AUTHORING CIVIC IDENTITIES IN FIGURED WORLDS: A CASE STUDY OF A CURRICULAR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE IN SHAPING COLLEGE STUDENTS' CIVIC IDENTITIES

by

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(Under the Direction of Amy E. Stich)

ABSTRACT

As university-based community engagement programs expand through curricular and co-curricular initiatives, it is important to understand and assess their impact in advancing a key mission of higher education—to nurture and develop engaged citizens with a well-honed sense of civic identity. A literature review revealed a gap in the conceptualization and understanding of civic identity as a construct that informs, shapes, and undergirds this work. It is essential to advance empirical knowledge about whether and the ways in which community engagement experiences at the baccalaureate level help shape civic identity in students, so we may more explicitly structure pedagogical approaches to facilitate its development.

This instrumental case study was crafted to glean insights about the ways in which a curricular community engagement program influenced students' civic identity development. The study was informed and shaped by blending together two important theoretical threads on identity evolution—self-authorship (Kegan, 1982; 1994; Baxter Magolda, 1999) and the theory of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with thirteen students and two faculty members, and document analysis of secondary sources such as program website, course syllabi, and course reading which allowed for triangulation.

Primary and secondary data were mutually confirmatory and revealed that early community engagement experiences influenced students’ college choices and their subsequent civic work in college. These experiences may enable the evolution of students’ identities as civic agents and engaged citizens. In generating new empirical evidence and in advancing theoretical innovation, this study highlights the critical importance of university-based community engagement experiences as a crucial mechanism for fulfilling the civic mission of higher education institutions. Study findings have implications for community engagement pedagogy, policy, and praxis.

INDEX WORDS: community engagement, civic identity, self-authorship, figured worlds, pedagogy, and praxis.

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“Building community is to the collective as spiritual practice is to the individual.”
—Grace Lee Boggs

“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”
—Rabindranath Tagore

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Over the course of the history of nation states, there have been periodic needs for civic renewal. During such moments, democratic societies often rely upon institutions of higher education to reform and deliver civic education that is responsive to the needs of the moment (Allen, 2016; Daniels, et al., 2021; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). During the present moment, conditions precipitating the need for continued emphasis on civic education include political polarization, increasing rural-urban divides, vast and expanding disparities in income and wealth, geo-political turmoil and resulting migration, and the ever-increasing urgency of the climate crisis. While many of these crises existed in times prior, they have risen to the fore again. While institutions of higher education are not the sole source of civic education, they are essential to cultivating the next generation of citizens and civic leaders to sustain democracies. As Miller (2010) astutely pointed out, while older generations may be concerned about the crises confronting us, it is youth that undeniably face the brunt of the most adverse consequences of these crises as their lives will be profoundly shaped by whether and how these matters are resolved.

Background and Context

At the front end of a new century, there is increasing recognition about the need for civic renewal (Putnam, 2000) and modernization of civic education (Allen, 2016; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Center for Information and

Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2006; Daniels, et al., 2021; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). There has also been a redefinition of civic leadership along more expansive and democratic terms including a recognition of mutuality, common purpose (Burns, 1978, 2003), and an emphasis on the public good, service, and community building (Greenleaf, 1977). Burns (1978), in particular emphasized the move away from a transactional orientation of civic engagement and leadership to a more transformational one—from one-off exchanges to deeper engagement that attempts to understand and tackle systemic issues. In addition, there has also been a shift in conceptualizing civic leadership toward a model that has a "public purpose—one that is more democratically oriented and goes beyond individuals 'standing out in a pack' and being recognized" (Longo & Gibson, 2011, p. 9).

Coinciding with these more pluralistic and civic-oriented conceptualizations of community engagement, the 20th century has also witnessed trends in higher education toward greater globalization, prioritization of national and international rankings, and substantial global mobility of faculty, staff, and students (Koekkek et al., 2021). These trends have led to the impression that universities are "disconnected from their constituent cities and regions" (Goddard et al., 2016, p. 3), and are operating as "entrepreneurial, purely business-oriented corporations" (Lynch, 2006, p. 7). However, despite the forces of internationalization and corporatization in higher education (Goddard et al., 2016), there has also been a commitment to community engagement (Koekkek, et al., 2021). In other words, universities are attempting to simultaneously balance global engagement with maintaining place-based ties to communities (Harris & Holley, 2016; Watson, 2007). Fueled by this civic orientation in the missions of institutions of higher education (Cuoto, 2011), there has been an expansion of curricular community engagement and civic leadership programs at the baccalaureate level (Komives, 2011; Jacoby, 2009; Brungardt et al., 2006; Colby, et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000).

The ubiquity of this mission, as measured by the expansion of courses, majors, minors, and certificate programs in civic engagement across a multitude of colleges and universities (Brungardt et al., 2006) seems to suggest that civic engagement is axiomatic of a contemporary college education. Yet even an inexhaustive examination of curricula at the undergraduate level demonstrates that there are significant shortcomings in breadth and depth, as well as inadequacies in resources devoted to fostering civic leadership (Johnson & Woodard, 2014). Additionally, there is lack of uniformity in the definition of community engagement, as well as lack of clarity in what the term entails (Koekkoek, et al., 2021). Furthermore, the development of civic identity amongst undergraduate students—the ways in which they make meaning of the community engagement experiences that they participate in and how these experiences enable them to build their capacities as civic agents and engaged citizens in democratic societies—is not well understood (Johnson, 2017). As Rhoads (2009) argued, for universities to be transformative spaces, it is essential to envision, (re)invent, and implement appropriate and timely community engagement opportunities that enable students to develop critical consciousness[1] that could potentially lead to the development of civic identity. Community engagement activities such as service-learning are the most often used approaches to helping students step beyond campus walls and in building social cohesion between universities and the broader communities of which they are part (Blouin & Perry, 2009).

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[1] This is a notion originally put forth by the Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire in the 1970s and is described as the potential of education to help students understand inequality… so as to "better transform it" (Friere, 1970, p. 24). It has been used routinely but largely implicitly in community engagement and service-learning pedagogical approaches.

While much of the discourse about whether and how institutions should be involved in preparing individuals to be engaged citizens tends to be philosophical in nature, there is also ample empirical evidence that "higher education does indeed impact students' civic engagement" (Vogelgesang & Astin 2005, p.1) and that the ultimate goal is betterment of the human condition—improving social, economic, and political conditions (Mlyn & McBride, 2020). Scholars further suggest that this can be achieved in myriad ways and that higher education is instrumental in facilitating and teaching the skills necessary to effect social change.

Even though political activities such as registering others to vote and participating in the electoral process tend to be the most assessed outcomes of civic engagement in the literature (Dee, 2004; Hillygus, 2005; Kam & Palmer, 2008; Lopez & Elrod, 2006; Nie & Hillygus, 2001), apolitical activities such as community service and volunteering are also considered in the literature as effective measures of civic engagement (Brand, 2010; Dee 2004; Lopez & Elrod, 2006; Lough, et al., 2009). Furthermore, the benefits of community engagement on various short and long-term outcomes among students are well-studied and well-documented. For example, students' involvement in community engagement has been shown to have positive impacts on their dispositions, attitudes, and behaviors (Billing and Furco, 2002), their civic life (Astin et al., 2006), and community service beyond college (Astin, et al., 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Warchal & Ruiz, 2004). Participation in service-learning and other similar community-engaged pedagogical experiences is also linked to the development of improved communication, leadership, and teamwork skills (Astin, 1999a, Astin, 1999b; Dvorak, et al., 2011; McFall 2012, Newman & Hernandez, 2011; Nie & Hillygus, 2001; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005). More recently, Thomas et al. (2021) demonstrated that students develop a sense of shared agency and generative leadership capacity through sustained engagement with community partners when combined with reflection.

Purpose of Study and Methods

As university-based community engagement programs expand, particularly through curricular and co-curricular programs, it is important to understand and assess their impact in advancing a key mission of institutions of higher education—to nurture and develop engaged citizens with a well-honed sense of civic identity. However, there is a gap in the literature in conceptualizing civic identity as a construct that informs, shapes, and undergirds this work (Johnson, 2017). It is essential to advance our empirical understanding of the ways in which investments in community engagement experiences at the baccalaureate level help shape civic identity in students, so we may more explicitly structure pedagogical approaches to facilitate its development. Paraphrasing Cipollone, et al. (2020), intention does not automatically equate to a desired outcome, and it is crucial to clearly explicate the link therein, in order to be more intentional in developing policies and programs. Additionally, gaining a greater understanding of the impact of civic engagement experiences on the development of students' civic identities could aid in refining pedagogical praxis and student engagement programming.

This study aimed to understand whether, and in what ways undergraduate students' participation in curricular community engagement programs shaped their civic identity. While there is ample empirical evidence in the literature on the many positive benefits of participation in civic engagement programs on students in the short- and long-term, there is a gap in the literature on how these programs help students develop and/or refine their civic identity. Given this gap in our understanding of the development of civic identity among youth, this qualitative case study aimed to understand *how*, and in *what specific ways* undergraduate students' participation in curricular community engagement programs shaped their civic identity. Institutions of higher education have an important role to play in developing engaged citizens in democratic societies, and a robust sense of civic identity is crucial for citizens to feel truly engaged in democratic processes. Therefore, it is essential to understand the development of civic identity among students.

The focus of this study was a curricular community-engagement experience at a private, not-for-profit, research-intensive, four-year institution (Carnegie Classifications, 2022) in the southeast of the United States—Duke University. The unit of study, or the case itself, was the Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) program, a nationally recognized and selective 12-month cohort-based leadership, and curricular community engagement program designed for students interested in engaging with social issues. The instrumental design of the case study was crafted to provide insight into how students who participated in and completed the SOL program as part of one cohort, made meaning of their experiences in the program and how and in what ways these experiences might have shaped students' sense of civic identity. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with thirteen students who were all part of the same SOL cohort. In addition, interviews were also conducted with two faculty members who teach in and are responsible for program administration to glean their perspectives on the pedagogy and praxis of the program, and their insights on the perceived program impact on students. Finally, data sources also included course syllabi, course reading material, and program website. This document analysis, overlaying the primary source of data collection through interviews, allowed for triangulation. Overall, both primary and secondary sources were aligned and mutually confirmatory of the themes unveiled during data analysis.

Overview of Findings and Significance

This case study of the SOL program suggests that students pursued varied paths on their journeys *to* college and as they traversed *through* college. The study was informed by the developmental frameworks for identity development put forth by Kegan (1982, 1994) and Baxter Magolda (1999) as well as Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of figured worlds. Study findings revealed that while there are multiple ways in which civic identity is developed and evolves, including the ways in which a college education shapes students' civic identities, curricular community engagement programs such as the one that was the basis of this case study do play an important role in enabling students to build their capacities as civic agents in democratic societies. Findings further revealed that early civic, or community engagement experiences can influence students' college choices and their predisposition to and experiences with community engagement while in college. Subsequently, these experiences may enable the evolution of their identities as civic agents and engaged citizens in society.

This study makes an important contribution to the literature. It confirms existing research and offers new evidence in support of the benefits of curricular community engagement experiences. Additionally, it weaves together two significant theoretical threads on identity development to investigate the ways in which curricular community engagement experiences shape civic identity among college students. This study is significant and timely in that it highlights the critical importance of university-based community engagement experiences as one important avenue to fulfilling the civic mission of higher education institutions. Given the magnitude of challenges that the U.S. and the world face, there is a heightened urgency for engaged and active citizens to address and potentially mitigate these challenges.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Extant literature about the development of college students has largely centered on cognitive developmental models (King, 2009). In their review of the literature on cognitive developmental theories, Love and Guthrie (1999) suggested that college students evolve from viewing the world with certainty to recognizing and navigating complexity and ambiguity. However, the main critique of dominant theories about college student development is that they are based on a Western frame of understanding and do not fully account for the developmental processes of students from non-dominant groups (Taylor, 2016). Given the ever-increasing diversity in higher education in the United States, particularly among college students (U.S. Department of Education, 2022), it is incumbent upon scholars in this space to incorporate greater inclusivity in definitional and empirical approaches to student development. Additionally, there is a greater focus in the literature on the "identification of structures that characterize developmental stages" versus the "analysis of processes of real-time activity within specific contexts" (Granott & Parziale, 2002 p. 2). Addressing this shortfall necessitates answering the call to study student development in context (King, 2009; Patton, et al., 2016; Taylor, 2017). This case study hopes to build on the literature in conceptualizing and studying college student development and identity evolution in a more inclusive and expansive way.

The literature about educational practices that foster college student development arose from several scholarly streams, and therefore this chapter will adopt an overarching as well as an integrative approach to reviewing the literature. For developmental frameworks of identity formation, the review will draw from models as put forth by constructivist-developmental scholars including Kegan (1982, 1994) and Baxter Magolda (1999, 2001, 2008). Additionally, given the primacy of contextual factors in addition to psychological factors in shaping identity, and to encompass the program that was selected for this case study, the lens of service-learning, and more specifically, critical service-learning (Mitchell, 2008; Rosenberger, 2000) will be utilized. The distinction between critical service-learning and other broader applications of service-learning is that this approach extends the 'service' activity "beyond empathy, and 'helping others'" and paves the way for "an avenue of education that enlarges students' critical consciousness and contributes to the transformation of society" (Rosenberger, 2000, p. 42). Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of figured worlds offers the most appropriate and relevant heuristic to undergird and inform the understanding of college student development and evolution of identity. Given this dual framing of evolution of identity, and identity informed and shaped by contextual factors, this chapter will incorporate developmental theories of identity as well as figured worlds. Developmental frameworks describe experiences in college at a broad and general level (Jones & Abes, 2013; Patton et al., 2016; Taylor, 2017) whereas the theory of figured worlds allows for a focus on contextual and program-specific factors (Holsapple, 2012).

This chapter presents an overview of the literature on university-based community engagement and civic education. Starting with a brief history and an overview of university-based community engagement, the chapter will then touch upon some of the philosophical debates about community engagement and discuss the programmatic (curricular and co-curricular) ways in which community engagement is implemented, particularly in baccalaureate education. This is followed by an examination of a decline in rates of civic participation and an exploration of the empirical evidence explaining this decline and paths to revive civic engagement. The literature review also includes a brief overview of extant scholarship about the development of youth civic identity. Building on this, the chapter delves into the theoretical frameworks that informed and shaped this case study.

A Brief History of Civic Engagement in Higher Education

Democracy, translated from its Greek roots as the practice of self-rule 'by the people' (Bellah et al, 2008), is defined by the active participation of citizens in self-governance. Participation in public life takes place in both political (e.g., voting) and non-political (e.g., community service) ways and is recognized as civic engagement (Ehrlich, 2000). As democracies across the globe grapple with seemingly intractable social problems including persistent inequality, systemic racism, environmental disasters brought on by climate change, and deep-rooted health inequities, we are in ever greater need for engaged citizens and civic leaders to navigate and tackle these issues (Sun & Anderson, 2012; Youniss, 2011). Participation in civil society is not a default condition, or as O'Connor and Hamilton (2011) somewhat facetiously put it, it is "not handed down through the gene pool" (p. 5). Instead, it is a set of skills that is acquired—it is learned and therefore must be taught (Dewey, 1916). Institutions of higher education play an important role in developing citizens and in nurturing leaders who are critical to finding solutions for systemic challenges (Astin & Astin, 2000). Promoting civic mindedness among students through active engagement with the communities that they are a part of is increasingly recognized as integral to the educational mission of institutions of higher education (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Establishing collective goals and working in collaboration with others to achieve them are critical components of (youth) leadership (Christens & Dolan, 2011) and vital for democratic societies to thrive (Krause & Montenegro, 2017).

Institutions of higher education have been engaged not just in workforce development but also in preparing citizens for participation in civic life—in the United States, and arguably in much of the democratic world. For instance, Harkavay (2006) suggested that the core mission of universities is “effectively educating students to be creative, caring, constructive citizens of a democratic society” (p. 9). While university-based civic engagement is not a new idea, there has been renewed interest in, and recognition of student civic engagement since the 1980s with the founding of Campus Compact in 1985. Founded originally as a partnership between Brown, Georgetown, and Stanford Universities and the Education Commission, it has since expanded into the largest coalition dedicated to advancing university-based student civic and community engagement. The membership of this national non-profit comprises university administrators, civic engagement researchers, practitioners, and students at universities and colleges across the United States. Its overarching mission is to position universities as crucial architects of our democracy with a commitment to educate students for responsible and engaged citizenship (Campus Compact, n.d.). Since the founding of Campus Compact, there is general recognition of the importance of incorporating civic purpose into undergraduate education (Maurrassse, 2001), and there are numerous professional organizations and academic publications dedicated to documenting and disseminating university-based civic and community engagement activities, along with a robust growth in the literature about this topic.

While this recognition and subsequent activity focused on incorporating civic engagement into the educational mission is seemingly recent, the history of universities' engagement with society runs deep and has been part of the Unite States higher education since the colonial beginnings. Contemporary pedagogical approaches are largely informed by the educational philosophy and approaches developed by John Dewey (1916). Since then, many others have rekindled and reinforced the need for institutions of higher education to take their commitment to society seriously and to tackle significant societal problems in collaboration with communities (see for e.g., Boyer, 1990; Harkavy & Benson, 1998; Harkavy & Puckett, 1994; Kellogg Commission, 2000 & 2001). Further demonstrative of the strong forces that seem to propel and prioritize the civic purpose of universities, some observers have even tried to make the case that modern research universities will not survive unless they deepen their connections to the local communities that they are part of and align their research and teaching missions more closely to real-world challenges (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002). As Fitzgerald et al. (2012) suggested, "to thrive in the 21st century, institutions of higher education must move engagement from the margins to the mainstream" and seriously recommit their covenant to the communities that they are a part of (p. 23).

Therefore, there are ever greater pressures for universities to demonstrate their broader usefulness to society, and more importantly their ability to center the needs and priorities of communities (Fairweather, 1996; Johnstone, 1993; Prewitt, 1993; Sladek, 2019; Tierny, 1998). The driving principle appears to be that universities need to serve vital community needs and address contemporary challenges in order to stay relevant as important societal institutions (Boyer, 1990 & 1994). This notion seems to have particular resonance in the current moment where universities face ever greater pressures to justify the rising costs of education by defending their contributions to society (Boyte & Kari, 1996; Daniels, 2021; Edwards & Marullo, 1999; Marullo & Edwards, 2000).

University-Community Engagement

John Dewey (1916) was among the first to advocate for the importance of civic learning to the mission of institutions of higher education. Following Dewey, another early proponent of active engagement between higher education institutions and the communities that they are a part of was Jacobs (1969), who posited that the broad knowledge creation function of higher education generates far greater local growth than the more specialized and self-interested research and development activities of private corporations. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) recognized the important role that universities play in serving the welfare of the communities in which they are located. More recent scholarship further supports the cascading benefits of universities to local communities including generating jobs, attracting new industry, providing social and cultural opportunities, and improving the overall fabric of the communities that they are a part of (Hodges, & Dubb, 2012; Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, 2011; Levesque-Bristol & Cornelius-White, 2012; Taylor & Luter, 2013). Community engagement and civic learning has been increasingly and consistently recognized as integral to the educational mission of institutions of higher education (Allen, 2016; Chittum et al., 2022; Daniels, 2021; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). For example, a survey of university faculty, professional association leaders, and university presidents found that most parties agreed that educating students for democracy and citizenship is among the core missions of higher education (Chambers & Gopaul, 2008).

On the other hand, even as universities have tried to strike a balance between serving public interest and furthering private institutional benefit, their accountability in serving the public over their own institutional priorities has been called into question by scholars and external observers (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002). The 1990s marked a watershed moment in this debate, prompting Clark Kerr, the erstwhile President of the University of California system to caution: “America now faces potentially the most stressful period of interactive relations between higher education and the surrounding society in the more than three and one-half centuries since the founding of Harvard in 1636” (Kerr, 1994, p. xii). Thus, university-community engagement has been propelled by the reemergence of a wider national movement for civic renewal (Edwards, et al., 2001; Gamson, 1997; Sirianni & Friedland, 2005; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999) that includes a call for civic education and public scholarship (Ehrlich, 2000).

Since the time of the earliest colonial colleges, the identities, and fates of many institutions of higher education have been derived from the local community of which they are a part (Thelin, 2004), further cementing both their potential and their position as anchor institutions (Anchor Institution Task Force, 2013, Harkavy, 1999). While educational innovations are constantly evolving and the rise in technology and globalization has opened possibilities for study abroad, online, and virtual learning for students; place-based experiential and community engaged learning is still a powerful pedagogical approach, as is community-based research (Harris & Holley, 2016) that institutions of higher education leverage in partnership with their locales. The geographic connectedness between institutions of higher education and the communities that they are a part of often leads to interconnected relationships through shared mission and purpose, capital, and infrastructure investments, human resources, and local businesses (Webber & Kalstrom, 2009). While physical proximity plays an important facilitatory role in community-university engagement, it is not the only driver (Bercovitz & Feldman, 2006). As Stachowiak et al. (2013) suggested, an infrastructure and ecosystem that support research, education, and innovation both inside and outside institutions of higher education have cumulative effects on generating positive economic and social benefits beyond the campus and into the broader community.

In addition, the broad appeal of university-based civic engagement is also tied to widely shared concerns about the state of American democracy and civil society and is echoed in the lofty words of a 1999 Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education signed by college and university presidents:

> In celebrating the birth of our democracy, we can think of no nobler task than committing ourselves to helping catalyze and lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes of and civic mission of higher education. We believe that now and through the next century, our institutions must be vital agents and architects of a flourishing democracy (Campus Compact, 1990, p. 11 as cited in Ostrander, 2004).

Thus, while the commitment to community engagement has been strong among higher education institutions, the manner in which it has been conceptualized and operationalized has varied as is discussed in the next section.

Conceptualization and Definitions of Community Engagement

A review of the literature reveals a lack of clarity in defining community engagement as well as significant variability in operationalizing and applying it. There are several threads that emerge related to university-based community engagement. One of these threads is focused on cultivating place-based relationships with local communities. According to Goddard (2009), “the engaged civic university provides opportunities for society *of which it is part*. It engages as a whole with its surroundings and not piecemeal… [emphasis added]. While it operates on a global scale, it realizes that its location helps form its identity and provides opportunities for it to grow…” (p. 5). Other conceptualizations of community engagement have emphasized mutuality and reciprocity in the relationship (Bringle, et al., 2012; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Bednarz et al., 2008; Bridger & Alter, 2008). Combining these two conceptualizations, the Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as “…the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (as cited in Driscoll, 2009, p. 6). Engagement of universities with their broader communities has been shown to have social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits; build capacity, and develop human and social capital (Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002).

Swaner (2007) suggested that civic engagement leads to the “development of citizenship capacities necessary for participatory democracy and social responsibility necessary for community membership.” (p.19). Goddard et al. (2016) also made the case that civic engagement was essential for advancing the educational mission of universities in that it helps students develop a sense of citizenship. Furco (2010) linked the evolution of and growth in community engagement to millennials and subsequent generations wanting to leverage their education to make meaningful contributions to society.

Civic engagement, at best, can be characterized as an umbrella term that includes both political and apolitical activities, such as voting, voter registration, campaigning on behalf of causes, as well as community service, volunteering, etc. There is agreement in the literature that it is a term that is hard to define and consequently has multiple definitions (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Finley, 2011; Holland, 2001; Jacoby, 2009; Levine, 2007; Saltmarsh, 2005). In fact, the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, went so far as to emphasize that the conceptualization of the term, civic engagement in their report, “A Crucible Moment,” is merely “suggestive, not definitive” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 3). The lack of consensus about the construct is such that even describing civic engagement as “behavior that addresses legitimate public matters seems to stir disagreement” (Levine, 2007, p. 4).

The definition offered by Ehrlich (2000) of “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference (p. vi) is most consistently used (Braskamp, 2011; Downs, 2009; Hatcher, 2011; Lough et al., 2009; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). The appeal and the advantage of this definition appears to be not just in its breadth, but also in its grouping of the various dimensions of civic engagement into the categories of *knowledge*, *skills*, and *values*. A fourth category that the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) added is, *collective action*. Campus Compact, a national non-profit coalition of over 1,100 institutions of higher education with a shared mandate to fulfilling the civic purpose of higher education elaborates on this conceptualization and describes it as an unprecedented opportunity to influence the democratic knowledge, dispositions, of students, and a responsibility to teach the values and skills of our democratic society (Ehrlich & Hollander, 2011).

The American Association of Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Civic Learning Spiral classifies civic learning as occurring across six inter-connected threads that form a "fluid, integrated continuum" that is "constructed around the notion of relationships and deeply embedded interdependencies that are a part of everyday life and learning" (Musil, 2009, pp. 60 — 61). These threads are self, communities & culture; knowledge, skills, values, and (public) action. Lastly, the "Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire," developed at Tulane University measures students' *skills* that are "useful in civic endeavors," such as leadership and awareness of social issues, *values* related to civic engagement, such as attitudes about community service, and *action*, or the likelihood of involvement in civic activities (Moely et al., 2002, p. 17).

Philosophical Orientation and Debates about Civic Engagement

Given the range of definitions and broad scope of community engagement, the activities included therein are also wide-ranging. These include economic development and university-sponsored entrepreneurship activities; infrastructure building and resource sharing; educational activities for the community; community based (participatory) research; volunteerism, and service-learning, to name a few activities. Many of these activities existed well before they were categorized under the umbrella of community engagement and before the concept gained recognition (Mtawa et al., 2016). Despite the breadth of community engagement activities that have been documented in the academic literature, one theme that stands out is that community engagement is ideally characterized by genuineness, mutuality, reciprocity, and authenticity.

Furco (2010) suggested that the “intellectual, and discipline-based resources at an institution are harnessed, organized, and leveraged to address community issues and concerns; and community issues and concerns are incorporated into the scholarly, academic work of departments, faculty and students” (p. 388). Along similar lines, Goddard et al. (2016) described community engagement as a “holistic, self-reinforcing, and sustainable circle of activity, embedded across the entire institution” (p. 70). He further described civically oriented universities as having a sense of purpose, being in active dialog with “the wider world, having a sense of place, being willing to invest in the local community, having a holistic approach to engagement, with transparent and accountable communication with stakeholders” (pp. 10 — 11).

One of the primary fissures in community engagement literature is around the definition and conceptualization of civic engagement. It has been suggested that there are as many definitions of civic engagement as there are scholars and practitioners who are concerned with it. An additional complicating factor is that many of the terms that constitute civic engagement—such as community engagement, democratic participation, etc., are often used interchangeably as well as in relation to curricular programs such as service-learning. “Several colleges and universities have renamed their community service or service-learning offices ‘civic engagement’ but have not changed the programs or services they offer” (Jacoby, 2009; p. 7).

Given the many definitions of what it means to be civically engaged, the confidence in being able to effectively assess civic engagement is somewhat compromised (Finley, 2011). Given the differences in the nature and the quality of civic engagement programming, both curricular, and co-curricular, it is hard to say with confidence that students are responding to the same set of conceptual ideas when taking a survey, writing a journal, or responding to an interview. Therefore, the evaluation of civic engagement may be more accurately identified through the activities and programming that accompany it than through a program name or label. That being said, while debates abound about conceptualizing and defining civic engagement, there is "near consensus" that the value of "feeling responsible to and part of something beyond individual interests" is of the essence (Lawry et al., 2006, p. 23). It has been further described as something that "individuals should feel to uphold their obligation as part of any community" (Komives et al., 2007, p. 20). Additionally, civic values are described as "standards and principles" that affect attitudes about issues that have "implications for a just and fair society" (Lott & Eagan, 2011, p. 334). The National Task Force for Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) further elaborates on these attitudes as "belief in the greater good, empathy, equality, ethical integrity, justice, open-mindedness, tolerance, respect for freedom and human dignity" (p. 4). An important caveat provided by Levine (2007) that is worth emphasizing here is that while values may "cause people to participate, participation *changes* people's values and habits" [emphasis added] (p. 73). Put another way, civic experiences do have the potential to change individuals.

The following sections discuss how civic engagement is defined, operationalized, and assessed on campuses through the lens of service-learning.

Civic Engagement Through the Lens of Service Learning

Much of what we know about the outcomes of civic engagement through empirical studies is through the frame of service-learning. The term service-learning first appeared in 1967 in referring to an experiential learning program where college students gained academic credit or financial compensation for community-based work (Sigmon, 1979). However, “as a pedagogical practice in higher education, service-learning was limited to a small number of participants until the mid-1980s” (Kenny & Gallagher, 2002, p. 15), until the launch of two major national efforts: the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) and Campus Compact. These two initiatives were instrumental in promoting service-learning in higher education as a way to facilitate students’ earning academic credit for service work in the community (Anderson et al., 2019). Another breakthrough moment in the history of service-learning was the signing of the National Community Service Act in 1990 by then President George H. W. Bush with his launch of the ‘thousand points of light’ initiative to encourage volunteerism, particularly among America’s youth, and setting the stage for the creation of the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS) and to the creation of the AmeriCorps program. With this renewed national visibility, service-learning assumed greater prominence on college campuses and community service and volunteerism garnered greater pedagogical recognition and academic credit. Nevertheless, it is still a niche area of academic practice with many faculty reluctant to commit to incorporate service-learning into their courses “due to the large amount of time investment required to make it effective” (Fisher et al., 2017, p. 188); and still others skeptical of its pedagogical value, considering it to be “fluffy, feel-good stuff” (Markus, et al., 1993, p. 411). Regardless of the skepticism, and lack of widespread adoption, there is extensive empirical evidence in the literature to support strong learning outcomes for students engaged in service-learning, particularly those at the baccalaureate level (Astin et al., 2000; Bureau et al., 2014; Kilgo et al., 2015; Kuh, 2008; Marco-Gardoqui et al., 2020; Moely & Ilustre, 2014; Myers, 2020; Ngai et al., 2018; Ylitalo & Meyer, 2019). The most telling endorsement of service-learning came with the AAC&U (2007) recognizing it as one of ten high-impact practices.

Since Sigmon's (1979) foundational piece labeling and describing service-learning as important to pedagogical praxis, a multitude of terms and definitions have been put forth—definitions that Furco (1996) suggests "are as varied as the schools in which they operate" (p. 9). In fact, Eyler and Giles (1999) identified nearly 150 definitions of service-learning in the literature. According to Jacoby (1996, p. 5), service-learning can be defined as a "form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development." Along a similar vein, Bringle et al., (2006) and Kuh (2008) define service-learning as a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility.

