A Case of Youth Navigating Structures of

Opportunity in a Chicago Public Military Academy

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THESIS

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This thesis is dedicated to the ordinary young people of Chicago who display extraordinary abilities to transform self and society.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Advanced Placement
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CCSR	Consortium on Chicago School Research
Chicago PMA	Chicago Public Military Academy
CPS	Chicago Public Schools
CAO	Chief Area Officer
DOD	Department of Defense
DFAS	Defense Finance Accounting Service
GAIN	General Assessment of Instructional Need
GAO	General Accounting Office
IDS	Instructional Delivery System
IIRC	Illinois Interactive Report Card
JROTC	Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps
LET	Leadership Education and Training
MIP	Minimum Instructor Pay
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
PMA	Public Military Academy
PSAE	Prairie State Achievement Examination
R2010	Renaissance 2010
USACC	United States Army Cadet Command
WIA	Workforce Investment Act

SUMMARY

A case study of the educational opportunities provided to low-income and minority youth attending a Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA); a military themed public high school was carried out using a qualitative approach that use survey to complement the qualitative design.

To examine how the youth at a Chicago PMA understand the ways in which they experience college preparation and leadership education as two dimensions of a wider opportunity structure and what they believe that means in regards to their current and future aspirations, I collected and analyzed demographic/survey data and qualitative data from four principle sources, which I organized into five phases of research:

A. Site Selection
B. Documentary review of Chicago Public Schools documents and manuals describing youth leadership development and plans to provide opportunities.
C. Survey of PMA youth perspectives on leadership and opportunity in the case program under study.
D. Focus group interviews with case study PMA students and individual interviews with PMA teachers, guidance counselors, and administration.
E. Observations, which included JROTC exercises (e.g. military marching, formations, classroom activities, JROTC student staff activities and inspections), core academic classrooms, after-school programs.

The study finds that students experience the Chicago PMA as an effective opportunity to develop leadership experience and to prepare for post-secondary education. The Chicago PMA students' experience of learning and developing in this context helped me understand how things that are more complicated than they may first appear. An in-depth look into one Chicago PMA illuminates how high school aged youth utilize complex *opportunity frames of youth reference* to negotiate the benefits and limitations of this school reform model.

I. Introduction

"I am an ordinary person who has been blessed with extraordinary opportunities and experiences"
-Chief Justice Sonia Sotomayor, 2009.

"This school has over exceeded my expectations because they have provided me with numerous opportunities. They have taken me places that I've never been before and helped me rise up through tough times. I got a lot out of it… I'm going to a really good college on a really good scholarship"
-Deidra, Chicago Public Military Academy Student, 2010.

A.   Extraordinary Opportunities, Ordinary Students

If asked for the most important evidence that public schools in the United States are not performing up to expectations, most educators, as well as the public in general, point to "the achievement gap." When filtered through popular media, the achievement gap is a phenomenon that has a strong hold on the imaginations of the American public. This educational concept has become "common sense" or an idea that is taken for granted (Kumashiro, 2004). Americans have bought into the idea that the achievement gap is the fault of "failing schools," "bad teachers and bad students," and "irresponsible parents" because common sense appears to convince them that it could not be otherwise.

Some regard the framing of the achievement gap as problematic, because it tends to oversimplify the socio-historical dimensions of the nation's educational system. A few scholars have proposed an alternative mode of thinking to the common sense assumptions associated with the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fine et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Rothstein, 2007). Instead of viewing the achievement gap as a problem that the individual students and their families created, these scholars suggest that the achievement gap should be understood as an outcome of the longstanding inequalities that structurally exist within the United States' educational system. Youth researching the

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achievement gap within a participatory action research framework came to believe that the term "opportunity gap" is a more accurate term than achievement gap because the former focuses on the "structures that deny" while the latter emphasizes "youth that lack" (Fine et. al, 2005, p. 501). While the opportunity gap framework may be promising, little empirical research has been done to explore the meaning of opportunity from the perspective of those most affected –the school-aged youth who are provided or denied a wide range of educational opportunities.

Although opportunity has been defined most recently in terms of teacher quality, enriched curricular offerings and school funding allocation (Education Watch, 2009), many public schools appear to now be experimenting with various youth leadership models as a way to provide additional academic and social opportunities to their students. The schools vary from promoting business, social justice and military models of educational opportunity. Although some may find all of these models of opportunity problematic, I investigated the educational opportunities provided to students attending a Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA) as a recent development in the educational reform landscape. College preparation and leadership opportunities are two dimensions of a wider opportunity structure explored in my study –and more importantly, explored from the perspective of how youth experience these two dimensions while attending one Chicago PMA.

Policy leaders who explicitly connect the "achievement gap" and "failing schools" concepts publicly justify Chicago PMAs as an educational opportunity. It seems sensible to provide new models of schooling that will provide black and Latino youth opportunities for academic success and social-emotional support; however, it is troubling

that these opportunities are directly linked to the military model of education through a

partnership between a large urban public school district and the Department of Defense

(DOD), which complicates this particular new model of schooling.

I designed a qualitative case study that uses a survey to complement the

qualitative design to focus on how students experience the college preparation and

leadership opportunities provided to youth attending a Chicago Public Military Academy

(Chicago PMA). The following questions guided my overall inquiry:

1. What meaning do low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity
   while attending a Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA)? What
   perceptions of their current and future opportunities do low-income students of
   color express in a Chicago PMA? How do these perceptions vary with race,
   ethnicity and gender?
2. How does the Chicago PMA's approach to leadership education and experiences
   for low-income and minority youth shape their sense of opportunity?
3. In what ways do students experience these leadership activities as relevant to their
   current and future aspirations? How do these experiences vary with race, ethnicity
   and gender?
4. How do students' race and gender affect their participation in the PMA and their
   particular experiences in Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) youth
   leadership programming in particular?
5. To what extent, and how, do the findings from questions 1-4 help assess the
   contributions of PMAs to Chicago School Reform?

My commitment to researching this issue is a result of my experience as an eighth grade

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) teacher serving predominantly low-income black youth

and their families. My students influenced how I now understand what is at stake when

addressing a phenomenon of interest that centers issues youth are facing on a daily basis.

One story, in particular speaks directly to how my previous teaching experiences,

assumptions, and personal history have led me study the meaning of opportunity youth

make while attending a Chicago PMA.

B.   This One Story

While my eighth grade students worked on a graffiti-art-meets-geometric-figures math project, I roamed the room within earshot of their small groups. I studied their conversations considering whether I should interrupt in order to bring their sole attention back to the mathematical tasks at hand. I decided to listen and I began to hear them give voice to their anxieties about transitioning to high school. A range of questions and concerns echo in my reflections:

> "Where you gonna go to high school?"
> "That's early. You'll have to get up then to make it to school? That's too far for me."
> "Where did you hear about those other high schools anyway?"
> "What's this, this selective enrollment school you be talking 'bout? How do you get in?"
> "I bet you have to know somebody, you feel me?"

Near that time I had read that in Chicago's public school landscape, a few students (fewer than 2,500 out of more than 12,000 competitive applicants) gain entrance into the highly competitive college prep selective enrollment high schools while the rest of the student body (112,541 students) remain in the neighborhood general and vocational track high schools (Chicago District 299 School Report Card, 2004). I thought just knowing this would help me best advise my students. It was not that simple.

C.   Paradoxical Implications of the Neoliberal Context of Choice

My students were more than capable of choosing a high school that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) intends to invest in, but whether those schools were capable and willing to choose my students was not guaranteed. This remains true today. Admission tests, previous standardized tests scores, selection interviews, and reviews of behavioral records often serve as the more apparent barriers to getting into the school of one's

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choice. Much less apparent are the students' families' social capital; student and families abilities to research the options and to access the proper paperwork; elementary school teachers general lack of awareness of the choice process; the beneficial, but also non-required letters of recommendation; and current sibling status at the school. In fact, the selective enrollment model reveals the "system-wide racial dynamics" of the Chicago Public Schools because "despite the system's 85% African American and Latino/a population, the majority of white students remaining in public schools are found in selective enrollment high schools," which are ranked not only as the best schools in the City of Chicago, but also as the top schools in the state of Illinois (Stovall, 2006, p. 254; Illinois School Report Card, 2013). My students wondered, "What choices do we really have?"

I first advocated for my students to ignore the choice idea; let's just squash it. In its place, I suggested that they give their neighborhood high school a chance. My students shot that idea down. Their astute awareness of the fact that their neighborhood high school did not serve their siblings justly made looking to other options attractive. However, their analysis has limitations. Parker and Margonis (1996) reminds us that while choice plans may appear sympathetic toward the needs of inner city African American and Latino/a families, choice policy "actually evidences a hidden bias against social equity issues in the schools" (p. 719). We were trapped right in the middle of the *paradox of choice*: the desire for better schools makes the idea of choice desirable, while simultaneously the very competitive nature of school choice means that a few students will win out while most others are denied various educational opportunities within this particular political-economic and ideological school reform context. Regardless of how

we looked at the decisions my students and their families were about to make, it was all too clear that the classed and racialized nature of choice within a neoliberal context would place constraints on their freedom to access greater educational opportunity.

We were left to negotiate the situation as best as we could. We realized that Chicago Public Schools disinvestment in their neighborhood high school left us with no sensible option but to look to schools beyond their neighborhoods (Kozol, 1992; Lipman, 2004). The possibility of using school choice reform as a potential pathway out of their decaying neighborhood school pipeline motivated us to seek out options despite the fact we knew many would end up with no choice but to attend their neighborhood high school. Awareness began: the best option was an unsettling policy.

Our school guidance counselor attempted to schedule visits from local high schools, but only one agreed to meet with our eighth graders. The Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA) students were dressed to impress us at this recruitment event. Each student wore a different aspect of the school uniform explaining how important following the uniform code is to earning respect at his/her high school. The couple of students wearing the full dress military uniform spoke of the pride they have in wearing the uniform that soldiers have worn in order to protect our country. Quickly other students jumped in to mention that they don't always have to wear the full dress uniform, but that you also get to wear battle fatigues. Suddenly band instruments were pulled out and several students played a short set of music for us. After a quick demonstration of drill (e.g. marching), the session opened up for Q&A. One of our students asked, "Do you like your school? Why or why not?" One student responded, "Yes, because I feel respected. I can take on leadership roles at school." Another said,

"We have so many extra curricular activities, there is always something fun to do." The event ended with the Chicago PMA students encouraging our students to apply.

When I think back on it, I can feel the excitement my students had that day. I see them proudly holding the glossy, colorful tri-fold Chicago PMA brochures; speaking to each other about the benefits of attending such a school. In all honesty though, not all of my students were that excited. It was my students who were on track academically and it was those who most often refrained from making poor decisions that were most interested in the Chicago PMA opportunity. At first I was surprised by who was interested but then it made sense. Popular media promotes an image of the military model of education as a place for troubled youth, a place where students are disciplined and shaped up or shipped out. While some of this image is true and likely deterred my students who struggle with making better choices from seeing this school as a desirable place to go, the idea of having a structured, quiet place to learn conversely spoke to the practical sensibilities of my higher achieving students. It was my largely self-motivated, ready-to-try-new-things kind of students who wanted me to help them gain admission to the Chicago PMA. They sought out my advice and support.

Now the pressure was on me to respond. First, I allowed my assumptions about the schools underlying commitment to military recruitment guide my thinking and actions. Second, I learned from my students and I let my personal history serve as a guide. Third, I let my first and second approaches toward addressing this dilemma guide me toward the focus of my dissertation research.

D.   Reflection-on-action: Troubling Assumptions

I attended counter-military recruitment workshops because I thought this was going to help me best address my students' inquiries. However, when I encouraged my students to not apply to a Chicago PMA because of my concerns, I insulted my students by assuming that they were unaware of these schools' recruitment agenda for the US Armed Forces. My students had already questioned this aspect of these schools, and they had already reasoned that these schools that require no commitment to serving in the military were going to provide them with educational opportunities that they had yet to experience in their lives. I began to rethink how I frame youth and how I understand and respect their sense of agency.

My students' perspective led me to consider that while I may view Chicago PMAs as an oppressive educational structure the youth attending these schools may use their acquired post-secondary preparation and leadership education and impressive character and clear vision for success to transform themselves beyond the lure of military mobility and toward the achievement of their current and future goals. The time I spent building the trusting relationships that teachers require to guide students through the school choice process led me to realize that my students who appear quite different from me also share many similarities with me.

E.   Reflection-on-my upbringing: Twists and Turns in my Personal History

When I consider my life history and that where I am today is a result of my family's connection to the U.S. Military, my interest in this topic becomes even more complex. My grandfather, a CPS graduate and from an immigrant family of modest means, told me that college was not an option for him; however, he knew in high school

that the military appeared as a viable option because he was drawn to the idea of providing service to the public good. My grandmother often expressed how much she wanted me to be the first in her immediate family to earn a college degree, but it was my grandfather's military stories that captured my imagination.

Some days I wonder how did I not end up serving in the military. While my grandfather's opportunities in the military certainly led me to have a favorable disposition to it, my parents' stories of their college experiences, my father's service in the Peace Corps, my parents' active resistance to war and general pacifist philosophies tempered my ideas about the exciting military life my grandfather led. The weird thing is that my grandfather never intentionally suggested that I serve in the military. I imagine my gender certainly played a role, but I also learned that he himself questioned the use of the U.S. Armed Forces for the purpose of oil profiteering for a few over protecting the public good of the many. It was the power of his stories about the commitment to serving the public good that led me to appreciate the complex role the military as an institution plays in our lives.

In short, my parents' efforts to "peace activate me," as my mom says, in tandem with the example of my grandfather's commitment to public service have most defined my political commitments to justice. Despite this worldview, I still grapple with knowing that I have benefited from the grandfather's military experience while also becoming appreciative of the culture of military life. To what degree have I been empowered and to what degree is that empowerment negated by how I have also been militarized? These contradictions in my life history gave me at least a part of the lens needed to conduct a

study that genuinely assesses the benefits as well as the limitations of the Chicago PMA model of schooling.

F.   Reflection-on-what we know: Developing my Dissertation Research

Once I saw the danger of my assumptions and made connections between my students' current experiences and my personal history, I was then compelled to understand what the research says about how these military-themed high schools promote academics and not recruitment. The problem was that there was little to no research to help teachers like me and students like mine to negotiate the benefits and limitations of attending such a school. I aimed to provide information that students, parents, teachers, and educational researchers need if they are to assess Chicago PMAs as a viable school reform model. This one story of my experience with school choice reveals how the focus of my dissertation research came to center on one controversial and yet under-researched school reform model, the Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA).

G.   What is a Public Military Academy? The Sociopolitical Context

The social context in which schools develop is significant to understanding society's goals for schooling in relation to what is expected of teachers and students. Schools are shaped by how society is organized and by society's systems of beliefs, and conversely schools through educational policy and reform can occasionally have an impact on social values and structures (e.g., Brown v Board of Education, or Title IX). In order to analyze the relative contribution of Public Military Academies to urban school reform, I first start with understanding the national and local context in which these schools emerged. Considering that the realities often do not match the rhetoric, my dissertation will intervene by examining the perspectives of youth attending one Chicago

PMA.

H.   The National Context

A longstanding partnership between the Department of Defense (DOD) and local public school districts through the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program influenced the development of military themed public high schools. One defining feature of all public military academies is the requirement of four years of JROTC participation, whereas most secondary schools offer JROTC as an elective option for a maximum of two-years. Public Military Academies (PMAs), in general, promote the idea that the structure of the military model of discipline, leadership, and public service supports the successful academic, social, and emotional development of its student body.

Currently, the United States is home to seventeen (17) Public Military Academies (PMAs). Geographically, three (3) PMAs exist in the Northeast (Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), two (2) in the Southeast (South Carolina and Virginia), nine (9) in the Midwest (Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin) and three (3) are located in the Southwest (California and New Mexico). Why have public military academies become an attractive reform model concept in the educational landscape?

While the majority of the public military academies entered into the educational landscape after 2000, Roswell, New Mexico opened the first military themed public high school in 1891. Not only is it the first of its kind, but it also remains as the only public boarding military academy in the Nation. From its inception, The New Mexico Military Institute (The Institute) has served and continues to serve both male and female high school students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (New Mexico Military Institute, 2011). The Department of Defense designates The Institute as one of the ten

distinguished public military schools in the nation, as annually 80 graduates of The

Institute gain admission to the nation's top service academies (New Mexico Military

Institute, n.d.). While The Institute is unique in offering a dormitory style campus for its

high school students, its focus on academic rigor sets an example for the rest of the public

military academies in the Nation.

Since Roswell, PMAs have appeared attractive to district administrators for a

number of reasons, among which the following seem most evident: 1) the urgent need for

district officials to address the persistent failure of urban neighborhood secondary

schools, 2) the persistent idea that a highly structured educational environment best

serves the academic and social needs of low-income youth of color, and 3) the ability

these officials have to accomplish these goals through entering into a cost share

agreement with the DOD. Local school districts regard their relationship with the DOD as

one method of providing students with even greater educational opportunities. This

guiding premise in tandem with a rapidly changing educational policy context set the

stage for the expansion of this model of schooling.

The current era of accountability left several district level officials with tough

decisions to make: either improve schools as measured by such school outcomes as

graduation rates, performance on standardized achievement tests, and post-secondary

education enrollment, or face state take-over of their local public schools. As a result,

school districts were pressured to turn struggling schools around without giving much

thought to why their schools were failing (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). Despite the logic of

analyzing school failure (Murphy & Meyers, 2008) and the logic of questioning the

premise of school failure (Hinchey, 2008), several district-level administrators responded

with sudden solutions. The introduction of the majority of public military academy models of schooling into the educational landscape is one example of how school districts experimented with methods of improving high school students' academic performance.

This line of thinking is in part made possible by linking the academic goals of these high schools to that of the highly selective, academically rigorous Public Service Academies. *U.S. News* 2011 Best Colleges report ranks the United States Military Academy (West Point) and the U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis) in the top fifteen (15) of the one hundred and seventy eight (178) ranked Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) Colleges in the Nation; both tied for 14th. The United States Air Force Academy came in at 33rd out of the LAS College lot. The United States Coast Guard Academy and the United States Merchant Marine Academy are ranked in the top five (5) out of forty-seven (47) of the ranked northern Regional Colleges (*U.S. News*, 2011). Based on these rankings, it is not surprising that the Superintendent of Oakland Military Institute in Oakland, California explicitly set his seven-year vision to that of becoming "the West Point of secondary schools" (Oakland Military Institute, 2008).

Additional support for public military academies relates to how we understand youth development, public problems and social policy for youth in general. Pauline Lipman (1998) reminds us,

> Public policy itself may be understood as a set of discursive practices that shape our thinking about public problems and define the universe of public actions and practical choices. From this perspective, policy shapes how we define complex social issues and the range of solutions that appear rational (p. 11).

The social construction of the policy problem determines the policymaking agenda, which in turn influences how the American Public makes sense of the problem as well as

how to take action. The framing of youth as "at-risk" is one example of how the government consciously constructs public opinion (Hinchey, 2008).

In order to create a sense of urgency for appropriate governmental intervention (Kingdon, 1995), public policy has constructed low-income youth and youth of color as "at-risk" (Jensen and Fraser, 2011; Lipman, 1998). The program goals of JROTC is a case example, as it proposes to address the needs of low-income youth and youth of color who are labeled as "at-risk" of academic failure and delinquent behavior (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Marks, 2004; Perez, 2006). Despite what might be good intentions, this particular social construction has led to several unintended consequences.

First, the "at-risk" label privileges the psychological framing of young people as individuals who engage in problem behaviors because that have an inability to perceive risks and have a thrill-seeking personality—or who at least are disposed to making counter-productive choices (Arnett & Balle-Jensen, 1993). This dominant narrative maintains an overly negative, pathological and deficit model of understanding youth development thereby marginalizing alternative approaches that center the strengths and possibilities of youth at the core of theory and practice (Damon, 2004). Within this framework, the military practices of the academies leave many with the impression that the students' undesirable attitudes will be broken down and rebuilt into self-disciplined, high achieving youth leaders much like how the U.S. Army uses basic training to break down enlistees' civilian attitudes and rebuild them as soldiers.

Second, the intense focus on "perverse personal and social characteristics (teen pregnancy, drug use, resistance to school, school failure, dropping out, etc.)" has created an organizing logic where "'at-risk" has become a signifier for race and class and a badge

of deviance pinned on urban youth" (Lipman, 1998, p. 13). "At-risk", as coded language for racialized and class-based stereotypical behavior, further promotes the individualistic idea that youth are "containers of risk", suggesting that there is something wrong with low-income youth and youth of color (Tilleczek, 2011).

The "at-risk" perspective limits how we understand policy problems because it suggests that we fix individual youth instead of the multitude of problems arising from inequitable social, political, and economic structures of society at large and labeling youth "at-risk" conjures up particular stereotypical images of youth that ignores differences within groups in which "expectations for entire groups may be suppressed with unfortunate educational consequence" (Catterall, 1998, p. 305). Some view the public military academies as institutions that serve as a context in which low-income youth and youth of color can develop protective factors against problematic life outcomes. And several others link the racist and classist undertones of the "at-risk" label to question whether public military academies are racist, classist institutions intended to control the behavior and worldview of low-income youth and youth of color.

Lastly, risk is almost always framed as problematic (i.e. resulting in negative outcomes) when risk is often beneficial and needed for young people to develop healthily (Tilleczek, 2011). For example, youth who try something new and learn from the process are exhibiting beneficial risk. In the end, the "at-risk" discourse that is prevalent in youth development and public policy realms supports the development of an organizing logic that deems some youth as more desirable than others, as if an "optimal" youth exists (Tillezcek, 2011). Despite the ways that the label "at-risk" blames individual youth for the challenges they face in life, rather than identifying the socio-historical, political

economic structures that discriminate against them, the public's racialized anxiety about destructive, violent youth of color is prevalent in society.

Proponents of the public military model of education often play right into the public's belief that safety that will result from the development of young people who are controllable and well disciplined. For example, leading up to the inception of the first public military academy without a residency requirement, the Richmond School Board formed a committee to determine if there was enough community support for a public military school. The committee developed and administered a parent/student survey in order to determine whether a public military school "might help improve discipline and general attitudes of the students" (Franklin Military Academy, n.d.). Parents and students within the community found the idea attractive, and soon after, Franklin Military Academy opened its doors in 1980. Under the direct leadership of Chicago's Mayor Daley, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) ushered in the second wave of public military themed high schools. His reason for expanding JROTC into full-fledged academies reflects a similar deficit logic stating,

> We started these academies because ... JROTC provides students with the order and discipline that is too often lacking at home. It teaches them time management, responsibility, goal setting, and teamwork, and it builds leadership and self-confidence (Daley, 2001).

Managing the behavior of low-income youth and youth of color is a guiding purpose of the development of the public military academies in the United States.

While the academic, discipline, leadership, and citizenship promotion of the public military academies proved attractive, the financial investment on behalf of the DOD is equally alluring. Congress determines the number of JROTC units that the Armed Services can establish, which then determines the total amount of funding

allocated to the partnering local school district. For example, Section 548 of the 2009 Authorization Bill supports the increase of JROTC units to 3,700 by September 30, 2020 in an effort to increase the employment options of retiring or retired military officers (S.3001). Although opponents of the program often question Congress' support of JROTC, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported a cost-benefit analysis of 127 youth development programs including JROTC (September 1997). The GAO concluded that the funding for JROTC is quite moderate in comparison to other programs, as funding for JROTC is comprised of only 4 percent of the more than $4.5 billion that is spent on programs that produce equal results (GAO, 1997; Taylor, 1999).

One difficult aspect of understanding the funding streams for JROTC has to do with the fact that each individual branch of the military is responsible for its own program. In particular, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget of each branch of the military uses the DOD Appropriations Bill and the Presidential Budget line items on Training and Education as well as Maintenance and Operation to guide the formulation of the budgets for each of their respective JROTC programs. Public Law further determines the formula used to calculate the salaries of the JROTC instructors. The administration of the Cadet Command Center establishes expenditures in the following two main areas: 1) administrative oversight of the program and 2) curricular and technological provisions including uniforms.

A central debate revolves around the question of whether or not local school districts benefit financially by entering into this contractual agreement with the Armed Forces. Opponents claim that JROTC is a financial drain on local school districts because the salaries of the JROTC instructors are more costly than the civilian, state certified

teachers (Galaviz, Palafox, Meiners, and Quinn, 2011; Jahnkow, 2011). Although the program's opponent's general concerns about the consequence of JROTC militarizing our society are warranted, the overall conclusion that school districts pay a high price for the establishment of units in their schools is unfounded. The evidence presented in my research indicates that school principals can hire on average three (3) military instructors for the cost of one (1) state certified teacher. I will provide a complete analysis of the funding for JROTC in chapter two, the literature review.

In sum, then, the public military academies developed and continue to develop during a political moment when public high schools are framed as failing institutions, low-income youth of color are perceived as undesirable, and school districts are burdened financially. The idea of developing these schools in the image of the highly ranked Service Academies at the very least sounds impressive and at the very best raises expectations for academic rigor. The military model of structure in tandem with the military model of youth leadership development aims to provide low-income youth and high school students of color a safe and yet challenging learning environment. Lastly, the partnership between local school districts and the four branches of the Armed Services is desirable because the local schools benefit financially without predetermining military enlistment for its student body. As a result, PMAs not only draw the attention of local school officials and the families served by the district but also that of financial speculators and city developers.

I.   Chicago Context: Neoliberal Development Strategies in Practice

Chicago, like many American cities, has the tremendous challenge of recovery from its decades-long history of de-industrialization, disinvestment, and white flight.

Education does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is caught up in the middle of Chicago's intended transition from decay to revitalization. The following section reviews the ideological and spatial contexts in which Chicago schools experience community change. I begin by accepting that for current urban economic development, neoliberalism is the dominant ideological paradigm, and gentrification is its spatial manifestation.

David Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. Additionally, neoliberalism is the doctrine that market exchange is an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide for all human action" (p. 3). For policy, this means that competitiveness, deregulation, and privatization play a key role in causing neoliberalism's end result of gentrification of cities, for, following Pauline Lipman (2004) and Saksia Sassen (2006) cities have a renewed importance as nodes of control and innovation for the globalizing neoliberal economy.

Competitiveness, as a development strategy, is essentially one of attracting businesses and high-income residents; such a strategy recognizes the need for both in order to revitalize. If one attribute of competitiveness is high-skill and high-income job creation, cities must make themselves hospitable to high-income residents. Opening new schools with selection processes and a specialized curriculum attracts high-income residents and becomes another catalyst of neighborhood change.

Deregulation involves the removal of government oversight of the production of goods and the provision of services. Consequently, it also involves a decline in public

participation in the regulation of production and provision. Advocates argue that

deregulation "frees-up" the private sector to operate more efficiently. Because it is in line

with the interests of capital, John Betancur (2005) argues that "deregulation" is a

misnomer; more accurately it is a new model of regulation. Critics identify loss of

community control, union-busting, and teacher certification loopholes as deregulation's

negative implications for schools.

Simply defined, privatization is "any shift of the production of goods and services

from public to private" (Starr, 1988). A city's interest in privatizing policy may be the

passing on of responsibility (and consumer complaints) to a third party (Starr, 1988).

Supporters assert that privatization will "give greater choice, introduce competition, and

result in improved services at remarkably lower costs" (Uhlfelder, 1996, p. 68). Critics of

privatization question whether the revenue generated from selling public assets is worth

the loss of control, management, and future development. Also, privatization runs the

danger of charging the consumer twice: once for the cost of the service via taxes and

again for the profit margin for the provider via user fees (Uhlfelder, 1996, p. 90).

Privatization has myriad consequences for public education. From a community

perspective, one negative consequence of the privatization of schools is a loss of control

and accountability for the community. This Chicago-style privatization is especially

problematic for city schools where people of color have long struggled to gain more

active involvement in the education of their children (Lipman, 2004). From a

management perspective, privatization increases responsibility on the school to succeed.

Usually schools have a several-year contract to "swim or sink" (Dell'Angela, 2005). The

potentially harmful consequence of this arrangement (school closure) is passed on to the students and their families, not to mention taxpayers citywide.

Educational policy in the City of Chicago takes place in the context of these neoliberal development strategies. Under the tutelage of former Mayor of Chicago, Richard Daley, Renaissance 2010 (R2010) served as a comprehensive reform plan for Chicago's education, and typifies trends of competitiveness, deregulation, and privatization. R2010 is a plan that aimed to close 60 to 70 low-performing schools and reopen 100 new "Renaissance Schools." According to a statement by the former mayor, "This model will generate competition and allow for innovation" (Daley, Renaissance 2010, n.d.). The current Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emmanuel, has maintained this agenda, although the language has shifted to that of 'school turnaround' or "a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that produces significant gains in student achievement within two academic years" (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007). The Chicago Public Military Academies (Chicago PMAs) are a part of this neoliberal development and school reform plan.

In order for large corporate headquarters to operate and specialized services to occur, bankers, lawyers, and accountants require 'good' neighborhoods and 'good' schools. Even though it is likely the Chicago PMAs will not serve as places of learning for the children of the city's business elites, the schools' emphasis on discipline and leadership serve as a symbolic measure of neighborhood safety; safety that attracts capital to the city. Geographically speaking, the majority-if not all- of the Chicago PMAs, tend to be gentrifying communities (it goes beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide

compelling evidence that all of these communities are gentrifying, but all of these areas are regarded as gentrifying to some degree.).

Additionally, the development of the Chicago PMAs coincides with the radical restructuring of U.S. labor markets that mark global cities as the testing ground for a world of increased polarization in workers: a few entitled to high tech and high paying corporate positions and the rest fitting into the service positions to meet the needs of high tech professionals and corporate headquarters. Additionally, the workforce is becoming highly stratified by class, race, ethnicity and gender as, "The great majority of the workers in the new low-wage and contingent workforce are immigrants, people of color and women" (Lipman, 2004, p.10). The current political-economic context in Chicago supports the idea that serving in the military may appear as a viable option if one cannot ascend into the top tier and wants to avoid the bottom tier of occupations. Chicago PMAs serve as a place for inner city youth to develop a contingency plan, in that if post-secondary opportunities remain limited, they have a back-up plan. Essentially, PMA students can 'try on' the military culture/life during their years in high school without any requirements to serve. In conclusion a stratified and depressed labor market would be likely to make PMAs attractive to lower-income youth and youth of color living in the City of Chicago.

J. **Characteristics of a Chicago Public Military Academy**

Chicago is home to not only the largest JROTC program in the nation, but it is also host to just over a third of all the stand-alone military-themed public high schools in the nation ("Chicago JROTC," n.d.). The Chicago context is especially unique, because all four branches of the Armed Forces are represented.

TABLE I
REPRESENTATION OF U.S. MILITARY BRANCHES IN CHICAGO PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

U.S. Military Branches	Air Force	Army	Marine	Navy
Public Military Academies (stand-alone)	1	3	1	1
Public Military Academies (within a school)	0	1	0	0
JROTC Program Schools (elective offering)	1	30	3	4
Total Citywide	45			

The Army JROTC is the largest program in the city, and has the largest budget. I will use the Army figures as an example that generally to the other branches, on a per-school level. Funding figures from May 2011 indicate that the CPS Army JROTC administrative budget was set at $204,000.00, with an average administrator salary at $53,000.00 and the instructor salary budget was set at $3,526,305.00, of which CPS is responsible for 41% of the cost share or $2,080,520.00. 100 students = 1 instructor; 10,000 students = 100 instructors in the system (figures indicate that CPS pays $23,000 on average per instructor).

However, the Army JROTC is the largest program in the city, therefore it has largest budget. Funding figures from May 2011 indicate that the CPS Army JROTC total budget was set at $3,730,305.00 (MAJ S. Green, personal communication, November 15, 2011). The administrative budget was set at $204,000.00, with an average administrator salary at $53,000.00 and the CPS Army JROTC instructor salary budget was set at $3,526,305.00. While some figures indicate that the average salary for a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) JROTC instructor in 2009-2010 was $75,400.37 whereas the average salary for CPS teachers was $69,000, it appears that the instructor salary figure provided does not reflect the cost share agreement (Galaviz, Palafox, Meiners and Quinn, 2011).

My research indicates that the average Chicago Public Schools (CPS) JROTC instructor salary in 2009-2010 was $47,000.00 (MAJ S. Green [pseudonym], personal communication, November 15, 2011). Once the cost share is realized; the military refunds on average $23,500.00 per instructor in CPS. Another way to look at this figure is that CPS on average only pays an annual salary of $23,500.00 per instructor, which is considerably less than the average annual salary of a CPS teacher (MAJ S. Green, personal communication, November 15, 2011). In fact, at least in one PMA insider's point of view, the sentiment among CPS administration is that JROTC is "regarded as the cheapest asset to CPS" (MAJ S. Green, personal communication, November 15, 2011).

In addition to the funding formulas, Chicago PMAs share six distinct characteristics, which include: required Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) participation, small school design, school turnaround philosophy, selective enrollment policies, college preparatory curricula, and high poverty, high minority student enrollment; all of which relates to the political economic context and ideological underpinnings of the neoliberal development strategies in the City of Chicago.
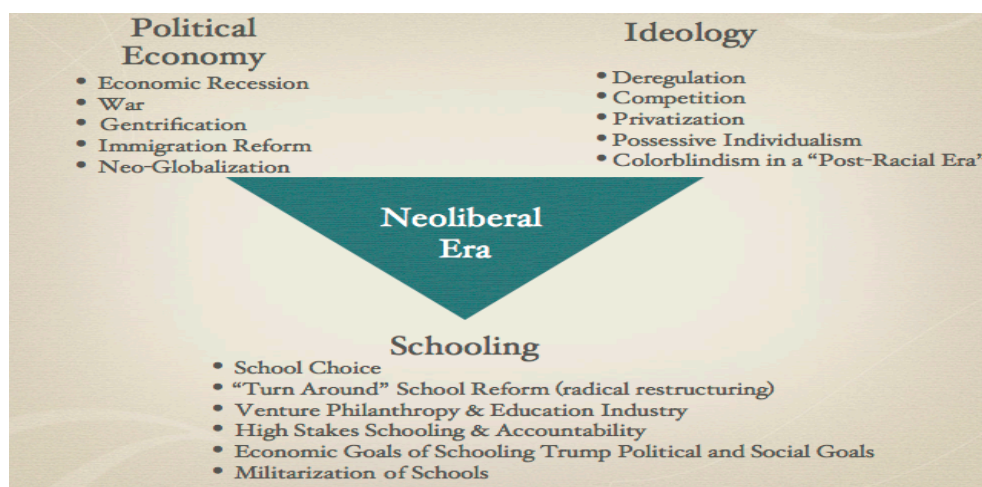
Figure 1: The development of public military academies in the Chicago context "Three-part analytic frame" adapted from Tozer, Senese, Violas (2012) School and Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

K. Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Participation: Shared Characteristic #1

Unlike the neighborhood schools where JROTC is an elective, students who attend a Chicago PMA are required to participate all four years of high school. The main mission of JROTC is "to motivate young people to be better citizens" (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). Supporting objectives include: citizenship promotion, leadership development, communication skills enhancement, strengthening of self-esteem, incentives to live drug free, physical fitness improvement, and the promotion of high school graduation (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). In order to meet these objectives, the JROTC curriculum addresses citizenship, leadership, communications, military history, drug awareness, and physical fitness. Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA) students are to comply with military uniform codes as well as attend JROTC class everyday.

L. Small School Model: Shared Characteristic #2

Chicago PMAs fit the small school model in that each of the schools serves a student population of less than 550 students (Chicago District 299 School Report Card, 2010). Several studies indicate that the small school model is beneficial to students' academic and social success. For example, Cotton's (1996) review of 31 studies found that students who attend small schools achieve "equal-and often superior-to" students learning within a large school (p. 5). In regards to additional indicators of successful learning outcomes, small schools also report higher graduation rates (Gregory, 2000; Walberg, 1992), higher attendance rates (Fowler, 1995; Wasley & Lear, 2001), and higher matriculation into college rates (Cotton, 1996).

While the evidence on student achievement in small schools is promising, Cotton (2001) cautions that effects of smallness and student learning outcomes are indirect because other factors such as school climate and school connectedness matter significantly. In particular, small schools support healthy social development by providing students with the following: safer schools (Gregory, 2000), a variety of extracurricular opportunities (Cotton, 1996) and strong, democratically oriented adult-student relationships (Ayers, Klonsky, & Lyons, 2000; Meier, 1996). Just as the correlation between school size and achievement is difficult to make, student achievement at the Chicago PMAs may not only be a result of the military structure, but also connected to other variables such as school size, environment, and connectedness.

M.   Radical Restructuring: Shared Characteristic #3

Although it is true that Chicago PMAs are not included in the official "turnaround" policies enacted by CPS, they do fit the "turnaround challenge" school reform philosophy (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007). The current era of accountability ushered in by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) led several policy leaders to explicitly connect the "achievement gap" and "failing schools" concepts. Schools that do not meet "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) toward the goal of the state standard of "proficiency" by 2014 face reconstitution. The focus on "failing schools" put pressure on local school districts to turn these schools around (Arsen, Bell, & Plank, 2003). As in large, inner city centers nationwide, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) was obligated to respond but did so without giving much thought to why their schools were failing (Murphy & Meyers, 2008).

Consequently, CPS intensified its commitment to the use of neoliberal free market reforms to meet such challenges. Neoliberals transpose market theory onto public educational settings turning public education into a commodity and students into consumers (Burbles and Torres, 2000; Lipman, 2004). As stated previously, ideas of competition, deregulation, and privatization guide CPS educational policy and practice. The concept of school choice, for instance, serves as an example of neoliberal theory put into educational practice.

In an effort to recover from the "failing schools" crisis, Chicago public and charter schools, in particular, experimented with school choice as a way to improve such outcomes as graduation rates, performance on standardized achievement tests, and post-secondary education enrollment. In order to entice students with the school choice model, CPS created concept schools that promote business to social justice to science or language academy models of education; all of which create an educational marketplace of choice. CPS claims that these concept schools serve as a "hook" used to keep students in school, in which case military culture became the "hook" in the Chicago PMA.

As more research became available on various approaches to turning schools around, it appears that the Chicago Public Military Academies also underwent dramatic transformations specific to the turnaround approach proposed by Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007). Their research suggests that a coherent, effective turnaround initiative incorporates the following elements: "changing conditions, capacity building, and clustering for support" (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007, p. 6).

According to Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash (2007), a "protected space" is needed to produce the changing conditions required of effective turnarounds (p. 6). Within this space, turnaround leaders are given the authority to act. For example, CPS enabled Chicago PMA turnaround leaders to skirt around current union contracts in order to fire ineffective teachers regardless of tenure status. This change empowered Chicago PMA principals to put in place the teachers who were ready for the challenge of turning failing schools around.

In addition to changing the conditions needed to support successful school turnarounds, CPS also focused on capacity building. Specifically, CPS developed external partnerships that employed an "integrated approach that aligns outside support around the turnaround plan" (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007, p. 7). All of the Chicago PMAs had educational management partners that helped them develop and implement the turnaround plan. Additionally, education foundations provided the Chicago PMAs with financial support. For instance, the McCormick Foundation and Tawani Foundation supports the Chicago JROTC district wide programs including the programs within the Chicago PMAs ("Chicago JROTC," n.d.). Moreover, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation invested in the Chicago PMAs through the High School Transformation Project, which supported the implementation of the Instructional Delivery System (IDS) curriculum and the creation of school computer labs within the Chicago PMAs (Chicago Public Schools, 2006).

Beyond these two key elements, CPS also organized turnaround schools in clusters as a way to provide valuable support to each other. At a time when CPS was reducing its number of central administrators, CPS invested in a whole new

administrative arm to oversee the Chicago public military high school turnaround model. Within a short time after hiring these administrators, Chicago went from hosting two Army themed public high schools to that of seven, which represent all of the military branches. This expansion coincided with the formation of The Area or the original cluster of military themed public high schools. The turn around team within this cluster created additional conditions for change that speaks directly to the fourth and fifth characteristics of the Chicago PMA.

N.   **Selective Enrollment: Shared Characteristic #4**

Selective enrollment policies set forth by the Office of Academic Enhancement guide the admissions policies. In order to gain admission to a public military academy, students must first apply by filling out a Scantron sheet or by filling out the online application. The students must meet academic selection criteria and interview for a position at the school. Additionally, parents/guardians and students must sign a contract that requires their compliance to the military model of school conduct.

It is important to note that within this educational context that a selective enrollment public military academy may appear to be a better choice than attending a neighborhood school not because it provides the best opportunities necessarily, but because it is all the market has to offer this population. In this case, it appears that the Chicago context promotes "constrained choices" of a hierarchical nature in the same way that choice making is always constrained by the free-market system (Harvey, 2005). Nevertheless, the promise of better educational opportunities appears to entice Chicago youth, and the leadership strand of the public military academies may meet the needs of individual students as well as business and community interests.

O.   College Preparation: Shared Characteristic #5

The Chicago PMA is designed to offer a college preparatory curriculum and college going support structure. Therefore, a successful Chicago PMA reflects an effective merger of two models of organizational structure. One model is based upon a college preparatory process, which includes the school principal as the educational leader, the assistant principal as the disciplinarian, the school counselors as the leaders of the postsecondary department, the staff members who maintain records as well as other administrative tasks, and the state certified civilian educators who teach the core academic and elective subject matter. The other model is based upon the military model of discipline and leadership including the Commandant as the leader of the JROTC Department who serves the schools as an additional disciplinarian and 1 JROTC instructor per 100 students (e.g. a Chicago PMA with 500 students enrolled has 5 JROTC instructors) (U.S. Army Cadet Command, 2004).

The military model is present in the core academic subject matter classrooms only in terms of the students' uniforms and basic structure. It is common to observe all of the students in their military uniforms in all classes and it is also common to witness an opening exercise intended to help students' focus on the learning that needs to take place in that class period. For example, a student leader will bring the class to attention and lead the class in saying the "Cadet Creed" at the beginning of the period.

The class leader will also assist the teacher with administrative tasks such as taking attendance and uniform compliance checks. Some Chicago PMAs include specific military style protocol used for transitioning from one period to the next whereas others

do not. In the more structured environment, students are in lines and they are expected to carry their textbooks under their right arm in a specific military style standard.

Additionally, the core academic subject teachers are encouraged to use physical military style activities such as push-ups and crab walks as punishments for various student enacted infractions. These two models along with the four pillars of Chicago Public Schools' college preparation model are intended to work together to support a college-going culture at the Chicago PMAs. The fours pillars are awareness, readiness, access, and success and serve as a guiding framework for chapter four.

P.   **Student Populations of Color: Shared Characteristic #6**

Chicago PMAs serve predominantly low-income high school students of color. In 2010 and on average, 46% of the students attending all Chicago PMAs within a 20-75% range are Black; 47% of the students within a range of 22-62% are Latino; 5% of the students within a range of 2%-12% are White; and 2% of the students within a range of 0-5% are Asian. While it seems only sensible to provide new models of schooling that will provide affirming academic and social experiences for the lower income African American and Latino/a high school students who are least successful in existing schools, the fact that these opportunities are directly linked to the military complicates the efficacy of this particular new model of schooling. The current political economic context of war and recession, juxtaposed with a public school system that is perceived as failing to educate its students for economic and political citizenship, situates the development of the Public Military Academies within a polarized debate.

Opponents to this model are concerned that these schools function as vehicles for military recruitment of low-income students of color (Berlowitz and Long, 2003; EnLoe,

2000; Lipman, 2004; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995; Perez, 2006), while proponents insist that it embodies an equity agenda, since the military is perceived as an avenue for social mobility (Hajjar, 2005; Laurence & Ramsberger, 1991; Moskos & Butler, 1996). Still a few others contemplate the complex contradictions of the opportunity by considering the military's commitment to black achievement (Moskos & Butler, 1996) and egalitarian racial and gender roles or lack thereof (Clark Hine, 1982; Perez, 2006). Therefore, the focus of my dissertation research is on understanding how youth make sense of their educational experience at one Chicago PMA case under study, their perceptions of the opportunities available to them, and how they view issues of race and gender as it intersects with their experiences of learning and developing within a Chicago PMA.

Q.   **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it is attempting to provide timely research on an emerging school reform model that has been largely scrutinized only theoretically by both proponents and opponents of the public military model of education. It is even more critical that empirical data be collected by conducting a genuinely descriptive inquiry into the most important dimensions of the Chicago PMA educational model as opposed to conducting the study to prove a conclusion that solely supports one side of the controversy. Pushing political ideologies and economic context aside, this educational reform model while appearing repressive to its critics, could suggest practices that in fact reduce educational disparities. Because so little is empirically known about whether or not public military academies are successful in improving student learning outcomes and improving students' views on their access to current and future opportunities, my dissertation study aims to address this lack of scholarship.

To do so, I designed a qualitative case study that uses survey to complement the qualitative design to explore how low-income youth of color in the City of Chicago make sense of the educational opportunities offered to them and how they view issues of race and gender as it intersects with their leadership development through the JROTC program offered by the Chicago PMA under study. The in-depth focus, or the ability to "learn the intricate complexity of one case", is a strength of case study design (Yin, 1994). Considering that leadership education and social opportunities are largely housed programmatically within the JROTC strand of the military themed high school, case study is an appropriate design because the program is the object of study or case. I interpreted the program in the context of the school, the school system, and wider social contexts that bear upon the multiple meanings of the program.

