JSSER
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Journal of Social Studies Education Research
Sosyal Bilgiler Eğitimi Araştırmaları Dergisi

2019:10 (1), 1-37

Preparing Urban Youth to Live-up to their Civic Promise? Evaluating Youth Positionality of Civic Engagement Using an Arts-Based Instrument

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Abstract

Additional research is needed on ways in which urban youth report their civic engagement. Existing research indicates that federal legislation has resulted in reduced instructional time and resources in social studies and civic education in many states, which has led to a civic education opportunity gap that resonates through many urban communities (Kahne, 2008; Maguire, 2007). This intrinsic case study explored how third through seventh-grade urban youth (*N*=544) positioned civic engagement in a constructed "significant circle," an employed arts-based data collection instrument. Findings indicated that 3% of the students included at least one idea related to civic engagement and responsibility in their circle, and less than 1% of the students demonstrated balance across three program goals that included civic engagement, academic success, and leading a healthy lifestyle.

Key words: Arts-based instrument, methodology, civic education, identity, urban, culturally relevant

Introduction

At the heart of social studies research is gaining new knowledge into policies, curricular and instructional strategies, and practices that advance civic competence in a culturally diverse, democratic society. While disciplinary literacy in the traditional content areas of history, geography, economics, civics, and other areas of social science are important, social studies prioritizes the fostering of engaged social and civic attitudes, informed decision making, and opportunities for citizens to act to improve our communities and world. Social studies professionals often share the progressive ideal that a public school, most notably the social studies classroom, serves as a "hub, indeed engine, of democratic life" (Pearlstein, 1996, p. 634).

In many of our urban communities and schools, serving mostly students of color, research indicates the existence of a "civics education opportunity gap" resulting from misguided federal

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policy and legislation that decreased instructional time and resources allocated in social studies (Kahne, 2008; Maguire, 2007). Tested and required subjects in the areas of math, language arts, and science often lessen the priority of social studies. The ripple effects of this civic education opportunity gap resonate through our urban communities, in the majors and careers urban youth select, in the voting booths and attitudes residents hold towards politics and government, and in the overall quality of civic dialogue and engagement. In this study, we explored how third through seventh-grade urban youth constructed their "sense of self," and the extent to which these constructions prioritized the area of "civic engagement." Social studies researchers often struggle to locate culturally relevant methods and assessments that provide for participant voice in the investigation of "self" and identity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). To this end, we outlined a methodological illustration of the significant circle drawing method, an arts-based research instrument, in setting a baseline assessment of "sense of self."

Literature Review

Two conceptual underpinnings were prioritized in this study. The first area included scholarship in civic education. In particular, we explored how urban youth, mostly students of color, positioned civic engagement when formulating their identities within their significant circles. The second area included scholarship in the area of arts-based research and culturally relevant methodological practices and perspectives when exploring youth's sense of self and identity.

Civic Education and Engagement

The civic mission, namely the preparation of informed and active citizens, is at the center of the social studies (NCSS, 2013a). Preparing youth to undertake our nation's most important office, the "Office of Citizen," is paramount to the health and vibrancy of our nation's democracy. The civic mission of schools includes preparing learners to analyze, evaluate, judge, and defend positions on both contemporary and historical civic issues. The *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013b) describes how a strong social studies experience provides youth with meaningful civic learning opportunities that includes collaborating with others, evaluating the reliability and validity of sources, using evidence to build an argument, and gaining valuable experience in taking informed civic action. In this study, we explored youth reported civic engagement. Knowing that this term is ambiguous and at times contested (Adler & Goggin, 2005), we drew from the following

definition of *civic engagement*: The ways in which youth take individual or collection action to improve perceived issues in their classroom, school, or community (Mitra & Serriere, 2015).

A meaningful civic education affords youth knowledge of "opportunities for participation and engagement in both civic and civil society" (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010, p. 14). Adolescent civic participation is related to lower rates of teenage pregnancy and higher levels of achievement later in life (Davila & Mora, 2007; Kirby, 2001; Potts, 2000). As a result of a meaningful civic education, citizens are able to think critically (Nussbaum, 2010), are committed to creating a better future for themselves, and work to create a more robust and inclusive democracy (Banks, 2006; Landsman & Gorski, 2007; Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010).

However, enacted legislation, namely No Child Left Behind [NCLB] (2002), has often been disastrous for the social studies and civic education. NCLB requires states to only assess elementary students in the areas of math, reading, and science. As a result of this focus, instructional time and resources in social studies have been significantly reduced in most states (Fitchett & Heafner, 2012). Huge pressures for elementary schools to equip their students to score well in tested areas (usually not inclusive of social studies) have led many schools to substantially reduce instructional time and offerings for the subject most at the center of civic education; the social studies (Baily, Shaw, & Hollifield, 2006; O'Connor, Heafner, & Groce, 2007; VanFossen, 2005). In a 2004 study by the Council on Basic Education and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, 956 elementary and high school principals from four different states were interviewed. One finding from this study was that almost half of all elementary principals acknowledged the time devoted to the social studies had moderately or greatly decreased (Von Zastow & Janc, 2004). Dwindling resources and priority have resulted in student lackluster performance in the area of Civics, as reflected in the 2014 NAEP Civic test scores. Scores from the last test administered to a nationally representative sample of 29,000 eighth graders at more than 1,300 schools, indicated less than 1/3 of students scored proficient or better, and only 3% scored at the advanced level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Some research indicates lower socioeconomic status groups, made-up predominantly of Black and Hispanic citizens, have high levels of civic apathy and distrust towards government (Gimpel & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2009). This civic apathy is compounded by a "civic education opportunity gap" that exists in classrooms with a high percentage of students of color, mostly in

urban communities (Kahne, 2008; Maguire, 2007). Students of lower socioeconomic status and academic achievement are often afforded fewer opportunities to practice civic engagement in classrooms (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Research documents the troubling side effect of NCLB in that elementary schools in high minority areas were most likely to decrease instructional time for civics (Council on Basic Education, 2004). It must be noted some researchers believe findings reporting civic apathy and disengagement of lower socioeconomic status people, mainly amongst Black and Hispanics, could be the result of faulty evaluations and instruments that are culturally biased by narrowly defining civic engagement (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2009; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2006; Smetana & Metzger, 2005; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). It is essential all our nation's youth receive a high-quality civic education to sustain and strengthen the health of our democracy. This effort calls for researchers to enact stronger, more culturally relevant approaches to present a stronger more inclusive assessment of minority students' civic mindedness and engagement.

