Civic Orientation in Cultures of Privilege: What Role Do Schools Play?

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Abstract

The context of privilege provides unique opportunities and challenges for youth civic development. A mixed-method approach was used to examine links between school-based community service, school climate, and civic orientation among students in cultures of privilege. Surveys completed by students (*N* = 376) at two private high schools—one with an extracurricular community service requirement and one without—suggest that students in the school without the service requirement report similar, and in some cases more positive, civic attitudes than students from the school with the requirement. Focus-group data indicated that the service requirement was viewed positively, but illuminated other school experiences that might promote community orientation in cultures of privilege, such as an emphasis on global awareness and making civic priorities fundamental to school identity.

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The process of becoming engaged in and committed to community is one of many important developmental processes that become salient during adolescence as youth form identities and define themselves in relation to society (Erikson, 1968; Yates & Youniss, 1996). We examine the role of schools in promoting such a civic orientation among youth. Specifically, we examine this issue in the context of privilege by studying private high schools serving predominantly affluent youth.

Civic Orientation

Attention to civic development as an important domain of functioning for adolescents has increased in recent years. In this study, we focus on the concept of civic orientation, defined by Crystal and DeBell (2002) as a "favorable orientation toward, and participatory experiences in, the civic/political domain" (p. 114) where the civic domain refers to how citizens interact with their community and polity. Civic orientation is indicated by community-oriented civic attitudes and/or civic behavior (Levinson, 2010). Community-oriented civic *attitudes* include a sense of responsibility toward and concern for others in one's community (e.g., Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007), trust in others (e.g., Flanagan, 2003), tolerance and appreciation of diversity (Flanagan & Faison, 2001), intentions to engage with others to address problems or maintain positive aspects of community (e.g., Metz & Youniss, 2005), and feeling that one has the capacity to influence one's community (e.g., Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2010). Civic *behavior* refers to the actions in which individuals take part within their communities. Community service is a civic behavior relevant to youth as a way to engage with and affect their social world (Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2007; Youniss & Yates, 1997) and might serve as a route toward broader civic participation (e.g., Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; McFarland & Thomas, 2006). Thus, community-oriented civic attitudes and community service are indicators of youths' developing sense of connection and commitment to society (Crystal & DeBell, 2002). Given that democracies rely on citizens' engagement in civic life (Galston, 2001), understanding and promoting civic orientation among youth is important in democratic societies.

The Role of Schools in Promoting Civic Orientation

Flanagan (2003) calls schools "mediating institutions": primary contexts in which the rules and norms of society are interpreted, recreated, and developed. As such, schools are in a position of opportunity, if not responsibility,

to foster community orientation among youth (e.g., Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007; Hess, 2009). In this study, we focus on two potentially important strategies that schools might use: promoting or requiring community service (e.g., Billig, 2000) and structuring a civic climate within schools (e.g., Flanagan, Cumsille, et al., 2007).

School-Based Community Service

A widespread strategy being implemented by schools, perhaps especially private schools, to facilitate civic orientation is school-based community service. In one survey of social studies teachers, Farkas and Duffett (2010) find that 82% of private high school teachers report that their school has a service requirement compared with 37% of teachers from public schools. This can come in forms such as service-learning programs or extracurricular service requirements (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999). Psychological theory suggests that school-based community service should have a positive impact on civic orientation (Yates & Youniss, 1996). Research findings addressing this proposition are mixed, perhaps in part because school-based community service programs vary widely and research focuses on different civic outcomes (Metz & Youniss, 2005).

Service-learning programs integrate community service into class curricula, and programs aim to offer students a comprehensive framework for reflecting on service experiences. The benefits of such programs for civic development are well documented (e.g., Eyler, 2002; Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999), yet this approach is resource intensive (Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform, 1995). In contrast, *extracurricular service requirements* are not integrated in the curriculum. Such requirements typically allow more choice and provide less structure than do service-learning programs. They do not necessarily provide opportunities for reflection or discussion of social problems (Billig, 2000). Many times, such requirements are simply for a certain number of community service hours prior to graduation. Schools might implement extracurricular service requirements if they want to promote civic orientation but lack the resources for a full-scale service-learning program.

The popularity of extracurricular service requirements has grown faster than the study of their effects. In fact, the limited existing research that evaluates extracurricular service requirements often combines this type of service with service-learning (Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Schmidt et al., 2007), making it difficult to tease apart effects of extracurricular service. Other research suggests that service done in the context of extracurricular requirements is not inherently beneficial in terms of promoting

civic orientation (e.g., Metz & Youniss, 2005). One recent study suggests that service done in the context of a requirement or in response to social pressure is less likely to promote prosocial orientation than voluntary service, though still more likely to promote prosocial orientation than not doing any service (Horn, 2012). The present study extends research on school-based community service by examining civic orientation among students attending schools that differ in their use of an extracurricular service requirement.