The above definition implies that the service and learning components of service-learning are integral to success: Both the recipients of the service and the students performing the service should experience benefits (Domangue & Carson, 2008).

Therefore, service-learning can be described as a pedagogical community engagement approach where students learn to use their knowledge, education, and skills to solve social problems and challenges in collaboration with community-based organizations and community residents (Ferrari & Worrall, 2000) and earn academic credit for it (Mooney & Edwards, 2001). Community engagement activities such as service-learning are effective in helping students step beyond campus walls and in building social cohesion between universities and the broader communities that they are a part of (Blouin & Perry, 2009).

Service-learning consists of the following components—it should address an authentic need in the community, it should make a meaningful contribution to the student's learning and therefore should be well integrated into the course (Levesque-Bristol, et al., 2010), and it should enable students to develop the ability to serve the greater good in a diverse democratic society (Checkoway, 2001). Another overlapping definition of service-learning includes: "[Service-learning] is a form of active learning that involves service to one's community" (Rama, et al., 2000, p. 658).

The implementation of service-learning in a curricular setting provides real and experience-based opportunities for students to become immersed in critical thinking while applying course curricula to a local problem (Pragman & Flannery, 2008, p. 217). In practice, institutions of higher education seem to adhere to the following, all-inclusive approach to defining and labeling the practice of civic engagement on their campus:

> Campuses have used a variety of terms to describe their civic engagement activities and the ways these activities are linked to learning. Some of the most widely used are service-learning, community engagement, community-based

> research, civic education, community experiences, community-based learning, democratic practice, and philanthropy education, not to mention a variety of co-curricular offerings for students. Regardless of the term used, if part of the purpose of the activity is to educate or enhance students' understanding of civic life, the work generally can be referred to as civic engagement (Cress, et al., 2010, p. 4).

The above definition serves the function of bridging various activities that campuses leverage for student civic engagement and provides the important distinction that the civic mission of higher education is primarily to provide students with an 'understanding' of civic life, as opposed to also helping cultivate the skills and values needed to actively participate in and influence such civic life. The latter requires incorporation of actions and practices in higher education that more intentionally frame civic participation as politically and democratically centered (Boyte 2008; Colby, et al., 2003; Thomas, 2011). The argument advanced by these scholars seems to be that the original, historic mission of higher education institutions in the US was focused on the engagement of students in the actions, skills, and value-building related to living within a diverse democratic society. Thus, true civic engagement goes beyond apolitical involvement in the community (i.e., service-learning, volunteerism, community-based learning) and intentionally fosters broad(er) forms of democratic skill-building. Furthermore, it's also been suggested that the limitation of civic engagement that is apolitical or divorced from civic processes and aims is that it is too focused on the individual student. Because these experiences are not substantively connected to a student's role within a larger community or processes of negotiation (i.e., dialogue and deliberation), apolitical experiences encourage students to focus reflection inward on their individual experience, rather than outward to the relevance of that experience to larger societal issues. As Knefelkamp and Schneider (1997) put it, "…an educational ethos of unencumbered individualism has a very high cost in the neglect and diminishment of democratic society" (p. 333).

That said, apolitical forms of civic engagement provide important context for reviewing the vast and varied research in this field. There is ample empirical work on civic engagement, and much of it has been concerned with documenting and assessing activities connected with service-learning. While service-learning facilitates students' engagement with communities, that engagement may or may not be politically oriented or intentionally structured to deepen the specific knowledge or skills associated with developing citizenship capacities.

Ranging from service-learning to political and policy oriented civic engagement, the landscape of civic engagement literature is vast, replete with theoretical frameworks, empirical research, and pedagogical models attempting to conceptualize, understand, and explain pathways and outcomes related to knowledge generation and skill building in this space. While we know a good deal about what institutions of higher education are doing to advance various forms of civic engagement, the bulk of empirical research has largely been focused on impacts and outcomes of service-learning. The next section delves into an examination of service-learning as a pedagogical approach and will examine some of the empirical evidence about the outcomes of service-learning.

Service-Learning as High Impact Practice

Since the mid-1980s, service-learning has gained recognition as a pedagogical model in higher education with exciting potential for students' academic, civic, and professional development (Stanton et al., 1999; Finley, 2011) and equipping graduates to become active members of a diverse democracy and agents of change in local communities (Checkoway, 2001). In 2008, the AAC&U produced a series of reports defining ten 'high impact practices' as particularly effective in fostering student learning and in preparing them for future careers (Kuh, 2008; Chittum, et al., 2022). These practices are: first year seminars, core curricula, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning experiences, service-learning, internships, and capstones or senior projects. Using data from the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSEE), researchers at AAC&U demonstrated positive relationships between students' participation in these ten practices and academic and personal gains.

By definition, high-impact practices help undergraduates develop real-world skills through hands-on applied learning (Anderson, et al., 2019). High-impact practices "promise to engage today's college students to a greater extent than traditional classroom-based instruction alone" (Brownell & Swaner, 2009, p. 1) while promoting "positive educational results for students from widely varying backgrounds." High-impact practices produce "outcomes that are closely calibrated with the challenges of a complex and volatile world"—outcomes including the intellectual and practical skills of inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, and teamwork and problem solving (Kuh, 2008, pp. 1—2).

Furthermore, according to Kuh (2008), these practices not only provide college students with a high-quality education but also prepare them for success in a global society. Extant research points to positive student learning outcomes including increased engagement, improved retention, and opportunities for enabling reflection and seeking and finding purpose in their learning (Hu & McCormick, 2012; Kilgo et al., 2015; Kuh, 2008; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). A series of meta-analyses reviewing hundreds of studies definitively demonstrated numerous positive outcomes of service-learning on academic achievement, personal development, and civic engagement. It was found to have a positive impact on students' understanding of course content (Warren, 2012), enhanced personal insight, cognitive and social development (Yorio & Ye, 2012), and positive attitudes toward self and toward school and learning, civic engagement, and academic achievement (Celio et al., 2011). Maynes et al. (2013) recommended the integration of community engagement into the college curriculum to maximize potential for student learning. They argued that "learning may remain tacit rather than explicit unless substantial opportunities for engagement and reflection are included in the service-learning experience (p. 80). Thus, service-learning is distinct from volunteerism and is tied to course-content and to specific learning outcomes therein. It is "intentional pedagogy" that "ensures that the service enhances the learning, and the learning enhances the service" (Furco, 1996, pp. 2—3), enabling students in making meaning of their experiences in and with communities and enriching the quality of thinking, of learning, of service, and of partnerships (Norris et al., 2017). Additionally, Bringle and Hatcher (1995) defined service-learning as:

> a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 112)

Service-learning offers opportunities for students to explore, experience, and enhance their civic skills by combining knowledge gained in the university classroom with skills acquired in community settings so that responsible and respectful service is provided. This will enable them to "make important contributions to their communities through their capacity to generate citizen-driven solutions" (Moore & Mendez, 2014, p. 33). Students draw the greatest benefits from service-learning when they are able to apply knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to addressing real issues in the community. Thus, service-learning that is well done will enable students to connect theory to practice in service to the community (Richards, et al., 2012).

Reflection is a critical component of high-quality service-learning programs (Domangue & Carson, 2008). When done well, reflection can enable participants to reconsider preconceived notions about the communities that they engage with. It also leads to greater awareness of social injustices, thus empowering students to become social change agents (Baldwin et al., 2007). Conversely, when reflection is neglected, service-learning may lead to reinforcing stereotypes rather than challenging them (Sheckley, et al., 1993).

The next section will delve into the outcomes of service-learning.

Outcomes of Service-Learning

Illustrating the rising importance of civic engagement in advancing the educational mission of institutions of higher education is the more recent category used by U.S. News and World Report to rank institutions of higher education on their service-learning programming (U.S. News, Best Colleges, Service-Learning, n.d.). The Carnegie Classification System (spearheaded in 1970 by Cark Kerr, the visionary behind the California Master Plan for Higher Education), created the Community Engagement designation in 2006 to broaden the classification of the functions served by higher education institutions (Driscoll, 2008, 2009).

The classic study by Astin et al. (2000) of over 12,000 college students found more than 75% of the survey respondents had participated in some form of civic engagement during college, with 30% having been involved in course-based service-learning and 46% participating in some other form of community service. Among a random sample of 384 students drawn from aggregate National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data, 83% of graduating seniors report being engaged in some form of community service during college (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009). There is also evidence that the level of civic participation in college matters. A 2009 report on the comparative levels of participation of 20—29-year-olds across ten areas of civic life (i.e., read a newspaper, trust others, membership in an organized group, attendance of a religious institution, self-reported voting), showed respondents who had gone to college had higher levels of participation in every area of civic life than their non-college going peers (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

A big part of institutional assessments of student success are retention and graduation rates. Service-learning has been positively correlated with both outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1998; Gallini & Moelly, 2003; McDaniel & Van Jura, 2020; Roose, et al., 1997; Schulzetenberg, et. al., 2020; Vogelgesang, et al., 2002; Yue & Hart, 2017). Greater independence, agency, and self-confidence were found to be additional benefits of involvement in service-learning (Prentice & Robinson, 2010). Additional studies also point to positive outcomes of service-learning on college satisfaction rates (Astin & Sax, 1998; Berson & Younkin 1998; Gray et al., 1998), a greater sense of responsibility for one's own learning (Largent & Horinek, 2008; Tos, 2015), development of effective learning skills and outcomes (Astin et al., 2000; Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Bureau et al., 2014; Kilgo et al., 2015; Warren, 2012), and on career outcomes (Eyler et al., 2001).

Soria et al. (2019) in a study of students from eight large public research universities found that service-learning courses had significant positive effects on students from working-class backgrounds feeling a greater sense of belonging in comparison from students from wealthier backgrounds. Importantly, participation in service-learning has also been associated with connectedness students feel towards faculty (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Ferguson, 2021; Gray et al., 1998; Jorgenson et al., 2018), and this sense of connectedness is a factor in increasing their college success (Astin, 1993), persistence and academic achievement (Berry & Chisolm, 1999; Buch & Spaulding, 2008; Cisero, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005; Porter & Swing, 2006; Potts & Schultz, 2008). Additional studies also suggest that ability to foster connections with faculty may be especially critical for the success of students of color and those from traditionally underrepresented groups (Cress, 2008; Hurtado, et al., 1996; Nagda, et al., 1998).

Service-learning has been shown to be positively associated with more political behaviors post-graduation, such as donating to a political campaign, attending political meetings, voting, social movement organization or activist group membership, protest participation (Winston, 2015), and stronger civic attitudes (Painter & Howell, 2020; Richard et al., 2016; Simeone & Shaw, 2017). Another study of 7,823 college students from nine institutions found that students' self-reported motivation to participate in community service upon graduation was heightened among those who participated in community-service experiences while in college (Soria & Thomas-Card, 2014). These positive attitudes persisted well into adulthood and were interestingly persistent for individuals who entered college with lower levels of pro-civic attitudes (Myers et al., 2019). Perhaps unsurprisingly, service-learning was also found to demonstrably deepen students' "engagement with and knowledge of the local community" (Benz et al., 2020, p. 30).

Service-learning has been characterized as a smart choice for institutions of higher education because it enhances student achievement of core educational outcomes (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). As Jay (2008) pointed out, "what makes service-learning different from volunteering is its explicit academic component—like any *test, paper, or research project*, the service-learning experience must be integral to the syllabus and advance the student's knowledge of the course content" (p. 255) [emphasis added]. Several studies have considered outcomes of service-learning related to students' development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and citizenship skills (Barber & King, 2014; King et al., 2009; Heinrich et al., 2015). In a comprehensive review of 31 studies and dissertations of the service-learning literature, Eyler, et al., (2001) connected service-learning with positive effects on student learning. Specifically, their review of the literature suggested that service-learning “improves students’ ability to apply what they have learned to the ‘real world,’” and with “complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development.” (pp. 3—4). Additionally, two separate meta-analyses of service-learning courses found that students enrolled in a service-learning course had an average increase of 43 points between pre and posttest measures on academic outcomes (Conway, et al., 2009) and an overall increase of 53% on learning attainment outcomes (Novak, et al., 2007).

Beyond pedagogical gains, service-learning has been correlated with positive outcomes such as improved interpersonal skills, spiritual growth, leadership, negotiation, and communication skills; moral development, and citizenship skills (Eyler et al., 2001). The literature also points to positive impacts of service-learning on outcomes such as critical reasoning, self-esteem, cultural sensitivity, tolerance for diversity, limiting stereotyping, commitment to service, enhanced altruism, etc. (Conway et al., 2009; Kezar, 2002). For example, results from a study of 209 institutions with a sample of over 12,000 students found that after controlling for level of civic engagement prior to college, students’ engagement in service-learning during college was significantly linked with positive cognitive and affective outcomes after graduation, such as frequency of socializing with diverse people, promotion of racial understanding, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and participating in community action programs (Astin, et al., 1999). Service-learning has been shown to facilitate greater social responsibility, and civic awareness. For example, studies have connected students' engagement in service-learning and their ability to effect change in their community (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Moely et al., 2002; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000). A meta-analysis of 55 quantitative studies found that service-learning experiences corresponded with a mean increase in outcomes related to citizenship, with an average increase of 17 points between pretest to posttest means (Conway et al., 2009). Ehrlich (2000) further suggested that civic participation leads to promoting quality of life in one's community through political and non-political ways.

More recently, service-learning has continued to be recognized as impactful by both scholars and practitioners from across a range of disciplinary areas (for example, Geller et al., 2016; Rutti et al., 2016; Yoria & Ye, 2012). Studies have noted that service-learning can be integrated into college curricula in several ways such as project-based learning, co-curricular activities, or as research projects (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Nejmeh, 2012). Newer scholarship has built upon previous findings and demonstrated the benefits of service-learning (Dienhart et al., 2016; Geller et al., 2016; Meyer et al., 2016; Olberding and Hacker 2015; Rutti et al., 2016; Weiler et al., 2013) including enhanced student learning, applicability of learning to developing practical skills (Meyer et al., 2016), greater reciprocity between campus and the community (Olberding & Hacker, 2015; Barnhardt et al., 2015), enhanced civic literacy (Rutti et. al., 2016), social responsibility (Weiler et al., 2013; Barnhardt et al., 2015), deeper understanding of course content (Dienhart et al., 2016), improved problem-solving (Geller et al., 2016), and active citizenship skills (Barnhardt et al., 2015) among students.

Despite there being plenty of evidence about the positive outcomes of service-learning, there is disagreement among scholars about whether service-learning can really be characterized as civic engagement. Some scholars have argued that service-learning often engages students in non-political ways and may not effectively build citizenship skills (Boyte 2008; Colby, et al., 2003; Thomas, 2011). Furthermore, service-learning is a broad term encompassing varying disciplines and programs of study.

Thus, the development, implementation, and evaluation of service-learning has led to significant scholarship and empirical evidence about its transformative potential and impact on students. Themes that stand out in the literature as effective practices in student centered civic engagement are quality of interaction with faculty and community partners, the duration and nature of the experience, including opportunities for real world application of knowledge and skills gained in the classroom, the quality, and nature of reflection about the community engagement experience, and the ability to engage and interact with peers in these real-world experiences. The following section will delve deeper into a few of these practices.

Effective Practices of Civic Engagement

While all of these are important aspects of a high-quality civic engagement experience, of particular relevance to this project is the reflective activities, although it is by no means a new idea in pedagogical practice. Dewey was an early advocate of encouraging students to reflect on their experiences, in order to transform the experiential aspects and translating it into [new] learning (Dewey, 1944). Other scholars have also reiterated and reinforced the importance of reflective activities to enriching student civic engagement (Bowen, 2010; Cress et al., 2010; Eyler et al., 2001; Conway et al., 2009;

Richard et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2021). One of the primary reasons that reflection has the potential for enriching civic engagement is because it often leads to cognitive dissonance for many students as they engage with diverse others and with members of the community. This dissonance and the subsequent reflection and reconciliation provides meaningful avenues for students to work through these experiences and gain new insights. Reflection also makes space for students to grapple with issues and make connections with what they are learning in the classroom with real issues that they are witnessing and encountering in the community. If structured in an open-ended manner, community-engaged work in general and the accompanying reflective activities in particular help foster both creative and critical thinking. In a meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning experiences on academic, personal, social, and civic outcomes, the incorporation of reflection was associated with net increases between pre- and post-test measures for each of the above outcome measures (Conway et al., 2009) and in comparison to students who have not had opportunities for reflection (Natadjaja & Yuwono, 2019).

Continuity, sustainability, and quality of experiential opportunities are also of vital importance in curricular, or co-curricular civic engagement programs. Cress et al. (2010) noted in their review of civic engagement programs, hours of service, continual contact with faculty and staff, and guidance and support throughout were crucial in ensuring a high quality of experience for students. Additional research has similarly concluded that students’ engagement in civic work must be sustained on a consistent level throughout the intervention rather than sporadically inserted, front or end-loaded at the beginning or end of the program, or in small quantities (Eyler et al., 2001; Gallini & Moelly, 2003;

Kuh, 2008; Simpson, 2013). Also critical to effective programming, and an elemental part of what duration and intensity provide to students is the consistent opportunity to apply classroom learning to real-world experiences (Benz et al., 2020; Bowen, 2010; Barber, 2023; Eyler et al., 2001).

Finally, scholars have noted the essential role and quality of peer-to-peer interactions as vital to civic engagement opportunities (Bernstein et al., 2016; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Chickering & Gamson, 1999; Keeling, 2004; Zainuri & Huda, 2023). For example, Cress et al. (2010; 2013) noted the benefits of using peer mentors for engaging students, in addition to cohort models, where students work consistently with the same group of peers over time (Bernstein et al., 2016; Cress et al., 2010; Teitel, 1997) as well as students' ability to interact with diverse others (Eyler et al., 2001; Hurtado, 2009) and opportunities to collaborate with peers and community members (Bowen, 2010; Cress et al., 2010; 2013).

A college campus can be seen as a "model community" where students "develop [leadership] skills that will transfer to the larger democratic society" (Thornton & Jaeger, 2007, p. 1013). Participating in the myriad activities that constitute campus life, ranging from the curricular to the extra-curricular, and simply the act of living together on campus shapes the "clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy" (Dewey, 1927, p. 149). Beyond life on campus, students develop civic skills through their engagement with the surrounding community. When institutions of higher education can model good "stewardship of place" to their students, i.e., develop partnerships with the communities they are a part of to address differences and ameliorate inequities, thereby providing a powerful locus for faculty and student engagement in collaborative and civic problem solving (Barnhardt et al., 2015; Schneider, 2012, p. 10)

Students' engagement is directly influenced by their perceptions of the organizational culture and environment (Apple et al., 2018; Berger & Milem, 2000; Carey, 2018). Specifically, scholars have suggested that institutions model "values in the way they conduct themselves… and in how institutions are run" (Astin, 1999, pp. 36—37). Students report that a campus community "that cares about the rest of the world encourages you to do the same" (Dey, et al., 2009, p. 1). The following section will shift the focus from individual outcomes on students to broader impacts of civic engagement.

From Individual Outcomes to Civic Impact

Positive individual outcomes of community engagement notwithstanding, it is important to consider the impact of these programs on larger social and community level factors, including on developing democratic skills and civic impact. As Cress et al. (2010) put it,

> We need to redirect our focus… to researching civic transformation and the development of a sense of civic and personal efficacy. We also need to better understand the developmental experiences and interactions that influence the efficacy of civic teaching and learning. This requires a more holistic look at what experiences in K-12 schools, colleges, and students' lives are shaping their civic engagement. (pp. 19-20)

Inherent in the literature in this space, are real fissures in conceptualizing and defining civic engagement and the outcomes related to what exactly it means to be civic. Several scholars have pointed out that empirical work must focus on unpacking the role of civic education in preparing students for the skills of democratic participation—skills such as dialogue, deliberation, reflection, and collaboration (Bureau et al., 2014; Colby et al., 2003; Colby, et al., 2008; Long, 2002; Medved & Ursic, 2021; Millett McCartney et al., 2013; Richard et al., 2016; Scobey, 2010; Thomas, 2011). As Scobey (2010) eloquently argued,

> Colleges in the United States have long promoted education for the public good as a core value of their mission statements, and they have fitfully included civics courses as core components of their curricula…Yet, as the courses, community projects, issue briefs and reflection journals…underscore [it is]… [t]he campus and the curriculum [that] have come to be regarded as consequential arenas for the making of a citizen. (p. 187)

This framing suggests that civic engagement is best considered as a continuum of practice, wherein service-learning is one programmatic avenue with potential to advance civic outcomes. However, in the context of isolated, unreflective experiences lacking in intentionality, it is insufficient and ineffective at producing the intended outcomes (Finley, 2011). In the broadest of terms, a civic continuum that encompasses outcomes related to "intentional participation in the democratic process, public policy, and direct service" (Keen & Hall, 2008, p. 2) can be defined as praxis that fosters what Checkoway (1998, 2009) refers to as "quality engagement—when people influence a decision or affect an outcome of collective, civic import" (p. 42). This raises the question: how should or how can young people gain the skills, knowledge, and values to influence such civic decision making?

Some would argue that the answer to that question lies in colleges and universities returning to their civic missions, and in this context, specifically through the facilitation of civic learning (Checkoway, 1999; Musil, 2003; 2009). “Civic learning is rooted in respect for community-based knowledge, grounded in experiential and reflective modes of teaching and learning, aimed at active participation in American democracy, and aligned with institutional change efforts to improve student learning” (Saltmarsh, 2005, p. 53). Furthermore, the degree of disengagement among youth in the United States adds greater urgency for colleges and universities to pursue civic learning on campuses (Saltmarsh, et al., 2009; and Checkoway, 1999).

Whereas the effects of service-learning are well studied and documented, the same is not true for outcomes related to more politically oriented civic engagement programs. Some scholars have made the case that more overtly political forms of civic engagement result in greater political participation. Having developed the skills to participate—and having discovered the rewards that participation provides—citizens are more likely to seek opportunities for civic involvement (Elder, et al., 2007). Whilst this argument certainly seems viable, the limitations wrought by the sparseness of empirical data compromise the ability to make this conclusion with certitude. Nevertheless, the research that does exist suggests the range of effects on students’ civic knowledge, skills, and values that may be developed through interventions that specifically integrate intentional, politically centered, and democratically guided forms of civic engagement. For example, the authors of a study of 21 courses and programs with high levels of intentionality to foster “political learning” among students reported that students engaged in these experiences exhibited “significant increases along several dimensions of political understanding, skills and motivation.” Political learning connotes both high frequency of involvement and high-quality participation where quality is defined as the employment of students’ “wise judgment” pertaining to political knowledge, motivation, skills, understanding of when and how to deploy political skills, and resilience to setbacks (Colby, 2008, p. 5).

Other similar studies suggested the positive effects of intentional course design on the development of skills related to social justice, measured by increased understanding of racial diversity and discrimination, and culturally specific critical thinking (Conner & Erikson, 2017; Kilgo et. al., 2015; Mayhew & Fernández, 2007). These studies showed that among the different pedagogical approaches employed, the practices that mattered most in improving social justice outcomes were participation in a combined intergroup dialogue, participation in a course taught with an emphasis on systemic issues, oppression, and discussions about diversity, and opportunities for reflection. Additional research has also indicated that politically centered civic engagement can be effective when done as part of the co-curriculum, suggesting the potential in linking both curricular and co-curricular efforts. For example, a four-year longitudinal study of the Democracy Fellows program at Wake Forest University that coupled classroom learning and community engagement, including conducting deliberative forums in the classroom and in the community was found to have many positive outcomes including counteracting alienation from public life. Upon graduation, these students demonstrated gains in a range of civic and interpersonal outcomes, such as speaking and thinking communally, ability to recognize possibilities and opportunities for deliberation, greater awareness of civic responsibilities, confidence in their ability to make a difference, and ability to critique political processes (Harringer & McMillan, 2007).

Additionally, a multicohort study of Bonner scholars—a selective program through which students engage in extensive co-curricular service experiences throughout college—from first to senior year, found growth in students' ability to engage in dialogue and significant development between their junior and senior years in the employment of effective communication skills such as listening, negotiation, understanding, and helping overcome differences, community-oriented mindset, greater orientation towards service, etc. (Keen & Hall, 2009). First launched at Berea college in 1990, the Bonner Scholars program is currently in place at sixty-five college campuses across 24 states in the United States (Bonner Foundation, n.d.)

The impact of students' political and democratic engagement has also been captured by studying more grass-roots activities. A case study of archival and interview data from a long-term protest by a student workers' union against university officials at a private mid-sized university in the Midwest identified the emergence of civic skills among the protesters, among institution officials—in listening to the protesters, and the larger student body—through their heightened awareness of campus labor issues (Biddix, et al., 2009). These authors further observed that the protest had fostered the opportunity for students and university officials to recognize opposing viewpoints, to find mutual agreement in resolving disputes, and to imbue the student body with a collective sense of community.

Another significant area of research related to politically centered civic engagement pertains to interventions, courses, and/or programs aimed at providing students with greater opportunities for dialogue and engagement with diverse perspectives. This work is often oriented toward group problem-solving or collaborative work. One example is intergroup dialogue or “deliberative dialogue” programs. Intergroup dialogue is defined as “an educational endeavor that brings together students from two or more social identity groups to build relationships across cultural and power differences, to raise consciousness of inequalities, to explore the similarities and differences in experiences across identity groups, and to strengthen individual and collective capacities to promote social justice” (Nagda & Gurin, 2007, p. 39—40; Soria & Mitchell, 2018). Intergroup dialogue seeks to foster civil conversation about contentious issues. Other common practices of this type are ‘Study Circles’ and ‘Sustained Dialogue’ (Zuniga et al., 2007a).

In a comprehensive review of the literature on intergroup dialogue, a range of positive effects related to civic outcomes were found to be consistently connected with intergroup dialogue activities. Outcomes cited as important preparation for democratic participation included engagement in diverse settings, development of perspective-taking skills, ability to work in dissonant or unequal environments, and development of a sense of pluralism (Zuniga et al., 2007b). Additionally, other studies have also demonstrated that the more students are able to engage in diverse interactions on campus, inside and outside of the class, the more likely they are to confront notions of prejudice, be inclusive of views different from their own, and embrace social justice (Diaz et al., 2019; Hurtado, 2009; Maruyama et al., 2018; Moely & Ilustre, 2016; Soria & Mitchell, 2018; Zuniga, et al., 2005).

Researchers from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) explored the impact of college experiences like engagement in intergroup dialogue (i.e., cross-racial interaction) in addition to service-learning experiences on rates of future volunteerism among college graduates. Linking data from 1994—1998 CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Project) data with a 2004 post-college follow-up survey on volunteerism activities, the researchers found students' engagement in cross-racial interaction and service both exhibited unique and significant positive effects on rates of future volunteerism among post-graduates (Mitic, 2019, 2020; Richard et al., 2016; Winston, 2015; Yamamura & Denson, 2005). While there is an abundance of empirical evidence on the individual and collective benefits of civic engagement, there has not been a corresponding match in institutional investment. The following section will further elaborate.

Institutional Challenges to Community Engagement

Despite the short- and long-term positive outcomes of community engagement in developing civic skills among college students, studies have also shown that while there is a verbal commitment to and recognition of the benefits of community engagement, there is a dearth of institutional commitment to, and scarcity of resources dedicated to this (Johnson & Woodard, 2014). For example, Astin et al. (2006) in their landmark longitudinal study of service-learning surveyed nearly 41,000 faculty from 421 colleges and universities and found that while only a small percentage (19%) of respondents found the inclusion of community engagement activities within the curricular scope to be 'poor' use of resources, less than a third of the sample (32%) actually incorporated community engagement into the courses they taught. While over 80% of respondents believed that universities are obligated to work with the communities that they are surrounded by to solve local problems, less than half of those surveyed, were able to leverage their scholarship towards understanding and addressing local needs (48%), had any degree of collaborations with local communities in their research and teaching (42%), or believed that their institution prioritized creating and sustaining local partnerships (46%). The data also revealed a gender discrepancy in both the perception of community engagement being a positive use of institutional resources (24% faculty identifying as women vs. 12% of faculty identifying as men had a positive view of community engagement) and in incorporating community engagement into their courses (39% women vs. 27% men). Furthermore, nearly 60% of the sample surveyed indicated that their work with communities was conducted entirely on a pro bono basis. While community engagement has gained momentum across college campuses (Hutson, 2019), particularly given its recognition as a high impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008), adoption has nevertheless been sporadic and inconsistent (Evans, et al., 2019). The following section, therefore, focuses on why there has to be a renewed focus on civic engagement across and within higher education writ large.

Decline in (Youth) Civic Engagement

The imperative to focus on civic values and democratic skill-building in higher education is in alignment with the well-documented decline in civic engagement in American society (Pew Research Center, 2019), particularly among underrepresented groups and youth (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement—CIRCLE, 2022; Colby et al., 2003; Pew Research Center, 2014; Putnam, 1995; Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 1997; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999; Suzuki, et al., 2022). The literature documenting the decline in civic participation in the United States (Hirshhorn & Settersen, 2013; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020; Horowitz, 2015; Putnam, 2000; Ridings, 2001; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999; Syvertsen et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2012; Wuthnow, 1999) is cause for concern as civic engagement is essential to strengthening civic participation more broadly and to confer benefits of democratic citizenship to young citizens and the communities they are a part of (Ehrlich, 2000; Putnam, 2000). Civic engagement can build and revitalize communities (Hyman 2002) and is linked to wide-ranging positive individual outcomes like health and wellbeing (Abbott, 2010; Kim et al., 2015; Marquez et al., 2016; Zheng, 2017), access to social capital (Derose & Varda, 2009; Marquez et al., 2016), greater civic participation (Flanagan et al., 2009; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Marchi & Clark, 2021), feelings of community cohesiveness (Bennett et al., 2014; Everett, 2011), and a more democratic and pluralistic outlook over time (Hinterlong & Williamson, 2006).

