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Best Practices for High School Civic Learning Programs in
Addressing Civic Engagement for Southern California Students of Color

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Christopher James Fennell

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Best Practices for High School Civic Learning Programs in
Addressing Civic Engagement for Southern California Students of Color

by

Christopher James Fennell

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Robert Cooper, Chair

Americans demonstrate less civic engagement than citizens in the vast majority of democracies worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2019). Furthermore, American communities of color participate in traditional political action at rates below their white counterparts which distorts the nature of the democracy and leads to the reproduction of poverty and disenfranchisement for those communities (Krogstad & Lopez, 2017). While there are many avenues to pursue increased access to the ballot box, public secondary schools are uniquely situated to make a dramatic impact in the attitudes of students toward civic engagement. In an attempt to increase civic engagement, California currently recognizes and awards public schools that have established civic learning programs that effectively encourage civic engagement amongst participating students. Given limited civic engagement, how can schools better engage students of color in civic learning programs?

This multi-case study uses focus groups and interviews with students of color to examine best civic learning practices for increasing their commitment to civic engagement. This research demonstrates that capital building practices celebrating community cultural wealth are effective for civic learning. Additionally, it demonstrates that an increased focus on non-traditional forms of engagement would lead to greater commitment to civic engagement for those students and that even the most successful civic learning programs are lacking intentionality when it comes to working with students of color.

The dissertation of Christopher James Fennell is approved.

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Robert Cooper, Committee Chair

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2019

DEDICATION

For my mom, who keeps fighting, my dad, who is my role model, and my wife, who is constantly by my side. I love you.

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VITA

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Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of Problem

Americans demonstrate less civic engagement, including political party participation and voting, than citizens in the vast majority of democracies worldwide; moreover, their trust in government is in rapid decline (Pew Research Center, 2019). This lack of traditionally measured political engagement is particularly remarkable for young people of color, resulting in depressed civic engagement. Since the turn of the millennium there has been a significant and increasing concern about the state of race relations in the United States, with over 70% of respondents indicating that they were either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the state of race relations in 2017 as compared with only 35% sharing that opinion in 2014 and 40% in 2004 (Gallup, 2018). This rapid increase in concern about race relations in the United States drove this researcher to focus on students of color among the larger group of the historically disenfranchised¹. In an attempt to increase civic engagement, California currently recognizes and awards public schools that have established programs that effectively incorporate the *six proven practices for civic education*² for all students (Gould, Jamieson, Levine, McConnell, & Smith, 2011). Unfortunately, many of these programs are small in scale and only target a small self-selected portion of the student population. Additionally, because these programs are based around the six practices and traditional forms of engagement, they do not incorporate or validate the forms of civic engagement most common among students of color. As a result, the most disenfranchised

¹ Historically Disenfranchised – groups of persons in the United States who have been subject to historical disenfranchisement. These groups include persons of color, migrant workers, immigrants and their children, individuals who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, individuals whose home language is not English, those whose faith tradition is not Judeo-Christian, and those with low family education levels.

² Educational Practices to Encourage Civic Engagement – the activities and actions that schools implement ad-hoc, school-wide, or as part of civic learning program that have been shown to increase commitment to civic engagement. These include the *Six Proven Practices for Civic Education* highlighted in the Annenberg Public Policy Center's 2011 report: *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*.

students are the least likely to be a part of programs that are designed specifically to encourage student engagement. This project gathered data regarding best practices for civic learning programs³ to increase the commitment of students of color toward civic participation. It gathered additional data on the types of civic engagement most favored by students of color, the reasons for those preferences, and how to align civic engagement programs more appropriately to incorporate the preferences of students of color.

In 2014, the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning wrote that “the success of our nation and state depends on educated, informed and active citizens and residents...to effectively respond to equity issues we must embed robust civic learning through the K-12 experiences” (California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning, 2014, pp. 6, 30). In conjunction with the California Department of Justice, the California Department of Education instituted the Civic Learning Awards in 2013 to “celebrate successful efforts to engage students in civic learning and to identify at each grade span effective models that can be replicated” (Torlakson, 2017, p. 1). Unfortunately, these programs are designed to increase commitment to traditional forms of civic engagement and do not incorporate the cultural context of communities of color, nor do these programs present the alternative forms of participation most frequently employed by communities of color as valuable. This design reinforces the disenfranchisement stereotype. The important and often unstudied cultural context of the historically disenfranchised includes community cultural wealth, experiences of government power, and beliefs surrounding the value of political action.

³ Civic Learning Programs – These may include clubs, extra-curricular activities, academic competitions, classes, graduation requirements, etc. The programs in California’s public K-12 schools that are designed to increase commitment to civic engagement for students enrolled in those schools. The best of these programs have been awarded by the California Civic Learning Awards.

Many award-winning programs primarily involve students who are already likely to be civically engaged. Additionally, although the number of programs designed to strengthen commitment to civic engagement has been increasing along with growing participation rates in such programs, overall levels of civic engagement have remained stagnant or decreased (Berger, 2011). California's civic learning programs are designed to increase civic engagement generally, but are not designed to increase civic engagement specifically for communities of color. The six practices (detailed later) are designed to be generally applicable, and general applicability tends to reproduce the power structure of White hegemony. The programs are not explicitly culturally relevant to those students whose commitment to civic engagement is most at risk because they strive for the general application that supports the majority population at the expense of the marginalized (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Background

Public trust in government is declining. In 2017, the Pew Research Center found that only 20% of Americans trust their government to do what is right all or most of the time, compared with 77% in 1964 (Pew Research Center, 2019). American voter turnout has not changed since 1976, but continues at levels roughly 30% below other developed democratic nations (DeSilver, 2017). Voting patterns are not uniform across the population. Specifically, persons of color, younger generations, socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals, those with less educational attainment, and those who do not speak English as a primary language tend to participate with less frequency based upon traditional measures (Khalid, 2017; Krogstad & Lopez, 2017; McElwee, 2014). This general lack of engagement coupled with demographic gaps is particularly problematic because public policy responds to civic engagement. When those who face systematic biases are least likely to engage with their institutions, those institutions may be less

responsive to the needs of those populations, perpetuating the cycle of discrimination that is endemic to American society.

Low voting rates are positively correlated with overall low general civic participation rates (Cohen & Chaffee, 2012). Moreover, general civic participation can be predicted by looking at high school students' attitudes toward civic participation (Lenzi et al., 2014). Civic engagement strengthens society by increasing available services (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). The downward trend is thus cause for alarm (Frazer, 1999). Governments have used various mechanisms to increase civic engagement, including public service announcements, *get out the vote* campaigns, town hall meetings, and simplification of voting processes. None of these compare with the use of public education in frequency or success, a finding that has been true since the inception of public education where the classic view of its role is to create effective citizens in modern democracy (Dewey, 1916).

Schools have demonstrated that they can generally increase their commitment to traditional civic engagement through the use of the six proven practices: (a) discussion of current events and controversies; (b) service learning or project-based learning experiences that are directly linked to curriculum and instruction; (c) extracurricular activities to increase involvement in schools, communities, and local government; (d) student participation in school governance; (e) simulations of the democratic process; and (f) instruction in political science beyond rote facts and dry procedures (Gould et al., 2011).

Specific examples where schools have effectively increased civic engagement include establishing democratic school climates where students have a voice in decision making (Campbell, 2008), discussing civic issues (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003), increasing student perceptions of teacher fairness (Arsenio & Gold, 2006), and providing service-learning

opportunities (Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007). However, the method of meeting these goals is often left to classroom teachers who are increasingly pressured to place their efforts in other areas (Dickerson, 1999). Consistent schoolwide initiatives are sparse and unsustainable. Whereas smaller programs such as mock trial⁴ are effective, they only reach a small subsection of the student population. Especially important is that the nature of these programs is self-selecting. The students who experience the greatest benefits from participation are those who have already demonstrated a personal interest in the area and are demographically more likely to have higher civic engagement. These programs are demonstrably effective at increasing civic engagement but are not specifically designed to build civic engagement for communities of color. Additionally, they do not promote, or even recognize as important, the types of civic engagement favored by communities of color, including participation in religious organizations and artistic self-expression (Ginwright, 2010; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

As students' perception of democratic climate increases, so too does their participation in discussions about civic issues (Lenzi et al., 2014). When students have the opportunity to make rules and plan events, they demonstrate increased civic skills and higher levels of institutional trust (Hahn, 1998). Additionally, a democratic school climate increases voting likelihood and critical thinking about civic issues (Campbell, 2008; Newmann, 1990). In 2014, Lenzi et al. found that whereas students' perception of a democratic school climate does not directly link to an increase in their civic responsibility, it does have a measurable impact when those students also participate in civic discussions and perceive school officials as fair. Brasof and Spector

⁴ Mock Trial - an extracurricular program in which students participate in rehearsed trials to learn about the legal system in a competitive manner. Interscholastic mock trials take place on all levels including primary school, middle school, high school, college, and law school.

(2016) found that a democratic school environment can increase civic learning in elementary (K-8) schools.

Certainly, factors beyond democratic climate affect student attitudes toward civic and political participation. Socioeconomic status, parents' education and occupation, sense of community, extracurricular experiences, and personal values play major roles in civic and political engagement (Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz, 2012). Gender, education level, and choice of major also have impacts (Allgood, Bosshardt, Van der Klaauw, & Watts, 2012; Cicognani, Zani, Fournier, Gavray, & Born, 2012; Dee, 2004). However, when teachers focus on civic issues in the classroom, students' commitment to civic participation increases (Kahne & Sporte, 2008).

In general, civic knowledge correlates with voting patterns (Cohen & Chaffee, 2012). In the UK, direct citizenship education increases political participation, efficacy, and knowledge (Whitely, 2012). Service learning and open discussion of political issues have a demonstrated correlation with civic engagement in California and Chicago (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013). In South Carolina, required college courses in civics increase civic behavior (Botsch & Botsch, 2015). In addition to increased civic knowledge, student participation in school governance also demonstrates promising results. Student representative councils on college campuses provide meaningful democratic opportunities for students (Parkinson, 2015). Powerful student organizations in Ireland and Turkey are putting student voices at the forefront of policy decisions at the college level (Fleming, 2015; Gul, 2010; Smith, Miller, & Nadler, 2016). Lenzi et al. (2014) called for additional research into the specific aspects of the school environment that lead to civic engagement, including interventions that increase democratic school climate.

In response to this and similar evidence, California has implemented a program to award public elementary, middle, and high schools for their creation and implementation of civic learning opportunities for students. These awards are based on the school's implementation of the six proven practices for civic education, which closely mirror the well understood precursors discussed previously (California Department of Education, 2017a). In 2018, the California Department of Education in conjunction with the California Department of Justice gave awards to 74 schools for their civic engagement programs, including three awards of excellence, and six awards of distinction. Only one high school was awarded for excellence whereas two were awarded for distinction. Each of these schools is recognized as successfully engaging students in civic learning. Whereas the California award claims to be for the engagement of all students, many of the awarded programs allow for student self-selection and as such do not target the most disenfranchised subpopulations of students. On the rubric for scoring these programs there are 65 possible points a school can earn. Only five of these points are related to student participation rates and there is no measure for racial or economic participation equity. By investigating how two awarded Southern California high schools employ the six practices and unpacking the perspectives of students of color, this project sought to provide California's public schools with a roadmap for implementing civic learning programs that address civic engagement for communities of color.

Depressed civic engagement among communities of color is a byproduct of a long history of structural racism and cultural bias. Critical race theory has its roots in the legal field but came to the forefront of education in 1994 (Ladson-Billings, 2005). In the legal field, critical race theory is used to deconstruct legal paradigms of racial oppression through examining the pervasiveness of racism in America, challenging claims about colorblindness, insisting on

contextual/historical analysis, and recognizing the experiential knowledge of persons of color. The development of critical race theory was the result of a scholarly inquiry into the persistent racial differences in socioeconomic matters (Dixson, Anderson, & Donner, 2017).

Similar racial disparities between white and non-white students involving academic performance and disciplinary outcomes have long existed in our school systems (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In the education field, then, critical race theory seeks to eliminate racial oppression and the resultant outcomes through the same mechanisms explored in the legal field. This project sought to find effective mechanisms designed to build civic engagement for communities of color and uncover how civic learning programs can incorporate contextual/historical analysis and the experiential knowledge of students of color while examining structural racism and challenging claims of colorblindness.

Research Design

1. What are the schools doing to engage students of color in the civic learning programs?
2. How do students of color describe their experiences in a successful school-based civic learning program?
3. What do students of color experience in successful school-based civic learning programs that causes them to care about the larger civic world and understand their place in it?

The sites for this study were two comprehensive, public high schools in Southern California that matched several criteria. Each school must have received a California Civic Learning Award of excellence or distinction in 2018. They must be funded by taxpayer dollars and serve high school students who will most immediately become eligible voters. Finally, the

school must have a substantial population of students of color. Aaron Sorkin High School (ASHS) earned the award of excellence in 2018 and Felicia Wilson High School (FWHS) earned the award of distinction in 2018 (school names changed to pseudonyms for confidentiality). These two schools have demonstrated various and diverse civic education programs while having high proportions of historically disenfranchised student populations.

At ASHS, students participate in an annual project activity where they engage in researching and designing policy actions for real world problems that they face. At FWHS, students participate in environmental service-learning projects and international student exchange programs where they work with community organizations outside of the classroom⁵.

The participants in the study included students, teachers, and administrators involved in the civic learning program at the site. Every adult involved in proposing the program, implementing the program, reviewing the program, and applying for the California Civic Learning Awards was invited to participate in the study. The primary goal of the study was to uncover the perspectives of students of color on civic engagement practices and provide counter-narratives to the disengaged minority myth while employing a critical perspective on current civic engagement literature (Checkoway, 2012; Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). The study also unpacked the cultural context of those students because it potentially shapes their commitment to civic engagement.

This qualitative, multi-case study incorporated document analysis, interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups. This methodology provided for comprehensive experiential data and allowed for triangulation of the findings. It was able to answer the research questions directly and offered opportunities for students of color to provide information about their experiences,

⁵ All sources of information about participating schools and districts have been omitted deliberately to protect the participants' confidentiality.

narratives, and perspectives with respect to civic engagement. These data can be used to provide insight for other, similar secondary schools looking to implement a culturally relevant civic learning program that includes practices designed to intentionally address civic engagement for communities of color.

I strove to discover the best practices for California high schools that bring about positive attitudes toward civic engagement for students of color. Although a large number of programs are successfully encouraging civic learning, those programs are not incorporating contextual/historical analysis or the experiential knowledge of persons of color. They regularly avoid questions of structural racism and tend to claim *colorblindness*. This avoidance of racial issues limits the ability for such programs to effectively engage historically disenfranchised population and prevents the programs from directly addressing civic engagement for communities of color. The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to discover the personal experiences of students whose demographics demonstrate historical disenfranchisement.

The focus group protocol followed a similar model to the research conducted by Cohen and Chaffee (2012) in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and interview questions followed work conducted by Kahne and colleagues (Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006; Kahne et al., 2013; Kahne & Spote, 2008). At both sites, I held focus groups with 15 students of color and invited all teachers and administrators to participate in interviews. These interviews and focus groups provided firsthand accounts of students' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs relating to their participation in the civic learning programs. I sought to discover the role of race and class in civic learning participation and discover if traditional measures of civic participation are effectively encompassing the experiences of historically disenfranchised peoples in award-

winning civic learning programs. The final student interviews allowed for counter story-telling that highlighted the context and personal experiences of students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The long-range purpose of this study is to encourage the implementation of future programs and modifications to existing programs to more adequately achieve California's civic learning purpose for students of color and increase civic engagement.

The findings of this study will be utilized to create new programs and modify existing programs to increase civic engagement among historically disenfranchised young people. I will distribute my findings to the California Department of Education, county offices of education, and individual school districts. The primary method of distribution would be through presentations at county offices with attempts at publication in local newspapers and academic journals.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The purpose of this project was to investigate award-winning civic learning programs to discover best practices for encouraging students of color's commitment to civic participation. The researcher gathered data on traditional and non-traditional forms of civic engagement with particular emphasis on those forms of engagement most preferred by students of color. The goal of the study was to provide guidance on how to more effectively incorporate the preferences of students of color in future civic engagement programs.

In reviewing the literature, I begin with an overview of the larger problem of a lack of political participation in the United States and highlight the educational watershed events of 2012. I provide context for a study in California by examining the demographics of California's historically disenfranchised. I then turn to the role of education, and civic education in particular, as it relates to political participation including the creation of the California Civic Learning Awards. These awards ostensibly measure schools' ability to engage *all students* in civic education before analyzing the history of disenfranchisement and voting barriers. I will critically review studies of existing programs to understand the current consensus on best practices and discover the weaknesses of non-critical approaches to civic engagement while critically examining the impact of these practices on students of color. These studies provide insight into effective practices including the six proven practices for civic education but do not illuminate the situation as it relates to civic engagement for California's disenfranchised youth. I conclude with an examination of critical race theory and critically explore civic engagement including a discussion of what *counts* in traditional civic engagement literature. I will argue that the current best practices for educators to increase civic engagement are insufficient in addressing communities of color.

Dangerous Trends in Civic Engagement

Americans in general, and communities of color more specifically, participate in traditional politics at rates far below that of other democratic nations. Low participation rates distort the nature of the democracy; further, they lead to the reproduction of poverty and disenfranchisement of those for whom participation is limited (López, 2003). Whereas voter turnout, across all demographic groups, has remained relatively consistent at around 55% since 1976, it is significantly below the rate of other developed nations whose voter turnout approaches 87% (DeSilver, 2017). Black and Hispanic Americans vote less often than their White counterparts, with 59.6% and 47.6% voting, respectively, as opposed to 65.3%. Also, for the first time in 20 years, Black voting rates declined in 2016 (Krogstad & Lopez, 2017). Additionally, Millennials (46%) are voting at much lower rates than other generational groups including Generation X (61%), Baby Boomers (69%), and the Silent Generation (72%). Millennials also are the only generational group to have its voting rate decline in 2016 (Khalid, 2017). Finally, those who are economically disadvantaged are also less likely to vote. There is a clear positive correlation between household income and voting rates, with the poorest Americans (those making less than \$10,000 per year) voting at a 47% rate and those earning over \$150,000 per year voting at an 80% rate (McElwee, 2014).

Depressed civic engagement for communities of color is particularly problematic because of the nature of our democratic institutions. In a democratic republic, public policy responds to voter input. If disadvantaged people are also disenfranchised people, then they will not influence policy change to improve their socioeconomic situations. Ultimately, this disparity leads to further increases in inequality. As the problem of civic disengagement continues to distort the American political process, major institutions have grappled with potential solutions and

improvements. Potential solutions arise in public policy discussions across political departments. However, the most public arenas for this discussion include legal battles over voting laws and the creation of education policy. The American public education system is uniquely situated to confront depressed civic engagement for communities of color because nearly all voting-age citizens are products of public schools.