School Climate

Another strategy for promoting youth civic orientation involves fostering a school climate emphasizing community. Young people arguably reap civic benefits when schools promote a "democratic climate" (Flanagan, Cumsille, et al., 2007), which includes comfort voicing opinions (Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Torney-Purta, 2002), feelings of student solidarity (Flanagan & Stout, 2010), and appreciation of diversity (Flanagan & Faison, 2001). Civic orientation is facilitated through a sense of membership in (Flanagan et al., 1998), belonging to (Kahne & Sporte, 2008), or inclusiveness across the student body.

Youth might also develop positive civic attitudes when they are part of a student body or a peer group that supports academic and civic values. For example, Youniss, McLellan, and Mazer (2001) show that youth in the "school crowd"—peer groups that endorse academic achievement and school engagement—hold more positive civic attitudes compared with youth in peer groups endorsing other priorities (e.g., sports, socializing). Given the role of peer influence during adolescence (e.g., McClellan & Pugh, 1999), peers who endorse academic and civic values might contribute to a school climate promoting civic orientation. This study examines associations between these aspects of school climate and civic orientation.

Why Focus on Privileged Youth?

Privilege has been defined in terms of characteristics that give people advantages over others (Kimmel & Ferber, 2003; McIntosh, 1990), and it constitutes an aspect of identity that shapes how people see themselves in relation to the world (Howard, 2008). Social class privilege is thus a context in which some young people develop views about their role in society. Several features describe privileged social class school contexts: relative financial affluence, highly educated parents, and majority White and college-bound student populations (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005). Students in private non-parochial schools often fit this demographic profile (Perie, Vanneman, & Goldstein,

2005). These youth typically have access to a multitude of educational and extracurricular opportunities, including civic opportunities (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Although not every individual attending a private school experiences these aspects of privilege, private non-parochial schools tend to constitute privileged developmental contexts.

An understanding of civic development in the context of privilege is important for several reasons. First, youth from high socio-economic backgrounds are likely to have community and political power in their future (Bartels, 2008). Individuals who grow up in the context of privilege in the United States tend to be disproportionately represented in political processes (Bartels, 2008); thus, it stands to reason that the civic education in such contexts should be taken very seriously. This is especially important given that young people growing up in cultures of privilege might be shielded from challenges faced by many members of society (Seider, 2009) resulting in lack of awareness about and perspective on social inequalities.

Second, "privilege" is an important ecological context for youth development. Financial privilege confers unique assets as well as challenges in domains such as mental health and well-being (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005); the same is likely true for civic orientation (Rubin, 2007; Seider, 2007, 2008, 2010). For example, motivations for civic action are tied to context; feeling responsible to "give back" might motivate service especially strongly for privileged youth whereas experiences with injustice might motivate youth in less-privileged contexts (Ballard, 2014; Jahromi, 2011). Attitudes concerning entitlement and obligation toward others (Howard, 2008; Seider, 2008) and emotional response to guilt stemming from privilege (Harth, Kessler, & Leach, 2008) likely play a role in civic orientation in privileged contexts.

Third, though often exposed to civic opportunities and education (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Levinson, 2010), many youth in privileged school contexts do not develop an orientation toward community. Understanding this variability within cultures of privilege is vital (Howard, 2008; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). Experiences that young people have in school connected to community service or school climate might predict some of the variability. Finally, private schools seem to implement service requirements at high rates (Farkas & Duffett, 2010), presumably to foster civic orientation. Little research investigates student reactions to such requirements or examines whether school-based service is associated with civic attitudes (Youniss & Yates, 1997).

The Present Study

Using mixed methods (surveys and focus groups), we investigated two strategies school might use to foster community orientation. The first is to promote or

require community service. Thus, the *first* set of research questions examined links between school-based community service and community-oriented civic attitudes, and investigated students' reactions to schools' strategies to require or encourage community service. We hypothesized that students at a school with an extracurricular service requirement would take part in more community service and report more community-oriented civic attitudes than would students at a similar school without such a requirement. We also examined whether, across both schools, students engaging in more service would report more community-oriented civic attitudes. Finally, using focus-group data, we examined students' reactions to their schools' attempts to encourage community service. We hypothesized that students would have mixed reactions to the extracurricular service requirement, with some viewing a requirement as a positive motivator and some viewing it as coercive. We also explored students' reactions to other school methods of promoting community service.