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

A. Literature Review

Ordinary people, whether soldiers or civilians, experience and react to the military differently. There are numerous factors that shape how people perceive the Armed Forces: one's previous life experiences; one's family background and one's intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and ability complicate how the military, as an institution is valued. While many view the military as an opportunity for social, economic and political advancement, others regard it as a vehicle of imperialism, militarism and violence. Still others are compelled to consider how one's experiences with the military can provide privileges and disadvantages simultaneously. A review of the literature on the relationship between schools and the Armed Forces reveals a central paradox: In the process of participating in JROTC (the most common relationship between schools and the Armed Forces across the US), students have access to opportunities that lead to identifiable and desirable learning outcomes, while at the same time making it nearly impossible to avoid becoming overly appreciative of and at times indebted to the culture of military life. Given the emphasis on youth leadership development in the JROTC program, it is important to assess the leadership opportunities provided youth participating in JROTC. Will it, too, prove paradoxical?

1. Situating Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps

In order to explore the central paradox of the reviewed literature, setting the program in the policy context as well as providing a brief description of the program is important. I will briefly outline some key aspects of the program in this section.

When the US military is short of the adult male soldiers that it imagines it needs to maintain national security, it lobbies policymakers to define this issue as a policy problem. As a result, policies are formed to address the recruitment needs of the military. It is in this regard that military recruiters are granted permission and funding to gaze upon public school-aged youth. These programs include the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), which exists within public schools and the Civil Air Patrol Teens, DOD STARBASE, National Guard Youth ChalleNGe, Naval Sea Cadet Corps, U.S. Army Cadet Corps, and Young Marines which are youth development programs that operate outside of public schools. The most well known program is JROTC, and it is the focus of my dissertation research because it is a four-year commitment required of high school students attending the Chicago PMAs.

Although JROTC was first established under the National Defense Act of 1916, few high schools originally established units, whereas 76 years after its inception the program started to gain widespread popularity (Funk, 2002). Bartlett and Lutz (1998) explain that this shift occurred because of two, albeit different, sociopolitical contexts in which JROTC experienced recognition. The first context speaks to its years of origin during World War I where "class-coded pedagogy, the proper aim of education for the new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, and the value of universal military training or paramilitary training for youth" dominated the discussions surrounding JROTC (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998, p. 2). The second context overlaps with the rapid expansion of JROTC in the 1990s "when racial formations more than class have structured the program's curriculum, demographics and the debate over them" (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998, p. 2). What influenced the racialization of JROTC programs in the 1990s?

One theory suggests that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell's immediate visit to the sites of the LA riots of April 1992 signaled a paradigm shift. For example, it is documented that he left convinced that JROTC, with its focus on responsible citizenship and respect for authority, "is the best opportunity for the Department of Defense to dissuade young people from destructive behavior and guide them along more productive paths" (Memorandum, 1992). With the lobbying assistance of President George H. Bush, Secretary of Defense Cheney and Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, Congress mandated General Colin Powell's proposal to increase JROTC funding to support an additional 3,500 high schools (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Funk, 2002). The mounting fear of youth that lack discipline in tandem with educational systems in need of funding and the reality that soldiers needed employment during non-active military duty maintained JROTC's importance as a federal program designed to address societal social and moral ills (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001).

2. The Expansion of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps

Operation *Young Citizen*, the US Army Cadet Command name for the plan, doubled enrollment and increased unit strength by 60% from 1992-2000; marking it as the fastest growing program in the DOD in that timeframe (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; EnLoe, 2000). This rapid expansion includes the operation of programs all over the world including JROTC units in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam and DOD operated schools for military dependents in Europe and Asia (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Funk, 2002). From 1992 to 1998, American high school student enrollment in Army JROTC grew from 211,000 to 330,000 (EnLoe, 2000; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). By 2000, 300 high schools were placed on a waiting list for new units

(Coumbe and Corbett, 2001). By 2010, all branches now sponsor JROTC units in as many as 3,500 high schools with a half million (500,000) students in participation nationwide, in which over half of the total enrollment (281,000 participants) is sponsored by the Army alone (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010). The widespread and exponential growth of JROTC makes it the oldest and largest federally funded youth development program to date.

3.   **Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Mission**

What is the stated purpose of JROTC? The main mission is "to motivate young people to be better citizens" (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). The program's vision is stated as, "providing a quality citizenship, character, and leadership development program, while fostering partnerships with communities and educational institutions" (U.S. Army Cadet Command, n.d.). Supporting program objectives include: citizenship promotion, leadership development, critical thinking skills development, communication skills enhancement, strengthening of self-esteem, incentives to live drug free, physical fitness improvement, and the promotion of high school graduation and college/work readiness (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Marks, 2004; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010; U.S. Army Cadet Command, n.d.). In order to meet these objectives, each branch established an instructional design advisory committee of experts in the field of curriculum and instruction to design the curriculum (Taylor, 1999).

4.   **Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Curriculum**

Advocates of JROTC claim that the curriculum supports best practice strategies similar to those the U.S. Department of Education recommends to improve student-learning outcomes (National Association of State Boards of Education). One example of

the program's best practices relates to how the curriculum is under girded by a holistic approach to student development. While the curriculum supports the student's core academic success, additional emphasis is placed on supporting the potential of every student's emotional, social, physical, and creative abilities. The curriculum supports this strategy through its intense focus on "developing values that are the foundation of being a responsible individual" in each participant (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010), in which case the JROTC program is further aligned with the Character Education Partnership's 11 Principles of Effective Character Education (Rice and Banton, 2001).

In order to insure that JROTC program objectives support desired learning outcomes, the curriculum periodically undergoes revision in order to better align the program's objectives with states' academic standards and with Common Core standards (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010). Additionally, the current JROTC curriculum continues to parallel recommendations and standards put forth by the National Education Goals (i.e. Goals 2000), the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, and the President's Summit for America's Future (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). JROTC leadership acknowledges that incorporation of their curriculum goals into local, state and national academic standards is needed in order to maintain successful units (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010).

The alignment of JROTC curriculum objectives with larger curriculum standards increases the credibility of the program. As states and local school districts develop 21st Century Learning Standards, JROTC leadership has redesigned the curriculum to support these new goals (Vanderbleek, 2009). For example, the JROTC curriculum supports 21st

century learning goals such as global awareness, civic literacy, health and wellness awareness support, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving skills, communication and collaboration skills, social and cross cultural skills, flexibility and adaptability, information, media, and technology literacy.

Additionally, JROTC curriculum developers are aware of the benefits of a relevant curriculum in that a relevant curriculum helps students remain interested in learning (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010). Therefore, the curriculum put into practice supports a student-centered approach with ample hands on learning opportunities. Moreover, the curriculum supports the use of personalized learning plans that supports student metacognition (Sousa, 2005). For example, the personalized learning plans guides the students through the following questions:

- Why is learning this important?
- What will I learn to do?
- How will I know that I'm succeeding?
- What knowledge and skills will I learn along the way?
- How will I learn to do it?
- How will I show that I have learned? (Vanderbleek, 2009).

The personalized learning plans further help the military instructors differentiate instruction in order to best meet the needs of their students. While the personalized learning plans help students take responsibility for their own learning, the students are also exposed to several personal awareness tools that help them self-reflect, self-assess and self-monitor their personal development through research-based behavioral assessments (e.g. "Winning Colors") and skill-building system (e.g. "The Success Profiler").

In addition to these core curriculum objectives, the US Army code also states that JROTC intends to "create favorable attitudes and impressions toward the Services and

toward careers in the Armed Forces" (32 CFR 542.5:3c). Appreciation is generated through the formal curriculum or what the instructors intend to teach as well as through the informal curriculum or the unintended lessons that often send subtle and yet powerful messages to students. The JROTC formal curriculum includes military history and leadership training coursework as well as explicit exposure to career options that emphasize the honor, incentives and sense of empowerment that result from military service (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Funk, 2002). The informal curriculum primarily centers on the relationships the JROTC instructors build with their students. Of most significance, they serve as role models who treat their students with respect and recognition (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Hajjar, 2005; Perez, 2006). Whereas the informal curriculum appears beneficial to the students, it does not come without some possible consequences. Berlowitz and Long (2003) employ Johan Galtung's concept of "structural violence" or the "indirect violence that arranges institutions so that they systematically discriminate against specific groups; such discrimination is legitimated by dehumanizing ideologies such as racism" to bring awareness to the subtle messages that appear to disproportionately encourage the enlistment of students from low-income and historically disadvantaged groups in the US to JROTC and the military.

The JROTC formal curriculum in tandem with the informal curriculum appears to effectively support the goal of generating an appreciation for occupations in the Armed Forces because survey data indicates that 45 percent of all graduates of the program enlist in the military (EnLoe, 2000; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Lutz and Bartlett, 1995). While many support the goals of citizenship building, leadership training and many other JROTC goals of social advancement and academic achievement, many others question

and challenge the goals of JROTC. Some contend that the program is an unacceptable use of funding because it contradicts the main goals of the Armed Forces (e.g. military readiness). These opponents argue that the military should avoid involvement in civilian projects; especially projects that are intended to mainly provide role models for underserved youth (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). Still many others insist that the JROTC's goal of generating an appreciation of military services and their accomplishments serves the sole purpose of militarizing the nation's youth.

5. Paradoxical Implications of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps

It should come as no surprise that JROTC supports the process of militarization or the "step-by-step process by which something becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from the military as an institution or militaristic criteria" (EnLoe, 2000, p. 291). Moreover, militarization is not just about mobilizing people for armed conflict: it also serves to legitimatize the military's needs and actions including seeing violence as acceptable, normal, and even valuable (EnLoe, 2000). In other words, militarization consists of blurring the boundaries between what is acceptable in military life and what is acceptable in civilian life (Adelman, 2003; Feldman, 2002).

Naturally, many proponents argue that this is not the focus of the program and may even suggest that this is not a problem because it speaks to instilling values such as loyalty, self-discipline, and perseverance in youth that are perceived as beneficial to society (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). Those opposed to the militarization of youth may also find instilling values in youth important but are likely to also question the JROTC's motive for instilling these particular values. To be sure, many opponents are concerned that the JROTC curriculum is designed to discourage critical thinking, a skill set

recognized as useful to developing an awareness of the contradictions inherent in appreciating military culture (Berlowitz, 2000).

The central paradox of the reviewed literature reveals contradictions inherent in many historical moments in which ordinary people have used the military to advance movements for social justice. During the suffragist movement, for instance, women activists viewed supporting war as an opportunity to be valued as a citizen (EnLoe, 2000). Over time, women activists added women's rights to serve in the military as equals to men. Not only women soldiers but also women in general are necessary to the development and success of the military because they tend to provide a sense of normalcy that is valued by the military culture.

Women willing to marry into the military are one example. Military wives, in particular, refer to themselves as "serving" and in fact are regarded albeit unacknowledged as the "backbone of social services on most bases" (EnLoe, 2000, p. 72). Women, whether military wives or not, willing to view mothering as a national activity is yet another example of the important role of women in the process of militarization (EnLoe, 2000). Whereas women's reproductive roles in society have been incredibly undervalued, the military's validation of mothers encourage women to raise their children to have favorable attitudes of the military and works to guarantee the existence of the military generations later. These historical case examples compel me to ask: What percentage of the students participating in the JROTC that do not enlist in the military become part of the other essential support networks that the culture of the military needs to remain seen as normal and appealing? Will they become military spouses and/or parents of children committed to military service?

Although both of these historical examples offered women opportunities previously denied, they also allowed the military to exert greater control over their lives thereby constraining ultimate equality, autonomy and value. The question becomes, "Were these women maneuvered or empowered—or both?" (EnLoe, 2000, p. 9). An additional case from World War II, often "dubbed as the forgotten years of the Negro Revolution," is an example of the interrelatedness of the use of military to advance racial and gender justice (Clark Hine, 1982, p. 241). Therefore, both male and female blacks viewed the emergency of war as an opportunity to advocate for the full realization of their rights as American citizens and as human beings.

In one particular case, Mabel K. Staupers, "heretofore unheralded and virtually ignored executive secretary of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses," had as her main objective to use the high demand for nurses to serve the wartime needs of the military to bring national attention to the rights of Black American nurses to be valued not only in the military, but also in mainstream American nursing (Clark Hine, 1982, p. 244-5). Stauper's leadership "displayed a sense of timing and political maneuvering" that helped organize a movement that successfully challenged the highly racist top tiers of the U.S. Army and Navy, thereby forcing them to accept black women nurses into the ranks during World War II (Clark Hine, 1982, p. 255).

Although the success of this campaign indicates that the military, at times, is more progressive than other societal institutions, it also reinforces militarism by highlighting that service in the military is an extremely valued activity that appears to reinforce the worth of people, especially marginalized groups of people. For example, while the military has focused on the promotion of black achievement the goal of non-racism is not

always as prominent (Moskos & Butler, 1997). Certainly, there are many indications that racism is in operation in the current JROTC programming (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998).

First, the DOD selection criteria require that educationally and economically disadvantaged schools host JROTC units (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). This requirement is an incentive for inner city schools that serve predominantly low-income students of color to participate. And it works because approximately 40% of all JROTC units operate in inner city schools (Funk, 2000). Chicago Public Schools' student demographic data indicates that 86% of the student population is low-income while 42.9% of the students population is black and 43.7% is Latino/a (Chicago District 299 School Report Card, 2011). Chicago leads the nation in the number of low-income students of color participating in various public school military programs (Perez, 2006).

Second, the supporters of JROTC programs often use ideological codes that shape the language used to describe the debated policy issues (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998). Consider how the term 'at-risk', according to the US Cadet Command refers to "youth seeking direction and a sense of belonging" while the term "at-risk" also speaks to ideologies that under gird racist, classist, and sexist views of youth who are social delinquents, low academic achievers and in the case of young women unwed teenage mothers (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Funk, 2002; Perez, 2006; Segal, 1995; Stein, 2004). Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, staunch advocate of JROTC, as an illustration, said, "hard-working, disciplined men and women of the Armed Forces could serve as a very powerful force among our young people---especially where family structures are weakened by poverty, drugs and crime" (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). Race and class are rendered invisible in his

statement, although he also covertly sends messages about who is best served by participating in JROTC.

Third, the large number of black and brown youth participating in JROTC is of concern when 54% of JROTC participants are low-income black and Latino/a students and, as previously cited above, 45% of the graduates of the program enlist in the military (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). The economic pressures these youth face along with their desires for political inclusion and social advancement such as earning citizenship in some cases and/or value as a human being in others complicates how many non-hyper-militarized people find themselves serving in the Armed Forces (Mariscal, 2007). Despite the facts that indicate that racism interlocked with sexism and classism undergirds JROTC programs, historical record indicates that it is also possible that participating youth recognize the advantages of using the military to advance the process of humanization in ways similar to that of their predecessors. Because the historical record indicates, "Militarization can come in many guises. It can ride on the back of a worthy cause," the research in this dissertation reveals the possibilities of and the contradictions of this central paradox from the perspective of the youth attending a PMA (EnLoe, 2000, p. 32). Are the youth participating in JROTC guided leadership opportunities maneuvered or empowered—or both?

6.   Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and Educational Opportunity

The adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 led school actors and the general public to become familiar with the phrase "achievement gap." In fact, if asked for the most important evidence that public schools in the United States are not performing up to expectations, most would point out that white students are out-performing their

African American and Latino counterparts on every standardized test in every subject. The achievement gap stresses the struggle schools face in educating all students regardless of the students' race, ethnicity, gender, and class background. The growing disparities in achievement between white students and African American and Latino students prompts scholars to refer to the achievement gap as a major civil rights issue of the 21st Century (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Rothstein, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

While the term "achievement gap" is most commonly used to describe the disparities in achievement between student populations, several scholars critique this terminology for its emphasis on placing blame for poor academic performance, as measured solely on standardized test scores on individual students alone (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hinchey, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006). The emphasis on increasing test scores through test preparation encourages schools to ignore additional options needed to close the opportunity and resource gaps that are far more problematic and yet directly related to the achievement gap. The opportunity/resource gaps have been defined most recently in terms of the historical and contemporary inequalities in educational opportunity in the United States. Specifically, research findings indicate the limited early learning opportunities, inconsistent teacher quality, limited enriched curricular offerings, and resegregation and inequitable school funding allocation increase disparities in achievement between high and low performing standardized test achievers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Education Watch, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Murphy, 2010; Rothstein, 2007).

Closing the opportunity/resource gap is a promising approach to providing all

youth with a high quality educational experience, because it not only addresses the

academic aspects of the dilemma, but also appears to address what Ladson-Billings

(2006) refers to as the "education debt" or the "forgone schooling resources that we

should have been investing in primarily low-income kids" that have "historical,

economic, sociopolitical and moral" implications (p. 5). Research conducted on the

JROTC suggests that participation is beneficial to students, and may contribute to the

closing of the opportunity/resource gap (National Association of State Boards of

Education, 2010). The literature on the achievement/opportunity/resource gaps can be put

into three broad categories:

1) Methods for measuring and reporting student achievement data
   (Education Trust, April, 2009; McKinsey, April, 2009; National Center for
   Education Statistics, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, January, 2009);
2) Causes of the achievement gap, both in terms of in-school and out-of-school factors
   (Belfiore, Auld, and Lee, 2005; Berliner, March 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010;
   Fine et. al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; McCready, 2004; Murphy, 2010; Perry,
   2005; Rothstein, 2007); and
3) Approaches and practices toward the elimination of the achievement gap
   (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Donlevy, 2007; Gardner, 2007; Ladson-Billings,
   2006; Larocque, 2007; Miranda, Webb, Brigman, & Peluso, 2007; Murphy, 2010;
   Perry, 2005).

7.   JROTC Participation and Student Achievement

Faced with the challenge of maintaining the global competitiveness of the U.S.

educational system, the Federal Government pressed States to create policies and

programs intended to increase the accountability of their respective local education

districts. State governments responded with the development of learning standards, high-

stakes standardized testing, and awards/sanctions based on student performance. While

accountability itself is not the problem, the process in which holding local schools

districts, administration and teachers accountable resulted in placing a greater emphasis

on learning outcomes over learning inputs (Andersen, 2010). As a result, attendance

rates, grade point averages, state standardized test scores, ACT/SAT/WorkKeys scores,

graduation rates, and college matriculation rates are the dominant student achievement

measures compiled throughout the great majority of high schools in the Nation.

Therefore, JROTC participation and student achievement in relation to these measures is

the focus in the following section, although it's important to note that I was concerned

about the limited amount of studies reporting this data as well as the validity of the

research.

In general, Army JROTC students have a 3% higher attendance rate (i.e. in 1999,

84.2% versus 74% and in 2010, 93% versus 90%) in comparison to the overall student

population (Elliott, Hanser, and Gilroy, 2000; Marks, 2004; Moskos, 1995; National

Association of State Boards of Education, 2010; Taylor, 1999). Because school

attendance is positively correlated with higher student academic performance and higher

graduation rates, student participation in JROTC programs is regarded as beneficial based

on this metric (Kronick and Harges, 1990). Additionally, research on the academic

performance of JROTC participants also indicates that on average they slightly

outperform their classmates in the general school population (GPA 2.8-2.9 versus 2.6-2.7,

SAT 823 versus 821 and ACT 20.5 versus 19) (Marks, 2004; Moskos, 1995; National

Association of State Boards of Education, 2010; Taylor, 1999). Moreover, JROTC

participants have a 10-15 percent higher high school graduation rate than their peers

(Moskos, 1995; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010; Taylor, 1999).

The JROTC participants ability to outperform their counterparts on these measures give

reasons as to why school districts and school principals believe the program can help reduce persistent achievement/opportunity gaps.

8. Teacher Quality

Several studies indicate that teacher quality significantly affects student achievement (Boyd et. al, 2006; Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000). In fact, if we were to provide all low-income students of color with highly qualified teachers, reducing the achievement gap would be a much greater possibility (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Contrary to common belief, the military does set high standards for military instructors (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001).

The Cadet Command of each branch determines the JROTC instructor employment eligibility requirements. For example, United States Army Cadet Command (USACC) Regulation 145-2 specifies the general administrative and certification requirements of potential applicants. The general requirements include:

- Retiring at or retired at a rank of E-6 (i.e. Staff Sergeant) through O-6 (i.e. Colonel) with at least 20 years of active duty
- No record of military or civilian adverse actions (i.e. conduct unbecoming an officer)
- Meet the retention medical fitness standards and weights of CCR 145-2
- Have an excellent record of military performance
- Have the mentality, personality, appearance and bearing to represent The Army well in the civilian community
- Have a good moral character, instructional ability, and be able to challenge, motivate, and influence young people in a positive manner
- Completion of initial qualification training, satisfactory interview with USACC certified interviewer, and be determined by USACC to meet all criteria previously listed (US Army Cadet Command, n.d.)

Additionally, the USACC is most interested in providing school districts with candidates who have prior teaching experience, experience working with youth organizations, and experience in leadership, supply, administration, drill and ceremony (United States Army

Cadet Command, n.d.). Furthermore, the initial and on-going instructor training requirements are similar to an alternative route to teaching certification program.

In order to meet the high standards of the Army, the retired officer first completes the initial training requirement, which includes an overview of the program's history, objectives, curriculum, and educational approaches to learning relating these elements to how the program supports national educational standards. Once the applicant successfully completes this training along with the other requirements, he can seek employment by the school districts. If a local principal is hiring, she will not only review the application and require an interview, but she will also observe the applicant's ability to teach a sample lesson. If the applicant is hired, then in order to maintain employment he will enroll in a series of distance learning courses and recurring training seminars that are worth 48 hours of college credit.

As time progresses, the instructor is required to earn and maintain his certification to teach JROTC in order to qualify for the extension of his contract with the local school. The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and Rio Salado evaluates these courses, in which the JROTC instructor can earn credit toward teacher licensure, graduate or undergraduate credit. The course descriptions include Contemporary Issues in American Education, Dynamic Teaching, Classroom Management, Educational Psychology, Secondary Methods, and Learning and the Brain. Because the instructors are part of the school faculty, they are required to attend professional development sessions alongside their civilian colleagues. Besides the professional development already required at the local school, the military and individual instructors provide the funding for the training requirements. Just as the quality of state certified teachers matter to the academic growth

of our student populations, the Armed Forces has set different, and yet high standards for the military instructors as one way to help build successful JROTC programs.

9.   **Funding Allocation**

The concentration of low-income black and Latino/a in city public schools is tied to the dwindling resource base produced by a limited inner city, local tax base. The widening disparities of resources between inner city and suburban schools often influences learning outcomes (Kaufman and Rosenbaum, 1992). The Armed Forces emphasis on developing JROTC programs in inner city school districts that predominantly serve low-income students of color can be understood as an effort to help reduce resource gaps. While funding for student enrichment programs is an important indicator that helps us think about the resources available to support student learning and development, it comes to no surprise that poorly funded as well as poorly managed funds often lead to poor programming and limited student outcomes. Certainly, the actual cost benefit of JROTC is a highly contested. The passionate, good intentions of anti-militarization activists and scholars desire to dismantle JROTC along with the Department of Defense's labyrinth of red tape to cross to get at accurate figures has led to the creation of a great deal of misinformation.

The discrepancy in JROTC program funding figures occurs because the figures most often used to make these calculations only consider what the school district provides in order for the establishment of units to occur. Before moving into exact funding formulas, it is important to understand the obligations of the school districts and the military branches. Title 10, US Code Section 2031 provides the terms of the contract between the military and local schools. In order to enter into this arrangement, the

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schools must provide the following:

- credit for coursework,
- classrooms (including desks and tables), office space (including desks, cabinets, etc.) storage, telecommunications, and drill area,
- partial instructor salaries, and
- like benefits for instructors and students (teacher-student parity).

The military enters into the contract by providing participating schools the following:

- educational/technological materials,
- classroom equipment,
- student books, curriculum guides, instructor manuals,
- unit support and maintenance funding,
- uniforms and organizational equipment,
- special team equipment (Color Guard, Drill Teams, Marksmanship Teams), and
- partial instructor salary reimbursement.

When assessing the funding issue, we must also consider the investment beyond the instructor salaries. For example, with the invention of Smart Boards alongside JROTC's goal of maintaining a 21st Century Learner framework, the branches decided to emphasize the importance of staying cutting-edge. "When the technology is completely in place, it will represent a $1 million investment in 884 Air Force JROTC programs and a $1.5 to $2 million investment in 1,300 Army JROTC programs" (Hawkins, 2009). Figures such as these as well as with curriculum and uniform expenditures are largely omitted from how opponents to the program calculate the financial benefits of the partnership.

Another area of funding that is often disputed pertains to the salaries of the retired military officers who serve as the instructors and special team advisors. The school districts and Armed Forces enter directly into a cost share agreement, which is the same for all schools in the partnership. The school principals who employ a JROTC instructor provide his/her monthly pay and the military refunds 50% of the salary of which those

funds go back into that school's general education fund. Instructor pay is determined by

the Minimum Instructor Pay (MIP) formula, which is "the difference between official

retired pay, reported by the Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS), and the active

duty pay and allowances that a JROTC instructor would receive if ordered to active duty"

(United States Army Cadet Command, n.d.). MIP includes the following:

- Basic Pay (calculated on rank and years in service)
- Basic Allowance for Housing (based on zip code of employing school)
- Cost of living allowance (if applicable)
- Overseas housing allowance (if applicable)
- Clothing allowance for uniforms (enlisted only)
- Basic allowance for subsistence

An example MIP calculation (per month) is as follows:

E9 (i.e. Sergeant Major) w/ 25 Year of Service	
Basic Pay	$5,391.60
Basic Allowance for Subsistence	$ 294.43
Basic Allowance for Housing	$1,265.00
Clothing	$ 0.00
Adjusted Pay	$6,951.03
Less Gross Retired Pay	$3,369.75
MIP	$3,581.21

Figure 2: Instructor Salary Calculation
Source: United States Army JROTC n.d.

Using this example, the annual salary for this instructor is $42,975.36, but when the

military reimburses the schools, the school ends up paying $21,487.68 for this employee.

Those in opposition to JROTC claim that schools end up paying more for a

military instructor than they do for a state certified teacher (Galaviz, Palafox, Meiners,

and Quinn, 2011; Jahnkow, 2011). While some figures indicate that the average salary for

a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) JROTC instructor, as the case example, in 2009-2010

was $75,400.37 whereas the average salary for CPS teachers was $69,000, it appears that

the instructor salary figure provided does not reflect the cost share agreement (Galaviz, Palafox, Meiners and Quinn, 2011). My research indicates that the average Chicago Public Schools (CPS) JROTC instructor salary in 2009-2010 was $47,000.00 (MAJ S. Green, personal communication, November 15, 2011). Once the cost share is realized; the military refunds on average $23,500.00 per instructor in CPS. Another way to look at this figure is that CPS on average only pays an annual salary of $23,500.00 per instructor, which is considerably less than the average annual salary of a CPS teacher (MAJ S. Green, personal communication, November 15, 2011). In fact, the sentiment among CPS administration is that JROTC is "regarded as the cheapest asset to CPS" (MAJ S. Green, personal communication, November 15, 2011). Moreover, CPS administration is not alone in regards to this sentiment. School administrators in Tennessee and North Carolina, for examples, also believe that JROTC is an asset to their schools adding that the program is a "cost-effective program in reducing the dropout rates" at their high schools (Marks, 2004, p. 77).

Even when the military instructor to student ratio is factored in, schools do not on average pay more for JROTC instructors in comparison to the civilian teachers. In particular, opponents to the program have compared JROTC instructor salaries and student load to that of Physical Education (P.E.) teachers, because several school districts allow JROTC as a substitution of P.E. requirements (Jahnkow, 2011). The argument follows that because the JROTC contract requires that one Senior Instructor and one Military Instructor is hired to teach and supervise 150 students, school principals could save money by hiring one P.E. teacher to teach the same number of students. Based on the case example, CPS average teacher salary in 2009-2010, the average salary of two

military instructors is still a better deal. The supporting evidence of this argument also omits that P.E. teachers often receive additional stipends and bonuses for coaching where JROTC instructors do not receive salary increases for coaching the program's sponsored special team activities. Additionally, opponents fail to mention that the SAI often takes on additional administrative duties at the school level. In sum, high school principals can hire on average 3 military instructors for the cost of 1 state certified teacher, in which case, JROTC programs are quite attractive to cash strapped school districts that are struggling to close persistent resource gaps.

10.   <u>Curricular Enrichment</u>

JROTC appears to address a multitude of educational goals and problems because it is designed to provide youth who are predominantly low-income students of color with leadership opportunities for personal and academic growth (Funk, 2002; Hajjar, 2005; Perez, 2006). However, there is little empirical evidence that documents, either quantitatively or qualitatively, the perspectives of students participating in JROTC's leadership education. In fact, not much is known about leadership from the perspective of youth, whether in JROTC or not (Edwards, 1994), because much of the research on leadership has focused on adult contexts. In the following, I review what little is known about JROTC leadership education as well as youth leadership development outside the context of JROTC.

Leadership, while always a central aspect of the Armed Forces, did not receive all that much attention until recently. A shift in the approach to recruitment appears to be the reason. When multiple studies revealed that post-service employment options were limited because the veterans did not have the advanced technological skills promised to

them, the military began to emphasize leadership skills as a reason to enlist (Lutz &

Bartlett, 1995). A quick review of current military advertisements confirms the new focus

on intangible benefits of military service, which makes it quite difficult to verify or

disprove whether the military actually provides beneficial opportunities (Lutz & Bartlett,

1995). The same focus complicates scholars' abilities to assess JROTC leadership

education.

One approach is to design research intended to gather information on

effectiveness of JROTC programs. Several researchers design comparative studies to

explore the differences between JROTC participants and other programs. Kolstad and

Ritter (2000), for instance, administered the Democratic Maturity Test to 308 JROTC

high school students and 1,452 college students in a teacher education program. Although

the research indicates that the college students' democratic maturity developed at a higher

rate than the JROTC students, the rate is only slightly higher. The researchers were able

to then also claim that involvement in JROTC develops greater democratic maturity and

that the JROTC youth serve as role models for other students.

In a similarly designed study, Cassel and Standifer (2000) implemented the

Leadership Ability Evaluation, to 100 JROTC students and 171 general college students

in business administration in order to examine to what degree the participants exercised

laissez fair, democratic cooperative, autocratic submissive and autocratic aggressive

models of leadership as well as their perceptions of their roles as a leader. While the

researchers claimed that the data indicates that the JROTC students are superior to

college students in regards to their ability to exercise leadership, a closer look at the data

reveals that the only category in which the JROTC students scored higher was in their

ability to exercise leadership independent of the leader's ability to direct members of a particular group. In other words, these students espouse a laissez faire leadership style that is largely regarded as an ineffective model of leadership (Bass, 1998). In addition to the quantitative comparative studies, a few academics have researched the aspects of JROTC from a qualitative perspective.

Barbara Vines' (2004) dissertation research applied a phenomenological approach to reveal three students' perceptions of achievement at the Chicago Military Academy. Vines (2004) conducted a total of nine interviews, three per student and claims she also conducted observations; however, she did not present evidence related to the observations. The lack of triangulating data sets negatively impacts the trustworthiness of her study. Nonetheless, the interview data are still useful as there are so few empirical studies on PMAs.

Her findings indicate mixed perceptions of achievement. Two of the participants believe that their JROTC has nothing to do with academic motivation and success while the third believes that JROTC participation did. All three students share a common desire to attend college and claim to find motivation in their fears of failing as adults; however, it is bit unclear how much JROTC played a role in supporting their goals. Of significance, 82% of CMA seniors matriculate into college and 94% of its student body attends school daily on average compared to an 85% district average (Tugend, 2005). Taken together, it appears that at least this PMA successfully supports a culture conducive to academic achievement.

Remi Hajjar's (2005) ethnographic study within the context of a PMA located in the Midwest also suggests beneficial outcomes. Interviews, observation, survey, a content

analysis of student papers and the academies' historical archives led Hajjar (2005) to suggest that the academy's military system improves the cadet's chances for upward mobility through "the production of crucial life skills and social-capital accumulation" (p.46). Hajjar (2005) theorizes that PMAs are beneficial to students because they expose students to "military capital or the 'knowledge and skills that promote military systems' such as leadership skills and agency, discipline, motivation, among other social competencies" (p.46). A sixteen-year-old Latino PMA student confirms Hajjar's (2005) view when he said, "Now I'm getting A's and B's in most my classes. Last year I didn't do my homework a lot, now I do. I respect my teachers. It [JROTC] has taught me discipline. They [cadets] go to college. They want a good life. They want a challenge. They want above normal" (p. 54).

When it came to his analysis of the students' experiences with leadership, Hajjar (2005) argued that the PMA is effective at developing the leadership capabilities of the students. Hajjar's (2005) conclusions, however, overlooked an essay of a cadet who lost control in the process of "earn(ing) respect this hard" as well as a cadet's understanding of various teachers' "hypocritical actions" that created a lack of trust in the leadership in the school, which in turn affected this student's perceptions' of being a leader (p.50, p.53). Even though there were some discrepancies and Hajjar (2005) admitted, "the evidence was mixed," he argued that public military academies were generally supportive of civility, build leadership, and ingrain discipline (p. 51, p.54. p.55).

Similar to Vines (2004) research, the trustworthiness of Hajjar's study is questionable because the design (utilized survey, limited engagement in the field, ignored potential bias as a military officer) does not appear to support the ethnographic tradition

of qualitative research. Yet, Hajjar's concept of military capital is compelling, a framework that requires further research because so many people believe that the military supports social mobility.

Similar to Hajjar, Gina Perez's (Perez) research on why Latino/a youth in Chicago consider enrollment in JROTC as well as enlistment beyond high school recognizes the lure of the military as an avenue for social mobility, however she complicates the theory by paying particular attention to the gendered aspects of the prospects of military capital. For instance, Perez (2006) focuses on how young Latinas, in particular find participation in JROTC offers freedom from "sources of productive and reproductive labor" (p. 53). Perez (2006) explains that some young women "who are expected to abide by culturally prescribed norms of behavior requiring them to be in the home" in order to provide the reproductive work necessary to family survival while also preserving their chastity necessary to their family's honor, can use their participation in the JROTC programs as a way to still contribute to their household economies (e.g. money upfront for participation in summer boot camps) while also finding a space to exercise autonomy outside of the home in a "legitimate" and "respectable" way (Perez, 2006, p. 63).

For example, one Latina, who participated in JROTC and also decided to enlist states, "I felt like [by joining the military] I would be protecting those I love. And even those I don't know, I felt like I could be doing something to help …. The women in my family have had to be protected by bad men [all their lives] and I don't want to have to do that. I could protect myself and not have to depend on others, but [my family] can depend on me" (Perez, 2006, p. 67). Although public officials increasingly support

JROTC programs as a way to curb unwed teenage pregnancies, which stereotypes the young women in JROTC programs as "at risk," Perez's (2006) study indicates that young women make complicated decisions fitting somewhere in-between finding that participation in JROTC was beneficial despite the fact that they also realize they are taking risks upon enlistment. These young women as many women in history have found a relationship between developing a sense of autonomy and one's economic independence on the one hand with, one's ability to protect oneself and her family and one's ability to ensure respect on the other (Perez, 2006; Segal, 1995).

In contrast to Hajjar's (2005) ethnographic research, the trustworthiness of Perez's (2007) study is not questioned because she interrogates her role as a researcher in relation to her phenomenon of interest. She also offers an exemplary ethnographic account because she keeps the reader in between the students' stories and broader cultural meanings of "war preparation on the home front" in which the youth negotiate their choices (p. 55). This ebb and flow process allows the ethnographers to paint a picture of the way of life at a particular historical moment. Up until this point, I have outlined research on JROTC programs that employ quantitative and qualitative research designs. Although these studies are important, it certainly is not the only way to examine JROTC programs.

Another approach is to conduct a document analysis of the JROTC text used to facilitate the leadership coursework. Lutz and Bartlett's (1995) analysis of the JROTC leadership text generated the following key themes: a focus on the prescriptions of the qualities of a good leader, leadership as a set of values such as "courage, candor, competence and commitment" rather than as a set of skills, leadership as problem-

solving, leadership as team work and leadership as recognized by the practices of "chain of command" or the practice of taking orders from a leader because of his/her rank rather than choosing who to follow based on one's own reasoning (p. 28). Lutz and Bartlett (1995) suggest that the ways in which leadership is described in the JROTC text is "abstract and simple, even simplistic" amounting to no more than meeting the overall program objective of "developing responsiveness to constituted authority" (p. 28). Although I agree with Lutz and Bartlett's position, I cannot accept their overall conclusion that the JROTC framing of leadership is simplistic. Rather it appears that undergirding JROTC leadership education is a combination of the trait approach theory and effective theory of leadership, both of which has shaped the field of leadership studies and make it easy to accept these models of leadership unquestioningly.

In sum, trait theorists of leadership such as Browne and Cohn (1958) and Stogdill (1974) emphasize character traits, goal attainment, effectiveness, style and ability to manage. This body of knowledge is an example of many scholars' preoccupations with identifying the components that create leaders and then suggest ways to put them to task. For example, the JROTC text describes leadership as a value because trait theorists have tried to categorize characteristics that make a leader successful. In fact, the *US Army Field Manual (FM) 22-100* emphasizes a military leader identity as a soldier who possesses Army character values such as "loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage" that in sequence form the acronym "LDRSHIP" (Keller, 2001, p. 67; U.S. Army, 2006, p. 4-2:4-3). While there has been no conclusive empirical evidence that illustrates the existence of particular innate personal qualities and characteristics associated with leadership (Stogdill, 1974; Delgado &

Staples, 2008), trait approach theory of leadership is often reinvented under different guises and remains respected, not only in the military but also within various fields (Bass, 1998).

Whereas the trait approach to leadership identifies the character required of a leader, instrumental theories document the effectiveness of these traits in practice. Scholars that study this theory analyze what leaders do and systematically look at patterns of behavior in order to determine the effectiveness of the leaders under study as well as the manner in which leaders exercise power over others (Yukl, 1981). Effective leadership theory is much more in line with contemporary views of leadership that conceptualize leadership as a reciprocal relationship that exists between those who lead and those who follow (Rost, 1991). Two distinct theoretical schools of thought inform the research conducted on reciprocal leader-follower relationship.

Transactional leadership consists of transactions or exchanges between leader and the led (Hollander, 1986; Bass, 1998). Leaders exchange promises of rewards or punishments to the led in exchange for the led fulfilling agreements with the leader. This model is much more about the skills associated with leadership e.g. public speaking, writing, delegating authority, leading meetings, problem solving and making decisions. Because doing leadership is most important, the transactional leader it likely to make decisions based on their own ideas and beliefs—even if everyone hasn't been heard—in order to move forward.

In contrast to transactional theory, transformational leadership is about more than exchanges and agreements. This model is based on the leaders charismatic capacities, inspirational abilities, emotional appeals and intellectual problem solving abilities (Bass,

1998). The transformative leader is more inclusive of others' ideas and beliefs because s/he considers how her/his leadership can help transform followers into leaders.

Several scholars apply instrumental theories to youth leadership programs (Fertman and Long, 1990; Fertman and Chubb, 1993; Long, Wald and Graf, 1996; Lyons, Saltonstall and Hanmer, 1990; VanLinden & Fertman, 1998). These studies suggest that the research participants most often understood student leaders as having the ability to produce outcomes for the school as a whole and as such students are more likely to enact transactional theories of leadership. One study, in particular, adds a layer of complexity to the research conducted on youth perspectives of leadership.

The researchers asked more than 140 fifth-grade students of color from an inner city, impoverished school district: "What does it mean to be a good leader?" (Shinew & Thomas Jones, 2005). Unlike the studies previously reviewed, the majority of the participants in this study discussed leadership in regards to the "informal leadership" or unofficial and not elected roles of the students (Edwards, 1994). They also described a good leader in feminine terms (Shinew & Thomas Jones, 2005). Moreover, the data from the initial questionnaires and 47 follow-up interviews revealed that these girls did not describe the typical transactional qualities typical of many participants in leadership studies. Instead, they discussed how leaders are people who are compassionate that "made sure people were treated fairly" and were able to negotiate complicated social circles in the class (Shinew & Thomas Jones, 2005, p. 59). They also explain how leaders may not be exactly the most academically achieving student in class or even the most popular student in the class for that matter, but that they are people who have a talent that they are willing to share with others.

While the stories of leadership captured in this study speak to transformational theories of leadership, they also speak to the unique voice that students of color bring to the conversations on leadership (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The research on youth leadership explored in the previous section supports the fact that there is a direct link between youth leadership and the theories of and research on leadership in adult contexts. Consequently, alternative views of youth leadership are often taken for granted in several public schools.

Bartlett and Lutz (1995), in particular, suggest that providing alternatives to the military model of leadership, for example, is an important step in reducing the heavy reliance on providing youth leadership opportunities through JROTC participation. A great deal of the theorizing and practicing of alternative youth leadership opportunities is emerging out of grassroots, youth-led community organizing (Delgado-Bernal, 2006; Delgado & Staples, 2008; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ginwright & James, 2002; Payne, 1995).

Not surprisingly, there are definite differences in these approaches to youth leadership in comparison to the military model of youth leadership; however two aspects, in particular stand out: 1.) Discussions of social justice are central to the provision of youth leadership opportunities within the literature on youth leadership within community organizing and 2.) Whereas youth leadership informed by theories of social justice and grassroots organizing strongly supports the notion that leadership is an activity for everyone and that everyone is a leader, the JROTC model clearly supports the chain of command theory, which suggests particular students are more desirable leaders than others (Delgado & Staples, 2008; Funk, 2002).

**11.	Joining the conversation**

Given the research reviewed here, additional research needs to be conducted in order to better understand the underlying assumptions and values youth bring to their perspectives on leadership, as it will remain important to understand how trait, transactional and transformational models of leadership operate in PMAs in tandem and/or simultaneously. By asking youth to describe and at times analyze their understanding of opportunity and their experiences with leadership, the results of this study add to the empirical data needed to sort out the paradoxical implications of learning and leading within a four-year JROTC program.

**B.	Theoretical Approaches to Investing in Youth**

The central problem of my research resides in a restructuring political-economic context that shapes the type of investments made to support the development of opportunity for youth. The theoretical framework I am using is multi-perspectival and multi-dimensional (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008) because no single theoretical perspective is sufficient to address the complexity of the issues I am investigating. Stated in a simple way, the theoretical and methodological complexities become apparent:

- What sense do students make of opportunity at the Chicago PMA under study?
- What role does the idea of leadership play in their thinking?

The lenses through which I viewed these questions fall within three diverse schools of thought: 1) Opportunity Theory helped me clarify the framing of opportunity, broadly speaking; 2) Youth Development Theory allowed me to value the students' perspective of opportunity as well as recognize how youth in different circumstances understand opportunity as a lived experience marked by their racial, cultural, and gendered identities. Moreover, youth development theory aided my understanding of what constitutes

opportunity in the form of an investment in youth and in relation to concepts of risk and resiliency; 3) Leadership Development Theory illuminates the nature of one particular opportunity offered to youth, which helped me to analyze different dimensions of the kind of leadership opportunities that the students experience.

1.   **<u>Opportunity Theory</u>**

Chicago Public Schools' administration publicly justifies the creation of the Public Military Academies (PMAs) as "an opportunity for students to enroll in schools that provide structure, discipline, and a focus on leadership" (Banchero & Sadovi, 2007). They further state, "The [military-themed] schools emphasize academics, not recruitment" (Banchero & Sadovi, 2007). While it seems only sensible to provide low-income youth of color opportunities for academic success, the fact that these opportunities are directly linked to the military model of education provokes concern about the benefits students receive from attending these schools.

Generally speaking, the concept of opportunity has a troubled history in the field of education policy. In the 1830s, Horace Mann, credited for the development of the Common School Movement, laid the foundation for understanding the concept of educational opportunity when he "declared schools the great balance wheel of society by providing graduates with equality of opportunity to pursue wealth" (Spring, 2008, p. 37). Despite the fact that in the 18th and 19th centuries, education was seen as a way to improve one's lot in life, educational opportunities were sharply limited by social class, race, gender, and ethnicity. Beginning in the progressive period, the concept of "educational opportunity" became an explicit justification for different kinds of education for different classes of people. Educational opportunity emphasized that every student has

the same chance to receive an education that will allow him or her to compete for wealth and for entry into particular occupations (Hinchey, 2008; Rury, 2004; Spring, 2008; Tozer, Senese, & Violas, 2012). Schools attempted to ensure educational opportunity by re-structuring in ways that would sort students into tracks intended to prepare students for jobs appropriate to their abilities.

While the social efficiency model of educational opportunity prevailed, John Dewey emphasized the notion that a democratic society should provide opportunity for all to improve their lot in life, as was the idea that education was a vehicle for doing so. Also in the progressive period, the idea that a democratic society should provide "equality of opportunity" was introduced. As Dewey in 1916 asserted, "Only through education can equality of opportunity be anything more than a phrase" (Tozer, Senese, & Violas, 2012, p. 118).

After Brown vs. Board of Education, which declared that segregated schools could not provide equal opportunity, the 1960s-1970s saw sustained debate in the educational literature about what equal educational opportunity could actually mean in practice. Did it mean that kids from one part of town should be transported to another part of town to have access to higher-performing schools? (Yes.) Did it mean that all students from all social classes could have equal opportunity to attend elite universities? (No.) It became clear that the constraints of class, ethnicity, and geography would never be trumped by slogans about equal educational opportunity. If opportunities for the neediest to be educated were to be improved, it would at best be a relative improvement, not an equalization of opportunities with the privileged.

At the center of my research is the question of opportunity. While it is important to understand the ways in which youth are provided access to various opportunities, it is equally important to understand the process youth take to choose the opportunity that they most value and how they experience those opportunities in relation to what they hope to achieve. For example, there is a difference between tracking the number of students who apply for and are awarded college scholarships, versus understanding how these students *experience the decision* to apply for and accept, the opportunities presented to them.

