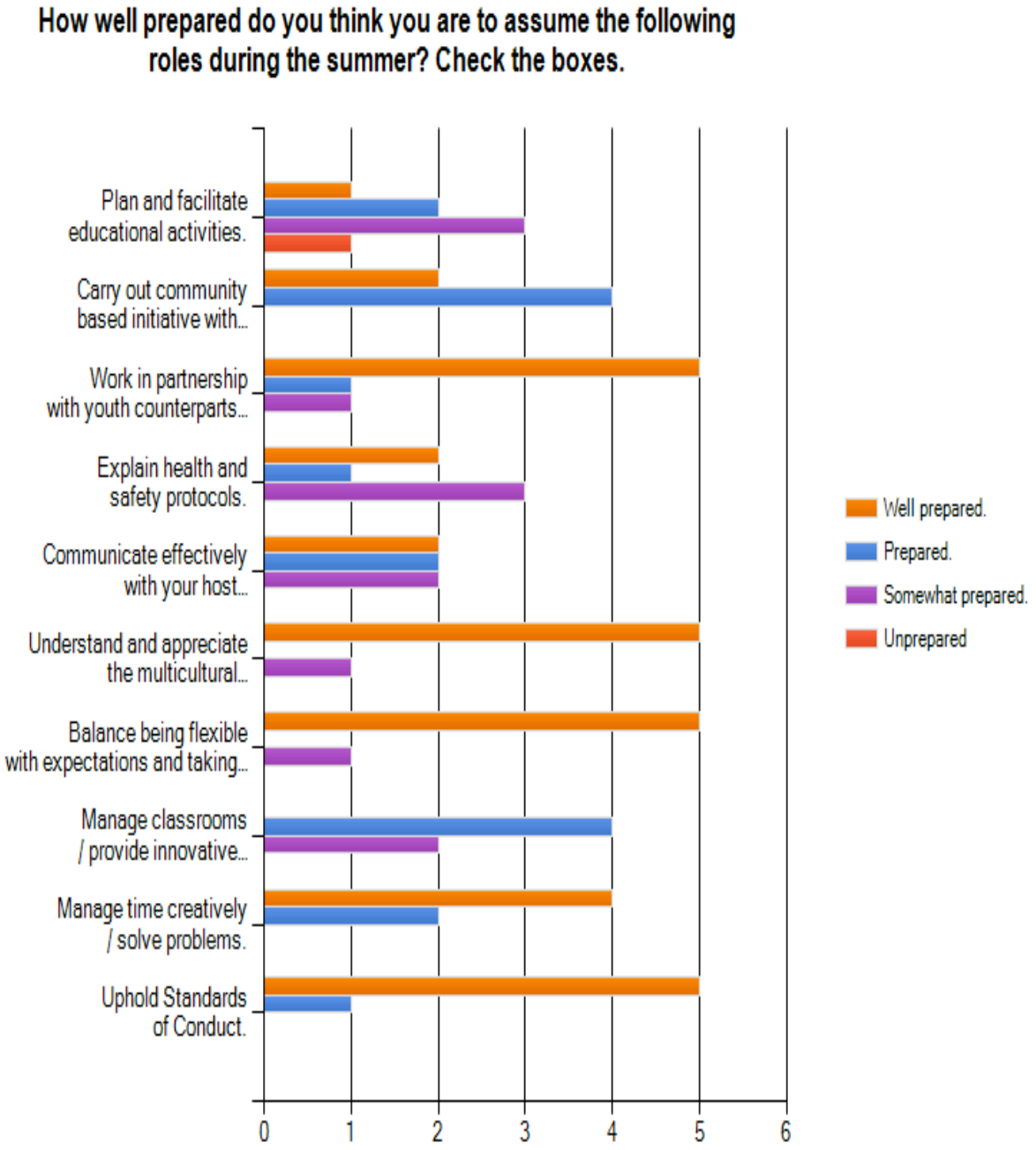
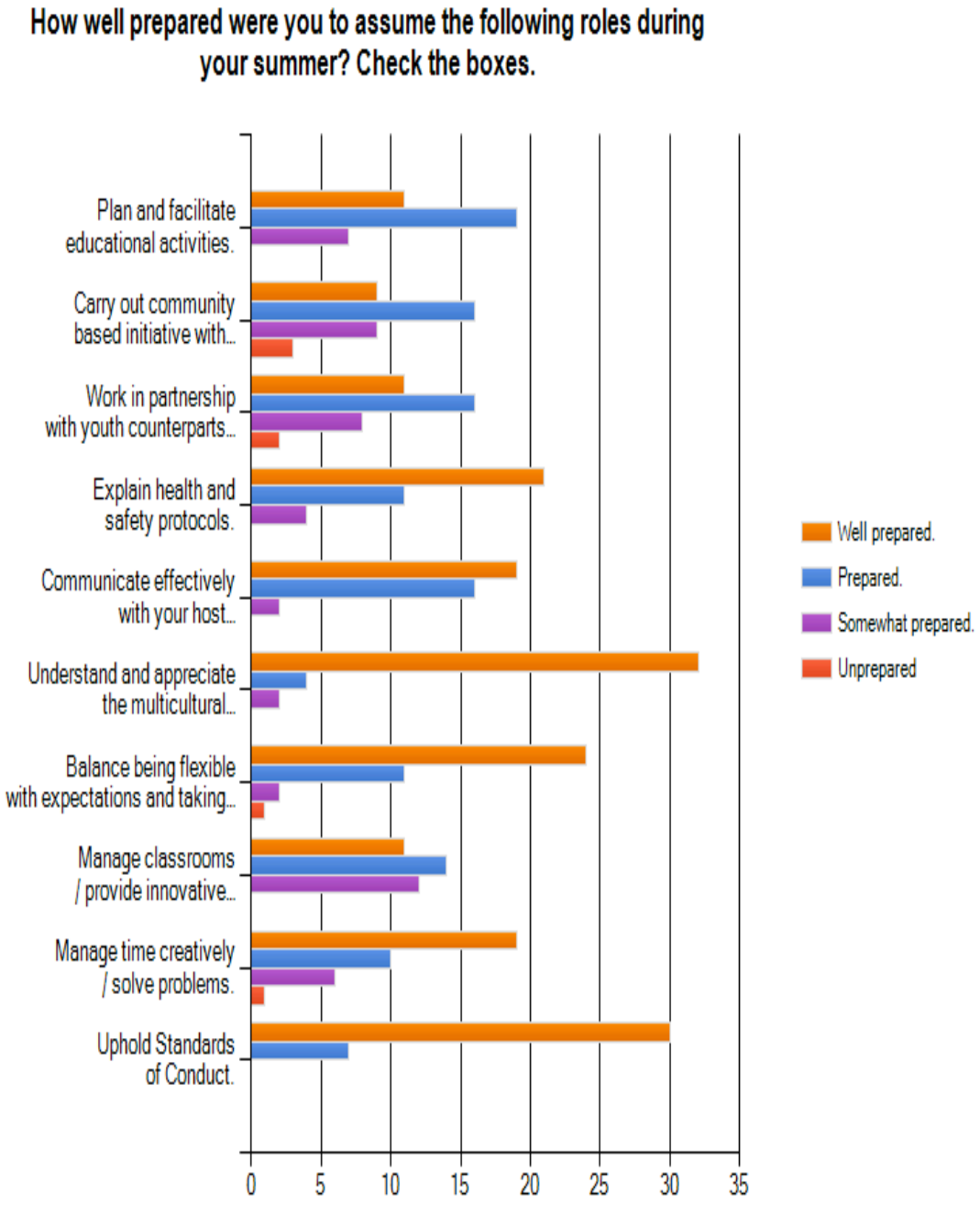


Figure 4.2 Amigos Veteran Volunteers: Training



Both surveys present similarities and differences that can be explained by the fact that the first survey is a prediction on the part of the volunteers of their readiness to assume their roles. One of the most striking differences is the fact that the pre-departure survey shows that only one volunteer does not feel ready to plan and facilitate educational activities. However, they all feel well prepared/ prepared /or somewhat prepared to assume the other roles. The veteran volunteer survey shows that after completing the program a small number of volunteers felt unprepared in some of the roles; however, they all felt well prepared / prepared / or somewhat prepare to plan and facilitate educational activities. Most of the other categories seem to show a similar degree of preparation on both surveys.

It can be assumed that the pre-departure survey indicates that, after training, most volunteers feel ready to assume their roles in their host communities. Obviously, this is no assurance of success. Nevertheless, it is an indication of the volunteers' satisfaction with the training and their willingness to assume their roles.

The Veteran Volunteer survey also shows that, overall, most of the volunteers felt they had been well prepared / prepared / or somewhat prepared to perform their roles. Only three volunteers out of thirty-seven felt they were unprepared to carry out a community based initiative with community members. Two out of thirty-seven felt unprepared to work in partnerships with youth counterparts from the communities. One out of thirty-seven felt unprepared to balance being flexible with expectations and taking initiative in AMIGOS projects, to manage time creatively, or to solve problems.

Overall, the surveys seem to suggest that both pre-departure volunteers and veteran volunteers were satisfied with the training they had received. The participants, based on their own observations and participation in the program, were asked two additional questions[37] to help me assess how best a chapter can serve the needs of a volunteer. The participants were asked to reflect on the improvements the chapter could have made in preparing them and what the participants might have done to improve their own preparation.

The pre-departure survey shows that the main areas participants might have improved on their own were community research and language proficiency. Three participants out of six indicated that they should have researched more about their communities. Volunteers find out where they will be traveling in February at the retreat. Perhaps chapters might ensure that from the time that volunteers learn about their destination until their departure, they engage in research about their communities and the types of projects that have been implemented or are being developed, In this fashion, they may have a better understanding of where they will be and what will be expected of them. This will also help them reflect on the tools they will need to be successful in their communities. Two of the volunteers indicated that they should have practiced more Spanish. Although most key words are given both in English and Spanish, during my observations it became clear that English is the main language of instruction. Few activities are conducted only in Spanish. One volunteer pointed out that he/she should have done more reading in the handbooks.

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[37] 1. What could you have done to improve your own preparation?
2. What improvements could the chapter that trained you have made in preparing you?

Responses to the second question (*What improvements could the chapter have made in preparing you?*) echo some of the topics that emerged in the Amigos pre-departure Training Assessment Survey. Two of the participants acknowledged that they felt prepared; two would have liked to have had more practice with the teaching component; and the other two would have liked to have had more practice with Spanish.

The veteran volunteers survey responses to both questions are consistent with the responses of the pre-departure survey. The answers to the first question (*What could you have done to improve your own preparation?*) show three emerging themes that volunteers identified to improve their own preparation: practice more Spanish; research more about their host community; and training was very good or excellent. The responses to the second question also echo the responses in the pre-departure survey. Ten participants indicated that they were satisfied with the training they had received. "The Peninsula Chapter has a very comprehensive and interactive training that made me feel completely prepared," stated one of the respondents. In response to this question, another veteran volunteer wrote:

> I thought I was prepared very well in the aspects that you can be prepared for. There's always going to be a surprise element because every experience is different. My chapter did a wonderful job in preparing me.

Seven volunteers also would have liked to have had more training in teaching and classroom management, along with more practice in Spanish. Typical comments were, "More Spanish training and practice, especially with native speakers;" and, "I wish more Spanish training could have happened; more immersion type stuff." Five veteran volunteers felt they would have benefited from having a more thorough preparation in

how to implement projects and from having role-played situations they were likely to encounter in their communities.

Overall, the surveys demonstrate that chapters do a good job preparing volunteers for their experiences in their host communities, but that there are a number of elements that could be improved to ensure an even better experience. Many volunteers engage in teaching the young people of their host communities. Chapters should place more emphasis on preparing these young people to become educators. The New York City Chapter trains volunteers to be youth educators once during the chapter's retreat. As one of the returning volunteers from 2009 stated in an interview:

> We were teaching the children about environmental health, like decomposition, organic compost, deforestation. The program guide really helped, "La guía del programa", because it had that direct translation. It had the words we didn't know so that we could teach. That really helped us. I think that there could have been more because there were just a couple of pages and extending that for a week was kind of challenging. It was tough.

Chapters should make sure that there is a consistent use of Spanish in the training. This could make volunteers feel more equipped to face some of their fears about language competency. However, as a veteran volunteer suggested:

> Training is key in taking a raw individual and preparing for all the new experiences a volunteer will come across. In that spirit, to a large extent, there is nothing that can train a volunteer except for the experience itself. So increased service learning, language immersion, and more time training probably would have helped immensely.

All of the 2009 returning volunteers of the New York City chapter completed the AMIGOS 2009 Volunteer Reported Experiences by Chapter[38], conducted by the International Office. Responses to the survey show a general satisfaction with the

[38] For the full report see appendix A p. 207.

program and the training received. There were two areas of the program that three (25 percent) volunteers rated as poor: (1) the overall rating of training prior to travel; and (2) the inclusion of language in training. These findings are consistent with those in the surveys I conducted. There was a low percentage of volunteers that felt dissatisfied with training, and a similar number felt that there should be more training in Spanish. However, the overall rating of the program indicates that participants rated the program either excellent (58.3 percent) or good (41.7 percent), comparable to the percentages of those who would recommend AMIGOS to their peers.

CHAPTER 5

AMIGOS: Data

This chapter answers the main research questions described in the methodology section of this dissertation. First, in order to help the reader connect history and practice with the research, it was necessary to provide the reader with a general understanding of AMIGOS as an institution, and to describe how AMIGOS operates.

Research Questions

This dissertation examines the impact of an after school program and a service learning program on students' beliefs and attitudes toward civic and political participation and engagement and social justice. In this chapter, I focus on AMIGOS, a service learning program. First, I analyzed volunteers' reasons to participate in the program by evaluating the responses to surveys and interviews I conducted with some of individuals who had decided to volunteer with AMIGOS. Then, I examined volunteers' beliefs and attitudes toward civic and political participation and social justice. I asked the participants to recall their views on those topics, and determined whether their participation in AMIGOS had in any way shaped how they thought about these topics now. In addition, I assessed whether preconceived ideas that high school and college students had about people from underprivileged countries had changed after having experienced everyday life in those environments. Also, I assessed whether for the volunteers the experience raised questions about inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation. Finally, I drew inferences from the data collected to conclude whether or not this was an empowering experience and, if so, whom had it empowered.

Why Volunteering?

Janoski et al. (1998)[39] conducted research on volunteering to "test two theories about how people become volunteers." Their research identifies two perspectives as the roots of volunteering: "the Normative perspective," which emphasizes the role that values and beliefs play in guiding people's conduct towards volunteering; and "the Social Practice perspective," which underscores the role that structured opportunities and social resources play in guiding people's conduct towards volunteering.

Janoski et al., drawing on the work of Durkheim (1973) and Tocqueville (1960), state that the Normative perspective emphasizes that human behavior is determined by "values, norms, and attitudes." In other words, they assume that volunteer behavior "flows from socialization into pro-social attitudes." Janoski et al., citing Wuthnow (1995), add that an "ethic of caring is fostered originally in the family," then channeled into "volunteer work by secondary institutions, such as churches, schools, etc."

On the other hand, the Social Practice perspective stresses the "formative role of practical experiences and social participation" in shaping volunteer behavior. This theory draws from the work of Bourdieu's (1977)[40] and the notion of "habitus," a system of predispositions. "People become habituated to certain modes of conduct through everyday practice." This theory underscores the role played by social situations and relationships in shaping pro-social attitudes and behaviors. "People acquire the 'habit' of volunteering because they are routinely placed in social situations and social relationships where the social skills and dispositions requisite for volunteer work are developed."

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[39] (Janoski, T., Musick, M., and Wilson, J.). 1998. *Being Volunteered? The Impact of Social Participation and Pro-Social Attitudes on Volunteering. Sociological Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 3. (Sep., 1998), pp. 495-519

[40] Cited in Janoski et al. (1998).

Janoski et al. concluded that early volunteering leads to later volunteering and that "mandatory community service programs can boost later volunteer efforts, but that socialization into appropriate citizenship attitudes is of equal, if not, greater value." (p. 496)

AMIGOS Volunteers

The 2008 AMIGOS Annual Report states that a total of 701 US volunteers participated in AMIGOS during that summer. Despite the declining global economy, the H1N1 pandemic, and the coup in Honduras, AMIGOS recruited 644 US volunteers in 2009[41]. The New York City Chapter sent 42 volunteers in 2008, 12[42] in 2009, and 12 in 2010.

This section examines the reasons why the volunteers who participated in the surveys and interviews decided to volunteer with AMIGOS, and connects the findings to the theories presented by Janoski et al. (1998). I will assess whether the volunteers were influenced by the Normative or the Social Practice perspectives, or whether the reasons provided do not support either of those theories.

I have analyzed three different sets of data: the surveys completed by veteran volunteers; the surveys completed by the volunteers that will be traveling this year (2010); and the interviews I conducted during 2009-2010. All participants were asked to state their reasons for participating with AMIGOS. In addition, veteran volunteers and the

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[41] 2009 AMIGOS Annual Report.

[42] Originally 14 volunteers trained but in the end 1 was unable to go and a second one returned immediately.

volunteers I interviewed were asked an additional question: "*How many times did you volunteer and why?*"

I interviewed eleven volunteers, one of whom left in June 2010. Six out of twelve volunteers completed the pre-departure survey, and thirty-seven participants completed the veteran survey. However, three of them skipped these questions. The data collected revealed four recurrent themes in the three sets of data. Most volunteers gave two or more of the following themes as reasons.

- The volunteers knew somebody who had participated and had influenced him/her to do the same.
- The volunteers wanted to learn or experience other cultures, or connect with different cultures/communities.
- The volunteers wanted to help others.
- They wanted to improve their Spanish.

In the pre-departure survey, 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they knew somebody who had gone through the program, and stated that as a reason to want to volunteer. One volunteer pointed out that she was excited about the connection her sister had made with her host family. As another volunteered stated, "I have talked to many others who have had this wonderful experience." The veteran survey shows that 17.6 percent chose to participate because they knew somebody who had participated. The responses echo that of the previous group: "I've heard of how life-changing it could be;" "my sister had done it;" and, "when I was eight, I first heard about AMIGOS from a family friend, who described her experience in such a way that I knew I wanted to participate as well." The interviews I conducted revealed that 70 percent of the volunteers

knew of somebody who had participated and this had influenced them. Andrew spoke of three of his high school friends who had participated in the program and loved it, and encouraged him to "check out this program." Anita commented that her sister, who had volunteered a few years earlier, really convinced her to go. Finally, Jessie explained that a couple of her friends had already done AMIGOS, and others were going to do it that same year.

Both the pre-departure survey and the interviews show that 50 percent of the participants want to experience or learn about other cultures and broaden their worldviews. The veteran volunteer survey shows that 76.4 percent also wanted to experience or learn about other cultures. In the surveys the volunteers expressed that they had decided to participate in AMIGOS to experience something new, challenge themselves, and learn what life is outside "their US comforts." Several returning volunteers also indicated that they kept going back to find that unique connection with the communities, and also to continue to learn more about Latin America.

> I had traveled outside of the United States before but whenever I had traveled I had always felt like a tourist. I always felt like I was viewing the foreign culture from the outside and I really wanted to know what it was like to live another culture and to really know it. I think that it was this desire that truly drove me to do it.

Volunteering to help others rated high among the responses, but not as high as wanting to experience and learn about other cultures. The pre-departure and veteran volunteer surveys and the interviews show a percentage of 50 percent, 38.2 percent, and 40 percent respectively. Pre-departure volunteers expressed their desire to want to help improve conditions for others, their love for volunteering, or to expand their own horizons while helping others. In the same manner, veteran volunteers indicated that they

wanted to dedicate themselves to service work; they felt compelled to help others; find ways to make a difference; help those in need; give back to the community; or do something different that contributed value to the world. Andrew, one of the interviewees, indicated that he always liked to give back to the community. Dennis articulated that his attraction to AMIGOS was not because of the aura of adventure, but because he wanted to do community service within another culture. Peggy had previously joined the Peace Corps when she was in college, and was really interested in doing international volunteer work. Finally, Gloria had gone to Ecuador with a church group for about two weeks the previous year to do service work. AMIGOS allowed her to have the same experience on a larger scale and with more freedom.

Finally, 33.3 percent (pre-departure survey), 20.5 percent (veteran volunteers), and 30 percent (interviews) of the participants indicated that improving their skills in Spanish and a love for the language and culture were additional reasons to choose to participate in AMIGOS.

The data supports the notion that volunteers either were normalized into volunteering by the values held by them or society, had developed an ethic of caring, had been channeled into volunteering by other institutions, or were influenced by the values of others. For example, Angela comments that she has always volunteered in many ways through different clubs at school. She believes it all comes from her family values. The data also supports that the other perspective--the social practice perspective--played a role in fostering the volunteers' desire to participate. A number of volunteers stated that they wanted to try something different, experience and learn about other cultures. This

led them to AMIGOS. In a number of cases, volunteers experienced AMIGOS more than twice, from which it may be inferred that the experience became a habit.

However, it is not clear that volunteers are influenced by only one of the two theories. It can also be inferred that in the case of some of the returning volunteers, the process is one of mutual confluence of both theories. Some volunteers were first normalized into patterns of behavior that valued volunteerism, and the fact that they volunteered several times made some volunteers acquire the "habit" of volunteering. For example, Tania explains that she went to Ecuador the first time and Mexico the second time. After those experiences, she needed to continue volunteering with AMIGOS in some way. She began right away helping with training. Now, She is looking for new opportunities to volunteer again with AMIGOS. Similarly, Dennis has volunteered three times: as a volunteer, a supervisor, and a project supervisor. He will travel as a supervisor again in 2010. Dennis explains he has always valued people's social engagement and after volunteering with AMIGOS so many times, it has become a part of him.

Students' Beliefs and Attitudes toward Civic and Political Participation and Engagement and Social Justice

Volunteers were asked to voice their opinions on civic and political participation and social justice to determine whether these are concepts that volunteers value, and to what extent these concepts inform their lives. Then, they were asked to reflect on how they had felt about these topics before participating in AMIGOS, in order determine if AMIGOS had had an impact on how they feel today.

Drawing on the work of Westheimer & Kahne (2004), I described a civic participant to the volunteers as someone who is a member of community organizations, cares for those in need, and engages in efforts to improve the situations of others. A political participant was described as someone who engages in voluntary activities aimed at influencing political decisions. Social justice was described as the desire to recognize social wrongs (Greene, 1998), paying attention to inequalities in our society, and imagining alternatives to the inequalities we witness (Oakes &Lipton, 2007). It means that we question how society generates privilege and inequality, and how it affects individuals' opportunities to develop at all levels (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Kumashiro, 2004; &Young, 1993).

Interviews: Civic/Political Participation and Social Justice

All the interview participants declared that civic and political participation and social justice were important or very important in their lives. Some stated that these are issues that are with them on a daily basis; others said that they are on top of their list of interest or in their minds at different levels. Tania expressed that social justice and civic participation is what she was about; however, she thought less about political participation. Peggy indicated that she thought they were all very important in her life, but on a personal level. She said that she did not feel comfortable dealing with them in a broader manner. She thought of them in terms of how she could be a more socially participative person, and described this as one of the reason why she first got attracted to AMIGOS. “It felt very community based, person to person based rather than big concepts that are kind of untouchable.”

Before Doing AMIGOS

All volunteers expressed that these were concepts that were important for them. Anita connected social justice and civic participation to her own community. She felt she lived in a closed-minded community where she had witnessed discrimination.

> Social Justice - it's definitely something that I think about. I live in a town where most of the population is Caucasian and my family and a couple of other two families are the exception for being Indian, so I've witnessed some discrimination growing up. It's definitely something that I think about. Civic Participation, again relating it back to my town, people don't do that. A lot of peole care only about themselves. Again, you have those people who take other causes and those are the people I try to associate myself with but again in my town a large percentage just don't do anything. They are really not aware of what is going on in the world.

Anne, another volunteer, remembers being interested in all these topics, but having no experience of them to which she could relate. However, after participating in AMIGOS three times, she began to build the knowledge base to connect to these topics. Tania indicated that she was all about social justice, that her parents, both of whom were from socialist, communist countries, had ingrained those beliefs in her at an early age. Angela described herself as a socially/politically active person involved in a lot of social groups.

> I've always been a socially active and politically person. I'm involved at my school in a lot of social groups. Now, I'm the leader of the Cultural Alliance program. It talks about social identifiers. I'm also part of the Gay Straight Alliance, and the environmental club. If you are going to live in this world you might as well try to do something meaningful. I think that a lot of it comes from my family because my family is a very social family. They are all about the connections you make with people. And they are also very politically active. They are not outstandingly active but... my parents have always told me that you can do anything, that a person can change the world. Those are kind of the beliefs I was raised with.

It is clear from all the interviews that all participants found, at some level, that these concepts have value and have always been important in their lives. Some of them connected their interest to family influence. Others just remember that they have always been interested, but cannot pinpoint a determining factor. Only one volunteer, Robert, does not remember how he felt about these topics before experiencing AMIGOS. The program seems to attract students who have an interest in at least some of these concepts, if not all three.

After Doing AMIGOS

All volunteers indicated that their views or beliefs about civic/political participation and social justice were on different levels a function of their participation in AMIGOS. Initially, the impact was at a personal level. Either it influenced their views on these concepts, or helped them understand or connect their ideas and beliefs to their realities. Later, the experience had an impact on some of their future decisions. Some, for example, wanted to volunteer more, others were able to decide what to study, while others became more aware of issues at home, or decided to continue learning more about the issues that affected the people in their host communities.

Anita, who was in Nicaragua in 2009 when there was a coup d'état in Honduras, came to understand through the reactions of the community how helpless people were and how little they could do to effect change. "They only had one TV, where they were watching all that was going on and they couldn't really do anything. They couldn't participate. Just the fact that they were so much into those topics whereas here we have the opportunity to contribute to each of those if we choose to do so." This led her to

conclude that many people in the US are selfish because they have many opportunities to participate, but choose not to. The views of both Andrew and Dennis were reshaped by their experiences. Andrew understood "how fortunate he is," and this experience has helped him become more interested in Latin American politics. Dennis felt that some of his views on these issues were altered and others were reconfirmed. He does not feel that people can change some of their everyday situations on their own, but need the support of others. He has become more political now, and says he has developed "a network view of society."

Anne explains that this experience expanded her understanding of how the world works and how important her work in those communities was—working with community members to effect change. It also expanded her understanding of how "poverty works and the ways people are kept in poverty and the things that can lead to get people out of poverty." Anne has become more politically engaged and believes that political participation is how we improve communities. Her experience had an impact on how she viewed the US. Now, she is trying to understand how, according to her, the US perpetuates some inequalities.

> My college experience was very dominated by Amigos. I was very involved in my college creating political change and I don't think that I would have been interested if I had not done Amigos. Now I'm teaching in the Bronx. Amigos helped me understand the problems of other countries but I didn't know much about my own country. The reason I wanted to teach in the Bronx was to try to understand the systems of poverty that exist here and also understand education more fully. I'm also interested in the role that education can play in all this. That's why I didn't go straight to graduate school. I wanted to figure it out first.

