8. Youth Perspectives on Community Activism: From the Personal to the Political

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Abstract

This chapter presents findings from the Toronto Tikkun Youth Project participants about their community and civic engagement activities. Data was gathered through interviews with sixteen participants who were between 16 and 24 years old and were of varied ethnic and racial backgrounds. The chapter contributes to literature that challenges notions of youth apathy and shows the varied ways in which youth contribute to the development of their communities and to civic society, generally. Data from the project show the different ways that youth define community and civic engagement, as well as the divergent forms and motivation for participating in these activities. Notions of belonging to their community, desire to contribute, challenge stereotypes, and create meaningful futures for themselves, were mentioned as some of the reasons youth chose to engage in community life. The youth voices echoed in this chapter can be used to combat the ongoing notions about youth apathy and the decreasing level of youth community engagement. The data also shows the need for a more systematic mapping of youth engagement and their contribution to society.

In this chapter, we present findings from data collected with youth in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), as part of the broader Tikkun Youth Project (2014-2017), with sites in Canada, Kosovo, and South Africa. The discussion presented herein is part of ongoing public and scholarly debates about youth civic engagement or lack thereof. In this chapter, we offer narratives that

describe youth community activities alongside youth discussions of empowerment, advocacy, and their growing career/academic pathways through and because of their activities in community spaces. We define community engagement as activities that "engage youth in the civic life of their communities" (Zeldin, 2004, p. 632) and as "how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 242). We also work with Berger's (2009) categories of engagement, while acknowledging his stance that the notion of "civic engagement" per se is muddled and lacks scholarly clarity. Berger retains the notion of "engagement," whilst distinguishing between political, social, and moral engagements and between *engagement in* (activity without attention); *engagement by* (attention without activity); and *engagement with* (attention and activity). We find these categories helpful in discussing the ways or levels of engagement that youth referred to as part of their community life. Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, and Anstead (2014) reported that a significant portion of youth channel their political activities towards their social movement and civil organizing; therefore, any discussion about youth community engagement must intersect discussion on political participation. By including discussions on Tikkun youth's political engagement, we also strengthen the debates about the divergent ways in which youth participate in and lead community engagement projects.

Examining youth civic engagement is important because the past two decades have been marked by growing concerns about the lack of Canadian youth involvement in community and political activities. Some community activists, researchers, and politicians see youth's apathy as the key reason for youth disengagement in political spheres (Wattenberg, 2006; Wring, Henn, & Weinstein, 2007). This concern has been amplified because of statistics indicating that Canada has already arrived at a "tipping point," where the number of people reaching retirement age is higher than the number of young people entering working age – a dynamic that is projected to increase over the years (Public Safety Canada, 2012). Further, diminishing the diversity of those involved in civic life and suggesting a risk for Canada's civic future, the 2015 report, *Social Capital in Action*, indicates that a mere 6% of adults are responsible for 35%–42% of all civic activities (Siemiatycki, 2011).

In addition to the age-based differences in civic participation (CP), research show some correlation between areas with low voter turnout rates and areas with high populations of immigrant and/or racialized groups

(MacKinnon, Pitre, Sonia, & Watling, 2007; Siemiatycki, 2011). Overall, when compared to their white Canadian peers, the participation of traditionally marginalized youth in formal political structures is generally low. For instance, while about 84% and 83% of young white Canadians report voting in the 2015 elections at federal and provincial levels respectively, youth from visible minority groups' report only 68% and 65% (Bilodeau, Turgeon, White, & Henderson, 2015). Given that the country's largest metropolises are comprised of rapidly growing racial and ethnic minority groups (e.g., 40% of the population across the Greater Toronto Area; Siemiatycki, 2011), there is a critical need to focus on supporting and building civic capacity among racial and ethnic minority youth. Taken together, these civic participation patterns and demographic shifts point to a governance *and* economic risk: if things continue along this vein, Canada will not have a sufficient base to carry on the civic activities upon which it currently depends.