The second strategy we examined is promoting a civic climate within the schools. Thus, the *second* set of research questions focused on aspects of school climate linked with civic orientation. We expected that a more tolerant and inclusive school climate, and higher academic and civic peer values, would predict higher civic orientation. Through focus groups, we explored these aspects of school climate and discovered others that were not predicted in advance but emerged from discussion.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Participants were students from two private high schools in the southeastern United States. Students at the two schools were demographically similar and fit the description of "privilege." In both schools, over 88% of participants identified as White (Non-Hispanic) and over 88% of both mothers and fathers had a college degree (over 40% of mothers and over 60% of fathers had a graduate or professional degree). Both school samples have a higher percentage of White students and more highly educated parents compared with county and state averages (according to Census data). The mean age of students was 17.1 years. There were no differences in ethnic composition, parental education, age, or gender across the two schools. Both schools were non-religious, college preparatory (with a 100% college acceptance rate), and served kindergarten through 12th grade. The schools had comparable tuitions and mission statements, each describing a commitment to developing students who will contribute to society.

The schools differed in one obvious way with regard to promoting civic orientation. Farside had an extracurricular community service requirement for graduation whereas Sycamore did not. Farside required that students complete 30 hours of service prior to graduation (10 for the school; 20 in the community). Service was not integrated with curriculum. Sycamore had no extracurricular service requirement for graduation, although sophomore students participated in a 4-day group service project.

Phase 1: Surveys. Students in the 10th to 12th grades from Farside High School ($N = 190$; 53% male) and Sycamore High School ($N = 186$; 51% male) completed surveys in February. After following appropriate parental consent and student assent procedures, Farside students completed paper-and-pencil surveys during a designated class period and received 1 hour of service credit. Sycamore students completed the survey online over a 2-day period. Some students who started the survey on Day 1 did not continue on Day 2; thus, the effective sample size at Sycamore declines for some constructs, dropping to a low of 114 for some variables, including hours and characteristics of service. Participation rates were 63% at Farside and 73% for the full sample at Sycamore (ranging to 45% for variables with the lowest response).

Phase 2: Focus groups. One year after Phase 1, 11th and 12th grade students at Farside ($N = 22$; 50% male) and Sycamore ($N = 18$; 39% male) participated in focus groups. Participating students either volunteered to be interviewed at the end of the Phase I survey or were selected by staff to represent a range of service involvement.[1] Appropriate parental consent and student assent procedures were followed.

Four focus groups were conducted in each school, each with three to eight participants and a mixture of boys and girls, although we were able to thoroughly analyze data from only three groups at each school due to problems with audio-recordings. Focus-group moderators were trained regarding study goals and procedures, and each conducted four practice focus-group sessions (Fern, 2001; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Focus groups lasted 45 to 60 minutes. Two moderators and a note-taker were present.

Measures

Phase 1: Surveys

Community service. Students estimated how many hours they had spent during the current school year on (a) weekly service activities and (b) "one-time" service commitments. Total school-year service hours were calculated

by multiplying number of hours per week by the number of weeks in the school year and adding "one-time" hours. Service hours ranged from 0 to 180. Due to high positive skew, a log transformation was applied to the service variable.

   Community-oriented civic attitudes. Eleven scales measuring community-oriented civic attitudes were used. For all multiple-item scales, items were averaged. To assess *Future Volunteerism*, participants rated the likelihood (1 = *not at all likely* to 5 = *definitely will*) of volunteering in the upcoming summer and after graduation ($\alpha_F = .78$, $\alpha_S = .74$). To assess *Future Unconventional Civic Involvement*, the same scale was used to rate their likelihood of boycotting a product, demonstrating for a cause, and working on a political campaign after graduating high school ($\alpha_F = .79$, $\alpha_S = .76$). Both scales were drawn from the work of Youniss and colleagues (Metz, McLellan, & Youniss, 2003; Youniss et al., 2001). To assess *Future Civic Aspirations*, participants rated the importance (1 = *not at all important*, 5 = *very important*) of four goals (e.g., "to help this country," "to work to stop prejudice"; adapted from Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007, $\alpha_F = .71$, $\alpha_S = .72$). To assess *Aspirations for Community Contributions*, participants used the same scale to rate the importance of seven community-oriented goals (e.g., "to help people in need," "to donate time or money to charity"; Kasser & Ryan, 1993, $\alpha_F = .86$, $\alpha_S = .87$).

   To assess *Social Trust*, participants rated their trust (1 = *strongly distrust*, 5 = *strongly trust*) for six groups of people (e.g., "people you meet on the street," "your government"; Uslaner, 2002; $\alpha_F = .78$, $\alpha_S = .75$). To measure *Diversity Appreciation*, participants rated agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with two items that were adapted from Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure ("I often spend time with people from backgrounds other than my own," "I don't try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups"; reversed), and three items that were created for this study ("I enjoy talking to people who have different ideas and points of view from my own," "I try to understand people who have different viewpoints from my own," and "I enjoy being around people from different backgrounds than my own"; $\alpha_F = .81$, $\alpha_S = .66$). To measure *Social Responsibility*, participants used the same scale to rate agreement with 10 items assessing general feelings of responsibility in addressing social needs (e.g., "everybody should volunteer some time for the good of their community"; Pancer et al., 2007; Pancer, personal communication, July 1st, 2009; $\alpha_F = .85$, $\alpha_S = .80$). To assess *Humanitarianism*, participants rated their agreement, again on the same 5-point scale, with five statements such as "Everyone should have an equal chance and an equal say in most things" (Katz & Hass, 1988; $\alpha_F = .77$,

α_S = .71). To measure *Civic Efficacy*, participants rated three items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) created for this study addressing whether youth felt they could have an impact on their community: "I can change my world for the better by getting involved in my community," "I can make my community a better place by helping others in need," and "There are things I can do to make the world a better place" (α_F = .87, α_S = .88).

