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“Trying to March Less and Organize More”: Culture, Capital, and Structure in Civic

Engagement Among College Students

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Abstract

This study explores volunteerism and activism in tandem under the umbrella of civic engagement and questions the importance of intergenerational transmission of forms of capital and cultural models of agency in how and why college students choose to be civically engaged. This study utilized a mixed-methods design with a survey to determine base rates of engagement and semi-structured interviews to identify differences in engagement based on class culture and capital. Overall, there were not differences in rate of participation by social class, but students volunteered more regularly than they engaged in activism. The interviews illustrated how students theoretically distinguish activism from volunteerism, how students navigate conflicting motivations to engage such as connection to a community and personal fulfillment, and how social capital and structural barriers such as transportation facilitate and inhibit activism and volunteerism differently, especially in the context of institutions such as liberal arts colleges.

“Trying to March Less and Organize More”: Culture, Capital, and Structure in Civic
Engagement Among College Students

When students arrive for orientation at a particular liberal arts college in a medium sized city in the Midwestern United States, they are told that their college has three core tenants: “internationalism, multiculturalism, and service to society.” But what is service to society? College officials are sure to provide varying definitions that indicate that even just studying and entering into the workforce as a “socially aware” young adult after graduation is serving society; however, students are also presented with two key images of service: volunteerism and activism. Service to society is accomplished through service to the community, be that local, national, or global. For students at this institution, service is expected but also taken for granted. According to the college’s department of Institutional Research, students at the institution report that the college has a more civically engaged culture than peer institutions, but there is not a significant difference in self-reported civic engagement compared to peer colleges.

Service to society could mean anything, but civic engagement can be more easily defined and understood. Yet, the activities under this umbrella term remain ambiguous, linked to each other but still holding separate connotations. These activities shape local, national, and global communities, making change on individual and structural levels. Considering civic engagement among college students provides insight into how the world and society will be shaped as these young adults gain power and influence in politics and industry. Civic engagement is one way to enact change and connect to community, and it is critical to understand who among emerging adults are engaging, how they are engaging, and why they are doing so.

BACKGROUND

Activism can be defined as organized and collective forms of protest or conflict (Agyemang, Singer, and Delorme 2010), and student activism has been defined as “work done by students to impact political, economic, environmental and social change” (Dominguez 2009:126). Altbach and Peterson (1971) detailed the history of student activism from the early to mid-twentieth century, establishing college student activism as a historical trend. Student activism is distinct because the targets and projects are defined and led by the young activists, making the student activists the agents of change (Flanagan and Levine 2010). College students consistently participated in activism and social movements that aligned with the social and political moment throughout the twentieth century (Altbach and Peterson 1971).

Activism falls under the umbrella of civic engagement alongside volunteerism (Hoffman, Kihl, and Browning 2015). However, activism is distinct from volunteer work, which is defined as activity in which time is invested without pay to benefit another person, group, or organization (Mustillo, Wilson, and Lynch 2004). Rates of activism and volunteerism have been compared intergenerationally revealing that young adults are less civically engaged overall than their counterparts in the 70s (Flanagan and Levine 2010). This overall lower level of civic engagement does not extend to volunteerism, however (Flanagan and Levine 2010).

Institutions such as schools, colleges, and community groups promote volunteerism (Flanagan and Levine 2010). Educational and religious institutions are two of the most common sources of organized volunteering activities (Flanagan and Levine 2010). Civic engagement has been integrated into the framework of higher education,

becoming an expected part of the college experience at many schools; however, this is true more for Ivy League universities, flagship state universities, and selective liberal arts schools than at the community colleges that educate the majority of college students in the United States (Flanagan and Levine 2010). Overall there has been a substantial increase in community service since the 1970s (Flanagan and Levine 2010).

Class, Capital, and Intergenerational Transmission of Engagement

There is a recognized relationship in the United States between social class and political participation that encompasses a 14 percentage point difference in self-reported volunteering rates between people who have attended college and people who have not (Flanagan and Levine 2010). People are more likely to engage in activism if their parents have attended college, and there is a relationship between parental political involvement and offspring engagement in activism (Flanagan and Levine 2010). Similarly, volunteerism is impacted by social class, parental engagement, and education such that mother's volunteerism and daughter's education mediate the effect of social class on initial volunteering but have no effect on the trajectory of volunteering over time (Mustillo, Wilson & Lynch 2004). Interestingly, parental volunteerism and individual educational attainment did not affect the trajectory of volunteerism beyond the initial engagement, meaning regularity of engagement and focus of engagement are not impacted by parental engagement or personal educational attainment (Mustillo et al. 2004).

Evidence suggests that activism is associated with educational attainment and parental activism (Flanagan and Levine 2010). Activism and volunteerism are supported by parents of high social status passing down political awareness, access to community

and educational resources, and the child's own access to higher education (Flanagan and Levine 2010; Mustillo et al. 2004). Civic engagement (volunteerism or activism) often begins in adolescence, before college, which magnifies the effect that unequal institutional opportunities for engagement have on students, as youth in low income neighborhoods attend schools with fewer resources and live in communities with fewer resources to support civic engagement (Flanagan and Levine 2010; Mustillo et al. 2004).

College is an important setting for civic engagement as the institutions themselves encourage engagement and educational attainment is positively related to civic engagement. There is also a cultural image of college students being civically engaged (Mankoff & Flacks 1971). However, it is important to note that colleges in the United States are white, middle class institutions (Stephens, Fryberg, & Markus 2012). As white middle class institutions, colleges encourage an independent and individualized, neoliberal way of pursuing interests, so while colleges are encouraging civic engagement, they are doing so in the context of an independent and self-improvement focused environment. Thus, it is critical to investigate how students who were not raised in white middle class culture might differ in their civic engagement.

The Portrait of the Young Activist: Who Is Really Engaging?

Mankoff and Flacks (1971) describe the "portrait of the young activist," noting that young activists are often thought of as upper middle class, urban, liberal, and educated children of politically engaged working parents. Though Mankoff and Flack (1971) provide plenty of evidence that this representation of young activists did not accurately represent who was performing activism, this image remains.

For example, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which was key to the success of the Civil Rights Movement (Robnett 1997), is primarily remembered for Freedom Summer, one of its many targeted voter registration initiatives (Robnett 1997). White volunteers were chosen for this specific initiative because they were more likely to receive media attention, which bolstered the initiative, but because this initiative was heavily publicized, there is a skewed perception of SNCC (Robnett 1997). After Freedom Summer, more white college students started volunteering with SNCC; however, the organization was still predominantly black (Robnett 1997). Regardless, SNCC is mostly remembered for their one voter registration initiative that featured white, college students. SNCC represents how the portrait of the young activist (white, middle class, and liberal) can eclipse the reality of who is engaging in activism.