2012: Civic Education's Watershed Moment

Both historically and contemporarily, many states have attempted to solve the issues of disenfranchisement through civic education programs (Arsenio & Gold, 2006; Botsch & Botsch, 2015; Brasof & Spector, 2016; Campbell, 2008; Hahn, 1998; Henderson et al., 2007; Kahne et al., 2013; Kahne & Spote, 2008; Lenzi et al., 2014; Newmann, 1990; Watts et al., 2003).

Proponents of education in the United States have long viewed education as a primary vehicle to increase civic engagement; they view education's ability to fulfill that purpose as essential to the establishment and maintenance of effective democracies. Prior to the Civil War, civic education was treated as an intentional constitutional indoctrination designed to create a universal citizen. Of course, this education only included the same group of individuals who had the right to vote: rich, White, land-owning males. In 1916, John Dewey argued that the purpose of education was for the betterment of the citizenry; George Counts argued that the purpose of education was to build a strong democracy in his 1939 pamphlet *The Schools Can Teach Democracy*. The beginnings of the civil rights movement saw the shift away from American exceptionalism as the common social science narrative and the rise of service as a means of civic engagement (Bankston, 2013).

As the United States moved into the 1980s, the public education system was turned on its head with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, resulting in the modern standards movement. In

California, social science standards were created in 1988, updated to their current form in 1998 and supplemented with a new framework in 2017 (California Department of Education, 2010). Those standards and frameworks prescribe skills and information to be learned by public K-12 students; they do not provide specific guidance in strengthening civic engagement outside of encouraging direct instruction and mentioning the value of service learning (California Department of Education, 2017b).

As the standards movement continued its dominance of the American education system, American colleges and universities were taken to task regarding civic education in the 2012 report *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (Bankston, 2013). Simultaneously, California was responding to its own report, *Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning in California: A Blueprint for Action* (California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning, 2014). Both emphasized the role of education in civic engagement and highlighted the problematic nature of current trends in civic engagement.

California's historically disenfranchised population is uniquely large among the states, providing a practical and abundant field for study. It has one of the largest and most robust economies in the world, but also has incredibly high levels of disparity between rich and poor. Since 1980, top incomes have risen 40% whereas bottom incomes have declined 19% (Bohn, 2016). California also has the highest numbers of individuals in poverty in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This trend is reflected in major differences in socioeconomic standing between local neighborhoods and across the larger state. Socioeconomic status is one indicator of depressed levels of civic engagement (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). With the largest population in the United States and several of the largest public school systems in the world,

California provides a wide opportunity for the study of the historically disenfranchised, particularly students of color.

California is particularly unique because the majority of its citizens are members of historically disenfranchised Hispanic and native populations. California was, of course, initially inhabited by people of the First Nations who were then invaded primarily by Spanish conquistadors (Library of Congress, n.d.a). California (which is itself a Spanish word of Moorish origin) functioned as a major European colony until Mexico gained its independence in 1821. California joined the United States as a territory in 1848 and became the 31st state in 1850 (Library of Congress, n.d.b). With nearly 700,000 individuals who identify as American Indian and over 15 million who identify as Hispanic or Latino, California has the largest population of both groups in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This unique nature of the history of California provides fertile ground for studying the historically disenfranchised. Descendants of the First Nations (including Hispanic persons) have faced a history of enslavement, intentional disenfranchisement, and conflicts with government, which makes the study of their modern situation unique in the United States. California's historically disenfranchised are facing disempowerment from depressed civic engagement. Education is a historically validated tool for increasing civic engagement generally, with ample research demonstrating the effectiveness of the six proven practices (Bankston, 2013; Boyd Pitts, 2016; Cicognani et al, 2012; Dee, 2003; Eckstein et al., 2012; Filer, Kenney, & Morton, 1991; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Henderson et al., 2007; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Lenzi et al., 2014; Neundorf, Niemi, & Smets, 2016; Whiteley, 2014; Zahorska, 2016).

The California Civic Learning Awards

In order to respond to the unique nature of California's population and history as well as the worsening problem of civic engagement in the state, California's Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning proposed several improvements (California Department of Education, 2017a). In 2013, the California Department of Education alongside the California Department of Justice responded to the report *Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning in California: A Blueprint for Action* through multiple steps, including the creation of the California Civic Learning Awards (Torlakson, 2017). These awards recognize schools that have responded to equity issues through civic learning programs based upon the six proven practices for civic education (California Department of Education, 2017a). In 2018, three California schools earned the Award of Excellence (highest award), with six earning the Award of Distinction (middle award). An additional 65 schools earned Awards of Merit (lowest award). Only three high schools earned an award of excellence or distinction and of those three, only two were non-charter. The California Civic Learning Awards are designed to increase civic engagement in general while awarding adherence to the current best practices.

In addition to the Civic Learning Awards, California schools have created countless partnerships with outside organizations designed to increase civic engagement, and the California Department of Education has reworked its standards to include a new Social Science framework. California also created the *Power of Democracy Steering Committee* within the judicial system and held the Civic Learning California Summit: Making Democracy Work. The California Department of education has spent a great deal of energy on attempted increases in civic engagement in California but significantly less energy has been spent on addressing civic engagement practices and forms of civic engagement most frequently used by communities of

color. Additionally, these programs largely ignore the historical and modern systematic disenfranchisement foisted upon minority populations and the resulting impacts on how those communities view traditional forms of civic engagement.

Voting Matters: The History of Disenfranchisement in the United States

An ever increasing number of modern students are members of communities of color. As the demographics of the United States shift away from being primarily European, those who have most recently been given the right to vote are still the least likely to participate in the nation's political activities. In the United States, voter turnout has remained relatively consistent at around 55% since 1976 (when Pew Research began tracking this data following the *full* implementation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965). Simply put, Americans participate in their democracy at shockingly low rates. Thomas Paine explained the importance of voting as early as 1795 when he wrote in *Representation: Dissertation on the First Principles of Government*,

The right of voting for representatives is the primary right by which other rights are protected. To take away this right is to reduce a man to slavery, for slavery consists in being subject to the will of another, and he that has not a vote in the election of representatives is in this case.

The United States has slowly increased the pool of eligible voters beginning with the expansion of voting rights in certain colonies prior to the American Revolution. At its inception, though, the United States afforded the right to vote only to White, property-owning, Protestant men. By 1856 the vote had opened to non-property owners and non-Protestants, but still only extended to White men, including specific disenfranchisement of women in 1807 and Mexican persons who became American citizens following the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. Whereas the 15th Amendment (right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of race,

color, or previous condition of servitude) was ratified in 1870 and the 19th (right to vote for women) in 1920, major roadblocks to securing voting rights for persons of color and women persisted long into history (Cruz, 2013). Whereas major legislation including the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act as well as landmark Supreme Court cases have strengthened voting rights across the country, actual political participation remains well behind that of other democratic nations (Filer et al., 1991).

This low level of relative participation runs counter to the increasing enfranchisement of subpopulations. The tendency toward participation among particular subgroups has remained fairly consistent since the passing of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 with small election-to-election changes. Race is a predominant factor in voting participation rates. White voters have consistently voted at higher rates than any other race except Black voters in 2012. Asian and Hispanic citizens vote at rates roughly 10% below Black voters and 15% below White voters (U.S. Bureau, 2016). Within the Hispanic and Asian populations, those who are born in the United States vote at lower rates than those who become naturalized citizens (Krogstad & Lopez, 2017). Race is the primary attribute of historically disenfranchised populations and also the primary area of depressed civic engagement. Wealth, educational attainment, native language, and religion all have implications for civic engagement, but can typically be controlled for by racial factors. Additionally, with current views on race relations showing strong negative trends, race is left as the most central aspect of historical disenfranchisement (Gallup, 2018).

Historical tools of disenfranchisement have further created a system where persons of color vote less frequently than their White contemporaries. Poll taxes, literacy tests, residency requirements, and other vestiges of Jim Crow have consistently been used to disenfranchise under the guise of electoral security (Filer et al., 1991; Keyssar, 2009; Kousser, 1999; Parker,

1990). Race has played a consistent role in voter participation over the last 50 years, and recently voter ID laws have demonstrated profound impacts. Since 2006, the creation and strengthening of voter ID laws have yielded similar impacts as poll taxes, literacy tests, and residency requirements. Strict voter ID laws diminish participation among Latinos, Blacks, Asian Americans, and multiracial Americans (Hajnal, Lajevardi, & Nielson, 2017). In addition to problematic voter ID laws, changes to voting processes such as limiting polling availability and same day voter registration, and restrictions on felons voting, numerous aspects of structural racism negatively influence the voting participation of persons of color (Giammo & Box, 2010; Larocca & Klemanski, 2011; Manza & Uggen, 2004; Weiser, 2014).

Persons of color are significantly more likely to face the aforementioned structural barriers to voting than Whites. In addition, persons of color are less likely to belong to a political party, be a member of a political organization, donate money to campaigns, or contact elected officials (Mangum, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2014). Lower levels of traditional civic engagement amplify the problems of historical disenfranchisement, leading to a repeated cycle of negative political impacts and resulting in greater disenfranchisement that continuously self-perpetuates.

Race is central to this study because race is central to voting rates. In addition to race, other demographic factors including age, economic status, education level, political beliefs, and gender also exert pressure on voter participation rates. Eligible voters ages 18-24 vote at rates approaching 32% lower than those ages 65 and older. There are increases at each age bracket in participation rates; those ages 25-44 are roughly 10% more likely and those ages 45-64 are 25% more likely than those ages 18-24 to vote (File, 2014). Additionally, people with more economic resources are more likely to vote than those of limited resources (McElwee, 2014). This trend

has existed over a long period of time and has similar systematic reasons as disenfranchisement based upon race (Hajnal et al., 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Those with higher levels of education are more likely to vote; however, the correlation between income and education level could be a mediating factor (Allgood et al., 2012; Cicognani et al., 2012; Dee, 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Women stand out as antithetical to the general voting trend as a historically disenfranchised population. Unlike other demographic groups, women vote at rates exceeding men by 2-4% over the last 35 years. Although this was not the case prior to 1980, women have seen an increasing gap over men in voter turnout since that election (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). In addition to demographic explanations, political beliefs also play a key factor in voter turnout. Groups identified by the Pew Research Center (2014) as “solid liberals,” “business conservatives,” and “steadfast conservatives” are 11% to 18% more likely to vote than other belief groups.

The history of the right to vote and the related demographic voting patterns in the United States have led to a devastating civic engagement gap that accompanies generally poor civic engagement among all Americans. Although the six proven practices have been extensively studied and shown to improve general civic engagement, they have not yet been shown to address the civic engagement gap that has resulted from centuries of discrimination. This study sought to discover best practices to build civic engagement for communities of color and strengthen the understanding of the forms of civic engagement most favored by students of color.

Building Civic Engagement for Students of Color with the Six Proven Practices

Large scale publications, including the Annenberg Public Policy Center’s 2011 report: *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* (Gould et al., 2011), have repeatedly

identified the six proven practices for civics education as the most effective set of practices for the purpose of increasing civic engagement. These best practices are well documented in their success for the general population (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Arsenio & Gold, 2006; Blevins, LeCompte, & Wells, 2016; Botsch & Botsch, 2015; Brasof & Spector, 2016; Callahan & Obenchain, 2016; Campbell, 2008; Cohen & Chaffee, 2012; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Fleming, 2015; Gul, 2010; Henderson et al., 2007; Kahne et al., 2013; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Lenzi et al., 2014; Parkinson, 2015; Smith et al., 2016; Watts et al., 2003), but have not yet demonstrated any positive effect in closing the civic engagement gap. The six proven practices for civic education are:

- Classroom Instruction – particularly instruction that goes beyond rote memorization of facts and dates and includes issues of cultural relevance to the students in the classroom.
- Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues – particularly discussions that involve actions for change that students can participate in and issues that have direct relevance to their lives.
- Service-Learning – particularly service that has connections to in-class social science discussions and is performed in the local context to improve the community.
- Extracurricular Activities – particularly intensive and long-term extracurricular activities where students engage in challenging tasks and form strong social bonds with the community.
- Student Participation in School Governance – particularly those that facilitate discussion and deliberation about class-wide and school-wide governance and those that divide students into smaller clusters.

- Simulations of Democratic Processes – particularly simulations of voting, trials, diplomacy, and congressional debate that include gamification and narratives (Gould et al., 2011).

The six proven practices are repeatedly emphasized throughout academic literature and serve as the baseline for several state programs including those in California and Florida (Boyd Pitts, 2016; Gould et al., 2011). In 2008, the Florida Law Related Education Association played a crucial role in the rewriting of Florida’s civics and government standards to incorporate the six proven practices and served as the coordinator for the state’s online civic learning initiative. In 2013, California similarly integrated the six proven practices into its pedagogical framework (California Department of Education, 2017a). This current model has been shown to be effective for students at large but does not address the particular needs and alternative forms of participation that are most culturally relevant to historically disenfranchised individuals.

Whereas major educational proposals have focused on the six proven practices, the larger discussion surrounding civic engagement tends to ignore the role of race and racism both in engagement itself, but also in the types of actions that *count* as civic engagement. In traditionally measuring civic engagement, practices including participation in religious organizations, and artistic self-expression have been ignored (Ginwright, 2010; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). If this type of engagement were to be included in empirical studies, it is possible that the civic engagement gap might be significantly smaller than otherwise suggested (Checkoway, 2012; Checkoway & Aldana, 2013).

This phenomenon has large-scale implications when reviewing the six proven practices because they have demonstrable impacts on traditional civic engagement, but do not explore the impact of these practices on the types of civic engagement most favored by communities of

color. Voting patterns clearly demonstrate a difference between historically disenfranchised persons of color and those who have not faced the same struggle (Khalid, 2017; Krogstad & Lopez, 2017; McElwee, 2014). Although measuring non-traditional forms of participation may demonstrate that the civic engagement gap is less stark than initially thought, voting discrepancies and the resultant lack of policy leverage still serve to reinforce historical disenfranchisement. As a result, this study investigated the impact of the six proven practices not just on traditional forms of political participation, but also on those forms of civic engagement most favored by historically disenfranchised communities of color.

Classroom instruction. In looking at the six proven practices, direct instruction is the most immediately available option for schools. Local and global research have shown positive impacts of direct civics education, as discussed subsequently. When teachers focus on civic issues in the classroom, including current political events, students' commitment to civic participation increases (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Students in Poland, Canada, Germany, Belgium, and England all demonstrated increased positive attitudes toward civic engagement after taking civics courses (Cicognani et al, 2012; Eckstein et al., 2012; Henderson et al., 2007; Whiteley, 2014; Zahorska, 2016). In one investigation in the UK, direct citizenship education increased political participation, efficacy, and knowledge (Whitely, 2012). This increase has also been noted in several schools across the United States. The general belief that direct instruction *works* is at the bedrock of all education and is repeatedly confirmed in the field of civic engagement (Bankston, 2013; Dee, 2003; Filer et al., 1991; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Lenzi et al., 2014; Neundorf et al., 2016). When taken together, the following studies demonstrate the value of increasing civic knowledge through classroom instruction.

Cohen and Chaffee (2012) studied all 1,300 students who were members of Generation Citizen's classroom civics education program in Providence, RI and Boston, MA in fall of 2010. The program included an action-curriculum framework that engaged students with solving real world political problems through direct instruction in American governmental systems and political statecraft and diplomacy. All students later took a 15-30 minute survey that Cohen and Chaffee used to link the dependent variable of *likelihood to vote* with the explanatory variables of civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic behavior. They found that after adjusting for race/ethnicity and advanced courses, civic content knowledge, current event knowledge, general self-efficacy, and skill-specific self-efficacy all held statistically significant independent association with future voting likelihood. The implication remains that directly teaching information about civics and current events will result in increased likelihood for future civic participation. This study controlled for demographic categories that might function as covariance but did not examine the role of historical disenfranchisement of persons of color in its civic engagement outcomes.

The premise that direct instruction in civics increases future civic engagement extends to the post-secondary classroom as well. Botsch and Botsch (2015) used two studies as they investigated the long- and medium-term civic engagement patterns of undergraduate students in South Carolina taking an American government course (including instruction in the fundamental aspects of American democracy, which is required by law in South Carolina since 2001). Over a period of 13 years, they reviewed two surveys completed by 3,200 students at the beginning and end of their government course (first study) and 531 students at one public university (second study). Botsch and Botsch found that taking an American government course improves political knowledge, interest, and efficacy both over the short- and medium-term. They also found that

political trust increased over the short-term, but slightly decreased over the medium-term in students who took American government courses. Botsch and Botsch found that direct instruction in civics results in both short- and medium-term increases in civic engagement but did not attempt to discover impacts on civic engagement particularly for students of color.

Unfortunately, the research generally controls for demographic variables such as historic disenfranchisement as opposed to identifying how students of color may be differently affected by direct instruction. In their 2016 study, Callahan and Obenchain attempted to use a mixed-methods approach to identify the classroom-based experiences of immigrant youth. Using Advanced Placement courses in San Diego, south Florida, Chicago, and central Texas, Callahan and Obenchain found that classroom-based instruction is most effective at increasing civic participation for immigrant youth when teachers place high expectations on those students. Students were most likely to increase their civic participation when the courses not only provided political information but also political encouragement, meaning direct and intentional interactions where the instructor promotes specific forms of political activism. They found that teachers fell short of a social justice agenda and cautioned that such encouragement may result in a “compliant citizenry,” not necessarily an “engaged citizenry” (p. 59). They also demonstrated more increases in student civic engagement occur when teachers recognize and value student funds of knowledge. This study indicates that direct instruction is effective for educating immigrant youth when coupled with encouragement and expectations and is a promising launching point in addressing civic engagement for students of color. Direct instruction in civics has a measurable impact on student commitment to civic engagement, but in order to address the needs of students of color it must highlight the history and community cultural wealth of those populations.

Discussion of current events and controversial issues. In addition to direct instruction, there is substantial evidence to suggest that the discussion of current events and controversial issues in any classroom will strengthen future civic engagement. In 2003, Watts et al. found that schools can promote increases in civic engagement outcomes for students by discussing civic issues (Watts et al., 2003). In 2008, Kahne and Sporte studied surveys from 4057 students at 52 Chicago public high schools and found that service learning, discussion of current events, discussions of problems in the local community, open dialogue, and exposure to civic role models have the greatest impact on student commitment to civic participation. Additional variables were also studied and will be discussed in the following sections.