Privileging in our thinking the way youth perceive the value of an opportunity strengthens our understanding of the relationship between opportunity and freedom. It is essential to ensure that the concept of opportunity is something created to support our freedom rather than allowing it to become an experience that is imposed on us by others (Sen, 2011). In theorizing what it means to be free while embedded in social constructs and constraints, Dewey (1916) emphasized the importance of framing and executing one's own purposes, as opposed to executing the purposes imposed by others. Making sense of how youth understand their ability to choose an opportunity freely, to frame and execute their own purposes, is important to understanding how to better provide equitable educational opportunities for all.

Because opportunity is often related to the distribution of equality and inequality in society, a great deal of debate surrounds the distinction between "inequalities due to the exercise of individual responsibility on the one hand, and those due to predetermined circumstances on the other" (Ferreira & Gignoux, 2011). In other words, to understand opportunity beyond the more simplistic notion of distributed outcomes, we have to

understand the dialectical relationship between the opportunity structure and agency of the youth who buy into, value, resist and/or transform the process of opportunity differently. Several scholars explore the differences between what individuals can and cannot be held responsible for within the opportunity structure (Roemer, 1993/1998; Nussbaum & Sen, 2009).

Roemer (1998), for instance separates influences on the outcome a person experiences into *circumstances* or the environmental variables that are out of the person's control and therefore, not held responsible (e.g. race, gender, class, or family background) and *effort* or choice variables that are in a person's control and therefore held responsible for their willingness to do (e.g. how long one studies, how hard one works). Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (2009) appear to complicate the effort aspect of Roemer's opportunity theory by explaining that it is also important to focus on what a person is *able* to do rather than just what a person ends up doing regardless of whether or not the person chooses to take advantage of the opportunity or not. They developed this set of ideas into what they call the "capability approach of opportunity" (Sen, 2011, p. 235).

While these scholars helped me clarify the framing of opportunity, Xavier de Souza Briggs (2006) reminds me of the importance of anchoring these ideas in historical, geographic context. It is within this regard that scholars in the U.S. are working to understand the relationship between opportunity and "inequalities of place" also referred to as the "geography of opportunity" (de Souza Briggs, 2006, p. 1). The geography of opportunity theory establishes that an inextricable relationship exists between poverty, inequality, and place in relation to access to opportunity and people's perceptions of

opportunity. The empirical body of scholarship on these matters emphasizes that context

matters –this research established how neighborhoods, schools, kinship or peer groups

have contextual effects on human behavior, well-being and attainment (Bronfenbrenner,

1979; Wilson, 1987). In particular, Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) and Kate

Tilleczek's (2011) bio-ecological theories of youth development expand the

conceptualization of the geography of opportunity for youth specifically.

2.   <u>Youth Development Theory</u>

Transitioning into adulthood is an experience we all share in common and yet

give meaning to differently. This leads me to believe that the concept of youth is a

complex idea because it involves power relationships marked by biological realities and

social constructions of behavior imposed on young people. Moreover, I adhere to

Furlong's (2013) definition of youth that separates the concept from that of adolescence.

Furlong explains:

> Youth is a socially constructed intermediary phase that stands between childhood
> and adulthood: it is not defined chronologically as a stage that can be tied to
> specific age ranges, nor can its end point be linked to specific activities, such as
> taking up paid work or having sexual relations. Youth is a broader concept than
> adolescence, which relates to specific developmental phases beginning with
> puberty and ending once physiological and emotional maturity is achieved, and it
> tends to cover a more protracted time span (2013, p. 1-2).

Considering theories about youth can be dated to ancient Greece and scholars have since

offered a range of perspectives on what it means to be young, I will only provide a brief

overview of the theories that inform my dissertation study. In particular, psychological

and sociological approaches to understanding youth tend to dominate the field of youth

studies.

a.   Psychological Perspectives

Defining adolescence within biological concepts related to ages, cycles, stages and transitions in relation to individual identity development have long been the business of developmental psychologists (Hall, 1909; Erikson, 1968). In 1909, G.S. Hall was credited with the "invention of adolescence" and while his theories have been challenged for lacking empirical evidence, his ideas remain pervasive (Tilleczek, 2011, p. 26). In particular, Hall (1909) became famous for characterizing physiological changes of adolescence as a traumatic experience. He used the metaphor of "storm and stress" to describe adolescence as a "period which involved risky behavior, mood swings, and conflict with parents" (Furlong, 2013, p. 2).

Several scholars further critique Hall's theory for constructing adolescence without paying attention to the cultural dimension to adolescence (Erikson, 1968), and the view of it as undesirable developmental moment choke full of unwanted behaviors that must be eradicated through conformity to middle class norms (Comacchio, 2006; Cote & Allahar, 2006; Foucault, 1977; Wyn & White, 1997). Hall's widely accepted theories of adolescence helped usher in the development of prevention approaches to address existing youth crises. The prevention approach is problematic because the theories that undergird it rely, intentionally or not, on a deficit model of understanding youth that tends to dominate current U.S. social policy. As a consequence, devastating disinvestment in youth has occurred as, "The United States not only has the highest poverty rate for children among industrialized nations, but it also provides fewer social supports for their well-being and fewer resources for them at school" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 31). Faced with these challenges, youth are forced to negotiate how

to live a "life of dignity" along with the more "deadly task of struggling for survival" (Giroux, 2009, p. 9).

From within their own field of study, Glen Elder (1974) and Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) challenged the earlier conceptualization of adolescence. Elder (1974) helped make the distinction between the term lifecycle that is tied with the intense focus on the decontextualized, linear journey through adolescence with that of *life course* that "places individual's experiences within contexts that are presented as both dynamic and linked to the lives of others" (Furlong, 2013, p. 6). Elder's (1997) life course framing of adolescence focused on "historical time and place, the timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives and human agency in constrained settings" (p. 5). Elder's life course theory influences how we can think about how young people's lives are shaped by structural factors such as social class, race, and gender as well as how young people also exhibit individual agency in their navigation of societal structures.

Influenced by Elder's life course theory, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed the ecology of human development theory. This framework describes and helps explain the different social environments that influence how youth experience "dynamic, interconnected systems of relationships" (Deutsch, 2008, p. 5). Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005) proposed four levels of influence –microsystem/individual, interpersonal relations that young people experience, mesosystem/group, interpersonal cultural relations that young people experience, macrosystem/societal structures that young people experience, and chronosystem/timing and patterning in a historical moment matters to how young people experience the other three levels. Taken together, these contexts deepen how we can understand how youth experience and actively negotiate their social lives.

Building upon the work of Elder (1974) and Bronfenbrenner (1979), Kate Tilleczek (2011) reminds us that within these complex levels of experiencing the life course "fundamental social processes" exist "by which these contexts hold and distribute opportunities and constraints" (p. 8). She categorizes the social processes as that of "being, becoming, and belonging" (Tillezcek, 2011, p. 8). The process of "being" emphasizes how a young person experiences and negotiates identity formation (Tillezcek, 2011, p. 108). "Belonging" speaks to how a young person experiences "a secure base for the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative" (Werner & Smith, 1992, Tilleczek, 2011). Lastly, "becoming" is the social process in which youth envision their future possible selves and take steps to aspire to their future selves.

Tilleczeck (2011) further explains that being, becoming, and belonging are critical to the social processes required of the development of protective factors in youth that enable the enactment of resiliency. However, she also finds that research on youth tends to focus most on the process of "becoming" thereby marginalizing the idea of needing to value young people for who they are *now* (Tilleczeck, 2011 italics emphasized by author). This is troubling, because ignoring the nuances and tension between "being" and "becoming" makes for an incomplete understanding of youth development. Unpacking the tension of what it means to be young now is crucial to understanding how youth develop a sense of belonging, which then leads to further tensions regarding what it means to become older; studying the tensions between these thematic realms reminds us that development is not a neat, linear process.

From an ecological, life-course developmental sciences perspective, adults who abandon the idea that youth are a necessary investment for the future leads to several

damaging developmental outcomes. Bronfenbrenner (n.d.), provides an example of the effects of this disinvestment on a young man, "On a cognitive level, we've taught him something very important: he is a dispensable person. On an emotional level, we teach him that nobody cares, the world is a dangerous and frightening place, and he'll never be a productive (or generative) member of society." While researchers have advanced our understandings of developmental processes, especially in regards to what we know about how contextual factors and human agency matter, very little of this work has yet to sufficiently influence the formation of non-wasteful, adequately integrated social policies (Jenson and Fraser, 2011).

b. <u>Sociological Perspectives</u>

Although psychological theories tend to dominate several fields engaged in researching youth, several sociologists have contributed to how we can locate youth identity in social interactions and societal structures (Deutsch, 2008). From this perspective, the concept of youth is a social construct that has a dialectical relationship with the socio-historical, politico-economic context of schooling and society (Wyn & White, 1997). Within this framework, issues of social justice, class, race, gender and spatial divisions are then considered in relation to privilege, on the one hand, and marginalization, on the other.

This body of work further focuses on how political and social processes shape youth and in turn, how youth shape these processes in ways that social inequality is constructed and reconstructed (Wyn and White, 1997). "Sociologically it provides focus for discussions of structure and agency, illustrating the ways in which young people are constrained by factors such as social class or gender and highlighting the ways in which

they can help break down barriers through their own actions" (Furlong, 2013, p. 6).

Accordingly, the social construction of youth is symptomatic of learning within a

structure that shapes youth practices while youth also take action in ways that constitute

and reproduce the rules and resources of the structure (Giddens, 1979). In contrast to

merely reproducing structures, youth that acquire the knowledge of the rules and the

material benefits of these rules can also enable themselves to put their innovative and

creative efforts toward the transformation of the structure into a more equitable system

(Sewell, 1992). In this respect, theories of structure and agency often prove useful in

understanding the ways in which youth conform to and/or mount resistance to the various

structures they negotiate on a regular basis.

Paul Willis' (1977) case study of the experience and cultural process of being a

young white male transitioning into manual labor in the United Kingdom proves a useful

guiding empirical example of how political and social processes shape youth in different

social groups and how youth shape these processes in ways construct and reconstruct

social inequality. Willis (1977) offers a lens to interpret the power of how youth analyze

their views on their lives and views of society. He characterized their analyses as, at

times, penetrating into the structures in which they reveal complexities of inequity and, at

other times, limiting as they express views that reinforce structural oppression.

These sociological perspectives have helped establish the theory of positive youth

development (PYD), which focuses on establishing the most significant supports young

people need to be successful, as they define success for themselves, in life. Moreover,

PYD challenges the dominant deficit model of youth that supports a prevention approach

by promoting the strengths youth develop and sustain rather than focusing on the risk

factors that mediate a healthy growth trajectory. Although I more fully critique the "at-risk" labeling of youth in chapter 1, it is worth restating that the idea that youth are "containers of risk" is faulty. PYD supports the idea that there is a relationship between risk taking, feeling agentic, and enacting resiliency. While youth development takes many shapes and forms, I am particularly interested the ways in which youth engage with leadership opportunities as an expression of their sense of agency and resiliency.

3.   Leadership Development Theory

 To that end, this dissertation research is also guided by theories of leadership. Student participation as both leaders and followers within school activities such as student government, athletic programs and extra-curricular clubs suggests that they are receiving formal and informal leadership training (Funk, 2002). Consequently, youth leadership programming tends to reflect theories of leadership that already exist in military, business and administrative adult contexts. As a result, trait approach theories, instrumental theories and shared leadership theories can contribute to an analysis of youth engaged in leadership roles at a Chicago PMA.

While these theories of leadership present different and yet overlapping perspectives of leadership, they also suggest that the purposes of leadership differ in various contexts. And yet, in other ways, all of these theories build upon each other as a body of knowledge that privileges the ways in which adults perform leadership. It is in this respect that three particular aspects of these theories dominate youth leadership theory and practice.

First, these theoretical perspectives incorporate leadership trait theory in a track-it and then train-it approach to leadership because then leaders can best serve the purposes

of their corresponding organizations. Even distributive theory grounded in democratic principles serves the purpose of "managing meaning" that teachers and students give to leadership (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998). Research based on these theories primarily suggests the most effective ways for leaders to lead.

Second, trait approach, effective and shared leadership theories support the idea that leadership is a developmental trajectory process and as such should prepare youth for future roles in adult contexts. Scholars critical of this idea, suggest that the developmental trajectory approach to understanding youth undermines the fact that young people are significant in their own right now and not just for some future purpose (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2006; Wyn & White, 1997).   In other words, youth have human rights and if given the chance to explore leadership for their own sense of purpose, transformation, and empowerment, they may become a political force in their own right.

Third, the majority of leadership theories appear to ignore cultural contradictions and specific relations of power in the leadership process. This may explain why after analyzing decades of research on leadership, scholars (Rost, 1991; Sinclair, 2005) still admit, "never have so many laboured so long to say so little" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, p. 4). Even though a shift occurred in leadership studies to consider the relationships between leaders and the led, the purpose was mostly to describe how leaders exert power. In an effort to address the theoretical limitations of trait approach, instrumental and distributive models of leadership, critical and feminist theories of leadership are also useful to draw upon.

Several scholars suggest that the purpose of critical leadership is to expose the myths of leadership in order to free leaders and the led from oppressive leadership (Gunter, 2001; Rost, 1991; Sinclair, 2006; Smyth, 1989; Western, 2008). Critical leadership theorists are less concerned with describing what leadership is and more compelled to reveal contradictions, identify paradoxes, raise awareness, and ultimately propose new ways to practice leadership. Addressing the myths of leadership is key to this process because the mythological nature of leadership makes it a powerfully elusive concept. Moreover, myths permeate the trait approach, instrumental and shared leadership theories; theories that tend to have an invisible hand in youth leadership programs.

Although critical theorists do, for example critique the myth of the hero as leader, it is feminist scholarship that theorizes that the representation of said hero leader is most often embodied as a male or a hyper-masculinized female. Therefore, feminist scholarship critiques the leadership studies literature for rendering invisible the gendered and sexual dimensions of contemporary leadership practices (Delgado Bernal, 2006; Blackmore, 1999; Sinclair, 2004). Whereas trait approach, instrumental and distributive leadership theorists tend to interpret a feminist perspective of leadership to mean that they should learn about women in leadership positions, feminists not only examine women exercising leadership but also reveal and critique the point that leadership as it is traditionally performed upholds a privileged masculinity of leadership (Blackmore, 1999; Sinclair, 2004).

4.   Summary Theoretical Notes

Inevitably, throughout history, one's aspirations as well as opportunities to achieve those aspirations would be socially and culturally conditioned. Today, we are again confronted with an occasion to understand what equal educational opportunity means in practice, and how it is experienced by those who are most affected –that is the inner city youth who are provided and denied a range of opportunities. To understand how people in any social context view the opportunities that are afforded by that context requires attention to the frames of reference of those individuals. In particular, this study examines the frames of reference within which young people in one contemporary school, created specifically to provide new opportunity for them, make meaning of these intended opportunities. I investigated what might be called their "opportunity frames of youth reference." The frames of reference that students bring to bear in making sense of what may or may not be opportunities prove to be, in some cases at least, complex.

III. Methodology

A.　Research Design: Bounded Object of Study

I employed a qualitative case study design that uses survey data to complement

the qualitative design to explore the notion of opportunity from the perspective of the

youth attending a Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA). The purpose of this

inquiry is to:

- Provide empirical research on an emerging school reform model that has been largely scrutinized only theoretically by both proponents and opponents of the public military model of education, and
- Encourage new modes of thought and enactment by complicating the assessment of the relative contribution of the public military academies by studying the meaning of opportunity from the perspective of those most affected, i.e. the school-aged youth who are provided and denied a wide range of educational opportunities.

The following questions guided my inquiry:

1. What meaning do low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity while attending a Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA)? What perceptions of their current and future opportunities do low-income students of color express in a Chicago PMA? How do these perceptions vary with race, ethnicity and gender?
2. How does this Chicago PMA's approach to leadership education and experiences for low-income and minority youth shape their sense of opportunity?
3. In what ways do students experience these leadership activities as relevant to their current and future aspirations? How do these experiences vary with race, ethnicity and gender?
4. How do students' race and gender affect their participation in the PMA and their experiences in Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) youth leadership programming in particular?
5. To what extent, and how, do the findings from questions 1-4 help assess the contributions of PMAs to Chicago School Reform?

In order to best address these questions; I employed case study design, because

this design encourages researchers to draw on multiple and overlapping varieties of

evidence. When it comes to the topic of whether or not case study is a research tradition,

some scholars argue that it is not a way of conceptualizing human activities and social processes (Schram, 2003; Wolcott, 2001). For instance, Wolcott (2001) regards case study as a format of reporting research and not a distinct research design. However, several other researchers insist that case study is an identifiable tradition of research (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) considers case study as a choice of object to study and not a methodological choice. I follow Stake and others who view case study research as an identifiable research tradition that is open to a wide range of methods of data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, case study is a decision of what to study in real-life events. Stake (1995) suggests the case researcher asks, 'what is this a case of'? In other words, what phenomena is the case explaining? Smith (1978) defines the case as "a bounded system," which suggests that the researcher focuses on a diverse range of components in relation to one another within some identifiable system of working parts—and the scale of the system can range from a case study of an individual to a classroom or a school system, just to cite examples from the field of education. The in-depth focus or the ability to "learn the intricate complexity of one case" is a strength of case study design. Considering my interest in examining PMA opportunities for students and that these opportunities are largely housed programmatically within the JROTC strand of the high school, case study is an appropriate design because the program is the object of study or case. I worked to interpret that program in the context of the school, the school system, and wider social contexts that bear upon the multiple meanings of the program.

Not only did I decide case study is the best design for carrying out my research, but I specifically designed a qualitative case study that uses survey data to complement

the qualitative design. Whereas I asked several open-ended questions intended to help me understand what is happening, how it is happening, and why it is happening at the Chicago PMA under study, I also asked a few questions that requires broad, statistical descriptive accounts of student perspective. To ensure that I was best able to understand and measure what I intended to understand and measure, I privileged qualitative methods and drew on quantitative methods to complement the qualitative design.

1.   **Philosophical Assumptions**

From as early as I can remember, I have always been intrigued by the idea that there are multiple ways of understanding the world in which we live. I often commit myself to considering different standpoints on any issue as a way of challenging myself to see things differently and more complexly. When I consider my epistemological and ontological approach to conducting research, I self-identify as a researcher who employs an interpretive perspective.

As my worldview led me toward how I have come to understand my researcher identity, I became ever more committed to exploring meaning from the perspective of those most affected by the phenomenon of inquiry interest. For the purposes of this study, I aimed to fully explore the meaning of opportunity from the perspective of those most affected---the school-aged youth of color who are provided or denied a wide range of educational opportunities. Therefore, it made sense that I applied an interpretive approach to my study, because it provides deep insight into "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118).

Moreover, I found that an interpretive approach worked well with understanding youth, in particular, because just as they are in rapid stages of

development, as this approach respects the ever-changing existence of multiple views of social reality. As youth construct meaning based upon how they interact with and perceive the world around them, an interpretive perspective respects the fluidity of the tumultuous experience that is often characterized of being young and becoming older simultaneously. Another attractive feature of the interpretive approach is that it further recognizes that people are the "experts" of understanding human behavior and that the researcher becomes the vehicle by which their expertise is revealed (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001; Hesse-Biber, 2011). It became clear that I had to approach my study in a way that privileges the qualitative perspective, because I was most interested in understanding the multiple interpretations my participants gave to the what, how and why of their experiences (Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, and Lydenberg, 1999).

It may at first appear that my philosophical approach to research is in conflict with the incorporation of quantitative methods. In fact, I often thought about how could I reconcile these conflicting philosophical approaches to research. Upon further reflection, it occurred to me that my openness was key.

How I understand the world as one that exists because of how people construct multiple realities also allows me to remain curious about the perspectives of researchers who understand reality as one that is fixed and therefore quantifiable. For example, using descriptive statistical data to place the findings from a qualitative study into a larger context intrigues me. For the purposes of this study, I caught myself wondering if gender, in particular, makes a difference the students' perspective of opportunity and their views on leadership.

Although I drew on some quantitative data to complement the qualitative design, I still see myself as an outsider to the traditional positivistic paradigm because of three major philosophical points of disagreement as it pertains to the notion of objectivity: 1) In consideration of conducting research with humans, I do not adhere to the belief that achieving absolute truth is possible. Simply put, the social world is too complex; 2) I also do not believe that just because numerical values are objective that the researchers behind the calculations are able to remain bias free themselves. Regardless of whether a researcher approaches his/her work quantitatively or qualitatively, examining her worldview and its attached bias strengthens the overall integrity of the study; 3) Whereas the positivistic paradigm has been privileged for its perceived methods of reaching objective truth, it simultaneously reinforces the status quo by operating within an paradigm that privileges the white male way of constructing knowledge and the white male way of understanding how the social world came into being (Harding, 1991, 1993). In the end, I stand firmly in believing that the research problem (i.e. guiding question(s)) must drive the design, which is the ultimate reason for why I approached my design in ways in which the qualitative approach is primary.

2.   **Complementing the Methods in the Design**

Once I designed a qualitative study that uses a survey to complement the qualitative design, I had to make a few logistical decisions. First, I had to consider how I would use the methods within the design, either sequentially (one, then the other) or concurrently (at the same time) (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Second, I had to decide when I would use the methods. In other words, how are the quantitative and qualitative data sets interacting with one another? (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Third, I

considered whether using a comparative case study design or a single-case study design would help me best address my guiding research questions.

Despite that using methods both sequentially and concurrently have strengths, I decided that a sequential design would strengthen my design. I made this methodological decision, because the results of one dataset can help inform the next phase of methods implementation, and the process offers options for enhancing the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings as well as options for exploring divergent findings between the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. Using a sequential design also helped me bring the data sets into conversation with each other through data collection, analysis and interpretation. This design gave me the opportunity to draw of various techniques to gather information.

I map the qualitative approach to my case study design, where the capitalized term "QUAL" denotes the dominance of the qualitative component and the lowercased term "quan" indicates the supportive role of the quantitative component in the design in the following way:

Guiding Research Questions

⇓

Qualitative Case Study Design that uses Survey to Complement the Qualitative Design

⇓

| | Relationship/Trust Building and Support Seeking; no specific data collection and analysis occurring |

"hung out" at the research site

followed by ⟹   followed by ⟹

QUAL   quan   QUAL

| Initial qualitative observations and analysis provide information about the site and participants, inform survey item construction, and create opportunities for challenging, informal conversations with participants | Quantitative data collection and analysis provide descriptive information about school site and participants and inform interview protocol construction | Ongoing qualitative observations and interview data collection and analysis provide information about the meaning the participants make of their experiences at the school site and participant feedback loops inform data analysis |

⇓   ⇓

| FINDINGS | ⟺ | FINDINGS |

Double arrow during analysis represents the following:

• Ebb and flow of quan and QUAL; do the QUAL findings confirm or disrupt the broader quan population findings, thereby possibly increasing the generalizability or validity of the data.
• Opportunities for triangulation of results and recognition of contradictions that lead to the generation of new research questions or insight.

Figure 3: Explanatory sequential design adapted from Hesse-Biber (2011)

3.   <u>**Why a Single-Case Study?**</u>

A critique of qualitative case study designs is that they produce small-*n* studies that make it impossible to generalize the findings to larger populations. Several researchers continue to value case study design for its ability to capture the depth and nuance of the phenomena embedded in the case. And yet, the resurgence of the dominance of positivistic research paradigms and the desire to use empirical evidence to address large system-wide problems has led several other researchers to question the utility of case study as a viable research design. For better or worse the former cohort of researchers are no longer satisfied with case studies that produce applicable theoretical models. Instead the emphasis has been placed on demanding that case studies produce empirical findings that are applicable to larger population and contexts. The ability case studies have to represent, in the classical statistical sense, larger entities is arguably negligible (Small, 2009). The pressure to generalize case study findings is a predicament that Small (2009) argues case study researchers should not avoid, but rather they should create "solutions that involve developing alternative languages and clarifying their separate objectives, rather than imitating the language of classical statistics for problems to which it is not suited" (p. 10).

With this predicament in mind, I chose a single-case study because the design allows for the evaluation of a set of specific opportunities in one specific context, and it allows for in-depth portrayal and analysis of a distinctive case that supports the generation of logical inferences that can be tested over time (Small, 2009; Yin, 1994). While it is documented that 17 stand alone PMAs exist in the United States and 6 exist in Chicago alone, this limited number of these high schools qualifies them as an atypical

educational setting. Although this case cannot be considered a completely "unique case study" (van Helsen, 1978; Yin, 1994), it can be considered a rare case, because out of the 24, 348 public secondary schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010), PMAs only account for .07% of the total number of public high schools. The rarity of the case is significant because it presents an exceptional opportunity to examine the relationship among issues of poverty/race/gender, comprehensive militarized educational opportunity, and neoliberal inner-city school reform. One advantage is that I can study this rare case in ways that I could not study a representative sample, as understood within the classical statistical paradigm. Capturing the nuances of a rare case allows for deeper exploration and interpretation of phenomena. I employed two alternatives presented by Smalls (2009) in an effort not to fall into the common trap of appropriating the language and objectives of classical statistical approaches to strengthen case study design.

First, I did not attempt to achieve a random sample of Chicago PMA sites and Chicago PMA participants, but even by including all of the PMAs and all corresponding actors, I would still fall short of developing a statistically generalizable sample. Therefore, it makes more sense for me to "sample for range" within the case by identifying characteristics of the groups under study and interviewing a number of them (Weiss, 1994). Within this frame, the actual n should be regarded as a single case "with particular characteristics that, rather than being controlled away, should be understood, developed, and incorporated into understanding the cases at hand" (Small, 2009, p. 11). Based on what I wanted to understand, making sure that I interview and observe low-income Chicago PMA students of color and Chicago PMA administration and faculty is

essential to making sure I could better understand some of the mechanisms through which poverty/race/gender, comprehensive militarized educational opportunity, and neoliberal inner-city school reform are related.

Second, I drew on the framework of an "extended case method" to conceptualize how this single-case study can strengthen the potential of theorizing from this relatively rare case (Burawoy, 1998). Central to the "extended case method" is that the researcher analyzes a "particular social situation in relation to the broader social forces shaping it" (Smalls, 2009, p. 16). For the purposes of this dissertation, I not only studied the meaning the Chicago PMA students made of opportunity, but also the larger external forces that influence how these students made sense of their realities. For example, understanding how together the neoliberal context of choice and the racialized nature of that context are forces that create a context of constraint needs to be studied in order to better understand the students' decision-making and sense-making. While this method is unable to match the statistical power of a representative sample, the extended case method points to "societal significance" in that "the importance of the single case lies in what it tells us about society as a whole rather than about the population of similar cases" (p. 281).

Moreover, the extended case method uncovers processes that allow case researchers to develop logical inferences that can be tested over time (Mitchell, 1983). Statistical representativeness loses significance in case study design when the objective, as Mitchell (1983) argues is, "extrapolation based on the validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events" (p. 190). Case study researchers can make logical inferences when "conclusions about the essential linkage between two or more characteristics are made in terms of some explanatory schema" (p. 199-200). During

analysis and write up, I can make logical inferences to develop questions and hypotheses that can be further researcher and tested, which can strengthen what we can learn from just this one case.

To examine how the youth at a Chicago PMA understand the ways in which they experience college preparation and leadership education as two dimensions of a wider opportunity structure and what they believe that means in regards to their current and future aspirations, I collected and analyzed demographic/survey data and qualitative data from four principle sources, which I organized into five phases of research, described in greater detail below:

A. Site Selection

B. Documentary review of Chicago Public Schools documents and manuals describing youth leadership development and plans to provide opportunities. This phase took place from September 2009 to September 2011.

C. Survey of PMA youth perspectives on leadership and opportunity in the case program under study, which took place during January 2010.

D. Focus group interviews with case study PMA students, which occurred from March 2010 through August 2010 and individual interviews with PMA teachers, guidance counselors, and administration, which occurred from January 2010 through August 2010.

E. Observations, which included JROTC exercises (e.g. military marching, formations, classroom activities, JROTC student staff activities and inspections), core academic classrooms, after-school programs, teacher meetings, principal-led

leadership team meetings, and parent meetings/LSC meetings. This fifth phase of

data collection took place from October 2009 through December 2010.

B.   **Phase 1: Site Selection**

A couple of factors guided how I selected the site for my study. First, the public

military academy is a fairly new educational model and as such there are few to examine.

Nationally, there are 17 public military academies. Locally, in Chicago, there are 6 stand

alone PMAs; three Army-affiliated, one Marine, one Navy and one Air Force. The

limited number of sites to select from forced me to realize that the administrators' consent

also included considerations of site confidentiality. To allow for greater protection of the

school site's identity, I removed or disguised identifiers for the school and used a

pseudonym for the name of the school.

The second factor relates to my interest in conducting timely research on a topic

that has been largely theoretically scrutinized by both proponents and opponents of the

public military model of education. With these theoretical positions in conversation, I had

to conduct research at a PMA where the administration trusted my interest in conducting

a genuine inquiry into positive and negative dimensions of the PMA program, as opposed

to conducting the study to prove a conclusion I had already reached. In order to speed up

the trust building process, I selected a PMA principal who already had and continues to

have a positive history of relationships with my degree-conferring institution, the

University of Illinois at Chicago. However, I did not take these previous relationships for

granted, as I knew that I had to prove to the principal and other site members that I was

just as trustworthy.

After sending the principal a letter outlining the objectives of my research, I met with him to discuss my project further, answer his questions, and negotiate my entry into the school site. Just as the principal used this meeting to decide whether to open up his school to me, I approached this meeting as a way for me to gauge whether or not I could do the study the way I intended. Admittedly, I wanted a sense of whether or not I could work with this principal and therefore this school site.

To my surprise and from the start, he was forthright about his philosophy of educational leadership including adding in his own personal history as he explains how it shaped his perspective and approach. His willingness to immediately discuss his views with me drew me in. I wanted to know more about him and how he understood the work he did at this Chicago PMA.

As our conversations continued about my project, I enhanced the trust building process by offering ways for him to view this study as an opportunity to analyze how the school provides leadership and youth development opportunities as well as how this PMA can make these offerings and experiences even more effective. Specifically, I casually mentioned that just as I expect to find aspects of the school that are working well, I also expect to find areas that could use strengthening. He responded:

> Exactly. I am always asking, "What can we do better?" I encourage this. You can ask my staff; they will tell you that I am always asking, what can be done? What next?

I believed we had a shared awareness about the research process that will protect the gatekeepers down the road from feeling completely 'slammed' when I report contradictions that critique the schools' provision of opportunities (Sleeter, 1998).

The limited number of possible sites, the need to build mutual trust to gain access to the site, and the desire to have at least some shared awareness about the research process with the main gatekeeper led me to select a site that is to some extent a sample of convenience.

C.   **Phase 2: Documentary Review**

In the second phase of my research, I conducted an analysis of reports, manuals, guides, and policy briefs on youth leadership opportunities and college preparation including their significance in PMAs. From these documents, I constructed the set of standards around youth leadership and college preparation that CPS expects. This phase proved useful because it provided me with a specific framework that I used to guide my research of the PMA under investigation. Additionally, this document review helped me construct my interview protocols.

I compiled documents from one general type of source, that is Chicago Public Schools, including but not limited to individual school publications, individual school electronic media/publications, JROTC manuals and resource guides, JROTC media (i.e. videos, PowerPoint presentations, and images), policy statements, school report cards, school performance data, and individual school archival records. I applied focused and open-ended coding schemes to the CPS documents. The focused coded themes comprise: CPS college prep pillar of readiness, which included academic and social preparation for college and leadership development. To expand on these themes, I looked for statements, concepts and standards that relate to college and leadership opportunities identified for students that are not only enrolled in college prep courses or already in formal leadership positions but for those students that are also getting the support needed to do well in these

courses and positions. Furthermore, the focused coding included analyzing the documents

for a position that emphasizes that the students' academic grades and community service

do matter to college admission boards.

D.   **Phase 3: Survey of Youth Perspectives on Leadership**

       A key feature of conducting a case study is that I can draw on multiple and

overlapping varieties of evidence because I am looking to capture the multiple realities of

the case including the contradictory views of what is happening in regards to the

leadership opportunities provided PMA youth (Stake, 1995). The purpose of the survey

instrument was to capture a preliminary, broad-based insight into the PMA students'

perceptions of leadership and post-secondary opportunity. I first considered who I was to

invite to respond to the survey.

       1.   **Survey Population**

       Originally I was most interested in surveying the Junior and Senior classes'

perceptions of leadership and opportunity, because, as upperclassmen, they have spent

the most time within the leadership programs at the PMA and they are often provided the

opportunity for the highest-ranking youth leadership positions in the PMA. Further, I

figured that as they prepared to graduate from high school, it is likely that they are

already considering how their leadership experiences are going to have some influence

over their postsecondary aspirations. However, undergirded by my willingness to have

minimal levels of collaboration at the school level, I discussed the survey sample with the

PMA administration as yet another way to ensure that this data is useful to the school.

They were interested to see what kind of trajectory of student beliefs, values, and

understandings might be demonstrated by comparing freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior student survey responses.

At first overwhelmed by increasing the survey population size, I proposed a solution that benefited both the students and me. Because of the support from the DOD and philanthropic foundations, the school has two full-fledged computer labs, ten computers in their library, mobile laptop classroom set for its LET 3 JROTC classes, and six computers in their post-secondary department. I asked the principal for permission to administer the survey electronically. He agreed to it and even argued that the students would also benefit from the experience, serving as a form of technology literacy. With the support of the JROTC instructors, we worked together to administer the survey during their class periods so that responding to the survey did not interfere with the students' core academic schedules.

2.   Survey Construction

I purchased a subscription to Survey Monkey in order to use it as my online survey platform. I constructed the survey instrument by creating four domains of items centered on a common theme for that domain. The domains include: Leadership attributes and education, youth leadership opportunities, and attitudes toward school and post-secondary aspirations. The Girl Scouts Research Institute gave me permission to modify their "Change It Up" survey instrument for the purposes of my research. I chose this survey because the validity testing indicated that the survey measured what it intended to measure, the content overlapped the four domains of my research interests, and the survey participants were representative of the students in my study (Girl Scouts

Research Institute, 2008). Although I used existing survey items that have gone through validity and reliability testing, I still addressed two issues of validity.

3. **Survey Validity**

The issues of validity of concern to me included content and construct. First, I considered content validity in that the items on the survey will actually gather information on the students' perception that is related to the focus of the study: leadership and opportunity in relationship to postsecondary aspirations. Second, I considered construct validity in that the items are written as short statements so the students can complete the survey with ease. While there are many things to consider in attending to construct validity, some examples are these: the statements will avoid negative phrases and ask only one question per item to reduce confusion; they will avoid factual knowledge because I am not testing for knowledge; the statements will avoid reference to the past to prevent memory distortion; and the statements will avoid absolutes such as all, none, never because it makes the statement either too ambiguous or too factual.

Four Chicago Public School (CPS) students who were not participants in the study but are representative of the race, ethnicity, gender, and ages of the survey population did pilot test the survey. Upon completion, they provided me with feedback on the layout, wording and ease with which it took them to complete it. While they understood the content of the survey and they were able to take it with ease, they did suggest reducing the scale or number of response categories. They convinced me that reducing the categories would help reduce boredom and frustration students may experience responding to the survey items. In sum, minding issues of content and construct validity helped ensure that the students were able to answer the items with

confidence thereby increasing the overall response rate of the survey instrument ($n =$ 335/391, 86% response rate).

4. Survey Analysis

After the collection of completed surveys, each item was given a score of 1 or 2 points; a "2" indicates agreement. I used quantitative data software such as SPSS to calculate measures of central tendency including descriptive statistics, standard deviation and frequency of distribution. I also ran ANOVA to gather information on whether students' perception of leadership is different by subgroup. For example, ANOVA helps me understand if there is a variance among the variables or difference between the young women's and young men's perceptions of leadership opportunities. The instrument's scores can give the school more complete information about the leadership opportunities they are providing their students and the students' perceptions of these opportunities. These values can, in principle, inform youth leadership programming, curriculum and pedagogical improvements.

E. Phase 4: Interviews

The survey instrument inadequately addressed why students feel the way they do about leadership opportunities and as such, I interviewed various PMA actors in order to elicit meaning-making information. I conducted student focus group interviews as well as semi-structured interviews with JROTC instructors, core curriculum teachers, guidance counselors, and PMA administration. In the following, I discuss how I selected the interview participants and I describe the interview process.

1. **Building Rapport**

Prior to attempting to set up any interviews, I spent several months in public spaces in and around the school. For example, I often rode mass transit and walked from the transit stop in order to travel alongside the students to the school, I walked to some of the local restaurants to grab lunch, and I made purchases from local businesses as a way to understand the relationship between the school and the neighborhood. While I did not intend to use the time I spent in public spaces for rigorous data collection, those experiences did provide me a greater sense of context, which I used to inform interview protocol construction as well as add depth to how I made sense of some of the stories I was told. Moreover, I aimed to use this informal time to build ethical relationships of care with the faculty, staff, and students.

My approach to building relationships with the research participants is an extension of Nel Noddings's (1984) theory of caring that is most often applied to teaching. Noddings (1984) explains that caring is not only an attitude, but that it is also used to describe deeper relations, that caring is a way of being in the world. I applied Noddings's (1984) theory of the caring teacher to that of what I consider the caring researcher. To be clear, I am not suggesting that a caring researcher is someone who develops a "warm and kind" friend-like relationship with her participants (Brinkman and Kvale, 2005). Rather she is concerned with being attentive to her participant's voices and concerns. Moreover, she is committed to developing reciprocal levels of care between herself and her participants. Disrupting the school actors' typical understanding of what a researcher is expected to do was challenging, but I found the process enabled me to better handle their suspicious attitudes toward my presence in their school. For example, this

approach allowed me to have frank conversations about issues of power, privilege and marginalization as manifested through racial, ethnic, gender and class divisions present in school and society with school administrators, core academic faculty, military instructors, and students.

2. Tensions Between Building Rapport and Qualitative Validity

Ultimately, the caring researcher approach to building relationships proved beneficial to conducting quality research; however it remained a process that required careful consideration through out the project. My experiences taught me that building rapport with research participants is a complicated process because a tension exists between building appropriate relationships to support the research versus that of "threats to validity" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 296). Whereas the quantitative validity that I applied to the survey instrument of this study supports the use of "prior design features" that work to eliminate threats, this strategy is less applicable for the qualitative aspects of the design (Maxwell, 1992, p. 296).

The nature of qualitative research guided my ability to address particular threats to validity in a couple of ways. Because qualitative research is inductive in nature and more concerned with "understanding particulars rather than generalizing to universals", I dealt with "specific threats to the validity of particular features of the accounts... by seeking evidence that would allow them to be ruled out" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 296). This strategy of addressing issues of qualitative validity often happened retrospectively upon the development of a tentative account or upon reflection for the purpose of guiding future action in the field. Moreover, I undertook the method of "the observation of participation" to reflect on and critically engage with my own participation within the

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situations I sometimes found myself in unexpectedly (Tedlock, 2001, p. 467). Field accounts of these situations allowed me to provide descriptions and interpretations of the changes in the school context that were out of my control as a researcher. In the following, I provide examples of how I handled the tension presented by building rapport with my research participants, on the one hand and managing the overall credibility of my study on the other.

Shortly after my entry into the field and to my surprise, the principal asked me if he could introduce me to the students during his monthly rotation of meetings with each class of students (i.e. freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior student body). Without giving me much time to consider the benefits and limitations of this proposal to the validity of my study, I was given the unexpected opportunity to introduce the scope of my research as well as myself to the whole student body. He told me that he put me a 10-12 minute time slot in the meeting. He also expressed that he hoped I would give students exposure to the meaning of earning a doctorate degree. The schedule was set... I was to report to the auditorium at 11:45AM.

When I entered the auditorium, the principal was standing in front of the blue velvet curtain on the stage. He appeared relaxed and proud. Six ornate chandeliers and freshly painted cream walls gave the aging auditorium a well-lit, fresh feel. The students and their teachers streamed in single file, but a buzz of noise took over the room as they chatted amongst themselves. Once seated on the recently re-painted hardwood seats, one teacher raised his arm high into the air and then the principal raised his hand. A few more students followed their lead, but the chatter continued. Several more teachers raised their hands and then as it was a near reflex I raised my hand. At that moment, I had to

negotiate if my participation would compromise my research role. Immediately, I decided it would not threaten the validity of my research because I have spent enough time in schools to know that the goal was to quiet the room down and it seemed like a harmless procedure to help achieve this goal. Soon after, all but a couple of the students' raised their hands and the whole room was rather quiet.

The meeting proceeded with announcements concerning dress code requests, attendance rate goals, medical compliance forms, and college awareness presentations. A quarter into the meeting, the principal says, "Remember when I had guest speakers, Cadet Alvaro Espinoza and Cadet Jorge Garcia (pseudonyms), both of whom were accepted to West Point come talk to you about college." The students shake their heads and some respond, "yeah." "Today I have two more speakers, both of whom have just earned scholarships to go to college next year." After their presentations, he introduced me by saying:

> I would also like to introduce another guest speaker to you from the University of Illinois at Chicago. [I headed to the front of the auditorium.] Ms. Horsley is going to be working here and she is going to publish a book on our school. See our school is on the up and up. Let's welcome Ms. Horsley." [The room erupts with applause; I'm nervous and I feel the pressure to get this project 'right'].

I decided to approach my introduction from a pedeagogical standpoint. After thanking them for welcoming me and telling them how excited I was to be there, I asked, "Does anyone know what it means to earn a doctorate degree?" Only a couple of hands raise so I asked, "how about earning a PhD?" Several more hands raise, so I move to breifly explain my educational journey and how I joke with my Aunt that I am becoming a doctor of ideas [students actually laughed]. I added, "I might not be able to help you get over a cold, but I can share my enthusiam for learning with you."

After my brief attempt to bring awareness to post-secondary opportunities, I talked up my purpose for coming to their school. I further explained:

> You probably already know that district officials in City of Chicago and even the Nation are looking for ways to improve high schools. Because Public Military Academies are so new, people want to know more about these schools. My job is to gather information and to make sense of that informantion. You will see me around your school, in your hallways, classrooms, and so forth. Just act as you would, I don't need special attention because I am just trying to understand what it is like to go to school here. To help me even further, I will also ask you to respond to a survey and I will also ask sixteen of you participate in group interviews where we will discuss various ideas about what it means to go to school here.

The principal then opened the floor for questions from the students. The students, across all age groups, wanted to know most about why I selected their school, who I would interview, if their names could be in the book, and what the title of the book will be. My answers echoed an abbreviated version of the reasons I outlined in my introduction and site selection of this chapter for doing my research at their school. I also mentioned that as a researcher I am obligated to keep what they tell me confidential so I could not use their names, but that they could help me pick alternative names for themselves. I ended my talk stating:

> You know better than anyone what it is like to go to school here. I might have gone through a lot of schooling, but you are the experts of *this* school. I could *not* do this work without your help. I look forward to working with you and I cannot express how much it means to me that you will all help me achieve my educational goals.

Prior to these introductory talks, the students would often give me cold stares with suscpcious expressions of "who are you?" "why are you here?" Afterwards, I was shocked by how their stance toward me changed. Several students came up to me in the hallways to ask me questions about college, to ask me about my research, and to ask me if I would interview them. I came to understand this as a reflection of how important it

was for me to publicly express, especially in front of their principal, commandant, and teachers that I believed their voices matter. Although getting to know the students went far better than I ever expected, it did not come without limitations.

3.   **Concerns about Building Realtionships with Students**

One of the most challenging aspects of building relationships with the students came in the form of knowing how to maintain some distance, to protect my outsider perspective in an effort to further gaurd against particular threats to validity. While I was excited to feel a change in the way the students accepted my presence following the principal meeting, I was also concerned that some students may want my attention just because they were told I was writing a book on their school. Would the students then just tell me what they think makes for what they think is a good, compelling read? Because I could not plan for this particular account in my design, I turned the experience into a tentative working theory that I needed to use to inform my next steps of action in the field.

Therefore, I took note of which students asked me to interview them. I decided they seemed too eager to talk to me and, as a precaution I disqualified them from future participation in the focus groups. I also reflected on how the students' positive response to me indicated that the principal of this school is likely well-liked or respected by the majority of the students. I inferred this because if he were not trusted by the students, I could have been in a horrible position to build trust with the students just by how the students may have perceived my association with their principal. In an effort to address this particular threat to validity, I employed sustained time in the field as well as additional sources of evidence to increase the validity of my study.

Moreover, I used body language, physical cues, and overt note taking to publicly remind students of my, "status as an outsider, as a person in the setting who has clearly delineated tasks and purposes that differ from those of the members" (Emerson, Shaw and Fritz, 1995, p. 37). I re-negotiated my researcher role in the field as someone who could participate, while at other times I could become detached as long as I assessed how the role I took during that particular account did not interfere with the quality of information I could gather as well as information I could interpret. Although this strategy did help curb the tendency of what researchers' consider "going native" (Pelto and Pelto, 1978, p. 69), I admit that I still felt a sense of belonging to the school community that I had to mind through out data collection and analysis.

4.   **Challenges with Building Rapport with Students and Staff Simultaneously**

Another consequence of showing respect to the students was how it shaped my perceived status as an adult in the school context. While the school administrators never asked me to substitute teach and I was known as "Ms. Horsley, the UIC research intern", my status as an adult made me feel as if I were expected to assert authority and contribute in ethical ways in the school. For examples, I encouraged the students to make better decisions whether in the classroom or hallways and to settle down in assemblies. I often provided students words of encouragement and mentoring support. Occasionally, I found myself driving students to recruitment events and after school programs. In some of the classrooms and without prior discussion, I fell into the role of a teacher's aide where I supported the learning process in the room. Through out these few episodes, I continued

to analyze the benefits and limitations of my participation to the overall quality of the research.