SNCC also represents how activism and volunteerism are related. While these terms have different connotations, they are linked under the umbrella term “civic engagement.” Colleges in the United States present an image of student and institutional involvement in their communities, and high school students across the United States are told that they need community service hours in order to gain admission to competitive colleges and universities. However, the definitions of these terms and their implications can be ambiguous, and the perception of these activities from observers, institutions, and participants might be different. Young adults might choose between activism and volunteerism based on these differentiations. Or, young adults might choose to engage in activism, volunteerism, both, or neither based on other factors such as access to resources or their own cultural understandings.

This research provides numerous explanations for how youth become civically engaged, but it fails to address how class identity and background influence student civic engagement beyond high school. Being a student is one of the key elements of the portrait of the young activist, so it is important to question how college students today are engaging and whether or not their engagement is determined by their class status. Further, these studies minimize youth's agency in selecting civic engagement opportunities. How and why students choose the forms of civic engagement that they do has not been explored. We also do not have an explanation for why volunteerism has increased or why, despite overall levels of civic engagement decreasing among youth over time, youth are still choosing to volunteer.

THEORY

In *Living for the Revolution: Black feminist organizations, 1968-1980* Springer utilizes fields to demonstrate the ways that social capital is necessary to becoming involved in social movements (2005). Springer noted that the majority of the black feminists she interviewed joined their black feminist organizations through their own social networks, indicating that social capital is necessary to engaging in activism (2005). Similarly, I intend to use Bourdieu's theories as a way to reframe resource mobilization and focus on how people require certain resources (in the form of social, economic, and cultural capital) that must be mobilized to engage in the specific fields of activism or volunteerism. This theoretical frame is similar to the frame Mustillo et al. (2004) utilized, status transmission theory, but is more firmly rooted in Bourdieu's theories of capital. This framework is similar to but distinct from those of Springer (2005) and Mustillo et al. (2004) as it focuses on how limits to personal capital could limit

opportunities to engage civically. While Springer noted the importance of social capital in social movement recruitment, she focused more on the organizational need than the individual's possession of and choice to mobilize that social capital.

Mustillo et al. note that much of the research on civic engagement focuses largely on motivations for participation (2004). Stephens et al. provide a summary of the Independent Model of Agency and the Interdependent Model of Agency which theorize that middle class people are more individually focused and make choices based on their own desires, needs, and opinions while working class people are more communally focused, considering other people in their decisions and being more group oriented (2012). Typically, this model is applied to college students in reference to cultural mismatch between working class and first-generation college students and collegiate institutions, but I believe that this theory could shed insight into how people from different classes become involved in volunteerism and activism in different ways, to different extents, and for different reasons. Because college education impacts civic engagement in many ways, it is reasonable to expand this model that has been used to study class cultural mismatch between students and institutions in order to study how class culture and individual agency interact within a college in relation to the field of civic engagement.

If students from different class backgrounds have different models of agency and different forms of capital, they might make very different choices regarding civic engagement. Perhaps a working-class college student is more likely to be interested in civic engagement than a middle-class student because the working class student is more communally focused and concerned with acting for the good of their community.

Alternatively, working-class students might not be able to make the same kinds of choices as middle-class students because they might not have the same intergenerational cultural capital (knowing how or where to get involved), social capital (connections to opportunities through family, friends, mentors, etc.), or material capital (money to donate to a cause or reliable transportation to events).

Overall this study seeks to determine if there are differences in participation in activism and volunteerism based on social class. Further, this study intends to determine if any differences in participation are rooted in class cultural differences, differences in resources, or both. Beyond individual choices, agency, and cultural understandings, this study also examines how the college, as an institution, can and does facilitate and inhibit volunteerism and activism differently. This research has the potential to not only correct a misconception about which college students engage civically and politically but also provide valuable insight into why people do and do not participate in activism and volunteerism, which could illuminate removable barriers to civic engagement. Further, this research could identify the defining differences between activism and volunteerism and how those characteristics or perceived differences influence choice of engagement; that is, this study could reveal differences in the cultural understandings of civic engagement as well as of motivations to engage.

THIS STUDY

While there is research on social class and volunteerism (Flanagan & Levine 2010), social class and activism (Schradi 2018), and volunteerism and activism (Hoffman, Kihl, & Browning 2015), there is a lack of research comparing volunteerism and activism by social class. Bourdieu's field theory as it was used in relation to resource mobilization by

Springer (2005) could lay the foundation for understanding how social location (social class) allows or prohibits civic engagement, and class based Models of Agency (Stephens, Fryberg, and Markus 2012) complicate strictly structural arguments of engagement by reminding us that there are individuals making choices within these structures.

One hypothesis is that working-class students participate more in activism and volunteer activities than their middle class or upper class peers because they view themselves as more connected to others and view their fates as more intertwined. However just as resource mobilization can make or break a movement, it is possible that lack of social and economic capital could limit the resources that working class students would need to participate in either activism or volunteerism. Based on the limitation of resources it could be hypothesized that working-class students participate less overall than their middle-class peers. Lastly working-class students could participate more in volunteerism than activism due to institutional programs that encourage and facilitate volunteering at their colleges. If all else is equal, which many institutions are trying to ensure by devoting funds to encouraging civic engagement, students might choose to engage in activism and volunteerism differently based on their own needs and the needs that they perceive in their communities.

The rest of this paper examines how and why students at a liberal arts college in an urban setting in the Midwestern United States engage in two different forms of civic engagement: activism and volunteerism. First, I will detail my method for my mixed-methods analysis of this question, explaining first the survey creation and procedure and then the methods for the semi-structured interviews. My analysis of the results and

findings will follow the methods in the same order, survey results followed by interview themes and findings. Lastly, the conclusion and discussion will reconnect the findings to the background literature, grounding theory, and sociology as a field.

It is important to note that this college is located in an urban setting, nestled a short bus ride between the downtown areas of two midwestern cities. Students at the target institution are uniquely situated compared to students at peer institutions due to the urban setting. It is also important to note that I generated my hypotheses and questions not only from the research but from my personal experiences as a student at the target institution. When navigating the interviews, I was also aided by my student status as I was presumably a less intimidating figure for the first years who participated than a professor would be. Further, there is likely less of a push to give desirable answers to a student researcher than a faculty member. The interviews might have also been aided by framing the request for participants as valuing and appreciating assistance in completing my senior thesis in sociology, making the interviews seem like a favor to another student rather than an investigation into any one person's experiences. Ultimately, being a student at the target institution allowed me to generate an interview schedule that reflected my perception of civic engagement at the target institution not only based on the literature and the results from the survey but also from my own experiences and observations, and my student status also aided in asking pointed follow-up questions and providing on topic affirmations or information when interviewees asked.