Kahne et al. (2013) confirmed the aforementioned findings when they looked at two separate two wave panel surveys: one in California and the other in Chicago. The California surveys were part of a larger initiative called the California Civic Survey, where 502 students from seven public California high schools were surveyed over 2 years. The Chicago survey is the same as from the Kahne and Sporte 2008 study. In California, Kahne et al. found that demographic factors including race did not affect their results. Open discussion of societal issues most strongly relates to traditional forms of political participation such as voting. In Chicago, Kahne et al. found that open discussion predicts voting intention. In Chicago, unlike California, they found that open discussion does not predict participatory citizenship. The primary outcome of this study confirmed that open discussion is effective at encouraging future civic engagement.

In some cases, civic discussion can function as a mediating factor for other positive associations within civic engagement. Lenzi et al. (2014) studied 800 Italian students ages 11-15 in Padova, Italy and found a positive association between democratic school climate and civic responsibility; however, they believe that this result was mediated by perceived fairness and

civic discussions, important to key subpopulations. Whereas discussion of current events and controversial issues may relate to cultural relevance, the primary research in this area was focused on general outcomes and did not differentiate effectiveness by subpopulation. Thus, whereas discussion of controversial issues and current events seems linked to addressing the apparent civic engagement gap, no direct measure of such a relationship exists.

The discussion of current events and controversial issues most important to communities of color is more likely to lead to engagement. Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista (2005) highlighted the importance of cultural validation as it relates to self-empowerment for student retention at the collegiate level. This holds implications for the discussion of current events and controversial issues. Because civic engagement relies in many ways upon self-empowerment, and cultural validation is an essential precursor to that self-empowerment, it follows that cultural validation during discussion of current events and controversial issues is more likely to foster commitment to civic engagement than discussions that are not culturally validating for students of color.

Service-learning. Service-learning and volunteer opportunities also demonstrate positive correlations with future civic engagement. However, like discussion of controversial events, there is no evidence to support the notion that service-learning might build civic engagement for students of color. As mentioned previously, the 2008 Kahne and Sporte study of Chicago high school students found that service learning encourages civic engagement. In the aforementioned 2013 study, Kahne et al. found that service learning opportunities strongly relate to volunteering and participation in youth-centered civic activities. Service learning also relates strongly to participatory citizenship. In Chicago, Kahne et al. found that service learning predicts participatory citizenship. In many cases, volunteer activity takes place in community churches.

Because participation in community churches is in-and-of-itself a form of political participation among communities of color (Calhoun-Brown, 1996; Leroux, 2007; Stovall, 2013), it is possible that encouraging participation in community churches may have some impact on civic engagement for students of color. Watts and Flanagan (2007) found that community service as part of religious organizations is more appealing for populations who face historical disenfranchisement. Although this form of engagement is not typically measured in civic engagement studies, it is essential to understanding the path to engagement for communities of color.

Additional research suggests similar impacts even in post-secondary environments. For example, Henderson et al. (2007) found success outside of the classroom for Canadian college students. Henderson surveyed over 1,700 first-year Canadian college students in 2003 and found that participating in volunteer activities, whether forced or truly volunteer, increased their positive attitudes toward civic engagement. The potential for positive impacts from compulsory volunteer activity, particularly if coupled with culturally relevant forms of service learning, indicates that service learning has potential to address civic engagement for students of color.

Extracurricular activities. Among the six proven practices, extracurricular activities were a clear choice for inclusion. For decades it has been generally accepted that participation in any extracurricular activity (including clubs, sports, and community service) correlates with political engagement. In 2003, Kirlin performed an extensive literature review reaching back to the 1970s in which it was repeatedly shown that participation in extracurricular activities correlates with later political engagement. More recent studies serve to confirm these prior findings. Flanagan and Levine (2010) found that extracurricular engagement in high school predict voting and other civic engagement.

One of the key arguments against extracurricular activities is that they are widely varied and their effects have not been shown to be causal (Kirlin, 2003). Because all five of the other six proven practices can take place within extracurricular activities, determining the most proximal cause has been challenging. In their 2008 study Kahne and Sporte found that participation in athletics is not strongly related to level of civic commitment. Participation in after-school activities (not sports), positive school environments, and supportive local communities have moderate impacts on commitment to civic participation. Once again, the relationship between extracurricular activities and future civic engagement has substantial academic support, but there has not been an indication that participation in extracurricular activities has any specific impact on civic engagement for students of color.

Student participation in school governance. Many schools are involving students in participatory school governance. Although this is typically not done for the purpose of increasing civic engagement, it does incidentally increase civic engagement. As discussed previously, Lenzi et al. (2014) found a positive association between democratic school climate and civic responsibility, with some mediating factors. As students' perception of democratic climate increases in their school, they also increase their participation in discussions about civic issues. Student representative councils on college campuses provide meaningful democratic opportunities for students (Parkinson, 2015). Powerful student organizations in Ireland and Turkey are putting student voices at the forefront of policy decisions at the college level (Fleming, 2015; Gul, 2010; Smith et al., 2016).

Campbell's 2008 study demonstrated that schools can find increases in civic engagement outcomes for students through the establishment of democratic school climates where students have a voice in decision making; Additionally, increasing perceptions of teacher fairness is

correlated with participatory governance (Arsenio & Gold, 2006). When students have the opportunity to make rules and plan events, students demonstrate increased civic skills and higher levels of institutional trust (Hahn, 1998). Additionally, a democratic school climate increases voting likelihood and critical thinking about civic issues (Campbell, 2008; Newmann, 1990). These positive outcomes could potentially be amplified if programs were constructed intentionally with the purpose of enriching civic engagement.

In 2016, Brasof and Spector studied a yearlong partnership between the Rendell Center for Civics and Civic Engagement from the University of Pennsylvania and Edwin Stanton School in Philadelphia to discover what civic engagement outcomes could result from an intentionally constructed participatory governance model. The premise of the partnership was that the Rendell Center would provide Edwin Stanton with curriculum and governance structures so that students could learn civics through participatory school governance. The participatory school government included student-led initiatives on lunch procedures, fundraising, field trips, community building, uniforms and dress codes, peer mediation, tutoring, and extracurricular activities. Through this study, Brasof confirmed his beliefs published in his 2015 book *Student Voice and School Governance* that participatory school government increases students' capacity to be active citizens. As schools increase participatory school governance, there are opportunities to include culturally relevant processes for interactions. Including these processes offers fertile soil for potential impacts on civic engagement for students of color.

Simulations of democratic processes. One of the more complicated implementations of the six proven practices involves simulations of democratic processes. Although this can be done in a classroom environment, the most success has been found in specially designed extracurricular settings. In a nationwide 2003 study, Andolina et al. (2003) found that

participants in Model United Nations and similar political organizations are 17% more likely to vote. Kahne et al.'s 2006 study indicates that there is a positive correlation between a course that includes a mock trial component and increased positive attitudes toward civic participation among surveyed Los Angeles high school students. Programs like Model United Nations and Mock Trial have a long history in public education, but in the era of high stakes testing, limited funding has made these opportunities increasingly rare.

The argument that these practices can be replicated in the classroom has been made, but not studied effectively. Blevins et al. (2016) studied 149 students who attended the iEngage Summer Civics Institute at Baylor University in Texas in 2013 and 2014. Their mixed-methods study probed for civic knowledge and disposition as well as propensity for civic action among high school students. Blevins et al. found that the approach used at the iEngage Institute effectively increased student leadership skills, civic engagement, civic understanding, and civic creation. The key, Blevins et al. argued, is meaningful *action civics experiences*. That is, the fact that students learned about civics through actively participating in civic programs within the community can lead to actual changes in the community. Action civics, they asserted, can be implemented in both curricular and extracurricular spaces, and is highly effective at increasing student propensity toward civic action. This argument seems to emphasize the ability to conduct this type of experience in the classroom but has applicability limits because the study was based upon a tailor-made extracurricular experience.

Participation in programs of this nature repeatedly yields strong correlation with civic engagement. Unfortunately, this type of program is funding limited and has low accessibility in poorly funded school districts. Participation in model democracies could include strong cultural relevance if it is intentionally designed and appropriately funded. Theoretically, this type of

program could result in building civic engagement for students of color. Each of the six proven practices demonstrates a strong correlation with general improvements in civic engagement. As general engagement across the United States lags behind other democratic nations, public schools are right to follow these effective tactics. However, the limited evidence of their success in addressing civic engagement specifically for communities of color provides a gap in the research. In examining race and civic engagement practices in public high schools, it is essential to critically analyze those programs and the underlying systems of power that support them. Critical race theory functions as an effective theoretical framework to explore race and civic engagement.

Critical Race Theory and Non-Traditional Political Engagement

Whereas critical race theory has its roots in social science inquiry and legal studies, it exploded onto the educational scene in 1994 at the American Educational Research Association (Dixson et al., 2017). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that critical race theory could be used to examine the role of race in education to help understand inequity. Ladson-Billings and Tate made three main arguments surrounding race and education. First, race and racism are significant factors in explaining inequity in dropout rates, suspensions, expulsions, and failing grades. Second, they argued that the American emphasis on property rights is inherently juxtaposed to human rights for those that were once considered property. As a result, property differences continue to persist for persons of color and those differences directly relate to school quality due to the property-tax funding model. Finally, they argued that civil rights laws and claims of colorblindness have not only failed to remedy educational inequity but also actually worsened it. They explained that *de jure* desegregation did not improve access to quality educational settings because *de facto* segregation persists and in fact increases. They also argued

that although many education professionals profess neutrality, objectivity, and meritocracy, the truth is that the personal narratives and counter-stories of persons of color are regularly suppressed, which hides the experience of those minorities from the popular narrative, results in internalization of negative stereotypes, and prevents oppressors from understanding the experiences of the oppressed. This viewpoint can be applied easily to civic engagement as well.

Many educators engage in practices designed to increase civic engagement among students, focusing on traditional forms of civic engagement and traditional strategies to address a lack of such engagement instead of incorporating practices that are more likely to engage those facing disenfranchisement. This strategy ignores the important contributions of community churches, artistic expression, protest, and race-based organizations toward civic engagement for the historically disenfranchised.

Coupled with critical race theory is Yosso's community cultural wealth model, first highlighted in 2005. Yosso (2005) argued that educators wanting to effectively challenge the structural racism endemic to public education need to understand and celebrate the value that students bring with them based upon their personal experiences. Yosso argued that deficit thinking as opposed to valuing community cultural wealth is one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism. Yosso went on to identify six types of capital that can be used to frame interactions with students and support the empowerment of persons of color. Educators should support and maintain students' *hopes and dreams* or aspirational capital while making sure to limit their own assumptions. Students' linguistic capital, including communication and storytelling skills, should be supported and celebrated through appropriate pedagogical practices. Counter-storytelling enables challenges to the dominant ideology and gives voice to perspectives that are often distorted and silenced (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Yosso (2005) emphasized that educators should recognize and help students draw on their familial capital, including social and personal resources within their community through honoring those families and communities. Students' social capital, including peers and other social contacts, can be strengthened by encouraging students to stay connected to their communities and community-based organizations. Educators should empower students through increasing their navigational capital and removing structural barriers that prevent effective student navigation of educational spaces. Finally, Yosso encourages supporting resistance capital through serving in local communities and celebrating the history of civil rights and collective freedom.

Educational research based in critical race theory tends to focus on the educational system at large and academic outcomes. However, the community cultural wealth model has broad implications in civic engagement as well. Just as each of these facets can be used to strengthen the educational experience of minorities in general, they can also be used to strengthen the experience of communities of color that participate in civic engagement programs. Programs that are designed to engage communities of color must, then, encourage hope and aspiration, strengthen the ability to navigate complex institutions, and challenge systems of inequality and oppression.

Whereas the majority of the literature on civic engagement focuses on traditional forms of participation, alternative forms of participation are more typical in communities of color and much of the research has failed to account for such participation. Non-traditional forms of political participation rates are less studied but typically take the form of membership in community churches and organizations (Calhoun-Brown, 1996; Leroux, 2007; Stovall, 2013). The role of these organizations was inextricably linked to the Obama campaign in 2008 (Ganz,

2009) and will play an ever-increasing role in political power in years to come (Leroux, 2007). This lack of attention to non-traditional participation limits the value of these studies related to civic engagement for communities of color. In focusing only on forms of engagement such as voting, party affiliation, donations, and contacting elected officials, any civic engagement outside of those frameworks is necessarily ignored (Mangum, 2013).

In addition to community churches and organizations, participation in explicitly ethnic organizations such as Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) or Black Lives Matter also shows positive impacts on civic engagement. Bowman, Park, and Denson (2015) found that involvement in ethnically-based organizations has long-term positive impacts on civic engagement for college students. These organizations run explicitly counter to the traditional view of American history in which race and racism are ignored or seen as conquered (Hu-Dehart, 1993). There has been a long-term attempt to delegitimize these organizations in general (Bennet, 2017; D'Souza, 1991; French 2016). Civic engagement research has not treated participation in these organizations as coequal to other forms of participation preferred by the majority population.

Other forms of alternative participation such as marches and protests are also a form of unconventional and contentious political participation. Immigrants and ethnic minorities participate in political protest more frequently than those who are native born or who belong to the racial majority (Just, 2017) and persons of color are more likely to support forms of protest (Intravia, Piquero, & Piquero, 2017). Ignoring the community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge that drive action and motivation in these communities demonstrates a lack of validation for the experiences of the community (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Yosso, 2005). The historical institutional racism of the United States has left a majority of Americans

underrepresented in their democracy. With the ultimate goal of addressing civic engagement for students of color, this study strives to validate culturally relevant civic engagement and include non-traditional forms of engagement as coequal to traditionally highlighted areas.

Chapter III: Research Design and Methods

Americans in general, but specifically communities of color within the United States, vote at rates far below other populations both in the United States and in other democratic nations. This lack of voting distorts the nature of the democracy and leads to the reproduction of poverty and disenfranchisement for those whose participation is limited (López, 2003).

Historically, civic engagement has been measured in ways that eliminate or invalidate the experiences of communities of color, and as a result our understanding of civic engagement and its relationship to voting patterns is limited. Demographic factors (particularly race) have led to an depressed civic engagement where communities of color are said to participate in traditional political activities at significantly reduced rates as compared to wealthy White men. This project gathered data regarding best practices for civic learning programs to increase the positive attitudes of students of color toward civic participation while also validating and strengthening non-traditional civic engagement. The purpose of gathering these data is to provide a roadmap for schools to best engage historically disenfranchised youth in civic learning opportunities and effectively incorporate the preferences of students of color into those opportunities.

Research Design and Rationale

1. What are the schools doing to engage students of color in the civic learning programs?
2. How do students of color describe their experiences in a successful school-based civic learning program?
3. What do students of color experience in successful school-based civic learning programs that causes them to care about the larger civic world and understand their place in it?

A qualitative, multi-case study approach to this project was best suited to discovering students' cultural contexts as explored through narratives, perceptions, and experiences, as well as other constituents' perceptions related to their sites. The approach allowed for exploring site-based documents and using observations of the unique characteristics of each site and program implementations. This is particularly important because I sought to understand context and personal meaning for students of color. A multi-case study enabled me to examine the practices and student experiences at two Southern California High Schools that have recently received a California Civic Learning Award. A case study approach at each of these schools allowed for an expansive look at each program using information from multiple sources; the approach allowed for increased depth of understanding through a qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Because I wanted to gather information about student experiences, educational practices, and teacher/administrator perspectives, focus groups, interviews, observations and document analysis provided insight into the unique experiences of students of color in the context of each specific civic learning program.

A qualitative research design is the most effective approach for providing rich and complex descriptions of human behavior in natural settings (Maxwell, 2013). Quantitative designs may provide a broader picture of high school student experiences and beliefs, but existing survey data have already broadly identified best practices. Qualitative data uncovered the unique experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of communities of color, including personal narratives about how and why certain practices may be more effective than others. Case study research explores the importance of local context when investigating problems and their potential solutions (Stake, 1995). It also provides the opportunity to explore the educational and social pressures that students of certain demographic backgrounds might experience.

Sites and Participants

The two sites for this study needed to have been recently awarded by California in its annual Civic Learning Awards. ASHS earned the award of excellence and FWHS earned the award of distinction in 2018. The sites are public high schools because this research was based upon the experiences of students who attend public school where taxpayer funding is used to encourage civic participation. High schools were chosen because as students approach voting age (18), their attitudes toward civic engagement become more predictive of actual behaviors. The sites also needed to include significant proportions of students of color.

I worked through a multi-step process to gather student perspectives beginning with gathering student information from document analysis and teacher/administrator interviews. After reviewing these data, I generated lists for student focus groups, including 10 student participants from each site who are members of communities of color and involved in the site's civic learning program. All participants were students of color. Although there was a possibility that some students may have been uncomfortable, preventing them from discussing their personal experiences in a focus group, it is also possible that the shared experiences of the group allowed for a rich discussion. For those who were more hesitant to discuss their experience in the focus group and simply wanted to expand the discussion, I also conducted individual interviews.

ASHS is a public 6-12 school in Hillside Unified School District (pseudonym) serving roughly 2,000 students. It is a model school of choice with over 80% of students identified as persons of color and over 60% of students identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. In the most recent (2017) testing cycle, persons of color and socioeconomically disadvantaged students demonstrated proficiency at rates as far as 60% below the White population. The award-winning

civic learning program at ASHS involves annual research and design projects where students engage with real world problems and present solutions to experts in the field.

From February 2019 to April 2019, I performed a case study at ASHS in Hillside Unified School District in the greater Los Angeles area. The case study involved a document review, one administrator interview, three teacher interviews, two student focus groups with written reflections, and three follow-up student interviews. Each focus group involved three students and follow-up student interviews included two students from the first focus group and one student from the second. Dr. Jed Barlet, the principal at ASHS, is a White man who became principal in 2011. Art department chair Mr. Matt Santos is a Hispanic man. Social science teachers Mr. Leo McGarry and Mr. Charlie Young are both White men. Demographic information (self-reported) for students is in Table 1 (all names are pseudonyms).