Peggy was able to "digest" those terms. She was interested in civic/political participation and social justice, but did not know how to apply her ideas to everyday situations. She explained that AMIGOS helped her put those terms into a context and to

see how they work in the everyday life. Jessie explains that she pays more attention to issues of social justice concerning Latinos now than she did before. Like other volunteers, her experience has had positive impact as relates to the importance of civic/political participation and social justice. All volunteers spoke of a positive change in their commitment to civic/political participation and social justice as a result of their participation in AMIGOS. They also indicated that their experience has put them on a path to contributing to civic/political participation and social justice.

Surveys: Civic/Political Participation and Social Justice

Out of the thirty-seven participants who completed the survey, thirty-three (89.1 percent) responded to the two questions that examined how important social justice, civic participation, and political participation were for them, and whether AMIGOS had shaped how they thought of these concepts. Thirty-two participants responded that these were very important topics, and one responded social justice was important, but not civic/political participation. Two respondents indicated that civic participation, though important, was less important than political participation. Conversely, another respondent pointed out that social justice and civic participation were "significant factors in a healthy society but probably wouldn't say that political participation is as important as political support of the other two."

All participants stated that social justice was important for them. The reasons why these concepts were important varied, but there were a number of themes that emerged:

- This is how we make changes in society
- They represent inherent responsibilities of a citizen and a community member

- They are necessary for democracy to work, to make sure that we obtain what we need, and to ensure that our voices and the voices of others are heard

The Impact of AMIGOS on Ideas About Civic/Political Participation and Social Justice

Out of the thirty-three volunteers who answered questions on the impact of AMIGOS on their ideas about civic/political participation and social justice, twenty-nine (87.9 percent) reported that participation in the program had an influence; four (12.1 percent) responded that they were not influenced at all or the impact was minimal. Of those who reported no impact or minimal impact, two indicated that they felt the same way about these issues (they are important) after completing the program. One responded that the program had merely extended his/her views, but without having a huge impact, and another volunteer simply said that the program had not impacted him/her at all.

The twenty-nine participants that reported impact on their views of civic/political participation and social justice described the impact in different ways. However, their responses can be grouped into three categories:

- The connections with their community members that caused them to become more aware, interested, or invested in those issues
- The importance of participation to make a difference
- The emergence of issues of inequality or injustice

The participants who indicated that they had become more aware, interested, or invested in these issues related this to their experiences and the connections they made with the communities they assisted. They were welcomed by their communities and became part of their communities.

> Mostly. AMIGOS made me more aware of and more interested and invested in social issues involving Latin America and/or Latinos in the United States. Now when I read about or witness injustices against Latinos here, in a way, it feels like I am part of that group and it hurts me personally.

The connections these volunteers made with their communities taught them to look at issues from the other's perspective and shaped how they viewed "the other." It is this exposure, some reported, that made them think more about civic and political participation and social justice. One volunteer wrote that what had the greatest impact was the time spent with the members of the community and the things they learned about each other. AMIGOS volunteers reported that not only did these experiences further their interest in civic and political participation and social justice, but also taught them about "the importance of familiarizing oneself with the population one hopes to advocate on behalf of and the value of inspiring populations (and giving them the tools) to seek social justice for themselves."

The volunteers' responses also underscored the importance of civic and political participation to make a difference. "Through active civic participation, the people of whichever location, Latin America or otherwise, can engage the government and have a progressive movement towards social justice stemming from their efforts." Volunteers indicated that their views on participation were influenced because they felt that their volunteering in each community left sustainable change. This, consequently, reassured them of the importance of participating to effect change. Other volunteers wrote that experiences like this revealed the "importance of first hand experience," leading one volunteer to conclude that, "reading or listening about a subject is only scratching the surface of understanding. My experience has given me a new understanding of service." For others, it reinforced their ideas on participation and the value of participating. "My

involvement in AMIGOS (and other youth volunteer activities) also confirmed in my mind the value of participating in civic engagement or service for young people."

A third group of volunteers expressed how their views on civic and political participation and social justice were shaped because their experiences exposed issues of inequalities and social injustice. "It shaped how I think about social justice because it exposed me to social inequalities. Seeing those pushed me to act." Still others witnessed inequalities tied to exploitation by other countries. They demand government intervention to end these inequalities.

> Positive changes really come from the majority, and the majority of Latin American countries Amigos has projects in are poverty-stricken and have been exploited in some sense by other nations. That exploitation has led to some undesirable living conditions and social justice really needs to come from the government's support of the legitimate enforcement of human rights so not as many families live in insalubrious conditions.

Both the interviews and the surveys show that volunteers' views on civic and political participation and social justice were influenced in positive ways. They disclosed that most volunteers experienced a personal impact that shaped their views on these issues by either consolidating or contextualizing their views, reinforcing the importance of participation or rethinking their ideas. This experience also had an impact on future decisions in their lives. It created a need to continue volunteering for some, who either returned to these communities or got involved with the program in other ways—for example, helping to train others. Others indicated that it had an impact on their future studies. A number of them said that they had chosen a career path that involved Latin America as part of their studies, or careers that had a social focus. Most reported a continued engagement in civic and political participation and interest in social justice.

Volunteer responses also confirmed what research on civic engagement has demonstrated. Proponents of service learning believe that it increases the students' often assumed, limited knowledge about politics and general sense of civic responsibility (Barber, 1992). Barber claims that these experiences can raise students' generally low estimation of the legitimacy of democratic governance, and reverse their lack of support for civic life. Ehrlich (1999) explains that talking about democracy or examining and discussing texts about democratic processes and institutions is important, but that this is enhanced when integrated with civic work in a community. He is convinced that a strong citizen is crucial for the health of democracy, and that serving and acting in one's community is powerful training for democratic citizenship. Campbell (2000) advocates for service learning as a way to also foster the development of social capital among high school students. He claims that participating in community service can increase social capital, which in turn can increase civic engagement. Putman (1995) refers to social capital as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits. Dennis demonstrated how important social capital is when he stated that thanks to AMIGOS he has become more political and has developed a "network view of society."

Did Volunteers Have Preconceived Ideas About Latin Americans? Did they Change?

Tania, Anne, Robert, and Gloria believed that most people would be poor and, by extension, unhappy. In the case of Tania, this was because of a trip to Mexico she had made with her parents when she was young. While there, she saw people living in shacks

on the side of the road. For Anne and Gloria, those images came mainly from the media. They all reported that the idea of poverty become more real. However, Tania explained that this was the case because AMIGOS works in rural places where poverty is the only reality. For her, AMIGOS provides a realistic view of the people but, at the same time, a narrow one. This was due to the fact that they were assigned to rural communities where they were not around educated people and were not exposed to life in the cities.

On the other hand, Anne described her experience as having broken all her stereotypes of how most people in Latin America lived downtrodden and unhappy lives. She described the people she met as "the happiest people I've ever met." Robert's accounts reveal tensions between his experiences in the United States and the community in Panama where he stayed. He expected people to be poor and "to look Mexican". He was placed in a very rural community and met many indigenous people. What shocked him was that people were diverse and did not fit the image he had of them. "I believed that Latin America was like the idea I had about Mexicans. Everyone I saw there was different. There were Japanese looking people; there were people with blue eyes; there were white-skinned people who spoke Guarani." Robert had a mental image of how poor people looked and, for him, they were not blue-eyed or white.

Peggy and Andrew could not remember if they had any kind of stereotypes about the people in Latin America. Andrew explained that if anything, he expected things to be very simple. He found the people to be very generous and he felt completely accepted. After AMIGOS, he has learned not to judge people before getting to know them. For Peggy, it was hard to remember, especially after having been trained as a volunteer and having participated in training for the last two years. She also remembers that initially she

had been more worried about being the "other" and how she would be treated, and that she had a picture of the people as a whole. Her experience taught her that the people there were “individuals with their own distinct personalities.”

Angela and Dennis were too wrapped up in their own thoughts, and did not have an opportunity to unpack their stereotypes. Dennis was so busy with college, leaving right after finishing that year, that he never thought about it and was glad he did not. “ I wasn’t really thinking about it. So, I really didn’t have any preconceived notions that I remember and that is what made it most beneficial to me.” Dennis’s experience actually changed how he viewed America. “I hated America.” After AMIGOS, he came back thinking that, “people also do good things in America.” In a similar manner, Angela’s own personal fears did not allow her to think about any preconceived ideas she had about the people. Angela is a vegan, and was very worried that she was going to have a hard time explaining her situation. She remembers people saying that she was crazy and offering her “salchichón.”[43]

Anita, a high school student, actually thought that it was going to be dangerous, with rape and gangs abounding. She did some research before her trip to find out that Nicaragua had the least gang members in Latin America. In addition, she had recently seen a movie, *Man on Fire.* This movie takes place in Mexico and shows the kidnapping of American children for a ransom. She related that she feared that it could happen to her. Obviously, her experience turned out quite different. She recalls only one occasion when somebody did not want them to get off the bus and they knew “exactly how to handle it.”

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[43] A type of sausage

Finally, Jessie's experience did not involve confronting negative stereotypes but positive ones of the people in Latin America. She had heard extensive stories from veteran volunteers about the people's generosity, how welcoming they were, and the authentic relationships one could build. This proved to be the case with her. Interestingly, the locals also had stereotypes about Americans, believing that they all lived in mansions, had many cars, and had other people serving them. "They were shocked to find out that I didn't have all those things."

All volunteers except Robert also mentioned the role that training played in dispelling some of the most common stereotypes about Latin America held by many in the United States. Robert was the only volunteer who had not gone through regular training, but initially had been a Correspondent Volunteer.

Did the Experience Raise Questions About Inequality, Oppression, Domination, and Alienation?

During my conversations with the volunteers, I explored whether their experiences had raised any questions about their communities related to inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation. We discussed these concepts and concluded that they are somewhat interconnected. We talked about the norms of society and how they privilege and benefit some while marginalizing others. We also reached the conclusion that oppression can be manifested in different forms: racism, classism, gender bias, and sexual orientation among other social markers (Kumashiro, 2002, 2004).

Volunteers' notions of inequalities were centered in beliefs about poor vs. rich and the ways in which people were not treated equally (for example, gays fighting for

marriage equality). All volunteers viewed their communities in terms of inequality and oppression. Issues of domination and alienation as such were not described by the volunteers; however, some of the events portrayed could be analyzed as instances of domination or alienation. There was one overarching theme when volunteers discussed inequalities: economic disparity. However, two themes emerged about oppression: Oppression by their own system, and oppression of females. The volunteers identified different forms of oppression, but did not always question who the oppressor was.

All the volunteers discussed inequality in terms of economic inequality. Anne compared her experience in Panama with her experience in Uruguay. In Panama, her host family had seven kids, and only three bedrooms and had to survive on $3.00 a month. However, she remembers that in Uruguay the family had a TV, and were "more well-off" than the family in Panama. Anita also reflected on the economic disparities she saw in Nicaragua. She stayed with a family "that had one of the biggest houses" but her neighbors lived in "shoeboxes." The family owned the only store in town and had a car. Similarly, Jessie also stayed with one of the wealthy families when she was in Nicaragua. "There were like two families in the community that were well-off and everyone else was so poor. Even for a US house, the two wealthy families had pretty big houses. They never seem to have food problems." Jessie would talk to many community members as a function of her role, and recalls complaints that they "got no money for what they did." One of the women told her that she never saw her husband because he was always working and would only get two hours of sleep. He was not able to spend time with their daughter. However, Dennis had a different understanding of the economic inequalities he witnessed. "The economic inequalities never really struck me as being that important. It

didn't feel that much different to me than staying at my grandfather's country house in NY." Dennis hates what capitalism has done to the US. In Latin America, he encountered what he feels he has been deprived of in the US: a connection to the earth. He views Latin American rural communities as ideal places to live. So he identifies the inequalities of the US based on his own dreams.

> The main inequalities that struck me were that they had things that Americans don't and that no amount of capital is going to buy for America, which is a functional community fabric, strong and adjacent to the place where they live; these things that we have completely gotten rid of in America. Those were the inequalities that really struck me. They were brewing with human happiness; that they worked with their hands everyday. They engaged in things around them and seemed to be very whole and made me feel like I was missing something inside of myself. Something had been taken away from me and sent to Paraguay, you know like way, way before.

Conversations with the volunteers unveiled two recurrent themes that described ways in which the volunteers identified oppression in their communities. This does not suggest that these are the only forms of oppression that exist in Latin America, but ones that were more evident to the volunteers. They all contemplated oppression, and some felt that it was the system that kept people oppressed. It is in the interest of those in power to maintain the status quo. Anne, Tania, Anita, and Jessie made specific references to the wealthy people in town as the ones in power and the ones making decisions that affected the community. Jessie lived in a community where two families fought over the control of the town:

> There was also some kind of rivalry between the two wealthy families. It was interesting because I was living with one and my other two partners were living with the other one. They hated each other: the two families. Pretty much, the town was divided. People would buy things from one of the families but not from the other. I always had to stay out of it and not say anything. The other members of the community were oppressed by this system. It was not fair.

Gloria, Peggy, and Dennis talked about female oppression. Gloria and her partner tried to implement workshops for mothers and daughters "to talk about sex and try to foster better conversations." She encountered resistance from the International Office and the partnering agencies (the church and the government) in Paraguay. According to Gloria, the International Office thought it was too controversial and it might jeopardize the support of the church and the government for other projects. Gloria felt "a little biased as a woman." She felt that women depended too much on men's permission to do things.

Peggy was worried that she was pushing stereotypes and judging situations exclusively from a "Western American [*sic*] perspective". She noticed that a lot of the women ended up being mothers and "heads of households and didn't have opportunities to kind of pursue their own path." She also noticed that there was a divide between the youth who were studying "Bachillerato"[44] and the older generations, "who were mainly taking care of nine kids, and staying all day in the kitchen, and selling things in the market." She worried that those young girls were pushed to become mothers and perpetuate the system. She met a number of strong and independent women whose husbands were in the US, and her host grandmother had not seen her husband in fifteen years.

Dennis viewed the women he met in Paraguay as oppressed. He remembered that they would get up at 4 am or 5 am to cook breakfast and they would be in the kitchen all day long.

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[44] Equivalent to High School in the US

> I remember my host mother by the end of the day. She would be rubbing her eyes and they were like red and dripping. She would be like, 'oh my head, my eyes; I need to go to sleep.' She was choking down on smoke. Part of that is that she had no idea of how to re-fabricate her kitchen so that she got smoke out but none of the males in the family didn't seem to think about it. That's one of the projects AMIGOS does with the smoke stoves, or whatever they call them, but it takes a local health professional who is working in health projects and identifies things like that. That for me was always a big sign of women's oppression.

Volunteers witnessed inequalities and oppression in their communities. They felt they were either not empowered to investigate what they were seeing or had no other support system to connect with to find ways to deal with it. A number of volunteers expressed frustration at what they were seeing and at not having ways to dialogue about these issues. Anne feels that as an outsider who is coming to "spur development," she needs to be aware of the system. She feels AMIGOS should help in fostering those discussions.

> One of the things I was disappointed about was that people were not having those conversations. There are such amazing possibilities for that because you have the supervisors coming each week and having those one-on-one check-ins, and they could easily talk about what they are observing and how do you see things in terms of inequality, oppression, etc. Because that is something that you cannot learn about if someone is not asking those questions. Unfortunately, most of that weekly observation is about how we are doing in terms of the project. And I believe that if it is part of AMIGOS to have people come back and be able to apply different views to what they are doing with their life, more discussions should be had and I think that is a part that is missing. I think those discussions should be had in-country and when we come back.

Was This an Empowering Experience? Who Was Empowered?

During the interviews, it became very clear that all the volunteers had been impacted in powerful ways by their experience with AMIGOS. All indicated that they

had been empowered at a personal level. However, Four of them also described the ways in which they felt they had also been able to empower their communities.

At a personal level, the volunteers expressed a gain in self-confidence, leadership skills, and self-esteem. They also pointed out that, after the experience, they felt they could do anything. As Gloria stated, "It has given me the courage to carry out a goal from start to finish." Although all volunteers felt they had been empowered, obviously they had different stories to describe their empowerment. Tania felt that she had gained a community back in the US, and that it was "OK to be a good person and volunteer." Jessie learned that she could make a difference. "Just because I am only one person, it doesn't mean that I don't have the power to do something." Finally, Dennis was able to redirect his life. The summer before doing AMIGOS, he had decided to drop out of school, but when he came back he knew he wanted to go back to school. He states that AMIGOS is responsible for the most important decisions he has made so far and has taken his life in new directions. The 2009 Volunteer Experience Survey conducted by the International Office showed similar results: 92 percent noted increased leadership skills; 88 percent noted growth in their personal confidence that they can accomplish anything they wish; and 85 percent reported an increased sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

Four of the volunteers also reported feeling that they had been able to empower the community. Anita thought that their project[45] brought the community together and provided the tools they needed to work together. Tania felt that the projects[46] she engaged in or supervised had a similar effect on the community. Jessie and Anne also felt that they

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[45] They were building chicken coops.

[46] Projects range from building latrines, environmental projects to a llamas pen project and a warm greenhouse for chickens.

were able to empower their communities. Jessie expressed it in terms of mutual empowerment; that it was not about the projects they engaged in but the things they learned from each other. Anne felt she was able to empower the community in Panama. Her community did not have a youth organization and the young people felt like they were stuck. They started having meetings, talked about the things they wanted to do in their communities, and started getting organized to change things. She remembers that in the end, "they all worked so well together, called their own meetings at night, and started organizing themselves. I remember sitting next to my host mother observing them, I wasn't even part of it and she said they had never done this before, and that was when it hit me and for what I hear they are still active and doing things, and that was really significant for me and that's where I saw the power of having that social change."

The stories told by the volunteers demonstrate how powerful this experience can be for youth that take part in it. It empowers them at a personal level and has the potential to also empower their communities.

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter has demonstrated that AMIGOS had a positive impact on all the volunteers that participated in this study. This study aimed at establishing if there had been an impact on the participants' beliefs and attitudes toward civic participation, political participation, and social justice. At the same time, it wanted to explore the decisions that led participants to volunteer, investigate any impact on their pre-conceived ideas about the "other"; raised questions of inequality, oppression,

domination, and alienation; and finally determined who was empowered in the process—the volunteers, the communities they served or both.

The study identified four reasons why volunteers decided to participate: (1) they already knew somebody who had participated and had witnessed a positive impact on them; (2) they wanted to experience/learn about other cultures; (3) they wanted to help others; and (4) they wanted to improve their Spanish. There appeared to be no single determining factor. Most volunteers' decision was based on at least two of those reasons.

The study also proved that after experiencing AMIGOS, the volunteers' beliefs and attitudes toward civic and political participation and social justice had been positively influenced. They reported being personally changed by the experience. They also stated that AMIGOS helped them understand or connect previous ideas they had on civic and political participation and social justice. The AMIGOS experience also had an impact on some of their future decisions (e.g., continuing to volunteer, deciding on a course of study, and becoming more aware of issues at home). This was also validated by the data collected in the surveys, revealing that 87.9 percent reported that their participation influenced their ideas on these concepts. They also reported becoming more aware, interested or invested in the issues and having a heightened sense of the importance of participating to make a difference.

Not all volunteers remembered having stereotypes about the people in Latin America. Those who had negative stereotypes discovered that these were often unfounded. The connections they established with the people allowed them to confront those negative stereotypes. Also, the experience forced volunteers think about

oppression, particularly the oppression perpetuated by the system and the oppression that women had to endure.

Finally, all volunteers felt personally empowered by the experience, gaining more self-confidence, leadership skills, and the feeling they could do anything they wanted. Some volunteers also felt that they had empowered the people in the community as well.

Research has reconfirmed the importance of citizen education and service learning activities to promote a sense of civic engagement. It has also stressed the importance of opportunities to participate in real life activities. However, research has also shown a decline in youth engagement in civic activities (Campbell, 2000; Putnam, 1995). Barber (1992) has stressed that community service is one of the most important ways, often the most important, to reverse a tendency toward civic and political disengagement. The work that AMIGOS volunteers do clearly supports Barber's statement.

CHAPTER 6

Spectrum: A Gay-Straight Alliance: The Context

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section I, describing GSAs, includes a brief history of the emergence of GSAs in the U.S., and the role they have played in supporting and advancing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights in schools.

Section II describes the two towns and the community of a particular GSA in a northeastern suburban high school. It provides a historical overview of the GSA, together with a detailed description of the GSA today.

Section I

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)

Stephen T. Russell (2006) defined Gay-Straight Alliances as "school-based clubs that are based on partnerships between sexual minority and heterosexual students for the purpose of supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students and their allies for promoting positive change in the school climate for these students." GSAs strive to make their school communities safe and welcoming for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. They have their roots in a strategic decision to form alliances between gay and straight students (Lipkin, 1999).

GSAs are concerned with safety and confidentiality, with many stressing at their first meetings that what occurs or is said at the club, stays at the club. Most GSAs do not pressure students to declare their sexual identity. They have adopted a variety of names:

some are known as simply GSA; others attach GSA to their school name; some use other names, such as Spectrum, GASP (Gay and Straight People), Project 10 East, etc. (Blumenfeld, 1995). Some GSAs work with a local chapter of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)[47] and participate in campaigns[48] to bring awareness of LGBT issues at their schools.

GSAs have helped create safer schools for LGBT students and their allies. Research conducted by LGBT organizations has suggested that:

1. The presence of GSAs help to make schools safer for LGBT students by sending the message that biased language and harassment will not be tolerated.
2. Having a GSA also makes schools more accessible to LGBT students by contributing to a more positive school environment.
3. GSAs help LGBT students to identify supportive school staff, which has been shown to have a positive impact on their academic achievement and overall school experiences.
4. Most students lack access to GSAs or other student clubs that provide support and address issues specific to LGBT students and their allies. (http://www.glsen.org)

The History of GSAs

The 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City marked that beginning of the gay rights movements. The call for rights and equality and the fight against the oppression

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[47] Founded by Kevin Jennings as the Gay and Lesbian Independent School Teachers Network (GLSTN). In 1995 it became a national organization and became part of a national movement to address the needs of LGBT students. GLSTN changed its name to GLESN in 1997.

[48] The Day of Silence, National Coming Out Day, and No Name Calling week, among others.

that gays and lesbians had endured became more visible. As a result, gays and lesbians began to demand more strongly their equal rights and protection under the Law. In the early 70s, some LGBT college students began to demand that universities offer them places to meet as a group, and protection from harassment (Miceli, 2005). These increasing demands and the heightened focus on conditions that LGBT youth had to tolerate at schools and often at home resulted in the creation of institutions to provide services for LGBT youth.

In 1979, the Institute for Protection of Gay and Lesbian Youth was founded, changing its name in 1989 to The Hetrick-Martin Institute (HMI). Miceli (2005) explains that psychiatrist Emery Hetrick and NYU professor A. Damien Martin were "prompted to establish the institute after a fifteen-year-old boy living in a group home was beaten, sexually assaulted, and then evicted because he was gay" (p.20). The goal of the institute was to provide social services, support, and advocacy for LGBT youth. In1985, HMI founded the Harvey Milk High School for LGBT and heterosexual students who had experienced verbal harassment or physical violence. The school's goal was to provide a safe, positive, and affirming environment.

Another institution born during this period of unrest was Project 10[49], founded in 1984 by Virgina Uribe, at that time an LA biology teacher. Interestingly, Project 10 and HMI were each prompted by similar events. While Uribe was a doctoral student in psychology doing research, she discovered that the Los Angeles Unified School District did not offer any kind of services for LGBT youth. During this same time, a young male

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[49] Uribe named the program Project 10 after the often-cited/occasionally-disputed Kinsey report estimate that 10 percent of the population is homosexual.

student dropped out of school after a group of students found out he was gay and began to harass him. Uribe[50] (1995) explains that Project 10 started "as a way of addressing the underserved needs of gay and lesbian students in the Los Angeles Unified School District" (p. 204). The main difference between HMI and Project 10 was that Uribe wanted the schools to provide services for gays and lesbians. She believed that it was the schools' responsibility to care for those students. She also wanted Project 10 to serve as a dropout prevention program for gay and lesbian teens. Project 10 became the first LGBT student support group in a public high school, and influenced other districts to create support groups for LGBT youth. In 1988, Al Ferreira created Project 10 East, modeled after Project 10 and with the support and guidance of Virgina Uribe and Kevin Jennings.

Kevin Jennings is credited with being the first advisor of the modern concept of the GSA. The first GSA was established at Concord Academy, an elite school in Massachusetts. The main difference between this GSA and the previous support groups was that the former were created to address the needs of LGBT youth and were not aimed at effecting change in their schools or immediate environments. These groups, attended only by LGBT youth, were meant to nurture and support LGBT youth. The GSA at Concord was born out of the desire of lesbian, gay, and straight youth and adults to create a more visible group while advocating for structural changes to improve the environment of fear, intolerance and discrimination that LGBT students suffered in schools.

Around the same time, Priscilla Bonney-Smith founded another GSA at the Phillips Academy, another elite school in Massachusetts. The founders and members of

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[50] In Gerald Unks (1995) *The Gay Teen.*

both GSAs had decided that it was important to build alliances with straight students and adults if they were to effectively institute positive changes in the schools.

Once these GSAs were established and known, other teachers and students from other schools sought information and guidance to create other GSAs. It was not until five years later, when GSAs were incorporated into the Massachusetts Safe School Program, that GSAs began to proliferate in public high schools. The Massachusetts Safe School Program was established in 1993 to improve the safety and educational outcomes for gay and lesbian students. The program emerged thanks to the publicized United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) report on Youth Suicide. The USDHHS conducted research to try and better understand the high suicide rate among the nation's adolescents. The report showed that between twenty to thirty percent of suicides were connected to conflict over sexual orientation (Gibson, 1989).

The Governor of Massachusetts[51] at the time formed a commission to develop a plan to lower suicide rates among LGBT youth, and to propose plans to improve their school experience. The commission made four recommendations[52] to the Massachusetts Board of Education, and in May of 1993 the Board of Education voted to adopt the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students (Miceli, 2005).

These events, along with the passing of anti-discriminatory laws that protect LGBT youth, have helped ease the process of establishing GSAs in other schools,

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[51] Governor William Weld.

[52] 1. Schools should develop policies to protect LGBT students from harassment and discrimination.
2. Schools should institute support groups for all students dealing with issues of sexual orientation.
3. Schools should provide counseling services to families of LGBT students.
4. School faculty and staff should be trained in violence and suicide prevention.
(Miceli, 2005). *Standing Out, Standing Together.*

instrumental in advocating for the rights and wellbeing of LGBT youth. Among these institutions are: the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN); the Safe School Coalition of Washington; and the Gay-Straight Alliance of California.

GLSEN works to improve the lives and educational experiences of LGBT youth. It has developed guides on how to start a GSA, has conducted research on LGBT youth in schools, and sponsors events[53] in schools to improve the lives of LGBT youth while raising awareness of LGBT issues in schools. In 1998, GLSEN began to register GSAs in schools. According to their web site, there were 1,000 GSAs registered in 2001, 3,000 in 2005, and 4,000 in 2008.

The Safe Schools Coalition of Washington was also created to support and advocate for the rights of gays and lesbians. However, they focus more on advocating for the wellbeing of LGBT youth at the state level, while helping to advance the proliferation of GSAs in high schools in Washington.