Twelve items created for this study to further assess civic orientation were submitted to a principle components analysis with varimax rotation. Results suggested two components of six items each. To assess *Personal Commitment to Humanity*, participants rated the importance (1 = *not very important*, 5 = *very important*) of "getting to know a diverse group of people," "equality for all," "performing actions that benefit others," "understanding the perspectives of others," "improving the lives of others," "making the world a better place" (α_F = .88, α_S = .88). To assess *Personal Commitment to Community*, participants used the same scale to rate the importance of "feeling connected to others," "contributing to my community," "being involved in my community," "influencing politics or policies in my community," "participating in community events," and "helping others in my community" (α_F = .87, α_S = .89).

School climate. To assess *Tolerant & Inclusive School Climate*, participants rated their agreement with seven items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) adapted from Ehman (1980) and Flanagan et al. (1998; for example, "In my school students feel comfortable expressing their opinions, even when they disagree with others," and "At my school, students feel like everyone counts"; α_F = .83, α_S = .83). Items were averaged within each scale. To measure *Academic/Civic Peer Group Values*, students were asked, "How important is it for your friends to do the following things?" They rated the importance of three items (1 = *not at all important*, 5 = *very important*) from Youniss et al. (2001; for example, "studying") and one item created for this study ("volunteer service work"; α_F = .67, α_S = .74).

Phase 2: Focus groups. Focus groups were designed to elicit students' experiences and perceptions about each school's efforts to promote community service and school climate as related to civic orientation. Questions were designed considering literature addressing school influences on civic orientation and findings from Phase I. We used a structured focus-group approach; moderators followed a script of questions followed by probes to encourage elaboration. We introduced the focus groups with a statement of overall goals and definitions of relevant terms (e.g., "community service," "civic engagement"). This was followed by sections eliciting information about community service

in each school and students' perceptions of school climate (protocol available on request).

Analyses

Using survey data, independent *t*-tests with School as the independent variable were used to examine school differences in community service, community-oriented civic attitudes, and school climate. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) provided a check on Type I error albeit with a reduced sample size due to missing data for some variables.

Initially, transcripts were open coded based on the principals of Grounded Theory (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003) with attention to some categories of theoretical interest. The second and third authors identified emergent themes; two research assistants then read and coded all transcripts for these themes. Next, the second and third authors revised the themes, and the coding process was repeated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Given our goal to identify themes for future study, rather than to categorize the two schools based on a coding scheme, we did not conduct reliability analysis across coders but instead coders discussed discrepancies in theme identification to refine our understanding of the emergent themes (e.g., Rubin, 2007).

In this article, we extrapolate on a subset of the themes that align with existing research or provide new theoretical and applied insights to the focal questions. In some cases, the nature and distribution of comments across schools appeared consistent with the pattern of results that emerged from Phase I survey data. Importantly, however, focus groups were not designed to permit formal comparisons between schools. Thus, we discuss impressions of differences between the schools that parallel survey results only for heuristic purposes, to raise possibilities that can be tested more rigorously in future research.

Results

School-Based Community Service and Civic Orientation

First, we examined how civic behavior and attitudes differed between schools with and without an extracurricular service requirement. Descriptive statistics and independent *t*-tests predicting dependent variables with School are in Table 1. Service hours did not differ between schools.[2] Significant differences emerged for 4 of the 11 civic attitudes (civic efficacy, social trust, diversity appreciation, and personal commitment to community), and there was a marginal difference in 1 additional civic attitude (personal commitment

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Results of Independent *t*-Tests Comparing Major Study Variables Across Schools.