METHOD

In order to answer the above research question, I conducted a mixed methods study utilizing a survey and semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed me to use

a survey to systematically determine if there were differences in levels of engagement between volunteerism and activism in my sample as well as if there were differences in the level of engagement by social class. The interview portion of the design was intended to provide depth and reasoning to the quantitative survey responses and illuminate the meaning behind any differences in participation found in the survey responses. Further, the interviews allowed for an intentional comparison of how college students culturally understand volunteerism, activism, civic engagement, and their own participation in these activities. The survey provides a clear understanding of who engages and how they engage, not only if they engage in activism or volunteerism but also how frequently they do so. The interviews investigate why students engage in the ways that they do as well as how they engage, meaning whether or not they utilize different forms of capital and different structures in order to engage.

The target institution is a private liberal arts college that claims to alleviate the social barriers that its tuition fees pose by meeting 100% of a student's "demonstrated financial need." However, the majority of the students in this study still identified themselves as at least middle class (70.4%). 4.9% of students identified as "upper class," and 27.5% identified as "upper middle class." The most common class identity among participants (37.3%) was "middle class." In contrast, only 13.4% identified as lower middle class, 11.3% as working class, and 4.9% as poor.

First, I administered a survey with questions based on the Hoffman, Kihl, and Browning (2015) survey of civic engagement among college athletes. These questions measure the frequency of volunteer work in the last twelve months as well as specific activities such as signing petitions and attending marches that have been identified as

activist activities. Respondents were asked about their participation in volunteer activities through the college's Civic Involvement Department to determine the validity of the third hypothesis. The social class variable was measured by subjective class identity and parental education. Participants were asked to opt-in to the interview phase of the study by providing a contact email address.

I conducted ten semi-structured interviews focusing on volunteerism and activism. These interviews ranged from fifteen minutes in length to forty minutes, averaging approximately half an hour long. Participants were asked about how often they engaged, how they became engaged, what motivated them to become engaged, how their environment growing up influenced their engagement, and how they differentiated volunteerism from activism. Participants were also asked to describe their social class. I transcribed the interviews and then generated a coding scheme by generating a list of themes from a subset of three interviews. This coding scheme was then applied across the rest of the interviews.

Survey Participants

Of the 750 students sampled, 142 students completed the survey. 70.4% of respondents identified as women while 24.6% identified as men, and 4.9% of the students identified with a nonbinary gender identity. Eight participants (5.6%) identified as trans or transgender. The respondents were overwhelmingly white (61.1%). 32 participants (19.8%) identified as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander while 11 participants (6.8%) identified as Hispanic or Latino. Both African American participants and Native American participants represented 1.9% of the sample respectively, and 2.5% of the

participants identified with another racial or ethnic identity such as Arab American. Only 12.7% of the participants identified themselves as international students.

Participants were all between the ages of 17 and 23. 32.4% of the participants were first years with seniors being the second most represented group (29.6%). Sophomores comprised 22.5% of the sample, and only 15.5% identified as juniors. The random sample of students at the target institution did not contain students currently studying abroad, which could account for the disproportionate lack of junior students as approximately 60% of students at the target institution study abroad during their junior year. Additionally, there is a strong possibility of selection bias both in those who chose to take the survey as well as those who chose to engage in interviews.

Interview Participants

Ten students self-selected to participate in semi-structured interviews after having completed the survey. Of these participants eight were women, and two were men. Nine of the interviewees identified as white, and one identified as white and Latinx. Four of the interviewees were seniors, while there were two juniors, one sophomore, and three first years. Interviewees' class identities ranged from lower middle class to upper class. I did not read the interviewees' responses to the survey and was not aware of their civic engagement history, racial identity, or class identity before the interviews began. Not knowing the class identities of my participants prevented me from actively recruiting poor or working-class students from those who voluntarily provided their emails; however, it also ensured that I would not ask unintentionally leading questions during the interviews. The names used throughout the rest of the paper are pseudonyms that are meant to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. The participants were given the

choice to choose their own pseudonym, but only two participants (Blaine and Rose) had a pseudonym preference. The rest of the pseudonyms were selected from a list provided by the department of Institutional Research of the ten most common names among the student body of the target institution.

SURVEY RESULTS

Students did not differ in rates of civic engagement overall, rates of activism, or rates of volunteerism by their social class identity. While a greater proportion of my sample reported participating in at least one activist activity in the last year than participating in volunteer activities in the last year, more students are regularly involved in volunteering than activism. Overall, 90.1% of participants reported participating in at least one activist activity (including posting on social media about social issues or causes); however, only 35.2% of participants participate in activism at least once a month. In contrast, only 79.6% of students reported volunteering in the last year, but 52.8% of participants reported volunteering at least once a month.

Additionally, while there was no difference between white students and students of color in rates of volunteering, white students engaged in activism at statistically higher rates than students of color as an aggregated group. White students ($m=.934$) were more likely to have participated in activism in the last year than students of color ($m=.843$; $p<.01$). White students ($m=.418$) also engaged in activism more regularly than students of color ($m=.235$; $p<.001$) did. Overall, there was not a statistical difference in these engagement levels across social class; however, there is an overall trend of participation in volunteerism over activism in a regular way. Further, while there was not a class-based

difference in activism, white students were more likely to engage in activism than students of color were.

Volunteerism might be more regular among students due to the impact of the college's Civic Involvement Department (CID). There was not a relationship between engaging through the CID and engaging in activism, but the CID did have a positive relationship to volunteering at least once in the last year ($p < .05$; $F = 4.008$) and volunteering on a regular monthly basis ($p < .001$; $F = 11.311$). Students who reported that they have not engaged through the CID in the last year ($m = .738$) were less likely to have volunteered at all in the last year than students who engaged at least once through the CID ($m = .944$) and students who engage on a monthly basis through the CID ($m = .952$). Monthly volunteerism was even more strongly predicted by use of the CID such that students who did not use the CID ($m = .427$) engaged less than students who had engaged at least once ($m = .611$), and those students also engaged less than students who volunteered on a monthly basis through the CID ($m = .952$). This indicates that the CID plays an important role in student volunteerism.