Lamentably, literature also indicates that the rise in Aboriginal and immigrant populations has had little bearing on the Canadian political landscape in terms of political representation of racialized minorities. Elected public office continues to be predominantly occupied by white, male, middle-class, educated, and Christian members (Andrew, Biles, Siemiatycki, & Tolley, 2008; Andrew, Biles, Siemiatycki, & Tolley, 2011), while Canadian visible minorities and Indigenous peoples remain underrepresented – both as candidates and as MPs (Black, 2011). In Canada, Indigenous people refers to First Nation, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) – the three distinct indigenous groups who have been lumped in to this government term. Andrew et al. (2008) indicate that some progress has been made towards equal representation, particularly for those with Italian and Jewish backgrounds, as well as South Asian, Filipino, and Chinese populations in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto. For instance, between the 2008 and 2011 federal elections, the number of racialized MPs increased from 21 to 28 (Black, 2017). Notable, however, is that this development in the ratio of minority MPs to the population remains uneven; between 1993 and 2011, the ratio of ethnic minority MPs to their respective population fluctuated between 0.39 and 0.56 (Black, 2017). On a municipal level, Bird (2004) states that the proportional representations of visible minorities in the local government of Canada's three largest cities remain uneven with 0.37 in Vancouver, 0.32 in Toronto, and 0.39 in Montreal (with 1.00 indicating a perfectly proportional representation). This uneven representation of racial minorities and Indigenous peoples means that they become voiceless, endowed with

minimum power and hence, redlined from shaping the course of the nation (see for example, Andrew, et al., 2008; Siemiatycki, 2011).

The data in this paper indicates that the uneven representation of racialized groups in civic structures is not because of their lack of activity. In fact, data in this chapter follows those scholars who challenge notions of youth apathy, claiming that youth might lack interest in or feel excluded from mainstream civic activity; however, they do participate in alternative spaces, such as the Internet (Bennett, 2008; Brooks & Hodkinson, 2008; Marsh, O´Toole, & Jones, 2007; Norris, 2011). These scholars also urge us to think more about what we mean by civic engagement, which is a concept used in our study regardless of its unclear and sometimes contested definitions (for a full discussion, see for example, Berger, 2009).

Review of Youth Civic Engagement[1]

There are vast amounts of works that are insightful in deepening our understanding of the value of youth civic engagement among advanced democracies. For instance, writing about the value of social capital, Stolle and Cruz (2005) indicate that citizens' involvement in political life positively affects the efficiency of democracy, individual well-being, and economic development. They also state that an individual's democratic attitude and behavior is inculcated at an early age through family experiences, civic education, and social relationships. Interestingly, these attitudes and behaviors are said to not change considerably within a person's lifetime; therefore, the said low pattern in youth democratic participation could have grave long-term adverse public policy outcomes (Stolle & Cruz, 2005).

Research has also given us a glimpse of popular forms of youth community engagement which include their roles on advisory boards for various non-profit organizations (Ho, Clarke, & Dougherty, 2015), participation in school clubs (Voight & Torney-Puta, 2013), and participating in informal activities (Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, & Zukin, 2002). In reference to these informal activities, Andolina and colleagues (2002) also noted that youth had looser notions of community engagement. Hence, young people may view carrying the groceries for their neighbours or helping someone to cross the road as community engagement. In other studies, youth also listed participating and organizing a protest as a form of community participation (Gordon, 2008).

Although an increase in age is positively associated with increases in social and political activities (Tiernan, Lysack, Neufeld, Goldberg, & Lichtenberg, 2014), most of the participants in our study displayed "adult forms" of community and political participation that distinguished them from the socio-normative view of youth.

While much has been written on the United States (see, for example, Knack & Keefer, 1997; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Rahn & Transue, 1998; Youniss et al., 2002), the scholarship on youth civic engagement in Canada is still rudimentary. Essentially, Canadian-based studies examining the trends within youth civic activities predominantly focus either on their civic literacy, their general disposition towards politics, or their level of participation in traditional electoral politics, such as voting, interest in politics, and membership in political parties (see Barnard, Campbell, & Smith, 2003; Bastedo, Dougherty, LeDuc, Rudny, & Sommers, 2012; Llewellyn & Westheimer, 2009; Young & Cross, 2004).