	Farside high school (maximum *n* = 190)		Sycamore high school (maximum *n* = 186)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Community service					
Service hours	1.44	0.56	1.41	0.76	0.38
Community-oriented civic attitudes and goals					
Future volunteerism	3.85	1.09	3.79	1.17	0.48
Future unconventional civic involvement	2.51	0.97	2.32	0.98	1.86
Future civic aspirations	3.53	0.80	3.59	0.71	−0.71
Social responsibility	4.05	0.61	4.14	0.55	−1.48
Civic efficacy	3.76	0.90	3.96	0.73	−2.33*
Social trust	2.80	0.62	3.03	0.56	−3.63**
Diversity appreciation	3.71	0.75	3.88	0.55	−2.46*
Humanitarianism	3.52	0.74	3.52	0.61	−0.62
Aspirations for community contributions	3.69	0.75	3.78	0.67	−1.13
Personal commitment to humanity	3.69	0.79	3.85	0.63	−1.90†
Personal commitment to community	3.20	0.78	3.38	0.70	−2.01*
School climate					
Tolerant and inclusive school climate	4.05	0.61	4.14	0.55	−5.86***
Academic/civic peer group values	3.34	0.72	3.59	0.74	−2.87**

†*p* < .10. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01.

to humanity). Contrary to our hypothesis, in all cases, Sycamore students reported more community-oriented civic attitudes. A MANOVA predicting all civic attitudes with School, in which the sample size was reduced to the 184 in Farside and 108 in Sycamore with complete data, indicated that the multivariate effect of School was significant, Wilks's Lambda = .92, *F*(11, 280) = 2.29, *p* = .011, η^2 = .08. The School effect remained when controlling for grade in school, and did not interact with grade in school.

Next, we examined whether students engaging in more service hours reported more community-oriented civic attitudes (see Table 2). In both

Table 2. Correlations Between Community-Oriented Civic Attitudes, Service Hours, and School Climate by School.

	Service hours		Tolerant climate		Peer values	
	Farside	Sycamore	Farside	Sycamore	Farside	Sycamore
Future volunteerism	.18**	.38***	.32	.12†	.39***	.32***
Future unconventional involvement	.25***	.25**	.01	.07	.15*	.25**
Future civic aspirations	.10†	.11	.14*	.12†	.34***	.33***
Social responsibility	.09*	.20*	.21**	.33***	.39***	.36***
Civic efficacy	.14	.04	.28***	.25***	.30***	.28***
Social trust	−.03	.03	.49***	.38***	.23***	.07
Diversity appreciation	.07	.05	.23***	.25***	.37***	.13
Humanitarianism	.05	.11	.26***	.01	.32***	.22**
Community contributions	.17**	.26**	.17**	.16*	.39***	.44***
Commitment to humanity	.09	.08	.20**	.13†	.44***	.44***
Commitment to community	.09	.30**	.30***	.28**	.31***	.53***
Future voting	.01	.21**	.02	.03	.16**	.23**
Service hours	—	—	.09	.08†	.10†	.23**

†$p < .10$. *$p ≤ .05$. **$p ≤ .01$. ***$p ≤ .001$.

schools, more hours of community service were significantly correlated with more community-oriented civic attitudes, especially with future-oriented civic attitudes such as plans to volunteer in the future and to be involved in other civic activities.

Finally, using qualitative data, we examined reactions to schools' attempts to motivate community service. Farside students were asked about their reactions to the extracurricular service requirement. Their comments were overwhelmingly positive. The following quote illustrates students' belief that the requirement was a positive catalyst for civic development:

> I think [the service hour requirement] ultimately influences [you] for the better. I think that if there hadn't been a requirement, I may not have gotten involved in a lot of the things I eventually got involved with and ended up really liking. I'd say that it influences the attitude in more of a positive way because it sort of forces you to get involved.

Only one student expressed reservation of the type we expected to hear more, saying,

> Enforcing service on somebody doesn't really show that you care about the community, because you're forced to do it. When you go out and do it on your own, you just realize that you really do care about what's going on.

Quickly, however, another student responded, "On the other side of that, even when you are forced to do things, you come to like something."

Students in every focus group in both schools mentioned *service clubs* as a primary route to service. For example, when asked how service was promoted, students shared,

> We . . . have about 25-30 clubs . . . . They organize everything for you so it's really easy for us to get involved. The clubs are already set up, they have a schedule of when the clubs meet so you're not going to join a bajillion clubs and have them on the same day. (Sycamore)

> I think there are so many clubs that we have that everyone can find at least one. Some people even invite you to volunteer even if you aren't a part of their club and you can . . . join at any time. (Farside)

Some Farside students made negative comments about service clubs, noting that a requirement to attend service club meetings made it difficult to sign up for service whereas students in all three focus groups in Sycamore emphasized the many ways in which service opportunities were made available (e.g., assemblies, emails, service club meetings). They also mentioned that having service projects available at a variety of times, including during lunch or right after school, facilitated participation.

School Climate and Civic Orientation

Our second set of research questions addressed aspects of school climate that might predict civic orientation. As expected, across both schools, survey reports of a tolerant and inclusive school climate were positively correlated with all civic attitudes (except future civic aspirations), although they were not correlated with community service hours (Table 2). Consistent with our expectations, across both schools, reports of academic/civic peer values were positively correlated with community service hours and all civic attitudes.