There is consensus among scholars, educators, and administrators regarding the need to address and mitigate the decline in civic participation. It is here that universities are called upon to lead. Gutman and Thompson (1996) and Daniels et al. (2021), in advocating a broader role for institutions of higher education, suggested that public forums of deliberation on what the government does ought not to be confined to institutions of government alone. Discussions about the functioning of government are inherently “part of citizenship in deliberative democracy” (Gutman & Thompson, 1996, p. 359). Institutions of higher education have historically had a role in fostering citizenship skills and in building democratic capacity through their educational, research, and service missions. However, there is concern about attrition in these priorities in recent decades (Allen, 2016; Daniels, 2021; Sax, 2000). Some scholars assert that the quality of knowledge itself is imperiled by this disengagement from real-world concerns and that it is imperative for knowledge creation to be grounded in real-world contexts (Harkavy & Benson, 1998). The alarm that noted political theorist Robert Putnam sounded nearly three decades ago about declining social capital in the U.S., still rings true, particularly for young people. He said,

> ...it is not just the voting booth that has been increasingly deserted by Americans. Since 1973 the number of Americans who report that 'in the past year,' they have attended a public meeting on town or school affairs has fallen by more than a third (from 22 percent in 1973 to 13 percent in 1993). Similar (or even greater) relative declines are evident in responses to questions about attending a political rally or speech, serving on a committee of a local organization, and working for a political party. By almost every measure, Americans' direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply over the last generation, despite the fact that average levels of education—the best individual-level predictor of political participation—have risen sharply throughout this period. (Putnam 1995, pp. 67—68)

From the time that the census began measuring voter turnout among 18- to 29-year-olds, almost fifty years ago, youth voter turnout in the United States has not risen above 54% (Booth et al., 2022). Syvertsen et al. (2011) in their study examining historical trends in youth civic engagement, paint a more complex picture about young people's civic participation. Their data suggested that over a thirty-year period, spanning from 1976 to 2006, youth civic participation has waxed and waned, and particularly since the 1990s young people seemed to show a preference for community service over electoral participation. The study also pointed to young people's consistently low levels of trust in government and in elected officials. An additional and perhaps more concerning finding of this study was the class differentials in participation among youth in terms of both volunteerism and political participation. Consistent with other scholarship and empirical evidence in this space (see, for example, Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012; Nie, et al., 1996; Pew Research Center, 2014; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Suzuki et al., 2022; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980), the study suggested a sharp difference "in civic behaviors and beliefs based on college aspirations." High school seniors who planned to attain a 4-year college education were most engaged followed by students planning to obtain a 2-year degree, with students who had no plans for college attainment being least engaged. The authors posit that some of these differences are likely a result of "institutionalization of service-learning" in high schools (National Youth Leadership Council, 2006) and the "protracted transition to adulthood, which has led to a delay in conventional civic participation, such as voting (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; as cited in Syvertsen, et al., 2011, pp. 590—592).

This pattern continues as youth transition into adulthood—young people with a college degree have higher rates of civic participation than their peers who have not attended college (Hillygus, 2005; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020; Marcelo, et al., 2007). Research has pointed to differences in political participation, post-college based on educational pathways during college (Hillygus, 2005; Lott et al., 2013; Nie & Hillygus, 2001, Perrin & Gillis, 2019). An education in the liberal arts and humanities has been credited with fostering citizenship skills (Small, 2013; Harphman, 2017), specifically public-sphere engagement, including perspective taking, civil discussion, and frank disagreement (Moy & Gastil, 2006; Zakaria, 2015). Social sciences courses likely highlight political and social issues more often (Clydesdale, 2007; Galston, 2001) and in combination with high impact experiences such as working community-based projects have been shown to lead to a greater citizenship skills and sustained political engagement (Perrin & Gillis, 2019).

All this notwithstanding, as stated previously, voter turnout and other forms of political participation among young people continues to be sporadic (Booth et al., 2022; Zaff et al., 2003). Some have argued that low political participation among youth is correlated to high levels of institutional mistrust, social and political polarization, and widening wealth and income disparities—all of which have steadily increased in the United States over the past several decades (Soule, 2001; Syvertsen, et al., 2011; Gramlich, 2019). Many campuses have attempted to address these factors by putting in place politically oriented civic engagement programs through which students develop skills for deliberative dialog, debate, and collaborative problem-solving (e.g., Civic, Liberal, and Global Education at Stanford University, n.d., Deliberative Democracy Consortium, 2008; Diaz & Gilchrist, 2010; Hurtado 2009; Mayhew & Fernández, 2007; Project Citizen at Duke University, 2022; South, 2010; Stitzlein, 2010; Difficult Dialogues Initiative, n.d.). These programs and the skills that they seek to build are intended to alleviate and mitigate some of the impacts of institutional mistrust and political polarization. Such models also facilitate public discourse through active learning (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022); action-based research; mitigating political alienation and apathy (Zhu, 2021); and enhancing democratic participation (e.g., Boyte & Kari, 1996), including various forms of advocacy and activism (Cunningham & McKinney, 2010; Harriger, 2010; Peters, et al., 2002). Thus, politically oriented civic engagement experiences during college also seem to play an important role in shaping students' civic skills.

The next section will turn to the construct of civic identity and how some of the initiatives and programs described in previous section might shape this construct.

Civic Identity

Civic identity has been described as a form of identity when one sees oneself as "an active participant in society with a strong commitment to work with others" for the common good (Hatcher, 2011, p. 85, as cited in Hudgins, 2020). As a construct, it comprises values, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge (Johnson, 2017) that together shape one's sense of self as a civic agent. This framing is in alignment with scholarly work in identity formation occurring along the lines of developing a sense of self (Baxter Magolda, 2001), developing a sense of self in relation to others, and developing a capacity for making meaning (Kegan, 1994). Knefelkamp (2008) went further and suggested that civic identity should be considered on par with other identities that shape an individual's sense of self such as race, ethnicity, gender, and nationality, and that the development of a civic identity should be one of the outcomes of a liberal education. Understanding the process by which students civic identities emerge and evolve, is essential to explicating the full impact of curricular community engagement experiences.

Zaff et al. (2003) conducted a longitudinal study of over 1,000 young adults to understand whether forming a "positive citizenship identity" and "feelings of fulfillment" about civic behaviors played a mediating role in influencing future civic participation (e.g., voting, volunteering, issue-based advocacy etc.). The authors defined positive citizenship as “the act of making one’s home, school, community and/or society a better place” (pp. 1—2). Stepwise regression analysis revealed no positive relationship between citizenship identity, and later civic behavior. Interestingly, these findings go against other research in this space (see for example, Serow & Dreyden, 1990; Youniss et al., 1999) as well as the authors’ own previous work showing a positive link between altruistic and communal values (which the authors used as a proxy for citizenship identity) and civic engagement (Zaff et al., 2002). In looking at other literature about identity, a significant shortcoming of this study is in conceptualizing civic identity rather narrowly—i.e., solely focused on values and leaving out important factors like knowledge, skills, and actions (e.g., Ehrlich, 2000; The National Task Force for Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012), which are essential dimensions of a civic self.

While other scholars have put forth “citizenship identity” as a construct and have used it interchangeably with “civic identity” (Lott, 2012; Youniss, et al., 1997; Youniss & Yates, 1999), extant literature falls short in investigating and documenting its development (Johnson, 2017), particularly in the context of college students’ participation in curricular community engagement experiences. Therefore, it is vitally important to understand how undergraduate students who participate in community engagement experiences during their time in college think about the development of their own civic identity and the dimensions that make up this identity. With this context, the following section will explore and examine theoretical frameworks that can be brought to bear in understanding the notion of civic identity.

Theoretical Roots of Identity Formation

Borrowing from the roots of cognitive development put forth by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, constructivist-developmental theories in education make the case for active learning. This approach suggests that knowledge acquisition and skill building occur in active ways—through experiences, engagement, discourse with key figures, reflection, integration, and assimilation (Elliott, et al., 2000; Arends, 1998). Constructivist approaches posit that students learn best through engaging experiences as opposed to passively absorbing information. Therefore, experiential learning pedagogies facilitate agency for students to construct knowledge that is real, relevant, and meaningful to them. Therefore, knowledge thus constructed can be dynamic and adaptable (Fox, 2001).

One of the foremost scholars in the areas of adult learning and identity development is Robert Kegan. Trained as a developmental psychologist, Kegan's work was influenced by three theoretical threads. The first is the constructivist-developmental approach leveraging the work of scholars like Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1969), and Dewey (1938). The second is the psychoanalytic tradition, including the work of Erik Erikson (1959) and Anna Freud (1937). The third is the humanistic-phenomenological tradition including the work of scholars like Abraham Maslow (1962) and Carl Rogers (1961). In his foundational work, *The Evolving Self*, Kegan (1982) discussed the notion of 'meaning making,' which he defined as the activity by which people make sense of their experiences through a process of discovery and resolution. Meaning-making, according to Kegan, is a life-long activity beginning in infancy and continuing into adulthood and evolving through a process of negotiation or balancing in a variety of contexts including biological (the balance between an organism and its environment), philosophical (between subject and object), and psychological (between self and the other).

In his book, *In Over Our Heads*, Kegan (1994) extended the work on psychological development to include greater complexity in the movement across the developmental trajectory, through five stages of knowing he describes as orders of consciousness. These ways of organizing experiences are not replaced as we grow but are integrated “into more complex systems of the mind” (p. 9). Kegan describes the developmental process as a balance between a desire for differentiation and the oppositional pull of staying connected. The evolutionary truces evident at each stage of Kegan's developmental model are "temporary solution[s] to the lifelong tension between the yearnings for inclusion and distinctness" (p. 107). He suggested that increased differentiation could mean finding new ways to stay connected. Paradoxically, as people make meaning in a more differentiated way, they also develop the capacity to become closer to others. The ability to engage difference constructively also requires the development of interrelated and interdependent social and cognitive capabilities or what Thompson (2014) described as “a personal epistemology that reflects a sophisticated understanding of knowledge, beliefs, and ways of thinking; empathy, and an integrated sense of identity that includes values, commitments, and a sense of agency for civic and social responsibility” (p. 39).

Self-Authorship of Identity During College

Building on Kegan’s work on identity formation, Marcia Baxter Magolda, a scholar in Higher Education, applied the notion of self-authorship, or the “capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relationships" to the development of identity among youth in general and college students in particular (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269). She conducted a 21-year longitudinal study of individuals aged 18 to 39 and extended Kegan's findings that epistemological, intra-personal, and inter-personal development help build belief systems that inform and shape a sense of identity and facilitates the development of authentic and mature relationships with diverse others (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Self-authorship occurs through a process of information gathering, reflection, and analysis. With regard to youth in particular, the journey towards self-authorship includes exploration and re-evaluation of one's values, making meaning of information gathered through one's experiences, and prioritizing goals that are consistent with one's sense of self.

As young people travel the path towards self-authorship, the major questions that arise and are addressed include:

- How do I know? Meaning making about experiences and information gathered.
- Who am I? Reflection about self and realignment of values.
- How do I engage with the world? Engagement with others and analysis about one's place in the broader ecosystem.

Baxter Magolda's work also led her to describe the journey towards self-authorship along a developmental spectrum from relying on external factors and moving towards internal motivators and finally arriving at self-authorship—an understanding of self-in-context. The various phases on the journey to self-authorship include *following formulas* defined by external forces; *arriving at the cross-roads*, where one seeks to become more autonomous; *authoring one's life*, characterized by reflection and realignment of one's beliefs; and *establishing an internal foundation* where a "solidified comprehensive system of belief is established" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 155). Self-authorship emerges through a learning partnership model and by creating contexts that facilitate meaning making. The learning principles that optimize self-authorship include validating learners' capacity to know, enabling them to have greater agency in the learning process, and framing learning as a process of mutual construction of meaning. The goal of facilitating the journey towards self-authorship is to "help young adults make the transition from being shaped by society to shaping society" (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 630).

Since community-engaged learning and civic pedagogies are multifaceted categories of learning with multiple perspectives and learning objectives (Battistoni, 2002, 2013; Hemer & Reason, 2017), Bringle & Steinberg (2010) conceptualized the notion of 'civic-mindedness' to integrate various conceptualizations of civic learning across both curricular and cocurricular programs (Bringle, et al., 2019; Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Bringle et al., 2011; Steinberg, et al., 2011). "Civic-mindedness" refers to a person's inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community, and to have a commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010, p. 429). Civic mindedness is viewed as distinct from orientations that emphasize oneself, one's family, or a corporate or profit motive (Bringle & Wall, 2020). Steinberg et al. (2011) suggested that civic mindedness is at the intersection of three dimensions: Identity, educational experiences, and civic experiences. (see Figure 1).

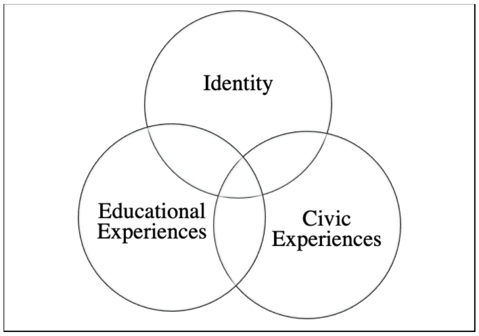
1. Identity—one's self-understanding, self-awareness, and self-concept

2. Educational experiences—educational experiences, academic knowledge, and technical skills

3. Civic experiences—involvement with and commitment to the community.

Figure 1

Dimensions of civic mindedness (Steinberg et al., 2011)



There can be significant integration between the three dimensions or no integration, indicative of a disconnect or underdeveloped aspects of one's lives in these arenas. For instance, limited integration between the identity and the civic dimensions means that a person's civic attitudes, values, and behaviors are not salient or well-integrated into their identity. In this case, civic identity is defined as a construct that encompasses civic knowledge, civic skills, civic attitudes, and civic behaviors (Bringle, et al., 2015; Hemer & Reason, 2017). A higher degree of integration is indicative of the capacity to undertake future civic activities (e.g., civic involvement, volunteering, political activity) in such a way that they can contribute to society and the public good.

Identity is a complex construct and is both conceptualized and theorized across the realms of psychology and sociology (Bringle & Wall, 2020). It can be construed as a function of roles, group membership (formal or informal), self-conceptualization as well as socially defined meanings (Reicher, et al., 2010). Individuals often have multiple and coherently organized identities, which provide a basis for reducing uncertainty about one's self and one's place in the world (Hogg & Abrams, 1993); for being seen and understood by others through social interactions, (Swann & Read, 1981), for providing purpose (Damon, 2001; Malin, et al., 2014), and for confirming one's worth and motivating collective action from others (Klein, et al., 2007).

Identity is often deeply enmeshed within social contexts within which individuals operate, and there is agreement across virtually all theoretical paradigms examining identity that it is a construct that is far from fixed. Instead, it is dynamic and socially constructed and civically co-created through actions and interactions with others (Bringle et al., 2015; Damon, 2001; Mitchell, et al., 2013; Swann & Read, 1981; Yates & Youniss, 2006). Knefelkamp (2008) described civic identity as the integration of (a) engagement with others; (b) through cognitive and ethical development; (c) and holistic practice, including empathy for others; and (d) via multiple experiences and opportunities for learning, experimentation, and active reflection. Building on these themes, civic mindedness can be viewed as one form of civic identity that integrates self-concept with educational and the civic domains (Steinberg et al., 2011).

Figured Worlds of Civic Identity

Given the above framing of civic-mindedness in the literature, it is useful to examine Holland et al.'s., (1998) theory of figured worlds to undergird our understanding of civic-identity. According to the authors, "figured worlds rest upon people's abilities to form and be formed in collectively realized 'as-if' realms…" (p. 49). Learning occurs in complex and complicated ways combining both the acquisition of knowledge and through the development of identities in the context in which knowledge is being acquired (Gonsalves et al., 2019). By extension, it is hard to understand learning and learning outcomes, without also understanding students' interactions with the contexts within which they are learning (Engeström, 1987). The contexts in which learning occurs are shaped by the broader discourses and the philosophies of the institutions and fields within which it is taking place and these in turn are shaped by key figures and relevant actors who are part of this ecosystem (Lemke, 2001). Thus, in trying to understand how civic identity among college students is shaped, it is useful to examine how students navigate the discourses and spaces in which civic learning is being facilitated, and how in doing so, they are learning to be civic agents. The theory of figured worlds offers a valuable heuristic for understanding the ways in which identity is shaped and the key figures and actors that play a role in this process. Originally put forth by Holland et al. (1998), figured worlds are psychologically constructed and interpretive worlds or communities that operate "dialogically and dialectically and are defined by power dynamics and spaces of agency and improvisation" (Chang, 2014, p. 30). Thus, individuals are subjects of figured worlds, and these worlds are sites where identities are developed (Urrieta, 2007), with relationships playing an essential role in this process. Figured worlds are essential to Holland et al.'s (1998) larger theory of self and identity and are intimately tied to understanding identity as it is shaped in process or through activity. Thus, figured worlds are sites where identities are produced and individuals 'figure' who they are through activities and in relation to social contexts within which these activities take place. People often develop new identities in figured worlds (Urrieta, 2007).

In aiming to understand identity, Holland et al (1998) drew upon the work and scholarship of thinkers as wide-ranging as Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, and George

Herbert Mead. Vygotsky (1978) put forth the notion that individuals' beliefs and behaviors evolve in the context of culture and history and furthermore, "an individual has the capacity to externalize and share with other members of her social group her understanding of their shared experience" (p. 132). Whereas Bakhtin's schematic model of the human psyche consists of three components: "I-for-myself," "I-for-the-other," and "the-other-for-me." The I-for-myself is an unreliable source of identity, and it is the I-for-the-other through which human beings develop a sense of identity. Conversely, other-for-me describes the way in which others incorporate broader perceptions into their own identities. Identity, therefore, is something that is shared by many (Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 184-189). Holland et al.'s (1998) work was also influenced by Mead's (1934) thinking about individuals' ability to coordinate their activities in relation to social contexts. From this standpoint, "identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5). Mead conceptualized the self as the "I," constituting the self-proper, and the "me," which represents the individual's capacity to mirror oneself in the perspectives of others. In addition, "the me aspect of the self enables an individual to anticipate the reactions of others and them to learn from the situation and modify his or her behavior accordingly" (p. 41). Thus, identities are constantly being shaped by the interaction of, and compatibility between self-perception and the perception of others. Furthermore, identity is both the story we tell ourselves, and the stories that other people tell of us, and is not entirely homogeneous nor is it static (Sarup, 1996).

How Figured Worlds Shape Identity

According to Holland et al. (1998), figured worlds are “socially produced, culturally constituted activities” where individuals conceptually (cognitively) and materially (through action) produce new understandings or identities. (p. 40). Figured worlds are characterized by four features.

First, figured worlds are cultural phenomena to which people are recruited, or into which people enter, and that develop through the work of their participants. They are shaped both by historic factors and other processes and traditions through which we engage with the world. Second, figured worlds serve as important contexts of meaning within which social encounters have significance and “participants’ positions matter.” Third, they are “socially organized and reproduced,” or put another way, they are shaped by contextual factors, and the actions of key figures and actors within a given context. Fourth, “figured worlds distribute ‘us’ not only by relating actors to landscapes of action and spreading our senses of self across many different fields of activity, but also by giving the landscape human voice and tone” (p. 41).

Therefore, figured worlds can be “characterized as metanarratives that develop over history and time, forming over in continual practice” (Chang, 2014, p. 31). They are processes or traditions that give people shape and form, and where they learn to recognize each other as a particular sort of actor, sometimes with psycho-social attachment, valuing certain outcomes over others, and attaching significance to certain actions over others. Furthermore, the figured worlds people enter depend on who they are and their personal, and social history. According to Holland et al., figured worlds facilitate “space for authoring” based on the notion of dialogism put forth by Bakhtin, or the ability of people to make meaning through internal dialog as well as external action. When being socially identified by others, people are assigned positions (or identities) they must accept, reject, or negotiate. Furthermore, deriving from Vygotsky's work around play, Holland et al conclude that through the "arts and rituals created on the margins in newly imagined communities" people develop skills and competencies to participate [and thrive] in these figured worlds (p. 272). In these newly formed figured worlds lies the potential for creating or sustaining new discourses, actions, artifacts, and perhaps more "liberatory worlds" (Urrieta, 2007, p. 111).

The theory of figured worlds is critical to conceptualizing civic identity as it expands our heuristic models beyond the psychological realm to include social and cultural factors that influence how identity is shaped. Additionally, it allows us to consider lived experiences and day-to-day interactions that may produce or reproduce behaviors and actions that shape identity as opposed to the lifespan approaches advanced by constructivist-developmental theories explaining identity formation. Additionally, within these social and cultural worlds "particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). Some have even suggested that figured worlds are social forces that shape behaviors and actions in social contexts (Hatt, 2007). In the complex context of community engaged curricular experiences where there are a variety of actors and where learning occurs in multi-dimensional ways, figured worlds offer a good framework to better understand *how* identity is shaped [italics added].

Another interesting aspect here is the notion of positionality within figured worlds. It has been demonstrated particularly within the context of STEM fields that students assign themselves certain positions (Gonsalves et al., 2019; Carlone et al., 2014; Cipollone et al., 2020), and these positions in turn shape who they are. Thus, “figured worlds rely on cultural models” (Jackson & Seiler, 2013, p. 828), which are essentially cognitive or psychological models or “schemas that capture or guide attention, help evaluate the value of experiences, or enable the drawing of inferences” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 297). Additionally, some actors and certain positions may hold implicit power and influence within figured worlds without explicit authority or institutional endorsement (Gonsalves et al., 2019). The theory of figured worlds has been applied to understand identity formation in a variety of contexts including in education. It offers great potential to understand the formation of civic identity among college students.

Summary

In reviewing the literature on civic engagement in higher education in the United States, the following themes emerge: First, there is a strong body of literature that emphasizes civic engagement as an essential tool for building citizenship skills among youth. Second, civic engagement as pedagogy and as praxis, assumes various forms depending on the campus context. There is variability across and within institutions, in approach, intensity, and extent of community engagement. Third, much of the empirical evidence about civic engagement programs is centered on service-learning and there is a vast body of literature demonstrating its many benefits—for individual students, for institutions of higher education, and for democratic societies writ large.

Much of the scholarship in this area clearly demonstrates that democracies are vitally dependent on civic participation, and it is a skill that can be taught. Trends suggest that democratic participation among youth in the United States has been sporadic in recent decades (Booth et al., 2022). Given the increasing complexity and seriousness of contemporary issues— the looming climate crisis, widening racial divisions, steep disparities in wealth and access, rise in ethno-nationalism etc.—there is an ever-greater need for citizens to work together to tackle these challenges. Institutions of higher education have an important role to play in shaping youth, and in developing their citizenship capacities. While there is substantial empirical evidence about the benefits of community engagement experiences in building civic skills among students, how exactly these experiences help them develop a sense of civic identity remains empirically under-explored. The proposed project will address this gap in the literature and seek to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of students, and faculty about the process by which curricular community engagement experiences help shape students' civic identity.

Additionally, weaving together the interrelated theoretical threads described above, this research was informed and shaped by the developmental approaches to identity formation as put forth by Kegan and further developed by Baxter Magolda in her work with mapping the developmental trajectories of college students and Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of figured worlds. These theoretical perspectives will be leveraged to understand the ways in which undergraduate students at one university refine and shape their civic identities as a consequence of their participation in curricular community engagement experiences. Abes (2009) described the threading of multiple theoretical perspectives as advantageous, particularly in the context of understanding student identity development. Characterizing this approach as "theoretical borderlands," she suggested that it enables researchers to understand and explain the complex realities of student development. Blending together the constructivist-developmental approaches put forth by

Kegan and Baxter Magolda on the one hand with the social and cultural approaches offered by Holland et al., makes space for the reality that students' identities are determined by psychological and cognitive factors and are also socio-culturally constructed and dynamically shaped by their interactions with the broader ecosystems that they are a part of.

While a substantial amount of empirical work has demonstrated the many positive outcomes of student success derived from their participation in civic and community-based experiences, there remains a significant gap in the research. We need to further delve into the ways in which high-impact practices such as community-based experiences enable students to develop and refine their civic identities and a generative capacity that sustains through from their time in college and into adulthood (Chittum, et al., 2022). How students construe themselves and the meaning that they attach to attributes associated with this self-definition have important consequences for social and civic behavior. Bringle & Wall (2020) in their study with college students corroborated the construct of civic mindedness put forth by Steinberg et al. (2011) and suggested that pedagogically informed civic identity can be a central component of a student's social identity. They further emphasized the need to better understand its nature and its development among students.

Given this gap in the literature, it is critical for research to explore a developmental model of civic identity. Such a model acknowledges more explicitly a primary goal of higher education—to transform students' "ways of thinking, knowing, and understanding, and this transformation in the understanding of oneself links the development of higher order mental capabilities with the developmental task of identity formation and integration that is central to adult life" (Thompson, 2014, p. 44). This understanding will provide a much needed (and still missing) framework for institutions of higher education to more fully understand and thereby more intentionally structure pedagogical approaches to prepare students for sustained civic life. Higher education institutions will richly benefit from knowing more about how community-engagement experiences enable and empower students to develop and exercise their civic selves, in the classroom, in community contexts, and beyond their time in college. As Chittum et al. (2022) succinctly put it, "the next frontier" for research in this space is to "truly understand the ways in which community-based and civic [pedagogies and] practices contribute to students attainment of essential skills," and in refining and shaping their civic identities (p. 25). This will bring us ever closer to realizing the promise and mission of higher education—of preparing students for lives of meaning and purpose, and for sustained and active citizenship in democratic societies.

CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methods

Curricular community engagement experiences are a significant part of the undergraduate educational experience at most institutions of higher education in the United States and globally. Characterized as high impact practice, much of this work is implemented through the avenue of service learning. The short- and long-term benefits for students of participation in service-learning and community engagement experiences are well documented in the literature. In addition to gaining practical skills such as a deeper understanding of social and civic challenges, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, students also develop empathy and a generative capacity for fostering social change. Above and beyond such skills, these courses, and programs facilitate civic participation, enable students to develop citizenship skills, and greater capacity to be engaged and active members of communities.

Despite the extensive empirical evidence about the benefits and outcomes of curricular community engagement experiences, surprisingly little is known about the process by which participation in curricular community engagement experiences helps shape civic identity amongst undergraduate students. Advancing our understanding of whether and the ways in which participation in curricular community engagement experiences helps shape students' civic identity is vital, particularly as colleges and universities review and refine the purpose of a college education and look to expand programs that prepare students for engaged citizenship in democratic societies. This was the driving motivation for the study. The primary purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the ways in which students who participate in curricular community engagement experiences make meaning of these experiences and whether and in what ways these experiences play a role in enabling them to develop or refine their civic identities.

This chapter describes the methodology that informed my study on the impact of curricular community engagement experiences in shaping the development of civic identity among undergraduate students. In describing my methodology, I use the metaphor of Russian dolls offered by Jones et al. (2014). They suggested that a researcher's decisions about the means by which data are collected are informed by their philosophical stance. This, in turn, informs choices about research methods.

Beginning with a description of my philosophical stance for this study, based in the epistemological foundation of interpretivism (Glesne, 2011), this chapter delves into my rationale for choosing the case study approach. Next, the chapter describes the specific strategies and methods that I used for data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Following that, I elaborate the steps that I took to enhance trustworthiness. I close this chapter with a positionality statement—describing how my stance as an individual and as a researcher informed, influenced, and shaped this work. Lastly, I briefly discuss the ways in which I tried to center the voices of participants in reporting the findings of this study.

Research Design

Given the focus of this investigation, and the dynamic and complex nature of the interactions that the research question was framed to answer, this study was informed by the constructivist (Dewey, 1938; Piaget 1969) paradigm. With this orientation, the study explored how and in what ways curricular community engagement experiences help shape students' civic identity using a qualitative case study approach to answer the research question. Since the research question is framed to address dynamic and complex interactions that students experience in the context of community engaged learning, the research design was based on the "borderlands" approach put forth by Abes (2009). Joining other voices arguing for leveraging multiple paradigms in the research process, or "paradigm proliferation" (Donmoyer, 2006; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Lather 2006, Tierny, 1993), Abes makes the case for this approach of bringing together multiple theoretical perspectives not as a methodological "blueprint" but "as one possibility." Thus, theoretical borderlands enable researchers to glean and explain "students' complex understandings and experiences with their identities… and as they navigate their realities" (pp. 141—144). This approach suggests that reality is socially constructed and shaped by individuals' interactions with the broader ecosystems that they are a part of. Therefore, this study was situated within the framework of interpretivism (Glease, 2011) and with the assumption that students' civic identities develop as they actively construct and make meaning of their experiences. Students also simultaneously shape and are shaped by the environments and contexts that they are interacting with.

This approach is best suited for this study because it allowed me to probe how students engage in and make meaning of their experiences (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018) and how they distill this meaning in ways that shaped their identity. Another advantage of this approach is that it allows the investigator to explore lived experiences, and to understand differential contextual factors (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) in choices about, experiences in, and engagement with, curricular programs.

The Case Study Approach

Stake (1995) suggested that when we need to discern a particular case or issue in order to understand the larger research question at hand, it is referred to as an instrumental case study. For instrumental case study, the “issue is dominant; we start and end with issues dominant” (p. 16). Designed as an instrumental case study, this research project investigated one specific curricular community engagement program at one university and probed the perceptions of students and faculty on how and to what extent participation in this experience shaped students’ civic identity. The case study approach is most appropriate for this study because of its intensive focus on a particular context and its emphasis on rich descriptions of complex interactions (Jones, et al., 2014). Furthermore, this approach offered the potential to contextualize identity development as being shaped by both cognitive and socio-cultural factors. The case study approach is a popular and one of the most frequently used qualitative approaches in educational research and yet characterized as “contested terrain” (Yazan, 2015, p. 150). It has been marked by epistemological debates, lack of consensus regarding study design and implementation, and perhaps stemming from this lack of consensus, confusion regarding what this approach is, and “how it can be differentiated from other types of qualitative research” methods (Merriam, 1998, p. ix). Amongst the most prominent methodologists of the case study approach are Merriam (1998), Stake (2005), and Yin (2002). These scholars provided tools and strategies for researchers in using this methodology (Crewsell, et al., 2007). Merriam (1998) offers the broadest definition and greatest flexibility in applicability and suggests that the qualitative case study can be conceptualized as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii). Bounded system[s] are the parameters of the case, what will and will not be studied, as well as the timeframe (Miles et al., 2020). Yin (2002) defined the case study method as an approach seeking answers to “how” or “why” questions about “contemporary phenomena within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context [within which it occurs] are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context” (p. 13).