As I continued to negotiate my researcher role time and time again, my general approach was consistent. I took action with a respectful lightheartedness, an approach that the teachers under contract and therefore under a great deal of pressure to perform cannot always afford. My process to building rapport let the students interact with me as they would a teacher, but they also let me know that I was not quite like their typical teacher. The students told me things like, "You should be our teacher" and "Talking with you is easy. If I could just talk to all of my teachers like I can with you." I achieved an "in-between status" in that the students still respected me like they would a teacher. However this status also allowed them to open up to me in ways that they might not with some of the teachers who determine their grades and consequences for mistakes made (Lewis, 2004).

The truth is that it was awkward at times building trust with the students and teachers simultaneously. Despite my good intentions to build rapport with the students and teachers and my commitment to give back to the school community for giving their time to me, the process produced unintended consequences. Inevitably, some of the administrators and teachers appeared concerned by my willingness to privilege the students' experience in my research. Because of some of the comments made in faculty meetings and during personal communications with me, I developed a sense that some feared what I would learn from the students. A few gave me the vibe that I should be careful trusting the students by indirectly mentioning to me "some students just like to cause trouble." While I was frustrated by some of the teacher's perceptions of their

students, I reassured them that I am able to use multiple pieces of evidence to make sense of the stories the students told me. I kept all of this in mind, as I invited students to participate in the focus groups. Quite simply, I did not lose sight of the fact that every story has more than one side to it and that I should not take any narrative at face value.

In retrospect, I was not always fully prepared for the level of complexity required of the trust building process inherent of conducting research in a context where relationships are central to what it means to exist within that institution. For examples, as a researcher in this school context, I was, in some ways, at the mercy of the gatekeepers, especially during early entry into the field where I certainly did not want to create a situation where the principal revoked his invitation. Over time, I also came to understand that I could not plan all the things that can happen while in the process of building rapport with participants. However, my concern with minding threats to qualitative validity allowed me to develop the type of researcher agency that I needed to ensure that the process did not interfere with the quality of information I could get from the participants as well as with my ability to collect and interpret the data.

5. __Student Interviewee Selection__

After spending a couple of months of immersing myself within the school community, I asked the principal to provide me a list of twenty-five students who represent a range of the school's student body, including some students who are academically high achieving and have high and no rank, students from both upper and lower grades and students with various identities including race, ethnicity, gender and ability. While he was agreeable to the selection criteria, he delegated the making of the

list to a staff member who overtime became my one of my key informants, in which case all of my key informants signed informed consent.

During the development of the list of potential student interviewees, I remained conscious of the danger of the informant giving me a list of all "star students" who would likely praise the school no matter what. In order to prevent the development of an unrepresentative sample of only happy, highly productive students, I discussed the importance of inviting students with differing perspectives to the overall credibility of my research. To my relief, the informant was pleased to hear that I wanted to understand all aspects of the school rather than just the positive experiences. Drawing on my initial observations and notes about some of the students along with her insider information of the students, we worked together to develop a list of students who could help me understand the whole story as much as possible. When several of the highest ranking students who are typically asked to participate in these type of activities approached me wondering why I was not interviewing them coupled with the surprised and humbled responses I did get from those I did ask, led me to believe that this was evidence that my key informant and I did select a group that was more representative of the school body as a whole.

Once I had the list of 25 students in place, we met in a teacher's room who supported my work from the beginning and who is also trusted by the students. During our meeting, I introduced them to the goals, the process, participant expectations, and their rights as participants of the study. In particular, I explained how essential it is for researchers like myself to protect their idenitities so that what they say through out the research process does not come back to them in ways that could cause harm their

standing in school. I further explained that this meant that I would disguise who they were by altering an example thay gave from a more specific to generic labeling of the example and by giving them pseudonyms in the write up of the research.

During this meeting, I also took time to get to know them and I let them ask me questions about myself and the project. I ended the meeting reminding them that it is completely their choice to participate and I gave them their participant consent envelope that included another letter of invivation, explanation of the project, and the parent consent and student assent forms. I requested of those interested in participating that they return their signed slips in the envelope to me over the next two weeks. I asked sixteen (n = 16) students from the list of twenty-five to participate based on the student's year in school (FR. SO. JR. SR.), while also trying to achieve an even mix of students who represent differing races/ethnicities, genders and abilities. With limited follow up on my part, all sixteen (n =16) students returned their consent and assent forms within two weeks.

6.   Administrator, Teacher, and Counselor Interviewee Selection

Prior to approaching teachers and counselors to request their participation, I researched the school's website to help inform the interview selection process. For each faculty member, I was able to gather information on his/her content area of specialization, grade level in which s/he teaches/counsels and his/her sponsorship of extra-curricular activities. With this information in mind, I asked the school principal to provide me with additional facts that I could not gather from the website. For example, I could include years in the profession, years working at this school sepcifically, and faculty leadership positions in my selection process. As a result, I asked fifteen (15)

faculty members from the list of twenty-eight (28) to participate based on a.) the grades they teach/counsel, b.) the courses they teach, c.) years of working at the school, and d.) the type and range of faculty leadership roles and positions they serve in. Four (4) teachers, five (5) JROTC instructors, and two (2) guidance counselors accepted my invitation to interview. I informed the staff participants that I would protect their idenitities so that what they say through out the research process would not come back to them in ways that could harm their standing in school. I further explained that I would disguise who they were by altering an example thay gave from a more specific to generic labeling of the example and by giving them pseudonyms in the write up of the research. Even though a 54% faculty member interview response rate is respectable, there are a few limitations of the sample worth mentioning.

7.   Limitations to Adult Interview Participation

Although I was welcomed as a researcher, the design of my study and the context in which I conducted my research affected the eagerness of some faculty member participation. In regards to the design, I was most diligent with securing the students' participation, because my overarching research questions require that I focused most of my attention to the students' experiences and perceptions. As discussed at length in the section within this chapter on "Building Rapport," my relationship building with the students appeared to limit my ability to build trust with some of the adult members of the school. Despite this outcome, my focus is seemingly justfied because capturing the students' voices was significant to strengthening the overall validity of my study.

Along with my design, the current educational context also created some barriers to faculty member pariticpation. It goes without saying that teachers, in general, are under

a great deal of pressure to improve their students' academic performance or face losing their positions or school all together. The teachers working in the site of my study are not excluded from this high stakes accountability environment. They were overloaded with professional tasks beyond teaching that made interviewing with me a luxury of time that several could not afford. Moreover, some whole departments were under such a tremendous amount of stress that inviting members within them to participate seemed unreasonable. Even the faculty members who agreed to confide in me still expressed concerns about their safety in regards to how I was going to use this information and who had access to the transcribed interview data because the school is small in size and therefore, tightly knit.

As a consequence of the research design and educational context, some faculty members did not participate formally. These limitations disproportionately affected my sample of adult female participants, especially considering the fact that the women were already in the minority of the school's overall faculty. Some of the females were concerned with how I planned to protect their identities when there were so few of them in the school and that they believed they had distinct persepctives that were already too well known by the faculty as a whole. While the limited number of female adult persepectives represented is a limitation of my study, I also considered that participants who do not feel safe may also limit the validity of the study because they are not as forthcoming in expressing their views as participants who feel less at-risk of the potential consequences that can come with being interviewed. Altough I intended to select faculty member interviewees based on diverse characteristics, the design and context of my study

presented barriers that made me more appreciative of those who were willing to give me their valuable time rather than meeting a selective criteria.

8.   Student Focus Group Design

Several studies demonstrate that low-income students and students of color face greater barriers to college and work readiness than middle to upper class students of European descent (Adelman, 2002; Oakes et. al., 2002; Freeman, 1997 and Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). In one particular study, Freeman (1997) conducted focus group interviews with African American high achieving students from five major cities in the United States. She explained via the students' college bound narratives how economic barriers, e.g. lack of college funds and social psychological barriers (e.g. intimidation; lack of options) limited their access to college. Freeman's findings are useful and, as an extension of her work I am interested in the students' opportunity-bound narratives within a Chicago PMA. Moreover, the purpose of the student focus group interviews was to elicit low-income minority student views on the leadership opportunities provided to them in relation to their postsecondary aspirations.

In addition, focus group interviews proved useful for three reasons. First, as part of the survey sample, the students assisted in the interpretation of what the survey respondents may have been thinking when they answered a survey item (Kleiber, 2004). This is useful, as responses to survey items often require further investigation.

Second, focus groups are beneficial because the groups are in an environment that reflects a natural communicative process of joking, laughing, storytelling and disagreeing (Sliverman, 1997). The focus group environment is practical, because this method tends to minimize the power dynamics between the researcher and researched, allowing the

student participants to come to voice their positions while comforted by the support of their peers. Moreover, the focus group dynamics allow students to co-construct their thoughts and in the process reveal socially constructed meaning through shared opinions and attitudes toward the topic under investigation.

Third, focus groups allow the researcher-moderator to observe how students turn personal thoughts public and how this process shapes the formation of their stated opinion (Kleiber, 2004). Even though focus groups can compromise individual expression for the formulation of a common thought from the group of students, I minmized this concern by using probes that encouraged dialogue to guard against "group think" or overt consensus building among the students (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 705).

In addition to how I facilitated the groups, I also supported individual expression by developing ground rules with the students. One of our agreements we made was to disagree with each other respectfully. The mere discussion of how disagreements amongst members in the groups are likely put forth the idea that I expected to hear differences in their perspectives. In the end, the techniques I used to encourage individual expression worked because I often heard several students make a comment such as "Okay, I get you but" and when students did give quick responses of agreement with other member's comments, I would redirect with a probe such as "Can you tell me more about why you feel this way?"

9.   **Student Focus Group Composition**

Creating the right balance between the homogeneity of the participants, on the one hand with that of having enough variation among participants to allow for contrasting viewpoints on the other is important to creating informative focus groups. If the

participants feel that they share very little in common with each other, they may not disclose much about their personal experiences about the topic under discussion or they may defer to those that they believe are more knowledgeable about the topic under discussion (Krueger and Casey, 2009). Conversely, if they share too much in common, then the point of conducting focus groups to begin with is undermined.

In regards to group composition, I considered several logistical issues. My thought process started with determining the topic(s) of discussion because the more sensitive the topic, the more important it is to carefully select the groups (e.g. the topic of discussion is about puberty, which is embarrassing to many people so it will be best if the groups are formed by age and gender background) (Horowitz et. al, 2003). I wondered, "Are my topics sensitive in nature?" Because I did not want to make assumptions about the topics I chose, I followed the advice given in the literature and I sought out guidance from key informants at the school (Horowitz et. al., 2003). Because the interview protocol probed the participants about the students' experiences with leadership opportunities and college going support systems, my key informants claimed that these were not sensitive issues; however they did mention that I might want to consider the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the students in the groups. I found this telling in and of itself at the time.

Next, I considered the cultural backgrounds of the student participants and its effect on the group dynamics. Because I wanted to understand how the students' view issues of race and gender as it intersects with their leadership development through the JROTC program offered by the Chicago PMA under study, I considered forming homogenous groups because this may create a safer space for students to discuss their

views (Horowitz et. al., 2003). Not only would this make the number of participants per group too small, I was also concerned that too much similarity amongst the members would not allow for much variation. Moreover, the solely homogenous groups may limit opportunities for cross-cultural understanding (von Aspern, 2009).

Considering the key informants mentioned that I might want to consider the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the students and the fact that I had already observed self-segregation patterns in the school, I decided that giving students who are culturally different an opportunity to discuss their experiences amongst each other would prove beneficial to the quality of my research. My previous teaching skills gave me the confidence needed to create a safe, yet challenging space for the students to co-construct meaning across their differences. In an effort to make sure the group composition did not threaten the quality of the data collected, I took additional observational notes on the dynamics of the groups. I could then use these observations to make adjustments to the group composition as necessary.

Specifically my observations of the racially and ethnically diverse groups in dialogue with each other appeared to enhance the students' abilities to explain their experiences. For example, it was often easier for them to explain what they meant in comparison to others in the group, which made me think how the students' process of co-constructing knowledge is reflective of how we come to understand our racial and ethnic identities in the image of the Other. In fact, the participants could then clarify or challenge an explanation based on whether they believed the reasoning was accurate or a reflection of stereotypical beliefs. Moreover, they also helped me identify similarities across their ideas and experiences as well.

Lastly, I contemplated the students' developmental stage in relation to creating group dynamics conducive to instructive focus groups. Differences in the participants' age and gender influenced my thinking. Generally speaking, it is ideal to "have an age range of no more than two years among participants" (Krueger and Casey, 2009). Considering the history of the Chicago PMA under study and the radical changes that took place from the time the oldest in the school were freshman to the current freshman class, it made even more sense to group the students by years in school. Therefore, I kept the upper classmen separate from the lower classmen.

In regards to development, I also considered what we know about gender relations as I formed the groups. Focus groups for 12-14 year olds are characterized as chaotic because male students, in particular, like to attract the attention of others thereby creating distractions (Krueger and Casey, 2009; Orenstein, 1994). While I realized that the junior and senior students were less affected by gender differences in the groups, I was concerned about the effects gender differences may have on the freshman and sophomore participants in relation to the quality of the session. However, much like my consideration with the racial and ethnic composition, I was also interested in the students' cross-gender meaning making.

In sum, then the focus group composition was as follows: the groups for round 1 and round 2 were comprised of racially and ethnically diverse students, but separated by gender and year in school whereas round 3 and round 4 remained comprised of racially and ethnically diverse students and separated by year in school; however I combined the male and female students. What I perceived as a small change in-group composition did alter the dynamics among the group members significantly.

10.   Limitations to Mixing the Student Focus Group Members by Gender

Prior to mixing the groups by gender, both male and female students were quite

serious about their role in the groups. To take a case in point, the young women

commented on the intensity of the groups. They made comments such as "I guess this

stuff has been on my mind and I just needed to get it out" and "I'm glad to know that I'm

not the only one that felt this way." Even though I was following my protocol, I was

concerned that I had led them toward what seemed more like group therapy. Before we

concluded our session, I checked in with them to see how they were feeling about the

sensitive nature of our conversations. After debriefing, the general sense was that they

actually felt better having had a chance to talk about the issues they face because they

often did not have a space to do so. However, once the male and female students were

combined, the tone of the discussions was much more lighthearted and the students

seemed to be messing or joking with each other more. In retrospect, I will likely consider

separating future student focus group participants by gender as a general preference.

11.   Preserving Confidentiality in Student Focus Group Methodology

The very nature of group data collection requires careful consideration of how

to protect the anonymity of the participants, especially as group members will know the

others participating in the study and each member of the focus group will hear what the

other members have to contribute. When I met with the students to invite them to

participate, I not only described to them what a group interview consists of but I also

reviewed with them the potential risks and loss of confidentiality that comes with

conducting group interviews. Moreover, I explicitly consented the students for focus

group participation.

In order to remind the students about how to preserve their anonymity in the group interviews, we began and ended each session by reviewing ground rules that emphasized the importance of not sharing what other group members said in the interview with others in the school. Because the "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" commercials were in then, the students related that concept to the focus groups. We also met in a room near the guidance counselors office that had no windows expect to that of the outside so additional school actors could just look into the room from inside the school. I also believe that by working near the guidance counselors that I could also relate what was said in the groups remains confidential, because the students understand the counselors' area as a safe space for sharing their thoughts in confidence.

Because "drama" that could have resulted from students' spreading word around school never came back to me, it appeared to me that the students did honor each other's right to confidentiality. Moreover, when I implemented feedback loops with the students and I had de-identified the quotations that I shared with them, several students' wondered who said what. It appeared to me that not only did they keep what was said confidential; that other competing information such as memorizing an important math formula made it so that the students did not retain all that was said in the groups either. In the end, I feel assured that the students' right to safely participate in focus group interviews was up held.

12.   Student Focus Group Interviews

I conducted 4 rounds of 4 student focus groups with 4 students per group for 1 hour and a half in length. The interviews were digitally recorded in a comfortable and convenient space within the Chicago PMA under study. During each round, I put forth

questions on the same topic in order to ensure that themes across the groups emerged and that non-confirming data to one group can be identified and investigated further.

The interview protocols (Appendix A: Student Focus Group Protocols 1-4) included 5-6 general questions intended to serve as probes to "obtain range, specificity, depth and personal context" (Merton, 1987). I transcribed the interviews and employed both focused coding and constant comparison as an open ended thematic coding process after the first group and before each subsequent group. The constant comparison coding process allowed me to analyze issues across groups in terms of a particular category so that I could identify similarities and differences to other data that I previously categorized (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

The focused coded themes were comprised as follows: self-affirmation, leadership opportunities, postsecondary aspirations, sense of achievement/success and CPS college prep pillar of readiness, which includes academic and social preparation for college and leadership development. To expand on these themes, I often probed "Tell me more" as I looked for statements and concepts related to opportunities that not only reflect mere college prep course enrollment and/or leadership rank, but also allowed me to understand how the students understood the support they received in these courses and/or positions.

13.   Administrator, Teacher, and Counselor Interviews

Several studies indicate that genuinely supportive relationships between students and institutional agents (administration, teachers, and guidance counselors) are required to sustain an academic supportive environment and college going process within public schools (Adelman, 2002; Oakes et. al., 2002; Freeman, 1997 and Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Specifically, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch's (1995) interviews with

Mexican-Origin high school students, teachers, and guidance counselors linked college going barriers to the school organizational structure in that teachers and guidance counselors often reached out to and offered the most assistance to students who were most outward conforming. For instance, Mexican-Origin students already fluent in English were provided more college support services than students with limited English proficiency (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). The Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch study highlights the importance of interviewing participants that play differing roles in the college going process.

Although the student focus group interviews are key to understanding the meaning the students give to their experiences with leadership opportunities, interviews with teachers, guidance counselors, and administration are also significant for two main reasons. First, because it is known that people sometimes interpret situations privately and as such interview is a useful technique used for making public and accessible some of what people are thinking (deMarrais, 2004). Second, the adult views also provide insight into the overall standards of expectation as it pertains to providing PMA youth with leadership opportunities within this particular school context.

The formal interviews consisted of one and a half hour digitaly recorded audio sessions conducted at neutral locations convenient to the participants. The interview protocol (Appendix B: Administrator, Teacher, Counselor Interview Protocol) included questions concerning the indivdual's role in providing youth leadership opportunities and his/her role in supporting the students' attaintment of their postsecondary goals. The protocol covers such general themes as the individual's history and relationship to the school, expectations for the students post-high school, the indivudal's role in supporting

the college readiness process and views on the military model of leadership and opportunity. In an effort to be more accomodating to the adults' schedules, I managed to have numerous informal conversations with the majority of faculty members who were consented to participate in public spaces, in faculty meetings, and during transitional moments in the school day. The interviews were transcribed and coded for themes such as creating leadership opportunities, sustaining support services, college readiness and post-secondary aspiration communications.

F.   Phase 5: Observations

Although interviews help researchers penetrate the minds of the participants, it is well known that what people say and what they do are not the same (Blomberg et. al., 1993). Field observations, the final phase of data collection, served as a form of triangulation, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of my research as a framework to confirm or disqualify evidence between what participants report in interviews, and what I actually witnessed in the field. I observed JROTC exercises (e.g. military marching, formations, classroom activities, JROTC student staff activities and inspections), principal and student co-led student assemblies, principal-led leadership team meetings, Chief Area Officer led performance management sessions, teacher classrooms, teacher led meetings, parent meetings, college awareness events, and various ceremonies (i.e. leadership promotion and graduation).

Balancing an effort to build appropriate relationships to support the research with that of minding "threats to validity" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 296), as previously discussed at length in the Building Rapport section of this chapter, guided the overall development of my role as an observer. I developed an in-between status where I would sometimes play a

much more neutral role and during other times, I would take on a participant observer role. In all cases, I undertook the method of "the observation of participation" (Tedlock, 1991). I recorded my own "activities, circumstances and emotional responses as these factors shape the process of observing and recording others' lives" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 11). To do so, I established myself as a note taker where I practiced a hybrid model of open jottings and private jottings.

Taking this approach meant that I had to also be prepared for participants to ask me what I was writing down (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). I created a script for when this would happen. I planned on explaining that I was taking notes to help me write up the research with accuracy and that at this stage, I am not prepared to share, but I will be prepared down the road. Despite my preparation, no one asked me what I was jotting down. Occasionally, their body language let me know they were interested, but more often than not, the participants would pull me out of jotting down notes to share their thoughts with me. The unexpected benefit was that these events created space for us to have informal conversations. Moreover, I learned who appeared most uneasy about my note taking and I would go to private spaces such as the bathroom or library to take down some notes in between observations.

I employed an observation process that was more or less unstructured. Ultimately, I was most concerned with recording what I actually saw in the field. Therefore, while in the field, I jotted down field accounts, which were "fragmented and episodic" in nature of teacher and student interactions, student-to-student interactions, content and organization of the observed event and aspects of the various leadership models (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 16). Prior to conducting an observation, I often re-read the following: "To

remember dialogue and movement like an actor; to see colors, shapes, textures, and spatial relations as a painter or photographer; and to sense moods, rhythms, and tone of voice like a poet" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995. p. 35). To me, saying this to myself was like a mantra to help bring focus to my jottings. The most challenging aspect of taking field accounts is attempting to shut off my analytical thought processes. Because that was not possible, I also made theoretical memos in brackets to indicate that certain ideas came to mind as I saw certain events unfold that should not be confused with what was actually happening in the field (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

1.   **Falling Short on Disciplined Field Note Write Up**

Originally I planned to write up my field account jottings as soon as I left the research site for the day, because "writing fieldnotes immediately after leaving the setting produces fresher, more detailed recollections" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 40). In the beginning, I was able to carry this plan out. However, as additional phases of the research began, my energy levels became more and more depleted. It became impractical to write up my accounts into narratives, transcribe hours of interview data, and prepare for the next steps in the phase of the research process simultaneously. As a result, I considered issues of account selection. In other words, I learned to recognize the relationship between emphasizing and marginalizing certain events, features, and actions (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 9). Moreover, I selected the episodes that would allow me to make the "familiar strange" (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995, p. 15). This strategy helped me manage turning field accounts into full field note narratives.

I also made sure to complete my full field note accounts before discussing my observations with anyone. "Such 'what happened today' talk can rob note-writing of its

psychological immediacy and emotional release; writing the day's events becomes a stale

recounting rather than a cathartic outpouring" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 41). My

hope is that this process increased the authenticity of my observation data. In regards to

analysis, I employed both focused coding in order to analyze specific aspects of how

college preparation and leadership is practiced in the school or how post-secondary and

leadership opportunities are provided to the students and open-ended coding in order to

reveal emerging themes.

G. **Minding Threats to Qualitative Validity**

The trustworthiness of my research is measured by how well I handled particular

threats to the validity of the qualitative components of my research. I took several actions

to increase the descriptive validity or the "factual accuracy of the account" as well as the

interpretive validity or the accuracy of the account from the perspective of the

participants (Maxwell, 1992, p. 285). I was particularly concerned with the authenticity

and credibility of my research.

1. **Authenticity**

I increased the authenticity of my research by establishing the verisimilitude of

my research findings for the context that I studied (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In the field

this meant that I recorded as much information as possible of important events including

direct quotations of the participants. Having made sure that I recorded the data

accurately, I did my best to make sure that I did not make up or distort the things I saw

and heard in the write up of my research (Maxwell, 1992). Additionally, I used digital

audio recording technology to record the interviews in order to get at the specific

comments made by the participants. In fact, I used two recording devices, I had extra

batteries on hand at each interview, and I took copious notes during the interviews; just in case, the main piece of recording technology failed to work as expected. Taken together, these practices prevented me from relying on my memory thereby increasing the accuracy of the data collection.

Moreover, I employed methods of triangulation in order to make sure that the findings are supported by multiple sources of data. I triangulated "between method" by collecting data on one topic with more than one method (Delamont, 2002, p. 181). I also discussed changes I made to the research design and factors that were out of my control in the context of my research site through out this chapter in order to increase the dependability of my research, therefore making it possible for other researchers to replicate this design in similar school contexts for the purpose of determining the generalizability of the theories that emerged from this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1992).

I also kept a research journal in an effort to uphold the authenticity of the research. Reflexivity is the process that guided my journal reflections so that I could push back on my experiences in the field for the purposes of informing action. Moreover, I realize that my research is affected by my personal histories and worldviews, and contains the baggage of moral values, community, and experience. The reflexive process offered me the opportunity to locate myself in relation to the participants and address the hidden, often-unrecognized elements in my background. However, Susan Speer (2002) maintains that researchers do not know how to do reflexivity well. This may be because not only is it difficult to face your subjectivities, but it is also difficult to know how to

evoke them as strengths to your research. It is also the case that few researchers demystify the process.

One reflexive skill that has been useful to me is to take key words central to a research project that have multiple meanings and to write about those key words by asking: What does this mean to me? Where did I get that meaning? And what does this mean for the project including my relations with the participants and other points of structural power, privilege and marginalization? I used my journal to write into tensions and surprises, to interrogate my theoretical frameworks and to evaluate my political commitments. While implementing my research design, I used these reflections to guide my next steps in the research. Even though reflexivity is in process (defined and redefined over time), the method strengthens research because addressing researcher subjectivity via reflexivity is yet another way to establish the authenticity of the research.

Lastly, the authenticity of my research comes from my commitment to doing justice to the participants in my study. Even after transcription, I would continue to listen to the interview recordings in order to remind myself that the work I do is about real people who deserve a genuine account of how "I judge what to be important of what people say and do" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 128). I believed taking the time to check in with the participants at various times through out the research was an important aspect of the design.

2. <u>Credibility</u>

While generating authentic accounts was important, so was creating opportunities for the participants to recognize if the analysis I was developing was valid. The meaning the participants make of events, behaviors, and experiences in particular contexts are of

great importance to qualitative research. Therefore, the ability for the researcher to get it right from the perspective of the participants speaks to the overall credibility of the research. Therefore, I employed "respondent validation" in order to measure the credibility of my research (Delamont, 2002, p. 180). In other words, I employed participant feedback loops so that the participants had an opportunity to challenge the credibility of the research from their perspective (Delamont, 2002).

3. **Adult Participant Feedback Loops**

My feedback loops with the adult participants followed a traditional format. I gave them the transcripts of our respective interviews and we set up a meeting two weeks following receipt. During our meeting, we discussed if they thought they misspoke at anytime and how they would like to clarify their points. We also discussed how I was interpreting the data where I recorded their reactions to my initial analyses. However, when it came to carrying out feedback loops with the youth, I took a different approach.

4. **Student Participant Feedback Loops**

Rather than giving the students 20 pages of transcribed interviews to read for each feedback loop, I created concept maps that organized the main themes from the data set along with a corresponding document that pulled direct quotes and examples of that theme from my observations. The data theme maps not only made it easier for the students and I to discuss my initial analyses, but it also gave me the opportunity to share the research process with them and to have them participate in the making of the interpretation of the data (Pizzaro, 1998).

I believed I was getting it right when the students expressed how surprised they were by my ability to understand them. In fact, after our last session together, Jamal told

me, "Ms. Horsley, I don't think you understand something." I became worried and thought to myself, "I wish he had said so earlier." But then he said, "It means a lot to me to know that my ideas matter. I can't wait to see this all finished, and I know you told us it will take some time, but just think, I'll get to tell my children and my children's children that this is me, that I was a part of this school's history." It was moments like this that reminded me how important it is to mind issues of representation because there is always "something at stake," as I research with youth and move to apply theories to their lived experiences (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 5).

5. **Representation**

Issues of participant representation present ethical issues that I acknowledged while conducting this study. On one level, it is an ethical issue because of the potential danger of revealing information that does not protect the identities of the participants. On another level, representation presents dilemmas concerning a researcher's ability to accurately represent the participants. If I dismiss issues of representation, researching with youth can have the unintended consequence of reinforcing stereotypes (Best, 2007). The feedback loops I conducted with the youth who participated in my study as well as my ongoing role as an adult ally to youth in contexts outside of my research site all kept me grounded in current youth culture, which helped me recognize when unfair judgments of youth unintentionally crept into my research.

IV. The Structure of College Preparation Opportunities in a
Chicago Public Military Academy

A. **College for All in the National Neoliberal Policy Context**

In a speech to a Joint Session of Congress, President Barack Obama (2009) declared, "We will provide the support necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world." Without using the slogan "College for All," President Obama called for every American to attend some form of education beyond high school, reflecting a rhetorical shift toward the idea that *every* American should attend college. Certainly the mainstream press began using the term College for All immediately after the President's speech (NBC News, 2009). However, while the College for All language seems to suggest an opportunity structure Americans can use to advance their economic and social standing, it is also situated within tensions symptomatic of the re-framing of educational opportunity undergirded by neoliberal ideology.

Prior to the neoliberal turn, not only did the government set goals for improving the educational system, but it also created systemic processes and regulated supports to help build the capacity of states and local school districts to meet these goals (e.g. Roosevelt's Depression era New Deal programs such as the WPA and the separate division of the National Youth Administration; Johnson's 1960's War on Poverty programs such as Head Start, Volunteers in Service to America, TRIO, and Job Corps). Under the neoliberal project of federal school reform, minimally government-regulated, systemic supports for dramatic school improvement have been put in place to achieve these goals. The transposing of free market development models onto public educational

settings has become the deregulated "support" structure employed to improve school systems. While some view the practice of deregulation necessary to the innovation and flexibility needed to free up the school system from overly bureaucratic controls that impede school improvement, others critique the deregulation movement for turning public education into a mere commodity where students are forced to become consumers who compete for what little opportunity remains available in the educational marketplace (Burbles and Torres, 2000; Fowler, 1995; Lipman, 2004).

The standards-based and accountability movement that gave rise to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, for example, is an exemplar of the turn toward neoliberal federal educational reforms. It is difficult to argue against the need for standards and accountability; both can help provide all students with equitable educational experiences. However, when these ideas are put into practice through free market support processes, then standards and accountability measures exacerbate inequality, as is apparent with following contemporary effects of neoliberal practices: increased de-facto segregation, intensified economic stratification, and the unquestioned acceptance of blaming failure on individual students in ways that is removed from a structural, historical analysis of the conditions in which young people are struggling to become somebody in the twenty-first century.

The College for All movement with its standards-based college readiness curriculum is further situated within this larger neoliberal guided standards-based and accountability movement. On the face of it, President Obama's declaration that everyone should attend college is impressive because obtaining an affordable college degree still remains one significant avenue for promoting equality and economic opportunity

(Haskins & Kemple, 2009). However, without providing specific, systemic supports needed to build the capacity of school districts and schools to make college for all a reality, meeting this goal relies on free market processes that often contribute to greater economic and social disparities between Americans. In particular, the concept of choice in relation to a new ethic of ruthless individualism (Harvey, 2005) is a key example of the tensions that emerge in a college for all neoliberal opportunity structure.

1. **The Classed and Racialized Nature of the Neoliberal Context of Choice**

Often the historical complexity of educational opportunity is masked by common-sense assumptions about how people gain equitable access to opportunity versus how people are expected to make the 'right' decisions that lead to economic and social success. The idea that people can always choose to engage with the opportunity structure is taken for granted because neoliberal reformers have led us to believe that the concepts of individual choice and access to equitable opportunity structures have become synonymous. Consequently, common sense tells us that the choice making process and the resulting consequences of choice making are the sole responsibility of the decider only. That a hidden bias toward those with greater social capital exists within the concept of the neoliberal choice framework goes unquestioned (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz, 1996).

Because choice and social class differences are directly and powerfully related, neoliberal educational markets "systematically privilege higher socioeconomic families through their knowledge and material resources" (Apple, 2004, p. 26). These are the students and families that are most empowered to make the 'right' choices. Privileged families are rewarded by the free market system because their decision-making furthers

their advantage and similarly situates their children within privilege. Therefore, by the conditions of neoliberal competition, as exemplified through the K-12 charter school lotteries and selective enrollment admissions, a few students win out while the majority are denied greater college preparation opportunities.

Choice is further complicated in the context of the College for All Movement in the U.S. because of how racism is endemic to the United States, especially in regards to the racial subtext in the notion of an individual's right to choose. This is problematic because neoliberalism promotes a racial project of colorblindness. As an ideal, neoliberals believe colorblindness is the most just method of producing a society that is no longer in need of race conscious policies. Conversely, espousing colorblind theory becomes a form of racism because it presupposes that racial discrimination has ended when in fact race is still used to privilege and marginalize members of society.

Colorblind ideology makes it difficult for Americans, in general, to pay attention to "the continuing significance and changing meaning of race" because racial practices are more institutional and subtle rather than overt and explicit (Omi and Winant, 1993; Bonilla-Silva, 2001). When the concept of neoliberal choice operates in tandem with colorblind ideology, racial discrimination is reduced to a private matter. In other words, colorblindness makes it difficult to see that college admission entails much more than individual choice, but also the need to develop systemic supports that grant low-income student and students of color greater access to the college opportunity structure. Within the neoliberal framework, the fault lies completely on the student who is not accepted to college rendering the structural barriers to opportunity invisible. Consequently, the college for all neoliberal opportunity structure validates the manifestation of ruthless

individualism because the free market promotes the ideal of individual merit over the lived experience of class and racial discrimination in the college preparation and college admissions process.

The neoliberal college for all movement gave rise to the development of a daunting policy problem –that is the aspirations-attainment gap or the disparity between "students' educational aspirations and their actual attainment of college degrees" (Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca, 2009, p. 2). When evidence indicates that access to postsecondary education, over the past few decades, boosts the income and economic mobility of low-income students and students of color by 19% in comparison to the income distribution of their non-college educated peers (Haskins & Kemple, 2009), it is no surprise that the aspiration to attain a college degree has become nearly universal among all student populations. From 1980 to 2002, tenth grade minority students' desire to attend college doubled from 40 percent to 80 percent across the nation (Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca, 2009). While college enrollment of low-income students and students of color has increased, too few Black and Latino students actually earn a college degree (Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca, 2009). The aspirations-attainment gap reminds us that the federal government has a much greater charge than just setting the goal of local high schools to increase college matriculation rates. If the goal is authentically intended to be achieved, the federal government has a choice: it has to help local school districts build the organizational capacity of its high schools to provide students with the academic, social, and emotional support needed to succeed in the postsecondary environment, or leave this task up to market forces that historically have shown no compelling evidence of being up to the task.

B.   **College for All Movement in the Context of Chicago School Reform**

While a significant body of scholarship on the history of CPS schools reform

exists, I will resist the urge to recount this work in great detail here (Bryk et, al., 2009;

Catalyst Chicago; Hess, 1991; Latz, 1992; Lipman, 2011; Payne, 2008; Russo, 2004;

Shipps, 1997). However, there are significant "turning points" in this reform history that

require noting in order to help situate the development College for All Movement within

local Chicago School Reform (Tyack, 1967).

Since U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennet called Chicago Schools the

worst school system in the country in 1987, Chicago Public Schools has undergone three

distinct waves of K-12 school reform. The first wave of school reform emerged out of the

1988 teachers' strike and an unlikely coalition of teachers, students, parents, members of

community organizations and members of the business community. United in opposition

of CPS' bloated central bureaucracy and poor school performance, this coalition used

local forums and trips to the state capital to restructure the system via the creation of

Local School Councils (LSCs). LSCs composed of parents, teachers, community

members, a student, and the principal had legal authority to hire and fire principals and

develop school curriculum. While the LSCs did not have the support always needed to be

as effective as intended, the reforms that emerged out of the 1988 teacher's strike and this

unlikely coalition have led scholars and activists to characterize the first wave of Chicago

school reform as an experiment with the democratization of a major school system (Bryk,

Sebring, Kerbow, & Rollow, 1998).

In 1995, as the re-authorization of the earlier reforms came due, parent and

community groups were largely left out of the process. The business community

reasserted its strong invisible hand in the second wave of Chicago school reform. CPS was nearly re-centralized with the most authority over the schools placed in the hands of Mayor Daley thereby establishing a corporate model of management. The second wave of CPS school reform is best characterized as part of a national turn toward mayoral control of major inner city school systems, where a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, a Chief Operations Officer, a Chief Purchasing Officer and a Chief Education Officer oversee the district. One critic went as far as to describe the school district management structure as more akin to "those of a Fortune 500 Corporation than an urban public school system" (Shipps, 1997, p. 73). Nonetheless, the LSCs still maintained power, but the central board also put strict accountability measures in place and if not met, CPS Central could reconstitute the schools through the dismantling of the LSCs.

Although district level standardized test scores improved at least somewhat under both first and second waves of reform, the signing of No Child Left Behind into law at the federal level influenced the third wave of CPS school reform. This phase of reform focused heavily on accountability in the areas of instructional quality and meeting significant annual progress in all major ethnic and socio-economic groups. In order to achieve these ends, the Mayor and the Commercial Club of Chicago proposed to close 60-70 low performing schools and to open 100 new schools. This highly controversial plan was named Renaissance 2010 (Ren2010).

Within Ren2010, one third of the 100 new schools were projected to be charter, another third contract and the last third performance schools. Charter schools are independently operated schools, mainly under private management (Renaissance 2010

Plan, September 2004, 04-0922-PO4, p.1). Contract schools are to be operated by a third party organization; mainly operated by the business community under a 5-year contract reviewed annually, however contract schools are not held to CPS rules and regulations (Renaissance 2010 Plan, September 2004, 04-0922-PO4, p.2). Performance schools are designated as small neighborhood schools that will be operated by Chicago Public Schools (Renaissance 2010 Plan, September 2004, 04-0922-PO4, p.2).

Ren2010 also replaced the LSCs with Transition Advisory Councils, which eventually became Advisory LSCs comprised of various stakeholders who have no voting power thereby putting an end to the democratic spirit found in the first wave of school reform. Not surprisingly, the development and implementation of Ren2010 led several groups to protest the process of school closure as linked with gentrification processes that displaced current students for the more desirable students expected to move into the gentrified neighborhoods, the loss of community control and attempt at union-busting, and the privatization of the public schools; all of which typifies global neoliberal trends of competitiveness, deregulation, and privatization that I addressed more fully in the introductory chapter.

These three "turning points" in the history of CPS also emphasized putting pressure on high schools to prepare students for college. In particular, research from the 1990s ushered in a specific focus on increasing the rigor and relevance of high school curricula (Lee & Ready, 2009). This body of research revealed the "association between course taking and student learning in that students who completed more advanced coursework learned more, regardless of their social and academic backgrounds" (Lee and Ready, 2009). Chicago Public Schools (CPS) was the first major inner city school district

to reform its high school curriculum based on the philosophy of the college preparation for all movement. During this curricular reform phase, CPS altered how high schools tracked students by academic performance and educational plans toward a universal curriculum that requires all students take college preparation coursework. Additionally, CPS expanded the Advanced Placement course offerings and most significantly to the Chicago context, the reform did away with remedial course offerings.

The Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) developed a cohort-comparison design to evaluate the effects of requiring a college preparatory curriculum for all CPS students. To understand the effectiveness of the curricular policy change, the study compared a cohort of ninth graders enrolled in high school from 1994-1997 who was not required to take college preparation coursework to ninth graders enrolled from 1997-2004 who were all required to take college preparation coursework. CCSR reported several findings. Of the positive findings, implementation was strong. Ninety percent (90%) of freshman students post-curriculum reform change were enrolled in Algebra I and survey literature, whereas a decade go less then half (50%) of CPS' students took these courses in ninth grade. Moreover, the researchers confirmed that the drop out rate did not increase as a result of requiring lower achieving students to enroll in more rigorous coursework.

Even though some encouraging results emerged, the researchers found several other unimpressive results. For example, student absenteeism increased and the students' grades were lower in comparison to the students who attended CPS and took these courses before the college for all curriculum reform. Failure to pass these courses increased and college matriculation rates did not increase. The work of CCSR revealed

that nearly half of all 9th graders entering high school were unprepared for college prep coursework, therefore CPS needed to add back in remedial courses in order to meet the needs of its struggling learners. The results of this study indicate that if we are to take seriously the closing of the aspirations-attainment gap for low-income students of color, curriculum changes alone are insufficient.

C.   Transformer Public Military Academy and Chicago's College-for-All Reforms

In addition to providing a rigorous college preparatory curriculum that also provides scaffolding for lower-achieving students to succeed, several additional barriers to college exist within geographies where opportunities to attend and succeed in college have been limited. While desire among students of color to attend college is very much present, Freeman (1997) explains that additional support services are required to provide help with overcoming psychological/social barriers such as feeling "college was never an option", "a loss of hope", and "the intimidation factor" that also comes along with perceiving college as an opportunity for economic advancement (p. 535). In fact:

> In the context of Chicago, the single most consistent predictor of whether students took steps toward college enrollment (planning to attend a four-year college, applying, being accepted, and enrolling in a four-year college), as well as whether they enrolled in a college that matched their qualifications, was whether their high schools had strong college-going climates measured either by the percentage of prior graduate attending four-year colleges or by teachers' reports of whether they focused their work and curriculum on preparing and planning for college (Roderick et. al., 2008, p. 8).

While curriculum reform matters, creating college going climates is equally as important for schools serving low-income students and students of color.

Successful implementation of college preparation programs relies on institutional cultures open to change and increased expectations for all involved in the educational

process (Hanson, 1990). Institutional agents such as administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and students are necessary to the development of the college-going culture of a school (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). In the case of schools that house specific college preparation programs, college matriculation and persistence rates increase as all institutional agents contribute to the development of the following:

- A Clear Mission Statement: Sets high expectations
- Academic Momentum: Challenging, rigorous course offerings
- An Understanding of How College Plans Develop: Know student aspirations
- Comprehensive Services: Guidance, preparation, and information
- Coordinated and Systemic College Support: All stakeholders invested
  (Corwin & Tierney, 2007).

Transformer Public Military Academy (a pseudonym, abbreviated to Transformer PMA) followed suit by demonstrating efforts to meet these criteria. Where this school departed from these college preparation standards was in the addition of the JROTC military model of education, intended to support students' academic achievement and social development.

1. <u>Specific Characteristics of Transformer Public Military Academy</u>

Like all Chicago PMAs, Transformer PMA is a selective enrollment public high school situated within the City Chicago School District 299, which is considered a large inner city school district because it serves approximately 400,931 students within 607 schools, and 106 of that lot are public high schools (CPS Stats and Facts). The District's student population is characterized as low-income and high minority, as 86.6% of the students are low-income and 44.3% of the students are Latina/o, 41.7% are Black American, 8.8% are White American, 3.3% are Asian American, 1.4% are mixed race, and .4% are American Indian (Chicago District 299 School Report Card, 2013). Like many of the PMAs in CPS, Transformer PMA is located within a neighborhood under

going gentrification embedded within the City of Chicago's neighborhood revitalization project and is located in older buildings that have been repurposed into campuses to house their academic and enrichment programs. In fact, the senior students who participated in my study can all recall walking up to the school for their admissions interview and after seeing the thick bars on the windows thought, "Is this a prison or a school? What am I getting myself into?"

Transformer PMA was born out of what was deemed a chronically under performing Chicago Public High School. Poor academic performance, high student dropout rates, and high teacher/principal turnover rates, to name a few, slated this school for reconstitution and turnaround. Once the transition into the early turnaround began, I was told that changing the schools' culture in regards to effective principal leadership, school safety, and instructional practices were most significant to improving the school. Pre-turnaround phase, only 2% of the students met or exceeded PSAE assessments norms, whereas post-turnaround phase over 40% met or exceeded, which is 15% higher than the district norms for CPS. Furthermore, the post-turnaround phase graduation rate increased by 40% on average. In spite of these improvements, Transformer PMA is still under-performing in comparison to State standards; therefore the school is still on academic watch status.

By the time I began data collection, the administration and teachers at Transformer PMA would often characterize the school as being on the "up and up." In the 2009-2010 school year, Transformer PMA had a school administration team comprised of 2 public school administrators and 1 Commandant or a senior leader of the JROTC branch of the school, 32 core academic educators and 5 retired military officer

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responsible for teaching the JROTC elective classes and extracurricular programs. This team of administrators, civilian educators, and retired military officers served, on average, 480 ninth through twelfth grade students and like all other Chicago PMAs over 90% of the population on free and reduced lunch (Chicago District 299 School Report Card, 2011). Further, the student population at Transformer PMA is considered high minority and high poverty. On average, the school is typical of all Chicago PMAs in that it falls into the range of 80% to 90% of its students are Black and Latina/o (Chicago District 299 School Report Card, 2011).

It seems worth noting that when I was collecting data, the teachers and students were dealing with the fact that the demographics of the school had been changing. For example, in 2006 when the seniors I worked with through out my dissertation were freshman, the Black student population was 85% and the Latina/o population was only 15%. This in some ways set the context for the students to grapple with ideas of racial and ethnic differences, which becomes apparent in my data reporting and subsequent analysis in this chapter and beyond.

Moreover, several of the students are from low-income, single parent households and unlike other top decile selective enrollment CPS high schools. One student who had come to speak at an alumni college day explained, "It was hard to come home for this, because at my dorm I have a bed. Going to college is the first time I have ever had not only my own bed, but an actual bed in a real long time. I just don't want to have to sleep on the floor ever again." Several students also often spoke of their critical role in raising their younger siblings and the challenges of participating in afterschool activities with that of their responsibilities at home. The poverty these young people face is unforgiving.