Interestingly, students at Sycamore had significantly higher means on both school climate variables than did students at Farside (Table 2). To examine

whether school climate might explain the higher endorsement of some community-oriented civic attitudes found in Sycamore, we conducted ANCOVAs predicting these constructs with School controlling for school climate variables. Controlling for *tolerant and inclusive school climate* eliminated all School differences. Controlling for *peer group values* eliminated School differences in three constructs (diversity appreciation, personal commitment to humanity, personal commitment to community); differences in civic efficacy and social trust remained.

Focus-group data illuminated several aspects of school climate potentially related to civic orientation, either because students made the connection explicitly or because student comments across schools appeared consistent with the quantitative differences in school climate. We present the themes of *tolerant and inclusive climate, understanding of privilege, educational activities promoting social awareness*, and *incorporating service and social awareness as central to school identity*.

Tolerant and inclusive school climate. We asked students about tolerance and inclusiveness at school (e.g., "To what extent do you think people at your school are tolerant of diverse opinions?"). Students at both schools recognized limited demographic diversity at their schools and within both schools opinions varied widely about tolerance for diversity among the student body. One type of comment unique to Sycamore was that although intolerance existed, students wanted to appear tolerant:

> I think we . . . say we're really tolerant, but inside we're . . . all a little intolerant." (Another student in response) "But when there are diverse opinions it's not like they're shut down. We're tolerant.

> I think we have a façade that's like we're so diverse and tolerant, but it's like in reality we're . . . really not there.

In contrast, at Farside at least one person indicated a willingness to express intolerance:

> I feel a lot of people are judgmental. I mean no one is always going to agree, but . . . sometimes in class if someone says something that's not accepted someone will jokingly say like "ohhh no" and I feel so bad for that person.

Comments suggesting a sense of student unity emerged at Sycamore. For example, when discussing peer group values, students at both schools talked about academic pressure and competitiveness among students. Yet, in one group at Sycamore, we heard comments such as,

. . . at school we want to be involved in each other's learning, help each other to be high performers and in our community we want to be involved to the same standards.

Students at Farside did not articulate this type of student unity. In contrast, in response to the question about whether students in their school are friendly to others outside of their immediate circle (which was, unfortunately, asked specifically only at Farside), they conveyed a sense of divisiveness between students, saying for example, "We're very 'clique-y' if that's a word" and "There are groups in this school, they're nice to people's faces but when it comes down to it when they're with other people truth comes out and it get backs to them. But that's just high school." One student said, "People have been here since kindergarten, but I'd be terrified to be a new student at this school." It is possible that had the question about "friendliness" been asked at Sycamore, similar comments about "cliquishness" and "exclusiveness" would have emerged. However, subtle differences in comments might reflect a more tolerant and inclusive school climate at Sycamore, consistent with the quantitative findings.

Understanding of privilege. Students at both schools were aware of their privilege and expressed the belief that privilege brings responsibility to give back to the community. For example, when asked to think about the most important reasons they do or do not do community service, comments such as the following emerged at both schools:

. . . a lot of us are really privileged to be able to come here in the first place and we have a lot of things that other people don't have so in my opinion . . . you should [do service] in order to give back for what you've been receiving. (Farside)

I've always been in community service because I've been taught that not everybody has the same opportunities that we all have and that it's good to give back because you never know when maybe you'll fall short . . . I think [we should] give back because we are privileged so we might as well help others. (Sycamore)

Furthermore, at both schools, students noted that school staff articulate that privilege brings responsibility. All of the comments from Sycamore expressed positive reactions to and acceptance of the message. For example, in response to being asked whether involvement in extracurricular activities made it harder to be involved in service activities, one student responded,

. . . everybody has things they have to do but our school engrains it into us that even though we have these other obligations it's still always good in your free time to give back. So I think that's one of the priorities that have been taught to us by the school.

Another student, when asked, "What things does your school do that influence your ideas or your behavior toward community service or civic engagement?" replied,

I think the school does a good job of saying that it's one of the many pillars that our school stands on and that most of us were given a good opportunity and it should use it to help someone else.

When one student noted that Sycamore was a school that "harped on" giving back to the community beginning in the elementary school, another student responded, "I agree but I don't think it's crammed down our throats. It's always had a positive connotation to it." Focus-group note-takers indicated agreement with these sentiments.

At Farside, there were some similar neutral and positive comments about the schools' messages about privilege. For example, one student, in explaining what Farside does that motivates students toward community service, said, "They just tell us how fortunate we are and tell us about people that need help and how much people would appreciate it." However, some Farside students perceived a guilt-inducing emphasis on privilege in at least one school activity. The following dialogue about this activity occurred in one group, with increasing negative tone as the conversation progressed:

I think since we go to [a] school like this, this connotation [is] put on us that we should be doing service to give back . . . . They made us feel bad and guilty and showed us a video of kids in Africa starving.

I felt like yesterday they kind of just assumed that because we go to [a] private school we have the funds to support the canned drive, but I mean, that doesn't mean I have a ton of money to drop on cans or the time to do it between school and everything else.