Table 1

Aaron Sorkin High School Student Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Home Language	Socioeconomic Status
Ainsley Hays	Female	African American	English	Middle
Donna Moss	Female	Mexican	English	Middle
Ryan Pierce	Male	Mexican	Spanish	Middle
Sam Seaborn	Male	African American	English	Middle
Gina Toscano	Female	Mexican	Spanish	Working
Toby Ziegler	Male	African American	English	Upper Middle

The civic learning program at ASHS is in its fourth year and is known as the “Innovation Project.” This project is done school-wide by all students in a 2-hour a day block during the week leading up to Thanksgiving Break. Each year, the administration chooses a general topic with the input of the department chairs. Students spend the block of time in their fourth period classes and work in groups of four to five with other students from the same class. They create a multifaceted proposal including a written document and a visual presentation. Teachers choose

the best presentation from their class and move them along to the next portion of the competition where a winner is decided by vote among the faculty. The first year of the project featured an online student voting component that was not used in subsequent years. The winning group makes a formal presentation to an official government body that is related to the general topic. Topics were water use and drought, transportation, waste management, and, most recently, housing.

FWHS is a public 9-12 high school in Salt Air High School District (pseudonym) serving roughly 2,400 students. It has significantly higher graduation rates and test scores than the district average. FWHS is not a Title I school. Over 55% of students are persons of color ,with over 30% being socioeconomically disadvantaged. The award-winning civic learning programs include student participation in environmental service-learning projects and international student exchange programs where students work with community organizations outside of the classroom.

From March 2019 to May 2019, I performed a case study at FWHS in Salt Air High School District in the greater Los Angeles area. The case study involved a document review, one administrator interview, three teacher interviews, two student focus groups with written reflections, and two follow-up student interviews. The first focus group included five students and the second included four students. Follow-up student interviews included one student from each focus group. Dr. CJ Cregg, principal of FWHS is a mixed-race (Asian and White) female who became principal in 2015. Social science teacher and JSA and mock trial advisor Mr. Will Bailey is a White man. English teacher and newspaper advisor Mr. Josh Lyman is also a White man. English teacher and Associated Student Body (ASB) director Mrs. Mandy Hampton is a White woman. Demographic information (self-reported) for students is in Table 2.

Table 2

Felicia Wilson High School Student Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Home Language	Socioeconomic Status
Oliver Babish	Male	Asian	English	Middle
Curtis Carruthers	Male	Filipino	Tagalog	Middle
Kate Harper	Female	Native American/Hispanic	English	Working
Margaret Hooper	Female	Hispanic	Spanish	Middle
Dolores Landingham	Female	Asian	English	Upper Middle
Nancy McNally	Female	Filipino	English	Middle
Joe Quincy	Male	Japanese	English	Upper
Annabeth Schott	Female	Filipino	English	Middle
Lionell Tribbey	Male	Hispanic	English	Middle

FWHS has applied for the California Civic Learning Award each of the last 3 years and submitted three different programs each of those 3 years. I discussed aspects of all programs and each person's individual experience with his/her program during interviews. In the first year, FWHS focused on clubs and activities with a political bent, including the German American Partnership Program (an international exchange program), Junior Statesman of America (participates in debate conventions) with Mock Trial (the programs shared an advisor and applied jointly), and Naturally Green (an environmental activism club). In the second year, FWHS focused on the classroom experience and highlighted AP European history, voter registration in government courses, and ASB/student leadership. In the third year, FWHS focused on media and literacy where they highlighted the school newspaper, the school daily news video, and the library/digital literacy program.

Access

The two schools where I conducted the case studies have each received a California Civil Learning Award over the last several years. I have had several phone conversations as well as email exchanges with the principals of each site. I have had phone conversations and exchanged

emails with several assistant principals, civic learning program teachers, and department chairs. At each step, I received their verbal and written consent to perform my study, including these individuals and the programs they oversee. I was also in contact with several individuals in the instructional services division at each district office (Hillside Unified School District and Salt Air High School District) to secure their permission to conduct the study as well. Both districts and both school sites provided written permission to conduct the study.

The second aspect of access relates to the students themselves. I identified all students who could potentially participate in the study through reviewing site-based documents including program rosters and working with the teachers and assistant principals. I obtained consent from all students.

Data Collection

This qualitative multi-case study proceeded over several phases. The study began with a document review of the Civic Learning Award application, program rosters, and supporting academic data. This was followed by interviews with teachers and administrators. I used the document analysis and adult interviews to create a purposeful sample of students who matched the criteria for focus groups. Focus group participants participated in reflective journaling immediately following the focus group session. Follow-up individual interviews were designed to provide additional depth took place at each site.

Document review. A document analysis of the schools' applications for California's Civic Learning Awards provided context related to the stated purpose of such programs, student participation rates, and academic (i.e., grades, test scores, etc.) and social (i.e., student discipline, extracurricular participation, etc.) outcomes as reported by the school. This allowed for the creation of a baseline understanding of the stated practices employed by each civic learning

program. Document analysis is an effective supplemental technique because it limits reactivity because documents are static (Bowen, 2009). The document review also helped to inform the interviews by providing program-specific information such as community partnerships. It also provided context for the overall school atmosphere and highlighted events that might not have been reported by students, teachers, and administrators in interviews. Document analysis helped to provide a clear, objective measure of the actual practices used in each civic learning program and provided triangulation for all research questions.

Teacher/administrator initial interviews. I used in-depth, one-on-one interviews with six teachers and two administrators (three teachers and an administrator at each site). The semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) was conducted following the initial document review. These interviews uncovered teacher and administrator perspectives and actions surrounding civic learning programs and their influences on historically disenfranchised student populations. Interview questions remained objective and neutral in regard to choices made by teachers and administrators in order to limit reactivity threats. These interviews explored teacher and administrative experiences in leading civic learning programs at their sites. I focused the interviews on the teacher/administration's practices including the six practices and their beliefs related to civic engagement for communities of color. Interviews were deemed the most appropriate way to discover this information because there were small numbers of individuals with scheduling conflicts, each of whom needed to provide information. Individual interviews took place both in person or over the phone to allow for greater flexibility in scheduling.

Focus groups. From teacher/administrator interviews and document analysis, I developed lists of students for focus groups. All students of color who were active participants in

the civic learning program and 18 or older were eligible to participate. Students who were over 18 were given priority as they were closest to voting age.

Focus groups offer compressed timelines and help to develop buy-in. They provide opportunities to generate debate and/or consensus and are most effective when the observer is interested in interactions between participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Additionally, focus groups provide a safe atmosphere where students are able to gather the emotional support of their peers and build upon each other's ideas. Finally, focus groups shift the locus of power away from the moderator to the participants. Creating student empowerment in this manner provided a metacognitive opportunity because the topic of discussion was the empowerment of these same students. Although there was a possibility that students may have limited their answers due to the nature of the focus group, alternatively, their potential supportive peer environment may have encouraged participation. In the case that the focus groups limited the conversation, individual interviews provided an alternative setting for that discussion.

At each school, I conducted two student focus group for a total of four focus group sessions. At each site, each focus group included at least three students of color who have chosen to participate in one or more of the site's civic learning programs; a total of 15 students participated. Questions asked by previous researchers—particularly from Kahne and colleagues' work in 2006, 2008, and 2013 (Kahne et al., 2006, 2013; Kahne & Sporte, 2008)—were used to develop the initial form of the focus group protocol (Appendix B). Focus group questions centered on program practices and their perceived effectiveness, individual experiences with civic engagement, and beliefs about the value and importance of political action. The purpose of these focus groups was to gather information directly from students to answer each research question.

Reflective journals. Following the focus group process, students were given an opportunity to reflect and journal on their experiences. These reflective journals (Appendix C) were open-ended and allowed students to convey information regarding behaviors, beliefs, and practices that they may not have been comfortable sharing in the focus group setting. This practice allowed students to provide more complete insight into the research questions. Additionally, students had an opportunity to expand upon or correct any statements they may have made during the focus group. Finally, they were able to challenge or question statements made by others in the focus group in a non-combative setting. This opportunity allowed students to express their experiences and opinions more thoroughly in a safe and comfortable manner. It also provided an opportunity for students to discuss their personal narratives, perceptions, and experiences as they relate to civic engagement experiences.

Student interviews. Following the focus groups and associated reflective journals, I performed in-depth one-on-one follow-up interviews with three individual students at each site. I chose those students based upon the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes expressed in the focus groups and reflective journals. The interview protocol (Appendix D) allowed me to dig deeply into individual experiences with civic engagement and government powers structures, personal beliefs about the value and importance of particular political actions, and the reasons why the students' attitudes surrounding power and civic engagement have changed over time. This protocol provided answers to the research questions. Interviews also provided information that was free of group influence, which might otherwise have limited the range of possible answers. They were also designed to probe and utilize ladder techniques to more substantially explore individual perspectives based out of historical disenfranchisement (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Most importantly, in-depth interviews were best suited to sensitive topics such as the personal

discrimination and empowerment experienced by students of color. The use of follow-up interviews provided a space for elaboration beyond what was discussed in the focus groups or written in the reflective journals.

These in-depth interviews allowed for expansive counter-storytelling where students had the opportunity to challenge the dominant narrative that typically uses a deficit perspective. Yosso (2005) argued vehemently that a deficit perspective ignores the community cultural wealth embodied by students of color. Instead of using this deficit perspective, students told stories about their lives and the lives of people in their community. Deficit framing ignores the positive accomplishments of students of color (Espino, 2012; Harper, 2009). As a result, I focused on the forms of community cultural wealth employed by students of color and allowed those students' stories to highlight the positive impact of their experience. I then integrated these positive experiences with the civic engagement models to demonstrate ways in which educational institutions can more effectively influence the civic engagement of communities of color.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis began with the document review followed by teacher/administrator interviews. Following this process, I analyzed data gathered in the focus groups, reflective journals, and interviews. The primary method of data analysis involved thematic coding of student experiences into a matrix, which featured educational practices as the headings for each column. These educational practices included each of the six practices that has been demonstrated to increase civic participation effectively (i.e., the six proven practices in Annenberg Public Policy Center's 2011 report: *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* [Gould et al., 2011]). Alternative, culturally relevant educational practices were also

used as column headers, including celebrations of cultural events, inclusion of guest speakers from communities of color, student-driven projects, and parent inclusion. Along the left side, the headings for each row were traditional and non-traditional forms of civic engagement described by the literature and uncovered in the focus group and interview process. Quotes and observations were placed in each appropriate cell in the matrix. The coding process demonstrates one aspect of reliability and validity in that it achieved 92% interrater reliability when codes were compared with a colleague. This, along with triangulation among several points of view in multiple processes increases the validity of this study..

The first step of data analysis was the document review. This process included all aspects of the school's application to be considered for the California Civic Learning Awards. I looked at this document for themes relating to critical race theory and active engagement of students of color with regard to their commitment to civic engagement. The critical race theory themes included considerations for alternative forms of civic participation and targeted engagement strategies. These strategies include using primary language in recruitment and demonstrating value for the local community's cultural wealth.

I also looked for which practices the school claims to be utilizing and the school's claims about the success of such practices for strengthening civic commitment among students of color. The document analysis was used to modify interview and focus group protocols through the use of notes in the matrix each time the application aligns a practice to an outcome. This analysis provided crucial insight for the following the research steps and began answering the research questions.

Within each practice, I analyzed the interviews for emerging patterns, including the perceived success of each practice both in recruitment and attitude shifting. Particularly in the

area of shifting attitudes toward civic participation, I divided responses into those that identify traditional forms of civic participation from those that identify non-traditional forms. Interviews with teachers and administrators included my personal notes to provide context to the conversation. Each interview was transcribed immediately following the interview and the transcriptions were compared back to the original recording to check for accuracy. Notes and observation were added in the margins of each transcript. Analysis of all transcripts began with a read/listen session where I looked for the emergence of themes and patterns by employing grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Following this read/listen session, each interview was coded into the aforementioned matrix.

Quotes from the transcripts were placed into the appropriate area of the matrix. Upon completion, the findings in each area were summarized and total counts were analyzed. This information was used in conjunction with document analysis and observations to provide a jumping-off point for student focus groups. The analysis of these data provided answers for all research questions.

Analysis of the two student focus groups also provided insight into all research questions. The data generated from these groups provided information about the effectiveness of civic engagement practices as well as the narratives, perceptions, and experiences of students of color. These narratives, perceptions, and experiences provided a cultural frame for student experiences and lent insight into the most appropriate responses to the unique cultural experience of students of color. The student focus groups were conducted at an easily accessible but private location at each school site. The four focus groups consisted of three to five students each and lasted for roughly 1 hour. Each focus group session was transcribed immediately and compared for

accuracy. Notes and observations were added to the transcript. The focus groups were analyzed for emergent themes and patterns before being coded into the matrix.

Reflective journal analysis provided an opportunity to discover additional information relating to the research questions. Student reflections were analyzed to uncover the effectiveness of civic education practices and the impact of cultural experiences on students of color's commitment to civic engagement. At the conclusion of the focus group session, I asked all students to engage in a reflective journaling process that allowed them to provide any additional thoughts or information in a non-threatening environment. I continued to analyze responses as they related to civic engagement practices and non-traditional forms of civic engagement. This information was used to ascertain broad student perspectives on civic engagement practices.

Analysis of follow-up student interviews was focused on uncovering additional information relating to the research questions. That is, I looked for themes and patterns for effective civic engagement practices as well as the influence of cultural experience on commitment to civic engagement. I used the information from the focus groups and reflective journals to develop short lists for follow-up student interviews. When an individual student's responses were closely aligned with the purpose of the focus groups and reflective journals, that student was asked to return for a follow-up interview where I was able to dig deeper into issues that were highlighted previously. These interviews were transcribed and coded in the same manner as prior information. The final matrix included triangulated information from multiple interviews, focus groups, observations, reflective journals, and document analysis.

Credibility, Role Management, Positionality, and Ethical Concerns

A major threat to credibility and trustworthiness involves the participants' candor, which may come in the form of social desirability bias or reactivity threats. Because the primary

method for this study was focus groups and interviews, the data I analyzed were inherently self-reported. There is no mechanism to force individuals to be honest, but through using existing research to design interview protocols and focusing on larger emergent themes, the incentive for dishonesty should have been diminished. I modeled the protocols after those already tested and used by other researchers and made sure to field test prior to implementation. However, the most important step I took was to explain the purpose of the research repeatedly. Students were more likely to be honest because they understood that their answers could lead to benefits for other students like them.

Teacher and administrator honesty was less crucial to the primary aim of this study, but was encouraged by engaging them in a discussion of the negative effect depressed civic engagement has on students of color. This may have resulted in a social desirability threat. However, understanding that socially desirable answers have resulted in the very civic engagement gap we are trying to reduce limited this threat. Additionally, the majority of the answers provided by teachers and administrators were factual in nature. By beginning the interview with a series of factual questions before moving into more complex questions about beliefs and perspectives, I built rapport with the teachers and advisors, which increased their likelihood of their giving honest answers. Perhaps most importantly, I also regularly highlighted the confidential nature of the study as it related to both individuals and institutions.

In order to ensure honest and complete answers, it was important to manage my role as researcher. For teachers and administrators, I explained the purpose of the study and highlighted the importance of confidentiality. I explained that the study began by highlighting the obvious strengths of the programs at each site and that I was looking to discover what steps each site is taking to go above and beyond the awards process to build civic engagement for students of

color. I introduced my study to students in a slightly different way. I demonstrated that my goal was student empowerment, and that I wanted to use their ideas to improve the situation of students of color across the state. I articulated that this was their opportunity to tell their story, and that they could do so without fear of harm or retaliation due to the confidentiality safeguards I had in place. I made this position clear in person and in my introductory letter and reiterated it at each individual interview and observation. I framed myself as an educator who cared deeply about civic engagement and who had a plan in place to increase civic engagement among those who have been victims of historic disenfranchisement.

Reactivity threats including administrators' desire to strengthen their school's reputation was minimized through revisiting the purpose of the study and ensuring confidentiality. I also triangulated my findings through multiple interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. In addition to qualitative data, I supported my findings with quantitative data from previous similar studies and highlighting the supporting theoretical frameworks.

Another threat to credibility and trustworthiness lies in the ability to generalize my findings to other school sites that serve students of color. The very nature of a qualitative multi-case study limits generalizability compared to a quantitative approach. My primary tool to limit this impact was to investigate multiple sites. Students at different sites came from divergent demographic backgrounds and responded differently to educational practices based upon those demographic differences. Because each set of circumstances is unique and the community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge differed by community, specific examples taken out of context without a conceptual framework are not generalizable.

Another essential aspect of critical theory related to civic engagement is in understanding and explaining positionality while also limiting the impact of my positionality in the outcome of

the study. In this study of students of color, it was essential for me to approach the research with a solid understanding of my own positionality as it related to the populations and topics in question. As a straight, cisgender, White male from a middle-class background, I do not share many characteristics with the population I am choosing to study. Although it is clear that my positionality affected the outcome of my research, there is debate as to whether this precluded my ability to conduct the research in the first place (Collins, 1996; Hardin, 1987; McLaren, 1992; Minh-ha, 1989). Rhoads (1997) effectively argued that positionality can distort the interpretations of events and discussions, but that the impact of such distortion can be mitigated through involving research participants in the research process. Therefore, I conducted this research while involving research participants as fully as possible in the process.

The primary ethical concerns of this study related to privacy and confidentiality because students, teachers, and administrators were discussing potentially sensitive and personal topics that included personal stories about negative experiences surrounding civic engagement. These negative experiences came both from students themselves and from students suffering vicarious trauma through the experiences of relatives or friends. Additional privacy and confidentiality concerns existed for the sites as well because a publicly available study could raise concerns about the practices at each site. This study did not implement any program changes but rather studied already existing practices. Any ethical concerns related to modified practices would only reside in the use of the findings not in their generation. To address privacy, I ensured confidentiality of participants. I created pseudonyms before interviews and used them throughout the study. The pseudonym key was kept on a separate password-protected and encrypted hard drive that was destroyed at the conclusion of the study. All audio and transcripts were stored on

two separate external hard drives that were password-protected and encrypted. To address site-level confidentiality, I changed the names and locations of the schools in the study.

Summary

This qualitative multi-case study gathered data regarding best practices for civic learning programs to increase the commitment of students of color toward civic participation and closing the apparent civic engagement gap. It gathered additional data on the types of civic engagement most favored by students of color, the reasons for those preferences, and how to more appropriately align civic engagement programs to incorporate the preferences of students of color. This study took place at two diverse suburban high schools that have received California's Civic Learning Award. At these high schools, I triangulated my findings through the use of focus groups, interviews, and document analysis, which were coded to discover emergent themes and narratives. The purpose of gathering these data was to provide a roadmap for schools to best engage historically disenfranchised youth in civic learning opportunities. The results of this qualitative multi-case study are highly context specific and I encourage further qualitative research in different contexts and quantitative examinations of the degree of impacts.