Ethnographic Research: Arts-Based Methods

The use of ethnographic research methods continues to grow in social studies research (Barton, 2006). These methods prioritize the voice and lived experiences of participants, and focus on studying collected cultural descriptions and scenes. Fundamental to ethnographic research is the idea of culture- a system of shared beliefs, values, practices, languages, perspectives, language, norms, rituals, subjects, and objects members of a group use to understand their world and in relating to others (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Over time, members of a group become accustomed to a culture through a socialization process. This study investigated specifically the socio-constructed identities and "sense of self" urban youth participants constructed. For instance, the researchers sought to better understand what shared values, beliefs, symbols, objects, and norms do urban youth participants put at the center or their identity? And, how do urban youth participants prioritize these?

Arts-based research, a form of ethnography, allows researchers to use art-based research methods (e.g., music, dance, painting, fashion, photography) to learn about culture and people's connection to one another and the physical world (Baron & Eisner, 1997). In her study on child-centered creative visual methodology, Lomax (2012) noted the benefits and limited use of arts-based research methods in social studies; in particular, in an art-based methodology allowing

researchers to pay attention to how youth voices are different (and unequally heard) in the research process.

Visual art-based methods and their adjoining instruments can give voice to youth that increasingly learn from and are exposed to visual media. Barton (2015) commented how social studies researchers can greatly benefit from the integration of arts-based research techniques that use visual, verbal, or written stimuli to elicit and encourage participants to talk about their ideas. Barton discussed how these "elicitation techniques" (many of which are arts-based) can be effective vehicles for exploring topics that might be difficult or sensitive to discuss in formal interviews. Barton notes such methods can also reduce power imbalances between interviewers and respondents, and help researchers become better familiar with how insiders make sense of their world.

While the use of arts-based and visual arts-based research methods are increasing, it must be noted their use as a Pk-12 social studies research technique has been limited. The vast array of social studies scholarship found by the authors focused on pedagogical implementation of arts-based methods (see Bickford, 2011; Rule & Montgomery, 2011; Serriere, 2010; Thomas-Brown, 2010), and not on using arts-based research techniques in an empirical process to formulate findings and generate theory. For instance, Taylor, Brundand, and Iroha (2015) described an action research study involving predominantly African American youth in a Detroit public school where middle and high school students viewed, reflected on, and created portraits in the social studies classroom. Although this study centered on the advantages of an arts-based pedagogy in promoting student reflection and learning in social studies, far less detail was provided on how student generated portraits were analyzed, coded, and classified by researchers during the research process. Swan and Hofer (2013) offered one of the few examples located where researchers not only described the implementation of an arts-based unit in the social studies (i.e., middle school students creating digital documentaries), but also thoroughly analyzed student work as a pivotal data source to generate findings and theory. One could assume that in a field as interdisciplinary as the social studies its researchers would be at the forefront of employing arts-based research methodologies and ethnographic research methods. However, a review of published research indicated a deficit in this area within social studies research.

The current study adds insights into these two under theorized areas: namely, how urban youth, mostly students of color, positioned "civic engagement" and by contributing an arts-based

research method in exploring youth's sense of self and identity. The visual art-based method employed in this study drew heavily from Esteban-Guitart and Moll's (2014) funds of identity approach. The funds of identity framework has been used by educational researchers to better understand how youth and their families construct their cultural identity (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; McIntyre, Kyle, & Rightmyer, 2005). This framework draws from socio-cultural theory which highlights the role of societal interaction on individual human development and cognition (Vygotsky, 1926/1997). The theory of funds of identity looks specifically at those historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge, skills, and practices that individuals report as essential to their homes, communities, and self (McIntyre, Roseberry, & Gonzalez, 2001). Educators and researchers are encouraged to look at these culturally developed practices and understandings as cultural resources and assets for teaching and learning. Paramount in the conversation of funds of identity is how should educators and researchers best detect these funds in students? Outside of using ethnographic techniques that explore student surroundings like traditional interviews and field observations, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) developed an arts-based instrument where students construct self-portraits and an accompanying relational map coined a significant circle (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014).

The significant circle drawing is a technique used "to generate information on the lived experiences in relation to the participant's identity in order to collect his/her funds of identity" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 43). This arts-based method is similar to a self-portrait drawing that provides an alternative medium to surveys and interviewing for participants to express their perceptions. Visual methods are an alternative for younger participants (Clark, 1999; Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2008) or those who might have under developed written or verbal skills.

Method

Research Design

This intrinsic case study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995) was part of a larger evaluation of a program (i.e., defined as the case) targeted ultimately at increasing high school graduation rates. One program goal was for the students to develop a balanced sense of self. This study reports on this particular program goal. The student sense of self was disaggregated by the researchers into

three over-arching analytical categories to compare the degree of balance and performance across these categories. The categories were:

- Academic Success. This category included a focus on academic achievement, the acquisition of desired, knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and participation in academic networks that helped promote attainment of outcomes and strategies aimed at academic achievement.
- Positive Lifestyle and Wellbeing. This category included a focus on participating in or creating social and physical environments that promote healthy development and healthy behaviors aimed at allowing youth to realize their full potential, keep a positive attitude, and cope with stressors.
- Civic Engagement. This category included expressions of civic pride, and learning or operationalizing civic knowledge, skills, or values to engage in individual or collective efforts to improve their classroom, school, house, neighborhood, community, or world.

Gaining an understanding of how the students viewed themselves and their lives was necessary to identify gaps between current perceived self and the program goal of developing a balanced sense of self. The significant circle drawing was identified as a method that could meet this need and that could be administered at key points (e.g., when entering high school, upon graduation). Two research questions were addressed:

1. What is the positionality of the students' levels of civic engagement in relation to the other two program goals (academic success and leading a healthy lifestyle)?
2. Is the significant circle a feasible and informative arts-based method for assessing urban youth identity in civic education research?

Methodology

Context

Program participants included third through seventh graders in an urban school district, as identified by the state department of education. The program was a collaboration between a non-profit foundation (founded in 2004) in the Mid-western U.S. and a local school district to provide wrap-around services to students identified by the district as at-risk based on their state standardized reading scores. Students with reading scores in the lower 20th percentile in the district at the end of second grade were invited to participate in the program through high school.

A new cohort of third graders are invited to participate in the program each year to expand the reach and impact. Once enrolled in the program, students are never dismissed unless they move out of the district or their guardians opt out.

The foundation sponsoring the program is built on the mission to impact youth in the surrounding community. They collaborate with the district to provide co-curricular programming for each cohort through high school with the ultimate goal to increase the graduate rate in the community. The foundation supports enrichments and wrap-around programming focused exclusively on advancing the program goals.