The Gay-Straight Alliance Network of California, founded in 1998, became a statewide organization in 2001. Its goal is to increase the number of GSAs in California schools. Since its inception, the organization has included bisexual and transgender students in its mission statement, and has aimed to build coalitions among different classes/races/ethnicities. The other institutions I described earlier included these other categories years after their establishment. One has to bear in mind, however, that the Gay-Straight Alliance Network was created 14 years after the first institutions were founded; they have been able to learn and model from these older institutions.

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[53] The Day of Silence, No name Calling week, National Coming Out Day, etc.

GSAs have faced a lot of opposition from school administrators, faculty, communities, and some religious groups. A number of districts have tried to ban students from establishing these clubs in their schools. However, in many instances students have sued districts, claiming that their rights under the First Amendment and the 1984 Equal Access Act (EAA)[54] had been violated. The courts have consistently ruled in favor of the students' rights to form GSAs. Miceli (2005) describes the Salt Lake City School Board's response to banning all clubs in their schools as an extreme reaction against the formation of GSAs. The students of East and West High Schools protested the decision of the board by "holding regular protests, such as walking out of school and marching to the state capital" (p.39). Parents and students began to protest the district's decision to ban all clubs. This resulted in the school district allowing some clubs (not the GSA) to meet, claiming that they were curricular. In the end, they also allowed the GSA to meet under the condition that the GSA paid for the use of school property after the close of the school day, the time that clubs usually meet. Eventually, with the help of Lambda Legal Defense, The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and GLSEN, the GSA sued the school district. In 1999, the Utah District Court ruled that the school had violated the EAA by allowing some clubs to meet and not others.

Macgillivray (2007) explains that the 1984 EAA is the most important law to be cognizant of when students try to form a GSA in their schools. The 1984 EAA stated that if schools allow one non-curricular student club, then they must allow all clubs. The 1984 EAA was originally requested by Christian parents who wanted their children to be able to form religious student clubs. The passage of the EAA had unintended consequences

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[54] See appendix A pp. 208 and 209. Title 20 > Chapter 52 > Subchapter VIII > § 4071 § 4071. Denial of equal access prohibited.

for LGBT youth in that it is the most important tool that students can utilize to ask schools for their right to form a GSA. There are other laws that, although not instrumental in helping students to form a GSA, have advanced LGBT students' rights and protection at schools. Federal courts have held that public schools have an obligation under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to protect students from harassment and discrimination based on their sexual orientation[55]. Also, Title IX guarantees equal educational opportunities regardless of sex, and protects all students from harassment based on sex and gender nonconformity. Schools are required to intervene and correct any type of harassment that is sexual in nature once they have been informed.

The Roles of the GSAs

Research on the experiences of LGBT students in schools demonstrates that they face discrimination and harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender expression, and that these experiences contribute to the creation of a hostile environment for LGBT students (Bochenek & Brown, 2001; Griffin, Lee, Waugh & Beyer, 2003; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Reis, 1999). Research has also documented the roles that GSAs can play to improve the experiences of LGBT students at schools, and to help eradicate the discrimination and harassment they endure (Fetner & Kush, 2007; GLSEN, 2008; Macgillivray, 2007).

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[55] Nabozny vs. Podlesny 92 F. 3d 446 (7th Cir. 1996).

Research conducted by GLSEN on gay-straight alliances concludes that the presence of GSAs at schools may have a positive impact on school climate. The study highlights four major findings:

1. The presence of GSAs may help to make schools safer for LGBT students by sending the message that biased language and harassment will not be tolerated. The brief concludes that students in schools with GSAs are less likely to hear homophobic remarks in schools on a daily basis than students in schools without a GSA (57 percent compared to 75 percent).
2. Students in schools with GSAs reported feeling safer at school; they were half as likely to be threatened or to miss school because of being afraid to go than those without GSAs.
3. Educators believed that having a GSA helps to create a safer school for LGBT students.
4. Having a GSA also made school more accessible to LGBT students by contributing to a more positive school environment and by helping students identify supportive staff. However, the brief reported that most students lack access to GSAs or similar clubs.

Macgillivray's (2007) handbook on gay-straight alliances also identified some of the positive roles that GSAs play in schools and dispelled some of the negative myths about GSAs. GSAs can function as safe places for students to get the support that they sometimes cannot get at home. Students have reported being afraid to tell their parents about their sexuality. They have heard their own family members describe homosexuals in negative terms, and this stops them from confiding in them.

> My family doesn't know.They are not really open to gay people. I think my parents would have a bad reaction to that. Like if they hear a gay remark they say "oh that's so disgusting." I feel pretty bad when I hear those comments in my house because I don't respond honestly at them , yes, I feel really bad because there are people trying to get their rights and we deserve it. I also don't say anything because I do not want them to suspect. (Jim, 2010)

GSAs are a good way to end the social and emotional isolation that some LGBT youth endure. They are also an effective way to educate schools and communities about equality and diversity. Macgillivray argued that GSAs are not sex clubs, an official endorsement of homosexuality, only for LGBT students, or compel anyone to agree that it is "OK" to be gay. Opponents of GSAs have frequently used these as criticisms of GSAs.

Griffin, Lee, Waugh & Beyer (2004) conducted research to describe the roles that GSAs play in schools, particularly schools that participated in the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program. Their research identified four distinct roles:

- *GSAs that served as counseling and support groups*. These groups were invisible in the school community. Counselors offered individual counseling and psychological support. Their focus was on LGBT students.
- *GSAs that served as "safe" spaces*. These groups were either visible or invisible in the school community. They also offered individual counseling, but the focus was on LGBT students and their allies.
- *GSAs that served as a primary vehicle for raising awareness, increasing visibility, and educating about LGBT issues in schools.* These groups were visible in the school community and advocated for individual rights. Their focus was on LGBT students and their allies, and was concerned with creating a tolerant school climate.

- *GSAs that were part of a broader school effort for raising awareness, increasing visibility, and educating about LGBT issues in schools*. These groups were also visible in the school community, but advocated for individual rights and changes in the school organization. The main difference with the previous group was that other school groups or staff initiated activities to create a tolerant school climate regarding LGBT issues.

The Gay-Straight Alliance of California has also highlighted the positive roles that GSAs play in schools, claiming that GSAs empower youth activism and advocating for school policies that create an environment of safety and equality. At the same time, they also train teachers to deter bullying at school. Their main focus is to build a generation of leaders for the LGBTQ[56] movement (http://gsanetwork.org).

Section II

The GSA Context

The Community

Two northeastern towns that share the same school district also share a particular GSA. Towns A and B[57] comprise nine schools: six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The towns have rich histories; one was established in the mid 1600s and the other in the early 1800s. Originally farmlands, their proximity to a

[56] LGBTQ is a new acronym that stands for Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning. It has been adapted to integrate the number of youth who are questioning their sexuality. Some authors have suggested that the Q stands for "queer" (see Macgillivray 2007, p.3). However. GLSEN and other major institutions and researchers (e.g., Linville 2009) refer to it as "questioning."

[57] The names of the towns are not disclosed to protect the students' anonymity.

major city and the presence of the railroad have transformed the two towns into desirable residential communities.

For Town A, data from the U.S. 2000 Census Bureau and the American Community Survey 3-year estimate[58] showed that the four largest ethnic groups were White (59 percent in 2000 and 58 percent in 2006-2008), Black (33 percent for both surveys), Hispanic (5 percent in 2000, and 15 percent in 2006-2008), and Asian (3 percent in 2000, and 2 percent in 2006-2008). The median annual household income was $ 79,637 for 2000 and $105.313 for 2006-2008, with 4.4 percent of all families living below the poverty level for 2000, and 2.2 percent for 2006-2008.

For Town B, data from the U.S. 2000 Census Bureau indicated that the four largest ethnic groups were White (60 percent), Black (31 percent), Hispanic (5 percent), and Asian (4 percent). The median annual household income was $83,611 with 1.9 percent of all families living below the poverty level. The American Community Survey 3-year estimate for 2006 – 2008 did not have any available information.

The two towns are in close proximity of other wealthy communities as well as other urban communities, perceived as dangerous places to live. Conversations with students, staff, and community members suggest that there is an economic and racial divide between the communities. When students, staff and community members speak about the sections of the towns on the other side of Divide Avenue[59], they refer to economic and racial differences. In the sections that border the urban communities, houses and taxes are cheaper, and some of the houses are shared by two or more families,

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[58] Shows data for years 2006-2008.
[59] Not a real street name.

most of whom are Black or Hispanic. There is also an imaginary subdivision within the wealthier parts of each community where residents also talk about the "other side of the tracks[60]". These border other wealthy communities, and taxes and houses, predominately inhabited by Whites, are more expensive.

Towns A and B have been frequently featured in the press and have been described as very accepting communities. A stroll through the towns reveals rainbow flags displayed outside houses, sometimes several on the same block. Real estate brokers and gay homeowners have described one of the towns as the "most welcoming suburb in the region for gay men and lesbians. A same-sex couple holding hands on the train platform is a ho-hum event here" (Press). Gay and lesbian homeowners say they "go about their daily routines as openly as they might in Chelsea or West Hollywood" (Press).

Town A voted unanimously to pass a resolution calling on state legislators to sanction same-sex marriage. Both towns are leaders in implementing civil unions and domestic partnerships laws, and pushing for more rights for same-sex couples in the region. The towns boast of being welcoming for "gay families, interracial couples, singletons, and empty-nesters. There are Republicans, Democrats and Socialists" (Press).

The School: Valley High[61]

The actual Valley High was built in 1927, thanks to a generous personal grant. The school featured a creative structural design and was cited in a well-known

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[60] Reference the actual division of the railroad tracks.
[61] A pseudonym.

architectural publication. In later years, the high school added three additions to the original structure to accommodate a growing population. For years, the school was awarded the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. The demographics of the school have changed rapidly in the last 10 years. According to the last report of the Middle States Association for Secondary Schools Commission (1992), 65 percent of the students were White and 35 percent were Black. Today's enrollment is 1866 students with 53 percent Black, 38 percent White, 5 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian, and less than 1 percent Multi-Racial, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian.

Table 6.1 Valley High Demographics[62]

ETHNICITY	Male	Female	Total
White	355	351	706
Black	519	468	987
Hispanic	48	54	102
Am-Indian	1	-	1
Asian	34	23	57
Native Hawaiian	2	-	2
Multi Race	8	3	11
Total	967	899	1866

The *Race and Gender Distribution Report* shows that there are two hundred and forty-six professionals[63] working at the high school. Seventy-two percent are White, 20 percent are Black, 6 percent are Hispanic, and 2 percent are Asian.

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[62] As of October 15, 2009.
[63] Certified teaching and support staff.

The GSA: A History

The GSA became an idea in 2000 and a reality in 2001. Lisa[64], a high school student, talked to her two best friends and asked them to help her form a GSA in the school. Adriana remembers she thought it would be "cool, in that way that a 15-year-old can shrug and mumble assent to something she's about to be working really hard on, up late at night pouring energy into". Adriana credits Lisa as "definitely the impetus at the very beginning." According to Lisa's mother and Adriana, Lisa had been questioning her sexuality. Adriana remembers Lisa being worried and scared about her parents' reaction to her sexuality. Adriana was more confident about her own sexual identity, but recalls being nervous about coming out to her parents and "agreeing to help start the club." Her mother's reaction was supportive, though she made it clear that the news was unexpected.

There were a number of factors that prompted these teenagers to form a GSA. Obviously, they wanted to explore their sexuality and create a support group in their school. Lisa recalled that it was their way to "eye the establishment," and they wanted to effect change in their communities. She described it as "part of the genetics of being a teenager, wanting to buck the status quo, and felt good." It was also a way of coming out to their parents. Adriana said that Lisa felt that starting the club was a way to soften the blow, "Yes, I identify in this way that you might not be happy about, but at least I am turning it into something good. At least you can be proud when I get my college acceptance letters." College was, in fact, another factor in the mix. They knew that it would look good in their college applications that they were the founders of the club.

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[64] I was unable to talk to Lisa. She died about two years ago but managed to interview her mother and her friend, who helped her to start the GSA. These are the memories of her mother and her best friend. All names are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Interestingly, Lisa omitted her involvement with the GSA when she applied for a Fulbright fellowship five years later on the advice of a Smith College fellowship adviser who felt that this would not sit well with the judging committee.

Lisa's mother remembers that there was some opposition to the creation of the GSA in the school. The principal did not support the initiative at first, feeling that it would cause conflict in the school and the community. However, Lisa's mother, who supported her daughter from the beginning and was an employee of the school district, knew how to negotiate the system in order to make this a reality. Her friendship with the superintendent permitted her daughter Lisa to speak with him about her projects. The superintended supported her initiative and talked to the principal and the Board of Education at Valley High. The Board unanimously approved the formation of the club. Adriana does not remember much about the initial opposition to the club and felt that her community, at least her "own side of the proverbial tracks, was always pretty gay-friendly." She did not mean that there was a "healthy acceptance of sexuality," just that in her experience gays "weren't specially targeted."

Having already secured an advisor for the club, it was time to give the club an official name and begin to think about the things they wanted to achieve. They decided to name the club Spectrum instead of using the term GSA. They chose the name Spectrum as a reference to the Kinsey scale. Another reason was that the name identified who they were: a spectrum of identities. They hoped it would become "a place to honor all parts of the confusing mess that is high school sexuality, even though that is more nebulous than creating a safe space for those who identify as 'gay' or 'bi' and helping them negotiate their identities vis-à-vis the larger community."

Lisa does not remember much about the organization of the meetings, other than she would have liked the advisor to have played a bigger role. She remembers meetings with 20 to 25 people, and meetings with fewer members. They had weekly support meetings, but Adriana recalls that it was sometimes difficult because of the presence in a nearby room of a male teacher who would hang about while they were having discussions, perhaps "pondering the intersection of the topics of his female students and sexuality." She felt it was difficult to establish strong enough trust to run support meetings with faculty members around.

There were two events that made a huge impact on Adriana: the *Love Makes A Family*[65] exhibit the club organized, and becoming a representative for Spectrum at the Student Council. There were also other events: the *Day of Silence* and the school's club nights during which they handed out stickers with "Hello, my name is …," and gay and lesbian slurs on them to "help raise awareness about the use of hurtful and bigoted language." None, though, had as strong an impact on her as the exhibit they put together:

> The *Love Makes A Family* event was my baby and I felt such a sense of grief and loss when it was over. I've not infrequently referred to it as the best thing I ever did in high school, and I still feel sad that I wasn't able to sustain that level of participation as an older teenager and reap its benefits to my psyche […] the Love Makes A Family event was the first time I ever felt like a professional, serious person. I remember one of the other speakers referring to it as "my" panel, which was a profound and joyful surprise for me. I remember the unbelievable feeling of appreciation and gratitude I felt at my friends' and my own hard work in putting on an event that at the beginning I was sure we would never be able to pull off. I remember Lisa showing signs of being the kicking-ass-and-taking-names kind of

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[65] "Love Makes a Family is a museum-quality traveling exhibit including photographs and interviews with families that have lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) members. Through first-person accounts and positive images, this exhibit seeks to challenge and change damaging myths and stereotypes about LGBT people and their families. At the most basic level, Love Makes A Family combats homophobia by breaking silence and making the invisible visible." (www.lovesmakesafamily.org/lovemakesafamily.php)

> woman that I think she had the potential to become. I remember myself showing signs of being the thoughtful, organized and dedicated woman that I am still in the process of realizing my potential to become. It was the first time I met her.

The *Love Makes A Family* event, sponsored by the Unitarian Church of the towns, was a success, and was visited by many community members. This brought the club and the gay and lesbian community of the towns together in a positive way. As an anecdote, the principal who had opposed the club initially and who did not assist in putting together the exhibit, "sought to benefit from it in the eyes of the community" after its success.

Finally, Adriana explained that Spectrum helped her to feel empowered and to find her voice for a little while. She expressed some regret that it did not influence her to "participate more in the civic life side of college, but that wasn't the case. There was a 'je ne sais quoi' to the magic I felt participating in Spectrum." As for Lisa, her mother and friends are very proud of all the things she accomplished, and of her strength and integrity in putting Spectrum together.

In *Describing Roles that Gay-Straight Alliances Play in Schools: From Individual Support to School Change,* Griffin et al. (2003) write:

> Individual students and staff come and go. Without changes at all levels of a school's organizational structure, the gains of any one year may be lost when GSA members graduate or club advisors retire. (p. 10).

In the year Lisa and Adriana graduated not only did the club lose its leadership but also its advisor. During the subsequent two school years, the club became very invisible, with little happening outside the club. It took two years before new leadership was able to restore the club's significance.

At the time Gerard[66] joined the GSA, there were only two other people in the club: the one who ran the club, and the individual who provided some support. Gerard was not sure what the club should look like, but he knew they had to bring in more students. During his freshman and sophomore years, he kept a low profile while observing what the other two members were doing. He also observed other clubs and how they were attracting new members. He knew that in two years the other two members of the GSA would leave and he would have to take over. Consequently, he spent this time listening, observing, putting in a few suggestions, while preparing himself to assume leadership and bring about changes.

Gerard stumbled upon GLESN by accident while surfing the Internet. Investigating it further, he discovered that they had materials to promote and organize a Day of Silence in schools. He registered so that his name would be in the GLESN data base. GLESN began mailing him information and soon he organized his first Day of Silence in the high school. Students elect to participate in this school-wide initiative intended to demonstrate what it means to have their voices go unheard. Most students will carry cards that explain why they are choosing to be silent.

Along with the packet for the Day of Silence, GLSEN included a postcard that encouraged students to become volunteers for GLSEN. At the time, Gerard felt he did not have time for volunteering. Two days before the application deadline, he was rehearsing late and helping with the school musical. When he attempted to access the GLSEN webpage, he got blocked. He realized that students could not access any LGBT web site from school. This encouraged him to go home and complete the application. Though he

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[66] A pseudonym.

had been an active member in the community and in school, he was still unsure about a greater commitment to GLSEN, feeling he just wanted to do work for his own school by kicking off the GSA and getting students involved in the club. Nevertheless, he submitted some of the work he had done for two of the school's magazines. To his surprise, he was chosen to do some training in Philadelphia. He began to get more involved with GLSEN and eventually was sent to a workshop in Florida. Three months later, he was in Texas, and then in Arizona. That is when he realized that this was the kind of work he wanted to do. He became the president of the school GSA, and since that time has successfully run many different activities that have brought LGBT issues to the spotlight. In spite of all this, Gerard recognized that there remained a great deal of work to be done. He believed that the school was having a problem with discipline. He felt that there was a lot of hostility directed at gays and lesbians, and that the school was often blind to these issues or unwilling to support the LGBT movement. Gerard felt strongly the school should be taking stronger measures. It was not enough that students simply be given detention for harassment or name-calling or other biased behaviors that had negative and complex implications for the wellbeing of the LGBT community.

Under his leadership, the GSA again began, to attract a number of students, both LGBT and straight. Gerard was aware that the time would come when he would have to leave the high school and to pass on the leadership to other students. He was confident that the club would continue to do well, and worked closely with others to show them how to grow the membership and to hold events in the school. He did a lot of fundraising for the club and managed to build one of the largest financial reserves for a school club.

Two years after graduation, he is still volunteering with GLSEN, and helping to train new youth leadership in LGBT issues at schools.

The GSA Today

The first day of school, clubs meet in the school's cafeteria and display information about the different clubs available for ninth graders. Each club obtains the emails addresses of students interested in becoming members or in attending upcoming meetings that the clubs will hold.

On September 18, 2009, Spectrum held its first meeting of the school year. Meetings usually last approximately an hour and a half, including time to socialize and to focus on an agenda. There are times, however, when students simply socialize. Twenty-eight students attended the first meeting, sixteen females and twelve males. Of the female students, eight were Black, seven were White, and one mixed (Black/Asian). Among the males, seven were Black and five White. There were nine new members at that first meeting, which began by the two leaders describing what Spectrum was about and describing some of the events that would take place over the course of the year. The rules of the club were explained: "Respect...what happens in this room, stays in this room;" "use the pronoun 'I'; and "share what you want. This is a space for you to feel comfortable." Members conversed informally, sharing with each other the reasons why they had come to the meeting; most disclosed their sexual orientation. Seventeen of the students identified themselves as straight, stating that they were there to support gay friends or gay rights. Five identified themselves as bi-sexual. Three males identified themselves as gay and two females as lesbian. Two, a male and a female, identified

themselves as questioning, and one of the leaders self-identified as "fluid[67]". I had never before come out publicly in the school but at that time, decided that I needed to come out to the group and openly disclose that I was gay. I did this in part because I felt it was important to support those students that had identified themselves as LGBTQ." After the first meeting, Spectrum had an average of 15 students per meeting, not uncommon in most clubs given that members have other after-school responsibilities.

September was devoted to preparing for the two events sponsored by Spectrum in October: LGBT History Month and National Coming Out Day. For LGBT History Month, the students put together an exhibit featuring information about prominent past and current gay and lesbian celebrities. The exhibit was showcased in the school's art gallery. National Coming Out Day was a very moving event attended by thirty students and seven faculty members. For that day, the students had asked several faculty members if they would share with the group their coming out experience. One of the deans talked about discovering her identity and how this led to her ending a thirteen-year marriage so that she could be with her current partner. She is a published poet, and read some of the poetry that she wrote while she was coming out. Another teacher talked about her brother's coming out and how her family dealt with the news. Some students also shared their coming out stories; others asked for advice about coming out to their families.

The meetings continued over the next few months, with students discussing current LGBT national news, their school experiences, and things the club could do to

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[67] Fluid is a term that some youth are beginning to use to escape traditional identity labels. As the leader explained, for her it was about the person not the sex. See also Savin-Williams (2005).

raise awareness. One of the leaders talked about the ThinkB4YouSpeak[68] campaign, screening for the group a public service announcement (PSA) that featured comedienne Wanda Sykes. The PSA shows a group of teenagers seated in a fast-food restaurant. One of them points to a gnome-like peppershaker that is supposed to represent a chef. This makes them all laugh, and one of the teenagers quips," That's so gay." Ms Sykes walks over to them and states, "Don't say that something is gay when you mean that something is dumb or stupid. It's like if I thought this pepper shaker was stupid and I said, 'Man, this pepper shaker is so sixteen-year-old boy with a cheesy mustache'." The PSA ends with the moral, "When you say that's so gay, do you realize what you say? Knock it off."

One of the leaders suggested that the group could perhaps create its own PSA and broadcast it during the morning announcements to promote the Day of Silence, and also to increase the club's visibility in the school. The group was excited about the project, and spent weeks brainstorming ideas. After deciding on one, they worked on the script, and spent several weeks taping and editing it. Once ready, the PSA was shown several times prior to and during the school's observation of the Day of Silence. Their PSA shows a teacher making an announcement in class to a group of students, one of whom, a male, is sitting in a "feminine" posture while fanning himself. The teacher announced that that day was the Day of Silence, but reminds students that the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy of the school remained in effect. Another student looks at the one who is fanning himself and says, " I call that telling." Another, very "straight acting" student, prompted by the comment, gets up and walks over to the student and in a defiant manner challenges

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[68] "A web site launched in conjunction with the Ad Council Campaign to fight anti-LGBT language by raising awareness among straight teens about the prevalence and consequences of anti-LGBT bias and behavior in America's schools." (www.glsen.org).

him with, “Do you have a problem with that?” The importance of this PSA is not the content but what it did for the group, bringing them together and making them believe that they could create something that would impact the school—changing some of the negative behaviors (e.g., anti-gay slurs) experienced by many in school, and much of which goes unchallenged (GLESN, & Harris Interactive, 2005; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2007; & Phoenix et al. 2006).

The club also promoted two movie nights[69] in lieu of their weekly meetings. They advertised the movies by displaying posters throughout the school. The movie nights were open to all students and were attended by fifteen and eighteen students respectively. Each of the events was followed by a talkback during which students were allowed to share their reactions to the movies.

The last two months of the school year witnessed fewer students attending the meetings, and there seemed to be no clear agenda. This may in part be due to the fact that the two leaders, both of them seniors preparing for graduation, did not always find the time to work with the rest of the group to prepare upcoming agendas as they had done throughout the school year. “I think she [the other leader]could have used help but she didn't ask for it or really know what she was doing. She wanted to make the club better but if asked she didn't have a clear answer. I don't think she really knew what to do.”

One of the new members, a volunteer with her state’s Marriage Equality organization, has shown a tremendous interest in leading Spectrum and will accept a leadership role if the group accepts her as the new president.

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[69] They showed: *Philadelphia*, the story of a successful young lawyer that is fired once his firm finds out that he has AIDS; *The Incredible Love Story of Two Girls in Love,* the story of two high school girls that fall in love.

The GSA members: The Participants in the Study

I conducted ten in-depth interviews with members of the GSA and an additional interview with a student who only identifies himself as gay / bisexual to close friends, and does not want to be associated with Spectrum. I was fortunate to have a wide range of participants that shows the "spectrum" of identities that the club attracts. I interviewed seven students who identify themselves as LGBTQ and three who identify as straight.

Table 6.2 Spectrum: The Participants

Name[70]	Sexual Identity	Age	Race / Ethnicity	Member	Religious Views
Chris	Gay	17	Black	4 years	Christian
Jane	Straight	14	White	1 year	None
Jennifer	Lesbian	17	Mixed	3 years	Spiritual
Jim	Bisexual	14	Black	1 year	Atheist
Joe	Gay	17	Mixed	4 years	None
Michelle	Fluid	17	Black	4 years	Christian
Mila	Straight	17	Hispanic	4 years	None
Sharif	Straight	16	Black	2 years	Muslim
Terrence	Gay	17	Black	No	Agnostic
Tina	Questioning	18	White	5 months	None
Zoe	Questioning	15	White	2 years	Spiritual

Chris is a Black gay teenager. He has been a member of Spectrum since he started high school and will be graduating this year. He goes to church every Sunday and lives

[70] All names are pseudonyms.

by a rigid notion of Right and Wrong. He does not consider himself "super Christian" but "Christian by culture." His religious beliefs are not in contradiction with his being in Spectrum. For him, God is love and "God loves" him. He feels Spectrum has had a positive impact on him and on the school.

Jane is a straight White teenager. She is a new member to Spectrum and has volunteered for other LGBT organizations. She feels Spectrum has a positive impact on the school because it makes "people think about LGBT issues."

Jennifer is a seventeen-year old of mixed (European/Cuban) ethnicity. She identifies as a lesbian but, of late, has begun to identify as "other than straight." She prefers "women as opposed to men" but she is attracted to some men. She is out to her parents but not to her grandparents, whom her mother would prefer she not tell. She has been a member for three years, but has not able to attend often this past year because of schedule conflicts and because she felt there was not much going on in Spectrum.

Jim is a new member to Spectrum. He is a fourteen-year-old African American who identifies as bisexual. He enjoys Spectrum because he has made new friends who do not care whether is gay, straight, or bisexual. For him, Spectrum is a "safe and fun place to go."

Joe is a gay teenager who is half Latino and half Eastern European. He was a cutter[71] in middle school, where he was taunted by other students, which led to his seeing a psychologist. He thought that Spectrum would be a place with more "gay people rather than people who were fluid, supportive or bi," and, because of these expectations, he was

[71] Using pain or self-mutilation to deal with an issue. In this case, it was being gay.

initially disappointed. He has enjoyed his leadership role this past year and has come to feel more a part of the club.