Merriam (1998) distinguished the case study from other approaches such as case histories, casework etc., by drawing on the specific features of the case study method. These include the following attributes: the case study approach is “*particularistic* (it focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon); *descriptive* (it yields a rich, and thick description of the phenomenon under study); *heuristic* (it illuminates the readers understanding of phenomenon under study [italics added],” (as cited in Yazan, 2015 p. 139). Furthermore, Merriam offered extensive guidance about conceptualizing and implementing the research process using this method—from conducting the literature review, developing a theoretical framework, designing the approach, devising sampling and data collection strategies, to collecting and analyzing data.

Specific to data collection, Yin (2002) offered the following tools—documentation, examining archival records and physical artifacts, interviews, direct observation, and participant observation. Although Yin and Merriam have differing epistemological assumptions undergirding their work, I combined the guidance offered by both scholars to conceptualize and guide the methodological approach for this study, as their approaches to data collection in case study complement each other. Yin identified three principles that researchers need to attend to in designing case studies—(a) use of multiple sources for the purpose of triangulation; (b) careful attention to the assembly of evidence; and (c) meticulous care to the links between the questions being asked, data that are being collected, and the conclusions that will be drawn (Yazan, 2015) which will help the researcher "follow the derivation of any evidence ranging from initial research questions to ultimate case study solutions (Yin, 2002, p. 83). Whereas Merriam (1998) provided thorough and explicit guidelines on data collection procedures for researchers to follow including "conducting *effective* interviews, being a *careful* observer, and *mining* data from secondary sources such as documents" [italics in original] (Yazan, 2015, p. 143). Yin's three principles and Merriam's detailed guidelines, in combination, provided a good grounding for me to construct my own approach to data collection.

In summary, case study is the most appropriate approach for this particular study because the goal was to focus on students who participated in one specific program at one institution in order to understand whether and how participation in this type of program helped shape students' civic identity.

The Case and the Context: Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) Program

In accordance with Merriam's (1998) definition of a case as a "single entity or unit, or phenomenon occurring in a bounded context" (p. 27), the focus of this study was a particular community-engagement experience at Duke University, a private, not-for-profit, research intensive, four-year institution (Carnegie Classifications, 2022) in the southeast of the United States. The unit of study was the Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) program, a nationally recognized (Colby et al., 2003; Colby et al., 2008), and selective 12-month leadership and curricular community engagement program designed for students interested in engaging with social issues. The program is administered through the Hart Leadership Program, an endowed leadership program based at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. The following sections provide brief descriptions of the university, the school and the Hart Leadership Program followed by a description of the case itself, the SOL program. The purpose in providing descriptions of the university, school, and the center, is to contextualize the SOL program within the broader institutional ecosystem.

Duke University

Duke University has had roots in Durham since the late 19th century, having relocated from Randolph County in central North Carolina, and reestablished as Trinity College in 1892 (Duke University Libraries, n.d.). In 1896, as Trinity College was struggling financially, Washington Duke, a well-known local tobacco magnate agreed to financially support the burgeoning institution under the condition that it "opens its doors to women placing them on equal footing to men" (Durden, 1975 p. 100) making it one of the nation's earliest co-educational institutions. Trinity College started admitting women as regular students in 1897 (Duke University Libraries, n.d.). In 1924, the institution once again benefited from the Duke family's philanthropy with the establishment of a $40 million endowment by Washington Duke's youngest son, James Buchanan "Buck" Duke. The endowment infused the institution with new funding and the school was renamed Duke University. This facilitated redevelopment of Duke's East Campus and instead of expanding eastward into Durham's urbanizing downtown neighborhoods, the university chose to expand westward through its acquisition of 700 acres in Duke Forest to establish West Campus and 200 acres to establish Central campus thereby reducing town-gown disputes over land acquisition (Duke University Libraries, n.d.). Throughout the university's history, Duke leaders have emphasized their intertwined fortunes with Durham (Moyen, 2004).

The latter half of the 20th century brought significant turmoil to the city with the decline in textile and tobacco industries decimating Durham's economic fortunes (Preservation Durham, n.d.). There was significant change and upheaval at the university as well—graduate and professional programs were desegregated in 1961, and undergraduate programs in 1963. Whilst Duke was a pioneer in expanding access to female students, it was amongst the last schools in the South to desegregate and open its doors to Black students (Activating history for justice at Duke, n.d.). Along with desegregation, the 1960s also brought a rise in student activism at the institution. Duke was the site of the largest peaceful protest following Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968. Dubbed the "Silent Vigil" students joined forces with hourly workers at the university most of whom were Black and residents of Durham, to demand pay increases and improved working conditions (Duke University Libraries, n.d.).

Today, Duke's campus spans over 8,600 acres (US News and World Report, 2024) and between the university and the academic medical center, it is the second largest employer in the state of North Carolina (Duke in North Carolina, 2023), and the largest employer in Durham (Research Triangle Regional Partnership, 2021). As of fall 2023, the annual cost of attendance is over $80,000 and there were over 6,500 undergraduate students enrolled, 55% of whom are women. The three most popular fields of study are, computer science, economics, and public policy (Duke University Facts, n.d.). Ranked seventh among national universities (US News and World Report, 2024), while Duke is a vastly different place since the days of its founding, with people of color making up 50% of the student body (21% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 9% African American, 8% two or more races), it continues to confront challenges of equity and inclusion (Duke University Libraries, n.d.).

A recent study (Chetty et al., 2023) and corresponding journalistic report (Leonhardt, 2023) suggest that Duke is the least economically diverse amongst twelve of the most selective universities in the nation—the eight Ivy league schools, plus Duke, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Chicago, and Stanford University. 12% of Duke's undergraduate students are recipients of Pell grants, the federal financial aid program that is available to students from families earning $60,000 or less per year. In contrast, Pell grant recipients at most of the other schools in the group are around 18% to 22%. Furthermore, Duke has fewer students from families who don't quite qualify for Pell grants but are still relatively low-income, with annual family earnings of less than $100,000. Duke administrators responded to these findings and stated that the work of diversifying the socio-economic makeup of the student body is well under way. They touted financial aid programs for students from low-income families, including a newly launched initiative that provides full-tuition grants for undergraduate students from the Carolinas with annual family incomes of less than $150,000. They also pointed out that students eligible for Pell grants rose to 17% as of fall 2023 (Wadekar & Wang, 2023).

Sanford School of Public Policy

Ranked amongst the top Public Policy schools in the country (US News and World Report, 2023), the school was first launched in 1971 as the Institute for Policy Sciences and Public Affairs under the leadership of then president, Terry Sanford and founding director of the Institute, Professor Joel Fleishman. Having previously served as governor of North Carolina, Sanford was tapped as Duke's president following the tumult and protests of the 1960s. With its emphasis on undergraduate education and a humanistic orientation to public policy, the school had strong appeal to students who sought an education that spoke to social issues of their time. The vision of the founders was to leverage academic disciplines like economics, political science, and other social sciences towards shaping policy solutions to intractable social issues. The Institute was officially launched as Duke University's newest school and renamed the Sanford School of Public Policy in 2009 (Sanford School of Public Policy, History, n.d.). Today, the school is home to over 1,000 graduate and undergraduate students, over 100 faculty (Sanford School of Public Policy, Facts and Rankings n.d.), is the top ranked undergraduate public policy program in the United States (Niche.com, 2024) and the third most popular undergraduate major at the university (Duke University, Facts, n.d.).

Hart Leadership Program (HLP)

Founded in 1986, the Hart Leadership Program is the first endowed leadership program for undergraduate students in the United States and since its founding has served over 12,000 undergraduate students through various pedagogical and experiential programs including the Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) Program launched in 1994, the Hart Fellowship launched in 1995, the Enterprising Leadership Initiative launched in 2002, to name a few. In addition, HLP also offers a wide range of courses centered on topics of leadership, ethics, and policy, with the goal to expand opportunities for experiential and community engaged learning and to foster leadership development among undergraduate students (Hart Leadership Program History, n.d.).

Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) Program

Launched in 1994, SOL is a small year-long cohort-based program of about 15 students per cohort. According to one of the two faculty members interviewed for this study, “the program receives over three to four times the number of applications than can be admitted given the intensive teaching, mentorship, and the discursive and reflective work built into the program.” The program is open to students in the first, second, or third years of college, and according to the same faculty member, they are selected on the basis of their demonstrated capacity “to take advantage of the learning offered by the program” and their ability to “not only think hard about themselves and the communities they inhabit and participate in, but also their willingness to engage with large, complex, systemic issues.”

The program is structured in three-stages—a preparatory gateway course in the spring, an independent, immersive community-based project designed and implemented by the students in partnership with a community-based organization in the summer, culminating in a capstone seminar after the completion of the project (Hart Leadership Program, Service Opportunities in Leadership, n.d.). SOL students receive a stipend for their participation in the program.

The overarching goal of students’ collaborating with community partners in designing the experiential component of their work is that this work is well-grounded in the community, and appropriately accounts for the community context—the assets, perspectives, needs, and voices within the community. Describing the program, the faculty member stated that the "core [of the program] is that they're embedded in a community and working with and alongside a community-based organization." Elaborating on the purpose of SOL, they described it in the following way, "the purpose of SOL is to inspire and prepare students who are interested in community-based work and systemic social change to understand how communities have and can advocate for and affect systems level change." Thus, the program is designed to both enable students to be intentional in considering their own engagement in a manner that is respectful, and inclusive of the communities that their work is based in.

During the two courses that bookend the experiential, community-based work, students engage with content and course material centered on values and how they inform and shape one's perspectives and ways of engaging with the world; ethical conduct of community-based work; the meaning and purpose of 'service,' and in ways to seek long-term, systemic change. The other faculty member interviewed stated that the goal was to "expose students to texts, people, and information that can open their imagination about public service." Further elaborating, they said that the goal of SOL was to "create a safe space for [students] to know themselves first and understand their motivation, so that they can choose intentionally the right role in the life of public service." Throughout the program, students engage in critical reflection on the personal, intellectual, and ethical aspects of their community-based work. This reflective practice is intended to help students consider the alignment of their values with contextual factors and discern ethical quandaries or leadership dilemmas that may arise during their engagement with communities. The overarching program goal is to help students hone skills for "*meaningful* service and *thoughtful* engagement with communities" [italics original] (Hart Leadership Program, Service Opportunities in Leadership, n.d.).

Data Collection

Data were gathered through interviews and examination of secondary data sources to gain a better understanding of the experiences of students' participation in the community-based project. Secondary data sources included material such as course syllabi, course content, and program website describing programmatic elements and course and project details. The primary goal was to probe whether and the specific ways in which the SOL program helped facilitate students' civic identity. In-depth interviews were conducted with students who were part of one cohort of the SOL program.

The rationale for focusing on a baccalaureate educational program was two-fold: First, this is the initial step in the post-secondary path for most "traditional" students pursuing an education beyond high school. Second, while the higher education sector in the United States is varied, and the specifics of the curricular community engagement experiences that undergraduate students encounter also vary widely, many institutions have programs that provide the skills necessary for successful civic engagement (Perrin & Gillis, 2019). Additionally, this is a stage in the life of students where they are transitioning from youth to adulthood, and therefore is a crucial developmental stage with regard to continuing evolution of identity. Additional criteria for selecting the specific study site are that it is a well-established, longstanding, and nationally recognized model combining curricular and co-curricular elements for creating meaningful and robust civic engagement pedagogical experiences for students (Colby et al., 2003, 2008).

The SOL program also offered the potential to reach a diverse student body allowing for a representative sample. An examination of extant literature revealed that many studies were based on samples that skew towards certain demographic characteristics, specifically in terms of gender and ethnicity (see for example, Christens & Dolan, 2011; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Gurin et al., 2004; Thomas et al., 2021). Therefore, purposive sampling (Guest et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994) strategies helped with incorporating more diverse voices in understanding the development of civic identity.

Interviews

Data from primary sources were collected through open-ended, semi-structured interviews with thirteen (13) students who participated in the year-long SOL program and two (2) faculty who were involved in teaching and program administration. The SOL program is a cohort-based model, and all participants in this study were part of the same cohort. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described semi-structured interviews as a mix of questions with varying structure. This approach allowed for flexibility as well as structure and enabled the researcher to guide the interviewee and navigate the interview process based on contextual cues and information that were being provided.

Interviews yielded diverse and broad ranging perspectives and narratives about students' community engagement experiences and civic journeys. Given that the primary focus of this study was on understanding students' civic identity, they were the main data source. However, faculty engaged in teaching and implementing the program were also interviewed to glean perspectives on student civic identity development informed by their role in envisioning and implementing community engagement programs and based on their observations of and interactions with students during their developmental trajectories. Faculty members offered important insights about program vision, and impact in shaping students' civic identity.

While determining sample size is contingent on multiple, complex factors (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), Guest et al. (2006) suggested that a sample of six interviews may allow for the development of meaningful themes with useful interpretations and twelve interviews should be sufficient to understand common perceptions and experiences. Since the main focus of this study is student civic identity, the thirteen interviews with students enabled me to capture both similarity as well as difference. In other words, I was able to get to common themes as well as individual experiences. Data saturation is the point "when new information produces little or no change to the codebook" (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65). Therefore, my goal was to aim for a large enough sample so my research could potentially achieve data saturation, even accounting for differences in robustness of responses from participants. I believe with the data collected from the thirteen students and two faculty members I achieved saturation.

Merriam (1998) and Jacob and Furgerson (2012) recommended recording interviews, and taking minimal notes during the interview process, so the researcher may focus on maintaining eye-contact and being attentive to the responses and other cues being provided by participants. I conducted all interviews via Zoom and recorded interviews using the record feature taking some notes during the interview process. After the interview, I used the transcribing service Otter-ai (https://otter.ai/) to clean the transcripts and completed cross-verification with my notes from the interview or verification with the respondents themselves, as needed.

Document Analysis

As mentioned previously, secondary data sources that were examined for this study included course syllabi, course content, and program website. Only those materials available in the public domain were gathered in order to ensure no regulations regarding student records were violated. These documents provided valuable information to supplement the primary data obtained through interviews (Bowen, 2009). The goal of data collection using these multiple strategies was to gain breadth of understanding *about* the community engagement experience and contextual depth in attempting to understand *how* these experiences helped shape individual students' civic identity. Bowen pointed out one further advantage of document analysis, in that it is less obtrusive and less prone to the reactivity of more direct data collection methods. Furthermore, secondary sources provide insights while limiting the direct influence of the researcher in the data collection process, and therefore there is a lower risk of reflexivity.

Data Analysis

I coded and analyzed data from the various sources to seek patterns about civic identity, and mined the data to understand whether and how civic identity was linked to students' participation in this community engagement program. The goal of data analysis was to understand the development of civic identity among undergraduate students and to explore the relationships between civic identity and participation in the particular community engagement program that was the focus of the study.

Specifically, I leveraged the guidance provided by Miles et al., (2020) and developed a coding strategy that provided a clear direction and consistency to my data analysis. In developing initial categories for coding, I relied on themes in extant literature on civic engagement, and identity development. As themes began to emerge, I moved towards more axial or analytic forms of coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) for the purposes of grouping, better interpretation, and delving into deeper themes that emerged from the data. Consistent with Merriam (1998), I adopted a "dynamic and recursive" approach to my data analysis (as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 145). This analysis of the initial stages of data collection helped shape data collection in ensuing phases. To further clarify, while I used the same interview protocol for all interviews, I was able to sharpen questions and dynamically shift focus progressively as I went through the interviews. I used a winnowing process in my data analysis moving from broad themes that emerged across multiple sources and narrowing to more specific or individual themes and participants' own words and language in presenting findings (Miles et al., 2020). I carefully reviewed the secondary sources of data to look for themes that either corresponded with data collected through primary sources or stood out (Bowen, 2009). I used a similar strategy to analyze my interview notes. The primary goal for data analysis with the primary and secondary sources was to triangulate the process of data collection.

Enhancing Validity and Ensuring Trustworthiness

Prior to initiating data collection, I garnered appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and conducted my research conforming to established research protocols and ethical practices. The Office of Human Subjects Research at the University of Georgia determined that this study was exempt from full board review. Subsequently, Duke University, which was the study site, made a similar determination and did not require the submission of a separate research protocol to Duke University Campus IRB prior to commencing data collection. All documentation pertaining to Human Subjects Research approvals at both institutions is included in Appendix C.

Above and beyond seeking institutional approval for this study, I did my utmost to not just ascribe to procedural ethics but tried to go beyond and adhere to situational ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Seidman (2013) noted that the social identities of participants can affect issues of equity in an interviewing relationship and suggested that there are many potential issues of power, including “who controls the direction of the interview, who controls the results, and who benefits” (p. 101). I tried to be cognizant of contextual factors during each interview, and intentional throughout the data collection process about how I collected data, and the ways in which I presented these data, aiming for fidelity to the highest ethical standards of data collection and interpretation. I tried to be mindful of the power imbalances during the recruitment and data collection process, making it clear to each respondent that their participation was entirely voluntary, and not viewed as an expectation or requirement of their participation in the program. I also reminded participants that they could skip any of the questions and choose to end the interview at any time during the interview process should they decide to do so.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) stressed the need for awareness of organizational politics and sensitivity to human interactions. Given that students, and faculty were sharing their personal experiences and perspectives, I recognized that there may be times when sensitive or potentially emotionally charged details may emerge during the interview process. In instances where such situations arose my primary focus was on respecting the needs and wishes of the respondents themselves both in the moment and in interpreting and reporting the data. Furthermore, during the data collection and reporting process, I tried to be extra vigilant of protecting the identities of the student participants in particular. I tried to report my findings truthfully (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and with integrity.

In enhancing trustworthiness, I engaged each person I interviewed and the secondary sources I gathered as part of this research project with genuine curiosity and an authentic desire to learn. I also tried to be both intentional and open-minded in listening to students and faculty as they shared their perspectives about community engagement and its influence on developing civic identity. While the overarching goal for data collection through interviews was to build "appropriate rapport" with participants as recommended by Seidman (2013), I also attempted to strike a balance in this relationship such that I tried to ensure fidelity to documenting and recording the perspectives and experiences of the participants themselves. Given that I am proximal to this work, I tried to be extra vigilant in building affinity and yet maintaining distance with interviewees such that this relationship did not evolve into "a full 'We' relationship… and the experiences [that were] being reported and the meaning that was being made was [not] critically confounded" (p. 98).

During this stage, I did my best to "triangulate" data collection in order to combine "methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1970, p. 291). This process of triangulation was across the primary sources of data collection (i.e., interviews with students, and faculty) as well as across primary and secondary sources (course syllabi, course content etc.) of data. The overarching purpose was to accumulate "a confluence of evidence [to both] breed credibility" (Eisner, 1991, p. 110) and "corroborate findings across the various [data sources] and thus reduce[s] the impact of potential biases (Bowen, 2009). Additionally, I attempted to systematize data collection and stay consistent in gathering data from participants so that I could focus on active listening during the data collection stage. Similarly, in data interpretation, I tried to be intentional about recognizing, acknowledging, and trying to limit my own biases and to stay true to reporting participants' perspectives. Lastly, in reporting findings, I attempted to stay close to the voices and perspectives of study participants. Paraphrasing Lincoln & Guba (1985), I tried to ensure fidelity to the truth as expressed by the interviewees, and did my utmost to ensure credibility, confirmability, dependability and to the extent possible transferability of the findings of this study.

The Story of Self[2]: Positionality Statement and Participant Voices

In the spirit of critical reflexivity, I acknowledge in (undertaking and) reporting the findings of this study that I am a woman of color, an immigrant, one who considers herself a global citizen, and a person with a deep commitment to pluralism, to community service, and democratic engagement. I am also an educator and a proponent of experiential learning, particularly of community-engaged pedagogies. As a researcher, I hoped to seek evidence that links pedagogical practices, institutional values, policies, and programs to student outcomes. Over the course of my career, I have had the opportunity to learn with, teach, and mentor many students. I have seen students grow—intellectually, socially, and emotionally—as they transitioned into adulthood over the course of (and as a consequence of many of the experiences inside the classroom and beyond) their college years. This study was driven by my desire to gain a better understanding of how students who participate in curricular community engagement programs refine and develop their civic identities.

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[2] Based on Marshall Ganz' (2011) approach of public narrative as leadership practice.

As an educator and scholar, I ascribe to the philosophies of constructivism and pragmatism and believe that we each create our own realities and make meaning of our experiences based on our backgrounds, deeply held values, and our lived experiences. Given this and given my research questions, I believe qualitative methods are the most suitable to seek answers. The lens that I bring has shaped the framing of the research question and likely the entire research process. I did my best to incorporate reflexivity throughout, by constantly examining the biases that I might bring to the research. In so doing, and given my background, I tried to ensure fairness, respect, and openness to the perspectives of those who participated in this research; and honesty and integrity in reporting the findings of the study. Specifically, I engaged in constant dialogue with myself and with my committee throughout, to ensure transparency, honesty, and respect for my participants so as to preserve fidelity to the research process. I attempted to preserve the voices and stories of participants as shared. I am deeply appreciative of the generosity and vulnerability with which the participants of my study shared their stories with me. It is my sincere hope that I was successful in my mission of letting the participants' own stories of their civic journeys shine through. Lastly, while I did my utmost to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of participants, it is incredibly challenging given the small size and cohort-based nature of the program. Given the nature and scope of the study and given the honesty and openness with which participants shared their perspectives with me, it is my sincere hope and belief that this study will not cause any harm, material or otherwise, to any of the participants.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the role and extent of the impact of curricular community engagement programs in shaping civic identity among college students. The study was structured as a qualitative case study of one such year-long cohort-based curricular community engagement program—the Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) Program, based at Duke University—a private, highly selective university in the southeast of the United States. Participants in this study were all part of the same cohort. They started the program in the spring semester of their first or second years of college and completed it by the end of the following fall semester. While the primary interviewees of this study were students who participated in the SOL program, two faculty members affiliated with the program were also interviewed to glean their perspectives on the course, their approach to the pedagogy and praxis of the program, and their insights regarding the perceived program impact on students. While the interviews with faculty members were highly informative and insightful to understanding the case, I intentionally chose to center the voices of students in presenting the findings of this study. The reason being, given the study is about the ways in which students' civic identities are shaped, I believed student voices and narratives should have primacy.

In this chapter, I present the findings, analysis, and interpretation of the data I collected through student interviews, document analysis, and perspectives shared with me by faculty. Beginning with a brief overview of student participants, the chapter delves into the themes that emerged from interviews and document analysis about the development and evolution of civic identity among student participants. The themes are organized along the following dimensions mapping the trajectory of students' civic journeys: Starting with their early experiences prior to entering college, moving to their transition to college, followed by their experiences with the curricular community engagement program that is the focus of the study, and culminating in students looking ahead to their civic lives beyond college. The chapter concludes with a summary and overarching takeaways about the findings of this study.

Students pursue varied paths on their journeys *to* college and as they traverse *through* college. The findings of this study indicate that while there are multiple ways in which civic identity is developed and evolves, including the ways in which a college education shapes students' civic identities, curricular community engagement programs such as the one that was the basis of this case study do play an important role in enabling students to consciously think about themselves as civic agents in democratic societies. Findings revealed that early community engagement experiences can influence students' college choices and their predisposition to and experiences with community engagement while in college. Subsequently, these experiences may enable the evolution of their identities as civic agents and engaged citizens in society.

Based on the literature, my theoretical framework, and the patterns that I saw emerging from my data, I organized my analysis within the following framework. First, I saw the notion of civic identity being shaped along a developmental trajectory from childhood to adulthood. Informed by developmental frameworks proposed by Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2004), I determined these stages to be the following: (a) Foundations of civic self—the influence of early experiences; (b) Emergent civic identity—transition to college; (c) Evolving civic identity—Impact of SOL; (d) Establishing civic identity—Finding one's civic voice; (e) Envisioning the future—Consolidating civic identity and looking ahead. Embedded within and alongside this developmental trajectory are also social, cultural, and contextual factors that shape identity. In other words, individuals are continually 'figuring' out who they are and who they want to become based on powerful influences, influential actors, impactful actions, and social and cultural messages, or meta-narratives, which they accept, reject, reconcile with, or negotiate to construct their identities. Thus, this study is also informed by the theory of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998).

I present my findings based on the above schema, and present data based on how they were expressed and emerged either individually or in the aggregate. Throughout, as I make meaning from my data, I also drew upon existing literature to show where my data either confirmed extant literature or diverged from it. I begin with an overview and introduction to the participants in this study. Included in Table 1 are pseudonyms that I assigned to students. Tables 2 through 8 and Figures 1 and 2 included in Appendix A provide demographic characteristics, background details, self-expressed identities, and details about academic and extra-curricular activities students shared with me. As is evident from the Tables and Figures in appendix A, student participants from the SOL cohort with whom I spoke are a diverse group, with varying gender identities, socio-economic, and racial and ethnic backgrounds. As shown in Figure 4, five (5) students identified as men, seven (7) as women, and one student identified as non-binary or 2 Spirit. Twelve (12) of the thirteen (13) students interviewed identified as people of color. Of these twelve students, six (6) identified as Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, one

(1) student as African American, three (3) students as biracial or multi-ethnic, one (1) as Latino/a, and one (1) as Latine and Native American. One (1) of the thirteen (13) students identified as Caucasian or White. While not shown in the tables or figures, student participants also represent geographic diversity, in that they come from a variety of places across the United States, and in some instances having grown up in other parts of the world. Educational attainment and occupation of participants' parents and/or guardians is also wide-ranging. Four (4) of the thirteen (13) students were first in their families to attend college. Three (3) participants indicated that their parents were either hourly-wage earners or contractual workers, three (3) said that their parents were small business owners, four (4) were state or federal employees, six (6) were academic or medical researchers or other professionals. With regard to their academic trajectory, the vast majority of students (10) were in their second year of college when they started the SOL program, with the remainder (3) in their first year. Participants also had diverse academic and extracurricular interests as shown in Table 8.

Table 1

Self-Reported Identities of Student Participants[3]

Pseudonym	**Self-Reported Identities: Gender Identity, Preferred Pronouns, Race/Ethnicity**
Brandon	Male, He/Him, African American
Danielle	Female, She/Her, Biracial (Black/White)
Jay	Male, He/Him, Asian American
Kayla	Female, She/Her, Biracial (Mexican/White)
Leonard	Male, He/Him, Asian
Michelle	Female, She/Her, White
Olivia	Female, She/Her, Asian American
Paz	2Spirit, They/Them Latine/Native American
Raina	Female, She/Her Asian American
Ron	Male, He/Him Asian American
Sam	Male, He/Him, Asian American
Sara	Female, She/Her, Biracial (Arab/South Asian)
Sofia	Female, She/Her/Ella, Hispanic/Latinx

Foundations of Civic Self: The Influence of Early Experiences

Ranging from volunteering in community food pantries, to being part of mission trips, to standing on picket lines alongside a parent, to canvassing for political campaigns, to climate activism, participants' early civic experiences varied widely but were foundational to how they saw themselves, their role in the world, and in shaping their future choices and trajectories. Some participants spoke about their families' lack of civic involvement as igniting a need for community within them. Others spoke of their earliest memories of community service centered around connectedness with their heritage—with place and space serving as powerful motivating factors. For instance, one of the student participants, Sam, spoke about raising funds to support schools in rural China, where educational access was very limited. In doing this work, he was keenly aware of the fact that most of these villages were not dissimilar to where his grandparents are from. Participants spoke of these early experiences as avenues for self-discovery, affirmation of personal values, and the development of civic skills. Others spoke of these experiences helping build resilience, clarity, and prioritization.

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[3] In addition to the students, two faculty members who are involved in teaching and administering the curricular community engagement program were also interviewed to glean their insights about course content, community engagement, pedagogical structure, and student learning outcomes.

Across all interviews, early experiences emerged as a central theme in shaping identity, particularly how participants saw themselves in relation to the broader communities they were a part of. Several participants described early experiences of volunteering with their families, as part of church groups, or through their school as transformative and influential in shaping their values and aspirations. Others described families who were not so civically oriented and this sparking a desire to seek community and propelling them towards volunteering, and community service. A central theme was the impact of early experiences with community engagement and volunteerism as a path to discovering civic life. Several participants discussed their experiences with volunteering and community service as opportunities for personal growth and to feel connected to the broader fabric of civic life. One participant, Kayla, described her perspectives on civic life and her earliest memories of community engagement being informed and influenced by a politically active family. Civic values were instilled in her by her mother who was a member of a teacher’s union in a midwestern city. She recalled standing on the picket lines as a young girl holding up signs alongside her mother. She even spoke of an instance when as a teenager she accused the mayor of the city of dereliction of duty for cutting funding for schools even as his own children had the privilege of attending a private school. Kayla described her upbringing as an introduction to a lifetime of engagement with social issues and political advocacy. I describe in the sections below the major themes in students' recollections of experiences related to community engagement prior to starting college.

A History of Seeking Community and a Sense of Belonging

As students recounted their experiences related to community engagement or civic work prior to entering college, seeking community and a sense of belonging appeared to have provided a powerful impetus for some students to seek out opportunities for volunteering. Racial and cultural identity also seemed to have had a significant impact on individuals' sense of belonging within communities in that some students seemed to experience a greater sense of belonging with communities that they shared identities with, and also felt drawn to work for and with communities that they had overlapping identities with. Struggles with identity especially in predominantly white environments sharpened a focus on seeking representation and acceptance for those with minoritized identities. The quest to connect with others, build relationships, and find their place in the communities they were part of was a powerful driving force. For instance, Ron who grew up effectively as an only child in a wealthy suburb in the Northeast attending a well-resourced high school, spoke of lack of community connectedness in his immigrant family who were not civically or politically active. "I don't think my parents would even vote, if I did not remind them," he said. He was always interested in politics, as a function of watching cable TV and paying attention to the news, and while he admittedly did not engage in 'traditional' forms of community service as a high school student, he spent time volunteering for the Congress member from his district. He spent time canvassing for the Congressman's campaign while he was running for office, and upon his election, started working on youth outreach for his office. As he put it:

> Honestly it was the lack of community that made me interested. I've been fascinated by issues of social capital, how communities that have shared social institutions thrive. And how within communities there are people who have more influence than others. I grew up in a family that was mostly void of those relationships, and engaging with politics was easy because it is featured so prominently on the news.