Across class lines, students engage in activism and volunteerism at the same rate. While students engage in volunteerism more than activism overall, students of color engage in activism less than white students. Engagement through the CID is positively related to volunteerism, especially regular volunteerism, but not to activism. The remainder of this study will focus on how the college as a cultural and structural force in students lives facilitates and inhibits activism and volunteerism differently for different students. The interviews will also illuminate if students must transform different forms of capital in order to engage in activism and volunteerism, and whether there are differences

in what forms of capital are needed to engage in activism and volunteerism, respectively. The interviews also provide an opportunity to discern if the structure of the institution is buffering working-class students from capital-based limitations to their engagement. If there are material and social capitalistic requirements of civic engagement, the consistency of engagement across class could indicate that the institution is appropriately responding to and supporting the needs of the students, at least for volunteer opportunities. It is possible that, rather than indicating that material capital is not necessary to civic engagement, these findings provide evidence of affective institutional support of civic engagement opportunities. Maybe, when all else is equal, working-class student choose to engage at the same rates as their peers.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

A number of themes and subthemes emerged from the interviews. The first theme is Defining Civic Engagement, or how the interviewees defined their own engagement and others as activism, volunteerism, or neither. Within this theme several subthemes emerged: the importance of intentions, connecting activist intentions to academia, locus and temporality of impact, and pay as a distinction. Next, I examine the interviewees Motivations to Engage. Several subthemes related to connection appeared throughout the interviews: connection to communities, one on one connection, connecting to one's own identities, and connecting to structures. Within Motivations to engage there were also several subthemes involving the importance of personal experience, sense of responsibility, and personal stakes in a cause as motivators to engage. The last major theme is Navigating Structures and Capitals. This theme also includes multiple subthemes: transportation, time, agency, initiative, collegiate support structures, social

capital, and cultural capital. The rest of this section will examine these major themes and their subthemes. Further, this section of the paper will illustrate the tension that was present across the interviews, as these middle class, mostly white students in a white, middle class institution navigated an independently cultured structure and their own independent ideologies while working towards an interdependent action, civic engagement.

Defining Civic Engagement: Intention Versus Impact and Other Dilemmas

I began this study by defining civic engagement, volunteerism, and activism through the works of sociologists; however, in the course of this study it became clear that one of the key questions of this study is how activists and volunteers define the work that they do for themselves. While the particulars of engagement varied across interviewees, from tutoring to writing the Line 3 Pipeline Wikipedia page, there were common themes in how participants defined their engagement and differentiated these two forms of civic engagement from each other. This common cultural understanding across these students was distinct from and more complicated than the empirical definitions sociologists have provided.

Activism was consistently linked to an effort for broader systemic change. First year Michael said, "...with activism you're really actively trying to change something and you're like it's more of a forceful like push for it." Similarly, Elizabeth another first year said "I think of activism as you know more grassroots more seeking to make change on a national um just a larger stage." Both of these interviewees distinguish activism as goal oriented and focused, and the goal in both cases is not just impacting a person but a system or circumstance. When interviewees discussed activism, they primarily used

language referring to systems and structures as well as the number of people being affected by their efforts.

Beyond the structural goal, participants viewed this change as both idealistic and “concrete.” Rose, a junior who only recently began participating with Planned Parenthood, discussed the ways that the Sex and Politics League that she had joined was more concrete than the other opportunities she had seen advertised. This concrete objective was to canvass for candidates who supported Planned Parenthood and to register voters for the November 6th 2018 midterm election. There was a clear goal and intended structural change: secure the future of Planned Parenthood by getting people to vote for Democratic candidates. There was also a strict time limit for these activities, which Sarah, a senior, implied might also distinguish activism from volunteerism when she said, “advocating for it would mean like on a broader level I’m like implement this program that’s gonna like help kids read like by a certain time all these kids will be able to read kind of a more measurable result I guess.” Thus, activism is a form of civic engagement that is connected to a broader social structure and makes measurable change.

Sophomore Hannah distinguishes volunteerism from activism as “...a difference between helping versus or like working within a system as it currently is and like working on a paradigm shift.” This distinction was echoed by other interviewees who consistently talked about their role as volunteers as “helping people” or “providing a service.” The distinction here, then, is that rather than trying to change a system, volunteers are trying to help the people harmed by systems. The interviewees were careful in their discussion of this dynamic. While some interviewees prioritized activism because they believed stopping the system would eliminate the need for that help, others

were hesitant to deny the importance of that service. Hannah, who focuses on environmental justice organizing, talked about her experience volunteering in the kitchen of a homeless shelter while she was in high school, saying,

“You can volunteer for the arts because you believe that art is important but you’re not like working on a change. You can usher at the door of a show and those sorts of things like you probably believe that that has value in society but it might not be like I’m ushering a show because x y z perspectives... Growing up I volunteered at the homeless shelter in my hometown working in the kitchen on Sunday mornings um and that is like I I I consider that volunteering because I was never thinking about that as like a macrolevel how do we change the condition of homelessness in [city] and in the state where I grew up but rather like this is something that I do to help the situation as it currently is and that felt like a critical need in its own way and so I think volunteering can also kind of land in more of these like um I don’t say band aid solutions because that makes them sound like not like great things to be doing...”

In this discussion of her volunteering in comparison to her activism, Hannah made it clear that her intentions were a major source of the difference in how she views her engagement. Across the interviews, participants identified the ways that they approached engagement as the key distinguishing feature. Largely, this was linked to the previously discussed theme of broader social change; however, Hannah makes it clear that if she had thought about her work differently, she might have considered it activism.

One senior, Blaine, clearly demonstrates how intention is a key feature of activism. While most of the interviewees discussed tutoring as a volunteer activity, Blaine discussed the ways that engaging intentionally with literacy can be activism.

“I’ve been thinking a lot about this too like what is the difference between being a volunteer and being an activist? I do think that sometimes a volunteer you think oh you’re a volunteer because you have a passive role and you don’t necessarily think that like you can act out change like you can be a change maker, and I think some like there are people that I’ve met who definitely have this more like volunteer mentality like I’m giving back or I’m helping. Or you know like sure like stuffing envelopes I don’t know that you could be considered an activist if you’re going for an hour and stuffing envelopes, but like I think that it’s with your

intentionality of like no I can enact change in my actions you know and like I can you know like believe these things about education as being a liberatory sorry as a liberation for students like I think that that is activism”

In this excerpt Blaine is not only saying that her connection of literacy to broader social structures makes her work activism but also that her intentional effort to make change in an individual’s life can be activism without necessitating the broader “paradigm shift” Hannah discussed.

Along with intentionality, the interviewees distinguished themselves from their peers by disparaging what they deemed “performative activism.” Elizabeth described this phenomenon as “you know where people um you know put their feelings forward and their activism forward in stickers and buttons and like ‘of course I stand for this I’m a liberal or whatever’ and then never actually having the action to back it up.” Similarly, people who participate in protests like the Women’s March seemingly only for the photo opportunity were deemed “performative activists.” The prevalence of this theme might be somewhat influenced by the fact that the target college claims “service to society” as a primary tenet of the institution. Alex unintentionally highlights the ways that students view this tenet as disingenuous when she discussed how she volunteers through the athletics department.

“It’s important to them that we like have something that’s engaged in the community cause it’s also like a [school] value um and the team wants to represent that as well so we’ve done like Greendot training we worked like I said like urban roots or something some garden and then this last semester we built a playground with [a professor] in the poli sci department so yeah”

The intentions of this engagement are more focused on presenting an engaged value rather than making difference, whether by helping or changing the structure.