Michelle is a seventeen-year-old Black girl who identifies as fluid. However, she often used the term bisexual during our interviews. She has been a member of Spectrum for the past four years. Her family is very religious and she has always had to disguise her sexuality vis-à-vis her family. Michelle became a “loner” in middle school for fear that others, including her family, would find out who she really was. Spectrum became the safe place that gave her the strength to confront her fears and to become the leader that she is today.

Mila is a seventeen-year-old Hispanic. She is straight, but has many friends and a family member who are LGBT. She first came to Spectrum to accompany a friend who was questioning her sexuality.

Sharif is a sixteen-year-old African American / Muslim. He is straight, but he has been around gays and lesbians since he was much younger. He was "dragged" to the club by two other members. Some of his friends are gay but they do not come to Spectrum because “they are afraid to tell people.” Others “are cool with other people knowing.”

Terrance, a young African American of Jamaican / Guyanese descent, identifies as gay, but only to close friends. He does not want to come to Spectrum because he is basically “in the closet” and is not “very comfortable with that[72]. I still don’t think that I am very expressive about it. I have friends that know, my close friends.” He claims that there are a number of teenagers he knows who do not attend Spectrum for the same reasons.

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[72] Being gay.

Tina, a White eighteen-year-old, recently joined Spectrum. She identifies as straight to others, but in the interviews acknowledged that she is questioning her sexuality. In Spectrum, she has found a community that embraces differences and she feels completely accepted.

Zoe is a White fifteen-year-old who is questioning her sexuality. There are some people with whom she feels comfortable sharing these doubts, though not many. Spectrum is helping her to become more comfortable with herself.

CHAPTER 7

Spectrum: Data

Introduction

This section examines the impact of a GSA on students' beliefs and attitudes toward civic and political participation and engagement, and social justice. First, I analyzed the students' reasons for participating in the club by reviewing the responses to surveys and interviews I conducted with some who are members of Spectrum. I then asked the students to recall their views on these topics to determine if their participation in Spectrum has shaped, in any way, how they think about them now. In addition, I determined whether preconceived ideas that students had about gays and lesbians have changed after participating in Spectrum. I also determined whether the experience raised questions about inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation. I further analyzed surveys completed by 187 students and 91 faculty and staff to determine the visibility of Spectrum and whether Spectrum has had any impact in the school. Finally, I drew inferences from the survey data and interviews conducted with GSA members to conclude whether or not this was an empowering experience.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are defined here as student-run school clubs supervised by faculty members. Ziblatt (1965) wrote that scholars were not in complete agreement on the origin of extracurricular activities in American high schools. He described two views. One explained that the version of extracurricular activities that existed at the time

he did his research was the same as the one that existed in the first free public schools. For them, it was necessary to relate these activities to educational goals and to exert control over students. The second view was that extracurricular activities were part of a creation of school bureaucracies. In the 1920's, educational theorists promoted extracurricular activities as a means of accentuating citizenship benefits and as a philosophy of the democratic school.

> Some of the values actually promoted by extracurricular activities depart drastically from idealized descriptions. In practice, athletics and social success came to dominate, despite frequent rationalizations. The local football coach addresses the benevolent, protective, and hearty members of local voluntary associations and tells them that athletics is the crucible of democracy because it teaches fair play and teamwork. (Ziblatt, 1965 p. 21)

Historian Gutowski (1988) studied the origin of extracurricular activities in the Chicago schools. According to him, these student-run organizations emerged in the late 1890's as secret societies, newspapers, journals, and athletic organizations. Some faculty members began to volunteer and help in some of those organizations. Soon, principals wanted to exert formal control over those activities and wanted more faculty members to assist, while establishing adult control over the clubs. Extracurricular activities grew out of those exchanges among students, faculty, the administration, and the board. Most students felt that faculty involvement would provide assistance in raising money, places to hold meetings, and faculty expertise. The administration and advisors began to impose censorship on school articles, and requirements for participation were established. Modern extracurricular clubs are still supervised by adults, and some have requirements for admission or permanence.

Why do students join a GSA?

Students join extracurricular clubs for many different reasons. Among the responses gathered from my students were: interest in the topic; other friends being members; or positive impact on the college application[73].

As stated earlier, I conducted ten in-depth interviews with new and former members of Spectrum. I also interviewed a student who identified as gay or bisexual to close friends, but who does not want to associate with Spectrum. In addition, I conducted two surveys with members of Spectrum: one at the beginning of the year (after the first meeting) and another one before the end of the year.

Eighteen students answered the beginning of the year survey. This comprises 64 percent of the total number of members who attended the first Spectrum meeting. Nine students had previously attended meetings and nine responded that it was the first time that they had attended a meeting.

The newcomers stated different reasons for attending the meeting. Seven of the students either found the club interesting or wanted to learn more about the club or LGBT issues. One student commented that he/she wanted to learn more about his/her sexual orientation, and another reported that he/she already volunteers for an LGBT group, has many LGBT friends, and is "questioning."

Students who have attended previous meetings have participated for a minimum of one year and a maximum of three years. Veteran students indicated two reasons for attending meetings: the club is a fun and inclusive place, and the sense of having helped others.

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[73] Personal communication with students at the high school.

Those students that stated that club was a "fun place to be" and "felt like home" said they were able to meet “fun” people and also found the place and people to be inclusive, accepting, and caring. The second group of responses indicated that a number of students felt they had been able to help others or help in a cause they believed in—that the students felt they had gained a sense of agency.

> The moment I really felt like I had joined the club was last year’s Day of Silence. I got my shirt, I got my pass, I went downstairs in the morning to silently greet the school as they walked in, I attempted to maintain my silence the whole day, and after school, I spoke during the group discussion, reflecting on the day. So this year, I plan to be a full-fledged member and to participate and help in any way that I can.

The interviews I conducted identified three salient themes in the students’ responses: they know somebody who is LGBT and want to show support; they were already questioning their sexuality in middle school and were looking for a space to feel accepted/be themselves; they were moved by activism, and wanted to effect change in the school. Three students, Sharif, Mila, and Zoe, indicated that they had friends or relatives that were gay, lesbian, or bisexual for whom they wished to show support.

Chris, Michelle, and Joe had been questioning their sexuality in middle school, and the GSA offered a safe environment in which to explore the notions they had about their own sexuality. Michelle said that the first time she came to Spectrum, it “turned out to be exactly I what I thought it would be. I loved freshman year with Spectrum. It made me feel good about myself and who I was.” In middle school, she began to question her own sexuality but she did not know what direction to follow. She defined herself as a “loner” at the beginning of middle school. “I had many issues in general, my sexuality, weight issues, fear that talking might disclose the real you, a very religious family that

follows whatever the Bible says about men, and women, same-sex etc. It was why I was a loner. Half my brain says it's wrong." Michelle had no support in middle school except another girl with whom she was able to discuss what she was experiencing. Two years after coming to high school, she assumed leadership of the club and poured her heart into it. Michelle is a clear example of the resiliency and agency that new research in LGBT examines (Blackburn, 2004; Buchenek & Brown, 2001; Bohan, Russell, & Montgomery, 2002; Gray, 1999; Kosciw & Cullen, 2001; Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002; Savin-Williams, 1990, 2005; Talburt, 2004)."

Similarly, Joe was also trying to figure out his sexuality in middle school. However, he had parental support and began seeing a psychologist to deal with these issues. He continues to do so and, although this helps him, he told me that what he really wanted was "to make friends, not just get advice." Szalacha (2001) reported that schools that had GSAs were perceived more welcoming than those without a GSA. GLSEN's 2007 National School Climate Survey[74] of Middle schools found that 81 percent of LGBT students reported being harassed on campus because of their sexual orientation. Thirty-nine percent reported physical assaults and of the students who told teachers or administrators about their being bullied, 29 percent indicated that the school's intervention resulted in positive changes. GLSEN's report showed that middle school is not safe for many LGBT students:

> Middle school students were less likely to have access to GSAs, supportive staff and inclusive curricular resources than LGBT students in high school:
> • *Gay-Straight Alliances.* Very few LGBT middle school students (4%) reported that their school had a GSA or similar student club, and they were much less likely to have a GSA than students in high school.

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[74] GLSEN (2009). The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender middle school students (GLSEN Research Brief). New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

> • *Supportive School Staff.* Nearly two-thirds of middle school LGBT students (64%) reported having at least one teacher or other school staff person in school who they felt was supportive of LGBT students, but they were less likely than high school students (86%) to report having supportive school staff.
> • *LGBT-Inclusive Curricular Resources.* Middle school students were much less likely than high school students to report having access to curricular resources that included positive representations of LGBT people, history or events. (2007 National School Climate Survey, p. 5)

Joe never felt his life was in danger in middle school, but he was not safe from the emotional fallout. "I don't think I felt like my life was in danger. I wasn't afraid of being beaten up. I was called a fag in the hallways." He remembers feeling safer in high school and feels that "students are more mature and some embrace homosexuality. I think that the club contributes to the fact that there is a change."

Jane, Jennifer, Michelle[75], and Tina reported that a sense of activism and wanting change prompted them to join the GSA. Jane[76] explained that LGBT rights have always been in her mind because she has a cousin and some friends who are gay. She remembers having seen *Milk*[77] and thinking it was great. This experience motivated her to look up LGBT civil rights movements in her state and to find an active LGBT organization. She joined it and helped in any way she could. This was part of the reason for her joining Spectrum when she started high school.

In the 8th Grade, Jennifer had a serious girlfriend who was out and who had a supportive mother who volunteered with an LGBT organization. Jennifer thought it was

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[75] Though Michelle first joined the club to feel comfortable, she soon developed a need to fight for what she calls "the cause," and became very active in pursuing LGBT rights. She described "the cause" as "fighting for something you are passionate about. It is who you are and what you do is something amazing. Spectrum-GSA is my cause."

[76] She was in 8th Grade when she joined the LGBT organization.

[77] Milk (2008). "The story of Harvey Milk, and his struggles as an American gay activist who fought for gay rights and became California's first openly elected official." (www.imdb.com).

interesting and went to a few gatherings with her girlfriend's mother. She became interested in the idea of "making a change." She was not able to attend many meetings in 2009/2010 due to schedule conflicts and also due to the fact that she did not feel there was a productive atmosphere for change. "I noticed a lot of fooling around. Towards the end, they begin to get more serious but a lot of people don't really know why they are there."

The GSA is experiencing some changes in trying to accommodate the different needs of the members and is in search of balance. There are members who want to engage in more political/civic activities who would like the GSA to be more active in effecting school change. On the other hand, there are other members who turn to the GSA as a "safe space," to meet friends or simply connect with other members.

Tina, who writes for the school newspaper, became interested in the National Equality March[78] that was scheduled for October 2009 in Washington, D.C. She wanted to attend and write an article about it. One of the editors of the school newspaper[79] suggested that she write about Spectrum. She began to attend meetings and wrote an article about Spectrum for the school newspaper. She now believes in what Spectrum does, has been coming to meetings ever since, and wants to change how students perceive LGBT youth in the school. She wants to help improve the school experience for students in general.

Jim, who claims to be bisexual, is the only one who decided to join the club because it seemed "interesting." His parents do not know he attends the meetings; they

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[78] Tina had seen the musical "Hair," , and discovering that the cast was going to be there, she wanted to attend. Tina describes herself as straight but she says that she is beginning to have questions about her sexuality.

[79] He often comes to Spectrum meetings.

think he is attending a different club. He is a quiet kid who has found a comfortable place to be and to begin to explore who he is.

Finally, Terrence[80], who is not a member, explained that he does not attend Spectrum meetings because he does not want to be associated with Spectrum. He is afraid of how other people might react to his being a member, and says that there are other students he knows who do not attend for the same reasons. Similarly, Jane has often been questioned about her participation in the GSA. Her friends and others ask her all the time, "why are you in the GSA if you are not gay? 'I'm here because I care,' I say. People question my sexuality all the time. GSA is gay-straight alliance but all people hear is gay." A graduate of Valley High[81] once told me that he was gay and only a few close friends knew about it. He chose not go to Spectrum because he was not ready to deal with rumors or any kind of verbal harassment in the high school. Now, he is a member of the GSA of a prestigious university in the Northeast. Interestingly, a few students whom I know in school who are gay[82] or who respond to same-sex attraction indicate that they are grateful for the club and what it does for the LGBT cause, but they are not defined by their sexuality only, and do not need a place to reaffirm who they are. Savin-Williams (2005) reported that a number of youth are reluctant to define their sexuality and reject any kind of labels.

In summary, some new GSA members reported that they joined the GSA because they were attracted by the club and wanted to learn more about it. Others were

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[80] Terrence is in the closet. Only some close friends know that he is gay or bisexual. He came out to his mom and dad recently after they had been insisting in knowing. He says they are ok now but they do not talk about much about it.

[81] Personal communication with the student.

[82] Gay is the label I have used to refer to them. However, they do not claim any of the common labels we use to describe identity.

questioning their sexual orientation. Only one student cited activism as one of the reasons to join. Former GSA members had joined because they wanted to support the LGBT community. In most cases, these students knew somebody who was LGBT. The GSA is a place where they feel comfortable and accepted. Finally, four members were part of the GSA because they believe it helps to effect change.

Table 7.1 Spectrum: Surveys

	New Members	Old Members
Reasons	• Seemed like an interesting club and wanted to learn more about it • To learn more about sexual orientation • Have friends in the club or friends who are LGBT	• Support of LGBT friends • Questioning and looking for a place to feel accepted and be themselves • Activism

Table 7.2 Spectrum: Interviews

	New Members	Old Members
Reasons	• Seemed like an interesting club and wanted to learn more about it • Questioning and looking for a place to feel accepted and be themselves • Activism	• Support of LGBT friends • Activism

Students' Beliefs and Attitudes toward Civic and Political Participation and Engagement, and Social Justice

The same methodology that was used to interview AMIGOS volunteers was used to interview GSA members. I provided the participants with definitions of civic and political participation and social justice[83]. However, I felt that there were differences I needed to account for to better understand and analyze the data. First, it was important to keep in mind Russell's (2002) description of the contradiction that LGBT youth face as they learn about civic life. LGBT youth learn about civic life at the same time they are exploring a culturally stigmatized identity. They become "partial citizens" because "they are excluded from some basic rights (and responsibilities) in each of the civil-legal, political, and social realms."[84] This situation clearly prevents many LGBT youth from experiencing key typical developmental experiences in family, faith, and education that prepare them for "fully engaged citizenship." It was then important to account for who among the ten participants identified as LGBT and who did not. Five of them identify as LGBT, three as straight, and two as questioning (Q).

Second, it was also important to consider the type of role that their GSA played in the school. As I described earlier, Griffin et al. (2004) identified four different roles that GSAs played in schools. Spectrum has the characteristics of two of the roles and has been shifting from one to the other since its inception. Spectrum can be identified as both a "safe" space and a primary vehicle for raising awareness, increasing visibility, and

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[83] See Chapter 5 p. 86

[84] Richardson (2000) in Russell (2002).

educating about LGBT issues in schools. I believe that GSAs, which engage students in activities that raise awareness about LGBT issues, have activities that increase the GSA's visibility, in the same way, activities in which students educate about LGBT issues have the potential to impact the students' ideas on civic/political participation and social justice more than GSAs that only function as "safe" spaces. Ehrlich (1999) explains that discussions about different topics are important, but the ideas are enhanced when they are integrated in real civic activities. Thus, GSAs that serve as "safe" spaces are extremely important as places for LGBT youth discussions, but coming out of that "safe" space and engaging in activities outside the club potentially can be powerful training for democratic citizenship.

Finally, Rubin (2007) explains that " [as] youth develop, they create meaning, identity, and a sense of themselves in the world by using a variety of sources, including existing constructions of ethnicity, race, gender, and social class" (p.450). Her research investigated "the students' senses of their relative value and importance within U.S. civic institutions and their belief in their ability to affect the system" (p.454). Rubin's framework of the development of civic identity of students, "particularly those from traditionally marginalized groups" (p.450) provides valuable frameworks of reference to understanding and analyzing the LGBT development of their civic identity. LGBT students frequently hear negative remarks about LGBT groups, which can have a negative impact on their identity development. The data suggests that there are two distinct axes of identity: from congruity to disjuncture between the students' experiences and the ideals they had learned about the United States; from passive to active about civic

participation; and a typology of four civic identities: aware, empowered, complacent, and discouraged.

Social Justice

Four of the five students who identified as LGBT indicated that social justice was important in their lives, and that they thought about it often. Jennifer saw the need for social justice for gays and lesbians as a matter of respect and tolerance. She explained that although she has never been 'attacked or disrespected," she had heard stories from her ex-girlfriend about her family being targeted. "They had a gay flag in their house and it was smashed into the window of their car. Things like that disgust me." She joined Spectrum in part, because she wanted to change the negative views people have of gays and lesbians, which sometimes results in episodes of violence. In the club, she heard similar stories that simply "elevated [her] anger." She felt frustrated, and doubted the club's effectiveness in creating positive change.

Michelle has had a more positive experience and often thinks about social justice. The GSA has shown her ways to help other people and, in the process, help herself. Her four years in Spectrum have taught her to be strong and fight for what she believes to be right: gay rights, equality, and justice for all. She calls gay rights her "cause." She hopes that she has been able to "pass [her] gift and passion" to the other members and that they continue to do great things, inside and outside the school, to help Spectrum members realize their vision of social justice.

Both Jennifer and Michelle learned in the GSA the importance of social justice in their lives. More important, however, they learned that there was still a long way to go to achieve social justice for gays and lesbians. While Jennifer became frustrated Michelle

kept the strength to continue fighting for "the cause." Following Rubin's typology, we can assume that Jennifer has experienced disjuncture between what she believed she could do and the realization that change is difficult, feeling discouraged and has ceased to attend the GSA. She is now an example of Rubin's passive civic participant. However, Michelle has also experienced disjuncture, but still believes in her ability to bring about social change. She is an example of an empowered, active civic participant.

Both Chris and Jim believe that social justice is important and necessary. They are aware of the need for social justice, but they have become complacent and expect others to take a more active role. Chris does not view the LGBT community as having second class status. When asked about it, he responded, " No, I believe that as years have passed by, the community has been more accepted by society." On the other hand, Jim, who is still learning to be comfortable with his own sexuality, uses the GSA as a "safe" space. He can share doubts with other members and feels free to express how he feels about his own sexuality without being judged.

Joe was the only LGBT youth that indicated that though social justice is important to him in theory, it is not in his personality. He described social justice as a "very real idea," and he likes to escape reality. "I don't think life is paradise. I think that they [*social justice and civic and political participation*] are important but I'm not committed to them. They are all important in my head but they are not prominent in my life." Having known Joe for two years now and having had many conversations with him during that time, I am certain that he is not ready to commit to anything beyond himself. He is still learning to manage his anger, particularly directed at people who have had an easy time coming out. Joe came out in middle school and was often teased for being effeminate. He

does not believe in bisexuality or “fluidity” and thinks that people are either straight or gay. He resents students who do not choose to identify as gay or straight. He wanted the GSA to be a place to meet other like-minded gay teens and maybe find romance. It just did not happen. All these obstacles get in the way of his thinking about improving the lives of others or opposing injustices the community has to endure.

The two students who characterized themselves as "questioning," Tina and Zoe, believe that social justice is very important. Zoe said, “It should be prevailing.” Both feel that their participation in the GSA has not changed their belief that the group needs to keep working to bring equality to the members. Tina hopes that her abilities are helping. “This has always been important for me. I have a lot of neighbors who are gay/lesbian and being part of this has helped me focus more on the activism aspect of it.”

The three straight teenagers also found social justice to be important and something they thought about often. However, Mila said she is somewhat “pessimistic," often thinking that "it will never happen. There will always be people who don’t believe in social justice or have a different belief.” Mila is aware of the fact that change is needed for equity and fairness, but she is beginning to feel discouraged. She has begun to feel that change is impossible. Sharif also thinks about social justice. Regarding his own experience of injustice, he states, “I’ve seen that if you are different from someone else and they don’t like it, they will mistreat you.” His experience with the GSA has taught him to be more open-minded, but he is not considering taking on a more active role in bringing about change. Though aware of injustices and knowing that change is needed for equity and fairness, Sharif assumes a passive stance. By contrast, Jane comes from a family that is very supportive of volunteering. “My parents don’t do the volunteering so

much but they've always placed a high ideal on it." Jane is extremely active in the GSA and also volunteers with an organization that seeks equality in her state. "Equality between races, gender, etc. is very important for me," she confided. Jane likes to be around other people who feel the same way she does about social justice and equality. "We all have the same ideals and it's interesting to be with people who want to do something about that." Spectrum, she said, makes her feel empowered; she feels ready to bring about change in the school. She believes in her ability to use the system to bring about justice, she knows about civic rights and processes, and has been encouraged to critique (Rubin, 2007). Jane was active before she joined Spectrum. However, Spectrum has opened new venues for her and has given her the opportunity to apply some of the tools she learned while helping out at the equality organization. Jane conducted a signature campaign at school to ask the congressman to vote to repeal the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. She also engaged some of the group members in a telephone campaign to ask constituents to call their representatives to seek their support for same-sex marriage.

Civic Participation

Two of the LGBT students reported believing that civic participation was very important for them, and connected it to the work they do in the club and the community. Michelle felt that it was important to reach out to the community because by doing so, the community will help you out as well. Both Michelle and Chris believe that the activities Spectrum promotes build upon their civic skills and help them become better people. Michelle and Chris play an active role in promoting in the school civic activities that may

improve the experiences of other LGBT students and change negative ideas that straight students may have about LGBT youth (e.g., the DADT signature campaign the group initiated).

Jim and Joe, both LGBT, felt that civic participation is important, but it is not something they think about often. Both Jim and Joe, however, are focused on their own personal issues and do not feel ready to engage in other activities. As I stated earlier, Jim is learning about his own sexuality and is still very much in the closet outside the club. In the club, he identifies as bisexual, though in private conversations he expresses a belief that he might simply be gay and not ready to admit it. Joe focuses on being liked in the club and perhaps finding the romance.

Jennifer wants to help out but she is disillusioned with Spectrum, feeling that the club is not accomplishing much. This and her schedule have resulted in her attending meetings less often. “Civic participation was what I was actually hoping to find and branch out from there. I haven’t done much up to this point but that is really because I don’t know how to take a first step. I’m looking for some organization that will fight for what I want.”

Zoe and Tina, the two students who identified as "questioning," also felt that civic participation was really important. Zoe indicated that people “should do as many good acts as possible,” while Tina declares, “You can’t have social justice without it and you can’t improve a society without it.” Zoe believes that Spectrum is bringing her greater clarity about her beliefs. Through Spectrum, she has found ways to contribute to make this a better society. On the other hand, Tina feels that by writing in the school newspaper about Spectrum and providing a positive view of the club, she may have encouraged

others to “join and do good things.” Both are active participants who know that change is needed for equity and fairness. They are aware of injustices and are working to improve conditions for others.

The three straight teenagers feel that civic participation is important. However, Sharif is discouraged about the impact that civic participation can have on a community. “Civic participation, when it comes to that, there are actually a lot of things that I wish I could do but the truth is that there is much going on, high school and even my friends, and I, coming up against it. Some things just won’t change, you can’t really improve the community.” Sharif is torn about his desire to actively do good things in the community and feeling overwhelmed with schoolwork and his social life. Perhaps this makes him more passive and complacent, which results in his questioning his lack of activism. He knows that change is necessary, but he feels fine with the status quo. Both Mila and Jane believe that civic participation is very important and are happy that Spectrum provides them with an opportunity to be engaged. Jane explained that she felt like “everybody has an obligation to at least try to do something that is good for society. I think that we have an obligation to better ourselves and others.”

Political Participation

Of the five LGBT students, Jennifer and Chris declared that political participation was as important as civic participation. However, they do not engage in any political activities except for the work they do with the club, which they feel is both civic and political.

Jim and Joe also responded that they felt the same way about political participation as they do about civic participation. They acknowledged the importance of political participation, but added that it is not something they think about. On the other hand, Michelle is the only one of the five who felt it was the most important one of the three. She felt it was not only about gay issues but any issue. "Political participation … that's the most important one. I mean we have a lot of issues, not just the whole gay marriage thing, legal issues, health care, etc."

All of them acknowledged not being very politically active, if at all, but were not clear why not. Chris said that "it is hard to find time to do all the things you need to do, school, after school activities, sports, hang out with your friends. I don't always find opportunities to do it and honestly, I don't think I look for them either."

The two "questioning" students also described political participation as important. However, Zoe referred to political participation as "almost a lost cause. Constituents don't have much power over politics anymore." She displays cynicism about the possibility of using the system to make changes (Rubin, 2007). They both recognize that they are not very politically active. Tina explained that although she wanted to attend the National Equality March in D.C., she was motivated by personal reasons, not political.

Finally, the three straight teenagers had different responses. Sharif thought it is important and can "help change things," especially if through political activism, you can get more people to accept differences. Then, maybe things like people being this or that won't be such a big deal." Mila displayed a mistrust of politics. She thinks that political participation is very important, but "we should do this for helping others not for a different agenda." When I asked her to provide me with more details, she confided that

she thinks some of the politicians or people who engage in political activities are doing so for their own personal gain: “to get their share of power.” Jane is the only one of the ten teenagers I interviewed who actively participates in political activities. She says that political participation is an obligation. She has learned a lot helping out at the political organization for which she volunteers. She is confident that she can get more people in the club to become more active, and was thrilled when a couple of the members helped her make phone calls to solicit support for same-sex marriage. Jane also encouraged members to ask other students to sign a petition to repeal DADT. She is confident that she can bring some of those aspects to the club next year and claims to have many ideas. Jane is a only a freshman, but with the current leaders graduating, a number of the students in the club would like to see her take a leadership role next year.

To summarize, all the students declared that social justice and civic and political participation were important for them. Two of them, Tina and Zoe, reported that the GSA had not had an impact on their views. However, they have found a new venue to effect change in the school. Joe was the only student that found that all of them were important, but pursuing social justice or change through civic or political participation was not something he thought about doing. For most of the students, the impact has been positive and has allowed them to realize the potential of effecting change through civic and political participation.

Table 7.3 Students' Ideas on Social Justice and Civic and Political Participation

NAME	SOCIAL JUSTICE	CIVIC PARTICIPATION	POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
Chris	Important. Tolerance is basic.	Important to do good things for the community.	Important.
Jane	Important. Thinks about civil rights and equality a lot.	Everybody has an obligation to at least try to do something that's good for society.	An obligation.
Jennifer	Important. Thinks about it often because she has heard stories of others being targeted.	Important. Hopes to be able to do something but does not know how to take a first step– Learned the importance of it by association with her ex-girlfriend's mother.	Important. Hopes to be able to do something but does not know how to take a first step.
Jim	Important. Thinks about it often.	Important, but does not think much about it.	Important, but does not think much about it.
Joe	Important in theory but not prominent in his life.	Important but not prominent in his life.	Important but not prominent in his life.
Michelle	It is big. Thinks about it often.	Very important. If you help out in the community, the community will help you.	The most important one of the three.
Mila	Pessimistic view. It won't happen.	People should do this as much as they can.	For helping others not for a different agenda.
Sharif	Has thought about it a lot.	You cannot really improve the community. Some things won't change.	Important. Can help change things.
Tina	Pretty important.	Important.	Important.
Zoe	Should be prevailing.	People should do good acts.	Almost like a cause, but feels that constituents do not have any power.