2. **Students' Views on Why They Attend Transformer Public Military**

Academy

Because Transformer PMA is a selective enrollment high school within a school

system that claims to provide school choice to low-income students of color, it is

interesting to note that when I asked the students how they came to Transformer PMA the

strongest theme reported over and over was that the students adamantly believed that they

did choose to attend Transformer PMA. Several commented on how their parents

supported their ability to decide through out, while a few often commented on how their

parents were skeptical of the military part of the school but once their parents visited the

school, they changed their minds and now believe it is the best thing that happened for

their family. These findings were further supported by the survey data where the students

were asked, "As you considered attending Transformer PMA, did these factors influence

you?" Figure 4 summarizes student perception of what or who influenced their decision-

making.
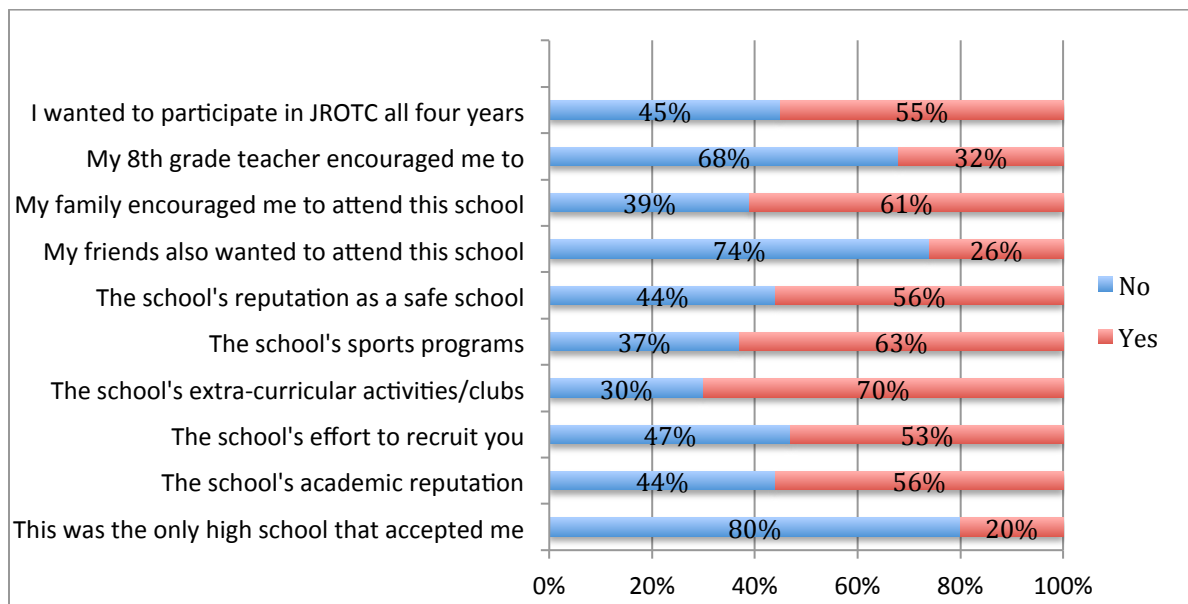
Figure 4: Students perceptions of the reasons for attending Transformer PMA

The survey findings suggest that the Transformer PMA students sought out a secondary schooling experience that their families supported and a school that would offer them opportunities of interest to them. The following is an analysis of how the students attending Transformer PMA experience the military structure of college preparation opportunities in relation to their own sense of opportunity. At the school level, the administration has appropriated military terminology to describe the college preparation process and it is otherwise known as, "The Campaign."

3. **Rolling Out "The Campaign"**

Preeminent military historian Colonel Trevor N. Dupuy (1992) defines a campaign as "a phase of war involving a series of operations related in time and space and aimed towards a single, specific, strategic objective or result in the war" (p.46). Whereas Transformer PMA administrators once thought about using military strategy to achieve success in the theater of war, they now apply that thinking to the goal of increasing college matriculation rates. Observational data, interviews with administration, teachers and counselors, and school records provide evidence of the ways in which "The Campaign" is a central feature of the school's college preparation opportunity structure. When it comes to college preparation, the administration engages in several phases of initiating goals, planning objectives, executing operations, monitoring progress, and assessing success, just as they would as if they were strategizing to win a war.

4. **Initiating Goals and Planning Objectives**

For quite some time CPS central administration has clustered schools together into "Instructional Areas." In August of 2009, CPS Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ron Huberman and Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason Watkins overhauled the Areas by

creating "a more efficient and performance-oriented structure for management of schools across the city" (CPS Press Release, August 24, 2009). The overhaul resulted in the elimination of Area Instructional Officer positions and the creation of Chief Area Officer (CAO) positions. All six (6) stand-alone Chicago Public Military Academies remained clustered in The Area along with the addition of eleven (11) neighborhood high schools.

CEO Huberman (2009) said, "we are streamlining the first-line management structure of our school system and instituting strategies that focus on developing leadership and accountability to improve student outcomes" (CPS Press Release, August 24, 2009). The CAOs were charged with clear expectations for performance standards and results. These changes took effect right as I began my research and it had a clear impact on the goals set by the administration of Transformer PMA.

Led by a CAO who was a retired U.S. military officer, the network of about 20 high schools (designated as an Area) in which Transformer PMA was included was regarded as a tightly-run unit. All PMAs in the district, as well as some non-PMA high schools, were located within that Area. Each Area leadership session, in which the school administrators from throughout the Area came together, was carefully directed by the CAO. Each session took on a different focus ranging from professional development topics for the principals to providing guidance on managing accountability paperwork, but the main focus was on dialoging about school and student performance data. Partly as a result, Transformer PMA administration also focused a great deal on improving student performance in several key areas. Hanging in every classroom, office, and hallway was a 24" X 36" poster titled: ***Do you know the Transformer PMA Key Performance Goals?*** (Table II: Transformer PMA Key Performance Goals Poster). The student performance

measures and outcome goals at Transformer PMA are disguised in the table below to prevent easy identification of the school. The point of the display is that the CAO set annual goals for the school to help increase school performance in 15 different categories.

The Key Performance Goals poster served as a constant reminder of student outcome expectations, and Transformer PMA Principal was then charged with creating an environment for his teachers to develop in ways that improved the overall instructional quality at the school in order to achieve these goals.

TABLE II
TRANSFORMER PMA KEY PERFORMANCE GOALS POSTER

Metric	2008-2009	THE AREA Goals 2009-2010 for Transformer
% Freshman on Track	a%	a + 3%
Freshman Attendance	b%	b + 1%
% Scoring 20+ on ACT	c%	c + 6%
% Meets/Exceeds PSAE	d%	d + 9%
% Exceeds on PSAE	e%	e + 5%
PSAE WorkKeys (% scoring 5+) Applied Math	f%	f + 5%
PSAE WorkKeys (% scoring 5+) Reading for Information	g%	g + 5%
Average Score on ACT Subtests Math	h%	h + 2%
Average Score on ACT Subtests Reading	i%	i + 2%
Average Score on ACT Subtests Science	j%	j + 2%
Average Score on ACT Subtests Composite	k%	k + 3%
School Attendance Rate	l%	l + 1%
5 Yr. Graduation Rate	m%	m + 28%
AP Enrollment	n%	n + 5%
AP Success	o%	o + 5%

5.   Executing Operations

With the goals and plans in place, "The Campaign" begins for each student the

day they enter the school. First and foremost, Transformer PMA sets the stage for the

Campaign by raising students' *awareness* of college as a possibility. When discussing

what stood out to them about attending Transformer PMA, Leon started the conversation

by stating:

> Once you come to school here, you start seeing college everywhere. After I went
> to my first college visit during 1st semester, every single billboard, like every
> radio station I turned on said something about college, so this school gets you
> started and then you just start seeing college everywhere.

Leon finished his comment with a light laugh and shake of the head, as he reflected a

sense of astonishment about his experience becoming aware of college. Suddenly,

Antonio chimed in, "Yeah, I would say like every single teacher you go to at some point,

they are going to say, 'you should consider college'."

Jamal emphasized:

> Its more than that, they talk about it [college] with power. They make the feeling go
> inside of us like college is important so stay focused on school work, do your
> homework, make good grades, like they talk about it almost every day explaining
> how important it is to go to college and they stress it to us almost every day about
> how going to college is going to pave the way for our future.

The young men's experiences run parallel with that of how all Transformer PMA

students enter their school and view banners representing hundreds of universities and

colleges neatly displayed down the first floor hallway. From day one, the post-secondary

education department that houses two counselor offices has every senior's name up on

the wall prepped and waiting to indicate how many college applications they have

submitted, along with the funding that these students earn in scholarships over the year.

Bookshelves filled with texts on how to get into college, how to find scholarships, and

other guides on a range of topics related to accessing and experiencing college are also accessible to the students. Additionally, blown-up scholarship award announcements of previous students line the first floor hallway to remind the student body that young people just like them have set a tradition for academic excellence, and therefore this is expected of them too. As the year progresses, college visit announcement fliers and FAFSA workshop announcement fliers are posted on the walls at stairway landings and on bathroom doors. These visuals, representative of the informal college preparatory curriculum, offer subtle reminders to the students of what the administration and faculty expect of them as well as what they hope for them. "The Campaign" supports a college-going climate, and the evidence indicates that awareness of college occurs every day these students enter their school. Supporting the student's ability to gain *access* to college emerges in the months leading up to the administration of the ACT and Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE).

Like other CPS high schools, the first week of October the juniors take Wonderlic's General Assessment of Instructional Needs (GAIN) exam, which measures the students' math and English skills. Prior to the administration of the GAIN exam, the principal meets with the students to explain how important the exam is to helping them prepare for the ACT/PSAE because the scores on this test will identify who gets into the Saturday proprietary ACT preparation program, which will take place on every other Saturday from December through early April for five (5) hours a session. Principal Montri explained to me that he does this to "sell to them that it is a privilege to be in the proprietary program. I encourage them to do their best. I want to create a sense of accountability and competition amongst the students."

Simultaneously, Principal Montri works with the teachers to prepare them for the upcoming months of ACT/PSAE preparation. The teachers are charged with figuring out the best ways to support a culture of student achievement. Immediately, the principal builds in time for the teachers to analyze and discuss the GAIN data and he makes sure the Math Department has the resources to make sure each student has a graphing calculator. Moreover, the principal and teachers come to realize that they refuse to leave the students who are not accepted into the proprietary program behind. Therefore, teachers are identified to teach a Saturday ACT prep course for the students who do not get into the proprietary program. One teacher agrees to take on the students who score into the top group of GAIN scores, and they are called the Rangers. Another teacher agrees to work with the students who score into the bottom group of GAIN scores, and they are called the Cambridge group.

Before the Saturday program begins, Principal Montri meets with the juniors again to set the expectation he has for the school to become a culture of achievement. He sets the expectation for 100% attendance including that he will call home, if you they not have a legitimate reason for missing a Saturday session. He further "incentivizes" the students by explaining they will all be served breakfast and lunch along with bus cards to get to and from school on those days. The Saturday ACT/PSAE test preparation programs start after Thanksgiving break.

In addition to the Saturday preparation programs, school administration and teachers take into consideration the fact that some students may score better in one content area over another. For example, if a student scores extremely high in math but then scores lower in English, this student's composite GAIN exam score places him/her

in the Rangers group. Instead of ignoring that this student needs help with improving his/her English score, the principal and teachers developed an after school program to provide this student with additional support. After school, a maximum of twenty students have the option to attend a content-specific differentiated group tutoring session facilitated by a teacher who specializes in that content area.

Additionally, Principal Montri fundamentally views, "JROTC as a supplement to the development of the student's college readiness skills." Therefore, he proposed a plan that would help bridge the gap between the two models of schooling. In particular, he approached the JROTC instructor who works with the junior class of students. Principal Montri reported to me:

> I noticed Sergeant Freeman has a strong student connection; he is able to relate to the kids. So my job was that I had to think about how to bridge that gap. I had to expose him little by little with the civilian academic side of things, expose him little by little with ACT, with the college readiness skills. This process didn't take 7 months; it has been an integrated approach over the last two and a half years. I had to coach him and at least I had my eyes on him to mold him into this way. More PD, more awareness, and more staff development and he fit right in.

Sergeant Freeman, as Principal Montri continued developing him, became increasingly receptive to using JROTC instructional time to support the culture of academic excellence emerging at the school. Specifically and uniquely, Sergeant Freeman suspends the JROTC curriculum from December through April in order to use that time for additional academic preparation. During this time, it is typical for the students to use the JROTC class period to complete practice ACT questions on the laptops provided by military funding. As test time approached, the core academic teachers, giving up their prep periods, provide instruction on concepts the students practice ACT test scores indicate they are struggling to understand.

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Moreover, JROTC instructors are willing to use their instructional time to support additional aspect of "The Campaign" such as supporting students' access to college. When it comes to completing college admissions applications, scholarship applications, and FASFA applications, the counselors and JROTC instructions work together to make sure every senior student applies to five schools and submits his/her FASFA forms. One counselor remarked:

> It's like we work hand and hand with each, cause that's when we usually go into their classrooms to teach a lesson, or that's when JROTC instructors let their students come down to get their FASFA done, like each JROTC instructor works really closely with us to help us be able to filter in the college application process easily, where Mr. Williams would not to take two days out of his English class.

Similar to other PMAs and where the norm is 2 counselors are to serve over 500 students, the addition of 5 JROTC instructors working to support the healthy development and college preparation of their students is an added bonus to the overall school climate.

"The Campaign" winds down with a PSAE Pep Rally in April. Juniors are obviously present, but the sophomores are invited as well to give them a preview of what is to come next year. The line up ranges from school administrators praising all their hard work to senior students offering advice to the juniors to teachers providing test prep strategies; all mixed in with humor and performances to serve as general edutainment. Principal Montri uses the pep rally to incentivize the students once more. He promises to take the students to a restaurant celebration if they have 100% attendance for day 1 and day 2 of testing. Moreover, he announces that each department donated money in order to offer $100 awards to the student with the most improved score and to the student with the highest composite score. While the coordinated efforts of the campaign are executed, the

Transformer PMA administration is always wondering, as Principal Montri often asks his staff, "what can we do differently or better?"

6.   Monitoring Progress and Assessing Success

The administration and teachers often reflect on the impact and success of "The Campaign," as it rolls out over the course of the year. Monitoring the practice test scores from the Saturday ACT preparation sessions was essential to their ability to maneuver toward successful "Campaign" outcomes. For example, each student's practice ACT test scores were analyzed and placed into a Transformer Student Growth Plan. At the school level, these reports were dissected and discussed in faculty and team meetings in order to keep an eye on the success of the Saturday preparation sessions.

Moreover, these data are not kept privately held for the school's faculty only. The Area CAO The CAO required all schools share their data for discussion at the weekly performance management sessions. From my observations of these sessions, I would say that sharing data for the purpose of holding discussions about how to improve practice was the goal, but when you are sitting in these sessions, you can't help but feel that those principals are under fire. When the data is displayed via PowerPoint, the colors red, yellow and green fill the screen to indicate the progress each school was making. Schools in the red were asked, "What is your striking range? What are you doing to get your school to move into the yellow?" The no-nonsense environment produced intense anxiety among the participants in the room.

The Transformer PMA administration, with their military background, could anticipate The CAO's style of leadership in these sessions. This is significant because while they still dreaded attending these meetings, they also used their understanding of

military culture to set themselves apart from the majority of the other leaders in the room. For example, they knew preparation and getting out ahead of the curve was necessary – staying in the yellow and green on data reports was a major motivator. In order to do so, innovation with reasonable risk taking and strong systems for monitoring their progress was central to how they came under less fire in these sessions.

During "The Campaign" Transformer PMA administration volunteered to share how they monitored their students' growth using the Area codes of red, yellow and green, as a result of the investment in the Saturday ACT preparation sessions. Rather than waiting for the CAO to get on them about their performance, Transformer PMA administration and teachers put the pressure on themselves before their CAO could do so. This makes me think of the adage: "Control yourself or someone else will control you" and Transformer PMA demonstrated their desire to have autonomy in the Area.

In addition to using data to monitor students' academic growth, Transformer PMA administration also knew that the Saturday sessions would only work if the students actually attended them. Therefore, they also monitored attendance rates closely. Continuous data collection and analysis allowed them to identify a discrepancy in attendance rates for the Saturday sessions with that of the "Issues" after school sessions, which led them to ask: "Why?"

When the Saturday sessions averaged in at a 92% attendance rate, the "Issues" sessions were only holding at an average of 50% attendance. As a team, the administration and teachers dissected the problem. They realized that other after school extra-curricular activities appeared to interfere with the junior students ability to attend "Issues". The faculty and staff that sponsored those activities agreed to encourage and

even send their junior class participants to the "Issues" sessions. In particular, the JROTC department agreed to stress to the juniors that "everything, every opportunity for ACT/PSAE preparation matters" and they helped motivate their junior members of that after school program to attend "Issues" until they achieve their goal for growth on their practice tests. If administration was not closely monitoring and then sharing with faculty so they could collectively diagnose and solve the problem, it would have become difficult to manage a successful progression of "The Campaign."

Finally, the administration and teachers determine the overall success of the "The Campaign" by meeting and/or exceeding student achievement outcome goals and by gaining citywide, state, and national recognition for outstanding performance.

a.   Student Achievement Outcomes

In regard to the Transformer PMA's ability to meet the key performance goals set by the Area, all have been met on an annual basis since 2009. The biggest gains came in the school's composite PSAE scores where these increases ranked Transformer PMA in a top two deciles in CPS. From 2008 to 2010 Transformer PMA juniors' composite PSAE scores quadrupled. Moreover, the 2010 PSAE scores came in substantially higher than the district's average. While Transformer PMA has more work to do in the area of academic performance, the PSAE student outcome data indicates that this school is on a continuous improvement track.

Transformer PMA also sees improvement in its students' ACT scores and Advanced Placement (AP) success rates. From 2008-2010, Transformer PMA juniors' average ACT composite score increased by 1.3 points. Moreover, the 2010 Performance Policy Student Growth Report indicated that Transformer PMA achieved a 27% AP

success rate, which increased in 2011 to a 60% success rate. Taken together, these scores support the students' opportunity to gain access to college.

Not only does the Transformer PMA graduation rate continuously increase to the point that they now boast over a 90% graduation rate, but the school's college enrollment rate also increased every year from 2004 to 2010. In 2010, 51.3% of the graduating seniors enrolled in college. Of that lot, 85% enrolled in four-year institutions and 93.5% of those Transformer PMA graduates attending four-year schools are on track to matriculate (National Student Clearinghouse, 2010). Of course, none of these increases would be likely without the post-secondary department counselors and their students' determination to win scholarships. To be exact, $1,659,344.00 was awarded to the students of the 2010 graduating class. Examples of these scholarship programs include the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, which funds the student through their doctoral program; the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois, which funds and supports student interested in becoming exceptional educators; and Service Academy Appointments, which upon enlistment guarantees these students full rides.

b.   **Recognition for Outstanding Performance**

Transformer PMA "Campaign" efforts also brought considerable recognition from others. At the citywide level of recognition, Transformer PMA has remained in the top two deciles of the CPS Performance Policy Rating from 2009-2011. The impact of this rating led several male students regardless of year in school and several freshman and sophomores could often be heard chanting a call and response up and down the stairways about their CPS Performance Policy Rating status. While different actors placed different kinds of emphasis on this rating and analysis of it, claiming this status did develop some

sort of identity among the majority of the students that resonated with "The Campaign's" goal of developing a culture of student achievement at the school.

At the state level, "The Illinois Honor Role", an organization born out of Northern Illinois University and their work on maintaining the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC), recognized Transformer PMA as an Academic Improvement Award Recipient for demonstrating substantial gains in performance over the last several years. Moreover, Transformer PMA is home to Golden Apple Teacher Award nominees and recipients, a prestigious award given only to ten teachers per year statewide.

Lastly, at the national level, Transformer PMA is a JROTC Honor Unit with Distinction, which is the highest honor a JROTC Battalion can earn. In fact, out of 1,650 programs across the nation, only 10 percent receive this honor. While this may not appear to have much to do with meeting performance standards, the Formal Inspection performed by U.S. Military Cadet Command staff is intense, including an academic bowl where students are questioned about their knowledge of the JROTC curriculum. Even though several JROTC activities are suspended or limited in order to support "The Campaign," Transformer PMA can still be ranked as one of the top JROTC units in the nation. Moreover, Transformer PMA is also recognized as an AVID National Demonstration School, which marks them as an exemplary model of the program. Only 3% (118 out of 4,500) of the schools housing AVID programs in the nation earn this distinction.

Considering the evidence presented above, Transformer PMA is in a strong position to draw on the school principal's military leadership experience to build the capacity of the adults and students in this setting to develop and sustain a college-going

climate. The appropriation of the military term, "Campaign" to that of creating a college

preparation strategy is one example of how the unlikely fields of military sciences and

educational leadership studies merge in this particular school context. When it comes to

college preparation, the above evidence indicates that the administration and faculty

engage in several phases of initiating goals, planning objectives, executing operations,

monitoring progress, and assessing success in order to support their students' ability to

achieve their aspirations. Transformer PMA's "Campaign" is an example of a

comprehensive opportunity structure that has attempted to fully integrate CPS' college

preparation pillars of Awareness, Readiness, Access, and Success into the culture of the

school. Now we will explore how the students made sense of "The Campaign."

D.   **Student Response to the Structure of College Preparation Opportunities in**

        a Chicago Public Military Academy

        While Transformer PMA provides its students with several opportunities that

prepare them for college, it is equally important to understand how the students respond

to and interact with this opportunity structure. While the students' give voice to how their

experience with this particular opportunity structure is largely beneficial in relation to

what they hope to achieve in life, a tension emerges with how the students realized how

the largely competitive structure of college preparation opportunities tend to privilege a

select group of students. The opportunity structure led many students to question the

value and effectiveness of the structure because these students' resiliency is

interconnected with a more inclusive, community-focused approach to success that is

often negated by the more competitive, individualistic framing of opportunity.

1.   **Using Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps to Support a College-Going**

Culture

Much like national college aspirations data, 84.2% of the students attending

Transformer PMA plan to complete a four-year college degree and of that lot 44.1%

intend to earn a graduate degree. Survey data indicates that "The Campaign" is an

important way to support the students' ability to frame and execute their own purpose in

life. In fact, several students often shared how the military model of education supports

the development of a college-going culture at Transformer PMA that they then use to

achieve their college-going goals.

When discussing their plans for after high school and how they feel they are being

prepared to achieve their goals, several students not only mentioned the role of teachers

and counselors, but they also commented on the role of JROTC, as a program, in pushing

them to reach their potential. Leon eagerly shared:

> JROTC it intensifies our leadership and leadership is a central thing to have for
> college or a career because colleges don't want to just see that you are in a lot of
> extracurricular activities, but that you are taking on leadership roles in those
> extracurricular activities. So it's like my Sergeant encouraged me to be a leader in
> the classroom and after school. Being in ROTC taught me how essential it is to be
> a leader and how essential it is to actually plan your way through because ROTC
> teaches you how to calculate better. It kind of intensified my academic career, but
> actually intensified my extracurricular activities more because it taught me I don't
> have to let this boy intimidate me just because he says he is better than me. I
> actually understand better what I bring and that helps me do even better in those
> situations.

Several students echoed Leon's views of the ways in which JROTC gives them the

advantage over other students when applying to college. For example, Ernesto put it this

way:

> JROTC definitely helps on applications and stuff for colleges, and especially for
> those interested in the Service Academies. Some of us went to an admissions

briefing one time and they were like, we look for people that are in leadership positions in JROTC, or if you are on the soccer team, make sure you are not just a soccer player, but that you are the soccer team captain. If you are in JROTC, make sure you are not just a JROTC cadet, but you are battalion commander and things like that. So that helped me plan and reach my goals. It [participating in JROTC] also shows how hard I've worked over the years in high school and colleges see that and that sets me apart from the other students applying to the same college.

Deidra added:

JROTC is really military style, it's really disciplined and formal stuff. The thing is I like it. [She looks to a peer in the focus group.] I know –that surprises me too. I don't know why, but it's just interesting to me, like learning to be so respectful, I guess. I feel like that's a higher class of respectfulness and then it helps you to set yourself aside from the others, as in to show that you have a lot of character. I can honestly say being in JROTC has already helped me get a job for after school and I believe it will help me get into college.

Benita jumped in:

Same here, I agree with Deidra's point. Like with drill, when I first saw it I was like, 'oh my God I'm going to mess up on that', and I joined it and so far it's been great. It's like it gives you that extra boost. It shows you leadership and all that you can do. It brings you out more than you never knew you had inside of you.

The majority of the students credited JROTC with providing them with experiences that "intensified my academic career," "sets me apart," "it helps you to set yourself aside from the others," and "it gives you that extra boost." Their views indicate that they feel JROTC strengthens their access to college by having an impressive resume. It is in this regard that the students' have learned that leadership development[1] during and after school as well as within community service activities is one way to enhance their resume. The majority of students I interviewed and interacted with appear to value JROTC as an opportunity that is structured to help them achieve their current and future aspirations.

Moreover, students often made a connection between their anticipated major in

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[1] I further unpack the leadership development component of JROTC in chapter five and provide additional analysis in chapter six.

college with the benefits of participating in JROTC all four years of high school. Janai, in a matter of fact manner, reported, "Because of the career I want when I come out of college, being in JROTC will look good on my resume." Nikki chimed in, "Me too! I think JROTC helps me focus more on my future because I want to go to college to become a special agent." The students who shared similar views as Janai and Nikki dreamed of becoming police officers, fire fighters, forensic scientists, teachers, lawyers specially for "people who don' t have a good lawyer" and CIA agents. The service-type career paths of interest to Transformer PMA students reflect an emerging group of young people who appear to understand navigating the college-going opportunity structure from both individualistic and collective standpoints.

In fact, when I asked why they were drawn to these careers and who or what influenced their thinking, the majority of students often asserted, "I just don't want to become another statistic, I want to be somebody in my life" along with "It may seem like we be slackin' up in school sometimes, but really, I feel most of us here, if we don't already, want to protect our families and make a difference in our communities." Located within the individual level of currently being a young person, the idea of "not becoming just another statistic" indicates a duality with the degree of agency these students have over the direction they take in their lives. On the one hand, these students recognize that there is, as one student put it, "chance" of opportunity at play in their lives and they make sense of how geographical and economic constraints of opportunity create circumstances that have led their generation to be seen as a mere set of "at-risk" statistics. However, on the other hand, their understanding of opportunity indicates that they feel strongly about taking responsibility for "not becoming another statistic" and that their responsibility

emerges from the kind of decisions they must make about how they engage with opportunity structures. Their commitment to seeking out careers in public service also suggests that they see themselves becoming a group of young adults who can use their access to pass on their commitment to increasing opportunity as a collective right to future generations. It is in this regard that these students' views on opportunity illuminate how their sense of their possible selves aligns well with the JROTC goal of motivating young people to become better citizens with that of their collective resistance to the often stereotypically oppressive views of inner city youth who are labeled "at-risk." In a sophisticated fashion, these students have thought about a way to incorporate the JROTC philosophy into how they want to be now. As one student put it, "I want to prove people wrong" in order to help them achieve their aspirations in ways that collectively redefine what it means to be a low-income young person of color navigating opportunity structures in the context of the inner city.

2. <u>Quality Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Instructors Matter</u>

Through my conversations with the youth about what they found of value about the structure of college preparation opportunity at Transformer PMA, it became clear that the quality of the adults who were operating within the structure mattered to them greatly. In particular, several students specifically commented on the importance of their Sergeants' ability to motivate them to set high expectations for themselves. The expectations the JROTC instructors have for their students are key to supporting the students' ability to be somebody now and to become the person they envision in their future. Jamal said:

> He [Sergeant] gives you something to look forward to. He tells us all the time – he will sit there and he'll talk to us, tell us about how good we've got it and how much

stuff we can get into that's good, that it will be better for us, and he'll push you. Like he'll know that if you're doing it, if you're even trying to do it, and he will make you want it more or he will make sure that you get it.

Benita said:

> Our Sergeants encourage us. They say, like you guys want to go far then come on, prove it to us that you can do it. Don't sit there and stare at the wall and waste a whole class. They say things like, 'did you guys come here to learn or just sit and watch us?' And they are right, we came here to learn, not sit here and stare at the ceiling. They encourage us also and it motivates us…get good grades – yeah. They are honest too, which is what we need.

It was not all that surprising then to find out that the JROTC instructors believe they have

a responsibility to contribute to the college-going of culture. Sergeant Rinks said:

> One thing is JROTC broadens horizons and deepens the cadets' understanding and appreciating of possibilities. A lot of them had very narrow aspirations and expectations; I think we open that up, especially with the field trips where we travel nationally. There's even a group that goes overseas once a year and it is the guest speakers that we bring in. These trips include college visits too so we share how we value higher education, it is also part of our [JROTC] curriculum that is teaching them how to learn, how to listen, how to take notes, how to set goals and plan, and we want them to understand themselves including how their brains work.

Sergeant Freeman discussed how he feels he supports his students' ability to plan for

their futures:

> The thing is you just have to get to know the kids and a lot of people don't want to get to know the kids, but you've just got to get to know the kids. Once you get to know them and they see that you understand their reality, you are in like Flynn. Because if you want to take somebody somewhere, you've got to really understand where they are starting and where they want to go along with where you need them to go. First you need to make a good assessment of where they are and what their challenges are and then you can set realistic goals over where you want them to go. So I did that, I got to know them, I got to know their reality.

All of the Sergeants commented on how they use instructional time to raise awareness

about the importance of college. All of them said that they worked closely with the

counselors of the post-secondary department. This was confirmed, as one counselor said:

We work hand in hand with JROTC because it just correlates, I mean they talk about character development, leadership and the future, and goals and decision making and I think it fits with what we help our students understand about their purpose in life and what they are going to do with their future.

3. **The Power of Military Group Cohesion**

While the students and staff were able to express the ways in which they believed the college prep and military model of the school go "hand in hand," I was still often left wondering, "Why?" It was the students who eventually helped me understand why they think Transformer PMA's military model of schooling is supporting their preparation to achieve their college aspirations. Jamal explains, "It's like we're one big family. Haven't you heard us say that before?" I said, "I have, but what does that mean?"

Jamal paused and then adds; "I guess we say it a lot without thinking about it. Um, it's how students get along with each other here, but not just as friends, but like we look out for each other, ya know help each other be the best we can be."

Benita added, "Yeah, because when they judge, they don't just judge us individually, they judge us as a whole, so we have a responsibility of setting the example, for all of us to do good work." Sara then said:

> That's true like the other day in math class there were students who just didn't understand what was going on. Our teacher kept explaining it, but they just didn't get it. So a couple of us including myself went over to show them how to do the problem. It took a couple tries, but we explained how to do the problem until they finally got it. It was important to me that we helped them out, that we didn't give up and leave them behind.

I followed up by asking, "Why is that important to you? Who or what encourages you, if anyone or anything to help each other out?"

Jamal chimed in, "Our teachers do, but it's hard to explain. It's more like the whole school just wants you to feel like you belong here. Like…yesterday like it was my

birthday. Walking down the hall everyone knew it was my birthday and I was getting

punched. Like everyone knows. It's very nice." Sara pointed out:

> Being a small school helps us get to know each other better. They [the school]
> discipline you and they motivate you and a lot of stuff that will make you want to
> change for the better, so it's like a whole all around better environment here with less
> drama, a whole lot less drama.

Benita adds:

> That's true, but like what I was saying about setting an example, that comes from J-
> RO [JROTC] because they motivate us to do better for ourselves and for others, for
> like uh the whole school. Our Sergeants really look after us like we're their own kids;
> all of them say that to us. We know he has our back all the time and I think that
> encourages all of us, I mean to know that we got each others' backs.

On the one hand, the students recognize that the small school structure of

Transformer PMA provides the support they need to achieve their aspirations. On the

other hand, it is also evident that the phrases, "We help each other be the best we can be",

"Setting the example," and "We didn't give up and leave them behind" the students use

to describe the feeling of family at Transformer PMA reflects military philosophy,

particularly the ideas found in *The Soldier's Creed*, which is posted in several of the

JROTC classrooms. It is in this regard that these students' views support research that

suggests military-education programs are modeled after the armed forces concept of

"military group cohesion" or the expectation of achievement being defined by not only

the success of individuals, but also by that of the whole group (Siebold, 2007, p. 286). In

particular, military-education programs further define success as the illustration of one's

ability to contribute to the greater good of the group and society at large (National

Association of State Boards of Education, 2010). The students' expression of

Transformer PMA as one big family reflects a collective orientation to success that

makes sense when considering that the US Cadet Command explicitly states that JROTC

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is intended for "youth seeking a sense of belonging" (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Funk, 2002; Perez, 2006).

The students' ideas about how they felt a sense of belonging at Transformer PMA also came through when they spoke at different times about the challenges they face and overcome on a regular basis. The students' perceptions of the importance of belonging within one big family at Transformer PMA also offer insight into their sense of opportunity. In one particular moment, Shanta, agitated and adamant, spoke up:

> Okay look, on the news the other day there was this homeless boy who lived in California and he had topnotch grades and he got accepted into Harvard or whatever. If you come from a lower economic background and you want to do good and you don't want to stay in that same setting in life, it will motivate you to do better in school. I can say that for me personally. It's the same for my friends and many students here, that's really how we feel as far as versus someone who goes to a top CPS selective enrollment school. They have a plush life, they don't have to work hard for anything because it's basically already set-up what they will be doing. So its like our troubles strengthen us and that brings us together and pushes us to look out for each other.

Deidra put it this way,

> I mean I don't know the family situations or the facts about the economic backgrounds at the other CPS selective enrollment students, but like from what I see the majority of those students that I've met or that I've come across like their lives are totally way better than mine financially. And like a vast majority of the students from Transformer PMA come from rough neighborhoods. And like Shanta said, we have to work way harder than like a student at another selective enrollment school. And like when it comes to us we see the life we're living and we see this is not where we want to be in ten years and it's not where we want to be in five years. I mean I don't know the family. As a student in Transformer PMA it is totally hard to come to school every single day with a smile on your face and trying to come be positive, do your work and it's hard as a student here. Like we have to work for every single thing that we get, like if we need money, we have to go out and we have to find a job. Like most other selective enrollment students I don't know, but like from what I've seen in meeting those students their parents, they don't have to have their children go out and work. They probably don't have to help pay the rent, like they probably don't have to help with children or help do all these other things. So when we talk about how we rank in academic numbers I think it all boils down to sticking together because of our lives outside school and our expectations for seeing all of us succeed helps us get what we want out of life.

While some of the students attending Transformer PMA related their view of the importance of being one big family in relation to the support received from the military aspect of their schooling experience, other students expressed the importance of a philosophical approach to collective success related to their understanding of how to succeed against all odds. While the benefits of using JROTC to create military group cohesions are apparent, this approach does not come without limitations, which is the focus of the remaining section of this chapter.

4. The Problematic Use of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps to Support a College-Going Culture

Without a doubt, Transformer PMA demonstrates consistent efforts to develop a college-going climate that provides an opportunity structure for the students to navigate in order to achieve their goals. While several students expressed, from their view, how the military model of education supports their desire to attend and succeed in college, several interlocking pieces of data also illustrate how the military model component, at times, unintentionally undermines the college-going culture of the school.

5. Tensions with 'Being One Big Family' and the Competitive Opportunity Structure

Although it was common for the students to express the importance of being one big family at Transformer PMA, the idea of everyone succeeding together, as I suggest is influenced by the philosophy of "military group cohesion," led the students to reveal important reservations and insights into this opportunity structure. The students' experience preparing for the ACT as well as seeking out post-secondary preparation opportunities serve as examples of this tension.

When I asked the students about which college preparation experiences have been most important to them, several offered up examples of the ACT preparation sessions at Transformer PMA. Santiago said, "I felt pretty prepared for the ACT. The [proprietary] program on Saturdays and Issues after school helped." The other junior and senior school-aged young men echo Santiago, as several exclaim, "Helped a lot, a lot." Santiago continued to say, "It's really how you apply yourself in school and in these programs." In that moment, Santiago reveals how it is possible to see access to opportunity and individual effort as inextricable. Immediately, I wondered how the other students would respond to Santiago's point.

Before I could follow up, Adam shared his experience:

Actually I felt this school did prepare me really well. I felt the only reason why I didn't do what I set out to do is because I shot myself in the foot. I didn't pay attention to my first two years of math, like at all. Everything else I got a really, really high scores on except for the math…

Randall cut in, "That's everybody's testing money right there. When you come in, you don't pay attention to nothing." Deron spoke up in aggravation:

Man, I always did the same so don't you even try. Personally, I just want to say a couple of things. Last year, it was just like they, um, they were auditing the whole program, they were trying to figure out how they spent every dime and why this is like this and people around here be bitin' their fingernails. This year, they feel like they smellin'[2] themselves a little bit, you feel me? [Other black males in the room nod.] Its like you see things, like seein' our school as a happy family. They want to show you all the good things, but there's always something going on behind the scenes. It's like with racism, its still alive.

Randall jumped right in:

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[2] Because I didn't want to interrupt the flow of the discussion, I later asked Deron what he meant by "smellin' themselves a little bit". He explained, "its like when you think back on something you did and feel big about it. Um, like feeling pride in what you did, but this isn't always a good thing because then you can get over confident and lose sight of how you did it and who helped you along the way."

I do see what you're sayin', a lot of people do stereotype us. But my thing is to rise above that, I'm not going to fall below it. They can think whatever they want about me, but that's not what I'm going to show them. And like I sort of agree, I'm not racist but I sort of agree with people that stereotype blacks as thugs and gangsters because when you go in a dominant black area that's all you see, right?

Deron came right back saying, "Yeah, but we in school. You feel the vibe in the air; feel the divide in the air. I just want to put it out there." Randall quickly rebutted, "I'm just sayin'." Deron pushed on:

But what I'm sayin' is, we got the same uniform on, we gotta follow the same rules, we use the same bathroom, we eat the same lunch, we do the same things and it feels like they treat us, like different. You know, as far as, certain things that they'll let [Deron paused and put his hand out to Santiago and said,] "I'm not tryin' [felt like he was being respectful of Santiago, almost to say it's not your fault]. With certain things they'll let Santiago know but not let us know.

Randall conceded, "That's true, I know they're still skeptical about me, even now that I almost have straight A's. But I'm not going to show them what they expect to see." Roy, snapped out of deep contemplation and with steady words spoke out, "The thing is they are actually doing what they can to prepare you, prepare you for the ACT, prepare you for life; its just up to you to take the initiative to apply the knowledge. That's what most kids fail to realize, I feel like they want to blame it on the school but actually its them not applying themselves."

The young men's conversation reveals several complexities about the way in which they understand the college preparation opportunity structure provided to them. The majority of the young men who expressed ideas such as "It's really how you apply yourself," "I shot myself in the foot," and "it's just up to you to take the initiative" are signaling that they view opportunity based on individual effort and one's willingness to execute decision making that enables them to take advantage of the opportunity structure.

However, complex tensions emerged in the conversation when Deron introduced his consciousness of the ways in which race and racism complicate the other students' views of opportunity based on effort. Deron, while in the minority of the shared perspectives, did get the others to listen and reflect on what I may characterize as his view of opportunity based on circumstance or the structural factors that are out of the person's control and therefore, not held responsible (e.g. race, gender, class, or family background). His analysis further penetrated into the earlier theme of the importance of being one big family at Transformer PMA.

Deron said, "Its like you see things, like seein' our school as a happy family. They want to show you all the good things, but there's always something going on behind the scenes." Here he alludes to how the concept of "military group cohesion" can work to empower and disempower students simultaneously. Because the military view of success still ultimately lies within building soldiers/students up to take on personal responsibility (opportunity of effort), this view of success can also negate the historical, structural forms of racism (opportunity based on circumstance) through offering soldiers/students a new military cultural identity that works to conform the group of soldiers/students to the core military values. The back and forth exchange between these young men demonstrate an awareness of how educational opportunities are linked to the relationship between poverty, race, and place and the tension between opportunities based on circumstance or effort.

When the young male students shared how they understood their sense of success, their female peers had expressed similar and yet slightly different views. Whereas the young men began their discussion of success by explaining that the ACT preparation

offered to them at Transformer PMA was most significant, the young women most often

spoke of citywide and summer college preparation programs being most important to

them. Shanta started by saying:

> Programs outside of the school I was able to be involved in helped me a lot. Like last year the Summer Expedition program showed me how much I needed to be prepared for AP math courses. I have to say Summer Expedition I learned the most about myself, about college, about the world from that program.

Diedra jumped in:

> That is so true. But this school has over exceeded my expectations because they have provided me with numerous opportunities. They have taken me places that I've never been before and helped me rise up through tough times. I got a lot out of it, especially all of the programs like Summer Expedition, Collegiate Researchers, and other programs like those. As a result, I'm going to a really good college on a really good scholarship.

Maribel added:

> When I sat in the Summer Expedition classes and I compared myself to the other students and where they came from, I think that they knew a lot more than me in certain respects, but I knew a lot more than they did in certain areas. So I guess finding out what I needed to know and what I didn't need to know and what I wanted to do and I didn't want to do in my life and what I didn't like was what makes those programs so important.

Shanta then said:

> These programs show you that you can hang with a lot of people who are on their way to college and stuff like that because the people there they were extremely smart. Like I don't even know how I got accepted into that program because they seemed like geniuses compared to me, but I mean I learned a lot from them and I found out I needed to prepare myself, that I'm going to be competing against a lot of people, so not just Transformer kids because that was my mindset at first, like it's just between these kids, but I now know there's a lot of people competing to get into college.

Maribel added:

> I know there were definitely times where I felt pretty dumb. But the good thing is that it gave me a chance to talk about kids like me who have gone on to college and there is going to be times at college when you definitely don't know what's going on, why are these people using such big words and you just say, 'this is just

OK, natural.' So I kind of come to grips with that. Here [at Transformer PMA] you kind of lose competitiveness after a while whereas being in these programs where you are around people who are twice as awesome, they do crazy things that I could never imagine doing academically.

Diedra, with a deeply concerned tone, added:

So it's like Transformer PMA is doing a good job of preparing us, but I guess it's just like they need to move faster, because it is pretty competitive. You're going to fight for scholarships and you've got to fight for a spot in college. The thing that gets me is why do some of us get so much and so many others nothing at all? I look at some of my friends, they try hard so why can't we all get a chance to participate in these programs?

During this line of inquiry, the young women's construct of the meaning of success was

tied to how the citywide post-secondary preparation opportunities awarded to them, and it

exposed them to students attending other selective enrollment secondary schools in the

City of Chicago. As these students clearly appreciated the benefits of these opportunities,

they also came to understand opportunities born out of competition and limited access

also deeply conflicts with their sense of working together to achieve success collectively.

When the young women began to question the notion of access to opportunity,

Maribel continued to express concern, as she put it:

It's like the students that do; I mean knows how to get opportunity, has learned that we have to fight for everything. Let's be real, no one is going to just say, 'Here, come to this great college.' But for those that are slacking up at school are getting left in the dust and when they do go to college, I mean depending on their mindset and how hard they work, they probably won't even be as prepared as the rest of us. So it's like all the smarter kids are running a race but we're pulling along the kids who don't know as much.

Maribel's metaphor of running a race with someone tied to your leg conjures up images

reflective of the responsibility a soldier feels to not leave behind another solider in

combat, but in this case the students realize that the structure of opportunity can create

confusion with how they should feel committed to looking out for each other. Not

surprisingly, the competitive nature undergirding access to opportunity did not sit well

with several students. Transformer PMA students' general notion of being one big family

and general buy in to the mantra of "leave no soldier/student behind" was often put to test

once having to face the reality of an opportunity structure based largely on individual

effort. Whether because of their interactions within the Transformer PMA family or

amongst the other selective enrollment students they met along the way, these students

demonstrated an awareness of how difficult but important it is to understand success

within a context that develops and offers opportunities or constraints simultaneously.

6. **Challenges with using the Military Model of Discipline to Strengthen**
   Academic Rigor

Although the students often expressed how the Transformer PMA's college

preparation opportunity structure heightened their awareness of college and increased

their access to college through intense ACT preparation, several students questioned the

level of the daily academic rigor required of them. Khloe, frustrated said:

> It's like we're cramming all the time. When the teachers ask me if I feel prepared
> to go to college, I'm honest and I tell them I don't feel like I'm prepared. But
> when the parents come in, the teachers tell them they're doing everything they
> can. I just feel like they're lying and when we confront the teachers about it, they
> just say we're being disrespectful. If we feel like we're not being prepared and we
> fail out of college, the blame is going to be on us -that we didn't try. I don't think
> that's right because we're the ones actually trying so hard to do the best we can.

Shanta added, "I agree. I know I'm going to use this summer to study up for the fall."

Diedra said:

> I'm grateful for everything that Transformer PMA has done for me, but I see what
> Khloe and Shanta are saying. The juniors have all these tutoring programs that
> you can do after school. Senior year a lot of those same students applied for
> different…like after school tutoring programs – none of them got in, and mainly a
> lot of the juniors got in but why? Because those are the people that will be
> representing how well Transformer PMA does this year. Their test scores…like

that's all they care about. How are we doing in college is less important…like us wanting a little extra help before we go to college, I don't think they really care about that anymore, it's only about how they look.

These students all shook their heads in disbelief and in overlap said, "Numbers and appearances, that's what matters." While these students shared several significant concerns about their academic preparation for college, I put these students' critique in a larger framework of the challenge of continuous school improvement in a national and local educational system that privileges standardized test performance over more holistic methods of accountability. Transformer PMA is working to do their best within this system. Having considered this framing of the issue, I continued to explore the issue of academic rigor with several other students. When I asked, "do you find school to be challenging for you? Are they challenging you academically?" With caution, Leon admitted:

I would say most of the time 'no', but when it comes to take the big tests, I would say, 'yes'. All the stuff they went over at the beginning of the year and the middle of the year it's coming back to us on these tests. I'm not going to say that's the only time they really challenge us, I mean I would say out of all the seven classes only like one of them is challenging me, but really none of them are challenging me because all the classes are really easy, if you follow directions.

Jamal confessed, "You would think with it being a military school, it'd be really tough. But I have been surprised by how it's an easy breezy school." I followed up, "Do you want to be challenged more?" All four students exclaimed, "Of course!"