Scholarly works on youth civic engagement in Canada have recognized the limits to the lack of political interest argument and have sought to offer more nuanced explanations for low engagement of youth in formal politics. Blais and Loewen (2011), for instance, posit that stage of life, political interest, and involvement in politics impact the voting behavior of young people. In addition, socio-demographic factors including age, income, gender, and residence are said to have some moderate effect on youth voting patterns. But more importantly, Blais and Loewen's analysis showed that youth perceived voting as a type of politics with little capacity to spur change. This is in line with Chareka, Sears, and Chakaera's (2006) findings. As they explain, Canadian youth regard participation in the electoral process as providing minimal political options. Furthermore, in their view, the political system is unresponsive to their concerns, and the ability of politicians to effect change is limited. Perhaps not surprisingly, they discovered that Canadian youth are more likely to be involved in community-based activities (Chareka et al., 2006). Some scholars have argued that civic engagement among Canadian youth occurs in the form of volunteerism and humanitarian work as opposed to traditional ways of political participation (see Chareka et al., 2006; Gauthier, 2003). This was further reaffirmed by a 2000 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating conducted by Statistics Canada (1997, 2000), which revealed that young people between the ages of 15-24 years old account for 15% of volunteer hours in Canada. Gauthier (2003) explains that in order to achieve sustained youth engagement, it is important to create

spaces for youth to function in a decision-making capacity. Thus, Gauthier (2003) is in favour of "broadening the concept of political participation" (p. 275), so as to embrace an interpretation that transcends electoral engagement.

Conversations of youth civic engagement has resulted in the resurgence of research projects that are geared towards understanding youth's perception of community and civic engagement. Some of these research studies also provide avenues for youth to design and execute youth-focused projects that position youth as change agents in their communities (see, for example, Dlamini, 2015). While some reports support assertions of youth being less engaged than adults (Statistics Canada, 2013), these research studies also negate assertions that most youth were apathetic. The participants in the Tikkun Youth Project's Toronto site also challenge the notion of youth apathy and instead narrated accounts of youth engagement and offered specific examples of their community-based activities.

The Toronto-Tikkun Methodology[2]

The broader Tikkun Youth Project used participatory action research (PAR). PAR is suitable for a project that seeks to produce social justices as it allows youth researchers and youth engaged in community work to actively participate in the research process (see, for example, Cammarota & Romero, 2011; Fine, 2009; Johnston-Goodstar, 2013). Youth's participation in the research process was not limited to the data collection; they were given the opportunity to effect changes to the research process and to analyze the data in general as well as for the production of this chapter[3]. Giving youth the chance to report their findings stimulated meaningful discussions of how to move forward with social healing and transformation.

The Toronto site of the Tikkun Youth Project (Toronto-Tikkun) was particularly interested in uncovering the barriers and drivers that youth faced when it came to involvement within their communities. For example, in our various meetings we discussed the general trends among why and how youth took on leadership roles. To address this concern, we interviewed youth from all over the Greater Toronto Area to uncover the stories of youth and their experiences.

The Toronto-Tikkun research activities were divided into three stages.

The first stage of the project involved finding youth researchers that could be trained and prepared to conduct qualitative interviews. The selection of youth researchers (YR) was purposive (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Ristock & Grieger, 1996), focusing on youth 16 to 22 years old who were enrolled in education institutions (high schools, colleges, or universities)[4]. A faculty researcher along with a doctoral student who was also a researcher in the project trained them in interview techniques.

The second stage focused on the actual training of each youth researcher so that they would be appropriately equipped and organized to interview other youth. Training consisted of a series of interactive workshops on PAR as well as observing and conducting trial interviews as a team. In addition to trial interviews, the Tikkun team addressed ways to deal with issues that could potentially occur during the actual interviews themselves. All in all, the youth researchers were trained on how to conduct interviews respectfully and professionally. Following the training phase, youth researchers were tasked with the responsibility of connecting with and interviewing civically-engaged youth.