Distinguishing volunteerism from activism through intention has also largely linked activism to academia. Linking activism to larger structures, paradigm shifts, and complex understandings of positionality has inherently linked activism with a more intellectual and academic lens. Sophia states clearly “there’s just something about activism to me that sometimes very intellectual which is kind of weird I don’t really know why I conceptualize it like that.” While most participants didn’t clearly make this connection, many talked about connecting their engagement to their coursework, and freshman Dan even talked at length about how having a sociology course this semester has shifted his understanding of engagement and furthered his understanding of activism.

Within the discussion of change making and helping, volunteerism and activism are further distinguished by who is impacted, who benefits from the engagement, and when the influence is seen. Volunteering broadly has a more personal, one on one influence, an individual or local locus of impact, while the structural focus of activism places the locus of impact on a “national or larger stage.” Activism and volunteerism also have different temporalities. Activism can be disheartening because changing a culture or structure takes time and can take years to be actualized in a visible way. In contrast, Sophia touts the benefits of the instant gratification that volunteering provides. By working within a system on a more individual level, volunteers can clearly observe the impact of their actions in an almost instant way.

Most of the participants defined volunteerism and activism by pointing out their differences, but this also posed a challenge as interviewees noted that they are linked. Overall, with the right intention and link to structural change, volunteering can be activism and activism can be volunteering. The last distinction that a number of

participants identified is that while volunteerism has to be unpaid, activists can engage through paid work.

Motivations to Engage

In order to isolate if models of agency have an effect on civic engagement in college, I asked participants to explain why they chose the forms of engagement that they have. Until now, this paper has focused on a collective understanding of these activities among students at this particular institution. These collective, cultural understandings of what civic engagement is could influence how and when students choose to be involved. This section will detail how participants justified their own forms of engagement.

Connecting to communities, individuals, yourself, and structure. The word “connection” appeared across the interviews. The interviewees viewed civic engagement as a way to connect on a personal level with other volunteers and activists as well as with the communities they were engaging in. For the interviewees that discussed connection this relationship to civic engagement could be about connecting with one person, like Blaine said, or a movement, like Hannah did. Sophia talked about wanting to connect with the community surrounding her college as more than “just a student” and then continuing her tutoring because of the personal relationship she formed with her study buddy whom she has watched grow from a second grader to precocious fifth grader. While intending to connect and impact a community might seem to indicate that civic engagement is inherently interdependent, students emphasis on connection intersects with other priorities and desires to complicate the relationship between models of agency and engagement.

Michael noted early in his interview that he was a first year and still trying to find his footing. He explained that volunteering at the local middle school was part of how he was figuring out his place in college and in the Twin Cities. Similarly, Dan talked about struggling to become involved because he didn't yet know what was important in this new community or where possible actions were held. Sophia talked about being a part of a first-year pre-orientation program that focuses on service not because of the service itself but because it allowed her to come to campus a week early and have a built-in friend group. This motivation differed from the way that first year Elizabeth talked about participating in the same pre-orientation program, which she viewed as a way to engage in activism, but this program and Michael and Dan's experiences illustrate how civic engagement can be used as a strategy for first years to locate themselves physically and socially in college and in the surrounding community.

Interviewees also overwhelmingly discussed how their understanding of their social location influenced their engagement. While the first years and sophomores took the time to acknowledge how their position as white people influences their engagement, the junior and seniors discussed the way that their awareness of positionality has influenced their engagement at length. Sophia noted, "I don't know I think I've definitely become a little more critical of service work in college and like the implications of coming into communities that are not your own," which raises a connected issue for engagement: what communities are we engaging in and how are we defining our own communities? Alex communicated this issue of defining and prioritizing a community when she said "but it sometimes at [this college] it feels like your your community is like [the college]." While the underclassmen spoke positively about learning about their

identities and how they impact the work that they do, the upperclassmen had more complicated opinions. Julia, a junior whose mother emigrated from Mexico, became civically engaged through her exploration of her Jewish identity. Julia expressed the ways that acknowledging positionality can change engagement.

“I think like [this college] maybe creates more of an environment where people are forced to think about like identity politics a little bit more so how your identity kind of relates to the way that you relate to the world um whereas I feel like kind of my family and where I grew up its very straightforward it’s like if you want to help people like you just do it um instead of like how much space am I taking up like like how is my identity as a woman impacting my ability to do this work how is my like I don't know like stuff like that um or like language barriers or like stuff like that that I don't really didn't really think about before coming to college and maybe part of that was growing up in like Texas which is a more conservative environment than [midwestern state] so”

While Julia is not discounting the importance of positionality, Sarah was critical of the way that positionality can discourage some people from engaging in a cause.

“I’m much more aware of positionality for better or for worse. I think sometimes at [this college] we get really hyper conscious of it in a way that’s unproductive that we like don't do as much as we could because we're so worried about where we do and don't belong and stepping on people’s toes.”

Overall, civic engagement provides a space to socially locate oneself, to explore and understand one’s own identities as well as the way that they intersect and impact other people’s lives and influence community connections.

Fulfilling requirements and personal needs. Nothing complicates the identification of an interdependent model of agency more than the participants’ emphasis on how engaging civically adds fulfillment to their lives. Dan noted that there is a “feel good factor” that influences when, where, and how he chooses to engage, and Rose talked at length about how her recent civic engagement was more fulfilling than the

volunteering she did in high school to meet the community service requirement for National Honor Society.

“It wasn't fulfilling in the same way that this was fulfilling. This was like I would be done at the end of the day and it would feel very very good and it was um it was like oh I feel like I'm actually making some kind of change um so that's why this work was like—even though sometimes I was like oh it's taking up a lot of time—totally worth more than worth it so yeah.”

This experience represents a common theme of not only participating because it makes one feel like they are making a difference but also because that feeling adds something positive to their lives. Sarah talks about how her volunteering with a dog rescue is “purely selfish” and motivated by her desire to be around animals and inability to have a pet in her off-campus apartment. Similarly, students acknowledged that beyond personal fulfillment they also got to put their engagement on their resumes, a highly desirable outcome, especially in high school. This highly independent motivation was unique to participants' justifications of their volunteer activities. None of the students who identified their engagement as activism stated that they engaged in their activism because it provided personal fulfillment or would bolster their own resume or academic experience.

Personal experience, responsibility, and stakes in a cause. Julia contrasted her experiences volunteering in high school with her activism in college by centering her identity-based connection to the cause.

“...all of the volunteering that I've done at [college] has been in the area of like immigrants and that sort of thing and its because my mom immigrated here from Mexico and so that's like a big like personal importance I suppose for me in terms like of wanting or like having that experience kind of humanized for me from based off of this like family connection that I have um so yeah I think like family and religiousness have made it kind of a larger part of my life.”