What may come of a surprise to many is that the majority of the students argued that making the military structure of the school more "strict, militant, and rigid" would help "demand that they [the students] follow through with their work." While the majority of students put forth this argument, Adam in exasperation responded within these conversations by asking, "What do you want them to do, like beat us?" Randall with

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force said, "I'm just sayin' they can't control us as if we was in a military boarding school where you have to stay over night and stuff." Deron with a quickness said, "Yea, that's how they see it, that's how they see it though." Randall went on to say, "I just don't see the discipline as much in this school." Adam rebutted, "But they already do control us a lot. You don't really realize it." Deron swiftly, but also underneath the larger discussion added, "They trickin' you with what they expectin' you to believe." Adam continued to say, "But besides that let me ask you, did you have a uniform at your grammar school? [Randall nods.] Okay, was it super strict? [Randall shakes his head no.]" Roy chimed in, "Like wearing this uniform properly everyday, every single day. You know, if they tell you to pull your pants up, you're going to pull them pants up."

"Yea," responded Adam, "You know there are certain things you can and can't do within this school that you could get away with at other schools. There is a real strong discipline system here at this school, but it's just like, ya know, but with it being a military academy everyone expects it to be super disciplined." Randall said, "The thing is that we got to discipline ourselves." Deron added:

> It's kinda like how, ya know for the everyday black man, you gotta transition from being at home to other places. But sometimes you space off and in the heat of the moment, you know you shouldn't conduct yourself that way at school, but then I get so deep into what I'm sayin' that it gets past me and I don't even realize what I just said. Its like when they talk to you, they look at us like little soldiers, soldiers. [Others shake head in agreement and laugh lightly.] You can see them like they're flashing back into the military and then you can't say nothing and you can't say too much.

I followed up by asking, "Have others of you shared similar experiences? And not to say that you have to contradict what Deron is saying, but I have witnessed instances that I don't understand so I need you to help me understand." Overwhelmingly, the black males

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in the room shook their heads up and down slowly. With discomfort and thoughtfulness, Santiago entered the discussion:

> With the whole aspect of discipline, Transformer PMA is not a place for bad kids, but I think people think that because it's a military school, that the military part is going to set us straight. There's parents that do think that but those kids have problems here because it's more about performing academically and doing the big things that we have done here. It's not about beating kids into obedience. They use the military as a structure to have this discipline so we can do all the good stuff we're doing.

Randall chimed in, "They do teach you to be more organized and how to plan for the future. You're built up over time." Adam ended the conversation by saying, "I feel like we can all pretty much agree that discipline is something that you teach yourself, whereas the structure for example the military structure here helps guide our actions so that we can do great things." [They all seems satisfied with Adam's statement.]

While several students believed that intensifying the military discipline of the school would help increase the academic rigor that they understand they need to be successful in college, several others were not so sure. Those who questioned the use of the military model of discipline to support the college-going culture were often the students who, at times, struggled with negotiating the level of control and conformity that is often expected of them. When Deron swiftly stated, "They trickin' you with what they expectin' you to believe," his statement led me to think about how he is speaking out against G.S. Hall's (1904) social construction of adolescence that was fraught with middle class values. While youth studies scholars have since determined that this conception of adolescence is not based on an empirical assessment of the ways in which young people behaved (Comacchio, 2006; Cote and Allahar, 2006), Hall's theorized norm of conformity continues to play a role in how several schools and youth programs

(e.g. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA) attempt to address "undesirable" youth behavior. In fact, a critical historical approach to understanding youth reveals that rifle practice and military maneuvers were often seen as a solution to the problematic nature of being young (Tilleczek, 2011); although I never observed rifle practice at Transformer PMA, I sure did witness a great amount of time dedicated to drill formation. While some of the students struggled with conformity, others viewed it as part of the structure that allowed them to do "big things."

In addition, the students' discussions of discipline and structure further unearthed the discipline disparities that exist between black students and their peers, disparities that are not unique to Transformer PMA, but nonetheless problematic for advancing as a school. The young women shared how they noticed that those who did not conform to the military code for the young women such as for those that wore large hoop earrings, did their nails, and colored their hair were often their black female peers. As a result, the young women told me that black females were disciplined more often than other female students. The young men had similar concerns to express. When Deron said, "Its kinda like how, ya know for the everyday black man, you gotta transition from being at home to other places. But sometimes you space off and in the heat of the moment, you know you shouldn't conduct yourself that way at school, but then I get so deep into what I'm sayin' that it gets past me and I don't even realize what I just said," he is speaking to the difficulty of living with what W.E.B. Dubois (1903) termed a double consciousness. For many youth of color this translates into learning to code switch between black cultural norms and white middle class norms often found in schools. The fact that all the other young black men in the room could feel what Deron was saying indicates how discipline,

structure and conformity as it is linked to racism presents several challenges with using the military model of discipline to strengthen academic rigor.

7. **Paradoxical Implications of using Military Youth Programs to Structure College Preparation Opportunities**

Ever since I began investigating the Chicago Public Military Academies as a proposed model of opportunity in inner city educational landscapes, I have been drawn toward wanting to understand how those most affected by the military model education---the youth themselves---make sense of their experiences attending a public high school that focuses on college preparation and requires four years of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC). The current political economic context of war and recession, juxtaposed with a public school system that is perceived as failing to educate its students for economic and political citizenship, situates the development of the Public Military Academies, therefore my dissertation study, within a polarized debate. In this section, I use the students' views to explore how they negotiate this polarized debate through their lived experience.

When I opened up a discussion about what they hope for in life, the great majority of the students indicated that they aspire to graduate from college. The students shared a common perspective in that when they thought about their possible selves, they want to go to college because they generally see it, as one student put it, "college will open up more and better opportunities for me." As the discussion progressed, it became clear that several students thought about who they wanted to become by going to college were also concerned about not gaining access to or not becoming successful in college. Camillo

said, "I just hope I get a higher post secondary education, higher academics, a better

standpoint view of like where am I supposed to be, how do I become the best I can be."

Rodrigo explained that for him:

> There's always a back-up plan, so like after high school probably go to college first and then Air Force or Air Force first then college or I could really screw-up in school, yeah, really screw up in school and just end up with a minimum wage job at McDonalds or something. There's just a lot of things that happen that you don't really see coming.

Leon entered the conversation by saying:

> They let us know ahead of time that this school is not to just prepare us for the military, they let us know that numerous times, so I would say that they prepare us for the Army and college because they teach us both about how to make it in college and how to make it in the military.

Jamal said:

> I'm going to say that my friends generally have very high expectations for themselves. All of them want to be successful but want to be successful in their own way and do what they like to do their best and succeed. And they want to like do what they want to do in their own way, like some will go to college and some will go onto the Army or Air Force. Some feel best suited for college and others the military.

Camillo, upon further thought, added:

> I figure that I better start buckling down, getting my grades better. Like if I don't get a good enough scholarship to go to some good college then instead of going to college I would just enlist, because its better than just roaming around Chicago with nothing working out so if that were to happen, I will just leave and enlist.

These young men reveal just how much is on their minds as they think about their

futures. They express real anxiety about what it will take to get into college and how to

make it through college. While attending college is their first goal, their uncertainty and

concerns indicate how attending a college preparatory public military academy also

makes the option of enlisting for military service a viable contingency plan.

The young women shared similar college-going goals with that of their male

counter part; though they often spoke of their exposure to the military aspects of the school differently. When the topic of the JROTC uniform came up, Benita told the group, "I don't like the shoes very much, they're uncomfortable, but besides that I like the uniform." I asked, "Why?" She said, "You get a lot of respect. My bus driver, every morning, just goes like this to me [she salutes]. Instead of hey, good morning, hi – he just salutes and I start laughing. But the thing is that I have learned what this uniform means now." I followed up, "What does the uniform mean to you?" Benita explained, "I always think about how someone, a real soldier, wearing this uniform is fighting for us, helping us have our freedom." Several of the young women agreed with Benita's explanation.

The next day Nikki pulled me aside and asked to speak with me privately. When we met up, she asked, "Remember when we were talking about the military and uniforms?" I said, "Yes, do you want to tell me something more?" She did and she confided in me:

> I don't admit this often but I feel like I have always, um been scared. I've seen a lot throughout my lifetime. I actually have a very close friend of mine that during the summer she actually got raped and when I heard that I was just stunned like she's lucky because she knows how to fight and she got away. But it's just the thing like the fact that I consider her family and to hear that your family is in danger like that it gets to me. Even though I'm also kind of scared of the military, you know how serving might mean you come home in a casket, but being here [in this school] is giving me a chance to think about how to not be scared. So I feel like okay, if I could just do something that would help protect my family as well as other people it will change, something will change for the better eventually. And because my heart is into it and I don't give up anything I start I feel like I'm becoming stronger like I can have the confidence to do more than I even know.

It is clear that all of the students are militarized to different degrees while attending Transformer PMA; however, the young men were most often fixated on how their future selves may intersect with the Armed Services as a back up plan to college. Conversely,

the young women expressed a deeper appreciation of the military model in regards to who they are now and who they see themselves becoming.

While the militarization of youth attending Transformer PMA is apparent, the youth could also name it, describe it and feel it. It is in this way that the power of militarization in the Public Military Academy context is weaker in comparison to how militarization operates in more allusive ways in other high school contexts. During a conversation the young men described how they get vibes from people who don't know anything about this school and how they set them straight, Roy said:

> I have to let a lot of people know that in each of the ROTC classes that I have taken, not a one of the instructors who teach the class recruit any of us, at least not from what I have seen. They just teach you about Army values, that's it. They're not saying you should join the Army because of this, that and that the Army will provide No, its not happening.

Randall added, "The school is just teaching leadership skills and stuff to put you in a position to tap into your full potential." Camillo then told us about how:

> One ROTC instructor has even told me that sometimes he regrets joining the Army because of the time that he was away from his family and his kids, so in a way that's a bad outcome, because I wouldn't want to spend too much time away from my family and miss out on the great moments.

Santiago also explained:

> I have a better understanding of how the military works, how everyone has different jobs in the military. The instructors share their military experiences with us so we have a better understanding, yeah.

Adam rounded out the conversation by saying:

> When I first came to this school, I thought I was going to come out of it swole like a big Army soldier. But then you realize that they're really helping you become a man, a grown man who can make decisions that let you strive for success. This is something though that with all that we learn about the military that is it mostly

good so if we're not careful, we can get kind of programmed to be all about the military. But I do see how we also hear how being in the Army is really dangerous.

The conversations that emerged with these students solidified for me how young people are more than capable of negotiating the simultaneous benefits and limitations of being involved in military themed youth programs. I interpreted the students' expression of their experiences within a framework of youth development that explains how trying on different selves helps them distinguish more clearly who they really are now and gives the insights into who they want to be in the future. I was further confident in my interpretation when, Leon said:

> I don't think military is like my main place I really belong, because it feels like I really can't have the presence I would want in life while in the military. It has to be a certain type of authority whereas in the career world I want to choose the type of authority I'm going to be under. Like a prestigious professor who just thought of an interesting theory or like this, this motivation book I'm reading now. I don't mind having them as authority because I guess you learn from them, but I feel like in the military I can't learn to better myself because in the military I would be in this closed box and I won't be able to choose my own future or my own decisions I make.

Although Chicago PMAs do not make this particular metric public, less then 1% of the Transformer PMA students enlisted Data point obtained through interviews with the Transformer PMA students, interviews and documentation provided by the post-secondary department faculty and school administration, and my observation of the 2010 graduation ceremony). Considering this, it is clear to me that these students have been able to unpack the hidden messages that come with attending a school that uses the military model of education to support a college-going culture.

E.   **Summary Reflections**

The stories the youth shared in this chapter provide a great deal of insight into what it is like to attend a Chicago Public Military Academy. The students themselves

were often deeply analytical about their own experiences. Although the students often reported several benefits of using JROTC to support a college-going culture, they also expressed important insights and reservations into the opportunity structure. The majority of the students demonstrated some limitation in their analyses in that their ideas often maintained the neoliberal framing of opportunity or mainstream cultural values. In particular, these values heavily privilege individual responsibility and effort over structural constraints on how students access and engage with this particular opportunity structure. The students' analyses in some ways do not surprise me, because we are shaped by current contextual realities. At other times, I was troubled by their limited tendency to see how the intended opportunity structure produces unintended consequences that further intensify racial and economic inequality. Having said that, the students' sense of resiliency that emerged out of their commitment to prove people wrong together, that is, to collectively not become another statistic, moved me to see that they do see injustice at various times within the college preparation opportunity structure. I came to learn that they are resistant to the idea of making excuses that might interfere with how they are then able to take advantage of opportunities along the way.

In sum, the meaning low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity while attending Transformer PMA is revealed. Generally speaking and despite differing racial, ethnic, and gender identities, the students in this study defined the notion of opportunity in a largely optimistic manner related to the actions that either they needed to take or the school needed to provide for them to achieve their aspirations. In investigating the meaning low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity while attending Transformer PMA, it becomes clear that risk, effort, and circumstance are central to

understanding how youth construct the meaning of opportunity in complex ways.

In addition, Transformer PMA students' perceptions of their current and future opportunities became clear as the students connected the future aspirations they had prior to attending Transformer PMA with that of the benefits as well as limitations of participating in JROTC all four years of high school. In investigating the students' perceptions of their current and future opportunities, another dimension of the meaning low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity emerged that focuses on how students imagine their possible selves is essential to understanding how youth construct the meaning of opportunity in complex ways. I return to further analyzing these themes in chapter six.

V. Learning to Lead within the Context of a Chicago Public Military Academy

A.   Youth Leadership Development in the National Educational Context

While the economic goals of schooling establish that schools should prepare future workers and the social goals suggest that schools are responsible for reducing inequalities in society, the political goals of schooling put forward the idea that schools should develop citizens and citizen leaders (Spring, 2008). Taken together, the economic, social, and political goals of schooling have been thought, since the early republic, to promote the notion that public schools are to prepare students for life in a democratic society (Tozer, Senese, & Violas, 2012). Therefore, public schools that support youth leadership development are often viewed as an important component of developing democracy (Dewey, 1905; Ginwright & James, 2002; Hill-Collins, 2009). This ideological view complicates the lens in which we might view the political purpose of the public military academies (PMA). Is it possible that the military model of leadership education actually supports democratic possibilities? Is this possibility made more plausible, or less plausible, by the heavily low-income youth of color enrollments that receive leadership development in PMAs?

Although several studies suggest that employers will increasingly require young workers to possess and demonstrate leadership skills especially as technological advances, intensified global competition, and the need to manage an increasingly diverse work force converge (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Kuhn & Weinberger; 2005; Horner, 1997), it is important to note that the majority of schools in the U.S. do not provide formal instruction in leadership theory and practice (Rogers, 1991). While youth learn about leadership in various contexts, formal rather than informal leadership education and

practices are often privileged as the most desirable method of experiencing leadership. Formal youth leadership is found in institutions or programs that develop specific youth leadership goals and formal leadership curricula. For example, many public institutions (i.e. schools, community advocacy agencies, religious institutions, youth organizations and sports programs) include youth leadership development in their mission statements (Linden and Fertman, 1998). Institutions and programs that aim to develop youth leaders draw on leadership theory and studies to map out the formal leadership education and training intended for youth to receive.

It is expected that the nomination or election of young people into specific leadership roles is central to formal leadership education. It is commonly believed that student participation as leaders and followers within these institutions and programs is representative of young people receiving formal leadership training (Funk, 2002). Several of these institutions and programs assume that practicing leadership roles does provide formal leadership training. However, my personal experience in various youth leadership roles, as well as experience as an adult ally to youth leaders, confirms that practice alone does not introduce youth to historical and contemporary theoretical perspectives on leadership. While learning by doing leadership is important, a defining feature of formal leadership education is that a theoretically informed and evidence-based curriculum exists to expose youth to various leadership theories, typically in the form of explanations for specific leadership practices, that can then inform their practice, and their practice can also inform the conceptualization of leadership.

B.   Youth Leadership Development in the Chicago Context

Once we further examine the formal educational landscape, even fewer

opportunities for low-income youth of color to learn about and practice leadership exist

(Ginwright, 2002). The fact that youth leadership opportunities are not equally or

equitably distributed across all populations is problematic because leadership education

and experience are linked to post-secondary opportunities such as work force

employment and college readiness. As the staff of Peterson's Guide wrote under the

heading "Leadership" in a 2013 publication on getting accepted into college:

> "Evidence of leadership" is a phrase that comes up often at admission decision
> committee meetings, and it can be what separates you from someone who ends up
> on the waitlist. There's a world of difference between the student who joined the
> Geography Club and the one who founded it. The more selective a college is, the
> more carefully your leadership role is examined (Peterson's Staff, 2013).

In Chicago, a standardized, formal leadership education curriculum framework

does not exist, yet leadership training is typically offered to youth through the Office of

Workforce Development, through attendance at particular Chicago Public Schools whose

mission statements specifically address leadership development, and through the City's

vast network of youth organizations that most often provide informal educational

experiences. Due to time and scope, I will focus on publically funded institutions'

provisions of leadership development.

In accord with the Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the City of

Chicago's Office of Workforce Development offers "at-risk" youth workers WorkNet

programs (City of Chicago Office of Workforce Development, n.d.). The WIA Youth In-

School and Out-of-School programs include intensified leadership development. These

trainings focus on developing, "positive social behavior and employment skills such as

decision making, team work and other activities" (City of Chicago Office of Workforce

Development, n.d.). Although developing these skills may help open up workplace

opportunities, Furlong (2013) argues that as the number of unskilled jobs decline, the

emphasis placed on the development of 'soft skills' parallels intensification in

conformity, thereby constraining youth agency in a labor market where opportunities can

appear to have weakened. One implication of Furlong's argument is that the good

intentions of the WIA youth leadership programs also present unintended consequences.

In addition to the City of Chicago's Workforce Development Initiatives, some

Chicago youth also attend public schools that offer a range of leadership experiences.

However, these experiences are most often apparent in the well-funded, selective

enrollment college preparatory high schools (Chicago Public Schools, n.d.). Although

CPS has not developed or adopted leadership education curriculum standards, the Office

of Post-Secondary education directly links leadership development to college readiness

(CPS Office of High School Programs, n.d.). Not only is leadership development

attractive to college admission boards but research suggests that leadership preparation in

high school also helps students manage the demands college presents--that is the difficult

task of balancing college academics with other necessary experiences such as internships,

community service, and part-time employment that often help college graduates look

even more attractive to employers and/or graduate school admission boards (Freeman,

1997; Oesterreich, 2000). The uneven distribution of formal leadership education in the

City of Chicago reveals an all too common tension between the political purposes of

schooling for a democratic society with that of what actually happens in schools in

regards to the provision of leadership education and experience.

Not unexpectedly, the Chicago PMAs Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (Junior ROTC) program attempts to address this tension by providing low-income students of color curricula on leadership theory along with opportunities to practice leadership for the ultimate purpose of motivating young people to be better citizens (Army JROTC, 2001). Just what does the JROTC youth leadership opportunity structure offer? For example, is the leadership education largely offered in service of military leadership training?

C. **The Structure of Leadership Development Opportunities in a Chicago Public Military Academy**

Chicago PMAs draw on the JROTC program goals, curricula, activities and practices to structure the leadership development opportunities offered to students attending PMAs. Understanding the leadership strand of the JROTC program is the starting place for making sense of how youth experience leadership education and practice in a Chicago PMA. The US Army Cadet Command (2006) introduces JROTC to students by stating:

> As a JROTC cadet you are embarking on one of the most interesting and valuable educational experiences of your high school career. In JROTC you will be given the chance to participate in your education and you will learn to be a better citizen. The program provides you with the tools and skills you can use to succeed in high school, but far more important, these tools and skills will be useful for the remainder of your life (p. x).

The introduction further lays out the supporting learning objectives of the program, which include the following: citizenship promotion, leadership development, critical thinking and effective communication skills, physical fitness appreciation, resistance to negative peer pressure, goal setting strategies, military history knowledge,

promotion of the importance of high school graduation, and knowledge of post-secondary

opportunities (US Army Cadet Command, 2006). In regard to the specific goals of the

leadership strand, the US Army Cadet Command (2006) states:

> You will learn to develop leadership potential and learn to live and work
> cooperatively with others. Teamwork and leadership, within teams and groups,
> are essential to the smooth operation of any organization. You will learn
> leadership to increase your skills, not only to lead but to also work as a member of
> a team. Service, drills, challenges, and other competitions make learning
> teamwork and leadership challenging and fun (p. x).

The overarching JROTC program goals are supported through the implementation

of the Leadership Education and Training (LET) curricula. Each grade in school that is

freshman through senior year has a corresponding LET curriculum. For instance, LET I is

intended for freshman students, LET II is intended for sophomore students, and so on up

to LET IV, the highest level in the curriculum. Each LET addresses the program goals

and learning objectives that is appropriate for the age group and is intended to review

and/or build off the content covered in the previous level.

In order to demonstrate some contrast between the LET levels, additional

description of the formal curriculum of LET I and LET IV is useful. Both LET curricula

include the following unit content topics: Citizenship in Action, Leadership Theory and

Application, Foundations for Success, and Wellness and First Aid. Although each unit is

worth additional description, I will further describe a sampling of the differences in the

subtopics of the Leadership Theory and Application units because it is the focus of this

chapter. Generally speaking, LET I introduces the meaning of leadership to the students

whereas LET IV attempts to advance their understanding of leadership principles,

leadership styles and management skills. Table III offers a sample of specific pieces of

content presented in the LET I and LET IV units on Leadership Theory and Application.

TABLE III
SAMPLE OF LET I AND LET IV LEADERSHIP THEORY CONTENT

LET I Sample Content	LET IV Sample Content
Lesson 1: Leadership is defined as "the ability to influence, lead, or guide others to accomplish a mission in the manner desired" (p. 76). Through the use of case studies students learn about and assess how people use leadership behaviors.	Lesson 1: Introduces the "confusion" leaders can experience when they exercise power and influence. Defines sources of power such as coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power (p. 30-31). Defines influence as "power in action" (p. 31) and describes approaches.
Lesson 2: Trait Approach, Behavior Approach, and Contingency Theories of leadership are introduced. Democratic, Autocratic and Laissez-Faire styles of leadership are introduced.	Lesson 2: Directing, participating and delegating leadership styles are discussed. Students are reminded of a previous lesson called "Leadership Reshuffled" where "leadership styles did not have to be an either/or set of behaviors.
Lesson 3: Definitions of values and beliefs are presented to the students in order to help the students develop their own personal code of ethics in comparison to the Core Army Values (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage; taken together is the acronym LDRSHIP).	Lesson 3: Management is defined as "process of planning, organizing, coordinating, directing and controlling resources to accomplish a mission" (p. 43). Each aspect of managing is further discussed and management styles are presented.

In addition to the core lessons taught in each unit on Leadership Theory and

Application, there are a couple of on-going lessons that contribute to how the unit is

aligned with the overarching goals of JROTC. First and foremost and regardless of the

LET level, the JROTC instructors are expected to present and review in different ways

the following 11 principles of Leadership with the students:

1. Know yourself and seek self-improvement.
2. Be technically and tactically proficient.
3. Know your subordinates and look out for their welfare.
4. Keep your subordinates informed.
5. Set the example.
6. Insure the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished.
7. Train your subordinates as a team.

8. Make sound and timely decisions.
9. Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates.
10. Employ your command in accordance with its capabilities.
11. Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions (US Army Cadet Command, 2006, p. 15).

Moreover, each LET level draws on a similar set of activities to help the students monitor their growth and/or change in leadership over time. The Success Profiler, developed by Financial and Personal Success, Inc. is a key example. Army JROTC uses two profiles of the Success Profiler.

Winning Colors, the first of the two, is a self-assessment tool used to cluster behaviors together that is intended to help people understand their leadership behaviors and is intended to help people learn how to communicate more effectively. After the students complete a survey containing closed-ended responses, they tally up their scores to learn about their present behavior. Based on the results, the students' responses land them into four styles of leadership: builders, planners, relaters, and adventurers.

First, builders are characterized as those who tend to enjoy being the person leading the decision-making. Second, planners are characterized as those who tend to enjoy thinking before making a decision. Third, relaters are characterized as those who tend to regard how emotions play into decision-making. Fourth, adventurers are characterized as those who tend to enjoy the excitement of taking chances. In addition to taking the Winning Colors self-assessment and discovering their behavioral strengths, the JROTC instructors are also to use other activities to support the students in making a plan of action for trying new ways of leading and helps them use this to monitor their own development over time.

The second Success Profiler used by Army JROTC is the Personal Skills Map. This self-assessment helps individuals rate their own sense of the following: motivation, interpersonal awareness, time management, leadership, stress management, self-esteem, empathy, and willingness to change (Rice, 2006). Once the students complete the assessment, they use the scores to inform their personal growth plan. The personal growth plan helps the students understand what emotional skills areas they need to develop, areas they can strengthen and areas they can enhance. The students themselves create a personal growth plan that indicates what skills they want to target for improvement, the time period in which they want to show improvement, what resources and learning they think they need to help them achieve their goals, and how they will assess their progress overtime. The JROTC instructors work with the students to develop their plan as well as achieve the goals set in the plan.

Additionally, Army JROTC also employs technology and various forms of interactive media, produced by the U.S. Army Cadet Command, to support the students' leadership development. These videos present a complex issue that then the students are encouraged to use the Army core values to make decisions about what sometimes a soldier and other times students their ages should do. Based on the students' selection of four possibilities presented to them, the story line shifts and a different set of problems arise that the students have to consider or a lesson appears for the students to discuss. When I observed the use of these interactive videos in the JROTC class period at Transformer PMA, I was intrigued by the interactive aspect of the videos in that it resembled a choose your own adventure type experience, and the issues covered in the

story line dealt directly with issues of racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, harassment, bullying, and cheating.

Not only do the goals, curricula, and in-class activities add up to a formal youth leadership education experience, but the program also presents numerous opportunities for students to put leadership theory into practice. There are several leadership positions with clearly defined roles for students to plug into within this leadership opportunity structure. Modeled off the U.S. Army chain of command, Army JROTC uses rank to classify each student's leadership level. Each Army JROTC program has a Battalion Command, which at the public military academy level is comparable to another high school's student government.

The battalion offers a minimum of thirteen (13) defined youth leadership roles. With in each battalion, each grade level (i.e. freshman to seniors) represents a company. A company consists of four (4) defined leadership roles therefore in one public military academy a total of sixteen (16) youth leaders are responsible for their respective companies. Within the companies, there are at least two platoons and for each platoon there are at least two or three squads comprised of fifteen to twenty students. Each platoon, including their squads, consists of a minimum of twelve leadership positions. Therefore in one public military academy a total of forty-eight leadership roles exist for students at that level of rank.

From battalion to squad leadership, a public military academy offers students seventy-seven (77) opportunities to practice formal leadership roles. The intended goals, curricula, in-class activities, and specific leadership roles provide a comprehensive structure that supports a formal youth leadership education experience. The hierarchical,

chain-of-command structure of the military creates a surprisingly large number of formal leadership opportunities for youth. These could in theory have the potential to militarize youth consciousness, or they might have the effect of developing the kinds of democratic leadership capacities—taking responsibility seriously, setting an example, thinking critically, knowing and seeking to improve oneself—that would assist a student in achieving academic and citizenship success. It is one of the purposes of this study to understand how impact these experiences are having on the young people going through them.

D.   **The Notable Structure of Leadership Opportunities at Transformer Public Military Academy**

Although the U.S. Army Cadet Command exerts great influence over all public military academies, the leadership opportunity structure at Transformer PMA focuses on additional elements of leadership development. Without a doubt, Transformer PMA models its formal leadership programming off of the JROTC model. However, it is also apparent that Transformer PMA is authentically committed to using JROTC to support academic excellence. One of Principal Montri's more recent projects was to get all the Battalion Commanders' pictures up on the wall. I asked him why he feels this is important and he said:

> So that the kids walking in will see the evolution of our school's tradition that it's cool or it is great to be scholars. It's cool to be Battalion Commanders. You will see the senior scholarship banners up there too. It lets the students know that becoming Battalion Commanders also means that they must also become successful academically.

He extended the JROTC formal youth leadership goals by making a direct link between developing student leadership with academic achievement. In fact, those students who are

interested in serving in a leadership role must have a 2.5 GPA or higher, more merits than

demerits, and submit a cover letter along with resume for review. The Battalion

Commander and his/her team review the candidates' applications and develop a short list

of students to interview. Principal Montri, Transformer PMA Commandant, and the

Battalion Commander then interview the students and select who will move up in rank.

The Battalion Commander at the time told me, "I feel that GPAs are most important,

because it was the first thing that we would look at to put our lists together. We also

thought about the students' attitude toward school and JROTC too." It follows, then that

academic performance is directly linked to formal leadership opportunity at Transformer

PMA.

Moreover, several Junior ROTC instructors commented that their ultimate goal of

the Transformer PMA leadership structure is that it would become completely student

led. However, they also stressed that achieving this goal takes time, effort, and reflection.

One JROTC instructor elaborates:

> JROTC is supposed to be cadet run. If you want the program to be cadet run you
> have to build the leadership attributes and the knowledge over time. You have to
> think about it like building blocks. You start with the base -that's marching and
> rewards and things of that nature. Then you work on the people management, the
> counseling so that by the time they are juniors and seniors you have a pool of
> cadets that you can pull in to run the JROTC program.

Another commented on his reflection of how he came to support the youth-led aspect of

the program specifically:

> I'm very detailed and I've been accused of being an authoritarian. This made me
> think that I need to step away from that as much as possible and try to encourage
> team work rather than telling them what to do, but letting them work it out among
> themselves as a team. So I've learned. Put them in groups so that they can do
> their teamwork. Now we're to the point where I kind of just monitor them. It is
> working out very well.

Connecting academic excellence to leadership and turning Transformer PMA into a completely student led enterprise indicates that this school is providing an abundant number of opportunities for students to learn about and practice leadership in formal capacities. The reality is that there are additional areas conducive to youth leadership development at Transformer PMA; areas that from the outside looking in most would not recognize--that is there are also a number of informal leadership opportunities as well as what I refer to as "semiformal" leadership opportunities embedded in the structure. Taken together, many if not most students have access to the leadership development opportunity structure at Transformer PMA. Unpacking dimensions of the students' experiences' within the formal, semi-formal, and informal leadership development areas are the focus of the remaining sections of this chapter.

E.   **Student Response to the Structure of Leadership Opportunities at**

         Transformer Public Military Academy

While Transformer PMA provides its students with several opportunities to develop their leadership potential, it is equally important to understand how the students make sense of their experience this opportunity structure. The majority of Transformer PMA students' report that learning to lead is largely beneficial in relation to what they hope to achieve in and beyond high school. It is striking to note that when I surveyed the Transformer PMA student body (n = 335), I found the following:

- 69% think of themselves as leaders.
- 75% have been told that they are leaders.
- 81% want to take on a leadership role.
- 91% believe that no matter who you are, you can learn to be a leader
- 88% feel they have the opportunity to be a leader at school, more so than any other place (e.g. home, community, youth organization, or sports team)

Possessing the *will to lead* suggests that there is something atypical about these students, especially when research on youth indicates that young people do not see themselves as leaders in terms of their will and abilities (Linden and Fertman, 1998). Youth can even learn about leadership and observe it everyday but still not "feel like a leader, know that s/he has leadership skills or even have any desire to be a leader" (Linden and Fertman, 1998, p. 6).

Moreover, when I asked the students to respond to the open-ended question: "Your school tries to develop leadership qualities in all students. How is this working for you personally? Explain what you mean." 81% (n = 215/264) of the Transformer PMA students responded positively to this prompt by explaining how they believe they are becoming better leaders because of the following common themes: they are acquiring leadership knowledge/skills to use now or for future purposes, they are developing self-confidence and their own voice, they are developing the ability to understand different perspectives on issues, they are identifying signs of their own academic and social improvement, and they are able to give back to others or help others (Appendix C: A Representative Overview of Student Responses to the Leadership Survey). The majority of these written responses support the claim that Transformer PMA provides an abundant number of opportunities for students to learn about and practice leadership. Taken together, these opportunities provide several ways for students to plug into their will and ability to lead.

However, it is worth nothing that 21% of the students also shared more critical perspectives on how their school attempts to develop leadership qualities in all students. These responses revolved around the following themes: student rank and abusive use of

power, favoritism, and resistance to the hierarchical nature of chain of command. Additional interview and observation data collection and analysis helped me further unpack the students survey responses. As a result, the students' views on the benefits and limitations of the leadership opportunity structure became apparent.

1.   **"First Impressions": Gender and Formal Leadership Experience**

Morning formation at Transformer PMA proceeds like clockwork. Black and Latina/o students' chins are up and shoulders back as they stand at attention in their school's concrete courtyard. The great majority of the squad members are sleepy, yet they are dressed to impress, which earns them merits. Platoon Sergeants, serving as youth leaders, continue the uniform inspection. When they identify an infraction, they quietly correct the few who fail to tuck in their shirts to the Army standard and they issue them demerits. Still a few other students find ways to work in quick chats with a friend in their squad. When or rather if, caught, the Platoon Sergeant "drops" them.

With out much protest of being "dropped", at most a sigh or roll of the eye, the noncompliant student finishes his/her set of 10 push-ups and falls back into his/her respective positions in the squad. Shortly thereafter, the Platoon Sergeants in unison firmly call out, "Platoons, are you motivated?" All of a sudden, a huge awakening occurs as nearly all-100 students respond,

> "Motivated, motivated down right motivated.
> You check us out. You check us out.
> Smooth Sergeant."

The Company Commander who is also a youth leader with even higher rank than the Platoon Sergeants collects the attendance and merits records to submit to their JROTC instructor. The Company Command then dismisses the students in time for first period.

One significant observational note is that 6 of the 7 youth leaders, including the Company Commander, are all young women equally representing Black and Latina racial and ethnic identities. Despite the fact that researchers document the Army's institutional identity as one that is hyper-masculinist (EnLoe, 2003; Segal & Bourg, 2005), it is quite striking to find that while the majority of the population attending Transformer PMA is male, the young women dominate the formal leadership roles within the school. I couldn't help but wonder why?

Disaggregating the survey data by gender revealed some broad-based insight into the students' perceptions of leadership that begins to help explain the disparity. Slight differences in perception begin to appear in the male and females' perceptions of the kind of leadership skills that are important for being a leader. Figure 5 summarizes student ratings of importance or lack thereof with 5 statements pertaining to leadership skills.
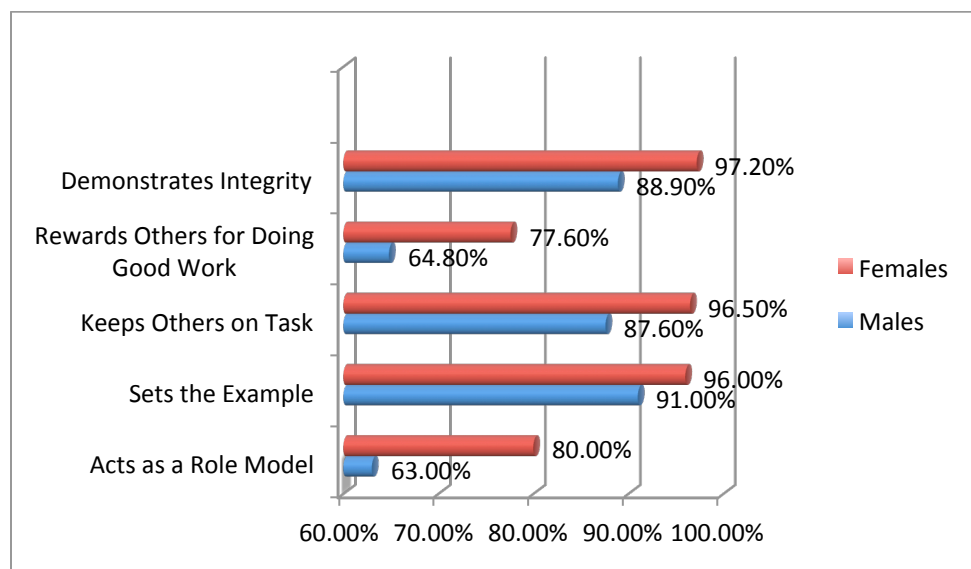

Figure 5: Student assessment of the importance of core leadership skills

The data presented in Figure 5 indicates that although the male and female students generally find value in this set of leadership skills, the young women rated these leadership skills to be slightly more important than the young men to being a leader. This data suggests that young women appear to find more value in the skills that are in greater alignment with formal JROTC leadership characteristics. It is plausible that this alignment suggests that young women's values are affirmed, which allows them to more easily plug into the leadership opportunity structure. In fact, when the topic of leadership came up with the young women, they spoke highly of their experiences with formal leadership. Nikki said:

> It's crazy, but I like being in charge. I understand the value of being there for my fellow classmates or whoever it is. Because I already carry the characteristic of wanting to care for someone else, I feel like I can take lead here.

Sara chimed in:

> It *is* crazy! [Giggles.] Seriously though, I honestly feel like I am becoming stronger as a leader, because I am actually doing leadership stuff in school.

Diedra added:

> I get what you're saying, but I like being a leader even when nobody is watching. I try to not be afraid to step down when somebody else leads. I've got a ton of leadership position in ROTC and Chain of Command and stuff, but recently I worked with the freshman this year as a platoon leader and that was the first position that I really had where I really, really enjoyed it because I had a chance to teach them more one-on-one about how to be a leader and what it takes to be a really strong student in terms of leadership basically. I would let them take my position and I would like stand in for them and really give them a lot of advice and they'd see, oh I don't have to be in front of the platoon all the time in order to be a leader, like I can lead from behind rather than the front. I think then a leader is knowing that it is okay to sometimes follow, because when you follow you actually learn more about how to lead.

The young women gave meaning to their leadership experiences in ways that reflects how they came to understand how the structure supports their views of leadership, which

gives them the ability to use the structure to their advantage. The genuine surprise that comes with their reflections on how they like "being in charge" and "being there… for others" along with reflections on the joy that comes from "a chance to teach them more one-on-one about how to be a leader" are vivid representations of the power of the values undergirding the Transformer PMA leadership opportunity structure. As such, it is difficult to determine whether their values of leadership developed because of the structure or whether it is luck that these students already have values that align with the structure. Nonetheless, the young women's example of doing "leadership stuff in school" suggests that they credit Transformer PMA with providing them formal leadership experiences that enhanced their sense of self in affirming ways.

While observations of youth leading at Transformer PMA as well as the young women's views on their learning to lead speak to the beneficial aspects of JROTC leadership programming, a much stronger tone of skepticism emerged from the young men's expressions of their experiences. When the young men reflected on the transformation the school has and continues to undergo, Roy blurted out to the rest of the group, "Right now we have got to set the example. That is the only pressure we really have, to make sure that we set the example. No room for slacking, no room for mistakes." As the room fell silent, Deron spoke up softly, but forcibly:

> What I don't understand [pause] and I understand it's a military academy and everything but nobody's perfect, nobody's perfect. Ya know, you can try your best to be perfect, but no man's perfect. They teaching us skills and values of leadership, but at the same time, I don't feel like they allow you to be yourself. As we get older, the same stuff I woulda took a couple a years ago, I wouldn't take from certain people now, ya know what I'm sayin'? And certain things I wouldn't react to now that I would when I was younger. Ya know, when they try to discipline you it's like they take it as a sign of disrespect when you look 'em straight in the eye, ya know. And they in your face and you want to be above that

and you lookin' them in the face, but at the same time they take it as a sign of disrespect.

Roy asserted, "But you got to give respect to get respect." Deron went on to say:

> Think about it this way, over time you, you grow. The same why you'd talk to a freshman wouldn't be the same way you'd talk to sophomore, junior, or senior. Certain things you know how to do as a freshman, but you might come with your tie hanging out because at the same time nobody's perfect, you might slip up. But after a while it kinda get irritating when they constantly say your name, constantly say your name, constantly say your name while you in the process of doing it and you feel they feel as if you shouldn't do it. It push you over the edge a little bit, but then you have to recognize and realize that you're here for one reason to get your education, to become a better person, and better yourself, but sometimes I have to remind myself of that because I get real upset.

"Yeah, I feel ya." Randall said. Deron continued:

> Back in freshman year I really didn't spend much time here at school, I really didn't realize, ya know, the seize the moment whereas others [points to two other students in the room] who did the orienteering and they committed themselves to show their passion. With me, I can only look forward to the future but then it's like that first impression, that *first impression is everything* [participant emphasizes]. From freshman year on, they just see you as the same person.

Adam admitted:

> Its kinda odd. I was on the military track freshman year. So I can say if you do show interest early on with the military especially in the Service Academies and you align yourself with the right people, then you will definitely get special attention. When I started to express that the military probably wasn't for me and I started to do different afterschool activities, I did feel some of the support disappear. But I can say that because I have always been interested in attending a higher-level university, I was still invested in such as with getting support for the summer college programs. But it was odd to go through the switch; I could feel what it was like to not be part of the favored crowd. A few JROTC instructors even took it personally rather than seeing what was better for me.

Randall joined in:

> Uh, I want to add to what Deron's sayin'. When you step in here your freshman year, you are at the highest level of immaturity there is to reach. Because I remember in my freshman year I ain't always been good, I was a lil' high hellish. I use to hate when they would get up in my face because I was embarrassed in front of my peers. But it helped me learn that I've got to have restraint, which is

the hardest thing to do and if I just do what I go to do, they ain't goin' to say anything to me.

Deron summarized the discussion:

> Hard lessons here, you feel me? It's basically up to you to seize the moment. If you seize the moment, life'll open up more opportunities. But if you don't seize the moment, it'll pass you by and you might never get a chance again.

Randall, Adam, and Roy solemnly nod their heads in agreement.

The young men provide us with what I interpret as a sharp, penetrating analysis into the structure of leadership opportunity as it intersects with their gendered schooling experiences. Their reflections on the significance of "first impressions," "immaturity," and "favorite crowds" were common threads pulled in and out of several of our discussions. Even the young women, in completely different focus groups and without prompting from me, raised reflections about the differences in which the males and females are treated. Diedra said:

> The girls are treated different than the boys in a lot of different areas, especially when it comes to the discipline aspect I think they are way harder on the boys then are for the girls. With the young women, it is most likely that we will get a lot more leeway. If a young woman doesn't have a beret when she comes to the door the sergeant will be more sympathetic to her than to a boy coming to the door without a beret. The guys will get into trouble if they don't shave, if they don't this or if they don't do that, they'll get nagged on a lot more if they don't meet a certain physical weight or height characteristics. I think it is a lot easier on us.

Maribel added:

> Yeah, but for the girls when it comes to rank and the leadership positions I think we have to work a lot harder to be in cadet staff or color guard because of the physical aspects of a lot of those positions. Like with the raiders I really commend those girls, 'cause they get up every morning and they run, train, work out with all the other boys, and all these other guys they were like some of fittest in the school and those young women worked it out and hung in there. The raider girls are stepping stone or set the example for the rest of us, that we can hang with the guys.

Khloe with an adamant tone jumped in:

> I can see what you're saying, but I see it more like how Diedra sees it. Let's be real, we are outperforming our male peers academically, which is where it matters most. Just look at how many of us are leaders! I'm not saying that we don't work hard for it, we do, but I feel like if a boy acts up just once, then they're held accountable for like the rest of their time here. I feel like that's not fair because they are trying to change, but they only think about how they were before. That's disrespectful.

The young women confirm that first impressions matter, which directly impacts the male students ability to plug into the leadership opportunity structure. Additional disaggregated survey data by gender supports how the adult school actors' perception of who is a leader matters. Figure 6 summarizes student perceptions of who influences them to be a leader.
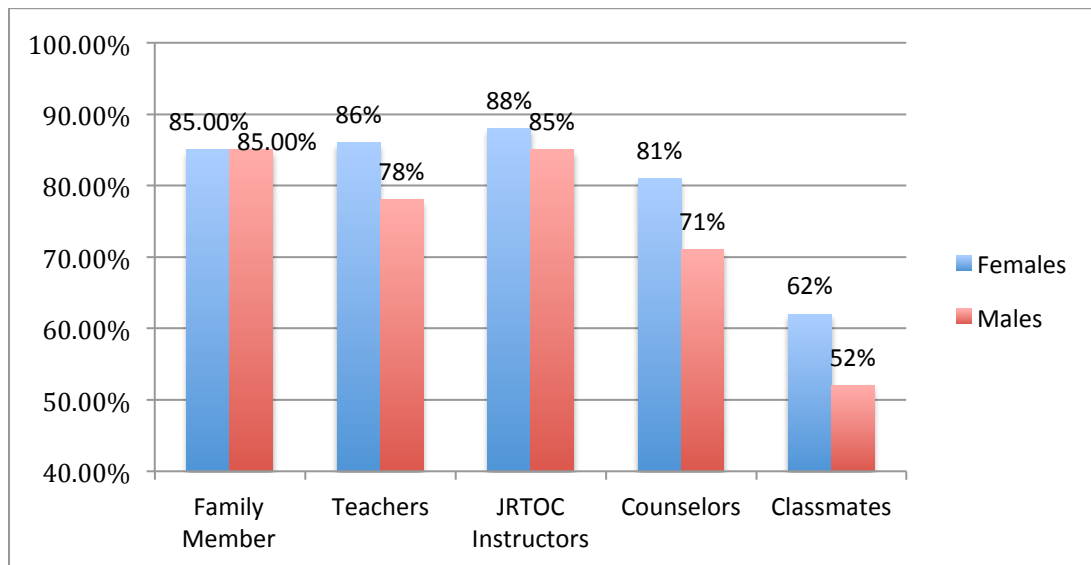

Figure 6: Student perceptions of influence

Although the students generally feel encouraged by several important people in their lives to take on leadership, it is worth noting that the young men feel less influence than the young women. When I interviewed the JROTC instructors, I gradually worked

up to asking them about the gender disparities with leadership that I was observing directly. One JROTC instructor put it this way:

> Well, we work with the kids on the enrichment activities like the sports teams and special military teams, because that's really a large part of JROTC. It is not just the curriculum that you have in the classroom. It is opportunities for the practical application of leadership skills. We do not run the JROTC, we are the coaches, the mentors, the facilitators and trainers. We will let them make mistakes, but we will not let them fail. I think that's one of the reasons that females do so well in JROTC because a lot of times young women display a higher level of maturity. I've also noticed that young women, in general, don't want to reveal that they are smart because it is related to the opposite sex and they want to have a social life but here we give them a chance to not worry about that; to actually be leaders and manage and learn about practical leadership skills and everywhere in the world JROTC females dominate the leadership. Everywhere.