We had five youth researchers who conducted three interviews on average. The interviews were conducted using the "Long Interview" (McCracken, 1988), a qualitative research strategy that allows researchers to illuminate the "life world" of participants and the content and pattern of their everyday experiences. The Long Interview provides researchers "the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). In the end, 16 youth were interviewed with their narrative's audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes on youth community activity. After all interviews were conducted, the research team then moved on to discuss general themes and anomalies amongst the general data that was collected.

The third stage allowed for all sites taking part in the Tikkun Youth Project to come together to share activities and discuss overall project stories of youth community life in all the three countries. An international symposium took place at the University of Windsor. At this symposium, youth researchers from Toronto, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Kosovo, and South Africa were able to share their themes of community involvement as well as brainstorm post project-funding steps that could be taken back to each site and implemented. Ideally, youth and researchers across sites were going to work together to devise ways to encourage and support other youth in their respective communities; however, the reality of such an activity to occur

without resources became unviable. In the end, the symposium served as a symbolic terminal stage of the project.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-demographic Information of Research Participants.

#	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education & Occupation	Ethnicity	Religious Background
1.	Philip	Male	16	High school student	Indian	Muslim
2.	Adriana	Female	18	High school graduate	Egyptian	Muslim
3.	Esha	Female	18	Undergrad student	Caucasian	Christian
4.	Nicholas	Male	18	High school student	Black	Spiritual/not specified
5.	Mark	Male	18	High school student	Lebanese-Canadian	Shi'iti Muslim
6.	Denise	Female	18	Undergrad student	African	Agnostic
7.	Shawn	Male	19	High school student	Caribbean Canadian	Religious/not specified
8.	Amanda	Female	19	Undergrad student	Caucasian	Roman Catholic
9.	Tom	Male	21	Undergrad student	Black	None
10.	Stacia	Female	22	Undergrad student	Caucasian	Christian
11.	Shyan	Female	22	Undergrad student	Southern Sudanese	Catholic
12.	Natasha	Female	22	Undergrad student	African	None
13.	Trisha	Female	24	University graduate, working	Ghanaian-Filipino	None
14.	Stacy	Female	23	Undergrad student	Indo-Caribbean	Christian
15.	Jason	Male	24	Recent master's graduate	Jamaican Canadian	Christian
16.	Annette	Female	25	University graduate, working full-time	Caribbean Canadian	Christian

Table 1 indicates that with the exception of one 16-year-old, all

participants were between the ages of 18 and 25 years old and were of mixed ethno-racial and religious backgrounds. At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked the question, "Can you tell me a little about yourself?" In answering this question and other interviewer probes, we were able to get richer biographic information that is partly presented in Table 1.

In discussing the participants, it is worth mentioning that they had two commonalities with the research assistants. First, all participants were university students or were transitioning from university to the work-force. This commonality is not surprising because all research assistants were also attending university; therefore, they recruited from familiar territory. Also, as previously mentioned, Toronto-Tikkun researchers themselves had tapped into previous networks to recruit research assistants, thus ending up with university students and graduates from previous engagements. Second, all participants were recruited by research assistants because of knowledge of some engagement in community life. To avoid recursively affirming approaches to community engagement that others already recognize as such, we avoided offering any definition of what we meant by engagement. In this way, we were able to tap into youth descriptions that might capture conventional and nonconventional community engagement happening across a range of civic domains. Further, our strategy to avoid defining engagement allowed youth to describe what they meant by engagement without fear of researcher judgement. Still, we acknowledge that it would have been difficult to develop ways of identifying participants without some normative conception of community engagement already at work[5].