We make up 400 people. They made it seem like the 400 people at (Farside) are the reason why kids are starving every day.

Thus, students at both schools suggested that school staff worked to instill responsibility toward others given their privilege, and some students at both schools accepted, even embraced, this responsibility. Yet, students at

Sycamore more consistently spoke of the school's approach to this message in positive terms, whereas some students at Farside voiced a defensive reaction.

Educational activities promoting social awareness. When asked about experiences that influenced their civic orientation, students from both schools spoke of programs and class content connected to social awareness. Several students at Farside mentioned a recent presentation on world hunger; others mentioned a green campus initiative connected with a green campus class.

More elaborated examples emerged at Sycamore (though they came mainly from one focus group). For example, when asked, "Is there anything that your school does to make you want to be involved . . .," one student said,

> I think it goes to that awareness, like everybody at this school, being aware is like a big benefit and that awareness makes us want to get involved. We have a lot of stuff about the election, . . . a lot of assemblies. And people came and talked to us and that awareness kind of makes me personally not feel like I'm obligated, but it makes me want to do it . . . this is the first election I got to vote so I got really into it and made sure I was informed on everything so I think this school helps do that as well.

The students in this particular focus group at Sycamore mentioned having school clubs that were specifically about social awareness (e.g., Club Uganda, Diversity Club), and in one part of the conversation, two students elaborated on social and global issues in the classroom:

> Student 1: . . . I think a school that encourages, especially in your social studies classes and history classes, empathy and compassion for those who are in situations like global issues, [affects your feelings about service positively]. Like sophomore year especially, we had a great teacher . . . [This teacher] does a lot to kind of give you a different perspective and challenge your views on things. I think it's good to change the way you view things, . . . like genocide or conflict diamonds . . ..
>
> Student 2: [In this class] You have to choose . . . a topic of some sort . . . I did mine on the genocide in Sudan, and so that right there . . . made me really aware and got me involved in the struggle for Darfur.

Thus, students at both schools spoke of efforts to promote social or global awareness within the school context, in classes, assemblies, and other forums. A subset of Sycamore students elaborated on these efforts and articulated the connection between school efforts to promote awareness and their own enthusiasm for community involvement.

Service and social awareness as central to school culture/identity. Another theme that emerged was the extent to which service and a community orientation was perceived as central part to school identity. Although both schools mentioned community service and citizenship in their mission statements, only Sycamore students articulated that service was central to their school's identity. They did so in different contexts: when asked about how the school promotes service and about the reasons they did service. For example, one Sycamore student said, "I think the school does a good job of saying that [community service or civic engagement] is one of the many pillars that our school stands on . . .." Others added,

> . . . our school engrains it into us that even though we have these other obligations it's still always good in your free time to give back . . .. So I think that's one of the priorities that have been taught to us by the school.

> One of the most important things [my school does that influences ideas or behaviors towards community service or civic engagement], kind of as a foundation at our school, I think is even from kindergarten and coming through middle school, is global awareness and creating an environment of perceptiveness and awareness of our world . . ..

Interestingly, Farside students did not suggest this sort of school identity; only Sycamore students articulated the notion that the school's "foundation" or "identity" encompassed both service and social or global awareness.

Discussion

The first goal of this study was to examine the relation of school-based community service to civic orientation in contexts of privilege. We were especially interested in whether an extracurricular service requirement predicted higher civic orientation. The phenomenological experience of the extracurricular service requirement among Farside students was overwhelmingly positive. Contrary to our hypothesis that these students would have mixed reactions to a service requirement, with some students voicing reacting negatively due to a developmental need for increased autonomy (e.g., Eccles et al., 1991), students spoke enthusiastically of its benefits.

Yet, we were surprised to find that differences in civic orientation between the schools favored the school without a service requirement. Although within both schools more service hours were associated with more community-oriented civic attitudes, the number of community service hours students reported did not differ between schools. Students at Farside reported significantly less civic efficacy, social trust, diversity appreciation, and personal commitment to

community. Like many extracurricular service requirements, the requirement at Farside was simply for a certain number of hours of service prior to graduation. It is possible that this requirement boosted civic orientation within the context of Farside School, perhaps especially for students least inclined to do service otherwise (Horn, 2012; Metz & Youniss, 2003; 2005), in line with the position that a requirement constitutes "strategic recruitment" into civic life (Reinders & Youniss, 2006). Nonetheless, overall civic orientation was either equivalent between Farside and Sycamore, or more community-oriented at Sycamore. Although it is possible that high-quality standalone service requirements could be effective; our evidence suggests that an extracurricular service requirement is not the only, and perhaps not the best, route to promote a positive civic orientation among youth in privileged school contexts. Other school strategies (e.g., multiple service clubs meeting at different times, a clearly articulated school identity linked to social awareness and service) might be as or more effective.