Population and Sample/ Study Group/Participants

A combination of purposeful and convenience sampling was used in this study given that the population of interest were program participants. All of the students enrolled in the program were invited to participate in this study. Student assent and guardian consent forms were distributed to all program participants. A month prior to the start of the 2015-16 academic year, the teachers involved with foundation programming were provided with an envelope to return parental consent and student assent forms during a summer orientation. The teachers then distributed and collected these forms from guardians and students interested in participating in the study. The guardians and students also received copies mailed from the foundation using a mailer service for those that were not in attendance at the summer orientation.

Sample

One-hundred percent of the students in the district where the program was implemented qualify for free or reduced lunch, and a majority of students in the district are students of color. As reported on the state department of education report card (2017), 75% of the students graduate in four years or less. An estimated 14% of the students will not finish at the school in which they started by the end of the academic year, either moving schools within the district or leaving the district entirely.

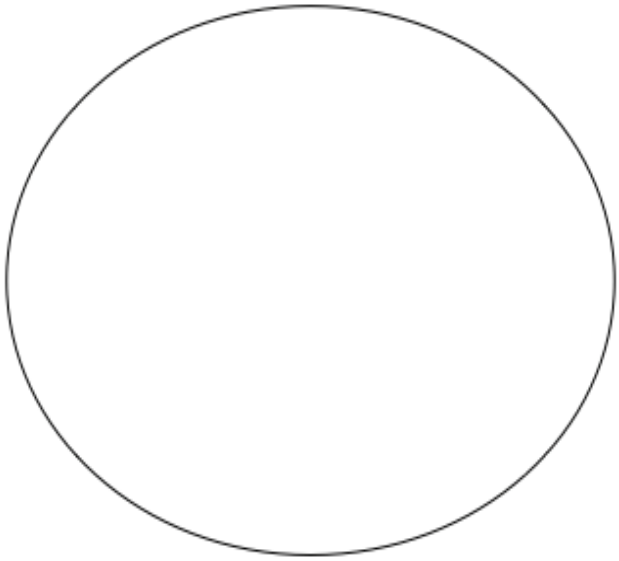
A total of 550 students submitted the required documentation, and completed the circle drawing, out of a total of 912 possible participants (60% response rate). However, only 544 of the drawings were legible and thus included in this study. The students ranged from third-grade to seventh-grade. Seventy-two percent of the students (n = 393) were third through fifth-graders, yielding a response rate of 56% for the elementary school student participants in the program.

Twenty-seven percent of the students (n = 151) were sixth through seventh-graders, yielding a response rate of 44% for the middle school student participants in the program. Of those who reported their gender, 54% were boys and 43% of the sample identified as Black/African American, followed by 22% identified as White. The remaining students identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, Bi/Multi-racial, American Indian, or other.

Data Collection & Collection Tools

Prior to administering the significant circle assessment, we piloted the assessment with two students (one entering grade 3 and one entering grade 6) to determine if any modifications were needed with directions and developmental appropriateness of the task. The teachers contracted to lead the summer orientation for the program were trained on how to administer the significant circle drawing. A written script was also provided to the teachers to standardize the administration across classrooms. The teachers read the instructions aloud and projected two example drawings for no more than 20 seconds. The examples were removed so not to prime the students' responses.

The students were given a blank circle on an 8" x 11" piece of paper to complete their drawing (see Figure 1). They were instructed to include activities they like to do, and places, people, or objects that they considered important. The students were further instructed to draw their most important place, person, activity, or object in the middle of the circle, following the method outlined by Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014). Finally, the students were asked to label and list their drawings by elaborating on three most important things they drew in their circle and why those were most important to them.



The three most important things I drew in my circle are:	Because…
1.	
2.	
3.	

Figure 1. Significant circle prompt administered to the students.

An alternative procedure to asking students to label and list, following completing their drawing, is to directly follow-up with an interview for explanation of the drawing, allowing for probing to gain further insight into the meaning of the drawings and symbols used. The use of labeling and listing the three most important things was necessary in this case because individual interviews were not feasible with over 500 student participants.

Data Analysis

The resultant data consisted of a black and white or colored, single to multiple-word labeled drawings, and a list of the three most important things in the drawing for each student. The first task was to determine how to code these types of data for which we considered four factors. First, the resultant analysis needed to address the evaluation purposes of reporting any gaps between the program goals and tracking changes over time in balance of how a student defined oneself. Second, the resultant categories that emerge needed to be easily communicated

and understood by the program developers to increase the utilization of the findings in programming (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). As such, the coding scheme applied had to link closely to the program goals. Third, the coding process needed to be systematically detailed to achieve high degree of credibility and trustworthiness (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The coding process also needed to be replicable. Finally, the coding process adopted had to be feasible given that there were over 500 significant circle drawings to code and two researchers coding the data.

We engaged in three phases of coding using the funds of identity as a foundation for initial coding. Briefly, Phase 1 consisted of establishing inter-rater agreement in coding which fund(s) of identity were represented in the drawings. This process involved developing descriptors and sub-codes for each fund of identity and identifying if any new funds emerged that were not included by Esteban-Guitart (2012). Phase 2 consisted of generating a crosswalk between the established funds of identity and program goals to allow for analysis of gaps between the funds of identity represented in the students' drawings and funds targeted by the program. The final Phase 3 involved coding the students' drawings for balance across the funds of identity targeted by the program. Within Phase 3, what we refer to as a Balance Index was developed to report on the students' current degree of balance in sense of self.

Phase 1 - Funds of Identity Coding

Up to three codes were assigned to each student's response to represent the three most important things they felt defined their identity. Sub-codes were developed for each fund of identity. Each student's response also was assigned a code to reflect what the student felt was the most important part of his/her identity as indicated by what he or she drew in the center of his or her circle. Finally, whether or not the program was included in each student's circle or list of important things was coded as "yes" or "no."

Two raters were engaged in three rounds of coding during Phase 1. In the first round, the two raters reviewed the student drawings independently to assign an appropriate code for 30 randomly selected student responses: 15 ranging from third-grade to fifth-grade and 15 ranging from sixth-grade to seventh-grade (the two highest grade levels of participants in the program at the time). Percentage of agreement for the first three codes assigned ranged between 80% to 83% for the "what is at the center code." For the program inclusion code, 93% of agreement was computed. The two raters discussed disagreements in codes and adjusted the code descriptors as

necessary. Modifications included adding two additional funds that emerged in the first round of coding that were not part of Esteban-Guitart's (2012) original theory of funds of identity. We refer to these emergent funds as "internal funds" and "material funds" of identity.