An overall finding from the data in our study is that youth who are engaged in their communities carry on their activities to adulthood because, as youth participate in more activities, they begin to get a sense of the things that are important to them and begin to take up more leadership responsibilities in the spaces in which they participate. To demonstrate, Trisha[6], a 24-year-old female noted, "I am a collective member on the Center for Women and Trans People, I am doing like photography and videography, I'm doing assistant work for two community activists, and I'm doing occasional workshops in the community around like HIV, harm reduction, and anti-oppression." Another participant, Esha, an 18-year-old high school student, explained that she participated in her community engagement activities through assisting with organizing community barbeques to conducting outreach with her church. Below we discuss some of the youth reasons for community participation and the meaning of community as they see it.

How Young People See Community Engagement and Political Activism

Participants were asked to talk about the places that they considered to be a part of and to talk broadly about what community means to them. Also, participants were asked to explain how they got involved in the activities that they participate in and to describe the things they do to make an impact on their community (see "Civic Engagement Questions" in Appendix 1). Data in our study indicate that the word "community" triggers different feelings and experiences for young people of all backgrounds; therefore, the concept of community engagement did not have a one-size-fits-all definition. To begin, the data in the study indicate that for youth, community engagement can be personal; it can move from a personal identity issue to advocacy and political activity similar to those experienced by the participant. The following quote illustrates this point:

> Nicholas: There's this program called EGAL, which I started going to a few months ago.
>
> Interviewer: What is that?
>
> Nicholas: It's for transgendered people to come together and talk freely and safely about their experiences and identities. They help you find a job, which is a challenge for trans people, and if you need immediate help like a place to stay if you're in danger or got kicked out, they will help you find a place that's affordable.
>
> Interviewer: So, why is it important for you to become involved in the community of EGAL?
>
> Nicholas: Well, there was a point in my life when I was confused and questioning my gender identity, and it was hard. It still is hard even now when I know who I am, facing people and society in general, walking out on the streets and not knowing if I am passing as a man, having to use the bathroom but being afraid to. EGAL is so important, it lets people explore without judgement, live without being doubted or under suspicion or questioning about what's in their pants. EGAL

lets people who feel like they are wrong know that they are right, and I want to be a part of that.

At the same time, youth connections of identity with community engagement clearly illustrated the complexity of what this term means. At one level, community engagement is about attending to those complex nuances of sexual identity as illustrated by the quote above. Going to an organization like EGAL in order to "explore without judgement" is a form of community engagement. This quote also illustrates the "stretched" notion of "civic engagement" that Berger (2009) is critical of because it is unclear what civic/community is in Nicholas's engagement. Yet, despite the lack of clarity of the civic-ness of this activity, the quote also shows that because of hers/his political awareness/informed-ness about issues of sexuality, Nicholas is engaged. Using Berger's categories, it appears that for this activity, Nicholas is *engaged by* "the space" (attention without activity), as well as *engaged with* exploratory activity (attention and activity). Even though we do not know what "explore without judgement" refers to in the quote, it is safe to assume that it is about an activity of some sort.

To be engaged by and engaged with is also illustrated by those participants who spoke of the interconnection between their racialized identity and civic life. For racialized youth, community engagement is about learning how to overcome barriers associated with "white-dominated institutions" and counteracting the constraints posed by their environment (i.e., low-income housing, school, and home). Such notions of engagement confirm scholarship that challenges us to think broadly about what community engagement entails and opens up the possibility of unrecognized forms because of non-conventionalism, as illustrated by the following quote:

> Jason: All the time. I think that I'm often trying to navigate my role and my footprint in each community. I think that being a Black male living in Jane and Finch and who has lived in community housing and lives in subpar housing now and having to go to school in a very upper class white institution, in academia, in the ivory tower in academia, I think that I've had to navigate keeping my foot in both worlds and having challenges put at me you know. I face racism in the ivory tower of academia and also, I face questions of legitimizing my blackness in my own community because I am educated now. So, in my two communities I find myself trying to navigate and keep my place a lot of the time. In those communities I feel that it's always been a struggle trying to go between the two. And keeping your

authenticity but also moving up in the ivory tower to get positions of influence. So, it's a struggle. And it intersects, my athletic community and my geographic community intersect being an athlete from Jane and Finch, going away for school, that intersected. Sports is an asset for me – that has intersected.