Did Students Have Preconceived Ideas about the LGBT Community? Did they Change?

Meyer (2009) explains that heteronormativity[85] is a "system of behaviors and social expectations that are built around the belief that everyone is or should be heterosexual and that all relationships and families follow this model (Meyer, 2009 p. 85). Heteronormativity plays an important role in condoning anti-gay attitudes and

[85] Coined by Michael Warner. See Warner, M. (1991). Introduction: Fear of a queer planet. *Social Text* (29), 3-17.

prejudice. It sanctions a normative view of heterosexuality at the same time that it demonizes homosexuality or any behavior that is not heterosexual in nature.

Lipkin (1999) drew on the work of Mary Kite and Gregory Herek to describe the roots of stereotyping or prejudice. Kite provided three reference points for analyzing stereotyping or prejudice: sociocultural stereotypes (culturally-based, creates membership and loyalty to the culture of the region), motivational prejudice (to bolster one's personal identity/related to self-esteem or depression), and cognitive stereotyping (to make sense of the world/apply a set of categories to other groups). Herek's work studies homophobic prejudice by analyzing attitudes toward gays and lesbians. It also provides three reference points: experiential/schematic (based on our own interactions with an LGBT person; it can confirm or reduce prejudice); defensive (cope with inner conflicts; contact make attitudes worse); and self-expressive/symbolic (learned behavior – connected social networks). Since the self-expressive/symbolic reference is a learned behavior taught by association with a cultural network, education can have an impact on negative attitudes toward LGBT people.

All the students whom I interviewed had been exposed to different types of anti-gay prejudice or stereotyping. Most of them dealt with it in positive ways, relying on the experiential and self-expressive/symbolic references—the most common ways to reduce stereotypes or prejudice.

The five LGBT students of the GSA had preconceived ideas about LGBT people. For most of them, the GSA was instrumental in dispelling those negative stereotypes or prejudices. Chris felt that he was not exposed to many stereotypes of gays and lesbians. However, when questioned about some of his beliefs, he realized he had a negative view

of gay men, and felt conflicted about it. He recalled thinking that "all gays were effeminate," which was in conflict with his own personal expression. His more "masculine" view of himself was in contradiction with his notion of gays as uniformly effeminate. He said that the GSA offered him a "different picture," and realized that there was a diversity of gay men. However, he was not able to recognize that he still had a negative view of gays who are effeminate. His comment, "I realized that most people aren't like that," emphasizes a negative view of effeminate male homosexuals.

Michelle and Jennifer had similar experiences. They were both in middle school when they met someone who helped them deal with their fears and negative views of homosexuality. Michelle, brought up in a very religious family, always believed that homosexuality was wrong, but her interactions with others and her involvement with the GSA have helped her feel more comfortable with herself. Similarly, Jennifer, who had a girlfriend in middle school, was able to discard negative notions she had about gays and lesbians, and also indicated that the GSA helped her learn more about homosexuality, leaving her feeling more secure.

Jim is aware of the stereotypes about gay men, but has learned a lot from Spectrum. His conflict is at home, where he still hears his parents remark, "Oh, that's disgusting," when they see something on TV about homosexuality.

However, the most conflicted LGBT student was Joe, who definitely had stereotypes about gays and lesbians before he admitted to himself that he was gay. He believed that gay men displayed a lot effeminate mannerisms, were promiscuous ("have one night stands with people they don't even know their names"), and spread disease. He claims that Spectrum has helped him see that those are not universal truths about gay

men. He has always heard of his parents express respect for homosexuals, especially those who have contributed to the Arts. However, when he came out to his parents, his father's big fear was that Joe would start dating. He worried that gay guys would coerce him into doing something sexual. "He was afraid of me flirting, being around gay guys, because they might coerce me into doing things." Joe was offended by the fact that his father would apply those stereotypes to him. Nevertheless, Joe still believes that gay men are promiscuous, and though still affected by his dad's applying those notions to him, he felt comfortable saying, "I have not abandoned the idea that statistically gay men are more promiscuous[86] … the Internet, which I have experienced, is a place of sexual drive. I don't think that straight people need to be online." Joe believes that if he went to a gay bar, people "would be having very casual sex with each other."

For the two questioning students, Spectrum has also been a learning experience. Both knew other gay people before joining the club: Zoe has a gay uncle and Tina knows several family friends who are gay. Zoe has been able to gain a broader picture of gay men. She had "never pictured black men being gay." For Tina, Spectrum emphasized the fact that "you never know." The limited knowledge you have about the world does not always help you completely understand the world. She was surprised to discover that a number of the teenagers did not use labels to identify.

The three straight students also described their experience with Spectrum as being beneficial in dispelling or confirming preconceived ideas they had about the LGBT community. Jane could not remember if she had any preconceived ideas about gays and lesbians. She claims that this is due to the fact that she has a gay cousin with whom she

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[86] He compares gay men to straight men.

has always had a personal connection, and the fact that, in general, the views of her family are very liberal. However, she believed that LGBT young people would be insecure and was glad to discover that "everybody is so secure."

Mila grew up believing that "gay men were more flamboyant and different from [her] dad." She indicated that the discussions, readings, and Spectrum members made her realize that this was not necessarily the case. She confided that she has lesbian friends who are "girlie," as opposed to the stereotypical view of lesbians as "butch."

Sharif grew up around gay and lesbian friends and family members. He claimed that he knew there were differences but had learned to judge people not for their appearance but for how they treated him. He had heard many stereotypes about gays and lesbians, but never believed them. He said that Spectrum helped him reaffirm the perception he had of gays and lesbians as "regular people."

Clearly, all the students had preconceived positive and negative ideas about gays and lesbians. Using Herek's three reference points, we can conclude that in most of the cases the experiential reference—contact with LGBT people—supported by the educational content of GSA, helped reduce negative stereotypes or prejudice against homosexuals. In the case of Sharif, his positive views were reaffirmed.

Did Participation in Spectrum Raise Questions about Inequality, Oppression, Domination, and Alienation?

Following the same methodology used when interviewing AMIGOS volunteers, I explored whether the students' experiences in Spectrum had raised any questions about the LGBT community in terms of inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation. We

discussed the terms, and came to the conclusion that they are somewhat interconnected. We considered societal norms, how they privilege and benefit some the members while others are marginalized. We also concluded that oppression is manifested in different forms: race, class, gender, and sexual orientation among other social markers (Kumashiro, 2002, 2004).

All the LGBT teenagers viewed the LGBT community in terms of oppression and inequality. None felt that the community was alienated. However, Joe added that "it depend[ed] on where you are." The visibility of the community varies, depending on where in the country you live. All of them referred to the LGBT community as lacking the legal rights enjoyed by heterosexuals, not being able to legally marry being chief among these. Chris added that some legal rights keep gays and lesbians "as some sort of second class citizens." Chris connected the lack of some legal rights to citizenship, lending credence to the idea that many members of the LGBT community view themselves as, in the words of Richardson (2000), as "partial citizens," whose experiences do not prepare them for "fully engaged citizenship."

LGBT teenagers characterized oppression as showing up in three different forms: fear, silence, and self-censoring. Chris expressed that he was very comfortable with himself but he did not "automatically tell people[87]." When he looks for a job, he does not disclose his sexual identity for fear that he might be discriminated against. Jim talked about the silence. He feels that people do not discuss homosexuality or simply ignore it. Finally, Joe stated that there are times that he wants to express who he is but unconsciously stops himself from doing so. "Even if I tell myself gay people are entitled

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[87] Being gay.

to the same rights, etc. when I am in front of people my reflexes act before my brain and that's oppression." For Joe society has clearly taught him to keep his sexual orientation to himself, which is not the case with heterosexuals.

The two questioning teenagers also viewed the LGBT community as oppressed and lacking equality. In addition, Tina felt that the community was alienated in politics, and that it might experience social alienation. Both Zoe and Tina referred to legal matters to describe inequalities in the community. Tina felt that the community was somehow oppressed, but she did not believe the oppression was "extreme." Zoe suggested that it was "getting better in some communities." She added, however, that gays and lesbians could not always share who they are.

Finally, the three straight teenagers viewed the community as lacking equal rights compared to heterosexuals. They saw the plight as a civil rights issue. Sharif identified with the community's fight for equal rights. "I see people who are like me … trying to fight for equal rights." Mila and Jane also stated that the community is oppressed in some ways, though not overly so. Mila referred to the fact that gays and lesbians cannot always adopt and provide "a child with a better life," and Jane saw oppression in the fact that gays and lesbians cannot always be open about who they are. By contrast, Sharif did not believe the community was oppressed. As a community, "they've achieved a lot within the last 20 years."

Overall, the ten teenagers, regardless of their sexual orientation, concluded that the LGBT community has struggles to overcome and does not share the same benefits or equal protection as the rest of society. Society's traditional norms and regulations block the LGBT community from participating as fully engaged citizens.

Was This an Empowering Experience? Who Was Empowered?

Nine of the ten teenagers interviewed felt empowered by their participation in Spectrum. Jane was the only one who did not feel empowered by the experience, describing her participation as "interesting." However, she pointed out that she could understand why it would be an empowering experience for LGBT teenagers. On the other hand, the other two straight teenagers, Mila and Sharif, felt empowered in that the experience broadened their views and taught them to be more accepting of others.

The two questioning teenagers, Tina and Zoe, also felt empowered. Tina has found a place where she can express herself, and is thrilled to be part of a community of like-minded people. Zoe reported feeling more comfortable with herself.

All the LGBT students felt empowered in different, but related, ways. They all reported to have learned a lot, not just about themselves but also about what it means to be an LGBT person in this society. Joe declared that Spectrum and its members taught him to not just accept himself, but to love himself. "We should also love ourselves and show pride for the fact that we are gay." Three of them reported feeling more comfortable being who they are and feeling free to openly discuss their sexuality[88]. Chris indicated that Spectrum had been an empowering experience for him. "It made me a lot more comfortable with myself. I don't know if I would have said to another person that

[88] Please note that these students still indicated that they know when it is not safe or wise to disclose their sexuality. That does not mean that they are not comfortable with themselves. Unfortunately, I know there are times when I should not disclose my sexual identity, and I am very comfortable being who I am.

"homo"[89] is wrong to say." Finally, the two leaders of Spectrum, Michelle and Joe, reported having acquired leadership skills and feeling more confident. They have learned to organize meetings, facilitate discussions, and incorporate the members' wishes into the club's agenda. They made sure that everyone's opinion was included and respected, and built a caring environment for all.

The GSA: School Impact

Student, Faculty, Administration, and Staff Surveys

It was important to assess how school constituents felt about having a GSA in the school, and whether having one had any kind of personal impact on them or on their views of LGBTQ students. Research conducted by GLSEN has consistently demonstrated that the presence of a GSA has a positive impact on school climate.

> Students in schools with a Gay-Straight Alliance reported hearing fewer homophobic remarks, experienced less harassment and assault because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff, were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, were less likely to miss school because of safety concerns and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community (www.glsen.org).

For that reason, I conducted additional surveys to assess the impact of the GSA on the school population. The goal of the surveys was twofold:

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[89] Chris said that the word "homo" is said a lot in the hallways. It really offends him. He also said that he heard it more in middle school than high school. He thinks that high school students are more mature, and that this kind of behavior is less acceptable.

- Find out if students, faculty, administration, and staff were familiar with Spectrum; and whether the presence of a GSA had a positive or negative impact on their views on LGBT issues.
- Determine how often homophobic remarks were heard in the school and whether there was any intervention to stop such behavior. A hostile school climate can have negative effect on LGBT youth: feeling unsafe, absenteeism, lowered educational aspirations, and impaired academic achievement (GLSEN, 2007).

The Student Surveys

The 187 students[90] who responded to the survey were asked to name some of the after-school clubs. If they did not include Spectrum in their list, they were asked to explain why not. They were also asked to describe what they knew about Spectrum, whether they could name activities promoted by Spectrum, and whether they had participated in any of them. In addition, they were asked to describe the impact that the club has had on them, if any. Finally, the students responded to ten questions that assessed the frequency with which they heard homophobic remarks, whether they had witnessed any such behaviors and whether they had ever personally intervened to stop such behaviors.

The demographics of the school[91] show that there was representation from all school ethnic groups. Forty-five percent of the respondents were male and fifty-five were female. Six percent of the participants were Asian, forty-six percent Black, six percent

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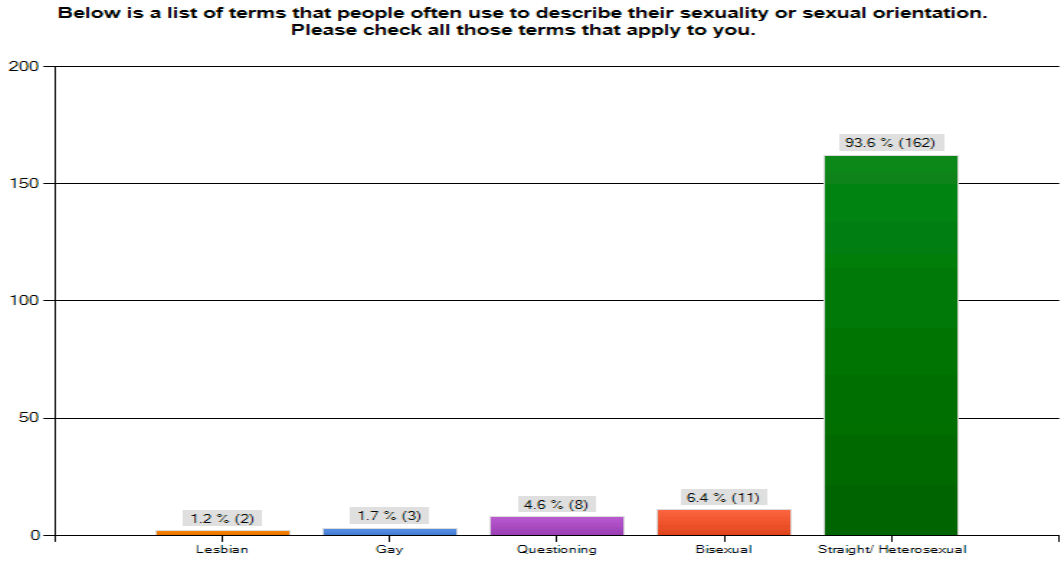
[90] 10 percent of the school population
[91] See page 119

Hispanic, eleven percent Multi-Race, six percent Other, and forty-one percent White. There was representation from all grades: twenty-nine percent of the respondents were in the ninth grade, twenty-six percent in the tenth grade, twenty-one percent in the eleventh grade, and twenty-four percent in the twelfth grade. Ninety-three percent of the students identified themselves as straight/heterosexual; six percent as bisexual; five percent as questioning, one percent as lesbian, and two percent as gay. Students were allowed to check all the terms that applied to them. The percentage is above 100 percent, which means that some students chose more than one label.

Figure 7.1 Description of Sexuality or Sexual Orientation



A total of 173 students responded to this question. The students were allowed to check all terms that applied to them. A total of 186 responses were recorded, which means that seven percent of the respondents chose more than one label to describe their sexual orientation.

Sixty-three percent of the students included Spectrum in their answers. Seventeen percent had never heard of the club. Fifteen percent had forgotten to include Spectrum

but they knew about the club. Five percent of the students responded that they had not included Spectrum because they were not gay, did not support LGBT students, or that it was wrong, which implies that they have heard of club and its mission. When asked what they knew about Spectrum, most of the students who had identified Spectrum knew that it was a gay-straight alliance or a group that supported LGBT youth. Nine percent of the students responded with misconceptions about the club—"It's for gay people/I think it's the club for homosexuals/It's a club for homosexuals and bisexuals" —or used offensive language to refer to the club: "It's a club for homos and queers."

Thirty percent of the students were able to name an activity sponsored by Spectrum, with the Day of Silence, movie nights, and bake sales, being the most common responses. When asked if they had ever participated in any of the events sponsored by Spectrum, fifteen percent responded that they had participated at least in one event.

Finally, students were asked to describe the impact that the events promoted by Spectrum or their participation in any of those events had on them. Of the 187 students, twenty-seven skipped that question, and twenty-three (14 percent) described some positive impact. The students reported that some of the events make them think about sexual orientation, how the LGBT community is treated in school, or "the struggles of sexually oppressed." Overall, they indicated that these events make them think about LGBT issues and make them more aware of the difficulties these students face in the school.

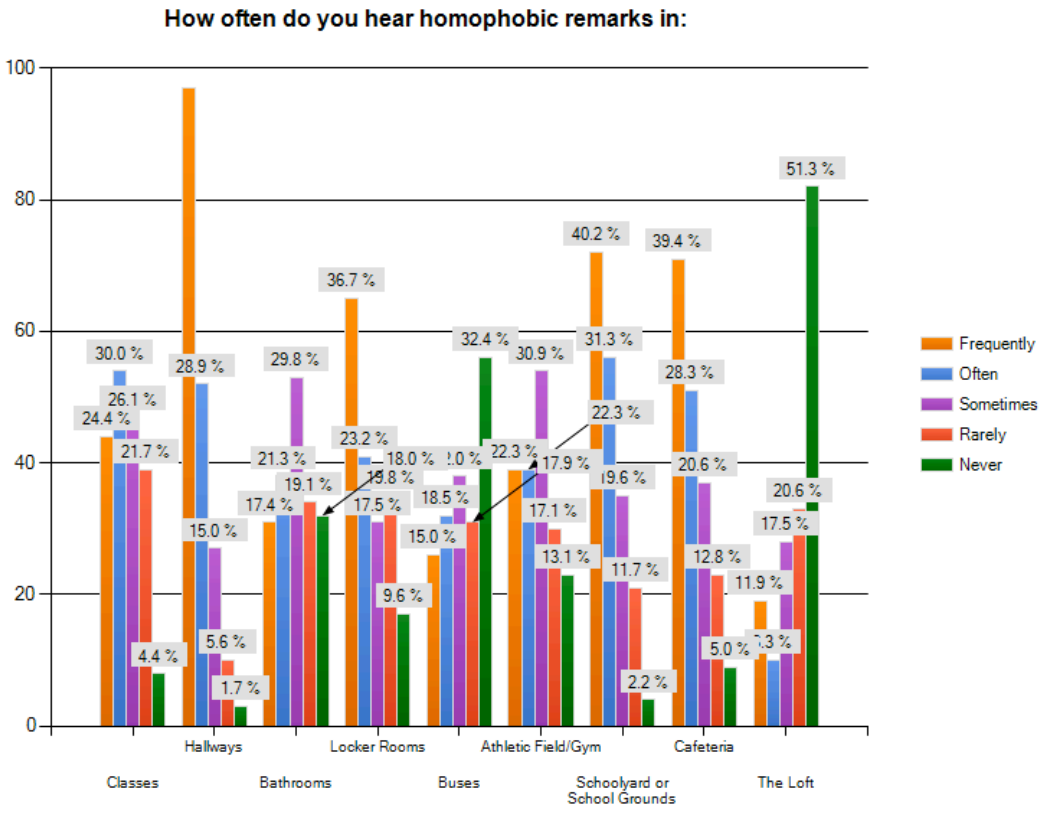
The second section of the survey[92] explored how often students heard homophobic remarks, and whether anybody intervened. Responses to the survey showed that a high percentage of students frequently (44 percent)/often (28 percent)/sometimes (22 percent) heard homophobic remarks. The responses also showed that homophobic remarks are made by most (36 percent)/some (51 percent) of the students, with only 12 percent stating that those remarks are made by few of the student. Only one percent believed that none of the students used homophobic remarks.

The students reported that teachers or school staff rarely (34 percent) or never (58 percent) used homophobic remarks. However, three percent and one percent respectively declared that they frequently or often heard teachers or school staff use homophobic remarks.

Hallways, school grounds, cafeteria, and locker rooms were the places identified by the students where they most frequently heard homophobic remarks. Thirty percent of the students identified the classroom as the place where they often heard those remarks.

[92] I used GLESN's School Climate survey as a guide to create this part of the survey.

Figure 7.2 How often students hear homophobic remarks?[93]



Forty-six percent of the students said that they never intervene when they hear homophobic remarks, and only ten percent and five percent respectively declared that they intervene most of the time or always. Thirty-nine percent indicated that they sometimes intervene.

Nineteen percent of the students reported that when a homophobic remark is made and a teacher or other school staff is present, they never intervene. Thirty-nine percent reported that teachers or other school staff intervene some of the time; thirty-two percent

[93] The Loft is a school-based youth program that is dedicated to the emotional, social, and academic success of the school's youth.

reported that they intervene most of the time; and eleven percent indicated that they always intervene.

Faculty, Administration, and Staff Surveys

A total of 79 teachers, administrators, and staff[94] responded to the survey. Participants were asked to name some of the after-school clubs. If they did not include Spectrum in their list, they were asked to explain why not. They were also asked to describe what they knew about Spectrum, whether they could name activities promoted by Spectrum, and whether they had participated in any of them. In addition, they were asked to describe the impact that the club had on them, if any. Finally, the participants also responded to seven questions that assessed the frequency with which they heard students use homophobic remarks, and whether they had intervened to stop that behavior.

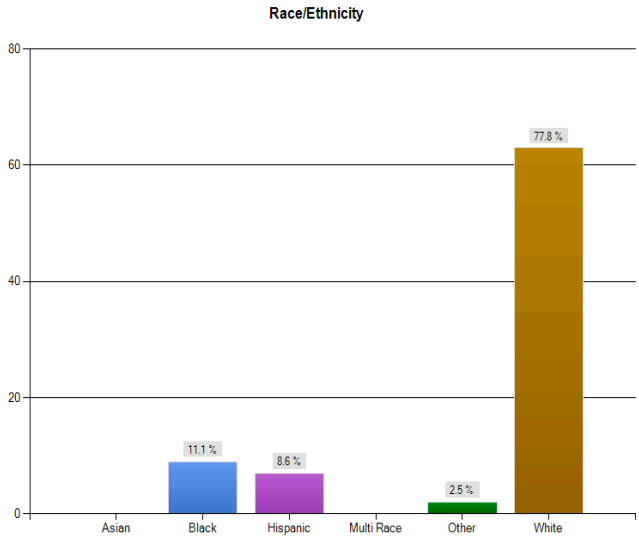


Figure 7.3 Students' Race / Ethnicity

Thirty-one percent of the participants were male and sixty-nine were female. Eleven percent identified as Black; nine percent Hispanic; and three percent Multi-Race.

Fifty-three percent of the participants included Spectrum in their lists. Of those who did not include Spectrum, seventeen percent indicated that they had forgotten to

[94] Nine administrators, sixty-one teachers, and twelve staff members (secretaries and support staff).

include the club, but the response implies that they knew about Spectrum. Another nine percent indicated that they did not know what Spectrum was. Overall, seventy percent of the participants know of the existence of Spectrum in the high school. When asked what they knew about Spectrum, seventy-five percent demonstrated an understanding of Spectrum's role. Responses were either very descriptive (e.g., "Spectrum is a club for students who are gay, straight, questioning, or those who support students who are gay, straight or questioning. They work to encourage support and understanding for gay rights in school and in the wider community") or simple and direct (e.g., "The gay-straight alliance;" "It is a club that teaches tolerance."

Sixty-four percent of the participants named at least one event promoted by Spectrum, the Day of Silence being the one mentioned most frequently (eighty-eight percent of those who had mentioned an event). Forty-seven percent of the participants claimed to have participated in or supported events promoted by Spectrum.

> Yes … I find that it makes a very clear point, even if it is for 45 minutes in the confines of the classroom; my students write about the meaning, impact or effectiveness.
>
> Yes. It is extremely important that we bring to light that we have students at [school name] that are struggling silently every day with the issues surrounding their sexuality. Our school community is at great advantage in that our culture generally accepts students that are homosexual. Twenty years ago, this was not the case.
>
> We put out a book display during GLTQ month and feature titles and books on our website.

Those who indicated not having participated reported that they did not know anything about events promoted by Spectrum, found it difficult to do their job if they could not speak, or did not have a personal interest in participating. “No, not practical for a teacher / No, have not had a personal interest/No, because I’ve never heard of them/No, I just didn’t feel a need.”

Most teachers, administrators, and school staff who participated in any of the events reported some impact in terms of awareness and increasing their support for LGBTQ students.

> These activities always help bring the topic to the front of our minds and reminds me as an educator to be aware that my classroom has students that are gay or have friends and relatives that are gay.
>
> Makes you think about children who have no one to talk to about their differences.
>
> Makes you aware of what is going on in the class regarding the treatment of students.

The second section of the survey was aimed at determining how often faculty, administrators, and school staff heard homophobic remarks in the school, and whether they intervene to stop this kind behavior.

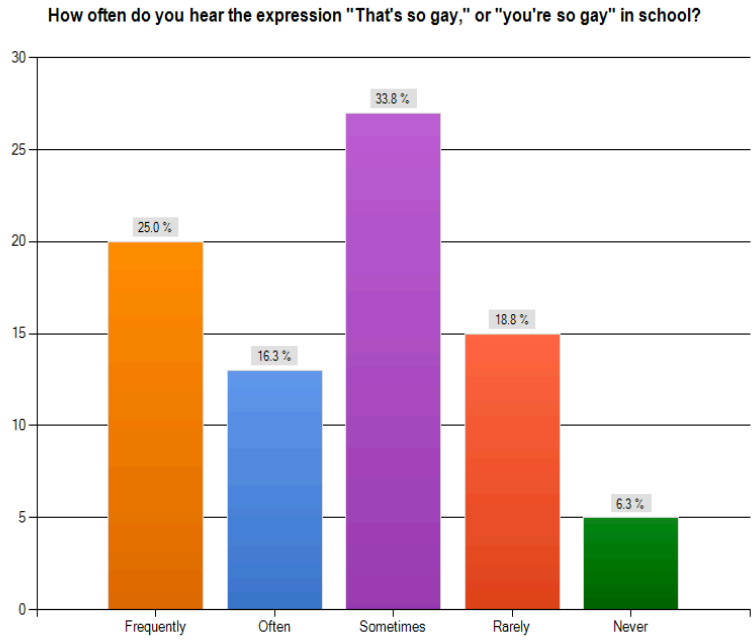


Figure 7.4 How often do you hear "That's so gay"?

Seventy-five percent of the participants reported frequently hearing (25 percent), often hearing (16 percent) or sometimes hearing (34 percent) the expression “that’s so gay” or "you’re so gay,” which proves that it has become a popular expression that students often use without questioning its negative portrayal of gays and lesbians.