For Ron, politics seems to have turned into an enduring passion, and he continued to do similar work in college. Lack of parental involvement in community or civic activities was a powerful motivator for several students. Olivia, a first-generation college student, talked about her parents' lack of time to volunteer: "honestly, they worked a lot." The need to belong was a significant part of the narratives students shared about their early experiences related to community engagement. Jay, another student, spoke of a lack of civic involvement in his family and his own sense of despair about the climate crisis serving as catalysts for involvement. Meeting and engaging with adult activists at climate protests and being treated as "one of them" was a powerful sustaining force to stay engaged. Sara, a biracial student, and a child of immigrant parents, who grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood spoke of her family's lack of connectedness to the neighborhood they lived in.

> Both my parents had a community growing up, and a lot of conflict that my sibling and I had in expressing our needs to our parents is around, maybe this is enough for you to be without community, but children require community.

Social connections that come with community service and volunteering were not surprisingly both a catalyzing as well as a sustaining force. As Olivia put it, “I really enjoyed the social aspects of volunteering while I was in school. I got to hang out with my friends, I got to see them, you know outside of the academic context.” Community service also appeared to offer a way to connect with others, to find community beyond one’s traditional networks. Moving around a lot as a child of a parent who was part of the Foreign Service, Danielle said that community service was for her a way to connect with and learn about all the places that her family moved to during her childhood and adolescence. “Getting to hear people’s stories, have conversations with them… was the really cool part of it,” Olivia said, describing her community service at a senior center. Sam, another student and also a child of immigrant parents, framed it poignantly when he said, “one thing I understand now in college is that learning how to sit in community was not something I was very good at in high school, so I took it upon myself to learn from others in college, and now it is central to who I am.” This realization highlights an evolution in understanding towards the link between civic work and a sense of belonging (Putnam, 2000).

Accountability to Community

As students were reflecting on their experiences related to community engagement prior to entering college, a strong theme that arose from the narratives was the notion of accountability to community. The narratives were largely centered on family members demonstrating the importance of fostering community. Some students spoke of their families being engaged members of their communities, despite living in challenging and precarious circumstances themselves. For instance, Sofia, who grew up in a farmworker community in a rural part of a southern state, described her earliest experiences of watching her mother provide food and other essentials to newly arrived immigrants in their community as something that was deeply influential on her own outlook on civic involvement. She said, “we may not have grown up with the best things or the newest things, but I was taught to value community.” Or Brandon, a student athlete raised by a single mother in a small town in the deep south, who said, “we were like one of those tight southern families that go to the same church and go to our great grandma's house for Sunday dinner after. It was my first impression of community, as I saw how many hands were involved in raising me. In helping whoever needed help, or whoever needed this or that. From that, I kind of developed this it takes everybody type of mentality.”

Other students including Brandon, and Michelle, who grew up in a large metropolitan city in the south in a neighborhood she described as “wealthy and historically segregated,” and Paz, a first generation Latine student, who grew up in a predominantly immigrant community in a big city in the north also spoke of their family’s involvement in church playing a significant role in their early exposure to civic involvement. Brandon and Paz spoke about being part of mission trips that their families would go on to communities in the United States as well as overseas, whilst Michelle’s first experiences with volunteering were around providing meals to homeless people through the church she attended with her mother and her maternal grandparents. As she put it, “it was a strong part of my family’s ethic to give back.”

For Paz, Sofia, and Brandon, this sense of accountability to community was also strongly tied to a deeper sense of responsibility to *their* communities and to feelings of reciprocity. As Paz put it,

> I come from a community that has done so much for me. I have been given so much, so many opportunities. that I have a community that I am responsible to. So, I'll frame it this way, in many Native American cultures, when we do healing-circles, or talking circles, when you introduce yourself, you say, who am I accountable to? And people respond with—my elders, my family, my community, native people as a whole… And so, I think even being a part of certain cultures that prioritize community networks and prioritize taking care of one another. I think because of that, I can't really fathom a life outside of that, you know can't really fathom not doing that.

Thus, it is evident that family traditions and family members served as role models and exemplars in teaching students about the importance of interdependence and prioritizing a sense of accountability to one's community.

Independence and Agency: Finding One's Niche

Another recurring theme that stood out in participants' reflections on their early experiences is that of community engagement experiences that helped them discover a greater sense of personal agency and efficacy. Participants spoke about early experiences that enabled them to find a sense of purpose and sustain motivation to seek change. They also spoke about these experiences helping them build relationships with like-minded others, and to a broader community, thereby sustaining them in their civic work.

Early experiences around community engagement were also tied to self-discovery, helping students figure out who they were, their deeply held values, and what they were good at, and in advocating for issues they cared about. For Olivia, volunteering was a way to connect with others and shine in ways that spoke to her strengths, to who she was as a person. “I wasn’t the person running marathons, you know, I was the person who’d go to the beaches to pick up trash and protect the environment.” In reflecting on her work at the senior center, Olivia spoke about the work enabling her to nurture her creative side which she seldom had the opportunity to do. During our interview she reflected,

> One of my favorite volunteering activities was doing crafts with senior citizens. I was in-charge of the activity we would do, and I loved it because it allowed me to engage my creative side, and I got to instruct everybody while we were there. It was refreshing to be able to do things outside of oh, like studying for classes. I was a very studious person in high school.

Conversations about early experiences also brought the strong connection between participants’ personal values and the causes they chose to engage with to the fore. Self-discovery in these situations occurred by students acknowledging their values, and what was personally important to them. Leonard, whose background as a child of Asian immigrants, growing up with parents who faced challenges integrating into their neighborhood due to language and cultural barriers, realized that inclusion was a core value for him. Subsequently, during his time at a boarding school, recognizing the limited services for LBTQIA+ students, he felt compelled to organize a group of his peers to start an LGBTQIA+ alliance at his school.

Engagement in community work and service activities fostered connections with others and personal growth. Paz reflected on community service facilitating a deeper understanding of their cultural background and thereby their unique perspective and positionality in being part of the fabric of civic life. Participants also emphasized the mutual benefit of working alongside and learning from others and a sense of belonging and purpose in contributing to their communities. Whether engaging in climate advocacy, or other forms of political activism, participants reflected a desire to align their personal beliefs with civic causes they espoused.

Other threads that emerged from these narratives touched upon self-efficacy emerging from these early experiences around community engagement. Michelle described developing a strong sense of independence and agency that came from volunteering alongside her mother and grandmother who she described as a strong presence in her life. As the only grandchild she received special attention, was included in adult conversations where she felt her opinions were valued and welcomed. These early experiences were formative in enabling her to develop a sense of autonomy and confidence. While reflecting back on her work at the community food center where she and her family regularly volunteered, Michelle said,

> I remember feeling so special because I got to have the key to go down to the pantry and reorganize it because they trusted me. Or when new volunteers would come, and I would show them what to do. Everybody knew who I was, knew that I was the youngest volunteer, and a regular, and they would put me in charge of a section.

Being seen as reliable and responsible seemed to reinforce self-efficacy and belief in her ability to make a difference. Jay and Olivia also highlighted their involvement in activities where they felt like they were treated on an equal footing by adults rather than as children. Jay said, “I got to hang out with adults at climate protests, and that was cool.” They didn’t treat me like a kid, like what did I really know?” Similarly, Olivia mentioned,

> getting to see and meet people where they lived, and going to different places in the community, I think was just a cool way to experience the community and all that it has to offer than just being someone who lived there without being involved.

All of these examples and opportunities for participation and being able to make decisions seemed to promote confidence and a sense of agency in students, and capacity to make a difference.

Influential Others: Mentors, Role Models, Formal and Informal Influences

Early education, both formal and informal, played a role in participants’ experiences related to civic engagement. High school courses such as history, government, and civics were highlighted as pivotal to deepening students’ understanding and appreciation of civic issues and in all of these instances, the courses involved some form of experiential component in addition to classroom learning enabling students to make their learning more actionable. Raina’s observations about high school coursework echoed the reflections of other students. She said,

> I loved social studies, civics, and government courses in high school. I liked being able to talk to my teachers about these subjects and trying to do things outside of

> class. I really liked being able to have a direct impact… and being able to work on issues that are more local.

Ron, who participated in competitive debate in high school, and was an avid consumer of news from a relatively young age, said that he enjoyed history and government courses because these courses helped him make connections between what he was learning in school and the broader world. He remembered, "talking about social and political movements like the Islamic State, or the movement for Scottish independence, and all of these things that were happening around the world, and how they were tied to what we were learning in class."

Students spoke of these experiences leading them to both understand and draw connections to the communities they were part of, and the broader world. These experiences also enabled them to understand power dynamics and help them start their civic journeys.

Several participants also spoke of influential figures who were role models. These individuals tended to be key figures within the orbit of participants' lives, such as teachers, parents, or grandparents. The influence of these mentors extended beyond academic and personal realms, impacting life trajectories and career aspirations. Olivia spoke about her high school teacher being a powerful role model and mentor to her.

> My AP Lang teacher, she was also the advisor for the National Honor Society chapter that I was part of at my school. I was very close to her, still am…she's also an Asian American woman. So, it was very nice to see someone who looked like me. And she was, she is the best. I still keep in touch with her. But I think why she stood out for me was because she was genuinely there for her students.

Olivia described this teacher as someone who went above and beyond to make a difference in her students' lives—staying for hours after school ended, supporting students' academic and extra-curricular work with equal gusto, and creating a sense of community in her classroom. Olivia elaborated, "…you know, one of the reasons why students succeed in school is because they have a sense of community. Like someone cares about them, or they have someone they can confide in or trust, you know, like my own experience." Sofia, spoke about one of her teachers, "Ms. Y taught us that community service was not just a requirement, but it was our duty as a community member to support others." Paz also described their teacher, Mr. C who coordinated community service programs at the private Catholic school they attended as someone who exemplified a respectful way to engage with community. They said,

> He never approached it, in the sense of like, oh, I'm helping these people. And like, he is this superior moral being or whatever. He was always genuinely very invested in the community. I think through his example, I saw the type of leader that I wanted to be when it came to civic engagement, he was someone who actually like, didn't just talk the talk, but walked the walk, you know?

Others spoke about parents and grandparents serving as role models. Danielle, Michelle, and Brandon all spoke of their mothers and grandmothers being very influential figures, particularly as early influences in their civic lives. Danielle attributed her interest in women's issues from a young age to what she saw and learned from her mother and grandmother, both of whom she was very close to. "I was always big on girl power, and some of that might have come from the tight knit relationship I had with them."

Students also spoke about community members who exemplified attributes and abilities that resonated with them. Sam said AJ was, “a perfect model for me to understand deep community work and exactly what it means to move at the speed of trust.” Danielle spoke about Ms. S, an advocate for maternal health equity,

> showed me how you can bring a lot of bluntness to community health work. It helps people trust you more and earns you a lot of respect. She was just very raw, and I think that it's very necessary when you’re working on something that should make everybody very angry, and she's not really willing to speak lightly about it.

The stories and narratives that students shared with me about their experiences related to community service, particularly the early influences, portray a powerful exploration of seeking community and a sense of belonging. They also underscore the impact of upbringing, and family dynamics in their quests to seek connection through volunteering and community service. Conversations with participants highlighted the transformative impact of early experiences around civic engagement—in shaping their values, aspirations, and in their personal growth. Cultural and familial influences, education, and relationships with influential individuals were also key factors in informing and shaping their civic selves early in life. In essence, for many of the students represented in this group, it was evident that the seeds of their civic selves were planted and nurtured through early experiences in childhood and adolescence. Not only did these influences shape their sense of self, they may have also shaped the choices that they made in college.

Sofia spoke about working on a migrant education project while she was a junior in high school. She was engaged in helping children of migrant farm workers with learning to read. During the course of this work, she met a young boy of about seven or eight who was making exceptional progress with reading and when she excitedly shared this news with her supervisor who was coordinating the migrant education program, she learned that this young boy, Domingo, was with a group of adult men including his father, who were all living in very precarious circumstances traveling from one state to the next in search of agricultural work. Witnessing both the circumstances that Domingo was living in, and seeing his potential was a "pivotal moment" for Sofia. As she described it,

> That was when I realized, like, my profound connection, and the reasons why I wanted to do the work I was doing. And because of him, like, he really, really changed my way of viewing community of not only viewing community in the sense that I am a part of my community, but *what is my role in my community*? And how do my experiences impact the reason why I want to do what I want to do, and I think it provided me with a more profound connection as to why I want to do the work I want to do. [italics added]

To summarize, the stories I heard suggest that the search for community is not simply a means of finding one's place, which it is, but it is also a journey towards personal growth, empowerment, and self-efficacy. The narratives highlighted the role of family and cultural influences in shaping civic identity. They also shine a light on cultural notions of responsibility and accountability in nurturing civic identity. Thus, students transition to college not as 'blank slates' but as individuals with foundational identities that have been shaped by formative experiences.

Emergent Civic Identity: Transition to College

Transition to college for this group of students brought with it additional challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a group that had a somewhat distorted experience in their final years of high school and transitioned to college under unusual and difficult circumstances. During a time when seeking and building community is vital to the consolidation of their evolving identities, they were forced into solitude and experienced much of their transition to college virtually. Marking the milestone of transition to college, as participants' identities and sense of self continued to evolve, the following themes were salient in painting the picture about the ways in which participants navigated their transitions to college. In transitioning to college, participants described encountering instances that sharpened their awareness of disparities in access and privilege in addition to the challenges wrought by being away from home. Students spoke about complexities in navigating classroom spaces and social situations arising from differences in socio-economic, cultural, and other forms of identity. Students also spoke about seeking communities they could fit into and thrive in.

Overall, the transition to college was marked by students' grappling with their identities and figuring out where and how they fit in within the campus context. In doing community service, students also spoke about differential privilege they experienced in working with individuals and groups with whom they shared an identity but were still outsiders as students attending an 'elite' university. Code switching and understanding and representing oneself and attempting to bridge schisms between different communities was critical. The juxtaposition of identity, privilege, and how one's perspective evolves over time, particularly during periods of transition, was an overarching theme that emerged. This was often tied to experiences of discrimination, self-awareness, or a broader understanding of the world and the role they saw themselves playing in it. Thus, as students transitioned to college, their civic journeys, and thereby, how their civic identities were evolving was shaped by the ways in which they were grappling with their other identities and finding ways to both ‘fit in’ and ‘stand out’ in college.

Transition and Adaptation

The transition from high school to college was one that brought a unique set of challenges for this group of students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the pressures of virtual learning, and applying to college, these students had to adapt to unusual situations, cope with social isolation, online learning, and still try to form new relationships and find a sense of belonging in a new environment. As Leonard put it, “during my initial months in college, my approach was to explore as much as I could. So, I decided to explore religion even though I did not have any exposure to religion at all up until that point. I decided to join a local church group and started going to their Friday service. I made a couple of friends through that.” A couple of participants highlighted the difficulties faced by students from low-income backgrounds or from families where they were the first to pursue a college education. They spoke about firsthand experiences in seeing the differential impacts of the pandemic on their communities and therefore a renewed desire to use their college education to help mitigate some of these disparities. Despite these challenges, many students also spoke about their transition to college as an exciting new opportunity and navigated the challenges that came with it as an avenue for personal growth—reviewing and reaffirming their values and priorities. Several participants also spoke about disruptions in opportunities for community service due to the pandemic but also spoke of creative ways in which they tried to navigate this (providing online support services, establishing, or participating in mutual aid networks are a couple of examples). Conversations surrounding transitions to college also emphasized how being in a more diverse landscape was revelatory for many. For instance, one student spoke about golf being a mandatory part of high school—which he thought was the norm until he learned differently in college. Whereas another student[4] spoke of being intimidated about going to social events and dinners because of not entirely sure about the appropriate cutlery to use while eating.

Overall, transitions were characterized by mixed emotions—fear, uncertainty, loneliness on the one hand, and excitement, renewal, and opportunities for new learning and developing new relationships on the other. Again, as students were navigating a range of experiences and emotions in their transition to college, so was their civic sense of self being shaped by these experiences and emotions. In essence, students were grappling with issues related to the identities they arrived at college with and figuring out how and where they fit in, and the ways in which they were dynamically seeking to shape their identities in new ways. Adaptation is another aspect of participants evolving during this time. As they adjusted to new circumstances often in unconventional ways, particularly due to the pandemic, they found ways to adapt to virtual learning, limited social interactions, and changing academic circumstances. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Danielle, who grew up moving around a fair bit throughout her life given her parents worked for the foreign service, had a particularly positive recollection of her transition to college. She said,

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[4] I thought it was important not to use names in this particular situation, despite all students being assigned pseudonyms. Given the small sample size for this study and given the cohort-based nature of the program, I believe that not disclosing names would give students an additional layer of anonymity.

> Freshman year was the best year of my college experience, even though it was supposed to be the worst, given COVID. We just like, really had very tight knit friend groups, people weren't being messy, because they didn't have the opportunity to be messy. Like, we thought a crazy night was having twenty people in the room. And so, I don't know… I feel like you just like, ended up building a very like tight knit circle.

Finding One’s Place, People, and Purpose

As participants spoke about their transition to college, feelings of loss of community due to the pandemic seemed to coexist with the heightened need to seek, nurture, and sustain it, especially during a time of transition in their lives. Students spoke about various ways in which they tried to build meaningful connections as they started college. In most instances it was through curricular programs—a semester-long seminar course, called FOCUS (FOCUS, Duke University, n.d.) offered at the university to first year students was cited as a popular choice by nearly two-thirds of participants. Building on curricular experiences in the first year, close to half of the student participants completed Bass Connections, another community engaged curricular program designed to tackle “societal problems” (Bass Connections, Duke University, n.d.).

In talking about their extra-curricular activities in college, several of the interviewees described being active participants in student organizations with strong civic orientations including student government, social justice and advocacy-oriented clubs, identity, and affinity groups etc. Other avenues included pre-orientation programs, extracurricular activities, and affinity groups. Many students described their participation in these activities as opportunities for connection, finding belonging, clarifying, or affirming their values, or to make a positive impact. For example, Olivia spoke about being involved with a pre-orientation program that was oriented towards community engagement (Project BUILD – Building Undergraduate Involvement in the Life of Durham); Paz spoke about being involved with a student-run ESL training program for Latino/a adults; and Sofia spoke about her involvement with Duke Define America, a student run organization that advocates for justice for immigrants, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; Leonard was engaged in civic outreach through his involvement with the performing arts; and Jay has stayed involved with organizations and causes advocating for environmental causes.

Grappling with Vexing Challenges and Jarring Realities

In transitioning to college, and often building on experiences that they had prior to entering college, students spoke about navigating troublesome realities. As they tried to make sense of these often-uncomfortable realities, there was a demonstrated impact on shaping their civic identities relative to power and marginalization, and cognitive dissonance.

Power and Marginalization

Students encountered and experienced the political realities of educational disparities, minoritized identities, issues of language, and other disparities and injustices. While these experiences were not necessarily new, in that these were things that they had encountered and grappled with earlier in their lives, college seems to have brought them into sharper focus. They also tried to make sense of experiencing feelings of powerlessness in some situations because of their age and status. In many ways, these experiences not only harkened their transition to adulthood but seem to have sharpened their focus on social justice. Olivia reflected upon her decision to study public policy and education during college stemming from an experience she had while in high school. She was a student representative on the school board of her school district, while in high school and had the opportunity to witness firsthand the realities of funding and budgeting for schools. Particularly during the pandemic, she felt like she saw some decisions made about differential allocation in funds for schools that made her uncomfortable. She also felt like given her status as a student, she was powerless to really advocate for what she saw as the right thing to do. As she described it, “In a lot of ways, I felt like students were put on a platform to be representatives, but we weren’t really given the opportunity to advocate for things we believed in, it was more like performative representation.” This led her to the path of studying public policy and education in college, and she hopes to eventually work on shaping educational policy.

Brandon spoke about a different experience, one that he had encountered earlier in life but was brought into sharper focus as he worked on his summer project for the SOL program on educational disparities experienced by Black children, a project that he worked on the previous summer. He tried to make sense of the experience as a Black man, and as an athlete, and tried to grapple with the questions it raised for him. He spoke about the jarring reality of the perceptions of Black people, and the Black experience—Black students being demonized and idolized in counterproductive and harmful ways. As he described it,

> Um, it is just so odd how, like, how a Black child could get kicked out of class and be rough handed by a police officer. And then that same day, the same people were praising him on the football field or basketball court. That is weird, or how every class on Black history or everyone, every Black student even as early as elementary school, knows who Jackie Robinson is, but nobody knows who James McCune Smith, the first African American to get his doctorate degree is, nobody knows who that is. Athletics is seen as the way for a Black person to be, or a Black student to be accepted, like just their physique being greater than their intellect. I've lived through that myself. It has influenced my whole life, but I did not really see that, until I was around those kids that I worked with during my summer project. I was like why does everyone want to be LeBron? But it was also important to remember that sports is huge, it's a huge cultural presence in the Black community, particularly in the South. We hold it tight to our families. We watch sports together. It's seen as the one thing that has been equalized. Like, once you get on the court, once you get in the field, it doesn't matter what color your skin, you're equal. So that was an important lesson I learned that summer.

As I heard Brandon narrate this experience, it seemed to me that he was trying to process in real time his own experiences as a student athlete at an elite institution and trying to make another world and worldview possible for the young children he worked with during his summer project.

Along similar lines, Paz, reflected on their work at a large national health policy and advocacy organization in their city the summer after their first year of college. They worked in the organization's division of community partnerships on a birth and reproductive health justice project which involved a lot of outreach to Latina and African American women living in the most impacted neighborhoods. Paz said,

> A lot of the women in this organization were talking about how language accessibility is a super important thing, and what struck me was that besides me, we did not have anyone in the organization who spoke Spanish. I mean, that is hard to understand or justify.

Or, when Sara spoke about the Magnet school she attended. Her class had sixty students from across the county in a STEM magnet program. As she reflected on this experience, she said,

> There were sixty kids in the grade from across the county, which again, if you think about education and the politics of that, I think we understood that at a young age, because I went to magnet school where like fifty of the sixty kids were Asian American and most of the rest were white, besides one Black student, no Hispanic students. That's not the breakdown of my county at all. And that was something that I learned at a young age. It made me realize how education itself is something that really divides people.

All of these realities that the students encountered and tried to make sense of while in college seemed to collectively illuminate the intricate issues surrounding power and marginalization. These realities that students grappled with and the ways in which they did so revealed a deeper and more critical understanding of these issues as well as a desire to confront and challenge them.

Cognitive Dissonance

Students also spoke about experiencing cognitive dissonance. Sofia described her experiences as a first generation, low-income, Latina student from a farmworker community having to navigate challenging circumstances in college surrounded by students from wealthy backgrounds and having attended elite schools with “advanced education,” as she put it. Having never had an elite, private school education, she said she often felt intimidated in classroom contexts and social settings. She felt like “she had to work twice as hard.” Some of what her peers said in class revealed to her profound ignorance and even tone-deafness to the realities of so many students from backgrounds very different from theirs. She half-jokingly said to me, “I often wondered, am I, am I the problem here?”

Similarly, Paz spoke about a profound and uncomfortable realization that they had during the COVID-19 pandemic,

> When COVID hit, everyone was talking about how cities had turned off, everyone was taking pictures of my city with nobody in it. I would go outside in my neighborhood, and everyone was still going places. Because everyone there was an essential worker. Life did not stop for us. I was like, oh, my gosh, everything is still running here. And of course, we were dying at the highest rates!

Many of these experiences that students shared were intertwined with their identities, their experiences around issues of disparity and privilege and the profound cognitive dissonance that they had to grapple with. While they may have encountered many of these experiences prior to entering college, they seemed to have been brought into sharper focus during their transition to college, as they were seeking and finding their place in college and figuring out their purpose. In many ways, in navigating the transition to college, students were reflecting back on, grappling with, and making meaning anew with many of their early experiences as well. Thus, these experiences and the meaning making that the students were engaging in, seemed to be shaping their sense of civic purpose and sharpening their orientation towards work that would advance social justice.

In summary, students' experiences and reflections collectively paint a picture of the complex and multifaceted journey of transitioning to college and engaging with various aspects of their new academic and social environments. As students transitioned to college, they adapted to change, engaged in self-discovery, developed their sense of identity and belonging, explored and grew, experienced the interconnectedness of academic and extracurricular pursuits, balanced practicality, and passion, overcame challenges, and built resilience at a pivotal stage in their lives. These factors depict a rich narrative of growth, exploration of purpose, and evolution of identity by engaging intentionally in meaningful experiences during their college journey. I got a glimpse into the narrators' experiences, values, and aspirations and how these shape their evolving identity during a transformative period in their lives.

While developmental obstacles were described as challenging, participants also reflected on the critical role these experiences played in helping them develop agency, and in finding alignment between personal values and societal needs. Many of the students, and in particular those who were first in their families to attend college, and/or an elite institution, also felt that their identities related to civic life and community work were deeply intertwined with a sense of responsibility and obligation to uplift the communities that they were from.

Evolving Civic Identity: Impact of SOL

As the students described it, the SOL program is characterized by its focus on ethical community engagement and the two classes that bookend the experiential community engagement component emphasized facilitated discussions and open dialogue rather than a traditional lecture format. Students seemed to appreciate the cohort-based model, which enabled the amplification of diverse perspectives, and the passion for their respective causes. The program also emphasized personal growth, self-awareness, listening, and working to create benefits for communities, and doing so in collaboration with communities. Students spoke extensively about being oriented towards an asset-based outlook towards communities as opposed to a needs based one. Another important component that came to the fore from my conversations with students is the focus on authenticity in engaging with communities and relationship building. Faculty emphasized wellbeing—or “taking care of one’s personal ecology” in engaging in community-based work as well as more broadly in their day-to-day lives as students. Overall, the SOL model seemed to be premised on notions of bridging intellectual curiosity with real-world impact through authentic engagement with communities and fostering personal growth by creating a supportive and diverse community of learners. The following sections lay out a distillation of lessons that students shared about their participation in the SOL program. These lessons are oriented towards specific ways in which the program seemed to have shaped students’ outlook on civic life and in seeing themselves as civic agents.

Identity and Shared Humanity

For some students there seemed to be synergies between their identities and the issues that they were passionate about. It appears that they were drawn to the work because of the resonance it had for them with their own lived experiences. For instance, Paz is from an immigrant family and identifies as Latine, and their family have been beneficiaries of community service programs. They chose to work on a project to make community services more accessible to non-native (English) speakers and immigrants by leveraging in-language and in-community networks and by developing bilingual community workshops. Reflecting on their summer project for the SOL program, Paz highlighted a particular experience that felt like an epiphany. It was an interaction that they had with a community health worker who was part of the organization they partnered with for their project. Paz described a time when they were walking in the neighborhood with this community health worker, Gladys,[5] who was deeply enmeshed within the neighborhood and knew everything about everyone within the community but had never considered being a health promoter within the community prior. Seeing Gladys' familiarity and interactions with members of the community, Paz recalled thinking "we have this big community… it is such a good resource to mobilize. How can we use it to create equitable health access?" Subsequently (and to some extent prior to), much of Paz' work has been centered on, as they described it, "an asset-based framework, and focused on uncovering [what are] the strengths of Latina community networks that help make our families healthier."

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[5] This is a pseudonym for the community health worker that Paz spoke about during our conversation.

Others said that they worked on issues that they did not have first-hand experience with, and grappled with how to navigate community contexts where their identities did not overlap with those of community members. Leonard reflected, “I think one major way in which working on my SOL project changed me is by giving me courage to work for, to work in a community that I personally don't belong to.” He worked on documenting the pressures of assimilation that French Canadian teenagers experienced in an Anglophone culture. Although the question that this raised for me regarding the resonance of this issue for him was his own lived experience as a non-native English or French speaker moving to live in Canada as a young person. Sara had a similar reflection but with a slightly different tilt to it. She said,

> If I wanted to do community work, there is a part of me that’s like, don’t you have to have the same identity as the people? But I also realized when I enrolled in the SOL program that you're not always going to walk in and be the same person as the people you're trying to support. And so, what do you do about that? I also think that when you share an identity, it does not mean you understand the person completely. That’s a false narrative. I feel like a good community organizer knows that no matter what, even if you share very similar identities with the people that are around, it still is a lot of work to understand the community. But also, the amount of work and the amount of listening and the amount of time you must sit on your hands and resist the urge to act…extends the farther your experiences are than the people you're working with.

Several other students seemed to face similar struggles and came to arrive at a similar conclusion. Regardless, the issues of identity and positionality and how they play into community work seemed to be on the minds of all students and a topic of discourse both in the classroom and beyond. Sam seemed to frame this struggle well when he said,

> I have also found myself realizing that the communities I work with don't look like me… so I don't know whether the so-called lack of personal stakes (I know this a blunt way to put it, but I don't know how else to describe it) may make me less willing to stay involved. For sure in communities that I am personally connected to, [I may feel more vested] but some are very privileged, so not sure how to approach this either!

It appears that whether identity trumps a shared sense of humanity in meaningfully engaging with communities remains an ongoing and unresolved issue.

Connectedness to Faculty and Community Partners

Almost all the students expressed a strong sense of connection to the two faculty members who administer and teach the courses in the SOL program. They spoke about this in terms of the relationship that they had with the faculty members and in terms of the communal and collegial spaces that the faculty fostered for them. All of these factors were critical to students feeling a sense of psychological safety in having open, and honest conversations with their peers. For instance, Sofia felt that interacting with faculty provided her with clarity and comfort at times when she needed it most. She likened it to conversations with family and said, "they made everything make sense." Danielle noted that the faculty were able to create "special" spaces so she and her peers in the cohort "could genuinely learn from one another." Michelle was grateful for one of the faculty members who really pushed her to ask herself critical questions about her proximity to civic work, saying that this faculty member was the first person outside of her family that "challenged me to ask myself about the civic purpose of my education," and in enabling her to make linkages between her academic work and her civic work.

Overall, what I heard from students reiterates findings from existing literature about the impact of connectedness to faculty in both improving learning outcomes and in shaping students civic agency (Astin & Sax, 1998; Buch & Spaulding; 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Ferguson, 2021; Gray et al., 1998; Jorgenson et al., 2018; Potts & Schulz, 2008). In many ways, faculty, and community partners seemed to serve as powerful role models and exemplars as students constructed their own outlooks and civic identities.