Chapter IV: Findings

From February 2019 through May 2019 I engaged in research at two southern California high schools that had been awarded a California Civic Learning award by the state. The study included document review, administrator interviews, six teacher interviews, four student focus group interviews and written reflections, and five follow-up student interviews. All students who participated in the study self-identified as a *student of color*. While different in scope and structure with requisitely divergent outcomes, the civic learning programs largely resulted in similar student experiences. The coding in this study yielded 92% interrater reliability when compared with a colleague. Triangulation among multiple points of view and discussion processes along with interrater reliability increases the validity of this study. The goal of this study was to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the schools doing to engage students of color in the civic learning programs?
2. How do students of color describe their experiences in a successful school-based civic learning program?
3. What do students of color experience in successful school-based civic learning programs that causes them to care about the larger civic world and understand their place in it?

Emergent Themes

Three important findings emerged from this study:

1. Students of color respond to civic learning practices designed to build social capital more than the six practices emphasized in the civic learning literature.
2. Students of color prefer non-traditional forms of civic engagement to those typically measured by social scientists (party participation, campaign donations, etc.).

3. Civic learning programs must make tradeoffs in design such as balancing depth with access, providing choice while maintaining program integrity, and considering intentionality around race as opposed to colorblindness.

Generally, the 15 students of color in this study believed in the efficacy of practices designed to build community cultural wealth. Generally, students were less enthusiastic and had less belief that the traditional six practices would effectively increase their civic engagement. School officials were more likely to believe in the power of the traditional six practices. Students of color expressed a preference for non-traditional forms of civic engagement including artistic expression, protests, and participation in race-based organizations. Students and school officials spoke about the important decisions that have to be made regarding depth and access, intentionality around race, and student choice.

Students of Color: What Works?

In all of our discussions, I found it important, given the overwhelming evidence, to ask directly about each of the six proven practices of civic education. As mentioned previously, I waited until the end of the focus groups to ask these types of short form questions to avoid swaying the discussion. In looking at both the six practices and Yosso's (2005) capital building practices, I compared the perceived efficacy of both through quotes and storytelling, percentage counts, and tallies. When engagement is measured in this way, the vast majority of students of color at both schools demonstrated a desire to be engaged in the civic learning programs through capital building practices. School officials also believed in the importance of engaging in capital building practices, but to a lesser degree than the students and less than their statements related to the six practices. There are implications for both these and other civic learning programs to

increase student engagement, particularly for students of color, through including capital building in program design more effectively. Additionally, there are important implications for the design of awards and for civic learning in general related to the implementation of capital building strategies.

The Six Practices

I turn first to the six practices highlighted in the literature on civic learning (Andolina et al., 2003; Arsenio & Gold, 2006; Blevins et al., 2016; Botsch & Botsch, 2015; Brasof & Spector, 2016; Callahan & Obenchain, 2016; Campbell, 2008; Cohen & Chaffee, 2012; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Fleming, 2015; Gul, 2010; Henderson et al., 2007; Kahne et al., 2013; Kahne & Spote, 2008; Lenzi et al., 2014; Parkinson, 2015; Smith et al., 2016; Watts et al., 2003). When discussing these practices with school officials and with students, school officials showed a strong belief in the efficacy of those practices. This is perhaps not surprising because the process through which California awards such programs explicitly targets those practices. Students of color were also generally positive, but at a lower percentage. For direct instruction, discussion of current events, service learning, democratic simulations, and participatory school governance, all the school officials in the study touted their benefits. For extracurricular activities, there was one teacher who did not find their implementation valuable, but they were otherwise well regarded by school officials.

Among students, direct instruction received 60% support overall with nearly ASHA students being twice as likely to support it compared with FWHS students. Discussions of current events and controversial topics was supported by nine of the 15 students with significant differences between schools. Service learning was seen as effective by eight students. No students from either site felt that extracurricular activities were particularly important for civic

engagement. Only six students believed democratic simulations helped engage them, whereas students were unanimous in encouraging programs to adopt participatory school governance to increase student voice and access. Discussion of current events and controversial issues as well as participatory school governance dominated the discussion of the efficacy of the traditional six practices.

Direct Instruction

In our discussion related to effective practices, students of color at ASHS generally agreed that high quality classroom instruction increased their commitment to civic engagement, with five of the six students answering in the affirmative. During our focus group discussions and follow up interviews, none of the students spoke about direct instruction except in immediate response to my asking about its effectiveness. Some students expressed concern about how late in their academic career direct instruction in government took place. One African American student, Toby Ziegler, stated, “It might not be a full knowledge of how it’s actually going to be implemented by the government until the last year of high school.” Because all of the student participants in this study were seniors in the second half of their senior year, they had all taken or were currently taking government and economics courses that are typically only taught in the senior year of high school.

School officials at ASHS were more enthusiastic about the potential impact of direct instruction. Social science teacher Mr. Leo McGarry said, “Oh, absolutely, and I think eleventh grade US History is where it really starts to come together for a lot of students.” Principal, Dr. Jed Barlet, stressed the importance of high-quality direct instruction, adding, “We need to do more cross-curricular work. We need to do more depth of knowledge.” All of the school officials with whom I spoke indicated that direct instruction was central to their civic engagement efforts.

Mr. McGarry explained, “Our department members teach government with an eye towards civic engagement.” Whereas both students and staff agreed that direct instruction was important, school officials spoke about its impact far more frequently and with greater enthusiasm than the students. This finding affirms the efficacy of high-quality direct instruction, as found by Gould et al. (2011) and Botsch and Botsch (2015), but also demonstrates that students of color at ASHS think of it, like the other six practices, as useful, but secondary to efforts directed at capital building.

Unlike ASHS, students of color at FWHS were split on the effectiveness of direct instruction in building commitment to civic engagement. Only four of the nine students who participated in the focus groups said that direct instruction increased their commitment, whereas the other five indicated that it was not important. Joe Quincy said, “What we are talking about in my government class right now—people who don’t vote—I’m just going to promise myself that I’ll vote every chance that I can because when people don’t vote there’s just more problems.” Nancy McNally agreed, saying, “What more is making me become more politically engaged is my AP Gov class, that has really sparked me to want to become more involved with the government.” Unlike ASHS, the FWHS students who found direct instruction effective were more likely to sing its praises. Students extolled its virtues not just when directly asked but also throughout the interviews and focus groups. Those who disagreed, however, did so only when asked directly. Those five students answered similarly to Kate Harper who said, “Not really” when asked if direct instruction increased her commitment to civic engagement.

School officials at FWHS were unanimous in their belief that direct instruction in the classroom was key to civic engagement. Principal Dr. CJ Cregg indicated that all three of the programs highlighted in the second year of winning the state award were core curriculum,

stating, “We need to go show that this is happening in our classrooms, not just outside of the classrooms.” Teacher Josh Lyman agreed with the benefits of direct instruction but came at it from a different angle. As the journalism teacher, he explained that his core curriculum begins with “The High School Journalist’s Code of Ethics,” and when asked how much of his students’ engagement comes from direct instruction, he said, “I think a lot of it.” Across the curricular landscape, FWHS school officials agreed that direct instruction was essential to increasing student commitment to civic engagement.

Because the award-winning programs at FWHS are more directly related to core curriculum than those at ASHS, one would expect to see a greater emphasis on direct instruction at FWHS than ASHS. Interestingly, both schools’ officials were similarly enthusiastic about its impact. When looking at the students, a greater percentage of students of color at ASHS were positive about direct instruction than those at FWHS, although those at FWHS who were positive were more enthusiastic.

Current Events, Controversial Issues, and Service Learning

At ASHS, the discussion of current events, particularly those with local significance, was found to have a strong impact on students. Students found distinctions among those events that happened locally and those happening at a national or international scale and were particularly interested when the current events held some controversy. As Gould et al. (2011) found, discussions around current events where students could have a direct impact were particularly helpful. They directly tied current events to opportunities for service learning in the local context. This specifically included the types of classroom to community connections found to be important (Kahne & Sporte, 2008).

All six students at ASHS indicated that the inclusion of controversial local events would increase their engagement in the Innovation Project. Toby Ziegler said, “At least people at the school would care more about local issues than something happening half way across the globe.” Donna Moss added, “I think if we were talking, especially talking about local ways that we can actually help, a lot of people would be more engaged.” Ainsley Hays and Sam Seaborn were very interested in the history of the local area and how that could relate to the Innovation Project. Ainsley Hays said, “We didn’t really discuss like identification or like the problem of housing in our own community which is really interesting.” Sam Seaborn suggested that future projects would be more effective if they engaged the local community, saying, “Bring it to their communities, like bring up problems that would relate to them more. Start with, ‘Hey this kind of impacts your community, what you think could be changed?’”

Particularly as it relates to service, Ainsley Hays said, “Volunteering at your local community center, because that’s like, your town politics, and making sure that your mayor, and things like that, are setting aside things that you want to get done in your community.” Ryan Pierce also focused on the service aspect of community issues when he said, “Some civic experiences I remember the most are times I’ve helped my city by volunteering and donating.” This combination of factors ties together two of the six practices highlighted by Gould et al. (2011) and others and emphasizes how inter-reliant the practices can be.

School officials at ASHS were also strong believers in the discussion of current events, local issues, and community service as civic engagement practices. Dr. Bartlet explained how important local service is when he explained that one goal of the Innovation Project was “connecting what you’re doing to a difference that a child can have out in the community.” Mr. Young added that because of the local connections to housing, “people got very passionate

and...it sort of expanded the consciousness and awareness of different aspects of that issue.” Mr. McGarry explained that local service often takes on a political tone for students because “some of the students decide to take a social science approach to that, and so students will sign up to work the polls, for example, at election time.”

Whereas both students and school officials believed that service learning through local current events was important to civic engagement, students felt as though the Innovation Project did not provide enough of that type of engagement even though school officials believed they were doing a good job. Student Gina Toscano explained, “There’s just a lot of like, lack of student involvement...they do offer like, a lot of community service events...like, homeless shelters. But it’s exclusive, so it’s like not many people participate.” Ainsley Hays added that currently the Innovation Project doesn’t “acknowledge the history of the community as a whole.... why we are suffering because of it; it’s gentrification. It’s also the system adding racism that’s in place in the community.” Dr. Barlet explained that the school has made a strong attempt at making important local connections when he said, “Definitely, having something that’s relevant, that they can connect to is important; something that makes a difference for them too.”

At FWHS, students found the discussions of current events and controversial issues to be less related to community service and less engaging overall than students at ASHS. Whereas all six students at ASHS increased their commitment to civic engagement as a result of service learning and current events, only two of the nine students indicated their effectiveness. Dolores Landingham said, “It gets too controversial for my liking. I start to get uncomfortable because if I’m talking to my friends and my family I don’t want to make something a bad feeling between us.” Oliver Babish was more positive about local service saying, “You can help to make a

difference and actually have fun at the same time.” Most students answered like Annabeth Schott who said, “No, it’s kind of a disconnect,” when asked if current or local events impact commitment to civic engagement.

School officials at FWHS seemed to have a very different understanding of current events and local service than the students did. In fact, this area was highlighted by all school officials repeatedly as one of the hallmark aspects of the civic learning program. Dr. Cregg said that one aim of the program was “being aware of what’s going on in our community, and caring about what’s going on in the community, and then doing something.” Mr. Bailey added that his programs are “geared towards getting kids more involved in discussing, debating or even involved in activism of various kinds—important social and political issues.” Mr. Lyman, the newspaper advisor, explained that he is aware of the disconnect between students and school officials, stating, “We spend a lot of time on controversial issues. It’s funny, I sometimes think the kids don’t think that we do.” School officials were quick to highlight the major benefits around community engagement and current events and explain the significant service that students had performed for the local community. Although students also acknowledged these practices, they did not see find them to be nearly as impactful as the school officials.

Extracurricular Activities and Democratic Simulations

Due to the nature of the two programs, there is an inherent difference in their approach to extracurricular activities. ASHS’s Innovation Project is a specifically designed and encapsulated week-long program that takes place in classrooms during the school day. The nine programs highlighted at FWHS include seven with explicitly extracurricular aspects (German Exchange Program, Junior Statesmen of America, Mock Trial, Naturally Green, ASB, newspaper, news video, and library). FWHS ASB Director Mrs. Mandy Hampton said, “They actually reach out to

the community as well and there's a community bridge there...It's global scholars fundraising, volunteering, collecting materials to give to underprivileged students in the local community and abroad." Similarly, Kirlin (2003) found that participation in extracurricular activities only increased commitment when combined with other practices such as community service or participatory school governance.

With that said, Kahne and Sporte (2008) found moderate impacts on commitment from non-athletic extracurricular engagement that is deep and meaningful. ASHS teacher Leo McGarry demonstrated that importance when he said, "You wanna talk about opportunities for leadership and engagement, they make the decisions, they do the organization, they do the fundraising, they run it." School officials at both schools believed that having extracurricular opportunities for students was valuable for strengthening civic engagement. With extracurricular activities at FWHS being central to their Civic Learning Awards, it is interesting that no students at FWHS explicitly highlighted the extracurricular nature of their program as noteworthy. When asked, all students responded similarly to Margaret Hooper, who said, "I don't really know, not really." ASHS students were similarly indifferent, with none defending its value, including Donna Moss who said, "I really don't think it does." Students at neither school held a negative view of extracurricular activities, but three mentioned a possible access issue, including FWHS student Joe Quincy, who said, "If you look at the ASB kids they're all the kids who are going to four-year universities, that have rich parents. So, maybe that could be changed."

Some extracurricular activities like mock trial also function as democratic simulations. In addition to this program, both schools offer model United Nations as a club as well as in-class simulation projects. Principal Dr. CJ Cregg of FWHS said about AP European History, "She'll do her own mock trials. So, I'll go in there, they'll be doing a trial on Henry VIII, or something."

This in-class experience is heightened as an extracurricular activity. Regarding mock trial, FWHS teacher Mr. Bailey said, “That’s kind of what they have an interest in because they want to be attorneys or are going into law or maybe law enforcement of some kind.” Mr. Bailey and his students agreed that programs that model democracy like mock trial or model United Nations have increased their commitment to civic engagement. FWHS student Margaret Hooper added, “You have to argue it no matter what the topic is, for or against. That same year I wasn’t very opened about... I didn’t have quote/unquote views yet. Mock trial opened me up.” This echoes research findings from Andolina et al. (2003) and Kahne et al. (2006) that showed increases in voting and commitment to civic engagement (respectively) after participation in model United Nations and mock trial. All four FWHS mock trial students indicated that it helped to increase their commitment to civic engagement whereas two students from ASHS indicated that their in-class participation in democratic simulations was beneficial.

Participatory School Governance

Program feedback and participation in school governance were important for students at both ASHS and FWHS. When asked, all 15 students agreed that the efficacy of their feedback and legitimate participation in governance was an important component of increasing commitment to civic engagement. All students shared similar sentiment as FWHS student Oliver Babish, who said, “I think so because it gives us more involvement in the school and it shows us the background of how things work and it makes us want to change things because we know more about the issues.” Students at FWHS, particularly those who participated in ASB like Oliver, were most adamant in their support. This is similar to the findings of Campbell (2008), Lenzi et al. (2014) and Parkinson (2015), who found that democratic school climates with

student participation in school governance were key to increased commitment to civic engagement.

Students at ASHS agreed that student voice was very important, but unlike the students at FWHS, ASHS students were split on whether or not their voices were being heard. On the one hand, Sam Seaborn believes that the school would respond if only the students spoke up, saying, “If there was a group of students that pitched this idea, and they had support to why it would work, and how it could be done, I think that would be really effective, they’d be responsive to it.” Donna Moss agreed, saying, “I don’t really think of it as like someone is in power making my decisions for me.... I feel like they do a pretty good job.” Some students, however, had an alternative experience. Ainsley Hays found difficulties with particular teachers and the program’s implementation. She said, “Some teachers ignore the whole thing. Other times they’re not properly instructed. They’re not planned out according to a student’s, like, life.” This dichotomy did not dilute the consistent conclusion that student voice in school governance is essential in order for civic learning programs to be effective.

School officials at both schools indicated that both student and parent feedback were important but were more hesitant in their support. ASHS Teacher Mr. Santos said, “I think we get their feedback; I think we get a lot of the feedback. I don’t think we have necessarily a formal time where we have them give their feedback, but they’re very outspoken.” All other ASHS school officials agreed. At FWHS, teacher Mr. Lyman said of the student newspaper, “We’re tried to put in place that look, we are a check and a balance. We’re part of the participatory government. Our job is to give a voice to people who are not in the ASB.” Regarding ASB and true participatory governance, Mrs. Hampton echoed her students, saying, “We’re more than just balloons and activities. If admin says no I’m like, ‘You can’t say no to me. I’m an ASB director

and this is for the students. You can't say no. I'm sorry, you just can't." Although students and school officials alike agreed about the importance of student voice and participatory governance, there certainly was more skepticism among the students from ASHS as to whether or not their voice would be heard.

Although the quantitatively proven six practices are significant parts of the program design at both sites and found to be positive steps overall, during focus groups, interviews, and reflective journaling, students were adamant in their desire for another way schools could engage with students of color in civic learning programs. Whereas both students and school officials were generally supportive of the six practices and the capital building activities, there were notable differences. Students were more enthusiastic about capital building than school officials and school officials were more enthusiastic about the six practices.

Capital Building

Over the course of our focus group and interview, Sam Seaborne from ASHS shared his community and family stories while highlighting the history of his hometown. He explained that when civic learning programs focus on highlighting community cultural wealth and building familial capital, they have a greater impact on students of color. I asked Sam to speak about issues facing his local community and he spoke to the effects of public policy that engage only in certain areas of the city. He said,

I think they're currently redoing the sidewalks; I don't know if that was a city decision or a town decision. But what I've noticed is that the sidewalks are being done in, I guess, the nicer part of town. Whereas if I go to the parts that aren't as nice, you know, I don't see that same type of reconstruction going on.

I asked him why he thought this was and he explained that it has always been that way:

This is where people live that have harder lifestyles. They don't have as much wealth; they don't have as much community assistance. And it's kind of hard ... It is hard to see because these people are like me, but they're not at the same time. I see how red lining has impacted you and your family, and how you live.”

As we discussed the importance of the local community and social capital, we dug into Sam's family history. He explained,

My great-grand cousin is Carter G. Woodson who started Negro History Week, which became Black History Month. He was a prevalent writer and advocate for African Americas in the 1920s. Ralph Riddle is my great grand uncle; he was the first African American police officer in my hometown. They taught me to always fight for change and equality through activism and to lead by example.

I asked him if engaging in the family history and with the local community would increase commitment to civic engagement for students of color. Sam explained,

I think another thing is, subconsciously, people of color know, or they have the inclination that if they present these ideas again, 'cause it's been presented over the course of years, that nothing new will happen. The government will say, “Okay, yeah, we'll do that,” and then they just won't get around it, they'll just sideline it.”