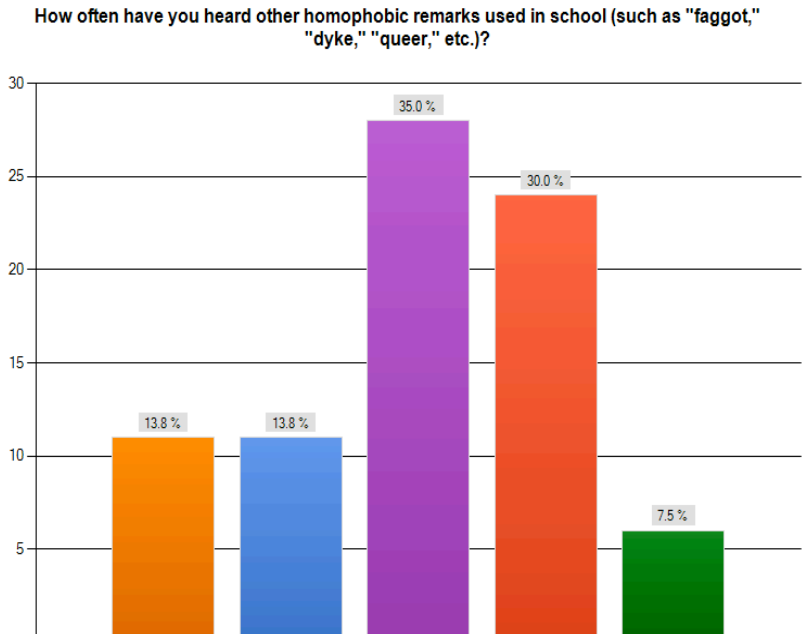


Figure 7.5 How often do you hear homophobic remarks?

The survey shows that thirty-eight percent of the participants rarely or never hear a homophobic remark like faggot, dyke or queer. However, twenty-eight percent reported they have frequently or often heard such remarks. A total of sixty-three percent hear such remarks frequently, often, or sometimes.

Only one percent of the participants reported never intervening when they heard homophobic remarks made by students. The percentage of participants that would not intervene was higher (25 percent) if the person who had said a homophobic remark was an adult.

In Summary, research has demonstrated that schools nationwide are unsafe for a majority of LGBT students, who "continue to face harassment, even physical assault, often without intervention from school staff (GLSEN, 2007 p. 4)." The 2007 National School Climate Survey examined the experiences of LGBT students in the schools. The survey identified a series of problems that LGBT students face in our schools and proposed solutions to the problems. Among those problems that LGBT youth face, the report cited:

- A hostile school climate
- Absenteeism
- Lowered educational aspirations and academic achievement

The report indicated that the presence of a GSA in the school "can create a welcoming climate for LGBT students and allies (GLSEN, 2007 p. 10)." Spectrum clearly has a positive impact on the school. Seventy percent of the school staff knows of Spectrum, and fully ninety-nine percent reported that they frequently/often/sometimes intervene if they hear a student utter a homophobic remark. Similarly, sixty-three percent of the students who completed the survey knew of Spectrum. Only a five percent of the responses included a negative comment about the club or LGBT youth. Both school staff and students cited awareness as the impact of Spectrum. These numbers suggest that the

presence of a GSA in the school has a positive impact. However, it is important to bear in mind that the school is located in an area known for its support of LGBT people, which can positively influence students' views of LGBT issues.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion and Discussion

Introduction

Michelli and Keiser (2005) remind us that one of the "at least four enduring purposes of public education is to "prepare students to be active, involved participants in a democracy" (p. xviii). We cannot dictate what families teach their children at home, but we can create opportunities to teach students about their civic and political responsibilities—key elements of a functioning democracy. Any country founded on democratic ideals or striving to be a democracy must instill and promote a sense of civic and political engagement in its inhabitants, so that the voice of the people can be heard, respected, and taken into consideration. Since Putnam (1995) documented a decline in political and civic engagement by American young people, scholars have attempted to find ways to alter this societal trend. Research confirms the importance of citizen education and service learning activities to promote a sense of civic engagement, also stresses the importance of opportunities to participate in real life activities (Berti, 2005; Bowes, Flanagan, & Taylor, 2001; Flanagan & Gallay, 1995; McLellan & Youniss, 2003; Sapiro, 2004, Sinatra, Beck, & Mckeown, 1992; Torney-Purta, 2002). Barber (1992) suggests that community service is one of the most important ways, often the most important, to reverse a tendency toward civic and political disengagement.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, I wanted to better understand the impact of after school clubs and service learning activities on students' beliefs towards civic participation and civic and political engagement. Second, using as my lens such

issues as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation, I sought to gauge whether participation in programs like the ones above altered preconceived ideas students held about others. I chose to study two different groups, an extra-curricular club and a service learning program, because each was grounded in ideals of social justice and democracy. I decided that rather than studying two similar groups (for example, two GSAs in two different schools or two similar service learning programs) there was potential for a greater yield from studying two programs that appeared to have different goals but, in the end, were working towards a shared vision: building leadership skills in young people so that they can become active civic and political members of society. However, as I will discuss later in this chapter, the data showed that the journey was more complicated and contained more obstacles for one of the two groups.

The GSA (Spectrum) is a group that focuses on the well-being, acceptance, tolerance for, and safety of sexual minorities. GSAs are made up of LGBTQ students, often marginalized by society or heterosexual students who are themselves accepted by society. Members of a GSA are often perceived as the "other," trying to change views that mainstream groups have of sexual minorities. Depending on the type of GSA a particular school has—whether it is more or less visible— students will have more or less opportunities for activism. The GSA of this study proved to be one that fluctuated between opportunities for activism and periods of invisibility. During the time that this study took place, the members learned to work and plan as a group to engage in civic activities and political activism/change. Therefore, those activities had a potential impact on their attitudes towards civic and political engagement.

The service learning program (Amigos de las Américas) has very different roots than Spectrum. The focus of AMIGOS is not on the students themselves but on the services they provide to other communities. AMIGOS students are not perceived as the "other." On the contrary, they are from the mainstream culture providing a needed service to "the other." These volunteers are looking to bring about positive change in marginalized communities. However, their contact with and understanding of those marginalized groups may potentially change their perceptions and biases towards other marginalized groups. Unquestionably, AMIGOS provides volunteers with many opportunities for civic and political activism. Therefore, participation in this program can have a potential impact on volunteers' attitudes towards civic and political engagement.

With both Amigos de las Américas and the GSA, I examined whether or not beliefs and attitudes towards civic and political participation had been impacted by participation in the programs. In addition, I assessed whether preconceived ideas about others had been changed after experiential contact with the "other." and whether or not participation raised questions about inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach (quantitative/qualitative) was used to examine the impact of participation in AMIGOS and Spectrum. Data sources included participant interviews, surveys, field notes, observations of training/meetings, and documents.

Data were first analyzed separately and then triangulated to investigate consistency in the findings, thereby adding another layer of validity and confirmation of the findings (Weis and Fine, 2000).

Data from the observations were analyzed at three different stages: (1) analysis done as an on-going process while reflecting on what was observed; (2) analysis after the study was completed; (3) analysis performed over the summer, after some time and at some distance from the study (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999).

After transcribing the interviews, I read and listened to them many times to look for recurrent themes. Once I identified these themes, I began creating coding categories based on the data.

The surveys provided two different sets of data, quantitative and qualitative. I analyzed the qualitative data in the same way I analyzed the interviews. I re-read the data many times, looking for recurrent themes that, once identified, were the basis for coding categories for the data. I used the quantitative data to run simple descriptive statistics, which allowed me to become familiar with the data (Picciano, 2004).

Documents were used as supportive data. These allowed me to identify and validate some of the recurrent themes provided by other data sets. Finally, all four data sets were triangulated to ensure consistency and validation of the findings.

Summary of Findings

First, I studied and coded volunteers' and students' responses to the surveys and interviews to identify the reasons why they had decided to participate in AMIGOS and Spectrum. Data from the interviews and surveys were triangulated, with several salient themes emerging. Four main reasons surfaced for AMIGOS volunteers, regardless of whether they were former volunteers or would be volunteering in the future. Responses

by Spectrum members were coded depending on whether they were new members or old members.

AMIGOS volunteers presented two or more of the following reasons for having signed on: (1) They knew somebody who had participated and had influenced them to do the same; (2) The volunteers wanted to experience other cultures/communities; (3) The volunteers wanted to help others; and (4) They wanted to improve their Spanish.

The responses of Spectrum members to the surveys and interviews helped me identify the core reasons why they had decided to join the club. New and old members indicated that among their reasons were: (1) They knew somebody who is LGBT and wanted to show support; (2) They were already questioning their sexuality in middle school and were looking for a space to feel accepted/be themselves; and (3) They were moved by activism, and wanted to effect change in the school. New members added two additional reasons to the list: (4) seemed like an interesting club and wanted to learn more about it; and (5) to learn more about sexual orientation.

Secondly, surveys and interviews were used to assess the students' beliefs and attitudes toward civic and political participation/engagement, and beliefs and attitudes toward social justice. I described a civic participant to the volunteers as someone who is a member of community organizations, cares for those in need, and engages in efforts to improve the situations of others (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). A political participant was described as someone who engages in voluntary activities aimed at influencing political decisions. Social justice was described as the desire to recognize social wrongs (Greene, 1998), paying attention to inequalities in our society, and imagining alternatives to the inequalities we witness (Oakes &Lipton, 2007). This translates into the questioning of

how society generates privilege and inequality, and how this affects individuals' opportunities to develop at all levels (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Kumashiro, 2004; &Young, 1993).

The AMIGOS volunteers that I interviewed declared that civic and political participation and social justice were important for them before joining AMIGOS. Only one volunteer was unable to remember how he felt about them before the AMIGOS experience.

After having participated in AMIGOS, all volunteers indicated that their views or beliefs about civic/political participation and social justice were a function of the AMIGOS experience. Initially, the impact was at a personal level. Either it influenced their notions of these concepts, or helped them understand and connect their ideas and beliefs to their realities. Later, the experience had an impact on future decisions. Some, for example, wanted to volunteer more; others were able to decide what to study; still others became more aware of issues at home, or decided to continue learning more about the issues that affected the people in their host communities.

All Spectrum members declared that social justice and civic and political participation were important for them. Two of them reported that the GSA had not had an impact on their views. However, they have found a new venue to bring about change in the school. One student found that, though important, the pursuit of social justice or change through civic or political participation was not something he had considered. For most of the students, the impact has been positive, permitting them to realize the potential of effecting change through civic and political participation.

Finally, with AMIGOS volunteers I explored whether their experiences had raised any questions about their communities related to inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation. Similarly, with Spectrum members I explored whether the students' experiences in Spectrum had raised any questions about the LGBT community in terms of inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation. With both groups, I discussed key ideas about inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation, and established that these terms were somewhat interconnected. We considered how societal norms privilege and benefit some while marginalizing others. We also concluded that oppression may occur as a function of many perceived "differences": race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, among other social markers (Kumashiro, 2002, 2004).

The study found that AMIGOS Volunteers' notions of inequality were primarily centered in one overarching theme: economic disparity between the rich and the poor. All volunteers perceived their communities in terms of inequality and oppression. Issues of domination and alienation as such were not described by the volunteers. The volunteers identified different forms of oppression, but did not always question who the oppressor was. Two themes emerged however: oppression by the system, and oppression of females.

Not all volunteers recalled having had stereotypes about the people in Latin America. Once they established connections with the people, those who did have negative stereotypes often discovered that these were often unfounded.

Finally, all volunteers felt personally empowered by the experience, gaining more self-confidence, leadership skills, and the feeling they could accomplish anything they

wished. Some volunteers also felt that they had empowered the people in the community as well.

As for Spectrum, all the LGBT teenagers viewed the LGBT community in terms of oppression and inequality. None felt that the community was alienated. However, one student did state that, depending on where in the country you lived, you might feel more alienated. All of them referred to the LGBT community as lacking the legal rights enjoyed by heterosexuals. Not being able to legally marry was chief among those legal rights cited. One student added that some legal rights keep gays and lesbians "as some sort of second class citizens," and connected the lack of some legal rights to citizenship. This lends credence to the notion that many members of the LGBT community view themselves as, in the words of Richardson (2000), "partial citizens," whose experiences do not prepare them for "fully engaged citizenship."

LGBT teenagers characterized oppression as showing up in three different forms: fear, silence, and self-censoring. The two "questioning" teenagers also viewed the LGBT community as oppressed and lacking equality. Finally, the three "straight" teenagers viewed the community as lacking equal rights compared to heterosexuals. They saw the plight as a civil rights issue.

Overall, the ten teenagers, regardless of their sexual orientation, concluded that the LGBT community has struggles to overcome and does not share the same benefits or equal protection as the rest of society. Society's traditional norms and laws block the LGBT community from participating as fully engaged citizens.

All the students whom I interviewed had been exposed to different types of anti-gay prejudice or stereotyping. Participation in Spectrum, contact with LGBTQ students,

and the educational content discussed in the GSA helped reduce negative stereotypes and prejudice against homosexuals.

Finally, nine of the ten teenagers interviewed felt empowered by their participation in Spectrum. Jane was the only one who did not feel empowered by the experience, describing her participation as "interesting." However, she pointed out that she could understand why it would be an empowering experience for LGBT teenagers. All the LGBT students felt empowered in different, but related, ways. They all reported to have learned a lot, not just about themselves but also about what it means to be an LGBT person in this society.

Significance of the Findings

Civic and Political Engagement

This study contributes to a richer understanding of beliefs and attitudes of young people towards civic and political engagement. The understanding is enhanced by my having employed such issues as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation as the lens through which to interpret the findings.

Research on young people's beliefs and attitudes towards political and civic engagement has shown that their attitudes are more positive and non-cynical than those of adults (Flanagan and Gallay, 1995). It has also stressed the importance of teaching about political and civic engagement, and providing young people with opportunities to participate in activities that foster political understanding and social participation. Research also reminds us that we need to pay attention to the role of minorities in political and social participation, in that frequently they, too, discover that they do not have a voice in the political process (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995). In addition, it is

important to examine the ways in which we transmit political and social values from one generation to another. Youth attitudes towards political and social participation are highly influenced by family values and family participation or encouragement to participate in political and social activities.

Both AMIGOS and Spectrum participants showed positive and non-cynical attitudes towards political and civic engagement. All AMIGOS participants showed positive attitudes towards their experience and indicated that they wanted to continue volunteering. Most former volunteers had participated in the program several times, or stated that the experience had impacted future decisions, like their choice of a course of study. For Spectrum participants, the experience proved to be different. Most indicated positive attitudes towards their experience. However, a few felt discouraged, not because of their Spectrum experience, but because they felt that "things[95] [would not] change." Over the past two years, Spectrum members have participated in many conversations about LGBT rights, and have engaged in activities aimed at changing the culture of their school. However, they continue to observe a society that does not view them as regular citizens, persisting in depriving them of basic human rights, including legal rights over their family members (i.e. hospital visitations of partners), state and federal rights granted to married couples, etc. They participated in activities to bring awareness about LGBT rights in their school, but the culture does not seem to have changed much. Many students continue to hear homophobic remarks at school and learned between August and September of 2010 about the deaths of several young people "who were known to be

[95] The current situation of the LGBT population: having the same rights as heterosexuals.

bullied relentlessly because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity." (www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2634.html)

Valley High students continue to report that they frequently hear homophobic remarks at school. Although most teachers said that they handle this behavior in the classroom, the students reported that only eleven percent of the adults consistently intervened when a homophobic remark was made. In 2010, Spectrum put up an exhibit[96] to commemorate LGBT history month and to highlight the challenges that LGBT youth are facing.

The exhibit had a section on "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (DADT); a section on marriage; a memorial to young people who had committed suicide or had been murdered because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression, including a former Valley high student who had been murdered in 2010. The exhibit also featured videos of famous people who had recorded messages of encouragement to young LGBTQ youth. The final section of the exhibit prompted visitors to post to a wall a written message about what they could do to combat the negativity.

I received a number of emails congratulating the students for an "excellent" exhibit. All school faculty, staff, and administrators were invited to the official opening of the gallery. Only a few adults showed up however, which was a disappointment to all who had worked on the exhibit. This seemed to suggest to the students that their efforts were not that valued. Although the United States has engaged in a national campaign to stop bullying and harassment in schools, we are constantly bombarded with evidence to the contrary. Any lasting change in school culture will only occur until adults begin to

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[96] See appendix A pp. 210 – 215.

model behaviors supportive of all students, including recognizing and celebrating the efforts of LGBTQ young people and their straight allies who, through organizations like Spectrum, are working to improve their school climate.

There are other factors that set Spectrum apart from AMIGOS. As I stated earlier, in both programs youth portray positive and non-cynical attitudes towards civic and political engagement[97]; and both programs provide real opportunities to engage in political/civic activities. Research has also underscored the importance of teaching about civic and political engagement and the importance of family values and family participation. Spectrum members depend on the roles that the student president and advisors play. This is a student-led club; advisors are not supposed to set the agenda. Their role is to guide, collaborate with, and support the efforts of the club members. The skills that the student president brings to the club are essential to ensure its success. Teaching about LGBT rights and providing opportunities to develop civic and political skills depend on the president's ability to engage and direct the members of the club. Members absorb these lessons in leadership and change, taking them with them when they leave the club. Without this, the club risks losing its focus and momentum, which can be a threat to its visibility. A club like Spectrum, which lacks the structure that AMIGOS has, should ensure that all members are trained to take leadership roles through modeling those leadership competencies, teaching about the value of engagement, and providing members with real responsibilities within the club.

Finally, not all Spectrum members have the support of their families. Some are aware that their families are opposed to LGBT rights and do not support or know about

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[97] With some noticeable differences for some Spectrum members.

their participation in the club. Some, like Jim, have to lie about which club he is attending on Fridays. Fortunately, there are many who have supportive families that endorse and support their participation in Spectrum.

The AMIGOS experience is very different. All members reported positive and non-cynical attitudes towards civic and political engagement. Only a few volunteers questioned the role of the U.S. in reinforcing inequalities in Latin America. However, they continued to engage in civic and political activities, and, in spite of their conflicted views, were able to perceive the U.S. role in a more positive light.

An integral part of AMIGOS is its educational component. All volunteers learn about the importance of civic and political engagement, learn about their roles, behaviors, and what is expected of them in their new communities. They have access to training and learn leadership skills. Trainers make sure that volunteers have acquired the necessary skills to be successful in their host country. In addition, the volunteers engage in real civic or political activities prior to their departure. AMIGOS has created a program that encourages youth to continue volunteering even after the initial program is over. This is, in part, due to the bonds that volunteers build with their host families and their new community.

Amigos volunteers are often recognized in their own communities. It is not unusual for a local newspaper to run an article praising the achievements of a volunteer. In addition, their families also recognize and praise their children publicly. Families are part of the process. They help volunteers raise money for the program, participate in events sponsored by AMIGOS, and volunteer with the program to prepare a

"Despedida"[98]. Some are even "on-call" during the summer to inform other parents of any situations that might occur while their children are in their host communities. Once all volunteers have returned, there is another opportunity to greet the volunteers, hear about their experiences, and celebrate their return.

AMIGOS does an excellent job engaging youth in civic and political activities. However, AMIGOS volunteers tend to be from the middle and upper classes of society. There is still a need to discover ways to engage young people from less advantaged economic tiers. Some AMIGOS' chapters are trying to create endowments that can subsidize the participation of volunteers with fewer resources[99].

In summary, AMIGOS provides volunteers with ideal opportunities to build a sense of civic and political engagement in youth. AMIGOS integrates key elements identified by current research: it provides opportunities for teaching about civic and political engagement, and provides opportunities for reflection. In addition, it incorporates real activities: students spend from six to eight weeks in a host community trying to effect positive change. Finally, their efforts are supported, recognized and praised by family members, the communities they come from, and the communities they are assisting.

Both groups, AMIGOS and Spectrum, work to make a difference in the civic life of their communities, and are developing a combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference. AMIGOS excels at achieving these goals. AMIGOS has

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[98] The "Despedida" is a party organized by AMIGOS board members and parents. It is the official see-off party. Volunteers receive their traveling tickets and other gifts before their departure. It is an opportunity for all volunteers, parents, board members, and trainers to meet, eat and celebrate their children.

[99] Currently, AMIGOS is only able to provide some volunteers with a maximum of $ 500. Not enough to cover the $3,300 family portion. In addition, volunteers are expected to raise another $3,000.

created a network that guarantees the success of its volunteers. The training they receive guarantees the transfer of valuable knowledge, skills and values. AMIGOS volunteers learn about their roles in society and how to use this knowledge to improve the lives of others and their own lives. They learn to plan and facilitate educational activities, carry out community based initiatives, work in partnerships, communicate effectively, being flexible with expectations, and many other skills that are highly valued in our society. It is this combination of training and "real life opportunities" that allows them to apply their knowledge and skills to reinforce and develop a strong sense of civic and political engagement. In addition, volunteers become part of a nationwide group that has established support groups all over the country. When Jessie first moved to New York City, she contacted the local AMIGOS chapter and was instantly embraced into their community.

Spectrum also has the potential to also build a sense of civic and political engagement in their members. However, they face challenges that have risked lessening their potential impact. For example, the club engages in "teaching" about civic and political and engagement and provides the members with opportunities to engage in real activities (Gutmann, 1987). However, they do not always receive the support and recognition of their communities (school) or families, and often face opposition to achieving their goal of equal LGBT rights.

One of the main challenges that Spectrum faces is leadership. The last two student presidents of Spectrum underwent some formal training[100] that enabled them to acquire essential tools to guide their members to bring about change in the school. However, once

[100] Gerard was trained at the local GLSEN chapter and Michelle was trained at the "Anytown Diversity Training program". Currently known as the Lead for Diversity Program.

the last student president, Michelle, left, there was only Jane willing to assume leadership of the club. Jane has not received any kind of formal training and is in need of guidance and support.

Another challenge that Spectrum faces is member commitment. Students do not consistently attend club meetings, and this has a negative impact on the goals set by the club. For AMIGOS volunteers, training is compulsory; they are only allowed to miss a couple of sessions and are required to make up any session they miss. It would be difficult to impose this kind of structure onto Spectrum. Still, the importance of attending and committing to the goals of the club should be constantly reinforced.

Finally, Spectrum efforts to effect positive change in the school should be recognized and the school community should embrace and support the club regardless of their beliefs. As educators, they have a responsibility to ensure that all students in the school are in a safe and supportive environment.

Civic Engagement and Identity

Richardson (2000) explains that LGBT youth face an important contradiction: "While they are learning about civic life and their role in it as adolescents, they are simultaneously identifying and exploring a culturally stigmatized identity." This situation clearly prevents LGBT youth from key typical developmental experiences that would prepare them for "fully engaged citizenship."

AMIGOS volunteers reported that the experience had positively informed their stance on civic engagement. Spectrum members reported similar outcomes. However, an important difference between the two groups emerged, one that needs to be further studied and tested. LGBTQ students that have not completely dealt with their sexual

identity—in other words, have not completely accepted or are still conflicted about their sexual orientation—were less inclined to report interest in engaging in civic activities. The LGBT students that had come to terms with their sexual orientation were more likely to report interest in, and engage in, civic activities. They are at times discouraged, being only too aware of the difficulties they face, but nonetheless persist in civic engagement.

Richardson described this as a contradiction. I, however, am more inclined to describe it as a tension that prevents LGBT students who are struggling with their sexuality from benefiting from the experience in the same way that the other students had. However, due to the small number of students that reported being conflicted with their sexuality, it is necessary to conduct more research with a larger sample of students to draw a more definite inference regarding LGBT youth.

Inequality, Oppression, Domination, Alienation, and Empowerment

The experiences of both groups of students permitted them to witness and question instances of inequality and oppression, though this proved less the case for AMIGOS volunteers who, when they did witness and question the sources of such inequalities, felt powerless. They either felt that they were ill equipped to investigate what they were witnessing or felt there was no support system in place to which they could turn. For some, this was a source of great frustration. Anne felt that as an outsider who was coming to "spur development," she needed to be mindful of the system. She also felt that AMIGOS should have been more instrumental in facilitating dialogue about the issues. On the other hand, Spectrum members identified mainstream society as the cause of the inequalities and oppression experienced by the LGBT community. Unlike

AMIGOS, Spectrum provides a forum for its members to discuss these issues and explore how to deal with the frustration of feeling at times powerless.

Both programs proved to be excellent venues to dispel stereotypes about others. Not all AMIGOS volunteers remembered having stereotypes about Latin Americans who, for them, represented the "other." However, they recalled that training (teaching) and actual "contact" with 'the other" helped dispel any stereotypes. Spectrum members also acknowledged the role of teaching/discourse during meetings and actual contact with LGBT youth in helping them to confront negative stereotypes. Only one of the members, Joe, still retained some stereotypes about the LGBT community, though he felt angry if those stereotypes were applied to him.

Finally, both experiences proved to be empowering for the students. AMIGOS volunteers reported becoming more self-confident and acquiring valuable leadership skills. Spectrum members also felt empowered. However, their empowerment was expressed more in personal terms. They reported that the experience allowed them to learn more about themselves and the LGBT community. Only Michelle, the former president, reported having acquired leadership skills. In fact, as the president of the club, Michelle had to prepare and manage meetings and organize different activities sponsored by Spectrum. All AMIGOS volunteers are trained to become leaders and take on leadership roles in their host communities. Spectrum members are expected to have a leader who directs the rest of the group. Clubs similar to Spectrum are beginning to

delegate responsibilities to all members, thereby facilitating the acquisition of leadership skills for all.[101]

Implications for Education

What schools can do to support LGBTQ clubs

AMIGOS has all the necessary tools to successfully train and promote civic and political engagement in the volunteers. The main drawback of AMIGOS is access to become a volunteer. Volunteers have to pay to participate, which only allows a certain group of individuals to benefit from this, as the volunteers repeatedly described, "life-changing experience." On the other hand, Spectrum has the potential to achieve the same goals as AMIGOS without members having to contribute economically. Schools can help clubs like Spectrum by supporting and collaborating with the clubs. Spectrum wants the school to be a safe environment for all students and improve the challenges that LGBT students face in the schools: bullying, harassment, lack of representation in our schools curriculum, and a safe environment for learning among others. This should not just be the goal of Spectrum but should also be the goal of the school district.

In 2010, national events[102] put pressure in districts to tackle bullying and harassment in their schools. In 2010, the school district where Spectrum is located revised the school policy on harassment, intimidation, bullying and hazing and made it available to all faculty members. In addition, the school district provided the staff with training on the effects of bullying and harassment and has scheduled a two-hour

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[101] In an informal conversation with Dr. Amy Moran, advisor to a GSA, I was told that her students share responsibilities in the club. They regularly switch roles so that the president is not the sole organizer in the club.

[102] The suicides and murder of several youth who were LGBT or perceived to be LGBT during 2010.

workshop on LGBT issues. However, they have failed to work in collaboration with Spectrum. This is not to say that the district does not support Spectrum, but they have failed to dialogue with Spectrum members to find out about their experiences in the school or whether the club has ideas that can help change the school culture.

Teachers can also play an important role in supporting Spectrum's initiatives by collaborating with Spectrum members to launch campaigns to eliminate homophobic language in the school inside and outside of the classroom, with students and adults alike. Teachers may also work to ensure that their curriculum presents positive images of LGBT people. In addition, Spectrum's annual Day of Silence might constitute a great opportunity for teachers to design and conduct a lesson that motivates students to reflect on the meaning of the event.