Having a personal stake in a cause was a common motivation for participating. Dan noted his own history with a chronic medical condition as a “selfish” reason to support certain political candidates, and Rose talked about how her own experiences with sex and access to information motivated her to get involved with Planned Parenthood because “I don’t really want other people to go through that um, and so I’ve kind of wanted to get involved with planned parenthood for a little while.” Similarly, Blaine’s passion for literacy was born out of her own struggles to learn how to read and the negative relationship she had with the tutor that her school forced her to see during her childhood. However, not all of the interviewees participated in engagement that was connected to their identities or experiences.

While climate change has a clear impact on all people on Earth, Hannah focuses her discussion of the topic on the way that “the people who have contributed to that crisis the least will disproportionately bear the brunt of...” climate change. This prioritization is an example of how some of the interviewees prioritized others and their impact in their motivations to engage. While Elizabeth talked about finding fulfillment through engagement, she also said that “um I really do think that it’s not only a privilege but an obligation to be civically engaged in how whatever means necessary.” Similarly, Dan said “It feels morally proper to be engaged. I feel like sort of part of the social contract to do your part to make your community a better place I feel like activism is sort of my way of doing that.” These responses indicate that these interviewees feel a personal responsibility to civically engage. It is possible that these participants view themselves as linked to other people, regardless of their personal identities or stakes in an issue, and are

thus actually choosing to engage because of their feeling of interdependence and responsibility to others.

Navigating Structures and Capitals

Inherent in this study is a question about the structural facilitators and inhibitors of volunteerism and activism. More specifically, these interviews seek to determine if there are structural explanations for why college students are more likely to volunteer than engage in activism.

Transportation and access. When I asked about what barriers to their engagement these students had encountered, every single participant mentioned transportation. Civic engagement generally requires students to leave campus, and while some students have avoided this issue by engaging in opportunities that are close to campus, such as Michael who tutors at the middle school that is less than a five-minute walk from his dorm, others like Dan have found that lack of transportation has lead them to disengage from activities they otherwise would have prioritized. Sarah noted that if her cousin had not given her a car, she would not be able to do all of the activities she has been doing, and Rose noted that she would not be able to afford to Uber to some of the more distant canvassing locations. Owning a car and public transportation both require financial capital, so if civic engagement requires a degree of mobility, then it could be inaccessible to a large portion of the population.

Formal structures such as the college's Civic Involvement Department help to alleviate this barrier to an extent. Blaine noted that one of her friends used a bus pass from the college to go to a volunteer site, and Sophia talked about how transportation was

not a barrier for her because the CID paid for a car to take herself and other volunteers to their volunteer site. However, there are limits to this assistance as Julia found out when she tried to get assistance paying for transit to an internship. The CID denied her request because they prioritized mobilizing groups of students to locations and would not pay for just one student to go to a site. Similarly, this assistance is only available for volunteer opportunities organized through the CID. Subsidized bus passes and transportation are not granted to students who are involved in internships, one of the few forms of civic engagement that allow students to be compensated (through pay or course credit) and helps many students to distinguish their activist work from volunteerism. In this way, the college is facilitating volunteerism and contributing to the inhibition of activism.

Along with transportation, the most common barrier to student engagement was time constraints. The participants expressed that they were most likely to opt out of an activity because they did not have time, and many said that they liked to have a regular schedule for their involvement as a way to hold themselves accountable and schedule their other commitments around their civic engagement. Only a handful of my interviewees mentioned work study or working for pay, but time was discussed as a valued commodity and scarce resource. A few of the participants noted that feeling like they did not have time was often more mental than real. It is possible that for lower income students or students from subordinated class backgrounds, the addition of work study hours and the financial burdens of transportation could influence their access to civic engagement, especially volunteerism.

Physical and social location, agency, and initiative. Many of the first years talked about location, like Dan who noted that since he moved away from the campaign that he

had been working on in his home state, he felt more disconnected from it. Michael said that he was still trying to figure out where he was and what needed to be done here, prioritizing an awareness of local needs in his activism. However, Elizabeth highlighted a unique problem with location: availability of opportunities. Growing up in a small town, Elizabeth noted that there were not very many opportunities to engage due to the size of her hometown, so at times she had to make her own opportunities. For example, she founded her school's student organization Students Against Gun Violence (not associated with the national organization), and her mother founded a learning center for youth. Elizabeth did note that there were benefits to growing up in a small town.

“I think um so because it was so rural I come from a very small school so it was lots of opportunities to be kind of a big fish in a small pond um so you know everybody knew who I was I knew who to talk to I could you know knew everybody on the school board like they were family friends so there was definitely a lot of dialogue that was able to happen just because it was so small and everybody knew each other. so for example I didn't like what was going on with some of the things that were happening at school and I didn't understand the policies that were instated so I became the junior representative to the school board for two years um and so I think in that way it definitely it made things seem much more accessible um which I think people from larger cities maybe definitely don't have you know they don't necessarily have that world view because its much more hierarchical there's much more of a chain of command than there is in a small town so because I didn't necessarily grow up with that I have I don't know the either idealism or audacity or whatever whatever word you want to put there to think that I actually do have the ability to make a difference.”

Elizabeth's views of being a big fish in a small pond also illustrates how college students navigate and construct a sense of agency through their engagement. Elizabeth felt empowered by her position in a small community and the social capital that came from knowing the people she was working with and against to make change, but other interviewees from larger cities expressed similar views of agency and initiative. Sarah attributed her participation to her own initiative in contacting volunteer locations. This

attribution is noteworthy because Sarah did get all of the contact information for her volunteer sights from the CID, but she still has an individualized and independent understanding of her own agency. Similarly, while Alex viewed the volunteering she did with athletics as a formal college activity, her engagement with the Christian Fellowship student organization on campus was separated from the institution and attributed to the students' own efforts and individualism because they organized it without help from the CID.

Finding opportunities to engage: structure, social capital, and cultural capital.

As has been previously mentioned, the CID also hosts a number of service-oriented pre-orientation programs that actively connect students to volunteer opportunities. Further, the purpose of the CID is to promote civic engagement, but the department overwhelmingly promotes volunteering over activism. The only activism that was associated with the college was Hannah's off-campus student employment, where she works with a nonprofit as part of her federal work study award. Additionally, Sarah and Alex noted that some of their courses had community service or volunteer components, requiring a certain number of hours of civic engagement as part of their work for the course.

Blaine, Hannah, Michael, and Julia each talked about how someone they knew was responsible for initially getting them involved in their civic engagement. Word of mouth, emails, and social media were the primary ways that students identified learning about and becoming involved in civic engagement. While structures such as the CID send out emails about opportunities, people like Rose also become involved by being emailed directly by organizations. Dan found their activist activities through Facebook but never

attributed this to a relationship with a specific person. However, Facebook generally only informs users about events when someone in their social network has already expressed interest in that event; thus, it is possible that social media events are as linked to social circles as promoting a cause or event via word of mouth. This social networking is a representation of social capital, implying that social capital is necessary to some degree to becoming civically engaged.