I wanted to find out what Sam thought we could do to make a greater impact, and he said, “Make it more engaging for them. So bring it to their communities, like bring up problems that would relate to them more. Start with, ‘Hey this kind of impacts your community, what you think could be changed?’”

I wanted to find out how this related to the local community, and Sam explained, “If you give students more leniency and more opportunity to make it more personal, then they could

become more engaged in the project.” I pressed further to find out what how the innovation project as it related to housing could increase commitment to civic engagement for students of color. Sam replied,

So I think more often than not, you will see people of color in situations that are harder to live through. I guess the most immediate one would be housing and trying to find housing and maintain housing for people of color.

I continued to ask how race and the local community impact students of color and their civic engagement. Sam answered,

I guess the bottom line of it is if it has to do with race, I’ll pay more attention to it or I’ll notice it more often, just because race and ethnicity has been such a big part of how I was taught and how I grew up because at the end of the day, I am an African American male.

In asking him why being an African American male was so essential to his experience, Sam said, “I have a deeper understanding of what it’s like to see people oppressed and then have that oppression justified through the legal system.”

In looking at student responses, it became apparent that they are in search of something different than the traditional six proven practices to more fully engage them and strengthen their commitment to civic engagement. They repeatedly demonstrated a desire for civic learning programs to empowerment them as of persons of color and frame interactions through valuing their community cultural wealth as defined by Yosso (2005). In similar but inverse relationships, both students and school officials found positives from capital building, but students were clearly more enthusiastic and supportive. All 15 students wanted their civic learning programs to include practices that built social, familial, and aspirational capital. One school official at each site did not see the value in familial or social capital, but all school officials believed in the efficacy of

aspirational capital. None of the school officials but 14 of 15 student desired practices designed to build resistance capital.

Aspirational, Navigational, and Resistance Capital

In expressing desire for and appreciation of empowerment through capital building. Yosso (2005) identified six types of capital that support empowerment, including aspirational, navigational, and resistance, which students repeatedly grouped together. Two students at ASHS, Donna Moss and Ainsley Hays, explicitly commented on the importance of role models who mirror their gender and race. Ainsley Hays said about aspirational support from school officials, “Yeah, it’s a double edge towards with that one if it catch 22 like yes you should stand with me but don’t stand in front of me.” In reflecting on their civic learning programs, all students at both schools agreed that the program should be built with support for student aspirations.

All school officials at both schools agreed that empowerment was key to success, such as FWHS Principal Dr. Cregg, who said, “I want kids to be empowered to do things in the real world.” Yosso (2005) noted how important it is for educators to limit their own assumptions when using aspirational capital to frame student empowerment. One example of a disconnect between assumptions was expressed by ASHS Principal Dr. Barlet, who said,

I always have one parent every year that emails me when we’re doing it, that I’m invoking my White middle-class values on the children by making them dress nice for their presentations and how dare I, but it doesn’t matter. We still do it, because it’s that importance of, “No, I’m going to have high expectations. When your child goes to a job interview, when they go to present, they need to understand what business dress is. That’s an important skill to have. They need to understand how these processes work.”

The balance between empowerment and the challenging of assumptions can be difficult when supporting student aspirations, but can also increase difficulties with navigational and resistance capital as well.

School officials and students at both FWHS and ASHS were split on their belief about the value of increasing student navigational capital related to civic engagement for students of color. When asked about the impact on commitment to civic engagement, eight of the 15 students believed it was important whereas both principals and half of the teachers agreed. At FWHS, student Curtis Carruthers talked about the difficulty of building navigational capital and the importance of doing so for students of color, stating, “The problem is just there’s so much work involved in getting access, the paperwork involved to do it to move along is what really separates the wall of paper between the people and the government.”

School officials and students agreed that counseling was one place where navigational capital building would have the greatest impact. FWHS Principal Dr. Cregg said, “We have a special programs counselor now, who focuses on ELD, our avid, our foster youth... he really specializes on them, to make sure that they’re invited, they’re being attended to, they’re engaged.” Several students highlighted the split between advanced placement and general education courses and access for students of color, including ASHS student Donna Moss, who said, “Generally the people in non-AP classes are people of color and people with lower incomes,” and Gina Toscano, who added, “There’s even some counselors where they don’t give you the option of like a 4 year.” Yosso (2005) also explained that a major part of building navigational capital is removing barriers. ASHS teacher Leo McGarry supported that viewpoint, stating, “The primary barriers are their own current level of achievement...their own reading level, and that we as a staff, it’s our job to bring them up to speed.”

Students at both schools were overwhelmingly positive about the potential benefits of building resistance capital. Yosso (2005) explained that building resistance capital involves celebrating the history of civil rights and collective freedom. No school official at either site spoke about the civil rights and freedoms aspects of resistance capital, but, as discussed earlier, they were certainly in favor of service in the local community. Students at both schools expressed a desire for building resistance capital in their civic learning programs but explained that they built that capital elsewhere. ASHS student Sam Seaborn expressed his belief that modern young adult literature is one source of resistance capital when he said, “We grew up reading books about how corrupt governments can get overthrown like *The Hunger Games*, the *Harry Potter* series, how a couple of young people can get together and they can create such dramatic change.” Another ASHS student, Ainsley Hays, argued for the value of building resistance capital but decried its absence in the Innovation Project, saying, “We don’t like to focus on it, period...race issues, sensitive black topics, mental health, gender inequality—it doesn’t matter. When it comes to it in the classrooms, people don’t like to talk about it.”

Familial, Linguistic, and Social Capital

The area of most universal and adamant support among students was the development of familial capital. Familial capital is closely aligned with social capital because both draw on social and personal resources within the community (Yosso, 2005). Every student at both schools expressed a strong desire to have civic learning programs incorporate building familial and social capital. Expressing frustration that familial capital was not more central to the innovation project, ASHS student Gina Toscano said, “It’s important, just hearing the stories, it’s like unbelievable. Like, how many times they crossed the border to live that, so called American dream, but they won’t do that.” Donna Moss added, “I think students would care a lot more if family or

community was part of it, honestly, ‘cause there were a lot of people that just didn’t really care.” Ainsley Hays also agreed, saying, “We didn’t really discuss like the problem of housing in our own community or for our families, which is really interesting.” All of the students at ASHS agreed that a greater connection to family and social capital would help increase engagement.

Separately, students at FWHS were more likely to believe that their various programs already included aspects that build familial and social capital. All nine students indicated a strong preference for familial and social capital building within their programs. Eight of the nine indicated that their programs were already successful in this regard. Oliver Babish said, “There were the events that happened the end of last year, and the class had a discussion about what we could do to change the attitude of the community.” Whereas that aspect focused on incorporating personal and social resources within the community, Margaret Hooper was more impressed with how Junior State of America (JSA) and mock trial incorporated storytelling including from her family, saying, “I kind of grew up with that and that’s what these clubs are really trying to do.” In addition to building social and familial capital, the incorporation of counter-storytelling and the challenges to the dominant ideology that it promotes are key to building linguistic capital (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Linguistic capital, too, was found to be important by a majority of students at both sites and 10 of 15 students overall. ASHS student Ainsley Hays said, “I will make my voice heard, because of my story and how not different but how unique it is, and the project helped with that.” School officials were less enthusiastic about the building of linguistic capital, with only one participant discussing it; Mr. Santos from ASHS, stated, “I start off with identity, move to memory, trying to find community, voice, so they’re learning about these things.” Although he emphasized student voice and storytelling, other school officials were more likely to focus on

familial capital. Mr. McGarry explained that, “The way that students respond to certain questions about political or cultural issues have been influenced by some kind of religious upbringing or other cultural kind of influence – it’s what we want.” FWHS school officials agreed. Principal Dr. Cregg explained that valuing family and community is essential; “I’m not an isolated piece of this community, I’m at the high school, Whatever the issue is; race, whatever; we’re a microcosm of the larger community, and so we need to have those talks here too.”

Over the course of the interviews, focus groups, and reflective journals, I came to find a clear difference in how school officials and students of color viewed the tactics used by their civic learning programs. At two of the most successful programs in the state, it is not surprising that school officials adamantly support the six practices that are highlighted through the state awards process. Although they are not negative about the six practices, students of color are significantly more positive about capital building through the community cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2005). On average, 86% of students supported capital building activities whereas only 50% supported the traditional six practices. Related to enthusiasm, students discussed capital building at 33% more frequently than the six practices. School officials supported the six practices at a 98% rate and capital building at 56%.

Forms of Civic Engagement

A second aspect of the discussions with students of color and school officials centered around what actions they believe count as civic engagement. Certainly, all students and school officials agreed that voting is the gold standard for civic engagement, but were split when discussing other actions that students might take. There are implications for race and culture as well as program development related to these differences. Checkoway (2013) suggested that prior studies of civic engagement ignored the types of engagement favored by students of color

and thus underreported engagement among certain subpopulations. Certainly, throughout the interviews and focus groups, it became apparent that non-traditional forms of civic engagement were massively preferred by students of color whereas school officials continue to place greater faith in traditional forms.

Over the course of our focus group and interview, Ainsley Hays from ASHS shared her family story highlighting forms of civic engagement that are not traditionally counted by political scientists. While she also spent time delving into the gentrification of her childhood home and decrying the history of housing policies that have resulted in racial inequity, she primarily highlighted the power of protest and resistance as meaningful political action. Ainsley explained, “My grandma’s a Black Panther. Like, we come from a very militaristic type style. And it’s just interesting to me because, I don’t necessarily hold that, but you are shaped by your community no matter what.” In understanding the importance of her family and community, she was able to understand and accept forms of political participation that have historically brought about political and social change for persons of color. Ainsley added, “My grandmother, who was a Black Panther and is advocating for equal rights among all, and is still like, in her 70s trying to get things done.”

When pressed on how her grandmother gets things done and how it has affected her, Ainsley answered,

Yeah, we will protest or march. It matters because you’ve never really seen a Black woman with power or has the voice of power or strength. With my personal political action whether it’s small or big, I’m opening doors for those who the door has been shut for very, very long time.

I followed up about those big and small actions and if voting was most important. Ainsley answered,

Voting matters, sure, but being a Black woman, she taught me that you have to do other things. I get to represent a community now and have that privilege, that's a privilege within itself and take their concerns into account and get to finally 100% value them for who they are and speak for them.

I continued to listen to Ainsley tell her family history and I asked about the role of protests and marches. She dug into her father's history with law enforcement and told me,

I believe it was here at my house and I think my dad was getting arrested when I was like maybe 8 or so. It's definitely like a very difficult phase because they're supposed to protect and serve but they've never lived up to that truth to me.

When I asked about how she believes she can use civic action to bring about criminal justice reform, Ainsley again spoke about her grandmother and the recent presidential election. She said,

No matter how far we have come, and are going, America is America. And America is ran by White men. But my grandma, having a strong background of coming from the civil rights era, she's always advocated for those less fortunate and less privileged as she is even though she's a Black woman in America.

I asked what she felt like she could do to make a difference in the future. Ainsley replied, "For you to sit here and ignore my skin color, and my truth, and my background is absurd. We will fight back, in the streets if we have to." I asked her if this was civic action. She replied, "Of course."

Traditional forms of engagement including party membership, campaign donations, and political event attendance were only seen as valuable by no more than three students.

Conversely, students supported non-traditional forms much more strongly, with all 15 valuing artistic expression, 14 supporting protests and marches, 12 supporting participation in race-based organizations, and six engaging in church and faith-based organizations. Voting and artistic expression dominated the conversation in each of the focus groups. It quickly became clear that there was a strong preference among students of color for non-traditional forms of engagement.

As we continued to discuss the meaning of civic engagement and what actions the students believe should count, we moved into the traditional forms of civic engagement highlighted by the Pew Research Center (2019), particularly voting and party membership. Every student interviewed at both schools identified voting as the central aspect of civic engagement, making statements similar to Donna Moss from ASHS who found value in discussions around voting on a school trip. She stated, “They did talk to us about the importance of voting and the school shootings-And just the major political issues that have been happening. I felt like I was pretty involved when I did that.” Joe Quincy from FWHS added, “Just seeing my government class right now...I’m just going to promise myself that I’ll vote every chance that I can because when people don’t vote there’s just more problems.” School officials also found voting to be central to civic learning programs. FWHS Principal Dr. CJ Cregg said of the school-wide voter registration program, “This idea that we want every senior to register to vote, there’s a lot of hesitation for different reasons, but it’s usually in their best interest.”

In discussing other forms of civic engagement, students were eager to express the belief that some activities might lead to voting, others were civic engagement in and of themselves, and still others had aspects of both. Among those practices that are generally considered traditional forms of civic engagements, students at both schools responded at very low levels. Only two students mentioned political party membership, three discussed donating to campaigns or

organizations, and one described attending political events. Sam Seaborn commented on engaging in politics in myriad ways when he wrote,

I try to pay attention to politics on social media, or I try to read something every now and then. I think, I guess I talked about it a little bit, going to city hall and talking to the mayor and his council.

Every student described engaging with politics on social media, whereas only three talked about reading.

When asked to bring up anything else that they might consider civic engagement, the students echoed Ginwright (2010) and Watts and Flanagan (2007), with 15 expressing belief in the power of artistic expression as political action, 14 highlighting the importance of marches and protests, six describing participation in church as a political action, and 12 discussing participation in race based organizations like MEChA. When we engaged in this discussion, student language tended to change and instead of using the term “civic engagement” they seemed to prefer using “political action.” I asked one focus group why this was and Joe Quincy replied, “It’s just what we call it in class.”

Artistic expression was unanimously favored by students as an important part of their civic lives. Students at both schools highlighted the prevalence of musicians and graffiti artists while expressing a desire for the inclusion of a wide variety of arts within their civic learning programs. Watts and Flanagan (2007) explained that artistic self-expression has been ignored as a form of civic engagement, but Mr. Santos at ASHS and Dr. Cregg and Mrs. Hampton at FWHS were all firmly in agreement with their students. Mr. Santos said, “I think it is engagement. If you’re going out into a public space, and interacting with art work, and that art work is affecting you, but not just that, the interaction with the people.” Three students spoke about art directly

related to their civic learning program, such as Donna Moss, who said, “Yeah, I definitely think that songs or art would get a lot more people involved.”

More frequently, students emphasized the impact of the political views of artists, musicians, and celebrities. All 15 students discussed the role of such celebrities, and only one held a negative opinion. Nancy McNally said, “I think celebrities have way too high of a power of influencing students because.” More typical responses came from Curtis Carruthers, who said, “I feel almost guilty how much comedians have opened my eyes to things,” and Toby Ziegler who said, “I think music and art is a more effective way of influencing younger people.” Sam Seaborn added, “I went to a Q&A with this artist KRS-One where he touched on political-esque ideas. Like just about how African Americans can get involved in politics and why their involvement is so small.” Artistic expression and the power of the artists themselves resonated similarly to other non-traditional forms of civic engagement.

Students at both schools discussed protest and marches in depth. At both sites, students began the conversations around the Parkland shooting and the subsequent student walkouts. ASHS Student Sam Seaborn said, “I remember being a part of last year’s walkout, which brought students and faculty together to advocate for gun control laws to protect all people, not just students.” Toby Ziegler added a complaint that most students shared; “The school decide that they would kind of have a thing for it, you could go out there during nutrition and that’s it - it kind of just turned into kind of a school activity.” Students at both school spoke about recent events and related protests and marches particularly for gun control. FWHS student Lionell Tribbey said, “After the Parkland shooting there was a lot of march for our lives protests where you can get indirectly involved in the government. We kind of had a walk out at the school right after.”

Other students expanded on protests and marches related to causes. ASHS student Ainsley Hays said, “I’ve gone to the women’s march, Black lives matter, I’m very much a part of. So, I’m heavily involved with certain movements.” Donna Moss added, “I have been to some marches. There was an administrator, and she kind of recruited some of the older female high school students that she knew of that she thought would be good.” Whereas 14 of the 15 students expressed the feeling that protests and marches were political action, FWHS student Nancy McNally emphasized the relationship between protesting and voting, stating, “Yeah, but you can protest all you want but the only way legislation’s going to get passed is if you vote. And so there’s no point in protesting if you’re not going to vote for or against it.” Curtis Carruthers added, “Just because you walked out of school or got 100,000 people to walk down a street, that doesn’t do anything directly. Unless the message is heard or understood or wanted to be accepted, it’s just white noise.”

The only student who was expressly opposed to marches, FWHS student Kate Harper, said, “A lot of protests and marches, they still don’t get anything done, but I think a lot of it’s just for attention a lot of the time, it doesn’t do anything.” The otherwise significant support for the importance of protests and marches as a political action aligned with Intravia et al.’s (2017) findings that persons of color are more likely to support forms of protest. One school official also highlighted protests and marches as important forms of civic engagement. FWHS teacher Mrs. Hampton said, “They’re more definitely globally connected, and nationally connected. They were out there protesting for prop eight, the women’s march, I looked around and there was tons of my girls, just tons. They’re doing it, they are.”

Whereas Ganz (2009) highlighted the importance of community churches in the 2008 Obama presidential campaign, only six of the 15 students stated that political actions happen at

church and that their opinions can be formed there. Curtis Carruthers said, “I share my parents religion, actually. We’re very active, very involved in our religion, that’s definitely affected our opinions.” Other students, however, did not think it had much of an impact, including Donna Moss, who said, “I really don’t think religion or faith or whatever has anything to do with it.” Interestingly, only Curtis expressed that his participation in a community church was in-and-of-itself a form of political participation, as noted by Stovall (2013).

Twice as many students expressed the belief that participation in ethnic-based organizations like the Black Lives Matter movement would increase their civic engagement, similar to the findings of Bowman et al. (2015). There was unanimous support among the 12 students who had participated in these organizations. Students spoke about participating in MEChA, Asian Club, Black Student Union, the POSSE Foundation, and the NAACP. The three students who did not participate in any ethnic organizations remained silent on the matter. Sam Seaborn said, “Literally in college and once you get out of college, we have all these different connections we can make in order to get jobs, or do to community service and volunteer work.” School officials on both campuses unanimously supported participation in race-based organizations and touted their partnerships, including FWHS Principal Dr. Cregg, who said, “That’s been a newer thing we’re doing, partnership with the foundation and with the NAACP.” ASHS teacher Mr. Santos added, “The NAACP is active in our school. I’m the adviser for the BSU, and they will come talk, but as far as being part of the innovation project, I wouldn’t say that we do that.”