Finally, if the student president is lacking in the requisite leadership skills, GSA advisors need to assume a broader role in the club. Otherwise, there is a risk of losing visibility, and the club might turn into a space where the students hang out but where there is no important school cultural change agenda being discussed. GSA advisors may coach students in effective meeting planning, crafting a mission statement, goal setting—instilling a sense of responsibility that will permit students to assume greater and greater leadership responsibility.

If schools are serious about the well-being of LGBT students, they need to show support for them. Not just enacting anti-gay policies, which are important, essential and necessary, but also collaborating with teachers and students to educate all students about the importance of respecting others.

Many organizations working to advance LGBT rights in schools have focused their efforts on protecting the safety of LGBT students (Linville, 2009). Although these initiatives provide support and tolerance in the schools, they have not proved to be enough to change anti-gay attitudes in schools. Scholars are encouraging schools to change curriculum content (Kumashiro, 2001), and to have teachers discuss with students the knowledge they are presenting as well as the knowledge that has been omitted. Schools' curricula often do not include positive depictions of LGBT people or the contributions of the LGBT community to society. In addition, teachers should also examine school behavior that might reinforce a culture of heteronormativity as the only viable societal option.

AMIGOS and Spectrum

Promoting Civic and Political Engagement

I stated in the introduction of this chapter that Putnam (1995) documented a decline in American youth political and civic engagement. Scholars have attempted to find ways to boost youth participation in society, and their research has reconfirmed the importance of citizen education and service learning activities to promote a sense of civic engagement. Also stressed is the importance of opportunities to participate in real life activities (Berti, 2005; Bowes, Flanagan, & Taylor, 2001; Flanagan & Gallay, 1995; McLellan & Youniss, 2003; Sapiro, 2004, Sinatra, Beck, & Mckeown, 1992; Torney-Purta, 2002). Barber (1992) emphasizes that community service is one of the most important ways, often the most important, to reverse a tendency toward civic and political disengagement. After school programs like AMIGOS and Spectrum may also play an

important role. AMIGOS has an infrastructure of support that ensures that volunteers are successful, become leaders in their host communities, and that they are able to bring those skills back to their own country. AMIGOS volunteers learn to have a voice in their communities by collaborating with the community rather than imposing their views on the community (Freire, 1970). This would not be possible without the right training. Unfortunately, the fact that a student has to pay to participate places limitations on who is able to participate in and benefit from the program.

Spectrum can provide a similar space for community activism. However, it does not have the same supportive infrastructure as AMIGOS, and depends heavily on the roles that advisors and student presidents play. School support, mutual collaboration and funding could improve Spectrum's opportunities to train student presidents and other members to become effective leaders in their schools and communities.

In addition, schools need to sanction after school programs that focus on social issues, community improvement, and the promotion of civic and political engagement. This can help create opportunities for students to participate in activities aimed at benefiting others. These after schools programs may become environments where students discover their own voice, collaborate with each other, play an integral part in generating the necessary knowledge to advance collective change agendas, and enhance civic and political engagement.

Promoting Democracy and Social Justice

Michelli and Keiser (2005) question the commitment of schools to issues of "democracy, social justice, and critical thinking" (Michelli & Keiser, 2005, p. xvii) in times of pervasive quantitative methods of assessing teachers and students alike. Their

work, along with that of their colleagues, provides conceptual grounding, examples of programs, and strategies to implement and foster democracy and social justice with learning, so that teachers and teacher-educators can best prepare students to cope with today's political climate. Michelli & Keiser (2005), and Michelli (2010) ground their work in four historical, enduring purposes of public education:

1. Preparing students for critical democratic participation
2. Providing access to knowledge and fostering critical thinking
3. Helping students have full access to life's chances
4. Preparing students to lead rich and rewarding personal lives

(Michelli, 2010)

Programs like AMIGOS and GSAs like Spectrum can play an important role in achieving the objectives cited above. The AMIGOS' training is founded on a curriculum that has been developed to support volunteers and ensure their success in their host communities. Volunteers learn democratic practices, engage in practices that foster critical thinking, and potentially bring awareness of issues of social justice. However, it is the trainer's responsibility to emphasize these democratic practices.

In GSAs, teachers and students can share power and authority in meetings. Teachers allow students to decide how they would like to run their club. Shor (1996) comments extensively on the benefits of sharing power and authority with students. He encourages teachers to move away from authoritarian approaches and to embrace a more democratic teacher-subject approach. He also addresses the importance of negotiating with students and permitting them to participate in their own education. Shor recognizes that one of the first things that a transformative pedagogy must do is resolve the teacher-student contradiction. This can be achieved through the sharing of power and decision

with students. AMIGOS and Spectrum provide the trainer/teacher with the opportunity to include a pedagogy that can transform the lives of students/volunteers.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings and analysis in this study suggest several directions for future research, including further investigation of clubs like Spectrum and service learning programs like AMIGOS.

Data from Spectrum suggests two principal areas for future research. First, there needs to be more research on identity formation and the impact that questioning identity has on students' sense of civic and political engagement when participating in groups that publicly engage in promoting and supporting LGBTQ societal rights. Conversations with participants suggested that the LGBTQ experience was more challenging in middle schools. There are signs that research is beginning to focus on this community, though more is needed.[103]

As I explained earlier in this chapter, LGBTQ students who had come to terms with their sexual orientation were more likely to engage in civic activities, while those who were still conflicted about their sexual orientation were less likely to do so. The former, though at times discouraged due to their awareness of the difficulties with which they were faced, persisted nonetheless. This suggests that future study is warranted of a larger pool of questioning /undecided students to determine the impact that participation in a GSA has on their civic and political engagement.

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[103] The 2009 National School Climate Survey surveyed both middle and high school students.

During our conversations, several students indicated that their experiences in the middle school were more painful. They reported being bullied, taunted, and harassed because of being perceived as LGBT. These students also declared that there was no support system to which they could turn for guidance (e.g., identifying faculty or staff allies, or locating a GSA). Therefore, it is imperative to conduct research that identifies the challenges that LGBTQ students face in middle school, and to advance strategies for supporting LGBTQ students.

Second, there is a need for research that explores the roles that different advisors play in different GSAs, and methodologies for positioning strategies that may best help student members. Although GSA's are student-led clubs, advisors need to make sure that they collaborate with all the members of the GSA to ensure that each reaps the benefits of membership.

Regarding AMIGOS, research might potentially target field experiences and the implementation of support groups to help volunteers process and address social issues encountered in host countries, along with the discomfort they felt when faced with these issues during their field experiences. This kind of ethnographic work would also allow the researcher to record and contrast the views of host communities and volunteers.

Finally, research focused on groups similar to AMIGOS and Spectrum might establish whether or not there are commonalities for an emerging sense of civic and political engagement—commonalities that might lead to valid inferences regarding this development independent of the environment in which it occurs.

Appendix A

Core Curriculum: Section 1

AMIGOS 101 Activities

Contents

AMIGOS Chapter Training Curriculum

Supplemental Training Activities

Table of Contents

Envisioning Sustainable Development
An Example of Community Development
Sustainable Community Development Scenarios
Introduction to Community Development
Mission Possible
ABCD Experienced
A Success Story
Community Assessment Activity I
Community Assessment Activity II
Community Assessment Activity III
Community Assessment Activity IV

4-Cultural Understanding

Tools for TDs: Characteristics of an Effective Diversity Facilitator
Intro to Intercultural Skills
Building Bridges with Common Ground
Insiders & Outsiders
Values Voting
Global Conference
Cultural Scenarios
Barnga
Brief Encounters
Jogging Alone
Stereotypes in the Media
Examining Home and Host Cultures
Cultural Theatre Sports
Cultural Adjustment
Deviancy and Labeling
A Letter from Peru
The Village
Thoughts on the Real AMIGOS Experience

5-Preparing for Educational Activities or "Charlas"

Introduction to Charlas/Palestras
Designing a Learning Activity
Sample Lesson Plan
Classroom Management
Project Packet Presentations (PPPs)
Multiple Intelligences Jigsaw
2 Takes on a Gardenia
Salsa For Beginners
Handouts for Volunteers on Facilitation

6-Health and Safety

Health and Safety Scenarios
What Does it Mean to be Healthy?

Dental Health and Nutrition
Oral Rehydration Therapy
Bodily Functions Brainstorm

7-Games, Icebreakers and Energizers

Energizers, Icebreakers and Team Building Initiatives: Why Do Them?
Tips for Facilitating Icebreakers, Energizers and Teambuilding Activities
Key Elements for Quality Icebreakers and Team Building Exercises
Getting to Know You – Name Games & Icebreakers – **(12 ACTIVITIES)**
Getting to Know You – Deeper, Beginning to Build Trust - **(11 ACTIVITIES)**
Just Fun & Games - **(21 ACTIVITIES)**
Group Process Activities - **(5 ACTIVITIES)**
Closers - **(5 ACTIVITIES)**

8-Teambuilding

Survival Case Study
Outdoor Leadership Exercises
Intro to Team-Building Activities
Beginning Trust Level Activities - **(10 ACTIVITIES)**
Medium Trust Level Activities - **(10 ACTIVITIES)**
Advanced Trust Level Activities - **(8 ACTIVITIES)**

9-Host Country and Project Area Information

Host Country Presentations
Project Area Reports
Country Jeopardies
Packing Skit
Going through Customs
Suggested Activities from TD Workshop

10-Program Information

Post Community Meeting Assessment
Project Cultural Scenarios
Introduction to Youth Groups
Envisioning a Successful Youth Group Project
Youth as Resources
Teaching about HIV and AIDS
Health Songs
What to do when there is nothing to do

11-Language Practice

AMIGOS Basics in Spanish
¿Que es AMIGOS/O que é AMIGOS?
Busca Palabras
Cuerpo a Cuerpo

Caras y Caras – Spanish Charades
Jeopardía
Everyday Situations
More Everyday Situations
Teléfono
Spanish Scavenger Hunt
Trabalenguas (Tongue Twisters)
Vocabulary lists and various other Spanish resources
AMIGOS Spanish Trainer Profile
Sample Training Profile
Communications Skills Program
Vocabulario de Regionalismos

12-Training Evaluation

Four Corners
Number Line
Tree of Life
Reflection Pond

13-Service Learning

Community Service Work
Service Learning Journaling

Organization of a Lifetime

Time: 60 minutes

Volunteer Training Objectives

- **1 – Volunteers will articulate the AMIGOS' mission, history, and organizational structure in English and Spanish/Portuguese.**
- **2– Volunteers will demonstrate accountability for their role as a volunteer and positive representative of the AMIGOS programs**.
- **4– Volunteers will identify and practice using resources for conducting technical aspects of AMIGOS programs (Program Guides, Volunteer Country Materials, useful individuals or groups in communities as appropriate).**
- **12– Volunteers will uphold the Standards of Conduct as a crucial part of youth leadership development, accountability to all AMIGOS stakeholders and the ongoing AMIGOS legacy.**
- **15– Volunteers will demonstrate flexibility in personal expectations and understanding of the diversity within AMIGOS experiences and communities.**

Materials

- Volunteer Training Handbook
- PowerPoint Presentation (on training CD)
- Jeopardy Questions and Answers (on training CD)
- Handouts: To Hell With Good Intentions

Facilitator Points

- Facilitate this activity as an introduction to AMIGOS – so as one of the first things on your calendar. (You can hold part 2 if you feel your Vols need more time to become familiar to AMIGOS before delving into deeper reasons/questions about volunteering abroad. Then include it after the first big retreat or about 1/3 of the way through the year.). You are in the process of joining the AMIGOS family, which involves a lifetime of support and opportunities.
- This is an organizational overview from Amigos de las Americas International Office.
- We will then do an activity examining why each of us are doing AMIGOS

Methodology

This Activity can be facilitated as one unit or on two separate occasions, depending on your group's dynamic. The first section gives Volunteers a basic understanding of AMIGOS, its history and basic structure. It includes several different options as to how the material can be covered. The second section gives Volunteers a forum to reflect on what their AMIGOS participation truly means.

Part 1- An introduction to AMIGOS.

OPTION 1 – Jeopardy

Ask Volunteers to read **Chapters 1 and 2** of the Volunteer Training Handbook prior to this training activity.

1. Print out jeopardy board with question themes and points, or, recreate the board on a larger sheet of poster paper so that all participants can see.

2. If possible ask one or two training team members to help facilitate by keeping track of the score and making sure that all participants have a chance to answer a question. Go over any details and rules with training team prior to the game so that the activity will smoothly (How to divide teams, time limits for answering questions, when teams can discuss etc…)
3. Each question has one corresponding answer, or a list of possible responses. Make sure to cover any additional responses or explanations provided on the answer sheet.

<u>OPTION 2 – Small groups</u>
For some groups of Volunteers, group size, time restraints or other variables may limit the possibility of a complete game of Jeopardy. In these cases you may consider just dividing the group into smaller teams of 2 or 3. Pass out a handout with all the questions listed and ask Volunteers to find the answers in their small groups. You have the option of allowing them to use their Volunteer Training Handbooks as a resource.

<u>Option 3 – PowerPoint</u>
All of the information covered in the first two options can be found in the Organization of a Lifetime PowerPoint. Present the PowerPoint using the notes sections to elaborate on the slides that are being projected.

If you don't have access to a Laptop/Projector, print out the PowerPoint (in notes style format). As an opening for the discussion, have the Volunteers turn to Chapter 1 in the Volunteer Training Handbook and follow along. Present the information from the PowerPoint (info is highlights from the VTH)

- Review any chapter specifics that you would like to add.
- Answer any questions the volunteers may have about the organization and/or various roles.

<u>Part 2- To Hell With Good Intentions</u>

- Transition from history to future of AMIGOS by asking, Vols – "Why did you get involved in AMIGOS?"

- Pass out copies of "To Hell With Good Intentions"
    - **Setting the Tone:** It is important to begin this activity with the proper tone. The content of the article can illicit strong feelings. During the discussion the facilitator should be very aware of each Volunteers' reaction to the Illich's speech. It is also important to note to Volunteers during the discussion, the year in which the speech was given and the changes in developmental theory that have occurred since. AMIGOS does not include this activity to upset Volunteers, rather, it is included to provide perspective.

- **Introduction**: Most of the time we give Volunteers pro-AMIGOS information. This activity presents a very different perspective on the type of work AMIGOS does; going abroad to work within other cultures is not always seen as a positive thing nor are the results always beneficial for the host community. Illich presents a very extreme opinion here that really prompts us to think about what we're doing in AMIGOS.
- Read "To Hell with Good Intentions."

- **Discussion questions**:
  - What do you think about what he has to say about people who volunteer in Latin America?
  - His perspective is extreme. What could have led him to think this way?
  - Illich suggests that service is *inherently* an imposition of a server's lifestyle and privilege on those served. Is he right? Why or why not?
  - Do you agree or disagree with Illich that "All you will do in a Mexican village is create disorder."?
  - What is your reaction to Illich's assertion that "There is no way for you to really meet with the underprivileged, since there is no common ground whatsoever for you to meet on."?
  - Illich's argument is clearly aimed at those crossing borders to do international service. Does his argument apply to national service?
  - Does your background always affect your service activities? How or how not, and why or why not?
  - Illich suggests that if you want to work among the poor, you should do it in your own country. What is your reaction to his stance?
  - What can you do this summer to minimize this type of reaction to your work with AMIGOS?

- **Debriefing**: This is an activity that can bring up a lot of strong feelings for Volunteers. Some may feel frustrated and wonder why they are doing AMIGOS. Others may be angry with the perceived naiveté of their peers. Others may be confused.
    - It is important to recognize these feelings and assure Volunteers that these are normal.
    - Check in with the Volunteers at the end of the activity to have them say what they are feeling.
    - Discuss what they think of Illich's viewpoint.
    - Ask whether this changes their expectations/view of the upcoming summer.

Taking it Beyond the Core Curriculum

1. Invite former AMIGOS Volunteers who have been involved in AMIGOS programs in different capacities. Often, many chapter board members have served the program in a variety of ways.
2. Ask them to share what their involvement roles have been and why they are drawn to the program.

Volunteer Training Objectives

- 1 – Volunteers will articulate the AMIGOS' mission, history, and organizational structure in English and Spanish/Portuguese.
- 2– Volunteers will demonstrate accountability for their role as a volunteer and positive representative of the AMIGOS programs.
- 3- Volunteers will explain the AMIGOS Health and Safety protocols and commit to following them (CALM Plan, Standards of Conduct, Weekly Self-Assessments and proactive personal care).

Community Development

- 4– Volunteers will identify and practice using resources for conducting technical aspects of AMIGOS programs (Program Guides, Volunteer Country Materials, useful individuals or groups in communities as appropriate).
- 5– Volunteers will practice utilizing the positive community development methodologies in preparation for the summer projects.
- 6– Volunteers will explain the purpose of a community based initiative and the process needed to ensure success.
- 7- Volunteers will articulate their primary role as partner & catalyst for positive change in working with community members.

Youth Leadership

- 8– Volunteers will communicate constructively and positively on both individual and group levels in English and Spanish/Portuguese.
- 9 – Volunteers will practice effective teambuilding techniques in preparation for working with community members, including Latin American and US peers.
- 10 – Volunteers will demonstrate creative time-management and problem solving skills.
- 11 – Volunteers will apply innovative lesson planning and classroom management techniques using a variety of multiple intelligences.
- 12– Volunteers will uphold the Standards of Conduct as a crucial part of youth leadership development, accountability to all AMIGOS stakeholders and the ongoing AMIGOS legacy.

Multicultural Understanding

- 13- Volunteers will demonstrate cultural sensitivity and multicultural awareness in preparation for positively integrating into the host community.
- 14- Volunteers will understand the importance of incorporating cultural norms to increase relevancy and sustainability of their projects.
- 15– Volunteers will demonstrate flexibility in personal expectations and understanding of the diversity within AMIGOS experiences and communities.

AMIGOS 2009 Volunteer Full Report: New York City Chapter

AMIGOS 2009 Volunteer Reported Experiences, by Chapter (Sep 16 bab)

Not all AMIGOS answered the survey, or all questions.
These are the questions related to the Chapter Experience
Chapters with fewer than 5 respondents are not published to preserve anonymity

NYC Chapter			All AMIGOS in 2009					
Experience Reported:		Excellent or Good		Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very Poor
Overall Rating of Training received PRIOR to travel	(# of vols)	5	67%	2	3	4	3	0
	(% of vols)	42%		16.7%	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%	0.0%
Feeling of Preparedness for Role and Responsibilities		10	62%	2	8	1	1	0
		83%		16.7%	66.7%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%
Training on Cross-Cultural Understanding		9	79%	2	7	2	0	0
		82%		18.2%	63.6%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Training on AMIGOS Health & Safety		12	87%	6	6	0	0	0
		100%		50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Inclusion of Language Training		6	43%	0	6	3	3	0
		50%		0.0%	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%
Rate AMIGOS' response to your health and safety		9	91%	4	5	1	0	0
		90%		40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Would you recommend AMIGOS to your peers?		12	95%	7	5	0	0	0
		100%		58.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		Strongly, or Would Recommend		Strongly Recommend	Would Recommend	Uncertain	Probably Not	Recommend Against
How would you rate your Overall AMIGOS Experience?		12	96%	7	5	0	0	0
		100%		58.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		Excellent or Good		Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very Poor

Title 20>Chapter 52> Subchapter VIII> § 4071§ 4071. Denial of Equal Access Prohibited

(a) Restriction of limited open forum on basis of religious, political, philosophical, or other speech content prohibited

It shall be unlawful for any public secondary school which receives Federal financial assistance and which has a limited open forum to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting within that limited open forum on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings.

(b) "Limited open forum" defined

A public secondary school has a limited open forum whenever such school grants an offering to or opportunity for one or more noncurriculum related student groups to meet on school premises during noninstructional time.

(c) Fair opportunity criteria

Schools shall be deemed to offer a fair opportunity to students who wish to conduct a meeting within its limited open forum if such school uniformly provides that—

(1) the meeting is voluntary and student-initiated;

(2) there is no sponsorship of the meeting by the school, the government, or its agents or employees;

(3) employees or agents of the school or government are present at religious meetings only in a nonparticipatory capacity;

(4) the meeting does not materially and substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of educational activities within the school; and

(5) nonschool persons may not direct, conduct, control, or regularly attend activities of student groups.

(d) Construction of subchapter with respect to certain rights

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to authorize the United States or any State or political subdivision thereof—

(1) to influence the form or content of any prayer or other religious activity;

(2) to require any person to participate in prayer or other religious activity;

(3) to expend public funds beyond the incidental cost of providing the space for student-initiated meetings;

(4) to compel any school agent or employee to attend a school meeting if the content of the speech at the meeting is contrary to the beliefs of the agent or employee;

(5) to sanction meetings that are otherwise unlawful;
(6) to limit the rights of groups of students which are not of a specified numerical size; or
(7) to abridge the constitutional rights of any person.

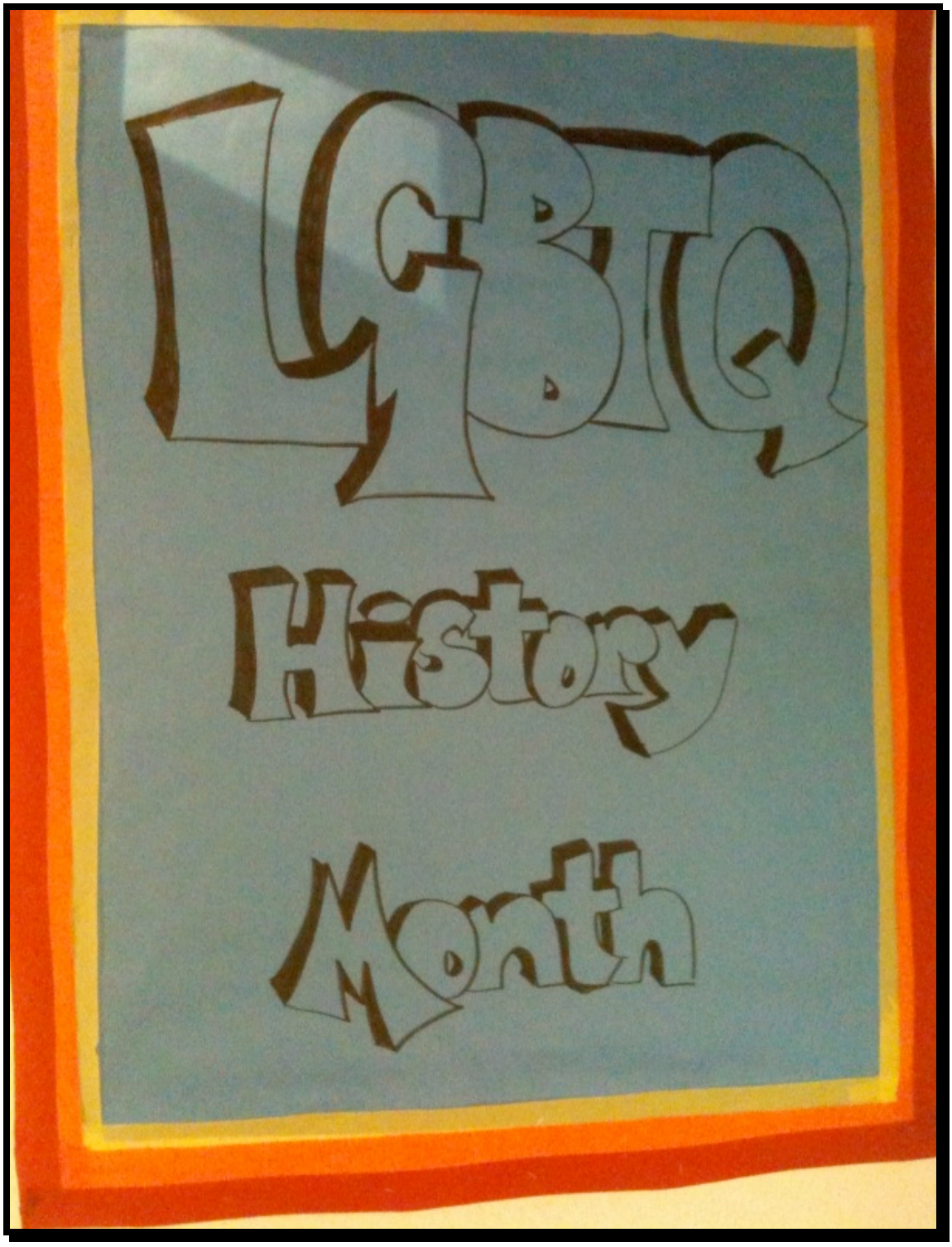
(e) Federal financial assistance to schools unaffected

Notwithstanding the availability of any other remedy under the Constitution or the laws of the United States, nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to authorize the United States to deny or withhold Federal financial assistance to any school.

(f) Authority of schools with respect to order, discipline, well-being, and attendance concerns

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to limit the authority of the school, its agents or employees, to maintain order and discipline on school premises, to protect the well-being of students and faculty, and to assure that attendance of students at meetings is voluntary.