Another JROTC instructor reflected on an experience he had to shed light on his views:

> I have to admit my biggest challenge, as far as I'm concerned with transitioning from active duty to retirement duty, was transitioning from working with adults to dealing with teenagers. There was this kid, probably about 15 years old. He was taller than I am and heavier, to me he looked like a grown man. But he was 15 years old. Acting like a kid, acting goofy, speaking out of line, speaking out of turn, really got on my nerves. I pulled him aside like I would have probably a Private and I basically almost ripped his head off verbally. Like I did in the active Army. This big kid all of a sudden starts crying, crying like you wouldn't believe. He just laid on the tears and I couldn't stop him. I thought, what's wrong with this kid. My children are grown. So, I almost forgot how to deal with teenagers, especially males. So at that time it was out in the hallway and when you go into jobs you don't get told everything. One of the teachers in the building came up to me and told me that this particular kid has learning disabilities. So, I said, why didn't somebody tell me? So, I felt for the kid in that I treated him in that manner. That was one thing I had to take into consideration with a lot of these kids, and being in area where poverty is prevalent, low-income families, they don't get the same financial stability that the suburban kids have and this kid was being raised by an aunt, no parents there. I felt horrible. I did some serious soul searching and I've adjusted because I realized, God I'm here to make a change in these kids lives. So to this day I think that I am doing something very constructive, something good for the community, and something good for myself.

A different JROTC instructor shared:

> This is a tough question. I appreciate you asking it though. [pause] So when I think about the young men I work with, I fear for them. I just want them to develop into a life where they can support themselves and feel good about the

contribution they make. My biggest fear is that I will pull into a gas station and one of my students will come up and ask me for spare change. I just want more for them. It's a tall order, our [JROTC] mission, for six people, because we are held accountable for taking these young people and helping them turn themselves into citizens of leadership with extraordinary characteristics. Ya know, several of them have started to really open up to me. Like [students' name] told me about what it was like growing up in the Taylor homes, the projects. His family was there when they were being torn down, not knowing where you're going, becoming homeless, that's rough. So he taught me what I need to learn more about so that's why you saw that we watched parts of the documentaries, "Tearing Down The Community" and "Dislocation" in my class so that we could look at the very issues several of our students are facing. I digress but I bring up this example up because often the young men when they're struggling they will not ask you, just out of pride or out of shyness, or just out of fear, because a lot of them look at us as giants sometimes. I hate to say it but they are just scared of us sometimes. You got to understand that we are the office that also carries out the discipline in this school. But we try to approach them and to give them as much guidance as we can, not do it for them, because sometimes I'll guide them through it but then they have to show me what they've learned. I have come to understand that follow up is key in this process of working with the students.

Much like the students, a parallel theme of "maturity" is reflected in some of the JROTC instructors' views on the gendered experience of leadership. However, the JROTC instructors also describe their own professional growth process. What I heard from the students is that they would also like to be given the chance to be respected for their growth trajectories. Given that the JROTC instructors good intentions to provide leadership education still produce unintended consequences indicates that giving youth more than one chance to develop and plug into their will to lead is significant. If not productively addressed, hidden messages about who is a leader and who is not will continue to push the young men to not trust the structure, thereby allowing the disparities in formal leadership opportunities to widen.

2.   Beyond the Formal Leadership Opportunity Structure

Although the formal leadership education and practice at Transformer PMA is the most apparent facet of the opportunity structure, semi-formal and informal leadership

development are also in operation. Semi-formal leadership, an area which this particular school context helped me define, is as area of leadership where formal and informal elements blur. The roles are clearly defined, but a formal process for acquiring such roles does not exist (e.g. no election or application process). Informal leadership is much more common in the literature and typically refers to roles that are less clearly defined and are unofficial in that elections are not held or applications solicited from students (Edwards, 1994). Taken together, offering students formal, semi-formal and informal leadership roles creates a comprehensive structure that gives students access to "numerous opportunities," as Diedra put it.

The Youth Leadership Survey data, as I indicated in my methodology chapter was adapted from the Youth Leadership Survey developed by the Girl Scouts of America, further supports the comprehensive access to leadership that the Transformer PMA leadership opportunity structure promotes. Figure 7 summarizes student participation in semiformal and informal leadership capacities.
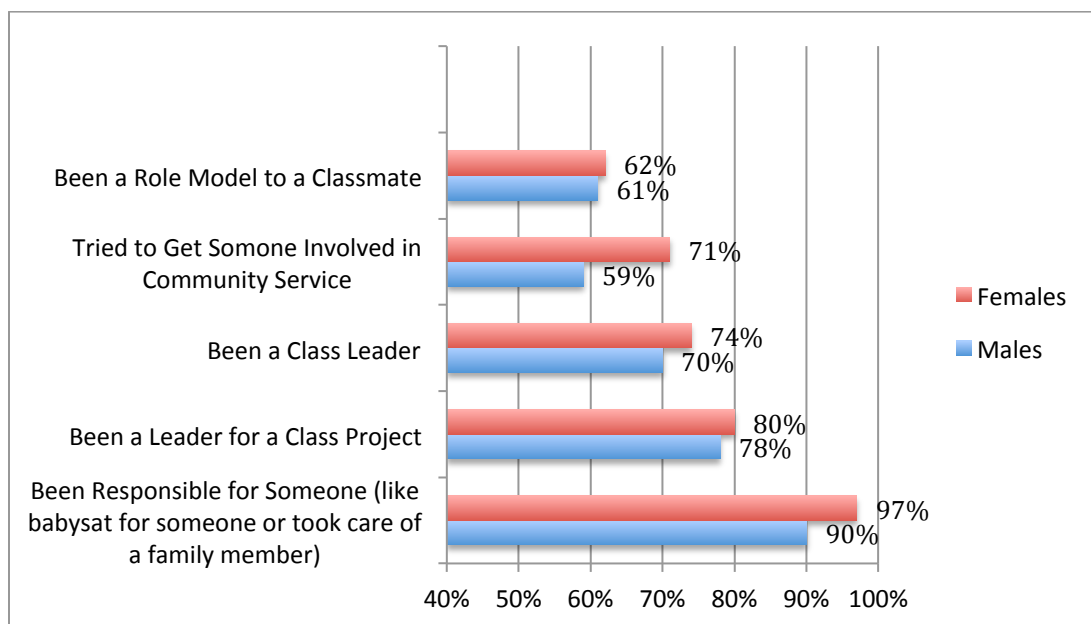

Figure 7: Student participation in semiformal and informal leadership roles

The three most relevant semi-formal leadership opportunities at Transformer PMA include being a class leader, being a leader for a class project, and being a part of a service-learning project. Whether in a core academic class period or an elective class period one thing you will notice about the classroom is that there is always a class leader. While this concept emerges out of the formal JROTC leadership structure and roles are clearly defined, the teachers of that class period decide the process in which those positions are acquired. The most typical process in the core academic classrooms consists of teacher defined characteristics such as attendance record, homework completion rate, number of merits, all of which determine who becomes class leader. The most typical process in the elective classroom such as in JROTC is to, as one JROTC instructor put it:

> Give everybody the opportunity to be a class leader. I give everybody an equal opportunity because you know I want them to feel the pressure that is on that other person, 'cause you might sit back and say, 'aw that's easy,' but sometimes it is not that easy and you are not going to know it is not that easy until you come up here and experience it. Once you come up here and experience the pressure that that person feels, then you can go back and you might have a little bit more respect and say, 'man I know I was up there so I know I'm not going to act the fool because this person is up there because I can know it wasn't that easy'. So, in my class I give everybody the opportunity to take charge of the class or to be leaders.

It was remarkable to see the young person who when called upon to be class leader tried to literally hide and crawl away into the back of the room to those who out right protest that they don't want to be leader then transform right before my eyes into a more confident or more engaged student through the class leader experience. The semi-formal leadership roles, in particular encourage the adult school actors to continue to strengthen, as one teacher put it, "the expectation that all students are to take on a leadership role here, whether it is in the classroom, in JROTC, in a core class, or in the

community. We want them to try it out." In fact, some of students found the service-learning component essential to being a leader in and out of school. Shanta explained, "We have learned in PMA JROTC that service learning is one of the most important aspects of school. We are encouraged to get out into the community and serve in the best way that we can." Because service-learning is most often organized through the JROTC classroom, there is semi-structure to the process however students are expected take the lead over each of their own projects.

In addition to the semi-formal leadership opportunities, informal leadership opportunities are abundant as well. Transformer PMA offers several sports teams and after school extra curricular clubs for the students to participate in. Within these programs, leadership roles exist but there is not expected structure to support the students' development. In other words, just because you're a team captain, doesn't mean that you are getting formal training in how to support what you do in that role. Having said that, it was in the informal area of leadership where civilian teachers and students engaged in movements toward social justice. For example, it was common to see the students who were participating in these activities to discuss the work of justice leaders. For instance, Diedra related Gandhi to her own views on leadership, when she said, "Gandhi once said, 'You must be the change you want to see in the world.' This is why I try to lead by example. Everything that you believe in and preach about should be lived out through your actions and deeds." The informal leadership area reveals the importance of giving youth the chance to explore leadership for their own sense of purpose in the now as these current experiences can shape how young people become a political force in their own right. One Transformer PMA anecdote serves as an illustrative example

250 students carrying books, band instruments, and sports equipment ascended upon Daley Plaza to protest Chicago Public Schools proposed budget cuts. What method did they use to raise awareness? Studying, that's right, these students demonstrated their opposition to increasing classroom size, firing educators and the elimination of extra-curricular activities by doing a public "study in" after school (Malone, 2010). The active students who largely represent the college preparatory selective enrollment high schools in Chicago wanted to let Springfield legislators know that CPS students care about their education and that they have the ability to display civic engagement by engaging in non-violent, responsible methods of creating social change. Among the students were a handful of Public Military Academy students who in their uniforms sat down to read F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby."

Within days of the study in, Kayla started a conversation with Christina, a faculty member and invited me to join in. Kayla in an exhausted, relieved voice announces, "I just got done with all of this testing." It looks like her head is spinning. "I wrote the whole essay too. They had us respond to the question: Should public school officials eliminate electives? "And," she pauses as we anticipate her response, "I said no." She smiles big.

Christina asks, "Oh yeah, how about reducing class size?" Kayla eyes shift up as she thinks for a second, "No they didn't ask that question, but they could have and if they did I would have argued to keep the class sizes small. With enthusiasm, she blurts out, "Oh did I tell you that I got an email about the upcoming rally?" Christina with care and concern responds, "No you didn't. Who sent you the email?"

Kayla pulls out her phone and scrolling in her email and said:

Well at the rally this woman came up to us and talked to us about who we are and why we are there. She then asked for our emails so that she could keep us informed about the next steps. It's so cool because she works with a large coalition where youth work with their parents to address these issues. She asked if we could try to mobilize more students for the next rally. It's coming up too. Um, here it is.

Christina says, "Good, there is no school that day. You should try to bring 5 more people." Kayla shares the email with Christine and me. We learn that it is from the Raise Your Hand coalition, "a growing coalition of parents and concerned citizens who advocate at the state and local level to improve education in Chicago and Illinois." The coalition's mission is "to improve the quality of public education in our schools, improve funding, and give parents a voice in the policies that affect children's education" (Raise Your Hand http://ilraiseyourhand.org/content/what-are-we-who-are-we).

Kayla is glowing, "I hope to bring more than that. I was thinking of making a flier to post up around the school." Christina says, "Here look at this. Hands phone to Kayla. A flier for the rally is in the email. Kayla responds, " Cool. I can just use that. Should I print it up and then just ask Principal Montri to sign it so I can post it?" Christina confirms, "Yep, you should do that." She explains to me that the new policy this year is that the principal is to approve all posters for the hallway. Kayla bounces away lightly saying, "I am going to go print this up now."

While she is printing, I ask, "Were you one of the students that went to the study sit in?" She proudly says, "Yeah, me and 4 other students." "How did you find out about it?" I inquire. Kayla tells me, "Well, I heard a kid in my class talking about the budget cuts and I started to really get into it. Yeah, I don't know but I just really got into it." She is all fired up. "It's not right to increase our class sizes. It's already hard as it is, this will

only make it harder for us to learn. Some of our teachers also talk about these issues and we have been discussing them among ourselves."

I pose the question, "So did you get any additional support from teachers on taking this action?" Immediately and firmly she says, "No, it was all student initiated, from the ground up. A student here heard about the rally on Facebook and then he told me about it just the day before and I decided to go. I thought it was really important and so I went. We could have had more people but we just found out about it in time for the five of us to go." I thanked her for chatting with me, and as I was packing up I observed her inviting nearby students to the upcoming rally. From the outside looking in Transformer PMA is known as a military-themed high school, but once on the inside, it becomes apparent that this school also supports the work of a sizeable group of ordinary people committed to carrying out extraordinary acts in the name of social justice.

F.   **Summary Reflections**

The evidence indicates that Transformer PMA offers numerous ways for young people to use the JROTC leadership structure to gain access to opportunities that enable them to cultivate and carry out their will to lead. Many antiwar activists and peace scholars would likely object to the idea of placing youth in military uniforms and calling its leadership training an opportunity. While concerns about students developing an overly appreciative view of military leadership culture are warranted, it is equally valid to consider the students' ability to transform a seemingly oppressive space into an environment where they can develop their own sense of leadership agency.

Granted, the Transformer PMA high school students' experiences and constructions of their sense of agency are influenced not only by the military culture of

the school but also by tensions between societal inequity and the movement to eradicate injustice. Transformer PMA youth who are learning to lead within the military model of education often negotiate the benefits and limitations of such experience. Their particular opportunity frame of reference is significant to understanding the complexity of this case. What may not seem like an opportunity to the antiwar activists and scholars has the potential to shift once viewed through the lens of the largely marginalized students who are living within an inequitable educational system.

VI. Conclusion

In Chicago as in large urban centers nationwide, public high schools as well as charter schools are experimenting with different approaches to college preparation. Offering youth leadership development opportunities is one such promising approach intended to improve the academic and social readiness of low-income students of color. The recent addition of Public Military Academies (PMAs) to the educational reform landscape suggests that this school model is intended to respond to the immediate need for city school systems to provide greater opportunities for academic and social success for lower-income Black and Latino/a students. Chicago-PMAs, in particular, fit the "turnaround" school reform philosophy that is scaling up from local reforms to federal educational policy making (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007). Chicago is taking the lead in this experiment, as it is host to just over a third of all the military-themed public high schools in the nation.

Chicago Public Schools' former CEO Arnie Duncan, a proponent of this educational reform model who now serves as Secretary of Education, is one of several policy leaders who explicitly connect the "achievement gap" and "failing schools" concepts. While it seems only sensible to provide new models of schooling that will provide affirming academic and social experiences for the lower income Black and Latino/a high school students who are least successful in existing schools, the fact that these opportunities are directly linked to the military model of education through a partnership between a large inner city public school district and the Department of Defense (DOD) complicates this new model of schooling.

The current political economic context of war and recession, juxtaposed with a public school system that is perceived as failing to educate its students for economic and political citizenship, situates the development of the Public Military Academies within a polarized debate. Opponents to this model are concerned that these schools function as vehicles for the militarization as well as recruitment of low-income students of color (Berlowitz and Long, 2003; EnLoe, 2000; Lipman, 2004; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995; Perez, 2006), while proponents insist that it embodies an equity agenda, as the military is perceived as an avenue for social mobility (Hajjar, 2005; Laurence and Ramsberger, 1991; Moskos and Butler, 1996). Still others contemplate the complex contradictions of the opportunity by considering the military's commitment to black achievement (Moskos & Butler, 1996) and egalitarian racial and gender roles or lack thereof (Clark Hine, 1982; EnLoe, 2000; Perez, 2006). In the context of this debate, the purpose of my dissertation research is to:

- Provide empirical research on an emerging school reform model that has been largely scrutinized only theoretically by both proponents and opponents of the public military model of education, and
- In an effort to encourage new modes of thought and enactment, complicate the assessment of the relative contribution of the public military academies by studying the meaning of opportunity from the perspective of those most affected, i.e. the school-aged youth who are provided and denied a wide range of educational opportunities.

Specifically, my dissertation focuses on understanding how youth make sense of their educational experience at one Chicago PMA case under study (Transformer PMA), their perceptions of the opportunities available to them, and how they view issues of race and gender as these constructs intersect with their experiences of learning and developing within Transformer PMA. The following questions guided my inquiry:

1. What meaning do low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity while attending a Chicago Public Military Academy (Chicago PMA)? What perceptions of their current and future opportunities do low-income students of color express in a Chicago PMA? How do these perceptions vary with race, ethnicity and gender?
2. How does this Chicago PMA's approach to leadership education and experiences for low-income and minority youth shape their sense of opportunity?
3. In what ways do students experience these leadership activities as relevant to their current and future aspirations? How do these experiences vary with race, ethnicity and gender?
4. How do students' race and gender affect their participation in the PMA and their experiences in Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) youth leadership programming in particular?
5. To what extent, and how, do the findings from questions 1-4 help assess the contributions of PMAs to Chicago School Reform?

Political ideologies and economic context acknowledged, the Chicago PMA educational reform model, while appearing repressive to many, suggests practices that appear to reduce historically stubborn educational disparities. The historical record indicates that the military has in the past created a platform for equity models, albeit paradoxically, because providing equitable opportunity to participate in an organization committed to deadly combat is at best a mixed achievement. Similarly, the Transformer PMA students with whom I had the honor to work with throughout my dissertation research shared how beneficial outcomes can, and often do, come with limitations. The Transformer PMA students' experience of learning and developing in this context helped me understand how things that are more complicated than they may first appear. An in-depth look into one Chicago PMA illuminates how high school aged youth utilize complex *opportunity frames of youth reference* to negotiate the benefits and limitations of this school reform model.

A.   <u>Opportunity Frames of Youth Reference</u>

Conventional wisdom has it that any opportunity is beneficial to the advancement of the individual and, in turn society. Take for example the cliché, "When opportunity knocks, answer the door." This quotation frames opportunity in overly simple terms. While it might first appear that Transformer PMA encourages conventionally simplistic meanings of opportunity among its student body, the evidence suggests that's not always so.

In addressing the meaning low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity while attending Transformer PMA, generally speaking and in spite of students' different racial, ethnic, and gender identities, the students in this study defined the notion of opportunity in a largely optimistic manner related to the actions that either they needed to take or the school needed to provide for them to achieve their aspirations. College preparation and leadership development are two dimensions of a wider opportunity structure that the students believe supported their ability to achieve their current and future goals.

Indeed, the students often linked their sense making of opportunity to that of their desired educational outcomes, as the strong majority reported that they thought earning a college degree was the way to not just "make it" in life, but to rather ensure that they will have "made it" in life. The students explained the distinction between making it and having made it, as the former means that you "got some quick money in your pocket, usually from the hustle," whereas the latter reflects more long-term financial stability, as Roy put it, "to have a salary, a 401K, and when my family or I go to the doctor, the bill is already taken care of." Conventional ideas about opportunity resonate in the students'

belief that college is the pathway to opportunity, and in fact these ideas influences how several students thought about opportunity while attending Transformer PMA. However, a closer look at the students' experiences reveals that their ideas are more complicated and contextually situated than they might first appear.

In order to capture the contextual nature of how low-income students of color attending Transformer PMA construct the notion of opportunity, I am using the term *opportunity frames of youth reference*. I introduced the term in the theoretical framework because if we are to understand youth, we have to unpack the developmental, structural, and agentic conditions of their reality from their frame of reference. To develop a theory of opportunity frames of youth reference implies that understanding the value young people place on experiencing opportunity is not only contextually bound, but also developmentally situated or often constrained. Moreover, I drew on the term "youth reference" found in Australia and the United Kingdom used to name formal youth groups who discuss key issues that affect young people and use leadership development to exchange ideas about how to raise awareness about youth rights. This emerging framework suggests that youth are consulted or referred to when creating programs intended to grant them greater opportunity because it is essential to ensure that the concept of opportunity is something created to support freedom and human development rather than allowing it to become an experience of imposition and constraint. In the following, I attend to four overarching dimensions that play a role in how the Transformer PMA students give meaning to opportunity.

1.   **<u>Risk, Effort, and Circumstance</u>**

The students in this study already know that some opportunities come with risks. If we are to understand how youth make sense of opportunity, we must consider that risk, effort, and circumstance all play a role. During the last round of focus groups, I directly asked the students to define opportunity. Several students highlighted how risk often comes with seeking out and taking on opportunities. Adam solemnly admitted:

> I'm in this weird point in my life. I have a stable, well-paying job right now. I can make enough money to make a living and upon graduation I would have the opportunity to move out of my mom's house, you know to be on track to adulthood. But I also have a partial scholarship to a well-respected four-year university, which my mom and teachers want me to take advantage of. I'm worried about giving up my job here, because its not like you automatically get a job right of a college anymore. College is a huge risk. I'm scared to pay a fortune for a worthless degree.

Although Nikki did not link risk with college, she also described opportunity as a risk, but she used the word, "chance" and as example of how "opportunity can come in the positive and in the negative." She gave the example of someone smoking and offering it to her: "You could say that's an opportunity to try something you haven't before. I just think that it then becomes how people choose to decide what is a good or bad opportunity."

Randall described opportunity without being explicit about risk, as he described it as a "situation that gives you a chance to do something." He added, "The thing for me is that I want to be better about taking advantage of every opportunity. I haven't always done that in the past because I wasn't sure how it would turn out." The risk/opportunity frame of reference is informed by the students' realization that opportunity creates uncertainty. Whether or not they truly have the freedom to choose the opportunity that

they most value is questionable. This is especially true when considering the classed and racialized nature of the neoliberal context of choice, which inevitably constrains the freedom these students have to choose avenues of opportunity most freely. In part, Adam has reservations about the attending college, because the message from those who influence him most as well as from society at large is that college is the main pathway to increased opportunity. However, Adam's fear about paying "a fortune for a worthless degree" is warranted when he is well aware that the contemporary U.S. economy has proved quite ruthless for recent college graduates. Moreover, Adam's risk of opportunity frame of reference intensifies, because he knows that the decision to attend college and the outcomes resulting of it are his decisions to make and if he doesn't make the right ones, he is left to absorb all the blame.

Deidra notices not so much risk nor uncertainty, but the importance of effort in opportunity. Though she took her time to formulate her thoughts, after awhile she concluded:

> I guess it depends on the person and where you want to go. To me opportunity is taking full advantage of every single program, like stepping above and beyond boundaries when it comes to academics, because you will get noticed by the teachers as a good candidate for this program or that. Then that's when you start to have opportunities to go above and beyond and succeed at your own standards. On a personal note, I've had a lot of open doors because of the effort that I put into my education and how much time I've invested in it.

Adam's experience, along with Nikki's, Randall's and Deidra's comments about "how people choose," "I want to be better about taking advantage of every opportunity" and "I've had a lot of open doors because of the effort that I put in," reveal how opportunity and individual effort are closely connected in the students' minds.

Throughout the study, I encountered several students who viewed opportunity based on individual *effort* and one's willingness to execute decision-making that enables them to take advantage of the opportunity structure (Roemer, 1998). The effort/opportunity frame of reference makes sense considering that the restructuring of the U.S. political economy has resulted in a process of "urban polarization" where patterns of solidarity and cohesion have been replaced by uncertainty and weak cohesion (Bryne, 1999). One implication of urban polarization for these young people is that they then strongly view opportunity through a lens of individual choice driven by the larger neoliberal context of a society being driven by self-interest.

However, contradictions emerged when some students shared how they understand how race and racism complicate views of opportunity based on effort. These students did get the others to listen and reflect on what I characterize as an opportunity frame of reference based on *circumstance* or the structural factors that are out of the person's control and therefore, not something for which individuals should be held responsible (e.g. race, gender, class, or family background) (Roemer, 1998). In investigating the meaning low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity while attending Transformer PMA it becomes clear that risk, effort, and circumstance are central to understanding how youth construct the meaning of opportunity in complex ways. An awareness of how educational opportunities are linked to the relationship between poverty, race, and place and the tension between opportunities based on circumstance or effort is central to this particular opportunity frame of youth reference.

2. **Possible Selves**

Investigating Transformer PMA students' perceptions of their current and future

opportunities, the students connected the future aspirations they had prior to attending Transformer PMA with that of the benefits as well as limitations of participating in JROTC all four years of high school. Several students' desire to seek a service-type career path revealed a tension between navigating the Transformer PMA opportunity structure from both individualistic and collective standpoints. Because several want to beat the odds against them, as several put it, "I just don't want to become another statistic, I want to be somebody in my life," a duality in the degree of agency these students have over the direction they take in their lives became apparent.

On the one hand and as stated above, several students recognize that there are risks associated with seeking opportunity when geographical and economic constraints of opportunity create circumstances that have led their generation to be seen as a mere set of "at-risk" statistics. However, on the other hand, their understanding of opportunity indicates that they feel strongly about taking responsibility for "not becoming another statistic" and that their responsibility emerges from the kind of decisions they must make about how they engage with opportunity structures. The students learned that they also have a role to play in using the structure to their benefit, as Deron reminded us how important is it to "seize the moment." And, as Roy pointedly put it, "By being stereotyped, it pushes us even harder to prove those stereotypes wrong. Let's be real, we are statistics, but it is up to us whether we make it a positive or negative statistic. When you come from a lower economic environment, we got to strive harder to prove people wrong."

Despite the individualistic notions of effort, their commitment to seeking out careers in public service also suggests that they see themselves becoming a group of

young adults who can use their access to pass on their commitment to increasing opportunity as a collective right to future generations. It is in this regard that these students' views on opportunity illuminate how their sense of their possible selves aligns well with the JROTC goal of motivating young people to become better citizens with that of their collective resistance to the often stereotypically oppressive views of inner city youth who are labeled "at-risk".

While developmental psychologists' theories of identity integration have long been identified as the most critical aspect of youth development, more recent qualitative studies in psychology suggest new ways of thinking about this stage of development (Deutsch, 2008; Way, 1998). In particular, I suggest that "proving people wrong" is arguably an important developmental task for young people who have been historically and stereotypically labeled "at-risk". Traditional thinking about identity integration claims that during the early stages of adolescent development, "increased cognitive abilities and expanded social worlds allow for both a more abstract construction of self and the consideration of a greater number of social roles and relationships" (Deutsch, 2008, p. 6). When young people's exposure to numerous social roles increase, they are inclined to imagine their possible selves or who they will become, as well as try on multiple selves in the now in order to grapple with who they are now. Through the identity integration process youth become aware of the "contradictions between the self-attributes they display across various social roles" (Deutsch, 2008, p. 6). It is expected that over time youth will merge these discrepancies, thereby developing a stable self-concept that allows them to continue to try on new ways of being without losing sight of who they know themselves to be in their day-to-day stability of self-identity.

Within the traditional line of thinking, developmental psychologists argued that if this merger does not take place, then these contradictions remain harmful and unsettling, which has negative implications for healthy development into adulthood. Erik Erikson, prominent identity theorist, defined this problematic point in development as identity diffusion (or confusion). New thinking on this phase of development indicates that the consideration of "positive and negative possible selves can be a positive motivating factor" (Deutsch, 2008, p. 6).

When applied to the students' who participated in my study, this framework suggests that wanting to achieve their aspirations is not enough. Rather it is necessary or at least useful for these students to also entertain images of who they would be if they did not achieve their goals. Diedra, for example, conceptualized her other negative possible self in comparison to what she has seen in others, "Once they leave high school, a majority of them [pause] like I don't want to say this, but like they're on crack." This image of the young adult on crack may be partly what motivates students like Diedra to work hard to achieve their goals. Moreover, the JROTC curriculum provides her and other students like her with skills and strategies (e.g. goal setting, conflict resolution, drug and health education programming; just to name a few) that help her navigate her life course (Elder, 1974) in ways that supports the development of the possible selves that she hopes to become. Additionally, the civilian teachers provide additional support through the numerous opportunities for after-school enrichment that support the positive development of these young people. Therefore, it is beneficial for youth to integrate their identities toward representations of both positive and negative possible selves and to have adult allies who support them in their navigation.

In a sophisticated fashion, Transformer PMA students have incorporated the

JROTC philosophy into how they want to be now. As one student put it, "I want to prove

people wrong" in order to help them achieve their aspirations in ways that collectively

redefines what it means to be a low-income young person of color navigating opportunity

structures in the context of the inner city. Although "proving people wrong" is arguably a

necessary developmental task for young people, my investigations of how the meaning of

opportunity vary with race, ethnicity, and gender indicates that this opportunity frame of

youth reference is further complicated as soon as gender, race and school discipline is

considered.

While several students believed that intensifying the military discipline of the

school would help increase the academic rigor that they deem necessary to be successful

in college, several others questioned their peers' premise. Those students who disagreed

with their were most conscious of how most students thought that the young black men

had it hard at Transformer PMA. For example, Deron bluntly described his experience

with racism as "something going on behind the scenes." He struggled with negotiating

the level of control and conformity that is often expected of students like him.

When Deron swiftly stated, "They trickin' you with what they expectin' you to

believe," his statement challenges G.S. Hall's (1904) social construction of adolescence,

which was laden with white middle class values. While youth studies scholars have since

determined that crisis conception of adolescence is not based on an empirical assessment

of the ways in which young people behaved (Comacchio, 2006; Cote and Allahar, 2006),

Hall's theorized norm of conformity influences several educational and youth programs

(e.g. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA) that attempt to address "undesirable" youth

behavior. Just as some students struggled with conformity, others bought into the structure because they believed that it allowed them to accomplish "big things."

The students' buy-in to the structure was further complicated when they unearthed examples of the discipline disparities that exist between black students and their peers. Although these disparities are not unique to Transformer PMA, they are nonetheless problematic for advancing as a school. The young women shared how they noticed that those who did not conform to the military code (such as the young women who wore large hoop earrings, did their nails, and colored their hair) were often their black female peers. As a result, the young women told me that black females were disciplined more often than other female students.

The young men had similar concerns to express. When Deron said, "Its kinda like how, ya know for the everyday black man, you gotta transition from being at home to other places," he is speaking to the difficulty of living with what W.E.B. Dubois (1903) termed a double consciousness. Within this context, developing possible selves out of "proving people wrong" could prove problematic for many youth of color, as theoretically speaking they're perpetually in a crisis of identity integration, because they have to code switch between black cultural norms and the white middle class norms often found in schools if they are to become successful. The fact that all the other young black men in the room could "feel" what Deron was saying indicates how discipline, structure and conformity as it is linked to racism presents several challenges with using the military model of education to strengthen opportunity structures for youth. In investigating the students' perceptions of their current and future opportunities, another dimension of the meaning low-income students of color give to the notion of opportunity

emerged. How students imagine their possible selves is essential to understanding how youth construct the meaning of opportunity in complex ways.

3. <u>Militarized-Belonging</u>

In investigating how Transformer PMA's approach to leadership education and experience shape low-income minority students' sense of opportunity, the students often expressed the ways in which they believed the military leadership model enhanced their college-going opportunities. For instance, the students' use of the phrases, "We help each other be the best we can be", "Setting the example," and "We didn't give up and leave them behind," to describe the feeling of "belonging" at Transformer PMA reflects military philosophy, particularly the ideas found in *The Soldier's Creed*, which is posted in several of the JROTC classrooms. It is in this regard that these students' views support research that suggests military-education programs are modeled after the armed forces concept of "military group cohesion" or the expectation of achievement being defined by not only the success of individuals, but also by that of the whole group (Siebold, 2007, p. 286). In particular, military-education programs further define success as the illustration of one's ability to contribute to the greater good of the group and society at large (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010). The students' expression of Transformer PMA as one big family reflects a collective orientation to success that makes sense when considering that the US Cadet Command explicitly states that JROTC is intended for "youth seeking a sense of belonging" (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Funk, 2002; Perez, 2006).

The students' ideas about how they felt a sense of "belonging" at Transformer PMA were complicated by the support received from the military aspect of their

schooling experience as well as the importance they placed on a philosophical approach to collective success related to their understanding of how to succeed against all odds. In itself, "belonging" is a demonstrable human need; the potential problem is in belonging to what? From a developmental perspective, I interpreted these students' sense of resiliency through the lens of protective factors otherwise known as the "personal resources that help them [youth labeled "at-risk"] prevail over adversities" (Jenson & Fraser, 2011, p. 11). In this case, the Transformer PMA students saw each other as resources to help each other overcome together, as Shanta later put it, "When it comes to academic preparation, I feel really like I got my best experiences from like some of us [peers]."

Rather than attempting to disentangle whether it is the theory of "military group cohesion" or the theory of protective factors, as if they are a dichotomy, the student's perspectives and my observations in this school setting led me to see the power of connecting these theories to help explain how the social process of belonging shapes the students' sense of opportunity based on both effort or one's willingness to execute decision making that enables them to take advantage of the opportunity structure as well as circumstance or the structural factors that are out of the person's control and therefore, not to be held responsible for (e.g. race, gender, class, or family background) (Roemer, 1998). When youth sense that they belong they understand how they fit in their social surroundings, which in turn allows them to engage with a risky opportunity frame of reference. These students led me to understand the meaning they give to opportunity is associated with how they perceive and navigate risk *(remember risk, as I use it here, represents a situation, not a characteristic of a person).*

These students helped me understand how "military group cohesion" works well with students who already have a sense of protective factors that results from youth looking out for each other. The outcome of the social process of belonging means that youth can learn from risk-taking behavior and develop ways of rebounding successfully when risk decision-making does not go as planned (Tilleczek, 2011). The increased sense of belonging found at Transformer PMA resonates with the military culture of the school as well as the students' self-developed protective factors that support their ability to overcome the challenges that they face collectively.

The question then becomes just how much does this combination of military group cohesion and the students' developmental need to belong intersect to form hidden messages about a kind of militarized-belonging? Here I am referring to how the military can serve as "a secure base for the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative" (Werner & Smith, 1992, Tilleczek, 2011). In investigating how Transformer PMA's approach to leadership education and experience shape low-income minority students' sense of opportunity, I found that the young men and women appeared to receive the message of militarized "belonging" in different ways.

The young men expressed anxiety about what it will take to get into college and how to make it through college. While attending college is their first goal, their spoken uncertainty and concerns indicate how attending a college preparatory public military academy also makes the option of enlisting for military service a viable alternative. It is plausible from their accounts that their exposure to the military model of education prompted them to see service in the Armed Forces as a practical and worthwhile contingency plan.

Although the young women shared similar college-going goals with that of their male counterparts, they often spoke of their exposure to the military aspects of the school differently. The young women spoke of the respect they received from non-JROTC peers, parents, and other members of their community. In addition, it was the young women who were most vocally committed to wanting to make a difference in their communities and they most often made the connection between their experiences with the JROTC model of leadership and service learning as an avenue that prepared them toward this end.

Although it is clear that all of the students are militarized to different degrees while attending Transformer PMA, the young men were most often fixated on how their possible selves may intersect with the Armed Services as a back up plan to college. Conversely, the young women expressed a deeper appreciation of the military model in regards to who they are now and who they see themselves becoming. In particular, the young women credited JROTC with how they were building their sense of self-confidence, in which the evidence indicates that JROTC, in this particular case study, has the effect of reducing the disparity in confidence that Peggy Orenstein (1994) documents most often exists between young men and women.

While the militarization of youth attending Transformer PMA is apparent, in the end, the youth could also name it, describe it, and feel it. It is in this way that the power of militarization in the Public Military Academy context is weaker in comparison to how militarization operates in more elusive or less visible ways in other high school and social contexts. In a school with an overt military culture, these students were often conscious of the ways in which they could be, as Adam put it, "brain washed by the school."

The conversations that emerged with these students solidified for me how young people are more than capable of negotiating the simultaneous benefits and limitations of being involved in military themed youth programs. I interpreted the students' expression of their experiences within a framework of youth development that explains how trying on different possible selves helps them distinguish more clearly who they really are now and gives the insights into the person they want to become in the future. I felt further supported in my interpretation by such comments as Leon's:

> I don't think military is like my main place to really belong, because it feels like I really can't have the presence I would want in life while in the military. It has to be a certain type of authority whereas in the career world I want to choose the type of authority I'm going to be under. Like a prestigious professor who just thought of an interesting theory or like this, this motivation book I'm reading now. I don't mind having them as authority because I guess you learn from them, but I feel like in the military I can't learn to better myself because in the military I would be in this closed box and I won't be able to choose my own future or my own decisions I make.

Leon, like many Transformer PMA students, can easily articulate why the military is not "my main place to really belong" because he like the others has a relatively advanced (for a teen-ager) understanding of the benefits and limitations of the military structure of opportunity. Moreover, Leon demonstrates that, in general, he is aware of and feels he is able to explore alternative opportunity structures. While the students' agency captured at Transformer PMA is symptomatic of learning within that military structure, the interplay between structure and agency creates a situation where just as the structure shapes student thought and practices, the students also shape the structure.

It has long been theorized that structures consist of rules and resources (Giddens, 1979; Sewell, 1992). Knowledge of the rules and the material benefits of these rules can enable human agents to put their life work into innovative and creative efforts

that may ultimately transform the structure. However, this theory of agency presumes that human agents will put the knowledge of the structures toward resistance when more often human agency will find material comforts in maintaining the status quo, thereby demonstrating that humans may find agency within conformity and complicity. To this end, Transformer PMA students live a duality of agency in which at times they appear thoroughly to endorse the model and at other times, actively critique and/or enact resistance to the military model.

The students' general ability to make the model work to their benefit while also remaining aware of the limitations indicates that both conformity and resistance describes the students' relationship with structure and agency at Transformer PMA. The students' ability to unpack the hidden messages that come with attending a school that uses the military model of education used to support a college-going culture is impressive. In investigating how the Transformer PMA approach to leadership education and experiences for low-income students of color shapes their sense of opportunity, attending to the dimension of militarized belonging is significant to understanding how this structure largely plays, as described by the students, a beneficial role in shaping their sense of opportunity. Taking into consideration that less than 1% of the students from Transformer PMA enlisted in the military upon graduation in 2010 in comparison to the district enlistment average of 6% for neighborhood schools with Army JROTC programs and several have developed strong critiques of the military industrial complex while also appreciating and respecting those who find themselves in uniform suggests that these students have been able to exert more agency over the structure than it might first appear.

4.   **<u>Leadership Development</u>**

The majority of Transformer PMA students' report that learning to lead is largely beneficial in relation to what they hope to achieve in and beyond high school, which is important to recognizing how Transformer PMA students experience various leadership activities as relevant to their current and future aspirations. In addition, the great majority believed they are becoming better leaders as a result of attending Transformer PMA. When discussing their plans for after high school and how they feel they are being prepared to achieve their goals, several students commented on the role of JROTC, specifically the leadership component of the program, in pushing them to reach their potential. Leon put it this way, "JROTC, it intensifies our leadership and leadership is a central thing to have for college or a career because colleges don't want to just see that you are in a lot of extracurricular activities, but that you are taking on leadership roles in those extracurricular activities." Several students echoed Leon's views of the ways in which JROTC leadership development gives them the advantage over other students when applying to college—echoing as well the advice a middle class, Ivy-league aspiring parent could be expected to offer his or her child.

The majority of the students credited JROTC with providing them with experiences that "intensified my academic career," "sets me apart," "it helps you to set yourself aside from the others," and "it gives you that extra boost." Their views indicate that they feel JROTC strengthens their access to college by having an impressive resume. It is in this regard that the students' have learned that leadership development during and after school as well as within community service activities is one way to enhance their resume. In fact, research indicates that leadership development in high school is attractive to college

admission boards because their previous experiences leading indicate that the student is academically and socially ready for college life (Oesterreich, 2000). The idea is that leadership preparation in high school helps students manage the demands college presents--such as the difficult task of balancing college academics with other necessary experiences such as internships, community service, and part-time employment that often help college graduates look even more attractive to employers and/or graduate school admission boards. In addition, Freeman (1997) suggests that providing low-income students of color with leadership opportunities within extra curricular activities in high school is essential to ensuring their readiness for college because they "need a passion" to help them maintain the focus needed to achieve their post-secondary goals. The majority of students I interviewed and interacted with appear to value JROTC as an opportunity that is structured to help them achieve their current and future aspirations.

A noticeable feature of Transformer PMA's leadership opportunity structure is that the principal explicitly connects academic excellence to leadership. Turning Transformer PMA into a substantially student led enterprise indicates that this school is providing an abundant number of opportunities for students to learn about and practice leadership in formal capacities. The reality is that there are additional areas conducive to youth leadership development at Transformer PMA; areas that from the outside looking in, most would not recognize--that is, there are also a number of informal leadership opportunities as well as what I refer to as "semiformal" leadership opportunities embedded in the structure. Taken together, students have access to a fairly comprehensive leadership development opportunity structure at Transformer PMA.

Another noticeable feature of Transformer PMA's Leadership opportunity structure is that while it might first appear that the JROTC leadership strand operates under the sole influence of the chain of command theory of leadership, a closer look reveals that multiple theoretical perspectives on leadership are in operation throughout Transformer PMA. Much like other youth leadership development programs, theories of leadership that already exist in military, business and administrative adult contexts influence the leadership education and practice at Transformer PMA. As a result, trait approach theories, instrumental theories and shared leadership theories are most apparent in the formal and semi-formal areas of leadership.

First, the trait approach theory of leadership is central to the JROTC program at Transformer PMA because it is a key feature of the military model of leadership. Trait theorists of leadership such as Browne and Cohn (1958) and Stogdill (1974) emphasize character traits, goal attainment, effectiveness, style, and ability to manage. This body of knowledge is an example of many scholars' preoccupations with identifying the components that create leaders and then suggest ways to put them to task. Exposing the students to the Army Core Values through the formal JROTC curriculum and then putting those values into practice is a vivid example of trait approaches to leadership.

Second, instrumental theories of leadership offer knowledge of effective leadership strategies that are intended to produce organizational outcomes (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998, Gunter, 2001). The focus on outcomes makes instrumental theories popular in the Transformer PMA context. Two examples of instrumental leadership include transactional and transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership consists of transactions or exchanges between leader and the led (Holander, 1986; Bass, 1998). Leaders exchange promises of rewards or punishments to the led in exchange for the led to fulfill agreements with the leader. The Battalion Command at Transformer PMA relies on this model because skills associated with leadership i.e. public speaking, writing, delegating authority, leading meetings and making decisions are key. In the end, transactional leaders makes decisions based on their own ides and beliefs—even if everyone hasn't been heard—in order to move forward.

In contrast to transactional theory, transformational leadership focuses on relationships of power (Burns, 1982; Sergiovanni, 1990). The transformative leader considers how her/his leadership can help transform followers into leaders. The student led component of Transformer PMA is an example of how transformational leaders empowers other to become leaders themselves. Moreover, transformative leaders are characterized as charismatic, inspirational, intellectual, and supportive (Bass, 1998). Several students related the concept of leadership to the idea of "setting the example," which speaks to how the students who were leaders were expected to be transformative role models within the formal leadership opportunity structure.

Third, shared leadership theories inform the semi-formal leadership practices at Transformer PMA. The semi-formal leadership roles, in particular encourage the adult school actors to continue to strengthen, as one teacher put it, "the expectation that all students are to take on a leadership role here, whether it is in the classroom, in JROTC, in a core class, or in the community. We want them to try it out." This is largely

accomplished by creating a sense of community that supports student buy-in into the value of learning to lead at Transformer PMA.

When it comes to the informal leadership opportunities at Transformer PMA, critical theories of leadership are most evident, although issues of power an influence are part of the JRTOC formal leadership curriculum and arguably help lay a theoretical foundation for informal leadership roles in Transformer PMA. Several scholars suggest that a defining purpose of critical leadership is to expose the myths of leadership in order to free leaders and the led from oppressive leadership (Gunter, 2001; Rost, 1991; Sinclair, 2006; Smyth, 1989; Western, 2008). Critical leadership theorists are less concerned with describing what leadership is and more interested in revealing contradictions and critiquing leadership theory for the purpose of suggesting what leadership should or could look like in practice. Addressing the myths of leadership is key to this process because the mythological nature of leadership makes it a powerful and at the same time elusive concept.

The informal area of leadership at Transformer PMA explicitly challenges key myths of leadership. Within informal spaces students could challenge the myth that leadership is always a form of empowerment, especially as they shared the stress that comes with being a leader in a formal capacity. Critical leadership theorists critique the ways in which shared leadership, while intended to empower, often creates even greater work intensification for those who are not in formal leadership roles. Several students, no doubt, find agency in their roles as formal student leaders, but several others feel that this form of empowerment can come with the extra responsibility of carrying out tasks expected of adult administrative roles. The students found that informal leadership spaces

did not impose responsibility of them, but rather gave them a chance to play around with various ideas about leadership.

Moreover, the leadership opportunity in an informal manner influenced how students questioned the idea that leadership is a heroic performance by a visionary individual. In all reality, the leader as one hero is difficult to dislodge from our minds. Nonetheless, the students who were organizing around several larger CPS reform issues often drew upon collective, expressive forms of leadership.

a. <u>Limitations of the Leadership Opportunity Structure</u>

It appears that Transformer PMA provides a comprehensive approach to youth leadership development. However, it also became apparent that greater access to a comprehensive leadership opportunity structure does not necessarily promote equal parity in opportunity. In investigating how students' race and gender affect their participation in formal JROTC leadership roles, my observations confirmed that disparity in leadership opportunity was particularly noticeable and the students helped me understand plausible reasons for why this disparity exists.