The traditional research focus on civic engagement has centered on traditional forms of participation. By focusing on forms of engagement such as voting, party affiliation, donations, and contacting elected officials, other forms of political action diminished and negative

stereotypes are reinforced (Mangum, 2013). School officials at both sites were open to non-traditional forms of engagement but were significantly less supportive of the idea than students. The students of color with whom I spoke believed that one of the greatest ways to increase their empowerment would be for civic learning programs to validate and encourage the forms of political action that are favored by their communities.

There Are Necessary Tradeoffs in Designing Civic Learning Programs

In our discussions it became very clear that there were significant tradeoffs that each school had to make when designing their programs. Students and school officials alike discussed their perceptions of those tradeoffs, causing differences between the two cases to emerge. As discussed in the program details before, the ASHS Innovation Project is a 1-week, school-wide assignment undertaken by 100% of students and staff. Alternatively, at FWHS, nine different programs were highlighted, with the vast majority being opt-in programs targeting small percentages of the school population. Conversations related to the tradeoff between depth and access were discussed at both sites. Particularly at ASHS where all students are required to participate, students discussed at length the difference in experience based upon whether a student was enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) course. Students and school officials at both sites also discussed the role of choice, whether between specific project types at ASHS or about which programs are engaging at FWHS. Finally, there was a significant breakdown in opinions related to the civic learning programs and whether they should be constructed to be colorblind or whether there is value in building the programs with intentionality around race.

Every single student of color and school official at each site spoke about the important decisions that have to be made regarding depth and access. This topic came up more frequently than any other single topic of discussion with Students of color overwhelmingly desired their

civic learning programs to include intentionality around race, with 13 of the 15 students in support. School officials were much more hesitant, with five of eight believing colorblindness was preferential to intentionality. All 23 students and school officials supported including student choice in their civic learning programs.

Depth versus Access

In the discussions surrounding the tradeoff between depth and access, several items were mentioned. FWHS Principal Dr. CJ Cregg explained that she believed her lack of a school-wide program was potentially holding back her school's success, stating, "To go bigger we really have to be a school wide program. We don't really have a program. We have lots of programs." The FWHS version of a multitude of optional program choices allows for a greater degree of flexibility among students, but is also likely to leave behind those students who are already disenfranchised. As student Joe Quincy put it, "If you look at the ASB kids they're all the kids who are going to 4-year universities that have rich parents. So, maybe that could be changed." FWHS ASB Director Mrs. Hampton agreed that, "The kids that are most involved are mostly our honors AP kids, to be honest with you." She countered that certain programs are more inclusive than others, particularly Representative Council, about which she said, "When I look down in there I see diversity, I see color, I see different viewpoints. Freshmen to seniors. They're all in there. And there is a big diversity of ideas." Student Nancy McNally also saw a lot of value in the access offered by representative council, saying, "When the kids get to meet and talk about the issues they are facing at the school, and then get them solved, I think that gives the students a chance to have their voice heard." Voter registration in senior government courses was the one FWHS programs designed for 100% participation. Curtis Carruthers said, "I know it is supported

in government (class), the school is trying to get everyone registered and make sure everyone's voting."

At ASHS, the student experience was much different. As the program required 100% participation of all students, school-wide, students had different concerns about depth and access that were primarily focused on the difference between those courses that are Advanced Placement and those that are not. Students indicated that there are well understood differences in student populations related to course access and had very strong feelings about the difference in quality, engagement, and support that the two tracks offered. ASHS student Donna Moss said, "A lot of the non-AP kids are more often people of color than in AP classes, I think because historically people of color don't have as much chances to get higher educated." Student Ainsley Hays explained that because placement in advanced courses was based on test scores, students who came from less academically successful elementary schools were at a disadvantage; "When you do not have the foundation at your elementary school and you're already determined by your test scores, it devalues that child from getting a greater education or from even like having aspirations to do that." Ryan Pierce spoke about his first-hand experience in a non-AP course and told us about a time his teacher said, "And this is why you guys are all gonna go to ..community college, but you guys are gonna end up in community college with a dead end job."

School officials at ASHS also agreed that there was a distinction between AP courses and those that were general level. Speaking about which students were most involved with the Innovation Project, Principal Dr. Barlet said, "They're kids that are already in our AP program or have received access to these types of things before." Teacher Mr. McGarry added that there are issues with effort as well, saying, "You have teachers that are gonna roll their eyes, 'Oh it's this or oh it's that,' so that was an issue." Dr. Barlet also talked about the challenges in overcoming

limitations for general level teachers, stating, “I think there is some adult mindset limitations when they’re sitting like, ‘Oh, well my innovation group doesn’t have advanced learners in it.’ So they’re not getting as much, they’re not being pushed as hard.” This difficulty in maintaining access to courses and ensuring teacher efficacy in all class was repeatedly highlighted by principals at both schools.

Choice

Related to issues of access is the question of student choice and the value that it brings. Choice presented different issues at each site because student choice at ASHS involved small-scale choices within the Innovation Project whereas programmatic choice at FWHS was central to the school’s civic learning design. Speaking about the wide range of programs offered at FWHS, Principal CJ Cregg said, “It could be whatever, art, dance, whatever, it doesn’t matter. I just want you to do something that you like, something you care about, something that motivates you.” Offering nine different programs designed for civic learning that both covers the entirety of the senior class and hundreds of students in various extracurricular organizations provides real and significant choice for those students. Teacher Mr. Bailey added, “One of the great things about these programs is it gives kids, particularly kids who maybe are not athletes, the opportunity to become involved in something.” Student Lionell Tribbey recalled speaking with his friends about the various club choices on campus; “I was asking friends, ‘What clubs are you in? I want to find a club that’s actually cool.’ Then one of my friends told me about JSA.” Several FWHS students talked about difficulties with recruitment and helping students to be aware of what exists. Joe Quincy suggested that the school “like have an extra open-house or something?” Discussions around the importance of choice were not limited to FWHS.

Students at ASHS found choice to be essential for actively engaging students of color. Ainsley Hays said, “Students of color would like to have a choice in the Innovation Project; if the administration came with five topics and we get to vote and whatever topic has the most votes is the one that we’re doing.” Student Sam Seaborn added that more choice would be engaging, stating, “I feel like if you give students more leniency and more opportunity to make it more personal, then they could become more engaged in the project.” School officials also believed that choice was important but explained that it was more complicated particularly due to time constraints, such as when Mr. Santos said, “The benefits we have of that streamline or concentrated time period also have its limitations as far as allowing the ideas to develop and grow.” Mr. McGarry explained that he believed that choice was successfully offered even within the time constraints, saying,

Within a week’s time they can actually write a paper, do a presentation and all of that.

But really, one of the most valuable aspects about the entire exercise is the process of them conceiving of what the problem is.

Colorblindness versus Intentionality

A final area of great disagreement was in how civic learning programs should address questions around race and culture. Two of the four school officials at each site believed that a colorblind approach was most fair and equitable. ASHS Principal Barlet explained,

We’re not doing anything specific to, “Hey, students of color, you are the ones that need to be a part of this for this reason.” But by incorporating and making it a school-wide 100% everyone’s doing it, we get everybody.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) emphasized that claims of neutrality and objectivity suppress personal narratives and result in internalized negative stereotypes. Other school officials believed

that the schools should show an increased intentionality around issues of race within their civic learning programs. FWHS Principal Cregg said,

I've talked to my staff about this multiple times, with girls of color and with, well yeah, any group that's not the mainstream group. you need to ask multiple times. They're not going to jump in because you said it the first time.

Whereas both principals believed that they were successfully accomplishing their goals around race and either colorblindness or intentionality, some teachers disagreed and were looking for change. FWHS Teacher Mr. Lyman disagreed with the approach taken by Principal Cregg, stating, "I ignore it. I don't think about color. I don't think about the religiosity. I don't think about any of the ethnic concerns. I treat them all exactly the same." Mrs. Hampton from FWHS had a different take. She expressed concern that discussions around race would cause problems in the local community, stating, "This is an incredibly conservative community. To bring up anything about race is suicide for you. Your political proclivities aside, it is sad because these are human issues." Mrs. Hampton was also concerned that the school staff did not represent the diversity of the students, stating, "How many African American teachers do we have? Come on. They don't see themselves anywhere on this campus. And I think that's really sad. My thing would be hiring more of a diverse staff."

Students at FWHS believed that their myriad options included opportunities to be intentional about race, but found that intentionality lacking in more generalized activities. Nancy McNally said, "But the kids who are, say, that aren't going to 4-years, they aren't the ones that are trying to get into ASB, but I also don't believe that we are marketing it as something that's their thing." When I asked the focus group what they meant by "those kids," Joe Quincy hesitated then replied, "Honestly, the poor Latino kid who deals drugs or something? It's just not

their thing because they don't care." ASB Advisor Mrs. Hampton was also concerned about recruitment and opportunity for students of color. She said, "I tried to open up the kids that come to apply for ASB, I don't have a big Hispanic population because they just don't think ASB's those kids. I don't know what we can do, Chris. I wish I knew." Student Dolores Landingham was also looking for answers when she said, "I feel like the only thing you really can do is try to support them and tell them, 'Hey, you should come, you should come, you should come.' But if they really don't care, it's not going to happen."

At ASHS, students also believed that there should be increased intentionality around race. Donna Moss said, "If there was some intentionality with race, that would maybe just involve more people in it than less. if you're not involving people of all different colors and cultures and races and sexes, then it's kinda pointless." Sam Seaborn added, "People of color and minority groups, LGBTQ, if we really took the time to highlight them and their needs, there would be backlash, but it's important to hear voices of people that are not the majority." The general feeling that minority perspectives were sidelined was also echoed by Ainsley Hays, who said, "I'm looking at other minority groups as well that have been ignored at my school. I'm looking at so many different groups of disenfranchised people."

The discussion of tradeoffs was one of the more intense aspects of the entire series of conversations, with strong opinions on both sides. Particularly with regard to intentionality around race and colorblindness, students of color and school officials were incredibly adamant about their beliefs and reasons for those beliefs. Students of color have made it clear that in order to better engage them and their peers, civic learning programs ought to provide students with meaningful choices, provide wide access (particularly to underrepresented minorities), and be

intentional about race and culture to more adequately address the needs of historically disenfranchised students.

Conclusion

After performing document review, focus groups, interviews, and reflective journals, I coded and analyzed the resulting data in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What do students of color do in successful school civic learning programs that has convinced them to care about the larger civic world and their place in it?
2. What are the schools doing that brought students of color to participate in the civic learning programs?
3. What are these schools doing (and if they are not, what could they be doing) to better address students of color?

After analyzing the documents, performing focus groups and interviews, and coding the data the following information rose to the forefront as most important. On average, the students of color who participated in this study strongly supported capital building activities designed to around community cultural wealth. They also found value in the traditional six practices but found those practices less compelling than capital building activities. The students who participated in this study also strongly supported non-traditional forms of civic engagement, particularly artistic expression, protests, and participation in race-based organizations. The students also indicated very little desire to engage in traditionally measured forms of civic engagement with no more than three believing in the efficacy of party membership, donations, or political event attendance. The students of color in this study were unanimous in speaking about the important decisions that have to be made regarding depth and access. Nearly all (13) of the students desired intentionality around race and every participant demonstrated desire for student

choice in their civic learning programs. Given these responses, I was able to conclude the following: (a) students of color are more likely to respond to building capital than best practices, (b) students of color prefer non-traditional forms of civic engagement, (c) there are necessary tradeoffs in designing civic learning programs, and (d) students of color believe that intentionality around race is significantly preferable to colorblindness.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the struggle for universal suffrage continues against voter suppression and disenfranchisement across the imperfect democracy known as the United States, the public education system has recently reconstituted its role as an advocate for civic engagement. Following the 2012 report *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (Bankston, 2013) and the Annenberg Public Policy Center's 2011 report: *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* (Gould et al., 2011), California responded with *Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning in California: A Blueprint for Action* (California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning, 2014), which has led to public education systems spanning K-16 intentionally redesigned and launching civic learning programs directly targeted at increasing civic engagement. California's K-12 Civic Learning Awards in particular focused on equity for all students. However, the majority of student participants in two of the most awarded civic learning programs across the state are White and do not adequately represent the historically disenfranchised populations that the civic learning programs were ostensibly designed to serve. Additionally, Berger (2011) found that even though the number of programs and program participation have increased, overall levels of civic engagement are at best stagnant. The need for increased civic engagement is apparent, as American voting rates are far below the vast majority of democracies worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2019).

The six proven practices for civic education (Gould et al., 2011) have come to be considered the gold standard for schools and due to their prominence in the awards process they are central to programs statewide. These practices have been validated as generally effective in increasing commitment to civic engagement (Cohen & Chaffee, 2012), but have not been demonstrated to build civic engagement specifically for students of color (Callahan &

Obenchain, 2016). Principals, teachers, and program advisors are left without a clear answer regarding how they can most effectively increase commitment to civic engagement particular for students from the most historically disenfranchised populations. In facing this dilemma, school officials face choices between colorblindness and intentionality around culture and race.

The purpose of this study was to gather data regarding best practices for civic learning programs to increase the commitment of students of color toward civic participation. It gathered additional data on the types of civic engagement most favored by students of color, the reasons for those preferences, and how to more appropriately align civic engagement programs to incorporate the preferences of students of color. As discussed in the literature review, there is a necessary coalescing of critical race theory, the community cultural wealth model, and civic engagement research. I strove to provide insight and direction for future civic learning programs to more adequately address the needs of students of color while validating and celebrating the forms of civic engagement most important to their families and communities. Through document analysis, four focus groups, and 13 interviews across two award winning Southern California high schools, this study identified what civic learning practices most entice the students of color in these groups, what forms of engagement are seen as most valuable, and how tradeoffs in these programs should be resolved by school officials.

The context of these sites is important to the overall discussion as is the composition of the participants. ASHS is a magnet school in the areas surrounding Los Angeles. There are implications for this study based around the lottery system for student admittance and the history of the greater Los Angeles area. FWHS is a traditional high school in Ventura County that has its own unique cultural history as a beach community with major agricultural development. The cultural context of the students who participated in this study is also essential to the findings.

Eight of the 15 students were female, three identified as African-American, six as LatinX, and six as Asian-American or Pacific Islander. This chapter seeks to unify the findings from the previous chapter through the lens of the research questions framing the focus groups and interviews. It will present how those findings echo and rebut prior researching providing direction for further study. Finally, this chapter will explore the limitations of the study and assert final recommendations.

Research Question 1: What are schools doing to engage students of color in the civic learning programs?

Award-winning civic learning programs in Southern California are addressing the needs of students of color most effectively through practices that build student capital and provide broad entry access to encourage participation. They could be more effective through incorporating practices that focus more directly on capital building than on the traditional six practices. Because the programs still have some reliance upon the six practices, they can approach these practices with a hierarchical model that emphasizes the practices most favored by students of color. The programs can also more adequately approach access through intentionality around race and the rejection of a *colorblind* attitude. Finally, programs that seek to address civic engagement for students of color must consider alternative forms of civic engagement, including civic disobedience, and entertain the idea that these alternative forms of participation may be more central than voting to certain communities of color.

Award-winning civic learning programs address the needs of their students of color through practices that build capital with an emphasis on aspirational, familial, and social capital, but fall short in providing resistance capital. Whereas programs effectively encourage the aspirations of students of color and incorporate some aspects of family storytelling and

community organizations, they could improve community connections, partner with race-based organizations such as the NAACP and MEChA, and utilize the language of the community. Additionally, programs limit the incorporation of resistance building through organization and community building and instead focus on more traditional practices. These and other programs would more adequately address the needs of students of color through encouraging resistance capital, including teaching the history of civil disobedience, the labor movement, and civil rights struggles, while also teaching students how to organize within the community and target policies that affect their families and friends. A change in focus to encourage forms of participation other than voting would more strongly engage students of color who have a rational disbelief in the efficacy of voting given the history of disenfranchisement and voter suppression. Ignoring resistance capital building practices not only limits the engagement of students of color, but also serves to perpetuate the structural racism endemic to American educational and political institutions that have historically only seen change through extra-election political action.

These programs can more effectively address the needs of students of color and encourage their participation through prioritizing the six practices with participatory school governance as the most essential component. Other effective practices include direct instruction and service learning that incorporate current, local, and controversial issues. Programs also effectively provide baseline access to a broad range of students of color either through mandatory participation or broad program availability. Both could be improved, however, by removing GPA and test score requirements for club and advanced course access while recognizing the systemic flaws that produce rampant racial inequity in traditionally measured academic success. Students of color also argued that although removing these barriers would increase participation, changes in intentionality around race and opportunities for student choice

and decision making would further engage communities of color. Examples include partnerships with community organizations inside of the communities where students of color live. Currently, community partnerships exist either with formal branches of government or with programs led by and based in White communities. Students of color believe that increased choice in program design where they would be encouraged to tackle issues directly affecting their local communities would significantly increase participation and positive experiences for students of color in civic learning programs.

Finally, students of color interviewed for this study indicated that civic learning programs would more effectively attract and support students of color through acknowledging and valuing alternative forms of civic engagement often favored by historically disenfranchised communities of color. This is particularly evident with civil disobedience within the Black and LatinX communities that face disenfranchisement through historic institutional racism and intentional current voting policy. In approaching future program design, school officials should reconsider their colorblind attitude and more intentionally design programs to support and engage historically disenfranchised student communities. In order to do this, programs should have an increased focus on capital building activities, doubling down on aspirational, familial, and social capital while finding a new emphasis on resistance capital. These programs should center their efforts within the six practices on participatory school government and direct instruction and service opportunities addressing important local issues. Finally, these programs should increase intentionality around race by more adequately connecting with local community organizations, providing choice in program design, and empowering alternative forms of civic participation such as civil disobedience.

Research Question 2: How do students of color describe their experiences in a successful school-based civic learning program?

Not only do schools do very little to intentionally bring students of color to participate in civic learning programs, but also school officials believe that colorblindness is preferable to intentionality around race and recruitment. School officials explained that as long as the programs exist and are available, they have done their job to provide access. Student believe that schools are doing an inadequate job of recruiting and encouraging students of color and believe that questions of access based around GPA and test scores continue to prevent students of color from benefiting fully from civic learning programs. They also indicated that coordination with the local community using the local language, particularly for service opportunities, was key to engaging students of color in civic learning programs.

Between the two case studies represented here, there were significantly divergent approaches to access. The ASHS model is school-wide, where all students participate, but there are significant questions regarding the difference in program quality based on academic tracking for students of color. The FWHS approach involves creating dozens of programs to engage students with disparate interests and provide access for all populations. Difficulties at FWHS revolve around recruiting students of color and the degree to which intentionality is a positive or negative force for equity. Both schools shared a commonality, however; the students of color who were most involved in the civic learning programs were college-bound, AP students who typically found themselves as the racial minority in all of their classes. Each of these students was able to articulate difficulties with access to their civic learning programs for their peers and friends who were also students of color related to GPA requirements for club participation or honors and AP course placement. Students of color interviewed for this study indicated that they

were often the exception in their participation; they credited strong family influence for their academic success and their resultant participation in civic learning programs.