During the second round of coding in Phase 1, another 30 student responses from across grade levels were randomly selected and coded in the second round. Inter-rater agreement improved to yield 100% for the first three codes assigned, 93% for the "what is at the center of my circle" code, and 97% for the final code assigned. The final refined coding scheme during Phase 1 is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Final Coding Scheme During Phase 1 Applying the Theory of Funds of Identity

Fund of Identity	Description[1]	Sub-Codes
Cultural	Any artifacts such as religious symbols, national flags, or any social category (ethnic group, gender, sexuality, nationality, etc.)	▪ Religion ▪ Ethnic group/heritage/nationality ▪ Class ▪ Disability ▪ Gender ▪ Age ▪ Sexuality ▪ Other
Geographic	Any area or territory that become a source of self-identification	▪ General geographic ▪ City name – Geographic specific to city live in
Institutional	Any social institution such as the family unit, church, the program, sport team, club, school (as institution) with a focus on belongingness to the social institution.	▪ Family ▪ Church ▪ School ▪ Program name or associated personnel with the program ▪ Sport team or club ▪ Other (e.g., other organization)
Internal	Reference to self	▪ "Me" ▪ Feeling not tied to other fund ("love," "peace")
Material	Objects (food, money, clothes, technology)	▪ Food generally referred to (e.g., "cupcakes are good") ▪ Food (specifies to eat healthy or for survival) ▪ Money ▪ Clothes ▪ Technology (Focus on possession of, not playing) ▪ House/roof over head

		▪ Other
Practical	Any activity such as work, sports, music, schoolwork, community service, etc. Student must specify engaging in the activity of doing.	▪ Engaging in sport or exercise ▪ Engaging in school academics ▪ Engaging in the arts ▪ Engaging in activities to maintain positive attitude ▪ Engaging in community service activities ▪ Engaging in a game that is not specified as a sport (computer game) ▪ Program goals – must specify an activity related to the program goal ▪ Other
Social	Significant others such as relatives, friends/peers, teachers, coaches, mentors, tutors, neighbors, school staff, foster parent, or guardian. If states entire family unit, then institutional.	▪ Relatives (sub-codes for each relative) ▪ Pet ▪ Peers/Friends ▪ Mentor ▪ Neighbor ▪ Teacher, coach, principal, school staff, etc. ▪ Other

Note. [1]Descriptors were adapted from Esteban-Guitart (2012).

Given that no new funds of identity emerged in the second round of coding, the two raters progressed to code a portion of the drawings independently during the third round of coding in phase one. One rater coded 320 student responses and the second rater coded 230 student responses with 40% crossover to further establish percentage of agreement (see Table 2).

Table 2

Significant Circle Drawing Coding Percentage of Agreement by Code Assigned and Coding Round

Coding Round	*f*	What is Important to Me? Code 1	Code 2	Code 3	What is at the Center of my Circle Code	Program Inclusion Code[2]
1 (Pilot)	30	83.33	80.00	80.00	80.00	93.33
2 (Pilot)	30	100.00	100.00	100.00	93.33	96.67
3 (Final)	221[1]	98.58	98.58	96.68	93.84	100.00

Note. [1] Represents 40% of the 550 who completed the drawing. [2]The program inclusion code was composed of a specific list of symbols or names that qualified as referring to the program. To protect the confidentiality, descriptors of this code are not provided.

Phase 2 – Linking Funds of Identity to Program Goals

Applying evaluation coding (Saldaña, 2013), the assigned funds of identity were then re-coded into one of three overarching analytical categories developed to align to the program goals being evaluated. Findings from the second and third method of analysis were the focus of this study. The purpose of this Phase 2 re-code was to present the data in a second way to decipher the positionality of the students' levels of civic engagement in relation to the other two program goals- academic success and leading a healthy lifestyle. A student's response assigned any fund of identity sub-code listed in Table 3, under "Special Fund of Identity Included in Circle" was re-coded into one of three overarching categories aligning to program goals: Academic Success, Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing, and Civic Engagement. For example, a student's circle drawing that included a drawing and listed a factor that was assigned institutional fund of identity – "engaging in school academics" as being important to that student was then re-coded to "Academic Success" as part of his defined "self."

Table 3

Coding Crosswalk Aligning Codes to the Program Goals Developed in Phase 2

Broad Category Representing the Program Goals	General Fund of Identity[1] (Main Code)	Specific Fund of Identity Included in Circle (Sub-Code)
Academic Success	Institutional	▪ Name of program as it represents goal of graduating from high school
	Practical	▪ Engaging in school academics
Positive Lifestyle & Well-being	Cultural	▪ All cultural funds
	Institutional	▪ Church, School, Other Institutional
	Internal	▪ "Me", Feeling not tied to other fund ("peace", "love")
	Material	▪ Food –specified to eat healthy or survival to meet basic needs, House/roof over head
	Practical	▪ Engaging in sport/exercise, Engaging in the arts, Engaging in activities to maintain positive attitude, Specified engaging in the goals of the program
	Social	▪ All social funds
Civic Engagement	Geographic	▪ City name – Geographic fund specific to City reside in
	Institutional	▪ Name or symbols associated with the program, Sport team or club, Other
	Practical	▪ Engaging in community service activities

Note. [1]Funds of Identities that did not directly align to the goals of the program were not included in the crosswalk for the purpose of this phase in the analysis.

Phase 3 – Balance Score Coding

In Phase 3, a mixed-methods data transformation technique called quantitizing data (Miles & Huberman, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) was used compute what the researchers refer to as a balance index. This index was developed to report how many and what percentage of the students' sense of self (as indicated by their circle drawings), included one or more of the three overarching categories representing program goals.

Since program goals focus on youth developing a balanced sense of self across all three analytical categories (Academic Success, Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing, and Civic Engagement), these scores can then be tracked over time and statistically analyzed to test for balance over time. Results can help inform programming design and implementation to promote a balanced sense of self amongst urban youth. Each student could receive up to three points, as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Balance Index Developed in Phase 3

Points	Level of Balance	Descriptor of Balance Index
0 Points	No Evidence of Goals Reflected in Circle	No categories coded as included in the student's circle.
1 Point	Little Balance Evident	One of the categories coded as included in the student's circle.
2 Points	Some Balance Evident	Two of the categories coded as included in the student's circle.
3 Points	Strong Balance Evident	All three categories coded as included in the student's circle.

Findings

The students' responses were initially coded based upon the theory of "funds of identify" (Esteban-Guitart, 2012; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). The students' drawings and lists were reviewed to assign an appropriate code. The initial coding scheme, and popularity of each fund reported, is included in the Appendix. After the students' responses were initially coded for "funds of identity," these codes were grouped into broad analytical categories (Round 2). These three categories were selected as they aligned directly with foundation goals. The crosswalk

constructed that aligned codes and program goals is available in the Appendix. The three categories used in Round 2 coding were:

1. Academic Success
2. Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing
3. Civic Engagement

Findings related to this round of coding significant circle data are reported below:

Academic Success

- 26% (143/544) of the students listed something in their circle related to their "Academic Success" as important to their identity. When disaggregating results between 3rd-5th and 6th-7th graders, 6th-7th graders were more likely to draw something in their circle designated in the Academic Success category, at 39% (59/151), versus 21% (84/391) for 3rd-5th graders.

Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing

- 97% (531/544) of children listed something related to their leading a healthy lifestyle as important to their identity. When disaggregating results between 3rd-5th and 6th-7th graders, 3rd-5th graders were slightly more likely to draw something in their circle designated in the Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing category, at 97% (385/393), versus 96% (146/151) for 6th-7th graders.

Civic Engagement

- 3% (19/544) of the students listed something related to civic engagement and responsibility as important to their identity. When disaggregating results between 3rd-5th and 6th-7th graders, 3rd-5th graders were slightly more likely to draw something in their circle designated in the Civic Engagement category, at 2% (8/393), versus less than 1% (11/151) for 6th and 7th graders.

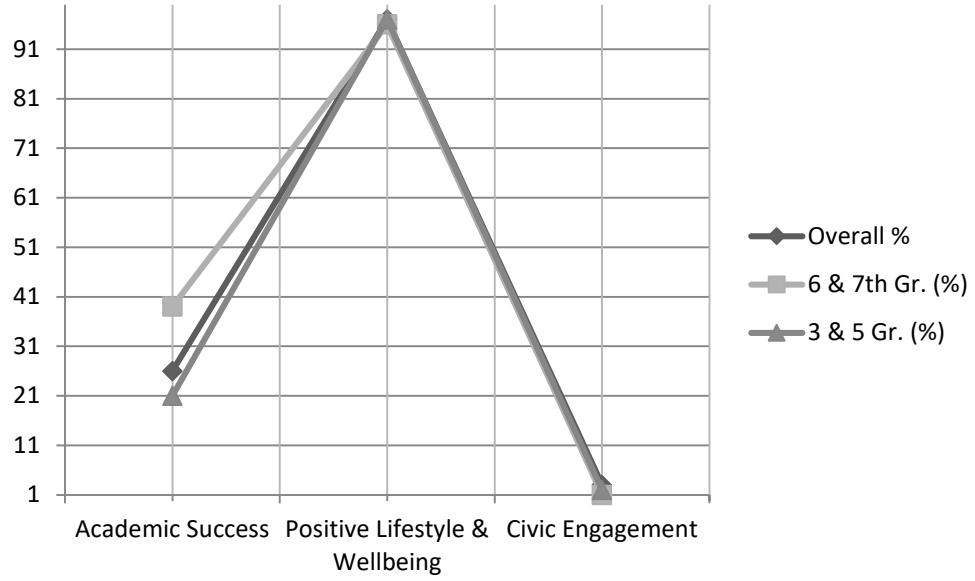


Figure 2. Comparison of analytical categories by grade band range.

Balance Index Score

To report and monitor youth performance on balance across the three analytical categories, as reported on the students' significant circles, a Balance Index Score was calculated for 3-5th and 6-7th graders. The Balance Index Score indicated the degree of performance and balance for each student across the three analytical categories. There were four possible assigned Balance Scores, and each score is described along with an exemplar for each possibility below.

- 0 = No Balance Evident: This score was assigned when a student's response was blank, or, when no category or fund of identity was evident (see Figure 3).

Exemplar

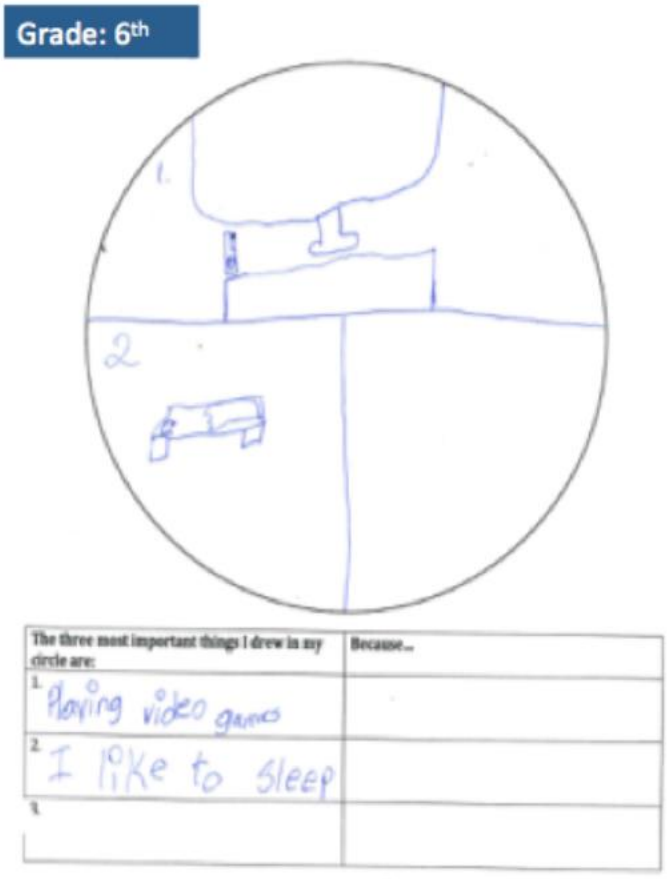


Figure 3. Example of drawing with no balance.

- 1 = Little Balance Evident: This score entailed a student's significant circle drawing being mostly dominated by one category. This score reflected poor child balance across all three analytical categories. As illustrated in Figure 4, students who focused solely on engaging in sports or playing only satisfied the "Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing" category.