The young men, in particular, provide us with what I interpret as a sharp, penetrating analysis into the structure of leadership opportunity as it intersects with their gendered schooling experiences. Their reflections on the significance of "first impressions", "immaturity", and "favorite crowds" were common threads pulled in and out of several of our discussions. Even the young women, in completely different focus groups and without prompting from me, raised reflections about the differences in which the males and females are treated.

The young men and women's voices in tandem with the views of facilitators of the formal leadership opportunity structure –that is, the JROTC instructors—led me to think about a tension between youth development and opportunity. The students expressed concern over their chances of turning their image around in the eyes of the adults who help decide who will become a leader. Even though these young men discussed how they matured, as Deron put it "over time you, you grow," they spoke of the injustice in how first impressions limits their chances. Although the young men realize that they are responsible for their actions, as Deron said, "you have to recognize and realize that you're here for one reason: to get your education, to become a better person, and better yourself," the young men also reveal that they want the adult school actors to recognize their developmental trajectories. They want to be held accountable for their immaturity and yet respected for their transition into increased maturity, an example of what Tilleczek (2011) frames as the kind of tensions that emerge between "being" and "becoming."

The fact that their developing level of maturity is something they feel is out of their control, but that over time they will get a handle on, makes me think about how this situation is also an example of opportunity theory in practice. It appears that the students' biological maturity is a "circumstance" that is largely out of their control until they can get a handle on it, which relates to how they are able to navigate their life course. As the students mature, they can demonstrate "efforts" that reflect their ability to participate with the Transformer PMA formal leadership opportunity structure. That the JROTC instructors' good intentions to provide access to leadership education and experience to all students still produce unintended consequences is problematic. In investigating the

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role leadership development plays in how students construct and experience opportunity, the adults "first impressions" of black males were difficult to shake off. The young men and women indicate that perceived maturity linked to underlying aspects of racism played a role in determining who was a leader. The students argued that it is unfair to hold them accountable for the rest of their time at school for being immature their first year in attendance and that giving youth more than one chance to develop and plug into their will to lead is significant. If not productively addressed, hidden messages about who is a leader and who is not will continue to push the young men to not trust the structure; thus, it will allow the disparities in formal leadership opportunities to widen.

In summarizing the leadership development opportunity frame of reference, it is important to note a few key theoretical insights that have implications for practice. A frequent critique of extracurricular activities (e.g. JROTC, Student Government, and Sport) has been that engaging youth in such activities tends to socialize them uncritically toward dominant social structures, thus serving goals of social integration and stability at least as much as serving the opportunity structure of the students. Leadership roles, like extracurricular activities, can serve as socializing functions. The fact that students did not express this critical perspective about leadership roles is perhaps an indicator that the socialization experience was working fairly well and that they were in fact buying into the opportunity structure of the dominant society. This however, makes them no different in that regard from privileged middle youth who are also buying into the opportunity structure of the dominant culture through extensive sports programs, student governance, and other opportunities for participation and leadership that help constitute socialization

into the "codes of power" that typically differentiate the privileged from the non-privileged in the wider culture.

To criticize these youth for using these routes of access to social mobility is to criticize them for taking advantage of opportunities for post-secondary success that are not available to the majority of their peers in non-selective Chicago public high schools. The critical theory perspective reminds us that at least one PMA provides opportunities for a very small number of students without challenging, but rather reinforcing, the dominant opportunity structure of inequality promoted by the re-framing of educational opportunity within neoliberal school reform contexts. In other words, this case points out that youth leadership opportunities are constrained by a school system that on the one hand, disinvests in the majority of inner city neighborhood schools and on the other, invests in a few new educational models that in many cases either have been proven ineffective or require further research.

B.   Implications for Further Theorizing

Without doubt the development of PMAs is symptomatic of a school system failing to serve its youth and their communities justly; in fact, the failure of existing urban schools is an essential part of the justification of PMAs. In addressing the extent to which the dimensions of risk, effort, circumstance in opportunity frames of youth reference and learning to develop possible selves and leadership within a structure of militarized belonging does shed light on the relative contribution of PMAs to school reform. In particular, PMAs alleviate the struggle for survival some youth experience while organizing for systemic, socially just reform is enacted. The young people attending PMAs, including the students who participated in my study, rely on this

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educational opportunity. Until a viable system-wide alternative takes hold, denying these PMA-based opportunities for high-school completion and subsequent post-secondary education to young people who continue to face disinvestment and oppression is an option that the evidence appears difficult to justify. At best, I invite theorizing on the following:

- *Opportunity Frames of Youth Reference* – Because opportunity is often related to the distribution of equality and inequality in society, the political and sociological theories of opportunity recognize that context matters when explaining how people value, access, interacts with, and experiences opportunity (Roemer, 1993/1998; Nussbaum & Sen, 2009; Souza Briggs, 2006). In this sense, the idea of contextualized opportunities is not all that new. Yet the dominant theories of opportunity obscure the contribution that youth make to understanding opportunity. Working to develop a theory of opportunity frames of youth reference implies that understanding the value young people place on experiencing opportunity is not only contextually bound, but also developmentally constrained. Moreover, this emerging framework suggests that youth are consulted or referred to when creating programs intended to grant them greater opportunity because it is essential to ensure that the concept of opportunity is something created to support freedom and human development rather than allowing it to become an experience of imposition and constraint.

- The tension between providing opportunities that are not counter-hegemonic with that of students and families valuing opportunities that reproduce

unintended inequality including the further entrenchment of racist, classist, and hegemonic structures in society. In this case, PMAs fill a temporary void in access to educational opportunity for those who are most affected by limited options. However, this access is limited by the promotion of militarized opportunities within communities of color. Disentangling the benefits and limitations of the structure of militarized opportunities is complex. All of which begs the question, at what point do these frames of reference become yet another excuse for the inequitable distribution of opportunity? Further analysis is needed to address how at times opportunity frames of youth reference may support the solidification of systemic oppression, while still valuing youths' frame of reference.

- The students views on how leadership opportunity is related to "first impressions', "maturity," and "favorite crowds" may advance leadership theories that explain the power of perceived physical attractiveness and appearance (Platzer, 2006; Rhode, 2010), which may also have implications on student performance adding yet another dimension to the opportunity gap found in educational systems.

C.   **Limitations and Implications for Future Research and Practice**

Although it is true that the evidence from this case supports the development of additional theorizing, testing those theories and additional quandaries through empirical study is also evident. It is important to note that I am not portraying the PMA being studied, Transformer PMA, as typical of other PMAs. As a single case, this PMA is likely to be similar to other PMAs in some respects, but dissimilar in other ways. Because

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the purpose of the case is to investigate student experiences in one PMA, I am not going

to make generalizations about PMAs. Nevertheless, this one study has implications for

both research and practice. For example, it invites studies of other PMAs to begin to

explore the variability of student experiences across these schools. And if there are

successful practices illustrated in this case that would assist other PMAs in achieving

their goals, then implications can be identified. The following is worth further

investigation:

- While the opportunity frames of youth reference has some explanatory power

  for this particular case, additional "extended case logic studies" (Small, 2009;

  Yin, 1994) of how youth make sense of opportunity in other PMAs as well as

  in other educational contexts of opportunity are needed in order to identify

  the commonality and variability of experience. In addition, a comparative

  longitudinal study would help us understand the relationship between

  graduating from a PMA and the student s' actual life outcomes in comparison

  to cohorts of cases with similar demographic descriptors.

- Evidence from this particular case suggests that this PMA provides its

  students numerous opportunities to learn about various leadership theories

  and develop their leadership skills. However, the formal capacity in which to

  do so, that is through the JROTC model of leadership, still largely upholds a

  privileged masculinity of leadership (Blackmore, 1999; Sinclair, 2004). This

  case study indicates that the leadership structure supported the development

  of young women's confidence, but additional research is needed on how such

  masculinized forms of leadership opportunity actually enable young women

to be and become. Similarly, the young men on occasion spoke of how this school was helping them become a man. I often missed opportunities to follow up with them on this in this study. Future research is needed to continue to work to understand young men's views on manhood.

Even though the implications for practice are somewhat limited, because this is just one case, various stakeholders can still learn from this particular case. State policy and district level leaders may consider the following:

- PMAs are not a structural reform solution, because the public military model of education appears to work best for the students who are already committed to achieving success in life. Contrary to common belief, the evidence presented suggests that at least this particular PMA is far from being a "reform school." In fact, one lesson here is that inequitable funding is an issue that state and district policy level leaders need to continue to address. Ultimately, what is stake here is providing the support structures needed for the healthy development of youth.

- Because policy makers often use problematic language such as the term "at-risk" to bring attention to the policy problem, the findings of this case study suggest that how we frame who is receiving social services needs to be reconsidered. In order to shift the location of risk from the individual level to the structural level, a few scholars have revealed the concept of youth living in risk situations or "students in at-risk situations" (Smink & Schargel, 2004). Although I find this new language promising because the focus is broadened to include the contexts in which youth develop, I wonder if this new label

will only shift the act of demonization onto that of the neighborhood in which youth are raised? I foresee this as problematic because policy makers and the American public can still place individual blame on the family more than on the structures of opportunity and oppression. The creation of urgency to support youth programs may better be served by using positive youth development frameworks to label youth who need support as "youth with resiliency." After all, theoretically resilience describes youth who experience adversity and need protective factors (e.g. excellent schools) to overcome it.

PMA Principals, JROTC Commandants and Instructors, and PMA Core-Academic Teachers may entertain the following:

- The JROTC model operating within the school in this study works in conjunction with several other models to address all the needs of high school aged youth. In this particular case, using JROTC to support a college going culture is essential to the culture of the school.

- Similarly, Transformer PMA succeeds in reducing the opportunity gap in part because the school is well led by a principal who knows how to turn the school itself into a learning organization. This principal builds the capacity of the teachers and leaders in order to support continuous improvement. This PMA principal takes seriously the need to support JROTC instructors in their ability to advance their knowledge of both college preparation and adolescent development.

- This case puts forth the evidence that many young people want opportunities to learn about and practice leadership within a comprehensive framework.

When planning programs and curriculum, principals and teachers may want to consider how they can embed leadership knowledge and practice into the students' educational experience. But putting these programs in place that support youth leadership development is not enough. Systemic inquiry, preferably through a collaborative action research framework, is needed to help the school identify the purpose and function of their youth leadership programming. In fact, it is the tension between the purpose and function of leadership that draws my deepest attention because it is most often left unquestioned. Leadership is taken for granted and often seen as the panacea to many of societies' social and economic ills. I agree that institutions and organizations need leadership because my experience in various contexts confirms it and leadership studies empirically justify it. However, the dominant guiding philosophy tends to rely on leaders perceived as heroes rather than a collective leadership that is responsible for and critical of the paradox of leadership. This paradox exists because a conflict emerges between what leadership theory purports to do with what leadership in practice actually does. Though some concede that leadership can contribute to liberation and self-empowerment, others still insist that it can also create subservience. I believe that leadership can contribute to how some are empowered and privileged and others are devalued and marginalized simultaneously. This raises serious questions concerning who is perceived as able to provide leadership or more often serve as a leader. In what ways, do these leadership opportunities empower and marginalize youth

simultaneously? This case further prompts us to reflect on important questions such as: What is the purpose of youth leadership development?, Who gets to decide that purpose?, and Why do some youth get a militarized model of leadership, when for other youth there are alternative models? While leadership opportunities can provide more creative and challenging ways for young people to express their developing sense of autonomy and beliefs about justice, the promise youth leadership development offers is dependent upon the theories undergirding the leadership programming as well as how those theories are put into practice. It seems most beneficial for youth leadership programs to incorporate education that is multi-theoretical and multi-perspectival because leadership practice is complex and situational.

- And, specifically for the JROTC Commandants and JROTC instructors: In part, the students' success at Transformer PMA resulted from the JROTC instructors' willingness to go above and beyond their call of duty in this high school. Just teaching the JRTOC curriculum is not enough to contribute to a school's ability to continuously improve.

Students, parents, and community members may consider the following:

- This particular PMA demonstrates that it can offer opportunities that support the students' ability to achieve their aspirations. Moreover, this PMA also demonstrates that developing an appreciation of the military among its student body often deterred the students from wanting to enlist because they had a deeper awareness of what it means to serve in the Armed Forces.

- Success at a PMA largely depends on the commitment students and families make to the model. As with any potential opportunity, individual effort and circumstance ebb and flow. The most successful students at Transformer PMA were the ones who looked out for each other and used the JROTC model to enhance their access to educational opportunities such as summer college preparation programs.

- PMAs remain as sites of contention because these schools are perceived as places of military recruitment, although this particular school registers a less than enlistment rate upon graduation (This type of data is not made public by Chicago PMAs, I obtained this data point through interviews with the Transformer PMA students, interviews and documentation provided by the post-secondary department faculty and school administration, and my observation of the 2010 graduation ceremony. It may be in Chicago PMAs best interests to disseminate these data publicly.). Using evidence-based research to inform the debate is useful. An in-depth look into one Chicago PMA offers the advantage of understanding the complexities of the benefits and limitations from those who experienced it, which can enhance one's argument for a more socially just school system.

D.   **Final Conclusion**

Evidence suggests that the students' perceive their experience with the Transformer PMA opportunity structure as largely beneficial in relation to what they hope to achieve in life, especially considering that attending a Chicago PMA requires no obligation to enlist. An in-depth look into one Chicago PMA illuminates how high school

aged youth in fact utilize complex opportunity frames of youth reference to negotiate the benefits and limitations of such school reform model within a political and economic context that is constrains their freedom to choose opportunity freely. The Chicago PMA educational reform model, while appearing repressive to many, suggests practices that in fact reduce historically stubborn educational disparities. Whether we like it or not history indicates that the military creates a platform for equity models, albeit paradoxically, because it never comes without strings attached—the military requires a contractual commitment to service. Similarly, Transformer PMA students shared how beneficial outcomes can, and often come with limitations. The college preparation and leadership opportunity structure led many students to question the value and effectiveness of the structure, for these students' resiliency is interconnected with a more inclusive, community-focused approach to success that is often negated by the more competitive, individualistic framing of opportunity, which has implications for further theorizing, research, and practice.

Student Focus Group Protocols

Student Focus Group Interview Instrument Round #1

Date:
Time:
Participant(s): Student Focus Group A, B, C and D (convening in separate groups)
Interviewer: Heather L. Horsley
Transcriber: Heather L. Horsley

Introduction: "Hello and thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is Heather Horsley and I am a PhD Candidate from the University of Illinois at Chicago. I am conducting a study of your school's college and career preparation services. At this point, you may be wondering what are we going to do exactly. Well I am going to ask you some questions about what you think because you all are the experts on what goes on in your lives. This is the first of four group interviews and as we proceed I will be checking in with you about the ideas we have covered in our meetings. The check in points will give you an opportunity to reflect on what you said and to make sure that I have recorded your ideas accurately. Today our meeting will last one class period. I will ask questions and all of you can respond freely. It is completely your choice to be here so if you do not want to respond to a question you do not have to do so—you can skip it or let someone else respond. I am recording our group interview so that your ideas are recorded in the way you actually talked about them. You can always ask to have the tape recorded turned off if you would like to discuss something that you do not want recorded. By the way, your identity will be kept confidential at all times. In other words, I am not going to ever say that so and so said this in the interview to another person. I will use more general descriptions such as one student said, "x, y and z." When we are finished with all of our group interviews, I will write a report that summarizes what you have told me that will suggest how your administration and teachers can best provide you with the opportunities you need to achieve your current and future goals. Thank you for your participation."

General Question #1	Detail Probes	Clarification or Elaboration
Let's begin with discussing how you came to attend this school. Overwhelmingly, students reported that this school was not the only high school that they got into so Why did you, personally decide to attend your school? Why do you think students, in general, want to attend your school?	How did you come to make this decision? (transportation –how far and how long?) Tell me what did you consider as you made this decision. (Academic reputation, recruitment, extra-currs., sports, safety (Fr/So. 55-65% Yes; Jr./Sr. 50% no on safety –do students feel safe at this school? what is done here that makes you feel safe? how has the safety of the school changed?), people) Fr/So – Majority said that participation in JROTC all four years was a factor that influenced their decision. Why do you think students responded this way? Roughly 60-70% of all students reported that their parents encouraged them to attend this school whereas their teachers and guidance counselors did not (just the opposite). Why do you think parents want their children to attend this school? Have your expectations matched up with what you are now experiencing? Is going here what you expected?	If you read in the paper that a CPS school administrator states, "Students need choice and we believe that students have a choice in which school they attend." How would you respond? Do you think that you benefited from being able to choose which school to attend? Do you think there are some downsides or limitations to having to make these decisions? You said X, can you provide an example or tell a bit of a story about it? How did you become aware of these factors? What does that look like?

APPENDIX A (Continued)

Student Focus Group Interview Instrument Round #2
Date:
Time:
Participant(s): Student Focus Group A, B, C and D (convening in separate groups)
Interviewer: Heather L. Horsley
Transcriber: Heather L. Horsley

General Questions #2	Detail Probes	Clarification or Elaboration

Think about how valuable school is for what you want to do in life.
 	
If you attended a school where everything about the environment prepared you to meet all of your academic and career goals, what would it be like?
	Now think about your own school experience.
	
	What are your expectations for yourself?
	
	What are your teachers' expectations for you? Do they HAVE any expectations for you?
	
	What are your parent or parents' expectations for you?
	
	What are your friends' expectations for you? What do they do to help you meet your goals? How do students treat each other?
	
	What kind of school activities do you think will make the most difference in your ability to achieve your future goals?
	
	Is school challenging for you? In what ways do you feel challenged?
		How do they let you know what their expectations are for you?
		
		• Are their expectations demanding, realistic and achievable, or are they demanding but unachievable; or are they low ?
		
		• What do your teachers do to help you meet your goals and their expectations?
		
		Are their expectations realistic and achievable?
		
		• What do they do to help you meet your goals?
		
		Probes:
		    • Sports?
		    • Clubs or leadership activities (Student Council)?
		    • Volunteer work in the community ?
		    • Academic preparation? Studying?
		    • Spending time with friends?
		    • Any others?
		
		Tell me more about X.
		(advice and advice from whom, examples of particular classes, particular extra-curricular activities, guidance counseling experiences, mentorship, JROTC participation-skills)

Student Focus Group Interview Instrument Round #3
Date:
Time:
Participant(s): Student Focus Group A, B, C and D (convening in separate groups)
Interviewer: Heather L. Horsley
Transcriber: Heather L. Horsley

General Questions #3	Detail Probes	Clarification of Elaboration
Let's talk a bit about your plans for after high school. Only 55% of your peers reported that they decided to attend PMA because they wanted to participate in four years of JROTC (Black students it tipped the other way 55% reported no). – How did you learn about JROTC as a curricular program? -Describe what it is like to be a student in a typical JROTC class period. -Do you think JROTC prepares you for success after high school? How so?	What are your plans for after high school? 50% respond Four year college What, do you think, are your teachers' perceptions of your post-high school plans? Why do you think they assume this? Do you think your teachers push you to reach your potential? Do you think that your school is preparing you for success in life both in terms of being a high school student now and then after you graduate from high school? How so? What attracted you to participating in JROTC? What did/do you expect to get out of JROTC participation? Have your expectations matched up with what you are now experiencing? Is participating in JROTC what you expected?	If college is mentioned: ask, why do you think a college education is important? If work is mentioned: ask, why are you not choosing college? If military enlistment is mentioned: ask, why are you choosing this path over others? Tell me more about some of your experiences. (advice and advice from whom, examples of particular classes, particular extra-curricular activities, guidance counseling experiences, mentorship, JROTC participation-skills and knowledge) You said X, can you provide an example or tell a bit of a story about it?

Student Focus Group Interview Instrument Round #4
Date:
Time:
Participant(s): Student Focus Group A, B, C and D (convening in separate groups)
Interviewer: Heather L. Horsley
Transcriber: Heather L. Horsley

General Question #4	Detail Probes	Clarification or Elaboration
-In your view, what does it mean to be a leader, in general?	-So is there a difference between being a leader and taking on or displaying leadership? -What does leadership mean to you? Where do you feel that you learned about your ideas about leadership? (anything before JROTC HS?)	Tell me about a time in which you feel that you displayed leadership. -Many people believe that leaders are born as leaders, while many others believe that anyone can become a leader. What do you think?
-What does it mean to be a leader at your school?	-Do you feel some leadership positions are valued more over others? How so?	-What about student voice? Who sets the agendas? How do you feel about the process? Do you feel that you can challenge the agenda?
-From our conversations (make students drop) there are various reasons why students are interested in being promoted. Why did you want to be promoted or why do you think most students want to be promoted?	-Leadership is a key aspect of the your school's mission. Do you feel your school supports this part of their mission (developing leadership qualities in students)? How so? -Personally, how is this working for you? Are you growing as a leader?	-How has this paid off for you in high school? -How do you think this will pay off for you in your future life beyond high school?
-How do you learn about your role and responsibilities in that rank?	-Where do you get your ideas/views about leadership? Who or what influences your thinking?	-You said X, can you provide an example or tell a bit of a story about it?

-80% of your peers reported that they want to take on a leadership role. Why is taking on a leadership role important? When asked if you have been a leader in JROTC (like Battalion Commander, Company Commander, Staff Officer, Platoon Leader, Squad Leader, and so on) Black males 36.5% - yes Latinos 53.9% - yes Black females 45.7% - yes Latinas 48.8% -yes	What do you think about these data? In your view, what are some reasons for these gaps?	

Appendix B

<u>**Administrator, Teacher, and Counselor Interview Protocol**</u>

Date:
Time:
Participant(s): Administrator A & B
Interviewer: Heather L. Horsley
Transcriber: Heather L. Horsley

Introduction: "Hello and thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is Heather Horsley and I am a PhD Candidate from the University of Illinois at Chicago. I am conducting a study of your school's college and career preparation services. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as someone who has expertise relating to the focus of this study. This approximately one-hour long, audio-taped interview is completely voluntary and you may skip questions or terminate the interview at any time. Your identity will be kept confidential at all times. Thank you very much for your participation."

I. Professional Information
    1. Job Category/Title
    2. Years at the job
    3. Tell me a little about how you came to this position? (Probe for related job(s) held previously, other training relevant to this field, specific military experience)

II. School Background Information
    4. Tell me a little about the history of this school? (If funding doesn't come up: How is your school funded in comparison to other high schools? How much does the DOD contribute to your school's overall budget?)
    5. What is the general mission of the school? How does the school climate support that mission? How would you describe the institutional climate at your school?
    6. What do you feel were some of the challenges you faced transitioning from a Military Academy as a small school model within a neighborhood high school to a large, independent military college prep high school? (Probe: Are the students described differently? Do you think there are any differences between the freshman that came to your school for the military program versus the upper class students that transitioned into your school because it is their neighborhood school? Are the schools' expectations of these students different?)
    7. What is your vision for the future of your school?

III. College Prep and Military Models of Education
    8. In what ways, do you think the military/JROTC and college prep model of schooling complement each other? Do you think there are any tensions between the military and college prep model of schooling?

9. How did you develop buy in among the teachers/students/parents to adopt the military/college prep model?
10. What do you think teachers expect for your students? How does the administration try to align the teachers' expectations? (Transitioning into a new academic model does not necessarily influence the teachers' expectations/practices)
11. Since transitioning, what has the school done to support the implementation of a college preparatory and awareness program? (policies, programs, PD) Have you experienced any resistance to the implementation of the college prep/awareness program? Can you tell me how you proceeded with the reorganization of the school? What do you think needs to be done to make these programs more effective?
12. What are examples of the skills and knowledge developed in JROTC participation that you feel directly prepares your students for success while in high school and after graduation from high school?

IV. Methodology/Action
13. What are the three most important values you demonstrate as a school leader? Tell me a story that demonstrates each of these leadership values in practice within your work here at this school or CPS. How do you define your leadership style? How did you learn about leadership or being a leader?
14. If I were to ask your faculty to comment about your leadership style, your leadership strengths, and your leadership weaknesses, how would they respond? What would this discussion tell me about you as a leader?
15. How does a student become a leader here? What role do teachers/students play in the naming of a leader? Do you think race/ethnicity, gender and/or age is a factor in the selection of a youth leader? (Probe for whether this process relates to academic performance, student discipline, having only one leader vs. seeing all students as leaders.)
16. How do you define youth leadership? How do you share your framework of youth leadership with your faculty and staff?
17. How do students learn about leadership? In what ways does your school provide students with leadership opportunities? (Probe for issues of development, education and training. Mentorship and practice.)
18. How have the schools tactics or approaches to leadership changed over time? Why?
19. What, if any, school policies impact youth leadership development at your school?

V. External Factors
20. What, if any, city, state, or federal laws influence the focus on youth leadership development at your school? (Probe for knowledge of JROTC goals)
21. What educational policies affect the provision of youth leadership opportunities at your school?
22. To your knowledge, have any changes in the city of Chicago influenced the development of the youth leadership focus at your school?

23. How would you characterize the outside perception of your school's focus on youth leadership?

VI. Wrap Up

24. How might you change the provision of youth leadership opportunities at your school if you could?
25. Is there anything that you would like to add that I did not directly ask about in this interview?
26. Do you mind providing me with some personal information? You can skip any or all questions:
    Gender identity
    Age range
    Racial/ethnic background
    First language learned
    Birthplace
    Salary range

Appendix B (Continued)

Date:
Time:
Participant(s): Teachers
Interviewer: Heather L. Horsley
Transcriber: Heather L. Horsley

I. Professional Information
    1. Job Category/Title/bachelor's degree, teacher certification, area of specialization,
    2. Years at the job
    3. Tell me a little about how you came to this position? (Probe for related job(s) held previously, motivations to teach, other training relevant to this field, specific military experience: Have you served in the military? If yes, which branch, years, division, rank.)

II. School Background Information
    4. Tell me about a typical day of teaching here. (Tell me about your academic freedom in regards to the curriculum, activities, philosophy. Tell me about your last 3 professional development workshops you attended. How would you describe your style of teaching? What are some of the challenges you face teaching here? Describe a typical lesson you would give your students.)
    5. What is the general mission of the school? How does the school climate support that mission?
    6. If applicable, what do you feel were some of the challenges you faced transitioning from a Military Academy as a small school model within a neighborhood high school to a large, independent military college prep high school? (Probe: What are some of the main changes you have observed? Has achievement changed after becoming an independent, large military school? Are the students described differently? Do you think there are any differences between the freshman that came to your school for the military program versus the upper class students that transitioned into your school because it is their neighborhood school? Are the schools' expectations of these students different?)
    7. What are you doing or the school's leadership doing to encourage parental and community buy in into the college prep program? How do you engage parents and community members in the college prep and awareness process?

III. College Prep and Military Models of Education
    8. What do you expect/hope for your students after high school? Do you think your students will meet your expectations?
    9. Do you think your goals for your students are in conflict with the school's goals?
    10. Do you have resources to help your students meet your expectations?

11. Would you consider the military model a resource for college preparation? In other words, how does the military model influence your students' college preparedness? (probe for knowledge of JROTC goals (motivation, leadership/discipline, sense of belonging) and how much do they know about JROTC and do they collaborate with JROTC instructors?

12. Are there field trips focused on college awareness?

13. Do you have a college fair? Do you have a career day? If so, who comes to visit your students? (Probe for: How often are military recruiters present at your school?)

14. When you talk to students about college is it in a group setting, individual setting, after school programs? What do you typically discuss (Readiness, Awareness, Access, Success)? How is written information disseminated?

15. What are some other college resources that you make available to your students (websites, CPS student planner, After School Programs i.e AVID)? (Funding for these resources?)

16. Do you talk to your students about the significance of doing well in your classes and GPAs for college matriculation? If so, how do your students respond?

17. What do you think could be done (policies, academics, programs, funding) to make your school a more effective college prep academy?

IV. Methodology/Action

18. How do you define leadership? Do you see yourself as a teacher leader?

19. How does the school as a whole define youth leadership? How does the school keep you abreast of issues pertaining to youth leadership? (probe: meetings, emails, PD opportunities)

20. How does a student become a leader here? Who are the leaders and what makes them leaders? What role do you or your students play in the naming of a leader? Do you think race/ethnicity, gender and/or age is a factor in the selection of a youth leader? (Probe for whether this process relates to academic performance, student discipline, having only one leader vs. seeing all students as leaders.)

21. How do students learn about leadership? In what ways does your school provide students with leadership opportunities? Do you think your school provides its students with quality leadership opportunities? Why or why not? (Probe for issues of development, education and training. Mentorship and practice.)

22. How have the schools tactics or approaches to leadership changed over time? Why?

23. What, if any, school policies impact youth leadership development at your school?

V. External Factors

24. To your knowledge, have any changes in the city of Chicago influenced the development of the youth leadership focus at your school?

25. How would you characterize parental perception of your school's focus on youth leadership?

26. How would you characterize community perception of your school's focus on youth leadership?

VI. Wrap Up
27. How might you change the provision of youth leadership opportunities at your school if you could?
28. Is there anything that you would like to add that I did not directly ask about in this interview?
29. Do you mind providing me with some personal information? You can skip any or all questions:
    Gender identity
    Age range
    Racial/ethnic background
    First language learned
    Birthplace
    Salary range

Date:
Time:
Participant(s): Guidance Counselors
Interviewer: Heather L. Horsley
Transcriber: Heather L. Horsley
I. Professional Information
1. Job Category/Title/bachelor's degree, teacher certification, area of specialization,
2. Years at the job
3. Tell me a little about how you came to this position? (Probe for related job(s) held previously, motivations, other training relevant to this field, specific military experience: Have you served in the military? If yes, which branch, years, division, rank.)

II. School Background Information
4. Tell me about a typical day of counseling at your school. (How would you describe your style of counseling? What are some of the challenges you face counseling at your school? Describe a typical counseling session that you would hold with your advisees.)
5. Readings on the role of guidance counselors indicate that counselors often feel over burdened by administrative duties and day to day crisis management which keeps them from college counseling.   Is this your experience?   If no, what allows for your successes? If yes, can you explain some of the obstacles?
6. What is the general mission of the school? How does the school climate support that mission?
7. If applicable, what do you feel were some of the challenges you faced transitioning from a Military Academy as a small school model within a neighborhood high school to a large, independent military college prep high school? (Probe: Are the students described differently? Do you think there are any differences between the freshman that came to your school for the military program versus the upper class students that transitioned into your school because it is their neighborhood school? Are the schools' expectations of these students different?)
8. What are you doing or the school's leadership doing to encourage parental and community buy in into the college prep program? How do you engage parents and community members in the college prep and awareness process?

III. College Prep and Military Models of Education
9. What do you expect/hope for your students after high school? Do you think your students will meet your expectations?
10. Do you think your goals for your students are in conflict with the school's goals?

11. Do you feel you have the resources needed to help your students meet your expectations?
12. Would you consider the military model a resource for college preparation? In other words, how does the military model influence your students' college preparedness? (probe for knowledge of JROTC goals (motivation, leadership/discipline, sense of belonging) and how much do they know about JROTC and do they collaborate with JROTC instructors?
13. Are there field trips focused on college awareness?
14. Do you have a college fair? Do you have a career day? If so, who comes to visit your students? (Probe for: How often are military recruiters present at your school?)
15. When you talk to students about college is it in a group setting, individual setting, after school programs? What do you typically discuss (Readiness, Awareness, Access, Success)? How is written information disseminated?
16. What are some other college resources that you make available to your students (websites, CPS student planner, After School Programs i.e AVID)? (Funding for these resources?)
17. Has CPS's Department of post-secondary education been a helpful resource? If yes/no, how so/how not?
18. Do you talk to your students about the significance of course sequencing and GPAs for college matriculation? If so, how do students select courses? How do you ensure that your students' course load and course sequence is aligned with the requirements of colleges and career options?
19. What do you think could be done (policies, academics, programs, funding) to make your school a more effective college prep academy?

IV. Methodology/Action
20. How do you define leadership? Do you see yourself as a school leader? Why or why not?
21. How does the school as a whole define youth leadership? How does the school keep you abreast of issues pertaining to youth leadership? (Probe for meetings, emails, PD opportunities)
22. How does a student become a leader here? Who are the leaders and what makes them leaders? What role do you play in the naming of a leader? Do you think race/ethnicity, gender and/or age is a factor in the selection of a youth leader? (Probe for whether this process relates to academic performance, student discipline, having only one leader vs. seeing all students as leaders.)
23. How do students learn about leadership? In what ways does your school provide students with leadership opportunities? Do you think your school provides its students with quality leadership opportunities? Why or why not? (Probe for issues of development, education and training. Mentorship and practice.)
24. How have the schools tactics or approaches to leadership changed over time? Why?

25. What, if any, school policies impact youth leadership development at your school?

V. External Factors
26. To your knowledge, have any changes in the city of Chicago influenced the development of the youth leadership focus at your school?
27. How would you characterize parental perception of your school's focus on youth leadership?
28. How would you characterize community perception of your school's focus on youth leadership?

VI. Wrap Up
29. How might you change the provision of youth leadership opportunities at your school if you could?
30. Is there anything that you would like to add that I did not directly ask about in this interview?
31. Do you mind providing me with some personal information? You can skip any or all questions:
Gender identity
Age range
Racial/ethnic background
First language learned
Birthplace
Salary range

Appendix C

<u>**A Representative Overview of Student Responses to the Leadership Survey**</u>

Open-ended Survey Prompt
"Your school tries to develop leadership qualities in all students. How is this working for you personally? Explain what you mean."

Common Themes
• They are acquiring leadership knowledge/skills to use now or for future purposes • They are developing self-confidence and their own voice • They are developing the ability to understand different perspectives on issues • They are identifying signs of their own academic and social improvement • They are able to give back to others or help others

Description of Student Respondent	**Student Response**
Black Freshman Male	• "It basically helps me become a better person inside and out" • "It has shown me that I can be in a position of power and not mess it up, like people around me respect me for making good decisions."
Black Freshman Female	• "Learning about leadership has helped me realize how capable I am of being an independent person at school and at home. It has also helped me assure myself of what my moral values are." • "It actually helps me focus more. I used to have a bad attitude problem, now I changed that. I changed this because I learned that no one wanted someone around them that was always crabby or didn't care much about no but myself. This change is how I have become a leader because people started looking at me like Wow, she changed her life maybe I can do the same."
Latino Freshman	• "It is working for me personally because it has made me see people in a different way" • "It's working for me because I'm learning to speak up for myself and lead not follow"
Latina Freshman	• "It helps me personally because it has helped [me] come out of my shell and be more open and take responsibility for my actions and face the consequences" • "It has helped me grow personally. I am getting stronger and more brave. I'm also believing more in myself and in what I think is right"
Black Sophomore Male	• "I believe it's working pretty good because I feel more confident and willing to help others with problems." • "I don't really care for being a leader. Some people don't listen or are hard to talk to making things complicated. But I do think that the qualities they teach

	help us now and will help later on in the future.”
Black Sophomore Female	• “Yes, I do agree that our school tries to develop leadership qualities in all students. I have experienced this through out my classroom sessions when teachers provoke all the students to become interactive with each other. The ethnicity or gender is not accounted for in this situation. We are all given opportunities to lead. But when you do something that is outside your square (inappropriate) the teachers and other staff members put you were you need to be, in your place.” • “I think it’s good that our school tries to make us good leaders. It’s a skill were going to need in the future. Plus you don’t always want to listen to someone your whole life you’ll want to take charge once in awhile.”
Latino Sophomore	• “Yes they do because I try to help many people around my community especially if they are young.” • “It’s working out good because I’m learning new leadership styles.”
Latina Sophomore	• “I don’t count on other people to do things for me. I work good in a team and by myself, I’ve started to talk more too.” • “It is working for me personally because they help me make better choices.”
Black Junior Male	• “I have been engaging in many group activities where I have to take certain responsibilities. These positions allow me to better my skills as a team member and leader.” • “Having the qualities of a leader will make others feel confident in me and put me in more responsible situations”
Black Junior Female	• “Honestly I feel very privileged because I am a minority, being female and African American, so getting rank and taking on leadership roles is helping to build my confidence.” • It gives me a sense of who I am, or who I want to become while instilling leadership skills in me that will help me throughout my life”
Latino Junior	• “The leadership opportunities here have encouraged me to do better, respect others and treat all equal regardless of appearance.” • “I am developing the skills that helps me better my performance in anything I wish to focus on.”
Latina Junior	• “I learned how to be nicer and respect other people. I try to help other people, like tell them to work hard in what they do.” • “Well leadership is all around us and therefore I’ve reached a [leadership] position. My personality has improved its better than it used to be. I used to be very quiet and an outcast. But now that I’ve learned the steps

	for leadership, I have overcome my fear of silence and started taking a position in leading others."
Black Senior Male	• "Our school instill leadership skills into their students the moment they walk in the door. My biggest motto is "Lead by example". That is what our school does, I do not know if that is done purposefully or subconsciously, but it happens. Seeing older leaders helps me to stay determined leading those that follow." • "It gives me a sense of achievement and by giving me leadership skills it allows me to effectively help, assist and direct a group of people to accomplish a mission."
Black Senior Female	• "While being here for 4 years I have learned how to be a leader in every aspect of my life. Not only have they taught me the Army Values, but I also apply those values to my everyday life. I'm more socially independent and considerate of others. I am not able to help or mentor someone to make me look better, but to encourage them and inspire them that leaders are made from anyone. It doesn't matter where you come from, being a leader is demonstrating that the role of your life is in helping others to get on track and that is the example a leader may show." • "I believe our school tries to show students that you could be a leader in any situation. For me, I have grown from being shy and quiet student who didn't like to participate in any activity because I was scared of being a leader. Going to school here showed me that you should be a leader here because once you have your own business or company you will have to be a leader of that."
Latino Senior	• "Before I would always be the lay back kind of guy that doesn't really do anything in school but now I try to help others when they need it." • "It has made me a better person and it gives me the motivation to achieve more and more in life."
Latina Senior	• "Because we are a small school, everyone is looked at in the same way. People have the same opportunity to become leaders and work on hidden skills. I have been able to be a leader and be someone who can change the world." • "It helps me be independent. I don't have to depend on anybody but if I need help I will ask for it. I am able to make my own decisions, whether I made a good or bad one I learn from them."

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Yukl, G. A. (1981). *Leadership in organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

H E A T H E R   L.   H O R S L E Y

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

8/2003 – Present   *University of Illinois at Chicago*
Ph.D. Candidate, Policy Studies in Urban Education
• Educational Policy & Urban School Reform   • Teacher Education
• Sociology of Education   • Gender Women Studies

8/1997 – 5/2001   *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*
B.A. in LAS
• History

AWARDS

▪ Student Travel Award, Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, and Graduate College, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2005-2011
▪ Dissertation Support Award, Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2010
▪ Dissertation Support Award, Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009
▪ Dean's List, Department of History, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Fall 2000 & Spring 2001

PROJECT AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

7/2012 – Present   *University of Illinois at Chicago*
Senior Research Specialist, Center for Urban Education Leadership
• Co-responsible for research design, data collection, and analysis on federally funded 3-year evaluation research project on professional development in early childhood settings.

9/2007 – 2010   *University of Illinois at Chicago*
Graduate Assistant to Dean Victoria Chou, College of Education
▪ Supported the development and successful submission of the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Federal Grant. COE awarded $16 million 5-year grant on September 30, 2009.
▪ Supported the development of the request for a revision of the Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education. Charged with the development of the course sequencing for the Education in a Democratic Society program.
▪ Designed a project to evaluate the College of Education's academic advising. Collected and analyzed advisement data and wrote executive summary presented to faculty.

8/2005 – 7/2009   *University of Illinois at Chicago*
Research Assistant to Dr. Steven Tozer, Educational Policy Studies
▪ Served as project manager and lead agency consultant on the Go To 2040 regional planning project mandated by the State of Illinois via the Chicago Metropolitan Area of

Planning and supported by the Chicago Community Trust. Charged with writing a report that suggests what K-12 education should look like by 2040.
- Conducted classroom observations on a Joyce Foundation-funded study that compares the professional preparation and early career experiences of teachers from Alternative Routes to Certification (ARC) programs and teachers from traditional preparation programs.
- Administrative manager of the first edited volume of the *Handbook of Research of the Social Foundations of Education* (Routledge 2011).

8/2006 – 6/2007   *University of Illinois at Chicago*
Research Assistant to Dr. Pauline Lipman, Educational Policy Studies
- Conducted discourse analysis on a study that analyzes the politics of race in mixed income housing and mixed income schooling policy. Assisted with literature search, writing the literature review and collected archived school data to write a descriptive statistical narrative of multiple schools.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

8/2011 - present   *University of Illinois Chicago*
Teaching Assistant to Dr. Mark Smylie, Educational Policy Studies
- Undergraduate course: Child and Youth Policies in Urban America. Charged with a complete overhaul of the course (i.e. revised syllabus, theoretical frame, lessons, and assignments) to address domains of anti-poverty, welfare, housing, health, disability, juvenile justice, substance abuse, and mental health policies.

9/2007 – present   *Concordia University Chicago*
Adjunct Professor, Teacher Education
- Masters course: Action Research for Practitioners (F2F & Blended); Developed the Master syllabus; Developed the hybrid model and online course that the university commissioned.
- Masters course: Ethics and Foundations in American Education (F2F & Blended)
- Masters course: Contemporary Issues in Curriculum and Practice
- Masters Course: Seminar in Reflective Practices
- Capstone Advisor: mentor cohorts in the successful completion of program

1/2008 – 5/2008   *University of Illinois at Chicago*
Teaching Assistant to Dr. Kevin Kumashiro, Educational Policy Studies
- Undergraduate course: Child and Youth Policies in Urban America**.** Lectured to 65 students from diverse backgrounds and led small group discussions.

1/2007-5/2007   *University of Illinois at Chicago*
Co-Instructor, with Dr. Pauline Lipman, Educational Policy Studies
- Undergraduate course: Child and Youth Policies in Urban America. Assisted with the co-development of the syllabus, led a small field project, and taught half the classes.

6/2006 – 8/2006   *National-Louis University*
Adjunct Professor, Foundations and Research, National College of Education
- Masters course: Social Justice Perspectives on the History and Philosophy of American Education

- Collaborated with an Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) cohort

1/2011 - present   *Cicero Public Schools*
Substitute Teacher
- Certification Code 39 and number 2352175

4/2005 – 6/2005   *Chicago Public Schools*
Cadre Teacher
- 6th-8th grade special needs math and reading. Prepared lesson plans. Assisted with updating individual learning plans.

9/2002 – 10/2005   *Chicago Public Schools*
Substitute Teacher

9/2001 – 6/2001   *Champaign-Ford County Public Schools*
Substitute Teacher

PUBLICATIONS

Horsley, H. L. (under review). Maneuvered opportunities: Black and Latina/o high school students complicate their participation in JROTC. Journal of Equity in Education.

Horsley, H. L. & Tozer, S. (2008). *Existing conditions in the seven-county region K-12 public schools*.
Chicago, IL: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. Technical report.   (30 pp).

Tozer, S. & Horsley, H. L. (2006). Professional development of teachers in physical education: Where are we now? *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 25*(4), 450-457.

PRESENTATIONS

"Lessons learned: A case of teachers working to turnaround schools in Chicago" presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC, CAN.

"Rupturing pipelines: Latinos and educational, military, and prison industrial complexes," presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the National Association for Multicultural Education. Chicago, IL.

"Maneuvered opportunities: Black and Latina/o high school students complicate their participation in JROTC," presented at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies Association, Denver, CO.

"What is at stake?: Research methods for social justice" presented at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies Association, Pittsburgh, PA.

"What choices do we really have?": Youth Negotiating Choice in a Chicago Public Military Academy," presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies Association, Savannah, GA.

"Should I be teaching: A novice teacher educator grapples with teaching toward social justice," presented at the 2008 5th International Conference on Teacher Education and Social Justice, Chicago, IL.

"Silence as hegemony: Structure and agency in a Chicago public military academy,"
    presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies
    Association, Cleveland, OH.
"City schools in the context of neoliberal development strategies and policies,"
    presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research
    Association, Chicago, IL.
"Collaborative and reflective strategies: New faculty meeting the challenge to teach
    in the social foundations," presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the
    American Educational Studies Association, Spokane, WA.
"Anthology of images: New ways of seeing Chicago school reform," presented at the
    2005 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies Association,
    Charlottesville, Virginia.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Proposal Reviewer, American Educational Research Association, 2012-2013
Discussant for Division B: Curriculum Studies at the 2012 Annual Meeting of American
Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC, CAN.
Journal Reviewer, Urban Studies, January 2010
Journal Reviewer, Curriculum and Pedagogy Journal, January 2007.
Journal Reviewer, American History of Education Journal, December 2005.
Student Representative, College of Education Doctoral Steering Committee, University of
Illinois at Chicago, September 2007 to December 2008.
Proposal Reviewer and Organizer, the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American
Educational Studies Association, Charlottesville, Virginia. Assisted Dr. Steven
Tozer with his duties as program chair.
Lead Organizer, Funding Committee Chair and Proposal Reviewer, Education and the
Public Good: Interdisciplinary Trends in Graduate Scholarship, a graduate student conference by
and for graduate students, University of Illinois at Chicago, August 2005 - February 2006, August
2006 – March 2007 and August 2007 – March 2008.
Co-founder, Education Group of Graduate Students, University of Illinois at Chicago: co-
secretary May 2005-April 2005, co-president May 2006-2008.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- American Educational Research Association
- American Educational Studies Association
- National Association for Multicultural Education

CERTIFICATIONS

- Online Teaching Certification, Concordia University, 10/1/2009
- USA Boxing Coach, Level 1, August 2005
- Substitute Teaching Certificate: Cook County, 2002, renewed 10/1/2008