The literature largely supports the idea that parental civic engagement predicts youth civic engagement because children are taught how to engage and socialized to view this engagement as important. While this concept is linked strongly to class, the interviews have complicated this image of acculturation. Blaine noted that her upper-class community engaged on holidays such as Thanksgiving and in their churches but that this civic engagement was conducted without thought or intention and was largely viewed as an activity to be done rather than a mission in and of itself. In contrast, Sophia said that while her moms did not volunteer while she was growing up, the service orientation of their jobs as a teacher and hospice nurse inspired her to view engagement with her community positively. Michael and Dan credited their engagement to being raised in politically conscious families and cities.

Rose, whose engagement in high school was limited to what was necessary for NHS and Key club but recently began working with Planned Parenthood, talked about how apathetic her family was to engagement in general. She noted that her community in general was pretty apathetic and that her own family did not prioritize civic engagement. For Rose, engaging has been empowering and educational, and through her engagement she has learned about opportunities she hadn't even been able to imagine. Engaging in

college has allowed her to find adult role models for engagement that her family did not provide.

“Some of them are like freshmen in college um and then some of them are like you know late thirties well into their career um and I think that’s really cool and eye opening to see cause it’s like oh I can because you guys are doing this you have time to take out of your day out of your you know your nine to five job or whatever your awesome career um I should be able to do the same or it’s like that’s an option that maybe I didn’t even consider again because of like sort of the um the household that I grew up in um so I think that is something that I would love to to uh sort of involve in my life after college um now that I know that’s like more of a norm than I thought so yeah yeah yeah definitely.”

DISCUSSION

There is background literature that establishes that civic engagement is intergenerational and related to college education; therefore, class background likely plays a role in how young adults choose to engage. Additionally, there might be differences in the kind of civic engagement young adults choose, as research indicates that civic engagement overall has gone down among youth compared to older generations but that this trend does not hold true for volunteerism. Research on activism and social movements indicates that successful social movements rely on successful resource mobilization-acquisition and use of money, resources, and people. I argue that this can be reframed as a reliance on material and social capital in order to build, gain, and influence cultural capital. The issue of recruiting in resource mobilization can be flipped to examine how and why people join social movements and whether individuals must mobilize capital in order to be a part of resource mobilization. The literature on volunteerism and activism is disparate, despite both falling under the umbrella of civic engagement. My mixed methods study seeks to bridge the gap between the study of volunteerism and activism in order to do a cross-sectional analysis of how college students from different class

backgrounds at an elite, private college in the US choose to be civically engaged and how they understand their own engagement.

Broadly, social capital plays a critical role in student civic engagement, even if it does not prevent poor or working-class students from engaging entirely, and material capital interacts with structures such as public transit to make certain forms of engagement more or less accessible. Colleges and universities can offset that inaccessibility by subsidizing transportation and fostering positive relationships with community organizations.

While the interviews complicated the initial hypothesis in relation to models of agency, this study does provide support for the idea that agency is an important part of civic engagement, and while Stephens' models of agency do not map perfectly onto this study, this study suggests that volunteerism may be more independently motivated and activism might be more interdependently motivated within the umbrella of civic engagement. Rather than illuminating class-based differences, this study has illustrated a difference in volunteerism and activism that is influenced not only by structure but may also be created by differences in the intentions and motivations of the students who are engaging as well as cultural understandings of civic engagement. Further, this study demonstrates that middle class students may have difficulty balancing their own independent culture and surroundings with a desire to do interdependent work.

Civic engagement is an umbrella term for two distinct but intrinsically linked constructs. This engagement is supported by agentic choices made by individuals who are located within systems—class structures, family structures, communities, hierarchies, and educational institutions to name a few. Some students find a conflict between their

structure and the nature of civic engagement. Future research should further investigate this tension as well as targeting students from other class backgrounds in order to identify if this is a universal tension, felt by all students in white, middle class institutions, or only by students in this setting who also grew up in that cultural context.

Class Identities and Class Culture in Engagement

While the survey did not identify differences in engagement based on class, the theories supporting this analysis are rooted in the study of class culture and class identity. Models of agency and Bourdieu's theory are inherently linked to class, so the class of these participants and how they navigate discussing it is critical to this study. Though the interviewees presented a limited range of the class identities present in the survey population, the narrow range allowed this study to capture how students who are raised in a white middle class culture and choose to attend a white, middle class institution have to balance competing independent and interdependent motivations to engage when they choose to become civically engaged.

The majority of the interviewees verbalized a range when asked about their class identity, and those who did not, such as Sophia, often elaborated on their answer without prompting, adding caveats or justifications for their own identification. This represents a cultural discomfort with discussing class in the United States and in many cases a distancing from perceived economic privilege. Many participants expressed confusion about their identity and relied heavily on comparison to their peers to identify their social location. This comparison method posed a problem for a number of the participants, however, who expressed a sort of confusion or dissonance with their class identity after coming to college. For many participants, their class was based on their relative

deprivation to their peers in their hometowns, so when they came to a college with a higher median income, their certainty about their status was shaken. For some of my participants that meant feeling solidly middle class at home and then wondering if they were actually lower middle class or even working class once they came to college.

A few of the interviewees noted that their hometowns or neighborhoods were predominately white despite the fact that I did not ask about the racial or ethnic diversity of their hometowns. Similarly, two of the participants cited the presence of students of color in their high schools as a representation of the socioeconomic diversity of their schools or hometowns, implying a conflation of race and social class that is common in the United States. A few participants even implied that civic engagement was more common or popular because of the perceived marginality of their peers, and Sarah noted that her much more racially diverse high school felt “united” against a cause while the college felt “divided.” While explicit and implicit understandings of class identity in the United States were not primary focuses of this study, it is important to acknowledge that these conceptions and misconceptions might have influenced the ways that participants responded to both the survey and interview. Implicitly racist assumptions about class and race might have skewed the ways that participants spoke about their own experiences because of their biased sense of relative deprivation.

Limits of the Study

My results would indicate that the cultural image of the white middle-class college activist might not be inaccurate as my participants were overwhelmingly middle class and white; however, it is important to note that the target institution in this study is a private liberal arts college located in a metropolitan area in the Midwest. This college is

representative of neither all higher education institutions nor private liberal arts colleges. While civic engagement has been integrated into the framework of higher education, becoming an expected part of the college experience at many liberal arts schools, this is less common at the community colleges that educate the majority of college students in the United States (Flanagan and Levine 2010). Liberal arts colleges are not a representation of the majority of college students, and it is highly possible that these findings would not be applicable to a large public university. The target institution is also located in an urban setting, which distinguishes it from many of its peer institutions and other liberal arts colleges in the country. This location, as noted by some of the participants, means that students at this institution might have more opportunities for civic engagement in a variety of arenas than students at other institutions. The overall rate of participation found in this study may have been inflated as people who choose not to participate in civic engagement might similarly choose not to respond to a survey about student civic engagement, this is especially likely as the survey response rate was less than 20%.