Interview data also indicate that youth took part in community projects because these activities in turn affected their daily lives in one way or another. For example, one of the participants mentioned volunteering at community centres where they could translate services for their community members. This meant that parents would be able to enroll their children in after school tutoring because they would no longer be turned away due to language barriers. The result? A community that is working together towards educating and supporting their youngest members. Interview data also demonstrate some of the passion that drives youth to engage in certain community activities, to challenge stereotypes, and to motivate themselves and others as illustrated by the following two quotes.

Challenging Stereotypes

Natasha: It's important because of the idea of sensing – the sense of leadership that I was telling you about earlier. Right? So another thing that I – that you know – I'm just so sick and tired of the way media talks about oh "Jane and Finch community"[7] and like you know, trying to change the name to "University Heights" like that's really going to do anything and you know like people will say "Oh my god, you're from Jane and Finch. Oh, I never knew that." It's like already there's this image that's attached to what somebody from Jane and Finch looks like. Right? So, now it's important for me to start actually becoming more like "Hey I'm like, you know, like hey I'm doing stuff and I'm from Jane and Finch."

Motivational. Esha: I think it's important because there's like a role model kinda aspect to it. For example, if you're a student in school or you work the kinda job that your parents are proud of or your family is proud of, it might lead someone else who doesn't know per say what it is they want to do in life, if they look at you and they felt that – they felt motivated and they felt like they wanted to mirror what you're doing, it can create like a domino effect where like I guess

everyone, well not everyone, but the people who kinda attribute what you're doing to be good or right, they want to do the same thing too.

When, Why, and How Youth Participate in Community and Political Life

The fact is many young people are interested in systemic and institutional change; however, given the systems in place, there is no easy solution to going about bringing said change. At the end of the day, every step of the way, youths find themselves facing a plethora of barriers which ultimately prevents them from taking on leadership roles that would allow for greater change and a seat at the table. Youth are pertinent to change because they are the ones that will be future politicians, governments, law-makers, etc. Moreover, if youth are not given the opportunity to lead change, the odds will forever be slim for them to do so (Scheve, Perkins, & Mincemoyer, 2006). Additionally, when youth are constantly discouraged from engaging in change – whether that be attending community meetings or mentorship – they will continue to fall into a cycle of disengagement and continue to be regarded as complacent, not to mention *feeling* complacent as well. One reoccurring concept that was found throughout interviews is that engaged and disengaged youth need to be empowered and supported in order for them to grow and nurture a more inclusive, positive, and healthy community. Below, we chart some of the reasons that the youth participants gave for their community engagement. Firstly, youth shared that they typically participate in community engagement because they passionately connected to their various communities. Youth shared that they felt compelled to engage because they believed that their communities are enhanced by it. These were youth who lived in low-income housing; in areas that are officially known as "priority neighbourhoods"[8] and are often stigmatized as incubators of gangs, gun violence, and crime. Such areas include the Jane/Finch area mentioned by Natasha above. One participant stated, "I find that that statement shows how much people don't look at areas like ours and our certain low-income areas or whatever they choose to call them. So, I feel like there are not enough people looking at these places that we start to have to look after ourselves." Additionally, many youths better their community members' quality of life. For example, another participant who volunteered

at a community center shared that "I like to do a lot of one-on-one stuff so, connecting people to organizations that can help them build themselves better."

Secondly, youth noted that a recurring inspiration for them (and their friends) to become active contributors to their communities is the role of positive relationships. Within the life stage of youth and young adulthood, there is great importance placed on relationships which influence both the creation and shaping of individual identities. Participants often noted that their willingness to initiate engagement within their communities was reliant on the participation of a peer. If there was no such relationship, they often refrained from engagement or waited until a peer expressed interest to become engaged as well. Another relationship-oriented finding was that mentor-like relationships play a large role in encouraging youth to remain consistent in their involvement. By building relationships with experienced and engaged community members, youth are able to learn the necessary aspects of what it means to be involved within a certain community and are able to better develop useful personal skills, such as communication and time-management. Youth and mentor relationships facilitate the sharing of knowledge and delegation of authority to youth, which in turn offer validation and purpose to their involvement. Within interviews, youth were able to identify at least one personal relationship which positively influenced their decision and commitment to engaging with their community.