Working for, Working With, and Being With: How Do You Engage?

Several students said that the work that they did in class was an important first step in preparing for the community engagement component of the program. In particular, many of them seemed to have been influenced by one particular reading during the 'gateway' course in the program, which centered on a thesis for community engagement advanced by Sam Wells, a priest, and Visiting Professor of Ethics at King's College in London. The reading discussed the notion of four kinds of ways in which to engage with communities— working for, working with, being with, and being for, and depending on contextual factors it is appropriate, and even necessary to be cognizant of the best approach to engage with communities (Wells, 2015). While it is hard to parse whether it was directly tied to this reading, their conversations in class stemming from the reading, or based on their other experiences with community engagement, the reading did seem to have crystallized for many students a greater recognition and appreciation for mutuality in community-based work. For instance, Brandon pointed out to me the difference between doing something for someone versus simply being with them. He said,

> When I am giving someone something, my time, or service, or a product that they need, that’s one part of community engagement, but it’s way more complex. We did this one reading where we spoke about the difference between working for somebody, working with someone and being with someone, and there may be a time when you have to do one or the other, and there may be times when it’s important to just be with someone, and at those times, it doesn’t feel like it’s one way, when I am giving you my time, I may be getting just as much out of it.

Elaborating on this, Sara even questioned more traditional notions of service, of “working for” someone. She believed that community work should emphasize “working together” or collective action for it to be realistic, and sustainable. As she put it,

> I've always felt like I've been *working for*, and I think that's part of why I would feel a little icky, for lack of a better word. And I think that if I were to go back to what I said about particularly how my parents view service or the church, it is very much something where you're told to work for something. I think that a lot of traditional ideas of service are very much like you're working for… and that's not [a] sustainable, or at least to me, a realistic way of doing service… [italics added]

The general consensus among students was that these conversations and associated cognitive processing about community engagement was a critical aspect of preparation prior to entering the communities for their summer work.

Thinking Big and Acting Small: Size of Impact versus Agency in Acting

Students also spoke about the notion of setting realistic expectations and meaningful goals in doing community-based work. It appears that this was also something that they discussed in class, albeit in the latter half of the program. Jay expressed how this lesson helped him think about his own work in advocating for climate action when he said,

> It’s easy to talk about changing a whole system, but it’s actually better to have a different conversation, to do something different, when you could for example, start a composting initiative, and build awareness about an environmental issue. get kids and young people involved in it. That’s more useful and feasible.

In a similar vein, Michelle had the following thoughts about her own work,

> And so, it's okay, if I'm going to a soup kitchen on Mondays, and just talking to people who are there. I don't have to be making the soup kitchen into a franchise that serves several cities in our state or serves all fifty states in our country, you know, it can be small work, that *does* mean something… [italics added]

Raina summed it up in simpler terms—applying it to her everyday life, and suggested that civic engagement is often unrealistically defined in grandiose terms. She felt like sometimes it can just be a matter of “being a good community member, getting to know your neighbors, helping with issues in your neighborhood, and not just solely focused on your own life.”

This notion of “thinking big and acting small,” seemed to be useful to consider in terms of perspective taking and with setting realistic expectations for their community engagement work, which in the case of the SOL program spanned a duration of twelve weeks in the summer. More importantly, it seemed to highlight the need to seek and strike the balance between pursuing a grand(er) vision of change while still accounting for the more mundane aspects of community work.

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

Another theme that was salient during my conversations with students, and apparently one that was discussed often in both classes and in peer group conversations within the cohort, was the importance of relationship building within community-based work. Students touched on notions of mutuality and thinking critically about their roles and positionality within community contexts and being cognizant of navigating these with care, and consideration for community members. Sofia, for example, spoke about her own work with the farmworker community, both during the summer and even at a more general level given her close ties with this community. She said, "The work that I did in class really made me think, made me reevaluate what it means to be in community, and with this community." Jay further drew the connections between relationship building, civic engagement, and public service when he said,

> When I think of civic, I think of public, and when I think of public, I think of people and relationships. It's one thing to care about an issue, whether it be poverty, or climate change, or the housing crisis… and you can propose as many policy solutions as you want, to address those issues, but all these policies involve people and until you get people to buy into something, you don't get anywhere.

In summary, student participants communicated the ways in which the SOL Program helped shape civic identity through its pedagogical approach—enabling students to work on a project that they independently envision and implement combined with preparation for ethical community engagement. It also fostered reflection throughout and particularly after completion of the project that each student worked on during the summer. One of the benefits of this cohort-based model is that it seemed to make space for a diverse community of learners to have authentic and occasionally difficult conversations facilitating greater understanding of different perspectives and a range of lived experiences.

Underscoring personal growth, self-awareness, listening skills, and collaborations with communities, this model seems to meld academic preparation with community-based work. It also appeared to foster a deep(er) understanding of civic responsibility, enabling students to become change agents in a diverse yet interconnected world. Relationships are seen as the cornerstone and students recognize that genuine engagement with people is the linchpin to effective civic work. Both identity and shared humanity play a crucial role as students work on issues that have personal resonance for them. Students also seemed to grapple with the tensions of working with, and in communities where their identities differed from that of community members, and they learned to navigate their roles and positions in communities with caution and courage. Students acknowledged that social change doesn't always require large scale action but can actually start with smaller, incremental steps. This reframing seemed to prepare students for the long road of civic change in sustainable and realistic ways. Connectedness to faculty and community partners was a strong enabling factor in helping students think of their own civic agency.

Overall, the SOL program seemed to have a profound impact on shaping students' civic identity by blending ethical community engagement, building authentic relationships, and a nuanced understanding of identity and shared humanity. It seemed to equip students with the tools and perspectives needed to be effective civic agents who bridge their passion for social issues with realistic and meaningful impact. What struck me about the students reflecting on the work and lessons learned from the program is that they came to see value in creating ripples of change that may be slow to begin with but may lead to more sustainable momentum rather than making a large splash that may simply be momentary.

Establishing Civic Identity: Finding One's Civic Voice

The purpose of a college education has evolved and continues to be a highly debated issue. While many suggest that a college education ultimately is about preparation for participation in the workforce (AACU, 2021), others say that it ought to be broader than that and should prepare students to be engaged citizens in democratic societies (College Compact, 2015). Rising costs of college have made this debate more fraught than ever before. However, given the increasing polarization in our country and globally, as well as the rise of misinformation and disinformation, it has perhaps never been more important to have citizens who are engaged in the democratic and civic fabric of our nation. A college education does and ought to prepare students for the workforce but should also foster personal growth, cultivate critical thinking skills, and promote democratic skills, and willingness to engage in and with communities that young people are part of. College plays an important part in enabling the shaping and refining of civic identity and in talking to participants about their perspectives on the purpose of a college education, the following themes emerged.

Access, Inequality, and Social Mobility: A Critique of Capitalism

Almost all the students I spoke to for the study grappled with issues of access, inequality, and social and economic mobility in the context of a college education. They suggested that while college is supposed to address and mitigate systemic inequities, there still are large gaps in college choice, access, and success beyond college. While participants recognized that college is a means to improve one's socio-economic circumstances, they were also cognizant of financial burdens and pervasive systemic inequities. Danielle gave voice to some of these quandaries,

> college definitely offers a leg up in the United States, in terms of social mobility… even for myself, coming from a middle-income family. It's kind of like a social safety net. Being at an elite institution, I have had my eyes opened as to *why the elite are the elite* and being in that space, in like a weird way, where I'm half in and half out.

Many also said that scholarships and other similar institutional support shaped their perspectives on education and gave them the luxury and privilege to pursue their intellectual passions. For Sam, the expectations of a college education and a career completely flipped once he knew he had a scholarship to support his education. He said,

> My expectations of college have absolutely changed because I came to the university without a scholarship. I was investing into my education so wanted a return on that investment (e.g., a higher paying job). Getting a scholarship flipped that script—now it was the university investing in me. This is a whole different ball game—I do things because I think they're intrinsically important,

> intellectually stimulating, or serve some public good, and not just because they serve my interest.

Some students also offered a critique of capitalism suggesting that an education solely based on the potential for financial returns was a very capitalistic notion that perpetuated privilege. As Sara put it, “philosophically, I think that the idea that you go to college just to prepare you for work is such a capitalistic idea, and I just can’t deal with it.” Instead, many advocated for a more holistic approach that considers broader social, and environmental concerns.

How Educational Experiences Shape Civic Purpose

Academic and extra-curricular activities while in college were an avenue by which students built skills and knowledge for personal and professional growth, but they also seemed to play a part in shaping their sense of identity and purpose. There was significant overlap and intersection between choice of academic (both majors and minors) and extracurricular activities amongst almost all participants. Students drew connections and seemed to find synergistic ways to connect their work in the classroom to experiential activities that they participated in.

Students often brought to bear their academic learning in advocating for issues that they cared about, indicating the exercise of civic agency. For instance, Michelle, who has a strong interest in urban issues and environmental justice crafted her own program of study in Sustainable Urban Planning. Similarly, Sam created an area of study centered around Decision Sciences and Democracy. Jay is majoring in Environmental Sciences and Policy given his longstanding interest in issues related to climate change. Students also expressed internal struggle with attempting to strike the balance between pursuing courses that would equip them to be competitive for high paying corporate jobs versus those that they found interesting and engaging and would prepare them for moving the needle on social issues that they cared about and were intrinsically motivated to tackle. As Sam put it, while he came to the university, eventually wanting to go to law school, he now has greater clarity. His academic and extracurricular work in college has convinced him that he "cares a lot about improving the legal system whether it is from the inside or outside." and he sees himself "hopefully doing some technical work related to public service, and at the intersection of math and politics." Another interesting revelation here was that just as students had a strong academic focus and a goal-oriented mindset, they also expressed sometimes struggling to juggle multiple priorities and commitments including academic coursework, extra-curricular and community engagement activities, and the demands of work. As Danielle put it, between overloading on classes every semester, volunteering, being in student leadership, and working, "I do feel like I put a lot on my plate."

While education was viewed as essential for career preparation, it was also seen as necessary to leverage for broader societal benefit. Jay's perspective on the purpose of a college education was:

> It isn't just about efficiency or isn't just to make as much money as possible. Going to a place like Duke or to any college for that matter comes with the responsibility that you're not just going to go out and earn a lot of money, but you're also going to make a difference… to lift up the communities you came from, or address issues you care about.

Or as Paz put it,

> You know, when I think about the purpose of college, workforce development is certainly important, but to not spend four years of your life learning and reflecting, and talking to your peers, and figuring out who you are, and what you want to do in the world, is to me a waste. What you may never have the chance to do again is to develop a sense for what change you want to see in the world… and what's your role in creating that change. Because I think when people just focus on workforce development, then they don't know what their purpose is in life, or they don't know what it is they're working for.

Therefore, students seemed to be crafting curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular experiences that were synergistic with their identities and interests. I will elaborate further in the next section.

Overlapping Identities, Interests and Activities

Across multiple interviews a theme that stood out was that of enmeshing of identities and how one influenced the other. There seemed to be an interplay between students' self-expressed identities and life experiences on the one hand and on the other, academic pursuits, extra-curricular involvement, particularly those related to civic causes that they embraced. Many students emphasized the importance of engaging with activities that resonated with their values and passions. For example, Jay has been focused on the issue of climate justice since his high school years and his coursework in college and experiential and extra-curricular activities all revolved around this issue. His aspirations for work after college were also aligned with this issue. Similarly, Sofia cared deeply about advocacy for farmworkers—from early in her life, leading up to her activities in college, and to what she envisioned evolving into a career in policy advocacy for farmworkers. Both Sofia and Jay, along with others, expressed the need to continue to be immersed in and work alongside the communities that they aimed to impact.

Several students were actively involved in student government and in political engagement and advocacy through various political outreach groups on campus. These are but a few examples of how students' interests, identities, and prior experiences were brought to bear on their civic work in college. Questions of evolving priorities and identity were also brought to the fore. For instance, Kayla spoke about a shift in her engagement from global and national issues to a more local orientation, "one thing I've realized after having volunteered for congressional campaigns and things like that… is that I am more interested in local and urban issues. Local government is more promising than being involved in congressional politics." Reflections from participants seemed to indicate that their time in college also translated to greater emotional processing, psychological maturation, and arriving at a place of deeper understanding of self and their place in the world. As Danielle put it, "after being involved with several things, and overloading every semester, the things that I have found most rewarding are the independent things that I have done, like my SOL project for example."

Another theme that emerged from the participants in this study is the extent to which they leaned towards experiential or community-oriented programs in their curricular and cocurricular work. Michelle's remarks and Sam's about their academic work are perhaps also reflective of other students' experiences in the group. Michelle said, "for at least five of the six semesters so far, I've taken classes that have had some form of community engagement component." Sam remarked, my activities so far have been a combination of math, politics, and the overlap—my classes are more heavily biased towards math, my activities more biased towards politics, but I see all of it through their intersection.” He has been working on a research project quantifying gerrymandering, serves as a speech writer to a member of the city council, and runs a Substack on political framing.

Thus, it seemed to me that students were finding powerful ways to fine-tune their civic voice and discovering a sense of agency by adding to and shaping public discourse through their civic work. It was also evident that as students were crafting their academic, cocurricular, and extracurricular experiences in ways that were synergistic with their interests and identities—they were also actively constructing these experiences around how they saw themselves and whom they saw themselves becoming. In other words, and as I discuss in the next section, identities and lived experiences—the positions that these identities placed them in were instrumental in helping them craft their civic role and purpose.

Identity, Resilience, and Role Construction

Participants spoke about encountering and trying to reconcile with the various developmental challenges they encountered from early on, while transitioning to college, and over the course of their time in college. These included, experiencing discrimination and the emotional toll that it took on them during a developmentally vulnerable stage of their lives. However, they also spoke of these experiences helping build resilience and equipping them with strategies for overcoming these obstacles fueled by the commitment to communities and causes of their choosing. For Brandon, themes of love, familial bonds, sacrifice, and support seemed to converge, instilling in him a mindset for overcoming challenges. He seemed to exude a sense of optimism despite the many challenges his generation faces. When I asked him how he saw his civic work evolving in the future, he said,

> As far as community engagement, I'd like to continue the work I did last summer[6] with school children, I want to make that, like an annual thing within my community back home. And I want to make it bigger and bigger. And I just want to keep showing that, like, yeah, these students got what it takes. And like, they just need the right people teaching them. People with the right mind, and the right heart for these students.

On the other hand, early exposure to and awareness of educational disparities, gentrification, and the disparate impacts of gun violence that Kayla described as part of her upbringing in a large midwestern city seemed to have caused her to become more jaded and cynical about the possibility of change. She contrasted her current outlook on politics to that of her father who she said still believed in the democratic establishment and in institutions. She said,

> I think the first time I ever saw my dad cry was when Obama was elected, which is so funny, because, like, that was for me, I think, like realizing how big of a deal it was. But then, I think I'm starting to stray away, I would say, through high school, and even like, at the beginning of college, I was a big optimist. I believed Obama was like, a great president, because we admired him so much in my house. I definitely, like, was raised in a way that was like, probably good, and in ways that like, all kids should be raised, and like believing in our democracy, but I

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[6] Referring to the work he did for his SOL project the previous summer to help mitigate racial inequities faced by Black elementary school aged children in his hometown.

> would say that, as the years in college have gone on, I feel like through talking to friends, and the classes I took, where I learned more, I think about the reality, and I feel like, there’s a marked shift. Like, I'm way less, I'm totally less optimistic than my dad.

This illustrated a shift from youthful political optimism to growing skepticism about the efficacy and belief in traditional political structures in facilitating meaningful change. She spoke about the evolution in thinking and shift in focus from engaging on national issues and campaigns to working at the local level—in trying to make small scale change through her work in cities and municipalities. As students were navigating and making sense of these experiences, they were also figuring out the meaning of these for their longer-term civic journeys. In as much as these experiences were providing them with clarity and conviction, they were also highlighting the real struggles involved in civic work as I will discuss in the next section.

The Struggles of Civic Work

As committed as these students were about doing civically oriented work, they also faced some challenges in this process. The struggles students experienced in carrying out civic work were real and tangible. These included burnout and feelings of hopelessness about the future; and struggles surrounding issues of identity, privilege, and positionality. Sara said, “you know climate change is here…. sometimes I’m like, wow, the world is ending, and no one seems to care,” or Jay said, “I’ve lived my whole life in the pursuit of my passions, but I have also felt burnt out.” Michelle tried to explain how she felt when she was trying to work on a project with a small non-profit in the city, “we were trying very hard not to enter the community or this partnership as Big U, university, but then the community partner wanted to get our pictures for their website because talking about a partnership with the university might help them with their fund-raising efforts, so in some ways I suppose there is no getting away from that." Sara spoke about struggles around gentrification,

> You know we see what is happening in Palestine or elsewhere and act like these sorts of things are foreign, across the world, but dispossessing people of their land is a very American thing. A lot of us want to live in cities, we walk around cities on autopilot, not even thinking about all of the ramifications of the choices we are making. The most liberal amongst us are also the worst gentrifiers.

The thing that struck me is that these students were willing to hold a mirror up to themselves, and they didn't always know what to make of what was reflected back to them. As I thought about this, it seemed like idealism and reality were often pushing up against each other, posing some difficult quandaries and raising tough questions for students—about self and the world—questions that were often uncomfortable, and with no easy answers or straightforward solutions.

Reflexivity and Transformation

Despite the challenges, the civic journeys that the students I spoke to are on also appear to have led to growth and development in their capacities as leaders and agents of change. Through critical reflexivity and by intellectually and emotionally vesting themselves into a variety of causes, in a range of contexts, the students grew in maturity and efficacy of actions. Their notions of what it meant to be a leader and an agent of social change seemed to evolve from more traditional stereotypes towards a broader more collective orientation. For example, Jay said that through his experiences he came to recognize and appreciate that the “hardest part of leadership is how you articulate your vision in a manner that encapsulates and connects to the vision of other people.” Similarly, Sofia said,

> my work made me reevaluate, what do I want leadership to look like, what should it look like? And sometimes it’s good to give power to people who are closest to the problem. Because they should have agency to provide solutions.

These two remarks highlight an evolution in thinking about leadership and individual agency, about recognition of the importance of incorporating diverse voices in decision-making processes. They also seemed to learn the value in leading from behind *and* asserting themselves when they needed to. Sara reflected on how she evolved over the course of her summer project,

> At first, I think that I was so afraid of dominating the conversation, I was often quiet… but the second half of the summer, I started to put myself out there more, to participate more. I realized that yes, you cannot dominate the conversation, and yes, you’re in a learning position, but you still must participate. There still must be a mutual relationship with people that you work with, and it’s hard to really understand that until you put it into practice. Because if you’re fearful of stepping on toes, and you’re silent in the corner, you’re also not in community. There is a fine line between the two, and I think I got closer to understanding that by the end of the summer. I even took these lessons and applied them to my other activities, just like I saw Syretta[7] do.

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[7] Syretta (pseudonym) was her supervisor and a community organizer in the city where Sara worked the previous summer.

Collectively, the thoughts and experiences that students shared with me portrayed a transformation in their understanding of themselves and about notions of leadership and civic agency. It reflects a recognition of the dynamic and adaptive nature of leadership and the importance of reflexivity, introspective examination, and willingness to learn from experiences with authenticity and vulnerability.

Envisioning the Future: Consolidating Civic Identity and Looking Ahead

As students looked back on their time in college and looked to their futures beyond college, they reflected on the evolution of their expectations of college—shifting from a singular focus on gaining marketable skills to intentionally building experiences and relationships. Leveraging their education to advance social justice appeared to be a central concern for many of the students I spoke to. While some criticized the perceived shift in higher education towards a hyper-focus on career preparation, many also struggled with this in the context of rising costs of college and believed that it is difficult to focus only on "doing good." Participants reflected upon the expectations they had for college and the realities they encountered, highlighting the discrepancies between their initial expectations and the actual choices they faced. Several students believed that dominant social structures such as capitalism and neoliberal economic and social policies presented profound challenges for their generation, and continued to create untenable circumstances for many, particularly minoritized and marginalized communities. They believed these challenges could only be addressed by seeking community-centered, and community-informed solutions. In short, many in this group are representative of, and give voice to, a generation that is faced with existential crises and has little faith in current leaders or institutions to tackle them adequately or justly. As students envisioned their futures, and the evolution of their civic identities, the following themes arose.

Parental Support and Expectations

In learning about the backgrounds of the students that were part of this study, it appears that a family history of parental civic engagement played an important role in both shaping and sustaining attitudes that facilitated greater involvement with civic oriented education and career choices. Many students felt a strong sense of struggle between external expectations and dominant societal norms with the ability to make choices about coursework and career pathways that facilitated greater community involvement. As Jay described his own choices about his academic work,

> I've generally, like pursued my education in a way where it hasn't been pre-professional at all and I'm getting worried now, like, I don't have any hard skills at all as people refer to them, but I've taken classes that I like, like cared about.

By all accounts, while these choices were driven by an intentional focus on pursuing courses that were in alignment with his abiding interest in the climate crisis, I also sensed some real tensions between pursuing "a career in public life versus a more conventional career path," as he put it.

Students reflected with vulnerability about the pressures they felt about choosing financially lucrative careers, particularly at elite institutions. This was the experience of several students even in a field like public policy (the major field of study of many participants in this study) that is oriented towards public service. Some expressed frustration with the seemingly improbable goal of "doing good *and* doing well"—of being able to have career options that were personally rewarding *and* paid reasonably well. Sara told me that when conversations about career aspirations come up with family members, she tells them, “what I’m planning to do doesn’t make a lot of money. So, I’m either going to work in government, non-profit, or community work.” And in as much as there was clarity in this, there also seemed to be uncertainty. As she went on to say, “perhaps I will work in the non-profit sector, as it will give me [some more] financial security.”

Doing What I Care About Versus Caring About a Living

The struggles of choosing something that they considered meaningful, or which resonated with their civic selves, and balancing that with what they deemed to be a means to a sustainable livelihood was very real for many of the students I spoke to. A couple of them seemed to have clarity in either direction—either focusing on seeking jobs that would lead to a sustainable salary or focusing more on work that felt meaningful and hoping that it would come with a reasonable income.

However, it seemed like this felt like a binary choice to them, and tough to have to choose one over the other. As Oliva said, “it feels very overwhelming to be at a school where there are a lot of people who just want to go into the same fields afterwards and are kind of on a straight path. And it sometimes seems like oh, should I be doing that instead?” When asked what those fields were, she said, “people who are just like, uh, you know, your typical finance bros, or people who just want to go straight into investment banking, or venture capital, or whatever… it’s a whole ’nother world.” Olivia said that what she really wants to do is to have an impact in the field of education, as an educator initially and then perhaps down the line moving towards education policy. She is majoring in Public Policy with a minor in Education. Sofia faced similar struggles, given her background and the community that she comes from, she'd like to continue to do policy or advocacy work for agricultural or other minoritized members of the workforce. However, she said that given her family's circumstances she also worries about financial stability. Between her parents, they make about $50,000 annually for a family of seven. She told me,

> I want to do so much work for my community, but I can't help others if I am not helping myself. And that means financial stability. There's a lot of pressure on me to help my parents, my family. So, I thought I'd try consulting. Every single PubPol[8] kid goes into consulting. I went through the interviews, and, and I hated it.

Olivia and Jay also provided additional context to this struggle that many of them seemed to be experiencing. Oliva said,

> I think in the Public Policy school that I am a part of, a lot of people want to go into consulting afterwards. And I'm like, whatever you want to do, that's totally fine, but I think it's kind of harmful sometimes, because people are so focused on getting to that that they lose a lot of things along the way.

Jay's reflection was similar,

> I've spent a lot of time searching for people that care…care about similar things that I care about. If so many of the people I am surrounded by want to go into consulting or investment banking or whatever, like nothing wrong with that, like that's fine. Not all of us have to dedicate our lives to a positive cause. But I am

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[8] PubPol is short for Public Policy, Sofia's major field of study.

> looking to do something that I care about that will also support me as I am trying to do that.

Some students seemed to have more clarity about this. Brandon said he was considering careers in the corporate sector and going to law school after a few years of working. He said he ultimately wanted to go into civil rights or public interest law, but he was leaning towards "going into corporate." Here's how he explained it: "I just want to help my family and myself financially, because, like, not that money means everything, but my family has invested a lot of time into me and sacrificed for me, that I would want to be able to provide them with the comfort they have not had." Paz, on the other hand, had a different kind of clarity. They said that their commitment to serving their community was steadfast. "I could never fathom not doing something for my community, especially now, especially after the pandemic." They are double majoring in International Comparative Studies and Nursing and see themselves working in global or community health.

Some students also grappled with whether work needed to be something that they derived meaning from or simply something that was a means to a livelihood. For instance, Sara said that she saw herself going into government, non-profit, or community work— "something that likely doesn't make a lot of money." When someone said to her that she could simply focus on making money and that her work did not have to be her passion or need to be fulfilling. She said that it would be very hard for her to separate the two. She told me, "that's one thing that I know about my future—work has to be fulfilling." Michelle had similar thoughts, especially given that she grew up with her grandparents as role models. Her grandfather was a pediatrician who often saw patients on government supported health insurance even though it was not as financially lucrative, and her grandmother was a family therapist who worked with "troubled children." For them, work and personal lives were intertwined. Similarly, she said that she could never imagine work being a "nine to five" endeavor. As she envisioned her future life unfolding, she said, "I see myself working evenings because that's when this kind of work happens. That's when relationships are built, that's when town halls are held... That's when so much of life is."

It was interesting to listen to students grapple with these real concerns and choices around doing work that gave them a sense of purpose, served a cause that they found compelling, or had a larger social purpose, but it also seemed like the choice felt like a binary one between what they saw as work worth doing, one that served a greater cause, versus one that would result in greater financial remuneration. It seemed that the messaging around career choices were strictly along those lines. I was intrigued by consulting being portrayed as a career option equivalent to 'selling one's soul'. The notion of taking care of "one's personal ecology" also came up here—as Sara put it, "not as in like, let me go put on a face mask, but more like, what do I need to do to be successful and to thrive."

The Long Aspirational Arc of Civic Work

In envisioning their ongoing civic journeys, while the specific trajectories varied, many of the students I spoke to seemed committed to doing work that would make a difference, regardless of the context, specific nature, or scope of it. Students also imagined working on the issues that they cared about, or some variation of it for at least the near-term future, reflecting that they recognized the long, slow arc of change. To me, this was indicative of a degree of commitment to seeking change, beyond short-term gratification. For some, there was the urge to work on local issues, and to foster national, and reciprocal global connections. This was particularly true for students who wanted to work on climate action, which seems appropriate given the global nature of the challenge. Jay imagined continuing his work advocating for climate justice beyond his time in college,

> I would love to work on the global issue of climate justice. How can we build alliances between different communities all across the world, so that they can share knowledge with each other? And pursue strategies that aren't driven just by, like corporate interests, but rather like community-based action?

Several students, and in particular, Sofia, Paz, and Brandon, were committed to uplifting their own communities. As Paz put it, this took root early in their life and has been an ongoing aspect of their sense of civic responsibility. They explained,

> When I moved from public school to a private school, I was the only one from my neighborhood, and perhaps one of a few from a low-income, Latine community. Community service was a way for me to stay connected to my roots—it ignited a fire in me. Given where I come from, and where I am now, I owe it to my community to give back. It is really important to me.

Sofia echoed these sentiments, “the work I am doing now, the work I’m going to continue to do isn’t just for myself, it’s for every other person from my community who didn’t have the chance to make it.” Brandon summed it up thus, “I'm very passionate about helping people I can relate to… not that I’m not passionate for helping others, but I naturally have more passion for those I can relate to. Working on making things more equal, just more even."

While they were uncertain about the exact contours and the specifics of the work, a recurring motif of the narratives was to continue to seek the change they wanted to see. Danielle framed it like this:

> I hope that I can continue to be on the right side of progress, whether that means improving the lives of ten individuals or whether it is advocating for change at a larger scale. I really don't know, but I just want to be on the right side of it.

I heard them imagine these futures, full of hope, and optimism, yet also with a certain degree of uncertainty, and weighted by a sense of responsibility. Closing with what Michelle imagined her future might look like seems appropriate here: "Much of the work of building community happens around tables. So, I'm hoping that I'm hosting dinner and having conversations around a table and hoping that soon I have a dinner table."

Summary

In summary, students who participated in this study represent diverse identities, backgrounds, and academic and extra-curricular areas of interest as well as issues and causes they cared about. Findings revealed that students' experiences related to civic and community engagement varied, but it was evident that these early experiences played a foundational role in shaping their evolving civic journeys, as well as their college and career choices. Data also highlighted the multifaceted nature of college education, encompassing personal development, critical thinking, social responsibility, ethical considerations, and the intersection of education within the broader societal context. They also grappled with difficult choices regarding career, largely due to financial considerations, and indicated that one’s objectives for and perspectives on the purpose of a college education do evolve based on individual circumstances, contextual factors, and over time. All this notwithstanding, from what I saw and heard from the participants, college plays a foundational role in shaping one’s identity, and how they thought of themselves as civic agents did evolve from adolescence to early adulthood. Participation in curricular community engagement experiences in general, and the SOL program in particular did seem to play an important role in shaping this.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Quoting Horace Mann who said, “a different world cannot be built by indifferent people,” the Presidents’ declaration on the civic responsibility of higher education (1999), asserted that higher education occupies a unique position and carries the obligation “to influence the democratic knowledge, dispositions, and ‘habits of the heart’ that graduates carry with them into the public square… and to help them learn both to respect difference and to work together for the common good” (Campus Compact, 1999 p. 1). Nearly a quarter century since that declaration, universities have implemented many initiatives and developed, launched, fostered, and supported curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities to build civic skills and ‘habits of the heart’ amongst college students. However, despite the widespread recognition of the many positive benefits of curricular community engagement programs (see for example, Astin et al., 2000; Barnhardt et al., 2015; Dienhart et al., 2016 Geller et al., 2016; Marco-Gardoqui et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2016; Olberding and Hacker 2015; Rutti et al., 2016; Weiler et al., 2013), little is known about whether and the ways in which these programs enable the development of civic identity among college students (Johnson, 2017). This study was driven by my curiosity to formally learn more about students who participate in curricular community engagement programs, how they make meaning of their experiences and the extent to which these programs help them refine or develop their civic identities. Informed by the constructive-developmental frameworks provided by Kegan (1982, 1994) and later extended by Baxter

Magolda (1999) in the context of college, and Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of figured worlds, I hoped to gain insights into the experiences of college students. My specific focus was on students' civic lives—prior to entering college, as they traversed through college, participated in community engagement experiences, and how they thought of themselves as civic agents within communities and democratic societies. The conversations that I had with the students and the faculty members I spoke to were illuminating and insightful. Below, I present the major insights I gleaned about the process and students' perceptions of the extent to which college education in general and participation in curricular community engagement experiences in particular, helped shape or refine their civic identities.