3rd-5th Grade Exemplar | 6th-7th Grade Exemplar

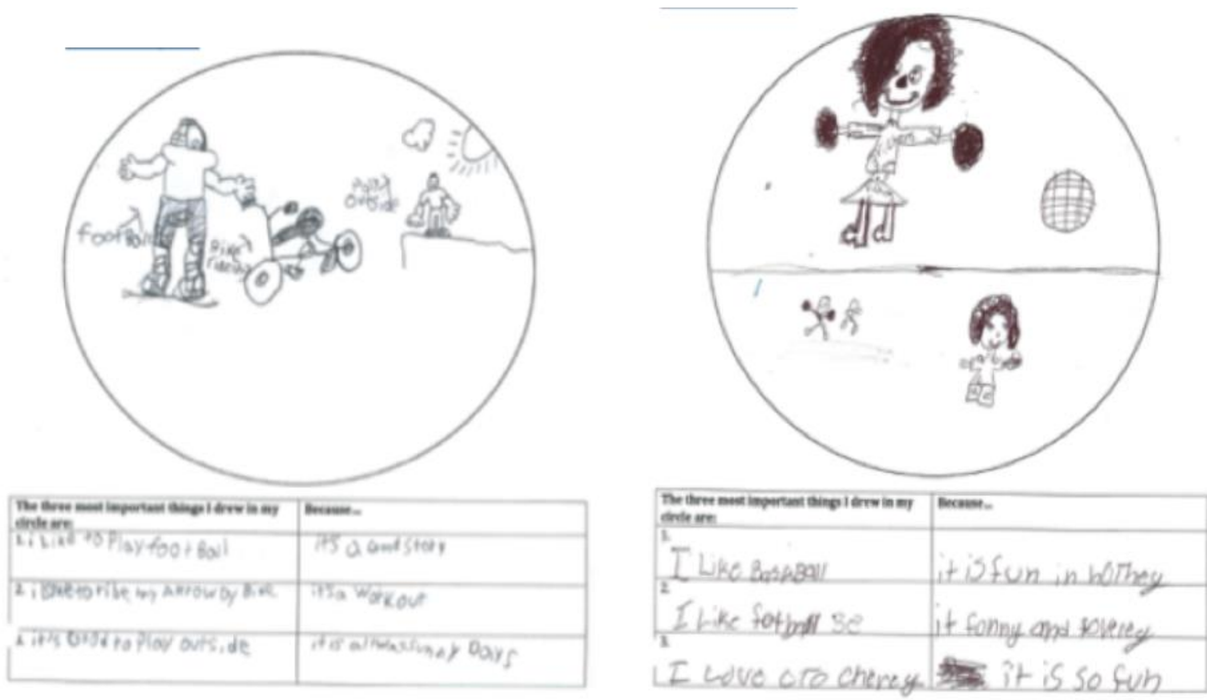
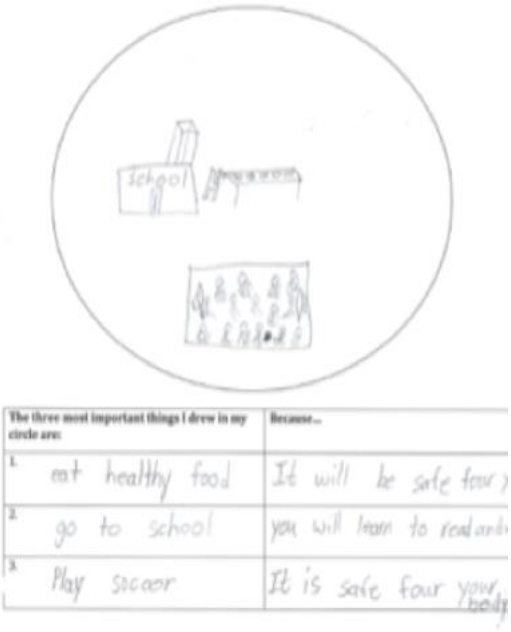


Figure 4. Exemplar of significant circles with a balance score of 1 (little balance evident).

- 2 = Some Balance Evident: This score entailed a student's significant circle drawing being inclusive of two different categories. Some balance across all three analytical categories that are aligned to the foundation goals were reflected in a student's drawing to be assigned this score. For an example of a Balance Score of 2, see Figure 5. For instance, a third-grade student who focused on engaging in sports satisfied the "Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing" category. This student also listed "going to school" as important, and thus fulfilled the "Academic Success" category. As another example, a seventh-grade student listed "grades" and "school" as important, as well as named and drew the foundation as an important part of his or her circle. This student's circle was thus coded as reflecting the "Academic Success" category and "Civic Engagement."

3rd-5th Grade Exemplar



6th-7th Grade Exemplar

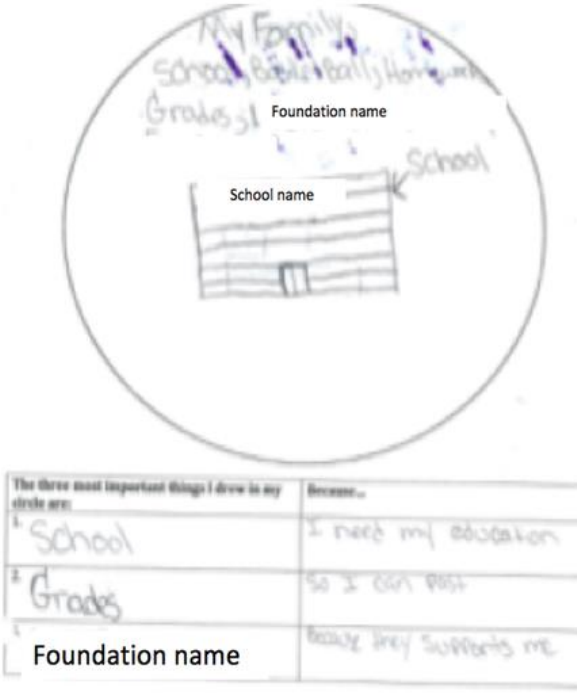
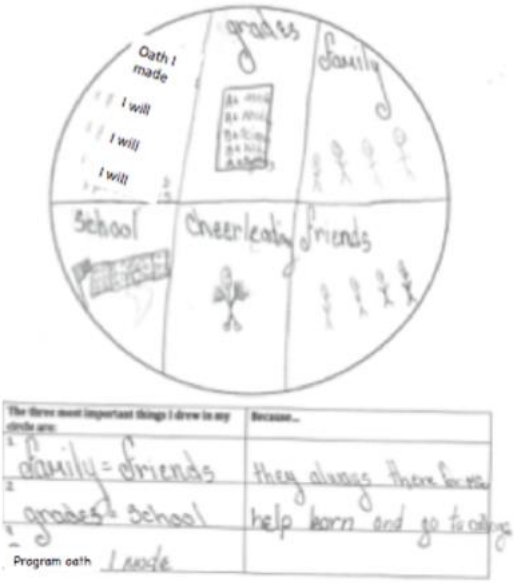


Figure 5. Exemplar significant circles with a balance score of 2 (some balance evident).

- 3 = Strong Balance Evident: This score entailed a student's significant circle drawing including evidence of their meeting all three analytical categories. This score reflected an ideal and optimum balance. For instance, in the grade third-grade to fifth-grade example in Figure 6, a student listed his or her family as important, which satisfied the "Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing" category. He or she also indicated grades and school as important, which fulfilled the "Academic Success" category. Finally, a seventh-grade student indicated a sense of belongingness to his or her community, which satisfied the third category "Civic Engagement."

3-5th Grade Exemplar



6-7th Grade Exemplar

Figure 6. Exemplar significant circles with a balance score of 3 (strong balance evident).