A second goal of this study was to explore how aspects of school climate are linked with civic orientation (both community service and community-oriented civic attitudes). In line with previous literature (e.g., Flanagan, Cumsille, et al., 2007) and our hypotheses, across both schools, student perceptions of a more tolerant and inclusive school climate and higher academic and civic peer values were associated with more community service and more community-oriented civic attitudes. Accounting for these aspects of school climate eliminated most attitude differences favoring Sycamore. Consistent with the quantitative data, students at Farside said more about intolerance in the school environment than did students at Sycamore. Although this difference in the qualitative data might have resulted from somewhat different questions in the two schools, the finding is consistent with theory (e.g., Flanagan & Faison, 2001) that fostering a tolerant and inclusive school community pays off with respect to community orientation, perhaps by allowing students to experience firsthand the benefits of interconnectedness with others.

Our findings further suggest that emphasizing civic values as fundamental to school identity might promote developing civic orientation. Schools build an institutional identity in overt and subtle ways. Sycamore students clearly recognized that community service and membership in a larger community were central to their school's identity. These ideas were not "add-ons" but were built into the fiber of what it meant to be a student at Sycamore, and an extracurricular service requirement was not necessary for students to recognize this.

We did not anticipate the finding about school identity and did not ask questions specifically about how schools incorporated civic identity into

school culture. However, some possibilities occur to us after studying the transcripts. Sycamore students perceived a school-wide emphasis on global awareness through a curriculum focusing on social and global awareness, extracurricular groups such as the "diversity club," and communicating values of service and diversity starting in kindergarten. Further research to understand how schools communicate civic orientation as part of institutional identity will advance understanding of school influence on civic orientation.

As others have suggested (e.g., Seider, 2010), students' understanding of privilege influences their developing orientation toward society. Although students at both schools understood they were privileged, they reacted differently to their school's framing of the issue. Students in Sycamore spoke more consistently of the school's approach to this message in positive terms. Some Farside students had a defensive reaction. Defensive reactions when confronted with one's own privileged status is a unique complexity of civic development in cultures of privilege (Howard, 2008; Seider, 2008); our results suggest that messages about privilege need to be carefully delivered.

Research on emotions and behavior of advantaged "in-groups" toward disadvantaged "out-groups" points out the importance of how issues such as inequality are framed. Some research suggests that emphasizing positive emotions such as hope and inspiration (Rahn & Hirshorn, 1999) are more motivating than focusing on negative emotions. Others suggest that capitalizing on anger and guilt about inequities (e.g., Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006) might motivate civic orientation, though students in our study appeared in at least some cases to take offense to messages perceived to induce guilt. More research is needed to understand how privilege can be discussed with and framed for youth to promote rather than discourage civic orientation.

Limitations and Future Directions

This mixed-method approach offers insights into civic orientation among youth in cultures of privilege; however, some methodological limitations exist. First, one-time correlational quantitative data do not allow conclusions concerning direction of the relations among service hours, community-oriented civic attitudes, and school characteristics. Second, although we purposely examined two schools with extensive similarities coupled with one major difference (the use of an extracurricular service requirement), there might be unmeasured differences between the students or schools that influence civic orientation. For example, although the schools serve demographically similar populations, the families choosing each school might differ in ways (e.g., involvement in community service) that influence students' service participation differently across schools. Third, focus-group methods

allow for genuine conversation to occur in the context of a semi-structured session; however, it is possible that the ideas of a few participants direct the nature of the group conversation. We have been cautious not to overgeneralize themes from comments made in only one focus group and we noted where conclusions are tentative given this limitation. Future research should explore civic development within specific ecological contexts and should illuminate how high-quality service programs can be implemented with limited school resources.

Conclusion

Our findings point to two conclusions concerning the research questions driving this study. First, extracurricular requirements for service might be experienced positively by youth in privileged school contexts; however, they might not be necessary or sufficient to promote civic orientation in cultures of privilege especially if decoupled from broader school culture. Second, several aspects of the climate of schools appear relevant to the development of civic orientation. Given that service requirements necessitate valuable school resources, other strategies might be worth considering for schools aiming to promote civic orientation in the context of privilege. These include building a tolerant school climate, communicating civic priorities as fundamental to school identity, emphasizing social and global awareness in and out of the classroom starting early in children's education, and framing privilege in a way that communicates responsibility and opportunity without inducing guilt.

Notes

1. A staff person from each school provided a service rating for each student (1 = *little to no involvement every week* to 5 = *significant involvement*). The average

service rating was 2.0 for Farside and 2.3 for Sycamore.

2. Students also reported mostly similar experiences with service: similar amounts of service involving direct contact with persons in need, similar personal choice of service options, and similar perceived meaningfulness. Sycamore students reported significantly more opportunities to reflect on service experiences than did students from Farside.

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