Thirdly, youth highlighted the importance of representation. If there was a leader which youth could identify with on one or more aspects of their identity (i.e., ethnicity, gender expression, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, etc.), youth were more inclined to participate and take on leadership roles. In contrast, a lack of representation was noted as a hindrance to their willingness to get involved, and an aversion, whether consciously or unconsciously at the time, to assume a leadership role in their community. Also, references to representation suggest that youth are consciously aware of the political terrain that they continuously walk. This shows that youth are aware of the racist and sexist society that they live in where the allocation of resources is mediated by who people are and how they are situated within those racial and sexuality ladders. This significantly problematizes already complex identity issues young people experience. It also shapes their propensity to engage and the types of activism in which they participate. In some ways, it mobilizes them to defend the right to express their Canadian identities (such as in the case of Jason – and to

some extent, Nicholas, above). Thus, while social exclusion (racism, sexism, etc.) in general acts to inhibit social involvement, some young people feel that their own marginality can enable community and political engagement. Such mobilization may constitute a positive response to stigmatization in the short-term. However, this focus on the politics of countering racism and sexism ultimately constrains youth's social involvement within a form of identity politics that fails to reflect their complex subjectivities and denies them the opportunity to make the broader contributions to politics and society that they desire.

Future Considerations

It would be interesting to do a longitudinal study that follows our Tikkun participants in order to see if their community activity deepens and continues over time. Correspondingly, there is a need for a shift from a discourse focusing on the levels of youth disengagement and youth apathy to a discourse that explores the various ways in which youth engagement continues on to adulthood and operates alongside other adults. Also, we recognize that other virtual spaces exist where youth engage in and facilitate community activities, such as debating, mobilizing, and circulating petitions to address a community injustice. However, in the Tikkun Youth Project, that is the basis of this chapter; on-line forms of community activities were not the focus. Therefore, our discussion on youth engagement focuses on the physical community-based activities in which youth participate. A study that also takes into consideration the online part of community engagement would lead to interesting findings. Moreover, understanding how youth and adult engagement are similar can ensure the creation of more programs that actively facilitate young people's work along those of their parents.

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Appendix A
Interview Guide

NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS:

- Remember to tell participants that they can return to any question at any time if they think of something they want to change or add.
- Remember to treat the interview like a *conversation* – use the probes to help you get the participant to elaborate on answers.
- These questions are a guide and do not have to be asked word-for-word.

POSSIBLE PROBES:

- Tell me more…
- Let's talk about…
- Do you have an example of…?
- What do you mean by…?
- Connecting that to what you said before… Do you think…?
- Can you explain that…?
- Why/Why not?

Opening Explanation

I want to thank you again for taking the time to meet me and do this interview. Just so you know, this interview is divided into two parts. During the first part of the interview, I will ask you general questions about your family, friends, school, and community. The purpose of these questions is to get to know you better. During the second part of the interview, I am going to ask you questions about your activities in the community. This part is meant to learn more about what sort of activities you are involved in and what sort of future activities you may imagine.

Opening question

As I just said, I am interested in learning more about you. I would like to start with a very open question just so that I can get to know you better. Can you tell me a little about yourself? You can start with whatever you would like.

Family

Can you tell me a little about your family?

Probe for:

- Household composition – parents, brothers/sisters, grandparents
- Parents' occupations
- What sort of things do you do for fun as a family?
- Responsibilities in the family

School

I am also interested in your school life. Can you tell me a little bit about your school? What does school mean to you and what are your school days like?

Probe for:

- Likes/dislike and why?
- Perceptions of fellow students.
- Perceptions of fellow teachers.