Discussion and Contextualization of Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand whether and the ways in which participation in curricular community engagement experiences helped shape student civic identity. To this end, I spoke to two program faculty and to thirteen students who participated in a curricular community engagement program—Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) at a highly selective school in the southeast of the United States. Semi-structured interviews with participants revealed that while the civic journeys that students traversed before and after arriving on campus are multi-faceted and complex, participation in curricular community engagement experiences in general—and the particular program that was the focus of the study—did seem to play an important role in helping shape students' civic identities. The sections below summarize key themes and takeaways from my research findings and contextualize them within extant literature and the theoretical framework that informed this study.

Authoring their Civic Identities

Fist coined by Kegan (1982) and later extended by Baxter Magolda (1999) within the context of a college education, the term *self-authorship* has been used to describe the unique developmental paths that young people navigate on their journeys into adulthood. Through the process of distinguishing themselves from others while also seeking connection, they refine their identities to find their place within social, cultural, and economic contexts of which they are part (Mezirow, 2000). There are three broad domains within which the notion of self-authorship is situated. These domains are **epistemological**—knowledge (of self) as constant versus evolving based on contextual factors, **intrapersonal**—internal factors such as beliefs, values, and ways of thinking that influence behavior, and **interpersonal**—relationships, and connection with others in relation to one's own identity (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004).

Baxter Magolda (1999) suggested that the journey towards self-authorship was critical for students not only to be successful within the context of higher education but more importantly, in helping them prepare for life after college. She wrote extensively on the role and responsibility of higher education in enabling students to move from "being shaped by society, to [then moving towards] shaping society as future leaders" (p. 630). Experiential education initiatives go above and beyond other pedagogical practices in creating experiences that support the progression towards self-authorship (McGowan, 2016). Some of the ways in which students do so include exposure to new situations and challenges, creating learning communities, and promoting greater self-awareness and broader social responsibility (Barber & King, 2014; King et al., 2009). In addition, experiential education in general and community engaged pedagogies in particular, promote the development of critical thinking (Heinrich et al., 2015), as well as greater reflection about and awareness of one's values and beliefs (Eyler et al., 2001). While there is substantial evidence suggesting an overlap between experiential education and experiences that promote self-authorship, few studies have actually delved into this relationship and its potential to facilitate self-authorship (McGowan, 2016). Fewer still have examined how these experiences facilitate the development of civic identity (Johnson, 2017).

Baxter Magolda (1999) described four developmental stages stemming from her work with college students that are synergistic with the stages towards self-authorship that Kegan (1982, 1994) identified for adults. These stages include **following external formulas**, **being at the crossroads**, **moving towards self-authorship**, and **building an internal foundation**. Informed by this theoretical framework, my own findings suggest that students move along the following developmental trajectory (depicted in Figure 2) in refining and shaping their sense of civic identity:

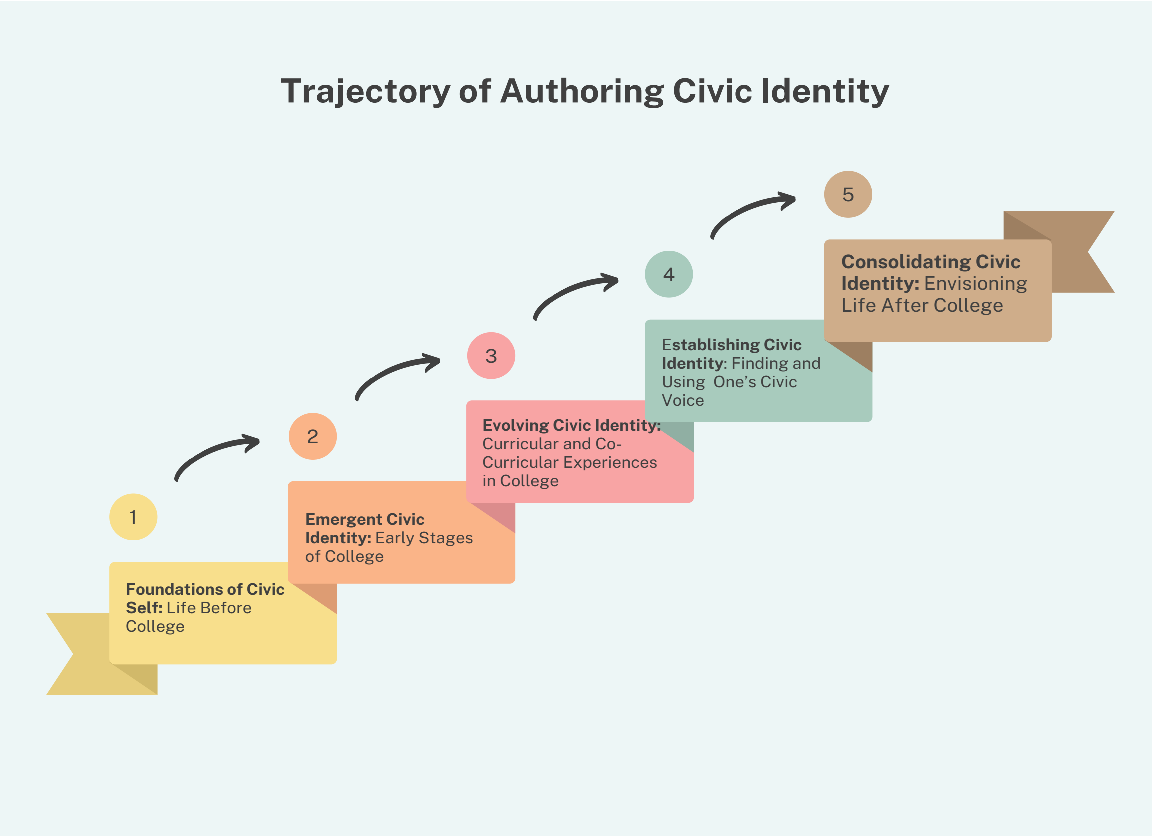
1. Foundations of civic self: experiences prior to entering college;
2. Emergent civic identity: choices that inform and shape the early stages of life in college;
3. Evolving civic identity: impact of curricular community engagement experiences in shaping civic identity;
4. Establishing civic identity: finding one's civic voice;
5. Consolidating civic identity: envisioning life after college.

Findings suggest that students' early experiences play an important role in shaping their choices about college—whether and where they choose to go to college, the academic and extracurricular activities they choose to pursue, and the communities they seek, while in college. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research (Campbell, 2006; Johnson, 2014; 2017; Kiesa, 2012) that experiences prior to entering college play an important role in shaping the formation of a civic sense of self among students. Unlike the findings of Johnson (2017) though, demographic factors also appear to have played an important role in shaping the civic outlook of the participants of this study. Students from minoritized communities in particular, expressed feeling a sense of responsibility and obligation towards uplifting the communities that they identified with or belonged to.

Subsequently, as students transitioned to life in college, and as a consequence of experiences in college, both inside the classroom and beyond, students communicated going through a process of self-discovery, finding one's place and purpose, overcoming challenges, reconciling with cognitive dissonance, building resilience and resolve, and moving towards their civic purpose. Curricular community engagement experiences seemed to play an important facilitatory role in enabling students to exercise their civic purpose and in moving them toward finding their civic voice. Again, experiences inside the classroom such as critical conversations with their peers, building relationships, and a sense of connectedness with faculty and community partners, figuring out appropriate and ethical ways to exercise their civic selves, seeking and finding civic agency, all seemed to mediate the process of students' progress towards greater evolution in their civic identities.

Figure 2

Trajectory of Authoring Civic Identity


Trajectory of Authoring Civic Identity
1
Foundations of Civic Self: Life Before College
2
Emergent Civic Identity: Early Stages of College
3
Evolving Civic Identity: Curricular and Co-Curricular Experiences in College
4
Establishing Civic Identity: Finding and Using One's Civic Voice
5
Consolidating Civic Identity: Envisioning Life After College

In navigating and co-constructing a complex and multifaceted motif of experiences, students seemed to move closer towards establishing their civic identities. These varied experiences, particularly the curricular community engagement experiences, enabled them to find their civic voices. They often did so by seeking and finding civic experiences that they were intrinsically motivated to take on or that were in alignment with their other personally held identities. Whilst participants did face struggles in their civic journeys, these struggles facilitated reflexivity and transformation towards a more established civic identity. Finally, as students moved towards a consolidated civic identity and imagined their civic lives upon graduation from college, while they grappled with issues of parental and societal expectations, and the existential challenges confronting their generation, civic identity emerged as a significant factor shaping how they envisioned their future. While they expressed a strong preference to continue working on advancing the causes they believed in, they also grappled with concerns of potential financial and other burdens in doing so. Nevertheless, they saw this as integral to who they were—deeply intertwined with their self-conceptualization of themselves, as members of the communities they belonged to, and as citizens in democratic societies.

This developmental trajectory, as shown in Figure 2 is informed by models proposed by Baxter Magolda (2001) and others (Nagaoka et al., 2015; Johnson, 2017). It also suggests that the process of authorship towards civic identity occurs through developmental tasks such as values exploration, affirmation, or divergence (Pizzolato, 2005), making meaning of one's experiences, determining the course of one's life, and taking steps along that path. Similar to previous studies (Baxter Magolda, et al., 2010; Pizzolato, 2003), this study also revealed that students with marginalized or minoritized identities seemed to move towards authoring civic identity with greater urgency than those who did not share these identities. These experiences of marginalization or "provocative moments" (Pizzolato, 2005, p. 628) propelled them towards greater clarity about their civic identity.

Baxter Magolda (1999) has long advocated that universities have an important role in facilitating the journey towards self-authorship through a constructivist-developmental approach. This approach gives students greater agency in co-creating knowledge by interpreting and making meaning of their experiences. Described by Kuh (2008) as a high-impact practice promoting student development, experiential learning programs, particularly community engaged pedagogical opportunities, are especially conducive to enabling students to become active participants in the learning process (Thomas et al., 2020). According to Baxter Magolda (2009), faculty are critical to creating environments that foster the journey towards self-authorship. They do so by facilitating students' self-discovery of values, enabling self-reflection and growth, fostering a greater sense of mutuality and collaboration in the learning process, promoting the recognition of complexity and nuance in analyzing issues, and allowing students to have greater agency in the learning process. The findings of this study further reinforce the critical role of faculty in supporting students in the evolution and realization of their civic identities.

In addition to the important role that faculty play, there also are student driven factors that facilitate the shaping of civic identity. These include greater reflexivity in questioning and determining one's beliefs, and openness to engage with and learn from the perspectives and lived experiences of diverse others (Barber & King, 2014; King et al., 2009). As elucidated previously, experiential learning opportunities have primacy in fostering self-authorship (Breuning, 2005; Gregory, 2006) including qualities such as self-efficacy, critical thinking, and leadership (Flood et. al., 2009; Heinrich et. al., 2015; McGowan, 2016). The findings of this study support this and further suggest that all of these aspects are also vital to the development and evolution of civic identity as well.

The Figured Worlds of Civic Identity

In addition to (and embedded within) the developmental framework of self-authorship offered by Kegan and Baxter Magolda, there were important socio-cultural avenues and mechanisms by which identities were shaped. To that end, the theory of figured worlds (Holland et. al., 1998) offered an invaluable theoretical and conceptual heuristic for this study. Defined as “socially produced, culturally constituted activities, figured worlds are both metaphorical and concrete realms where individuals cognitively and materially create new understanding[s] or sense[s] of self about themselves (pp. 40—41). As conceptualized by Holland et al., there are four broad features of figured worlds:

(i) They are culturally produced realms into which people voluntarily enter or are recruited.

(ii) Encounters and experiences within figured worlds lead to meaning making and people’s positions and actions have significance.

(iii) Figured worlds often act as “landscapes of action,”

(iv) where individuals “learn to recognize each other as a particular sort of actor, sometimes with strong emotional attachments.”

Thus, the theory of figured worlds is a framework that explicates how individuals construct their identities and navigate within various social contexts or ‘figured worlds.’ These worlds are interconnected, and influence individuals’ actions, behaviors, and perceptions through the social roles that they either assume or are assigned to them. In other words, figured worlds are integral to “identity work” (Urrieta, 2007, pp. 107–108). I present below the various elements and processes of students’ figured worlds shaping civic identity.

Elements of Civic Worlds

Identity formation is about figuring out one’s sense of self as one moves through the various ‘worlds’ one participates in and how one relates to and learns from other actors in these spaces. Since figured worlds are socially constructed and culturally replicated, interactions and engagement with others are critical. Individuals ‘figure’ who they are and how they move through the ‘worlds’ they are part of over time, and across different contexts. Holland et al. (1998) describe these as “roles” that are created and recreated through actions and activities that individuals engage in (p. 98). One important distinction relevant to my study is that individuals have agency in shaping these actions. There are four critical elements that comprise figured worlds—actors, actions, activities, arenas, and artifacts. I describe these below contextualizing them to the findings of my study.

Actors: Individuals (or groups) Engaged in Civic Activities and Interactions: As Urrieta (2007) framed it, figured worlds are “peopled by characters,” and my findings revealed several influential characters and actors who were important in the process of students’ civic identity development (p.109). Influential actors ranged from parents and grandparents, to teachers, instructors, community partners, members of communities, as well as their peers. These individual actors were critical to how students saw themselves in civic contexts as well as the ways in which they developed values and learned norms within civic contexts. These influential actors served as powerful role models or exemplars of civic behaviors. For example, students spoke of parents and grandparents, teachers, and community partners all serving as role models paving the path towards civic engagement as well as exemplifying appropriate ways to engage.

Actions: Civic Expression, Behaviors, Participation, and Engagement: The actions of these influential actors were crucial to how students learned norms for civic behavior as well as how these norms helped shape their own civic actions and civic sense of self. Themes of ‘doing like’ influential actors or ‘doing for’ important causes or people were salient throughout, and vital to how participants saw themselves. These themes were enmeshed both with who they were, and who they were choosing to become. What I found particularly useful in interpreting and understanding the findings of my study was that understanding of self, as shaped by navigating figured worlds over time and space (from adolescence to adulthood, for instance, or through curricular and other spaces) is not based on static notions but is dynamic and constantly shaped by actions of self and that of the other. Thus, figured worlds are often recreated by work, and work with others, and “across landscapes of action” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 109).

Holland et al. (1998) recognized and called out both conceptual and material ways in which identity is shaped and suggested that behavior is better viewed through the prism of “self in practice, not as self in essence.” My findings suggest that students created and recreated their civic selves both conceptually and materially over time and through the choices that they made and the actions that they took (p. 31). Through these actions, their perspectives evolved and matured into new(er) senses of self or to more consolidated ones. In other words, they ascribed new meaning to their actions over time. For instance, when students described how work had to have greater meaning and purpose than just a means to a livelihood, or when students distinguished their own choices about areas of study and career pathways as distinct from others who made different choices. In this sense, figured worlds of civic action seemed to provide them with the agency to influence their own choices and behavior. As Hatt (2007) put it, figured worlds often serve as “guidelines” or “social forces” influencing how people act and “practice” within social spaces (p. 149—150).

Activities: Civic Practices, Rituals, or Events. There were several activities students spoke about throughout that were instrumental to learning civic behaviors and in fostering civic identity. Starting from volunteering, to participating in protests, to community service activities early in life, evolving into more formal ways of community engagement such as curricular and extracurricular activities, reading, discussions, and dialogue about civic behaviors and community engagement, there were several practices and rituals related to civic engagement that seemed to shape students civic identity. Examples of this included developing practical means to advance change, such as “thinking big, and acting small,” or practicing wellbeing— “taking care of one’s personal ecology.” In these instances, participants seem to be creating new discourses, artifacts, or even new “liberatory worlds” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 111). The ability to independently envision, develop, and implement a community-based immersion experience through the SOL program that led to tangible outcomes and to intangible ones was significantly impactful in further shaping and consolidating students’ civic identities. In many ways, the experiences as part of this program seemed to help students both find *and* fine-tune their civic voices.

Arenas: Physical, Cognitive, Psychological, or Virtual Spaces that Foster Civic Identity: The arenas within which these actions took place were important. Be it in the context of family, community setting, in a classroom context, or formal and informal meeting spaces for the cohort, physical spaces and the actions, conversations, and the messages that were exchanged and absorbed within these spaces was a critical mechanism by which students’ developed civic identity. When Olivia (and several others) described consulting or other career paths as “a whole ’nother world,” I got the impression that she was making a distinct choice of not wanting to be part of that world precisely because, as she saw it, “it is so harmful.” In addition, the psychological contexts within which students made meaning of the experiences, and the mindsets they were developing about civic work were an important mechanism in shaping civic identity. Lastly, virtual spaces such as blogs, podcasts, substacks, and the groupchat that the cohort had created for themselves were also influential in enabling civic agency, and in helping students use their voices. These spaces served as powerful socializing sources and in some instances, as a measure of accountability to practice civic behaviors and to advance civic ideals. As several students put it, “learning to value community” and “learning to be in community,” was critical to how they saw themselves. Here, rituals and practices that may be “created on the margins” helped individuals develop new competencies (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272).

Artifacts: Symbols, Representations, and Materials that Shape Civic Identity.

Holland et al. (1998) described artifacts as “psychological tools that are collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful.” They serve as mechanisms facilitating everyday actions but also as symbols of individual or collective memory that propagate certain behaviors or actions. They describe artifacts as contributing to and shaping “developmental histories” of activities past and present (pp. 60—62). Symbols, representations, or other similar abstractions around civic behaviors played a part in encouraging civic behaviors and ultimately in shaping civic identity. For instance, when Paz talked about being accountable to one’s community being prioritized in the Native American culture that they are from, or how this notion is evocative of important cultural experiences for them. Or when Sam described learning from his community partner that community work ought to “move at the speed of trust,” it evoked Holland et al.’s characterization of artifacts in figured worlds as mediating thoughts and feelings and through this, enabling individuals to build the capacity to position themselves for themselves. In other words, artifacts can be interpreted through a prism of "a collectively remembered history" as well as offer "possibilities for becoming" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 36).

The Process of Identity Formation

If the elements described above served as vehicles for identity development, the catalysts that gave these vehicles momentum were several process related factors. These factors catalyzed the evolution and consolidation of civic identity throughout the developmental stages described in the previous section of this chapter. I describe below the various process related factors related to the evolution of civic identity that my findings highlighted.

Engagement, Participation, and Relationships: Developing Norms and Values Through Civic Work. Social and cultural norms are a mechanism by which individuals learn to navigate figured worlds. Individuals' identities are shaped by how they absorb and apply civic norms into their day-to-day decision making and ways of being. A significant finding of this study was that students seemed to have created metaphorical worlds within which they made meaning of their community engagement experiences and replicated norms that they either saw in an individual who was influential in informing how they engaged in a civic context or in embracing values and norms that they aspired to. Notions of 'responsibility to community,' 'doing the right thing' or 'caring about each other' were all values and norms that seemed to influence and shape students' civic identity from adolescence and through their college tenure. Paraphrasing Urrieta (2007), identity is not just made up of labels that individuals assign themselves or that are assigned to them, it is "very much about how people come to understand themselves, how they come to 'figure' who they are through the 'worlds that they participate in." (p. 107). My findings suggest that through active participation, and engagement students developed civic skills and a sense of civic self-efficacy. There also appeared to be deep symbolism to these activities—they were often laden with value; or associated with people they liked spending time with, or with individuals they admired, aspired to be like, or otherwise looked up to. These elements were all part of the figured worlds that students moved through which shaped how they saw themselves, who they saw themselves becoming, and what was deeply enmeshed with their sense of self.

Space of Authoring: Artifacts and Discursive Elements. Students seemed to negotiate their civic identities by seeking alignment with their own values, beliefs, and the roles they envisioned for themselves. Channeling Bakhtin, Holland et al. (1998) described 'space of authoring' as an important element within figured worlds in shaping identity. Engagement and participation with artifacts or discursive practices could lead to "embodiment of [this] identity" (Mayes et al., 2016, p. 613). The findings of my study suggest that while students may already have had a predisposition for civic engagement prior to their participation in the SOL program, the artifacts (from program application to course reading, and course deliverables) were all primed to create spaces and opportunities for students to author their own civic destinies. In addition, discursive elements of program participation, including classroom discussions and dialog, engagement with peers, and community partners all seemed to enable self-authoring of civic identity. The ways in which students engaged with these artifacts and discursive elements was unique and personalized to their own civic journeys. As Mayes et al., (2016) showed in their study about citizenship positions enacted and embraced by children in an elementary school, the figured worlds of civic identity overlapped or diverged depending on the positions that the students themselves chose to take. For students like Sofia, and Paz, accountability to *their* communities was integral to their civic identities. Whereas for several others, *the* cause they were passionate about, be it climate justice, gentrification, or gerrymandering, was the catalyzing element.

In understanding students' civic life trajectories, the metaphor of 'lamination' put forth by Holland and Leander (2008) seemed appropriate. In the context of identity, this process works by one's sense of self being built and thickened with layers of memories, experiences, and artifacts. While each layer may be distinctive, it also bonds together with new layers. This flow between worlds creates overlapping and synergistic layers of identity (Brown, 2017). Regardless of the ways in which these figured worlds of civic identity aligned or diverged, it appeared that program participation offered students tools by which to construct, define, and perform a sense of their civic self (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007), and this seemed intertwined and enmeshed with their other identities and histories of self.

Narratives, Discourses, and Co-construction. According to Holland et al. (1998), identity becomes consolidated through discourse and collective meaning making, or co-construction of worlds that individuals share. With increasing involvement in civic work, students seemed to develop shared meaning and shared rituals of civic work. In these situations, as students became more vested in civic worlds and civic work, it often manifested as "spoken discourse and embodied practice" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 251). Students were retelling and replicating many of the lessons learned during the SOL program into their everyday parlance and into day-to-day practice. For instance, in discussing the evolution of their ongoing civic journeys beyond college, there was a recurring motif of a vision of continued engagement with community. While it was hard for participants to predict the specific contours that this engagement would take, they could not envision a future devoid of some form of public service or civic work. As Holland et al., (1998) framed it, identity is what “people tell others [about] who they are, but even more important, what they tell themselves and then try to act as they are who they say they are…” (p. 3).

Agency, Resistance, and Positioning: The Meta Narratives of Civic Identity. Individual agency and how students ‘positioned’ themselves with regard to their civic selves was determined by factors such as background and personal history, but also in how individual aspirations and ideals influenced thoughts, behaviors, and ways of interpreting the world. While the SOL program was influential in positioning students as civic leaders and in preparing them for public service (Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University, n.d.), students seemed to improvise and exercise their own civic agency within these influences and structures (Hatt, 2007).

Another significant finding of this study is that students often developed a sense of civic self by resisting dominant narratives. One such narrative thread that emerged was that of anti-capitalist rhetoric, in positioning oneself as distinct from peers whom they could not find identity alignment with. Phrases like “I’d be miserable as a consultant,” or the need to “be around people who care,” or not wanting to be like “the finance bros” came up a lot in describing one’s aspirations. This seemed particularly true for participants from minoritized backgrounds. As Holland et al. (1998) suggested, “oppressed people are especially subject to situations replete with contradictions,” necessitating the need for improvisation, and the “potential beginnings of an altered subjectivity, an altered identity” (pp. 16—18). Holland et al., further suggested that negotiations around positionality, and space of authoring, are powerful avenues for producing identities. Positionality refers to roles that are either assigned to individuals or those they create for themselves within figured worlds, whether it be that of a “finance bro” or that of “people who care.” Similarly, and with regard to narratives, individuals encounter narratives that can either be oppressive or liberating and where prestige and rank are determined based on one’s identity alignment. In civic worlds, terms like, “caring,” “community,” “fulfillment,” “purpose,” “public good,” all seemed to impact how one saw oneself and one’s identity as serving a larger civic purpose rather than a more narrow, individualistic one.

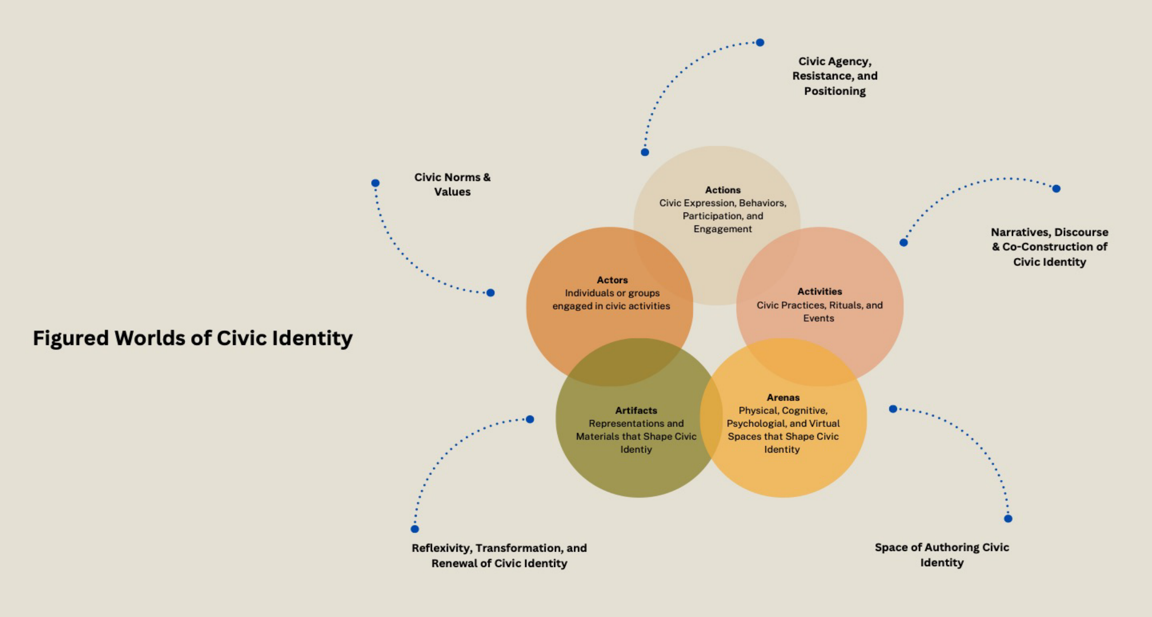
Reflexivity, Transformation, and Renewal of Civic Identity. Identity is a dynamic process influenced by evolving interactions and experiences within figured worlds. Given the ongoing and long-term practice of civic work, figured worlds become both spaces of possibility where individuals have the choice and agency in the ‘roles’ that they play. Thus, when students were making choices about their community engagement activities (both curricular and extra-curricular) it was both additive of a new identity but also affirmative of previously existing ones. As opportunities for repeated participation and choices to engage arose, accompanied by an “emotional charge,” so did the accumulation and internalization of civic identity as a form of self-authoring (Holland and Leander 2008, p. 137). As one of the students, Leonard, put it, it was easy to “follow old patterns.”

Applying figured worlds to adult education and lifelong learning, Sefton-Green and Erstad (2013) suggested that learner identities are shaped at and along learning moments and are often expressed as epiphanies. There were many such learning moments sprinkled throughout students' civic trajectories and one resounding epiphany that rang through several narratives was the importance of "being with community" that seems to have been catalyzed by a reading that they did for one of their SOL classes. Another relevant concept here, particularly with regard to the effect of the program in shaping students' civic identity is that of "affinity spaces" proposed by Gee (2004), where students are part of a community, and learn from others (Gee, 2004, p. 68). The notion of 'space' has primacy here where identity work occurs. The SOL program seemed to be just such an affinity space and created both physical and virtual spaces where students learned from and with each other with faculty playing powerful facilitatory roles. Thus, individual civic identity shapes behaviors, actions, and interactions, contributing to collective civic worlds. Civic work then becomes part of cultural practice that is "used to give meaning to others and to [oneself] (Hatt, 2007, p. 158).

Figure 3 provides a depiction of elements and processes involved in the figured worlds of civic identity.

Figure 3

Figured Worlds of Civic Identity


Figured Worlds of Civic Identity
Civic Agency, Resistance, and Positioning
Civic Norms & Values
Actions
Civic Expression, Behaviors, Participation, and Engagement
Narratives, Discourse & Co-Construction of Civic Identity
Actors
Individuals or groups engaged in civic activities
Activities
Civic Practices, Rituals, and Events
Artifacts
Representations and Materials that Shape Civic Identiy
Arenas
Physical, Cognitive, Psychologial, and Virtual Spaces that Shape Civic Identity
Reflexivity, Transformation, and Renewal of Civic Identity
Space of Authoring Civic Identity

In understanding the trajectories of the civic lives of students and how these trajectories seemed to shape their civic sense of self, I found the explanation offered by Holland and Leander (2008) to be illuminating. They described how the various elements of one's life, social, cultural, and personal, become intertwined over time like strands in a rope that "an object with characteristics distinctive from those of the original ingredients results… A rope differs in form and behavior from the fibers that compose it (p. 134)." Similarly, as students engaged in different and more complex civic work, their civic identities continue to evolve, and mature assuming more distinct forms than previous iterations. Identities incarnate over time through repeated positioning and through engaging with frequently used artifacts and discourses that align with this positioning. Hence, the work that students do seems to be in alignment not just across the various aspects of their lives as college students but also synergistic with how they imagined their life stories evolving. Thus, figured worlds are always "in process," always "undergoing transformation in practice" (Holland, 2010, p. 273) and identity is "about becoming, rather than being." (Brown, 2017, p. 94).