Balance Index Score of Students

The Balance Index Score by grade band is reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Total Sample and Balance Score

								Balance Index Score							
		Academic Success		Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing		Civic Engagement		0		1		2		3	
Sample	*f*	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Total	544	143	26	531	97	19	3	7	1	387	71	144	26	6	1
3rd-5th Grade	393	84	21	385	97	8	2	5	1	302	76	83	21	3	< 1
6th-7th Grade	151	59	39	146	96	11	< 1	2	< 1	85	56	61	43	3	1

Our findings indicated that less than 1% (6/544) of all students demonstrated evidence across all three categories in their circles. 71% (387/544) of students scored a 1, while only 27% percent scored at a 2 or better (150/544). When results were disaggregated, sixth and seventh-graders demonstrated more balance across the categories than third through fifth-graders, as 42% (64/151) of them scored a 2 or above versus only 22% (86/393) for third through fifth-graders. Sixth and seventh graders were also slightly more likely to score a 3 (1%) than third through fifth-graders (less than 1%).

Overall, only 3% (19/544) of the students included a drawing or label related to "Civic Engagement" in their circle. The students in general across both grade bands were least likely to reference civic engagement in their circle when compared to the two other analytical categories (academic success = 26%; positive lifestyle = 97%). Sixth through seventh-graders performed slightly worse than third through fifth-graders (less than 1% versus 2%) in the "Civic

Engagement" category. Findings suggest that the vast majority of students failed to reference civic engagement content in their significant circle, and this lack of visibility (gap) negatively influenced students' overall Balance Index Score.

Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

Related to the first research question, the results in this study contribute insights into how urban youth reported their levels of civic engagement (Kahne, 2008; Smetana & Metzger, 2005) as it pertained to program goals. The students scored most poorly in the "Civic Engagement" category (only 3% included this in their circle). While both groups of students scored poorly in this category, 6-7th graders performed worse than 3-5th graders (less than 1% versus 2%). This finding is in-line with current research in social studies and civic education that identifies a crisis in Pk-12 civic education; especially, at the early and middle grades (American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2016; Fitchett & Heafner, 2012; Levinson, 2012). The large gap found between civic engagement content and content from the other two analytical categories within students' significant circles in this study mirrors research findings in social studies education that documents a civic education opportunity gap in classrooms that often serve a high percentage of students of color, mostly in urban communities (Kahne, 2008; Maguire, 2007). The effects of this civic education opportunity gap may have rippled through students' reported identities, as captured in this study's data.

The students in this study, most of whom are students of color, even when provided a more open and culturally relevant assessment of civic engagement (Akom et al., 2009), reported lower levels of civic engagement as part of their significant circle versus other program goals (positive lifestyle & wellbeing and academic success). These results were communicated to the foundation and district to use for informing future programming related to this program goal.

The lack of prioritizing civic engagement might relate to the troubling side effects reported in existing research of NCLB in schools, especially, in high minority areas, that are most likely to decrease instructional time for civics (Council on Basic Education, 2004). Such failures in providing all of our nation's youth with a high-quality civic education weakens our democracy and exacerbates divisions in our nation. With a long history of institutionalized discrimination and inequality in our nation it is essential citizens of color have meaningful opportunities to learn about and engage in the civic process.

Further scholarship is needed that captures and illustrates additional culturally relevant approaches in researching minority students' civic engagement. This research adds insights into the connection between minority students' reported civic engagement but additional research questions related to their civic mindedness, typologies, and habits need further study. For instance, in students' significant circles, what types of civic engagement were excluded? Why were they excluded? Were "good citizen" depiction more in-line with the personally responsible, participatory, or justice-oriented citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004)?

Future iterations of this study would benefit significantly by comparing students' positionality of civic engagement in their significant circle, their civic typology, and contrasting that with learning opportunities in their social studies class; in particular, with a focus on taking individual or collection action to improve perceived issues in their classroom, school, community, and/or world.

Discussion of the Significant Circle Drawing as a Method

Related to the second research question, this study provides insights into an under theorized, yet, significant area of inquiry for researchers in social studies education in the area of arts-based, particularly visual arts-based, methodologies (Barton, 2006; Lomax, 2012). We presented an illustration of one-such arts-based method, the significant circle instrument, implemented as a cultural relevant tool to engage urban youth, in a non-threating and developmentally appropriate way, to draw, label, and portray their "sense of self" and identity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In-line with Barton's research (2015), the use of the significant circle, might serve to reduce power imbalances between researcher and respondents and helped urban youth, most of whom are students of color, communicate their "insider" perspective as researchers attempted to make sense of their worlds (Mitra, 2014).

We engaged in discussion of our reflections on the method, its analysis, and utilization of the results. This reflection called for reflexivity to raise questions about "one's place and power relations within the research process" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 13). Ongoing reflection provided us with the opportunity to highlight the successes and challenges for others interested in applying this technique. Also, for determining whether we would continue to adopt this method in the evaluation plan. Six successes identified were:

1. Although the analysis process was time intensive during the first pilot coding round in Phase 1, it was feasible after that point with coding averaging 5 minutes or less per drawing.
2. The theory of funds of identity adequately served as a foundational core to code how students represented their sense of self.
3. The development of a crosswalk (Phase 2) and Balance Index (Phase 3) helped to identify areas of strength and gaps linking back to the program goals.
4. The students' drawings were clear overall with only 1% coded as illegible.
5. The students were engaged with the significant circle drawing as evidenced by the detail of the drawings and use of color (when available). This assessment thus might be viewed less as a test or assessment and considered a more engaging alternative to surveys for younger samples.
6. The program developers requested the continued use of the assessment, indicating they found value-added in the data.

We identified three challenges during our reflection that related specifically to the coding and interpretation process:

1. The initial pilot round of coding during Phase 1 was time intensive and raised questions regarding the feasibility in coding and interpreting significant circle drawings for larger samples.
2. Because there was no verbal interaction with the students such as a one-one follow-up interview, the raters needed to be current in terms of the lingo and interests of the age group being coded.
3. Also, because there was no follow-up interview to inquire on the meaning of the drawings, there is a degree of subjectivity involved in interpreting the drawings at times. The labeling and prompt to list the three most important things in their drawing assisted in minimizing this limitation. Despite this fact, verbalizations accompanying the drawings would increase the degree of validity of the interpretations.