Exhibit Pictures



Picture 1

Picture 2

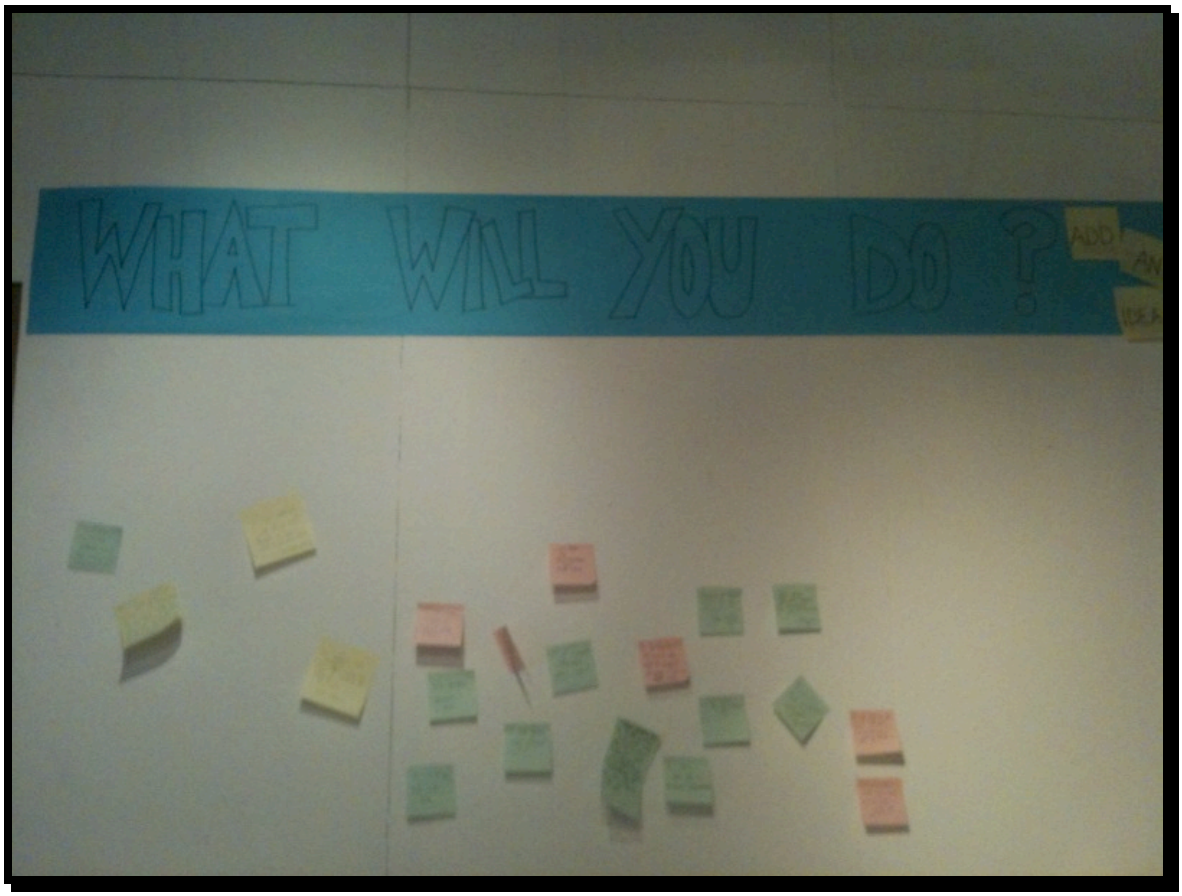

The Frightening Facts
Only we can minimize these statistics.
The Trevor Lifeline
866-488-7386
"Homophobia is like racism
and
anti-Semitism
and other forms of
bigotry
in that it seeks to dehumanize a large group of people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood. This sets the stage for further repression and violence that spread all too easily to victimize the next minority group."
-Coretta Scott King

Picture 3

Picture 4


SPECTRUM
High School's G.S.A.
"Human rights
are
gay rights
and
gay rights
are
human rights"

Picture 5



Picture 6

Appendix B

GSA (Spectrum) – Semi-structured Interview

1. **What made you decide to join the GSA?**
2. **How long have you been a member? Do you plan to continue being a member?**
3. **How did you know the school had a GSA?**
4. **What is your race, ethnicity, and age?**
5. **What is your sexual identity?**
6. **Are you Religious?**
7. **Did your religious beliefs play a part on joining GSA?**
8. **How important are: SOCIAL JUSTICE - CIVIC PARTICIPATION -POLITICAL PARTICIPATION. Could you be specific? Provide some examples?**
9. **Has the GSA impacted how you view Social Justice - Civic/Political participation?**
10. **How has the GSA Impacted you?**
11. **Did you have any preconceived ideas about how gays, lesbians or transgender people are?**
12. **Do you view the LGBTQ community in terms of inequality, oppression, domination, and alienation?**
13. **Has the GSA been an empowering experience for you? In which ways?**
14. **Do you think the GSA has any kind of positive/negative impact on your school? Community?**
15. **What are the things you remember most about the club?**
16. **Do you think it would have been different had you not know anybody who was gay?**
17. **Has the club met your needs?**

Spectrum – GSA Survey

1. SPECTRUM - GSA Survey

1. Have you previously attended a GSA meeting?

☐ Yes.

☐ No.

2. If yes, how long have you been a member? Describe your experience to date as a member?

3. If no. What made you decide to attend for the first time?

4. What are your expectations? How do you think that membership to this club can help you?

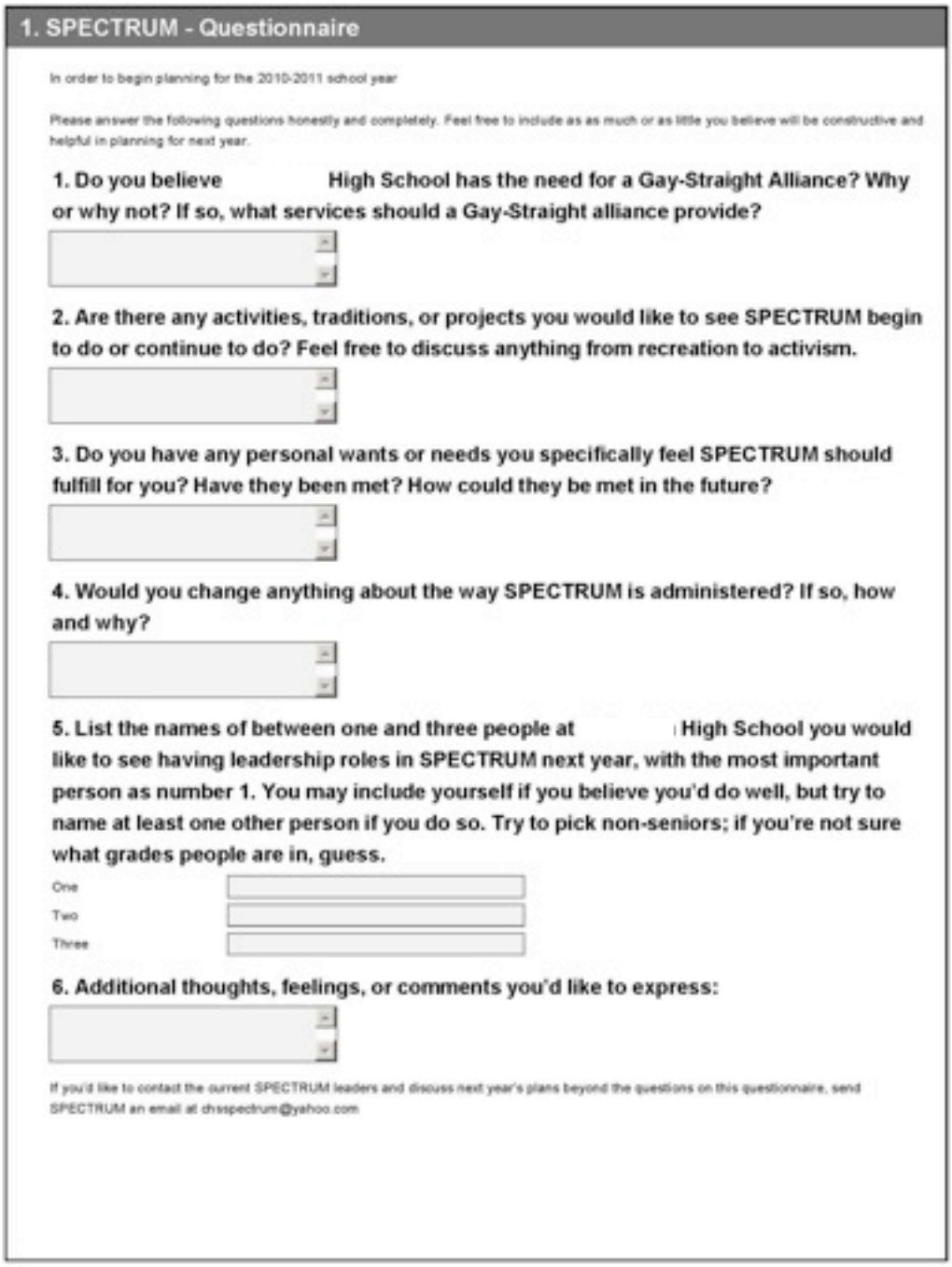
5. If you have previously attended a GSA meeting, what were your expectations when you first joined the club? Have they been met? If so, how? Explain.

6. What would you like to see happening in your club?

7. In your opinion, what can be done to improve spectrum? If anything

8. Are you planning to continue attending GSA meetings? Explain either way.

Spectrum - Questionnaire



1. SPECTRUM - Questionnaire

In order to begin planning for the 2010-2011 school year

Please answer the following questions honestly and completely. Feel free to include as as much or as little you believe will be constructive and helpful in planning for next year.

1. Do you believe High School has the need for a Gay-Straight Alliance? Why or why not? If so, what services should a Gay-Straight alliance provide?

2. Are there any activities, traditions, or projects you would like to see SPECTRUM begin to do or continue to do? Feel free to discuss anything from recreation to activism.

3. Do you have any personal wants or needs you specifically feel SPECTRUM should fulfill for you? Have they been met? How could they be met in the future?

4. Would you change anything about the way SPECTRUM is administered? If so, how and why?

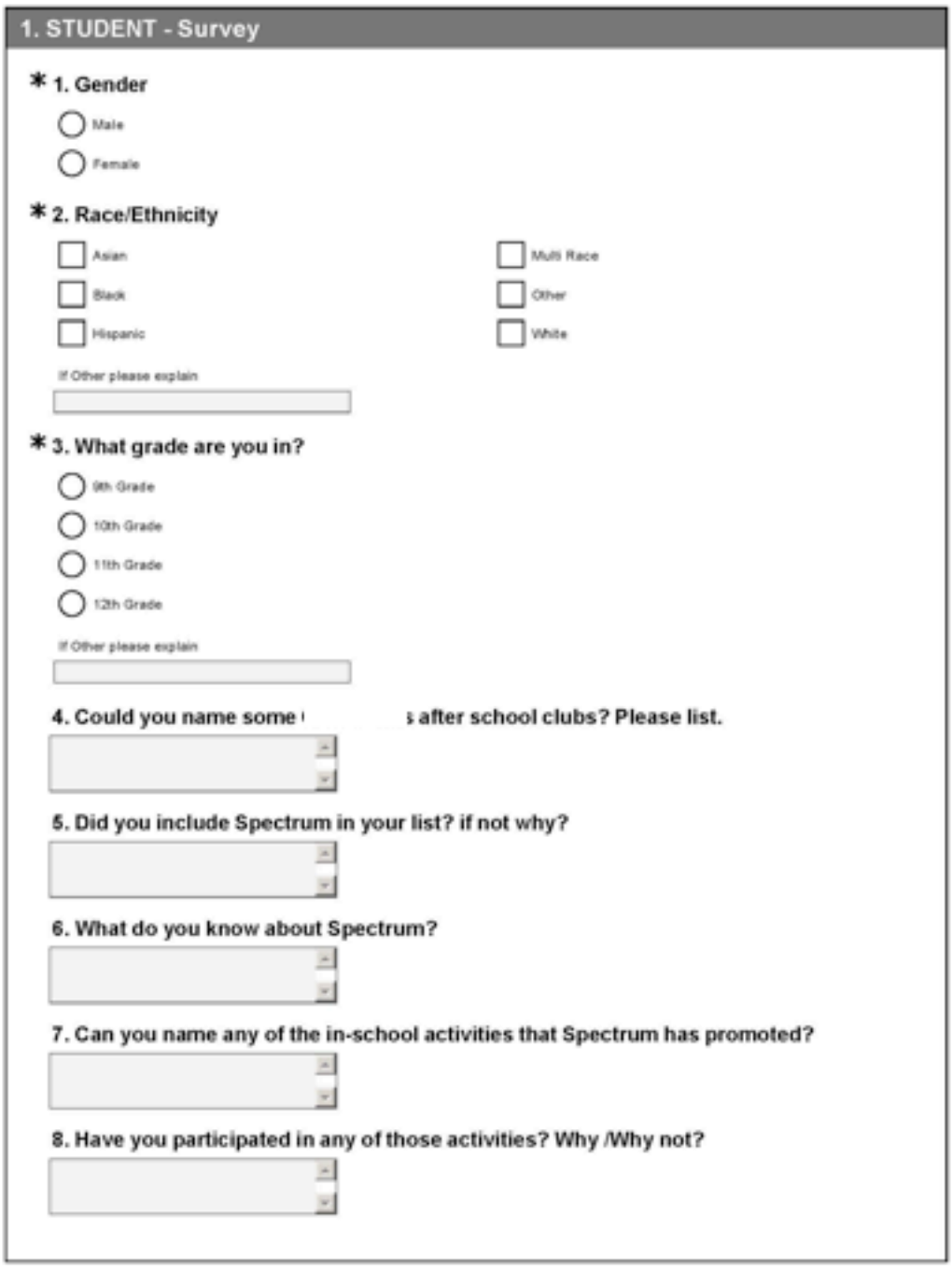
5. List the names of between one and three people at High School you would like to see having leadership roles in SPECTRUM next year, with the most important person as number 1. You may include yourself if you believe you'd do well, but try to name at least one other person if you do so. Try to pick non-seniors; if you're not sure what grades people are in, guess.

One
Two
Three

6. Additional thoughts, feelings, or comments you'd like to express:

If you'd like to contact the current SPECTRUM leaders and discuss next year's plans beyond the questions on this questionnaire, send SPECTRUM an email at chsspectrum@yahoo.com

Student Survey



1. STUDENT - Survey

* 1. Gender

- Male
- Female

* 2. Race/Ethnicity

- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- Multi Race
- Other
- White

If Other please explain

* 3. What grade are you in?

- 9th Grade
- 10th Grade
- 11th Grade
- 12th Grade

If Other please explain

4. Could you name some s after school clubs? Please list.

5. Did you include Spectrum in your list? if not why?

6. What do you know about Spectrum?

7. Can you name any of the in-school activities that Spectrum has promoted?

8. Have you participated in any of those activities? Why /Why not?

Student Survey p. 2

9. Can you describe the impact that any of those activities has had on you? Could you provide details?

2. SECTION 2

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

1. How often do you hear the expression "That's so gay," or "you're so gay" in school?

- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

2. How often have you heard other homophobic remarks used in school (such as "faggot," "dyke," "queer," etc.)?

- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

3. How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from other students?

- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

4. Would you say that homophobic remarks are made by:

- ◯ Most of the students
- ◯ Some of the students
- ◯ A few of the students
- ◯ None of the students

Student Survey p. 3

5. How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from teachers or school staff?

- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

6. How often do you hear homophobic remarks in:

	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Classes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hallways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bathrooms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Locker Rooms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Buses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Athletic Field/Gym	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schoolyard or School Grounds	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cafeteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Loft	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. When homophobic remarks are made, how often do you intervene?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Most of the time
- ◯ Some of the time
- ◯ Never

8. When you hear homophobic remarks, how often does another student intervene?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Most of the time
- ◯ Some of the time
- ◯ Never

Student Survey p.4

9. When you hear homophobic remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Most of the time
- ◯ Some of the time
- ◯ Never

10. When homophobic remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Most of the time
- ◯ Some of the time
- ◯ Never

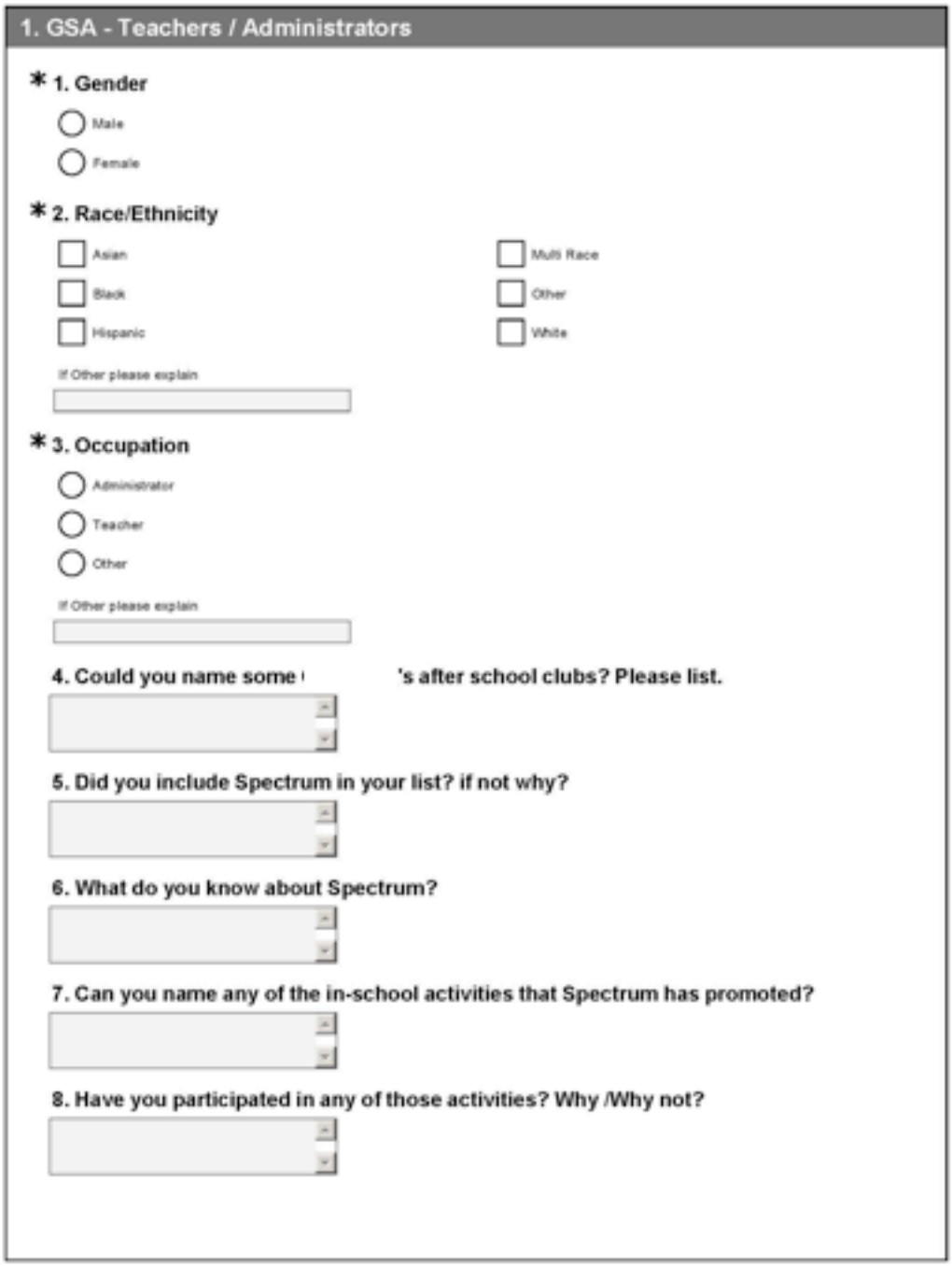
3. Section 3 - Personal Characteristics

1. Below is a list of terms that people often use to describe their sexuality or sexual orientation. Please check all those terms that apply to you.

- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Straight/ Heterosexual
- ☐ Questioning

If none of these terms apply to you, please tell us how you describe your sexuality or sexual orientation:

GSA Survey – Teachers / Administrators / Staff



1. GSA - Teachers / Administrators

* 1. Gender

- Male
- Female

* 2. Race/Ethnicity

- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- Multi Race
- Other
- White

If Other please explain

* 3. Occupation

- Administrator
- Teacher
- Other

If Other please explain

4. Could you name some 's after school clubs? Please list.

5. Did you include Spectrum in your list? if not why?

6. What do you know about Spectrum?

7. Can you name any of the in-school activities that Spectrum has promoted?

8. Have you participated in any of those activities? Why /Why not?

GSA Survey – Teachers / Administrators / Staff p. 2

9. Can you describe the impact that any of those activities has had on you? Could you provide details?

2. SECTION 2

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

1. How often do you hear the expression "That's so gay," or "you're so gay" in school?

- ◯ Frequently
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- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

2. How often have you heard other homophobic remarks used in school (such as "faggot," "dyke," "queer," etc.)?

- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

3. How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from students?

- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

4. Would you say that homophobic remarks are made by:

- ◯ Most of the students
- ◯ Some of the students
- ◯ A few of the students
- ◯ None of the students

GSA Survey – Teachers / Administrators / Staff p. 3

5. How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from other teachers or school staff?

- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

6. When homophobic remarks are made by students, how often do you intervene?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Most of the time
- ◯ Some of the time
- ◯ Never

7. When homophobic remarks are made by other teachers or school staff, how often do you intervene?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Most of the time
- ◯ Some of the time
- ◯ Never

AMIGOS – Semi-structured Interview

1. **What made you decide to join Amigos?**
2. **What is your age, race, and ethnicity?**
3. **Are you Religious?**
4. **Do your religious beliefs play any part on your decision to join Amigos?**
5. **How important are for you: social justice, civic participation, and political participation? Can you give me some examples? Can you be specific?**
6. **Do you recall what your ideas were on these topics before you did Amigos?**
7. **Do you believe that Amigos has impacted the way you feel about them now? Positively or negatively? Can you give some examples?**
8. **Where did you travel? Was it the first time? Have you been to an underpriviledged country before? If so, where? Why did you travel there?**
9. **Did you have any preconceived ideas about the people there? If so, how did this experience change or not these ideas?**
10. **While you were in your destination; did you view or thought about these people in terms of inequality, oppression, domination, or alienation? Can you describe this in detail?**
11. **Was this an empowering experience for you? In what ways?**
12. **Do you think you were able to empower the community you were in, and in what ways?**
13. **Do you plan to continue involved in these types of activities? How?**
14. **How do you think that Amigos impacted you?**
15. **What are the things you remember most?**

AMIGOS – Pre-departure Survey

1. AMIGOS - Pre-Departure

1. Check one. I'm a volunteer for the summer of 2010

☐ Yes.

☐ No.

2. What improvements could the NYC Chapter have made in preparing you?

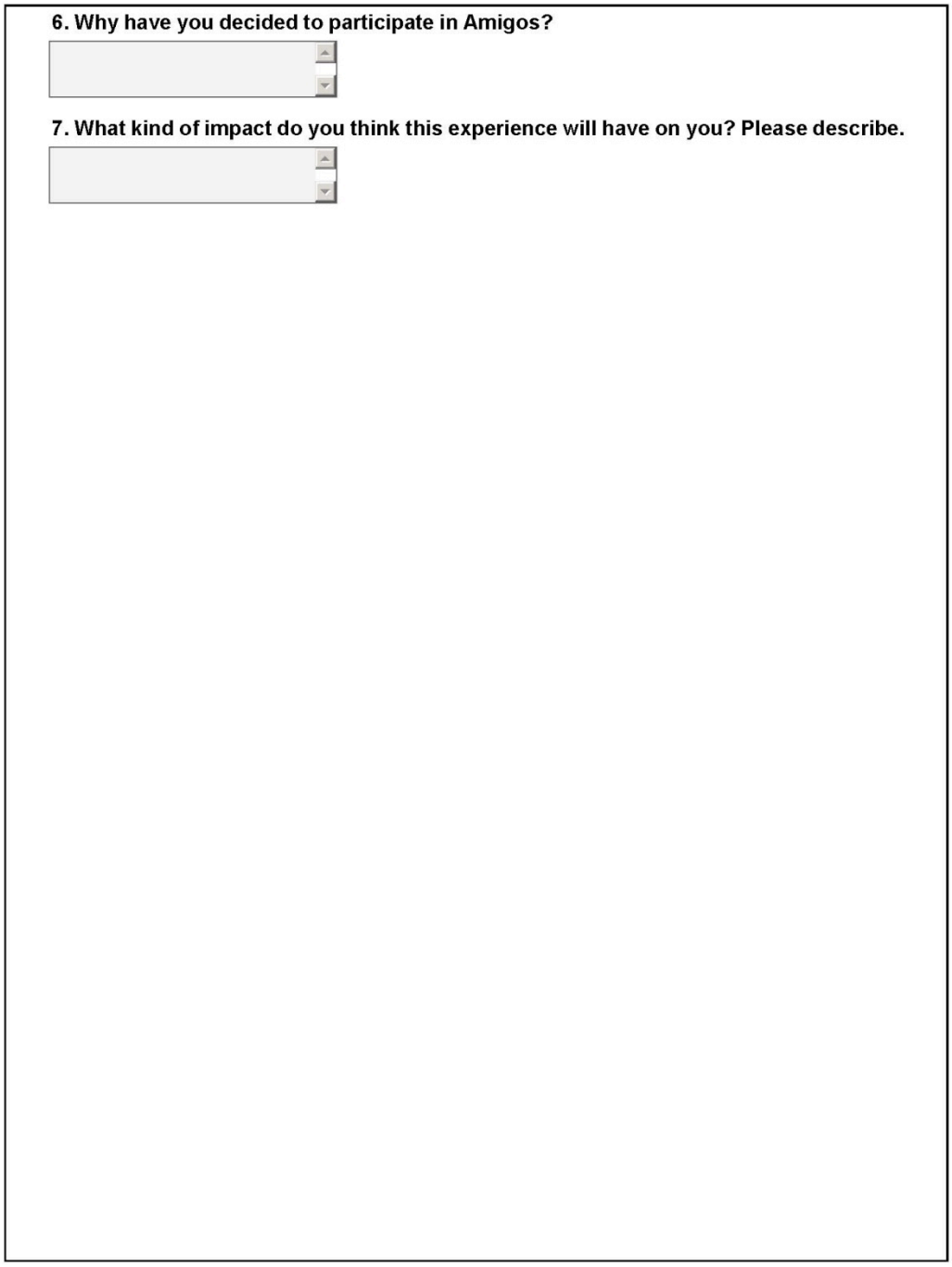
3. What could you have done to improve your own preparation?

4. How well prepared do you think you are to assume the following roles during the summer? Check the boxes.

	Well prepared.	Prepared.	Somewhat prepared.	Unprepared
Plan and facilitate educational activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Carry out community based initiative with community members.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work in partnership with youth counterparts community members.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Explain health and safety protocols.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communicate effectively with your host family and community.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand and appreciate the multicultural aspects of being an AMIGO.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Balance being flexible with expectations and taking initiative in AMIGOS projects.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Manage classrooms / provide innovative lesson planning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Manage time creatively / solve problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Uphold Standards of Conduct.	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. How do you think you will adjust to your community? Can you think of anything that would have helped better prepare you for living and working in Latin America?

AMIGOS – Pre-departure Survey p. 2



AMIGOS – Past Volunteers Survey

1. AMIGOS - Past Volunteers

1. I was an Amigos volunteer.

☐ Yes.

☐ No.

2. Did you volunteer more than once? How many times and why?

3. What improvements could the Chapter that trained you have made in preparing you?

4. What could you have done to improve your own preparation?

5. How well prepared were you to assume the following roles during your summer? Check the boxes.

	Well prepared.	Prepared.	Somewhat prepared.	Unprepared
Plan and facilitate educational activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Carry out community based initiative with community members.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work in partnership with youth counterparts community members.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Explain health and safety protocols.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communicate effectively with your host family and community.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand and appreciate the multicultural aspects of being an AMIGO.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Balance being flexible with expectations and taking initiative in AMIGOS projects.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Manage classrooms / provide innovative lesson planning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Manage time creatively / solve problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Uphold Standards of Conduct.	☐	☐	☐	☐

AMIGOS – Past Volunteers Survey p. 2

6. How prepared were you to use the following resources? Did you have ample opportunities to learn about these materials in chapter training prior to your summer with AMIGOS? Check your answers.

	Well prepared.	Prepared.	Somewhat prepared.	Unprepared.
Volunteer Handbook.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Volunteer Country Materials (project specific info from your PD available online).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program Guide and the Spanish Program Guide (red and yellow, respectively).	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. How did you adjust to your community? Can you think of anything that would have helped better prepare you for living and working in Latin America?

8. Describe your project. How engaged was the community in the planning, implementing and evaluation of AMIGOS project and CBI? What do you think made the project a worthwhile and sustainable change?

9. Why did you decide to participate in Amigos?

10. What kind of impact do you think this experience had on you? Please describe.

11. How has your experience with Amigos impacted your present life? What situations in your present life are a result of your participation with Amigos?

12. How important are for you Social justice, civic participation, and political participation?

13. Did you participation in Amigos shape how you think about those issues? If so, could you describe how?

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