Friends/Social Circle

Can you tell me about your friends?

Probe for:

- Who?
- Age range
- School friends versus outside school friends. How are they different?
- Activities
- Hang-out places
- Traits you look for
- How you became friends
  - Story of how they became friends

Leisure

When you are not in school, what do you like do? For example, work, sports, art, school clubs, etc.

Probe for:

- Interests outside of school (e.g., music, sport, art, gaming, etc.)

- What other activities are you involved in?
- Who are involved in these activities?
- Reasons for being involved in these activities

City/Town/Village

How would you describe your city/town/village? What are your feelings about this city/town/village and living in this city/town/village?

Is this community a good place for young people to grow up in? Is it a place that provides you with opportunities?

- Education?
- Work and career?
- Leisure activities?
- Family life?
- Friendship?
- Safety?
- Freedom of movement?

Civic Engagement Questions

Thank you very much. I would now like to ask you about the types of activities you are doing in your community. Can you tell me a little bit about the sort of activities you are currently involved in? In what ways are you currently engaged or active in your community?

Probe for:

- What community projects/organizations are you involved with?
- Who is involved in these projects?
- How did you become involved in these projects?
- How much time do you spend with this project/organization?
- What issues do you seek to address by your involvement with this project/organization?
- Are you typical of other young people in your community? Are other youth in your community involved in these types of projects/organizations? Why do you think they are/are not involved?

You seem quite active in several activities. Can you tell me about what motivates you to be active in these sorts of initiatives, activities, and/or projects?

Probe for:

- Can you tell me a specific story about realizing that you needed to do something about an issue facing your community?
- Do you feel that youth are supported in this type of volunteer or community work (i.e. by their peers, friends, teachers, government, etc.)?
- Are you aware of any form of support that is provided for youth in your community that want to become more involved?

I would like to ask you a little bit about what you think needs to happen in your community. What sort of initiatives or projects would you like to see developed or what could be done to help existing projects/organization address the issues that matter to you?

Probe for:

- How do you think other youth could be encouraged/motivated to become more involved in their communities?

Thank you very much for your participation. I have asked all of my questions. Is there anything else you would like to say that you think is important for me to know?

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[1] Part of the literature discussed in this section appears in Dlamini, Daniel, and Kwakyewah's (2015) article.

[2] Some parts of the methodology may have appeared in other project-describing documents such as funder-reports and news briefs.

[3] At the initial planning for this chapter were five youth who expressed interest in its production; however, as time progressed, only two were left: Cynthia Kwakyewah and Shawnee Hardware. This was partly one of several challenges of working with youth in research, which are discussed in Dlamini, Kwakyewah, & Daniel's (2016) article.

[4] Purposively, we tapped into youth and their networks previously used by the Toronto researchers, notable in Dlamini's Engaging Girls, Changing Communities (2011-2014), which was a SSHRC-funded research project that

examined girls' concepts of and experiences with leadership and civic engagement in an urban environment.

[5] Several studies have been successful in broadening what we mean by engagement through participating in a more observatory than categorizing approach to youth community life. For a telling example, see Pilkington, 2018 H2020 Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement (PROMISE) project. http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/home-page/

[6] To protect the identity of the participants, all names are pseudonyms.

[7] The Jane/Finch community is often portrayed as an incubator of trouble and violence that offers youth a limited perspective of the opportunities they can gain in life. Media coverage has reinforced this negative image of Jane/Finch as a "troubled" community. "Even as the media attempt to present 'positive' portraits of the community, or 'look deeper' into it, they often reinforce the very ideas they claim to want to counteract [...] the message tends to be about the importance of an individual's efforts and not about how systemic inequity limits the opportunities that might have helped individuals to better their situation [while reinserting] the reputation of Jane-Finch as a tough, violent and harmful place" (James, 2012, p. 36).

[8] For details on Toronto's priority neighborhoods see United Way. (2007). 13 *Priority Neighbourhoods Map* [online]. Available online at http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/whatWeDo/neighbourhoodsMap.php