Regarding the latter challenge, future research should consider testing whether the coding across the three Phases differs when additional verbalization data is available to inform coding and interpretation of the drawings. Also, future research should also be conducted on applying multiple ways of analyzing the resultant drawings. There are multiple ways data could be

analyzed depending on the research or evaluation purpose and question. For instance, applying a developmental framework comparing students across the grade levels. Another example is use of spatial data analysis whereby geographical mapping documenting and categorizing spatial components (e.g., neighborhood) of socio-spatial processes (e.g., social-cultural experiences like social-institutional relationships) (Rucks-Ahidiana & Bierbaum, 2015).

Evaluation work tends to prioritize youth academic success and general well-being over measuring civic engagement and attitudes (Beaumont, 2012). The foundation and district partner are deeply committed to advancing all three goals and categories, and findings from this study will be used to better support and advocate for deeper investment in civic learning experiences to offset the underperformance of this goal as depicted in the findings of this study. It is also our hope this manuscript advances greater efforts by researchers in social studies education to empirically investigate urban youth civic engagement and attitudes in reporting on the civic education opportunity gap. Such in-demand research can benefit greatly by employing art-based methods and instruments that prioritize student voice and experiences.

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Appendix A

Crosswalk: Program Goals to Significant Circle Funds of Identity

Domain	Program Goals	Funds of Identity
Academic Success	Go to school and arrive on time Accept the challenge to finish school	• Institutional Funds of Identity 37 • Practical Funds of Identity: 5
Positive Lifestyle & Wellbeing	Live a healthy lifestyle	• Practical Funds of Identity: 3, 4, 6 • Cultural Funds of Identity: 12 to 18, 19 • Social Funds of Identity: 20-33, 34 • Institutional Funds of Identity: 35, 36, 39 • Material Funds of Identity: 44
	Try new things Keep a positive attitude	• Practical Funds of Identity: 7, 10 • Internal Funds of Identity: 41, 42 • Materialistic Funds of Identity: 48
Civic Engagement	Give back to my community Be kind and respectful to others	• Practical Funds of Identity: 8 • Geographic Funds of Identity: 2
	Be a role model to my peers and the wheels for education students Be a leader	• Institutional Funds of Identity: 38, 40

<u>Funds/Categories Not Used</u>

Geographic Fund 1:
Practical Fund: 9, 11
Material Funds: 43, 45, 46, 47, 49

Appendix B

REVISED - Significant Circle Coding Scheme

Geographic Funds of Identity: *Any area or territory, such as a river, a country, a village or a mountain that become a source of self-identification. Examples: City, America/U.S., landmarks or historical marks in the city, etc.*	
1	General Geographic Fund of Identity
2	City Specific – Geographical Fund of Identity specific
Practical Funds of Identity: *Any **activity** such as work, sports, music, schoolwork, community service work, exercise, etc. For instance, I can say that psychology is very important to me. It is part of my identity. Must be engaging in the ACTIVITY.*	
3	General Practical Funds of Identity
4	Engaging in sport or exercise
5	Engaging in school academics (schoolwork, homework, specify a subject matter)
6	Engaging in the arts (music, drama, etc.)
7	Engaging in activities to maintain positive attitude
8	Engaging in community service activities
9	"City Reside In" *(protect confidentiality)*
10	Other
Cultural Funds of Identity: *Any artifacts such as religious symbols, national flags, national anthems or any social category such as age, ethnic group, gender, sexuality, nationality, etc.*	
11	Religion
12	Ethnic group, heritage, nationality
13	Class
14	Disability
15	Gender
16	Age
17	Sexuality
18	Other
Social Funds of Identity: *Significant others such as relatives, friends/peers, teachers, coaches, mentors, tutors, neighbors, school staff, foster parent, etc. If states entire "family" unit, then institutional fund of identity.*	
19	Mom and Dad
20	Mom
21	Dad
22	Sister or Brother
23	Grandparent
24	Aunt or Uncle
25	Cousin
26	Other Relative

27 Pet
28 Peers/Friends
29 REMOVED *(protect confidentiality)*
30 Mentor
31 Neighbor
32 Teacher, coach, principal, school staff, etc.
33 Other

Institutional Funds of Identity: *Any social institution, such as family church, sport team, club.*

34 Family
35 Church
36 School (indicates affiliation or belongingness to school)
37 REMOVED (protect confidentiality)
38 Sport team or club (Must focus on the team/club unit)
39 Other

Internal Funds of Identity: *Refers to self*

40 "Me"

Materialistic Funds of Identity: *Objects (e.g., food, money, house, clothes, games, technology)*

41 Food
42 Money
43 Clothes
44 Technology
45 House/roof over head
46 Other

Appendix C

Round 1 Analysis Findings: Funds of Identity

Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Responses Coded by Fund of Identity (Overall Sample)[1]

	What is Important to You?					
	First Most Important (*n* = 542)		Second Most Important (*n* = 529)		Third Most Important (*n* = 517)	
Fund of Identity	*f*	%	*f*	*%*	*f*	%
Institutional	187	34	89	16	57	11
Social	171	31	191	36	172	33
Practical	115	21	169	31	179	34
Material	38	7	47	8	68	13
Cultural	13	2	11	2	14	2
Internal	13	2	15	2	19	3
Geographical	5	.90	7	1	8	1
Missing[2]	8	1	21	3	33	6

Note. [1] Percentages rounded down to the nearest whole. Percentages were computed out of those who provided a legible response. [2]Students responses' were illegible.

Third, Fourth, and Fifth-Graders Overall Fund of Identity Category Across Codes[1]

	What is Important to You?					
	First Most Important (*n* = 391)		Second Most Important (*n* = 380)		Third Most Important (*n* = 371)	
Fund of Identity	*f*	%	*f*	*%*	*f*	%

Institutional	142	36	48	12	32	8
Social	141	36	154	40	133	35
Practical	61	15	115	30	118	31
Material	27	6	38	10	59	15
Cultural	12	3	11	2	14	3
Internal	7	1	9	2	11	3
Geographical	1	.30	5	1	4	1
Missing[2]	5	1	16	4	25	6

Note. [1] Percentages rounded down to the nearest whole. Percentages are computed out of those who provided a response. [2]Students did not provide a response or the response was illegible.

Sixth and Seventh Graders Overall Fund of Identity Category Across Codes[1]

	What is Important to You?					
Fund of Identity	First Most Important (n = 151)		Second Most Important (n = 149)		Third Most Important (n =146)	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Institutional	45	29	41	27	25	17
Social	30	19	37	24	39	26
Practical	54	35	54	36	61	41
Material	11	7	9	6	9	6
Cultural	1	.70	0	0	0	0
Internal	6	3	6	4	8	5
Geographical	4	2	2	1	4	2
Missing[2]	3	1	5	3	8	5

Note. [1] Percentages rounded down to the nearest whole. Percentages are computed out of those who provided a response. [2]Students did not provide a response or the response was illegible.