Further, the supposed value of civic engagement to the institution could influence the ways that students understand and choose to be involved with civic engagement. As I did not know the interviewees class identities before each interview, I also did not do anything to oversample working-class students. My interview data is reliant on middle class experiences and voices and thus should be viewed as a middle-class student cultural understanding of civic engagement. Future research should examine how class identity and cultural understandings of civic engagement influence activism and volunteerism among students at different types of institutions. The portrait of the young activist should

also be challenged by more intensely investigating the intersection of race and class, which this study failed to do due to the limitations of the sample and target institution.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study applies Bourdieu's theory of capital in a new way and integrates it in a way into resource mobilization theory, expanding the study of social movements beyond their success or failure to the recruitment and motivation of individuals to join. This study further employs models of agency and research on social class to civic engagement in a new way. In expanding our theoretical lens in our exploration of civic engagement, we complicate and nuance our understandings of not only who is engaging but also where, how and why they are choosing to do so. This study also provides a theoretical basis for conceptualizing volunteerism and activism under the umbrella term of civic engagement as well as differentiating them from each other in a more complex and nuanced way than research has in the past. Future research should continue to study the cultural understandings of civic engagement, among college students as well as older adults.

More practically, this study illustrates both the opportunities and the boundaries college students face in their involvement in civic engagement. This study could provide insight into how colleges could better promote or support engagement, such as improved transportation assistance or broader communication about activist activities in addition to volunteer activities. It might be beneficial for colleges and universities to create resources and programming around balancing personal needs and civic engagement as well as cultivating a more interdependent culture so that students can more easily operate in interdependent activities and environments. This study revealed a surprising tension between ideology and practice for middle class students. Many students are relying on the

target institution to provide them with the necessary social, cultural, and economic capital to become civically engaged; however, they are lacking support to understand this engagement more deeply. Students are struggling to frame their engagement because of the conflict between their independent upbringings and college setting and their desire to do something that is in so many ways inherently interdependent: engage meaningfully with a community. Institutions such as the target institution should consider expanding their department curricula and workshop schedules to go beyond the initial connection with community partners and instead help students come to understand their own engagement and how they can frame their actions in a meaningful way that does not inherently clash with the messaging from the CID.

Understanding how students engage civically gives insight into how students will participate in the political system of the United States as well as what change could be on the horizon as these young activists and volunteers begin voting and engaging in politics in other ways. Future research should focus on how independent and interdependent models of agency, cultures within activism and volunteerism, and frames of this involvement influence student participation in civic engagement. These actions are important, and understanding them and developing systems to better support student engagement is crucial. Students “trying to march less and organize more” and work interdependently to help where they can or initiate a paradigm shift are a sign of how communities—local, national, and global—might be shaped for years to come.

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APPENDIX A

1. In the last 12 months, how often have you engaged in the following activist activities? (not at all, Once, Two to four times, Five to seven times, Eight to nine times, About once a month, More than once a month)
 - a. ... contacted a public official in order to advocate for a policy, stance, opinion, or social change?
 - b. ... contacted a newspaper in order to advocate for a policy, stance, opinion, or social change?
 - c. ... contacted a radio program in order to advocate for a policy, stance, opinion, or social change?
 - d. ... contacted a TV talk show in order to advocate for a policy, stance, opinion, or social change?
 - e. ... used social media in order to advocate for a policy, stance, opinion, or social change?
 - f. ... attended a protest in order to advocate for a policy, stance, opinion, or social change?
 - g. ... signed a petition in order to advocate for a policy, stance, opinion, or change?
 - h. ... boycotted a company/retailer based on the company's social values?
2. Including all of the times above, how often do you participate in activism (student protests/signing petitions/contacting departments and administrators) on campus?
 - a. Not within the last 12 months
 - b. Yes, I have participated in activism within the last 12 months
 - c. Yes, I have participated once a month or more
3. In the last 12 months, have you participated in community service/volunteer activities with or related to...? (Not within the last 12 months; Yes, I have volunteered within the last 12 months; Yes, I volunteer once a month or more)
 - a. ... a religious group?
 - b. ...an environmental group or related to the environment?
 - c. ...a health group or related to health?
 - d. ... youth/related to education?
 - e. ...related to another field or topic?
4. Including the times above, do you participate in community service/volunteerism through the Civic Engagement Center (Lives of Commitment, Bonner Scholars, community partnerships, etc.)
 - a. Not within the last 12 months
 - b. Yes, I have participated in activism within the last 12 months
 - c. Yes, I have participated once a month or more
5. What is your gender identity?
 - a. Woman
 - b. Man
 - c. Nonbinary/gender fluid/genderqueer person
 - d. Some other gender
6. Do you identify as trans/transgender?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. What is your racial/Ethnic identity (Mark all that apply)?
- a. White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Hispanic or Latino
 - d. Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
 - e. American Indian/Native American
 - f. Some other identity
8. How old are you? _____
9. What year are you?
- a. First year
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
10. Are you an international student?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Which class label best reflects the class status that you identified with while growing up?
- a. Poor
 - b. working class
 - c. lower middle class
 - d. middle class
 - e. upper middle class
 - f. upper class
12. Do you come from a single-parent household?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
13. What is your parent/guardian's highest level of education?
- a. Less than high school
 - b. A highschool diploma or GED
 - c. Some college
 - d. Associates
 - e. Bachelors
 - f. Masters
 - g. Law, Medical, or other Doctoral Degree
14. What is your second parent/guardian's highest level of education? (optional)
- a. Less than high school
 - b. A highschool diploma or GED

- c. Some college
- d. Associates
- e. Bachelors
- f. Masters
- g. Law, Medical, or other Doctoral Degree

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured Interview Questions/Topics

1. Can you describe to me what kinds of civic engagement (activism and/or volunteerism) that you participate in most often?
 - a. How did you become involved with your volunteerism/activism?
 - b. What barriers have you encountered to engagement?
 - i. Do you participate formally through the college?
2. How important is it to you that you engage in this way?
3. Why have you prioritized this form of engagement?
4. What motivated you to participate in this activism/volunteerism?
5. When have you chosen not to participate in volunteerism/activism?
6. How has the environment you grew up in influenced your engagement?
7. In the survey I asked you to identify with a social class identity, can you describe the social class you grew up in for me?
8. How do you differentiate activism from volunteerism?
9. How do you prioritize activism and volunteerism differently?
10. How does the regularity of your involvement influence your understanding of it?
11. How has your involvement with and understanding of civic engagement changed since you came to college?
12. Do you have plans for continuing to be civically engaged after you graduate?