Implications and Recommendations for Pedagogy, Policy, and Practice

This study offers a new perspective to civic engagement scholarship. From a theoretical angle, it blends two major theories to understand the development of identity. It marries the constructivist-developmental models of identity formation provided by Kegan (1982, 1994) and Baxter Magolda (1999) and the socio-cultural approaches of Holland et. al.'s (1998) theory of figured worlds to interrogate the impact of college students' participation in curricular community engagement experiences in shaping civic identity. While the theory of figured worlds has been applied to understanding identity among learners in various contexts, it has not been brought to bear on exploring how college students' civic identities are shaped as a consequence of their participation in curricular community engagement programs. The only study that comes close is one that examines the development of citizenship identities among elementary school children (Mayes, 2016). To that end, this study adds to the literature on civic engagement, and civic identity. The findings of this study have implications to shape pedagogy and practice of university-based civic engagement and institutional policy. Below, I present recommendations for fostering the development of civic identity among college students.

Implications for Pedagogy

There are three main implications from this study with regard to pedagogy. The first is how meaningful students found the opportunity for experiential learning combined with open and honest conversations with their peers in class. Opportunities to reflect upon and learn from their experiences were cited nearly universally as one of the best aspects of program participation. These carefully constructed and cultivated spaces seem to offer an important venue and avenue towards civic authorship. Reflection is lauded as one of the most, if not the single biggest factor in facilitating understanding of self and the other (Domangue & Carson, 2008), and in promoting authorship of civic identity. Therefore, my first recommendation is to create curricular programs where students have a chance for open and honest conversations with peers and faculty, and to have opportunities for self-reflection and growth.

Second, imagining and crafting an independent community engagement experience and then working along with a community partner, and alongside community members to operationalize it seems to have provided students with a sense of agency. While this process was not without challenges, and in some instances, caused uncertainty and self-doubt, students seemed to have navigated that with support from faculty and peers. Going through this process seemed to have strengthened their resolve and further cemented their commitment to civic work. Students described their experiences in the program as transformational and life changing. Based on this finding, my second recommendation stemming from the study is to create curricular programs where students have greater agency in crafting their own projects rather than working on pre-determined projects curated by faculty.

Third, this study further supports the findings of previous scholarship that has demonstrated the power and effectiveness of cohort-based models in creating learning communities (Roholt et. al., 2009; Weerts & Cabrera, 2015). Students who were part of the program developed strong bonds with each other over the course of their participation in the year-long program. They were learning with and from each other and seemed to influence and shape collective civic worlds by virtue of their interactions with each other in spaces in the classroom and outside. As pertinent to this study, cohort based pedagogical models, while requiring more planning and resources, undoubtedly bear fruit by creating learning communities that foster civic skills and the consolidation of civic identity.

Implications for Policy

Almost all of the participants in this study spoke in glowing terms about their experiences in the program. Preparing students for ethical and just engagement with communities and making space for them to reflect on their experiences past, and present, was by all accounts a tremendously valuable experience for students. Participants' feedback about curricular community engagement experiences in general, and the SOL program in particular, was very positive. However, programs like this have to be very selective due to the high touch nature of the programming and due to resources needed to provide these types of experiences for students. Therefore, it is useful for university administrators, state, and federal policy makers to invest more resources into programs like this, thereby democratizing access to such programs for more students. The goal should be to expand civic skills among a broader swath of students, not just a select few. After all, democracies depend on engaged citizens with well-honed civic identities.

Implications for Practice

Much of the literature about the benefits of service-learning is on individual outcomes—graduation, retention, longer term civic involvement etc. While these outcomes are certainly important, one major finding of this study was that students develop civic agency, and author their civic identities in communal contexts, and they highlighted the many benefits of being with community. It is worth paying attention to the sense of belonging that the program seems to have fostered. At a time when mental health concerns among youth in general and college students in particular are rising, it is worth learning from these success stories and replicating them. Given the deep schisms (Balz & Morse, 2023) in our society, and given the disengagement among youth (Booth et al., 2022; Zaff et al., 2003), there is a need for more programming to build community and connections among college students. This will not only expand a sense of belonging but also help build civic agency among young people. Given the magnitude of challenges confronting their generation, there is an ever-increasing urgency for them to build community-centered solutions to these challenges from the bottom up.

Other Considerations and Future Directions

This qualitative case study of participants in one curricular community engagement program was conducted at a highly selective school in the southeast of the United States. As such, it provides a glimpse into the experiences of some students who were part of this program, and the ways in which their experiences in and beyond this program may have shaped the evolution and consolidation of their civic identities. However, given the nature, scope, and context of the study, there are several considerations that have implications for the transferability of findings. These considerations largely stem from contextual and institutional factors as described in the following section.

Contextual and Institutional Factors

The participants of this study were thirteen students and two faculty members who are part of a selective curricular engagement program at a highly selective private four-year institution in the south-east. The findings were entirely distilled from participant interviews and document analysis of course material shared by faculty (course syllabi and reading material) and content produced by the students available in the public domain (program website and similar sources). As such, and at best, they offer a snapshot in time of the experiences of these particular students, based on personal reflections (both retrospective and prospective) at this particular point in time. Additionally, both the program (Colby et. al., 2003) and the university (U.S. News and World Report, 2023) where this case study is based have a long and well-recognized commitment to community engagement. Given that institutional culture does have an impact on the civic experiences of students (Berger & Milem, 2000; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000, Young et al., 2007; Dey et al., 2009) this is a consideration for transferability of study findings.

Future Directions

What motivated me to embark on this research project was the limited extent of empirical work examining the impact of curricular community engagement programs in shaping students' civic identity. Incorporating community engagement experiences into pedagogy and praxis for students continues to be a priority for colleges and universities. Given the considerations listed above, and limited empirical work examining the impact of curricular community engagement experiences in shaping student civic identity, I hope that this work can be replicated at other sites, including at public universities, community colleges, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), other minority serving institutions, as well as in graduate and professional education programs. It would be useful to see whether and the ways in which curricular community engagement programs might shape the development of civic identity amongst students in these settings. This will likely lead to bringing in greater plurality of voices in understanding the role of curricular community engagement experiences in shaping civic identity amongst students, particularly as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. The interviews with participants were substantive in terms of time—each interview lasted 60 to 80 minutes, and the openness and honesty with which participants shared their perspectives with me, was a significant benefit. That said, I do wonder if I would have been able to glean additional insights had I been able to spend more time observing students day to day during their time in college. Immersing myself within the domains that they were participants in, such as classrooms, community contexts, or other similar spaces, may have provided additional opportunities for triangulation of data collection. With more time and resources, this could certainly be a methodological direction for future research in this area. Lastly, and as stated previously, the findings of this case study offer but one snapshot in time, with students reflecting upon their civic activities, and envisioning the future trajectory of their work. A longitudinal study following students from before they enter college, and on to early adulthood might offer insights into the evolution of civic identity and civic engagement over time.

All that said, this study makes an important contribution to the literature. From an empirical standpoint, it extends current research and offers new evidence in support of the benefits of curricular community engagement experiences. From a theoretical angle, it marries two prominent theoretical streams on identity development and applies them to examine the impact of curricular community engagement in shaping civic identity among college students. In essence, and modeling the work of Abes (2009), this study attempted to "create[d] a theoretical borderland" between constructivist-developmental frameworks and figured worlds in interrogating the development of civic identity. While the respective theories individually provide a rich understanding of the process and influences on identity development, I believe that combining them yields a far more layered and tapestried understanding of the evolution of civic identity. This borderland where students make choices and decisions about college based on aspects that are integral to their identities, and the ways in which these identities are "fused, performed, and… [are continually] becoming," is an essential contribution of this study (p. 148). Blending these theories allows us to recognize and appreciate the complexities inherent therein. It is an integrative approach where social, political, and cultural factors are just as influential as psychological and cognitive processes. As such, this study has important implications for student development theory and for curricular praxis.

I embarked on this study somewhat dissatisfied with extant theoretical and empirical work explaining civic identity, and with the ambitious goal of understanding the impact of curricular community engagement experiences in shaping the development of students' civic identities. Paraphrasing Abes (2009) while it can be limiting to rely on singular theoretical frameworks to explain identity, experimentation with the borderlands approach can offer paradigmatic shifts in our understanding of student development and about the (civic) purpose of a college education. Above all, it allows us to let students' own voices and stories make the case for how they craft their civic selves in the context of a college education. It is my hope that the insights offered by this study corroborate the vital importance of university-based community engagement experiences and bring us closer to fulfilling one of the loftiest missions of higher education—enabling students to author their civic identities, and thereby to strengthen the fabric of democracy and of communities.

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APPENDIX A

Figures and Tables

Figure 4

Students' Self-Reported Gender Identities

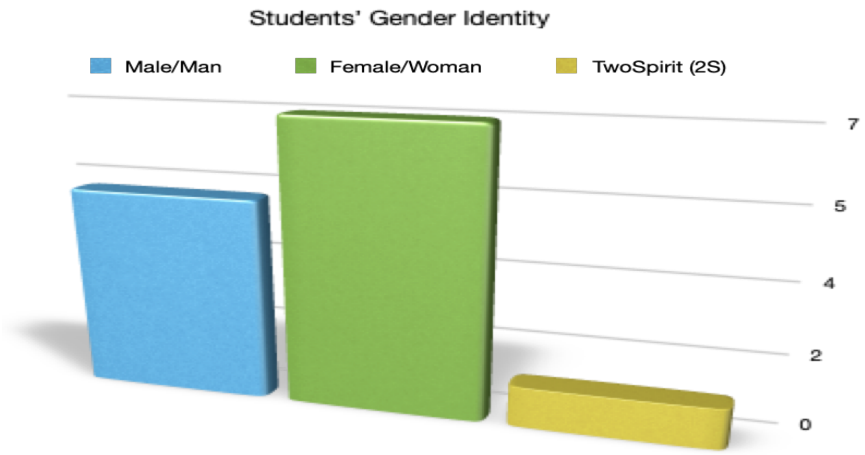

Figure 5

Students Preferred Pronouns

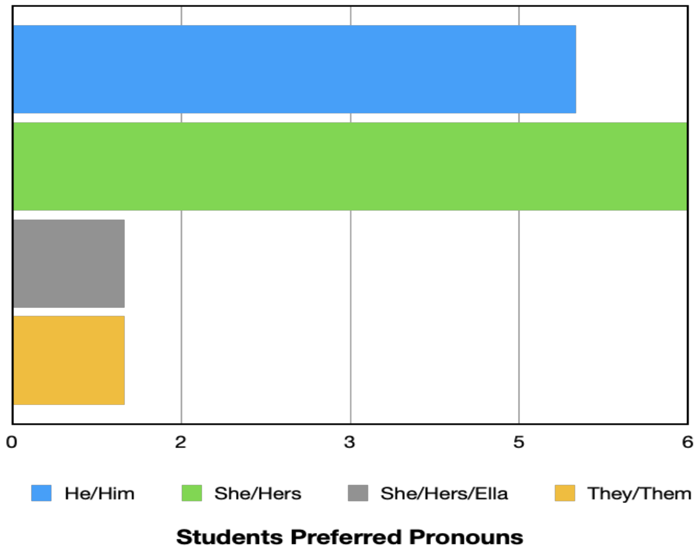

Table 2

Students' Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity

Students Race Ethnicity					
	White	**Black**	**Native American**	**East Asian**	**South Asian**
Caucasian/White	1				
African/African American	1	1			
Hispanic/Latinx/Latine	1		1		
Asian/Asian American				4	2
Arab					1
Mexican	1				
TOTAL					13

Table 3

Year Student(s) Started College

Year Started College	
Fall 2020	10
Fall 2021	3
TOTAL	13

Table 4

Student(s) Anticipated Year of Graduation

Anticipated Graduation Year	
May 2024	9
May 2025	4
TOTAL	13

Table 5

Student(s) Academic Areas of Study

Students' Academic Areas of Study										
Areas of Study - Major/Minor/Certificate		**African American Studies**	**Education**	**Environmental Sciences**	**Global Health & Spanish**	**History**	**Nursing**	**Philosophy**	**Sociology & Human Rights**	**Statis-tics**
International Comparative Studies							1			
Political Science		1								
Public Policy	1		1	1	1	2		1	1	1

Areas of Study - Program II			
Mathematics Decision Making & Democracy	1		
Sustainable Urban Development, Leadership, and Planning	1		

Table 6

Student(s) Parent/Guardian Educational Attainment

Parent/Guardian Educational Attainment	
Elementary School Level	1
Middle School Level	2
High School	3
Associate's degree	1
Bachelor's degree	7
Graduate Degree	3
Doctorate	4

Table 7

Student(s) Parent/Guardian Occupation

Parent/Guardian Occupation	
Self-Employed/Small Business Owner	3
State Government Employee	1
Federal Government Employee	3
Academic/Medical Research	4
Other Professional	2
Hourly Worker	2
Contractual Worker	1

Table 8

Sampling of Student(s) Self-Reported Issues of Interest, Academic Areas of Study, Other Relevant (Community Engaged) Curricular, and Extra Curricular Activities

Student Number	Issues of Interest	Major/Minor/Certificate	Other Relevant Curricula	Relevant Co-curricular/Extra-curricular Activities
1	Climate Action	Environmental Sciences & Policy	FOCUS	Participatory Democracy Environmental Clubs Duke Votes
2	Educational Equity	Public Policy Education	FOCUS	Project Build (Building Undergraduate Involvement in the Life of Durham) University Student Union POLIS (Center for Politics) - Director's Fellow
3	Immigrant Rights/Workers Rights	Public Policy Sociology Human Rights	FOCUS	Me Gente, Duke Define America Student Action for Farmworkers Project Citizen Student Government
4	LGBTQIA+ Issues Immigration	Public Policy Philosophy		Student Government Chinese Dance Group
5	Political organizing Effective Altruism	Public Policy Statistics	FOCUS Bass Connections	Podcast production Duke Democrats
6	Gender Equity Women's Health	Public Policy Global Health Spanish	FOCUS Bass Connections	University Student Union Black Student Union Community Empowerment Fund
7	Racial and Educational Inequities	Political Science African American Studies	FOCUS, Political Engagement Project (PEP)	Duke Justice Project (Restorative Justice) DUKE SHAPE (Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education)
8	Climate Justice	Public Policy, History		Student Government Asian Students Association
9	Health Inequities Immigrant Rights	International Comparative Studies, Nursing	Bass Connections	Latino Student Union Durham LEAP (Latina Educational Achievement Partnerships) GANO (Gente Aprendiendo para Neuves Oportunidades)
10	Local Government Urban Planning	Public Policy, History	Political Engagement Project (PEP)	Duke Votes Duke Justice Project (Restorative Justice)
11	Social impact investing Branding/Marketing of social issues	Public Policy		Social Impact Investing
12	Urban Planning Housing Local Government Climate Justice	Program II – Sustainable Urban Development, Leadership and Planning	FOCUS Bass Connections	Office of Sustainability (Green Devils) Duke University Partnership for Service Student taught 'House courses' on urban/local issues
13	Democracy Electoral Politics Political Framing	Program II – Mathematics, Decision Making & Democracy	Bass Connections	Political Framing Substack Speechwriting

APPENDIX B

Primary Data Collection Instruments

Student Background Questionnaire

Please provide the following details about yourself and your background. Please DO NOT include your name, contact information, or any other identifying information.

1. Date and year that you started college.

2. Date and anticipated year of graduation.

3. Year you started the Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) Program.

4. Year that you completed SOL.

5. What is your major and/or minor?

6. What is your Race/Ethnicity?

7. Please provide your gender identity and your preferred Pronouns.

8. Please list your parent/guardian’s occupation and highest level of education completed.

Student Interview Protocol – Community Engagement Experience and Civic Identity

The target group for this interview will be undergraduate students who have participated in a curricular community engagement program at a private non-profit baccalaureate serving institution.

Introduction:

My name is _________ and I would like to learn more about your experience with participating in community-based work through a course or other similar academic program. For example, community-based work connected to an academic course, such as a service-learning course. I am interested in learning more about how students develop and continue to refine their civic identity – and civic identity is defined as how one sees one's identity in connection to participation in public life. This should take about an hour. If at any point during our conversation, you need to stop, take a break, or for whatever reason, discontinue our conversation, please know that you can absolutely do that. Our conversation is completely confidential. You are neither obligated to have this conversation with me nor will there be any adverse consequence should you choose not to share your perspectives with me.

Life Before College: Background: During this first part of the interview, I would like to learn about your life before college and how that might have shaped your perspectives.

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself? (**PROBES:** Where did you grow up? Tell me a little bit about your first experiences and recollections with community-based work or volunteering?
2. Could you tell me more about your high school years – what were some activities that you participated in? What did you enjoy about these activities? Could you briefly reflect on the role that these experiences might have played in shaping you?

3. Tell me a little bit about your family (**PROBES:** Tell me about some activities that you did together? Are there specific values that you learned from your family?
4. Besides school and family were there other influences in your life? (**PROBES:** Were you part of a church? Were there other members of your extended family or community that you interacted with? Were there other formative influences on you?)
5. Tell me more about these how these experiences influenced you? (**PROBES:** What role did these people and experiences play in helping you become the kind of person you are? What values did they nurture in you? Do you feel like these experiences helped prepare you for life in college? How have these early influences and values enabled you to navigate life in college? How have they helped you make the kinds of choices you made in college?

Life During College: Transition: Now I would like to move to learning more about your transition to, and life in college.

1. First, tell me about your time in college so far. (**PROBES:** What has the transition been like? What have you enjoyed about college? What has been challenging? Tell me a little about the friend groups or communities you are a part of.
2. Now, let's talk about your academic pursuits in college. (**PROBES:** What courses have you taken so far? Which ones are your favorite? Why? What did you learn from these courses? Are these courses directed in any way to prepare you for life after you graduate both in terms of your career and in terms of your life outside of work? Are there other courses or academic experiences that you wished this college would have offered that they don't currently do? If so, what? And why are these types of courses important to you?
3. Let's switch to your activities outside the classroom. (**PROBES:** What activities do you participate in outside of class? Are there clubs, student groups, or other similar activities that you participate in? If so, what are these? What do you like about them? Do they help in any way with your professional or personal goals and aspirations? Do you believe these goals help shape the kind of person you are seeking to become?

4. Overlap between academic and extra-curricular activities. (**PROBES:** Are there any ways in which your academic and extra-curricular activities intersect or are they completely separate? Tell me more – what (if any) overlaps are there? Why? Does this reveal something to you about either who you are, or who you are seeking to become? If there are no overlaps – could you reflect on this? Is there a particular reason for this?
5. Now for a somewhat philosophical question - What do you think about the purpose of college? (**PROBES:** What goals should a college education help meet? Some say that part of the mission of a college education is to help students prepare for participation in public life, for participation in democratic processes. Do you think this is important? Why or why not? Have your thoughts or expectations of a college education changed since you were in high school? In what way? Based on your experiences and observations, do you think the purpose of a college education has evolved over the past 10-20 years? If so, could you share your thoughts on this and what you believe are the reasons for this change?)

Community Engagement Experiences: Could we now talk about some of your community engagement experiences during college?

1. What was your most exciting, fulfilling, or energizing community engagement experience(s)? (**PROBES:** Tell me more about it. What specifically was exciting, energizing or fulfilling about this experience?
2. Can you share some details about it (**PROBES:** What did you do? Who did you work with? In what ways did the work help the organization you worked with? Do you think you were able to have a meaningful impact through your work? Do you think doing this work changed you in some important ways? If so, tell me more…)
3. Who are the people you interacted with? (**PROBES:** Are there specific people in the organization or the community that they are a part of and/or serve that you interacted with? What was this experience like? Are there particular individuals or experiences that stand

out? If so, could you tell me more about these individuals or experiences? What were they like? Why did they stand out?)

4. What did you learn from this experience? (**PROBES:** What skills did you gain? Did it change you or your worldview in any way? If so, could you share more?)
5. How do you think this experience helped shape you? (**PROBES:** Have these experiences had an effect on you? In what way? Have you changed as a person? How? Have your worldview and/or perceptions changed? In what way?

Life beyond college - Goals and aspirations: Now, looking to the future, I would love to learn more about your goals and aspirations for life beyond college.

1. What are you looking forward to doing after you graduate? (**PROBES:** If employment, what sorts of jobs are you planning on looking for? If graduate or professional school, what sorts of programs are you considering? Why?)
2. Do you envision being engaged in the community you are a part of after college? (**PROBES:** What activities do you hope to engage in outside of work or graduate/professional school? Do you see yourself volunteering? If so, tell me more about it. Are there specific things that you did in college or in high school prior to that, which you hope to continue after college? Tell me more about these activities. Why are these activities important to you?).
3. Are there issues that you care about enough to work on beyond college? (**PROBES:** What are some of these issues? Why are they important to you? Why is it important to address these issues? Could you speak to how you see yourself working on them?)
4. Where do you see yourself 5-10 years from now? (**PROBES:** Tell me about your vision for both your professional aspirations as well as your personal ones. What vision do you have for the community/ies that you will be part of? What do you think our country will look like and the world?)

CLOSING:

Is there anything else you like to share or add to our conversation?

Thank you so much for your time, and for sharing your thoughts and perspectives with me. I greatly appreciate it. If you think of anything additional you'd like to share with me or if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. If you would like, I can share my e-mail address with you. Once I have the transcripts from the recording, I would be glad to share them with you. Again, thank you and I wish you the very best for the remainder of your time in college and for your journey beyond college. Take good care!

Faculty Interview Protocol – Community Engagement Experience and Civic Identity

The target group for this interview will be faculty who teach (or have recently taught) a community engaged experiential learning course at a private non-profit baccalaureate serving institution in the South-East.

Introduction:

My name is Lalita Kaligotla and I am interested in learning more about your perceptions about student civic identity. Specifically, I would like to understand if and to what extent participation in courses that incorporate experiential civic engagement help shape students civic identity. Civic identity is defined as how one sees one's identity in connection to participation in public life. Given your expertise and work with developing and/or teaching a community engaged experiential learning course, your perspectives about this are valuable. Our conversation should take about 45-60 minutes. If at any point during our conversation, you need to stop, take a break, or for whatever reason discontinue our conversation, please know that you can absolutely do that. Our conversation is completely voluntary and confidential. You are neither obligated to have this conversation with me nor will there be any adverse consequence should you choose not to share your perspectives with me. I greatly appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts with me.

Overview of Course: First, I would love to hear more about you, your background, and the community engaged or service-learning course(es) you teach.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. (**PROBES:** How long have you been on the faculty here? How long have you been teaching this particular course or similar courses and programs? How many students take this course? Is it taught once a year or more frequently? Is it part of a program or is it a stand-alone course? If part of a program, tell me more about the program.

2. I’d love to hear more about the course. (**PROBES:** What was the vision for this course? What are the goals and learning objectives? Tell me more about the content and the distribution of in-class time and experiential components. What is the frequency and duration of the in-class sessions?
3. I’d love to learn more about the community based experiential learning component. (**PROBES:** Tell me more about the experiential component – How many hours do the students spend working in the community? Are there specific deliverables that result from the work? Could you share any examples of deliverables that have resulted from the students work?
4. Tell me about the reflective activities or other assignments built into the course. (**PROBES:** Tell me about any reflective activities that are incorporated into this course. Are there any additional assignments that are part of this course? If so, could you share more about what these are? Is the reflection geared more towards students doing internal work about their personal values, or grappling with issues that they encounter during the course of their community engagement? Or is it gear more towards external and systemic factors—about civic responsibility, political engagement, public service, social justice etc.?
5. Finally, tell me about why you think this course is important? (**PROBES:** What is exciting about it? How is it tailored to student learning needs and the developmental trajectory they are on? How is it useful in fostering civic skills among students? How does it accomplish the department’s or the university’s mission? What, if any, challenges have you encountered or continue to face in teaching this course? What about it is meaningful and fulfilling to you?

Partnership with Community: Now, I would love to pivot to learn more about the community engagement and community partner for this course.

1. Tell me about the community engagement component of this course. (**PROBES:** How did you envision and implement the community engagement? Could you walk me through how the community-based component ties in with the course?)
2. Could you talk about some of the potential benefits resulting to the community and/or community partners from this course? (**PROBES:** What are some positive impacts of the work that students do or their work in the community for the community and the partnering organization? Do you believe that this enables the organization to expand their scope of work, or impact in a meaningful way? What are some gains to the broader community and members of the community? In your assessment, what is the value of this engagement for the community and the partner organization?)
3. Now switching gears to look at this from a different angle, do you think there are any challenges faced by community partners or community members that result from this engagement? (**PROBES:** Do you see any additional burdens faced by community partners in working with and providing direction to students? If so, how do they navigate this? What are some potential challenges in having students work in communities and with community members who may have a different lived experiences than them? How do you prepare them for this? How do students and community members navigate this?)
4. Now, I would love to hear more about your experience with teaching a community engaged course. (**PROBES:** Could you walk me through the process of finding community partners to work with? How do you build connections with them? Are some of these relationships ongoing? What are the benefits to that and what are some burdens? What rewards do you experience and what challenges do you encounter in teaching a course that has community engagement incorporated into it?)
5. Now, can we talk about the institutional implications of this work. (**PROBES:** In your assessment, how does this partnership with the community further the goals and mission of the institution you are a part of? Are there any costs to the institution? In your assessment

and experience, is there institutional support for this work? Why or why not? Are there things (structures, processes, rewards etc.) that could be done differently than they currently are? And is there a difference in support between your department or school vs. the university? If so, could you elaborate?

Student Experience & Future Direction: Switching gears, I would love to hear your perspectives on the student experience.

1. What are your thoughts on the impact of this course on students? (**PROBES:** Could you first share with me at a high level, what the benefits for students are from having such community engagement experiences? What sorts of skills does it help them build? What if any challenges do they encounter in doing this work or in taking courses like this? In your experience, have you noticed any patterns in the kinds of students who choose to enroll in this course/program or similar community engaged courses? If so, what patterns have you noticed and what are your thoughts about it?)
2. Now let's talk about student preparation for these types of courses/programs. (**PROBES:** Could you talk about the activities or exercises that you provide to the students in order to prepare them for community engagement? Could you talk about how these activities and exercises are effective in preparing students to engage with the community? What ongoing support and supervision do the students receive throughout the duration of engagement? What, if any, gaps remain in preparation and ongoing support? What are the consequences of this and what are some ways that they can be mitigated over time?)
3. Now, I'd like to switch gears to talk about the ways in which such courses/programs change the student. (**PROBES:** Based on your experience, could you talk about the ways in which students change—attitudes, behaviors, action, over the course of the semester and through their work with the community? Are there ways in which you have tracked or have noticed changes in awareness about different issues? If so, could you speak to that? In your assessment, do you believe that students feel a greater sense of connectedness with the

community they worked with as a consequence of their engagement with them and/or are there ways in which they experience cognitive dissonance? If so, could you elaborate?)

4. Now, and based on your experience doing this work, I would like for you to reflect on some of the longer-term effects of students experiences with courses/programs of this type. (**PROBES:** First, do you stay in contact with the students beyond their time in the course/program? Could you tell me more about this – how do you stay in contact with them? Based on this, do you see any long-term implications for the students who choose to participate in curricular community engagement experiences than those who do not? Can you elaborate on this? In your assessment, what is the value of such courses/programs for the students?)
5. Building on that, I would love to briefly touch upon the broader implications of such courses/programs. (**PROBES:** In your assessment, what is the broader long-term value of such courses on students from a personal and professional standpoint? What are some socio-cultural benefits? Based on your experience, is there a particular need for such courses/programs now? Could you please elaborate on this – why or why not? Should your institution (and other institutions) be prioritizing such experiences in baccalaureate education?)

CLOSING: Is there anything else you like to share or add to our conversation?

Thank you so much for your time, and for sharing your thoughts and perspectives with me. I greatly appreciate it. If you think of anything additional you would like to share with me or if you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out. If you would like, I can share my e-mail address with you. Once I have the transcripts from the recording, I would be glad to share them with you for clarification and/or verification of the information you shared with me. Again, thank you and I wish you continued success with this amazing course and with the work you are doing in fostering opportunities for civic engagement for college students. Take good care!

APPENDIX C
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Documentation

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Tucker Hall, Room 212
310 E. Campus Rd.
Athens, Georgia 30602
TEL 706-542-3199 | FAX 706-542-5638
IRB@uga.edu
http://research.uga.edu/hso/irb/

Human Research Protection Program

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

April 12, 2023

Dear Amy Stich:

On 4/12/2023, the Human Subjects Office reviewed the following submission:

Title of Study:	Understanding Development of Civic Identity Among College Students: A Qualitative Case Study
Investigator:	Amy Stich
Co-Investigator:	Lalita Kaligotla
IRB ID:	PROJECT00007301
Funding:	None
Review Category:	Exempt 2ii

We have determined that the proposed research is Exempt. The research activities may begin upon submission of a revised consent form via public comment as stipulated on 4/12/2023 regarding removal of the linked coding process description.

- Since this study was determined to be exempt, please be aware that not all future modifications will require review by the IRB. For more information please see Appendix C of the Exempt Research Policy (https://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/compliance/hso/IRB-Exempt-Review.pdf). As noted in Section C.2., you can simply notify us of modifications that will not require review via the "Add Public Comment" activity.

- The PI is responsible for ensuring that all activities and materials are compliant with the following policies: Participant Selection and Recruitment, Students as Research Participants, and Internet Research. Also, the consent process must include the elements in Appendix B of the Exempt Review policy.

A progress report will be requested prior to 4/12/2028. Before or within 30 days of the progress report due date, please submit a progress report or study closure request. Submit a progress report by navigating to the active study and selecting Progress Report. The study may be closed by selecting Create Version and choosing Close Study as the submission purpose.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Kimberly Fernandez,
Compliance Professional II
Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia

Duke UNIVERSITY | CAMPUS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

2200 West Main Street, Wing A–200
Durham, NC 27705

September 22, 2023

Lalita M. Kaligotla and Professor Amy E. Stich
McBee Institute of Higher Education
University of Georgia

Thank you for submitting the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) documents for the project on “Understanding Development of Civic Identity Among College Students (IRB ID Project 00007301). The Duke Campus IRB has determined Duke was not engaged in the research activities undertaken by Lalita Kaligotla. Therefore, a protocol was not required nor submitted to the Campus IRB.

If you have any question, feel free to contact me at alejandro.martinez@duke.edu or 919-684-4905.

Best,

Alexandro Martinez, CIP
Associate Director, Campus IRB
919-684-4905

Duke University Campus Institutional Review Board
2200 West Main Street, Wing A-200, Durham, NC 27705
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