Every individual interviewed, whether a student or school official, spoke about difficulties with access. Students of color spent large portions of the focus groups describing the general difficulties with academic tracking, course access, club access, and general levels of comfort and success for students of color. Particularly relevant were discussions involving GPA requirements for course and club access and the practice of using test scores for course placement. Students of color repeatedly and adamantly lamented what they described as racist and unfair practices of placement based around grades and test scores that result from unequal and inadequate primary education institutions. Students at both sites highlighted the significant differences in schools from the *rich* and *poor* parts of town. Students described the poor educational conditions of lower grade schools for students of color and how those students are then tracked into remedial courses based on the test scores they earned from underperforming institutions. This question of access was largely ignored by school officials who believed that all students were given equal and open access to all courses and clubs.

In addition to questions of access, intentionality around race also divided students and school officials. 13 of 15 students of color in this study believed that schools ought to intentional design programs around the strengths and needs of communities of color whereas five of eight school officials believed that programs that were colorblind were preferable. All students and school officials agreed that the programs were currently constructed to be colorblind and the majority of school officials saw this as a benefit whereas a majority of students believed this was an area where the programs could be improved. Students explicitly said that programs involving local issues discussed in the community in the language of the community would increase the

involvement of students of color. School officials generally argued that such intentionality would be unfair to other students and that providing broad and equal access was preferable in program design.

The value of choice was universally agreed upon when it came to providing access for students of color. Whereas every student and school official agreed that providing choice was an essential aspect of encouraging participation, they disagreed on the extent to which current programs successfully provided choice. The vast majority of students believed that the programs at both schools provided at best the illusion of choice, and in fact asserted that the programs were extremely limited and unresponsive to student input. School officials believed that their programs responded adequately to students' input but consistently described their programs and processes where all decisions and directions were given by school officials.

Programs looking to recruit and support students of color effectively should consider intentionality around race and an emphasis on culture. Students of color interviewed in this study indicated that programs should provide broad access to students of color without limitations based upon GPA and test scores. On a larger scale, they believed that educational systems as a whole should do a better job at providing equity to all students and providing stronger academic outcomes for impoverished communities of color. Additionally, students of color indicated that successful programs would attract and engage more students of color by providing real choice in program design, particularly when it comes to community service and volunteer activities.

Research Question 3: What do students of color experience in successful school-based civic learning programs that causes them to care about the larger civic world and understand their place in it?

They participate in school governance, receive direct instruction in the systems and processes of government, discuss of current events and controversial topics, and utilize service-learning opportunities. Students of color build aspirational capital through discussions of higher education, familial and social capital through connections to family stories and connections to community organizations, and resistance capital through learning how to effectively organize.

The center of any discussion around civic learning must begin by tipping its cap to the decades of research that have yielded the six practices (Cohen & Chaffee, 2012; Botsch & Botsch, 2015; Gould et al., 2011 Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Kahne et al., 2013). Direct instruction, discussion of current events and controversial topics, service learning, participation in extracurricular activities, democratic simulations, and participatory school governance all have a role to play in any well-constructed civic learning program. However, the students of color interviewed in this study demonstrated a desire for additional practices that embrace the cultural wealth of the community and empower them to take action beyond traditional forms of engagement. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model highlighted how challenging structural racism requires understanding and celebrating the personal, familial, and community experience. Ideal programs would incorporate the best aspects of both approaches.

The six practices. Students of color interviewed for this study were asked about the extent to which each of the six practices as used in their civic learning program increased their commitment to civic engagement. They spoke about each in concrete and hypothetical forms highlighting the perceived value of each. These results complement prior quantitative research

into the subject, including work done by Kahne and Sporte (2008). In ranking support, both through direct questions and total number of mentions, the six practices leave a clear hierarchy that can act as a sort of guidepost for future program design. The clear starting point from the six practices is participatory student government. This was among the most discussed practices in the student focus groups, and every student described how participatory school governance directly increased his/her future likelihood to vote. A majority of students also cited direct instruction in the systems and processes of government (9 of fifteen), discussion of current events and controversial topics (eight of 15), and service-learning opportunities like volunteer work (eight of 15) as increasing their likelihood to vote. Students of color interviewed in this study found democratic simulations like mock trial and model United Nations less likely (six of 15) to lead to increased voting and none found participation in extracurricular activities to be effective. The students involved in this study found some efficacy in the traditional six practices, but were much less enthusiastic in their discussion. Newly designed programs focused on engaging students of color might consider constructing their programs with effective direct instruction that incorporate current, local, controversial issues, with opportunities for service-learning and participatory school governance.

School officials approached this issue differently with a greater focus on each of the six practices than did students. This is unsurprising for a number of reasons. First, the programs themselves are intentionally designed to incorporate aspects of the six practices due to the nature of the state awarding process that provides points for the use of each. Second, school officials, particularly those involved in designing the civic learning programs, are more likely to be aware of the existing literature on civic engagement and both advocate for and be knowledgeable about those aspects of the civic learning programs. Finally, school officials were more likely overall to

extol the virtues of their programs than students, which is likely due to the inherent bias involved in being the program provider as opposed to target audience. School officials were nearly unanimous in their overall support of the six practices and believed that those practices should be effective in the abstract and were in fact effective for their students in daily practice. Notably, school officials did not believe that these practices would be any more or less effective for students of color than the general population.

Capital building. The students of color who participated in this study were strong advocates for capital building activities, whereas school officials were more muted in their positivity. This demonstrates a disconnect between school officials and students of color in capital building but also a similar, converse relationship exists within the six practices as well. Overall, the students of color interviewed for this study were much more likely to desire capital building activities than the traditional six practices, while strongly believing that those activities would not only increase likelihood to vote, but also increase other forms of civic engagement, which some students found as important or more important than voting including artistic expression, protests, and marches.

There was largely agreement across large sections of capital building activities between students of color who participated in award-winning civic learning programs and the school officials who designed and oversaw those programs, including nearly absolute agreement in the value of aspirational, familial, and social capital building activities. Among these clear positive practices, building familial capital was most discussed by a wide margin. Any civic learning program designed to increase civic engagement for students of color effectively should consider familial capital building practices where we recognize and help students draw on the histories and wisdom of their families and communities through counter-storytelling opportunities and

events coordinated between the school and local cultural organizations and communities. Similarly, social capital can be built through building a wider net than the essential familial capital. This net includes the larger peer network and community-based organizations whose integration into civic learning programs is key to building commitment to civic engagement according to students of color interviewed for this study.

Students and officials were split as to whether navigational and linguistic capital building activities would increase likelihood to vote. A program designed to increase engagement for students of color could therefore justifiably include efforts to build such capital. This could be done through practice such as increasing storytelling opportunities and supporting the communication strength evident in local communities of color. Additionally, such programs might include instruction and support for student interactions with the institutions of education and governmental power. This is essentially coupled with self-examination of structural barriers that such institutions have consistently put in place for students of color including access to advanced courses, segregation, and voter suppression.

There was a clear disparity when it came to resistance capital; 14 of 15 students believed it increased civic engagement manifested both in voting and other non-traditional forms of engagement including protests and marches and artistic expression, whereas no school official believed building resistance capital would increase likelihood to vote for any students. This discrepancy highlights a primary difference in understandings of civic engagement between school officials and the students of color they serve. Whereas school officials directly believe in the primacy of voting as civic action, they do not believe that practices such as using higher education training to resolve challenges of equity, teach effective organizing, or target issues relevant to local communities for protest are effective at increasing likelihood to vote. In fact, the

majority of the school officials found that marches and protests were at best ineffective forms of civic participation. Conversely, students of color found that they would prefer civic learning programs that taught resistance capital and that those skills would be essential to civic action including voting. Even more importantly, students of color prefer forms of civic disobedience that have historically been used by communities of color to bring about change in the face of disenfranchisement.

Based upon the interviews and focus groups in this study, students made it clear that building capital directly influences their likelihood to vote. Further, they demonstrated that they believe the electoral systems within the United States have historically been designed to disenfranchise persons of color. They recognize current efforts to prevent citizens of color from voting including problematic voter ID laws, limited polling availability, preventing same-day voter registration, and voting restrictions on current and previous felons. Because of their views on disenfranchisement and structural racism, students of color interviewed for this study strongly believed that political action outside of voting could often be more effective than attempts to use the ballot box. In order to increase civic engagement, both voting and otherwise, students of color in this study stated that they favor activities that build their capital, particularly in the areas of aspirational, familial, and social in addition to resistance. As such, civic learning programs designed to increase engagement for students of color should incorporate these capital building activities with the most important of the six practices in order to build programs that are most likely to bring about the greatest impact in increasing civic engagement.

Limitations of this Study

The two sites for this study were selected to provide a broad perspective on successful civic learning programs in southern California. Although these programs both serve large

populations of students of color and provide two fundamentally different approaches, it would be impossible to completely extrapolate the results of these two cases to any other programs. Each site exists within its own community and circumstances that change how its unique approach might be successful for the particular population of students of color that it might serve. The importance of these community effects is particularly foundational in Ventura County. The nature of a beach community coupled with major agricultural areas results in a fairly unique population where retirees, migrant farm workers, and suburbanites coexist. Issues with housing development, citizenship status, and wildfires presents a particular backdrop upon which the overall discussion rests. In the outlying Los Angeles area where the other school was located, the difference in population and experience also present limitations to this study. This includes the particular history of redevelopment funds, gentrification, and the status of the school as a lottery-based magnet that serves students from several different communities.

Further research in this area may look at multiple schools in divergent communities and the replicability of such programs with particular emphasis on some of the emergent practices highlighted here. This research could include quantitative studies of students of color across that state that incorporate the capital building practices highlighted in this study as well as alternative forms of engagement and intentionality around race. It would also be important to look at differences that might be presented by smaller subgroups within students of color. This research incorporated views from African American, LatinX, and Asian-American communities. There were distinct and important differences that each of these communities experienced and highlighted. Further studies could focus on individual communities and attempt to develop increased specificity.

It is difficult to ascertain how the particular facets of the state awards process might affect program design, but it is clear that school officials at these two sites designed their programs with state guidelines in mind. Further studies might look to the influence of state award guidelines in program designs where broader implications might be found. Coupled with this option, there is room for further action research where student voice becomes more central to program design than state award guidelines. In addition to the awards process, there are also potential limitations and difficulties in implementation that may arise out of teacher comfort and capability. The specific types of discussions related to community cultural wealth that are encouraged by this research may be difficult for classroom teachers to implement based upon their training and comfort with those culturally complex topics. It will ultimately be the responsibility of classroom teachers and program moderators to directly implement capital building practices into their instructional design.

There are additional limitations due to the nature of this study that include student self-selection and the potential for one voice to lead the discussion within focus groups. Just as many of the civic learning programs include only students who chose to be a part of those programs, so too the participants within this research self-selected. This could limit the applicability of this study because the experience of engaged students may diverge from the experience of a disengaged general student. Additionally, focus group methodology may create an agreement bias and build consistency in responses due to a single voice guiding the discussion. I attempted to limit this limitation through directly asking questions to those students who were less responsive and making sure the focus groups involved all voices.

There are two additional considerations that are outside the specific scope of this study. First, this study highlighted the efficacy of capital building practices for students of color. It did

not look at whether these practices would be effective, or the potential size of that effect for White students. It is entirely plausible that these practices designed to build upon community cultural wealth would be impactful for all students. There is room for potential further study into the general efficacy of such practices. Second, while this study focusses upon improving civic engagement through educational programs, there are important public policies that could have profound impacts. Automatic voter registration, the *Voting Rights Act*, and various specific enfranchisement legislation are all areas of study outside of the educational landscape. These additional considerations provide additional areas of study and are important contextual considerations for this study.⁰

Finally, it is important to note that this study focused on two models for civic learning programs that are already considered among the best in California. Implications that these results might be relevant in other settings must be tempered by the idea that much of the basic essential work in building effective civic learning programs has already been done by school officials at these sites. Although prior research indicates that the six practices are an essential first step in program design, future research could also look to practices within capital building for improving less successful programs.

Implications and Conclusions

The students of color involved in this study participated in award-winning civic learning programs in Southern California. They hail from diverse suburban communities on the outskirts of the greater Los Angeles region. In their divergent approaches, they highlight some differences, but far more similarities in for students of color. This study aimed to determine what practices would be most effective for increasing commitment to civic engagement. Participating students had a clear opinion that has implications for program and award design across the state and

nation. Although it is admittedly limited in general applicability, this study opens doors for future research into program design with an eye toward community cultural wealth as well as possible participatory action research projects around programs inherently designed to support students of color.

These programs would focus on capital building activities as defined by Yosso (2005), with a primary focus on aspirational, familial, and community capital. Resistance capital would also play a central role with a focus on connection to local communities and building capacity within community organizing. When using the generally successful six practices, these programs would focus on participatory school governance while providing direct instruction and service opportunities that are coordinated with local communities of color and in languages spoken by those communities. These programs would promote civil disobedience, artistic expression, and other forms of alternative civic engagement favored by communities of color faced with a history of disenfranchisement. These programs would discard the burden of colorblindness and focus on the centrality of race and identity to provide the most effective supports for communities of color through an intentional and systematic series of supports.

Future frameworks, award initiatives, and civic learning programs need to modify their approach to best practices for civic engagement. The six practices are traditionally effective at encouraging voting behavior among participating students. However, although more students are participating in more programs across the country, overall levels of voting and other forms of civic engagement remain stagnant or are in decline (Berger, 2011). Among these practices, this study found that students of color are more responsive to some than others. In particular, participatory school governance where students themselves are stakeholders in program design is highly effective. Direct instruction and service opportunities in the local community are also

highly regarded. Both cases tie to ideas also expressed through capital building activities.

Although students indicated some preference for activities that build navigational and linguistic capital, they were much more enthusiastic about aspirational, familial, and social capital.

Additionally, resistance capital building practices were very important among students.

Students showed strong preferences for capital building practices, which has important implications for civic learning program design. With the centrality of validating and celebrating student voice and community experience, programs should shift in focus from school projects to community partnerships. These partnerships must exist with organizations inside the communities of students of color and must validate their experience while addressing their concerns. Similarly, these programs must be designed collaboratively with students of color and their communities to encourage and model participatory school governance. The ability of students and their communities to identify the important issues and the framework for discussion is central to this paradigm shift in civic learning program design.

Future civic learning programs and regimes can more effectively address the needs of students of color by foregoing the deficit thinking endemic to colorblindness that Yosso (2005) has called one of the most common forms of modern racism. Students of color involved in this study explained that intentionality around race is significantly preferable to colorblindness. They are aware of and understand the historical underpinnings that infiltrate every aspect of modern standards-driven education. The students demonstrated their deep desire to improve educational systems as a whole to better address impoverished communities of color. Short of groundbreaking global solutions, however, programs could more effectively address students of color through removing structural barriers including GPA requirements and test score limitations. Moreover, effective civic learning programs should directly coordinate with

communities of color and the organizations that serve them while building meaningful and lasting partnerships through which students can experience service learning. Understanding language and culture is key, and future programs must more adequately engage communities of color if they seek to effectively engage students from those communities.

Perhaps the most interesting finding to emerge from this study is the discussion around what counts as civic engagement. The students of color who participated in this study not only found traditional forms of participation such as joining a political party or donating to a campaign effectively useless, they also found voting to be problematic. Concerns with voter suppression, voting machine irregularities, the electoral college, and gerrymandering led students to indicate that nontraditional civic engagement including artistic and civil disobedience might even be more important than voting itself. This discussion has implications for civic engagement research across the board and highlights that perceived gaps in civic engagement may actually be errors in measurement created by forces of historical systemic racism. How we measure civic engagement is key. The history of disenfranchisement and current voter suppression tactics change how persons of color feel about and desire to participate in various forms of civic engagement. When designing civic learning programs, school officials must understand the forms of engagement favored by their students' communities.

Current civic learning programs effectively increase student commitment to civic engagement, but these programs leave behind the students left most vulnerable by a history of structural racism and intentional disenfranchisement. Academic frameworks, civic learning curricula, awards regimes, and civic learning programs themselves can and must be improved to address fundamental issues of civic disengagement in America. Programs should centrally focus on capital building activities that promote alternative forms of civic engagement designed in

coordination with all stakeholders, particularly organizations serving the communities in which the students of color live.

Appendix A

Administrator/Teacher Interview Protocol

Good afternoon. Thank you for participating in this study regarding your Civic Learning Program(s). I am studying the effectiveness of civic engagement practices for communities of color for research at the UCLA Graduate School of Education. This interview will last roughly 45 minutes and all information is *confidential*. I plan to record this interview, and would like your consent. Do you consent to have this interview recorded? Do you have any additional questions before we start? I'm going to begin with some background information, and move deeper as we move forward. Please let me know at any point if you would like additional clarification or have any questions.

- What is the name of the Civic Learning Program you are involved with?
- How would you describe your position as it relates to the Civic Learning Program?
- When did you first become involved?
 - How did that happen?
- How would you describe the purpose of your Civic Learning Program?
- What does your Civic Learning Program typically do? (please elaborate)
- What would you call success as it relates to participation in your program?
- What actions would you consider “civic participation”? Why? Elaborate on each:
- What practices do you use to encourage students to join your program?
- What practices do you use to encourage students to remain in your program?
- What practices do you use to increase commitment to civic engagement among your students?
- What practice(s) do you believe is(are) most effective at encouraging civic participation amongst your students? Why? Explain:
- There is a large body of research that shows that certain populations are less likely to participate in politics. These populations include persons of color, low income families,

low education families, immigrants, and many other categories. From your perspective, does your program do an adequate job engaging these students? Why/Why Not?

- What does your program do to particularly target these students? Elaborate on each:
- What do you believe would be necessary to more effectively target these students?
- What do the adults at your school do to help encourage commitment to civic engagement for these populations? Do adults at your school do anything that prevents commitment to civic engagement amongst these population? Explain:
- How closely do you think the values and skills emphasized in your Civic Learning Program match with the values and skills emphasized in the homes of your students? What differences might exist for students in different populations?
- What skills and values do students from these populations bring to your Civic Learning Program that other students may not? What challenges do these students face that other students may not?
- What do you think your program is doing well as it relates to these populations?
- What do you think your program could do better as it relates to these populations?
- Do you believe direct instruction is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe discussion of current events and controversial issues is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe service learning is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe extracurricular activities are effective civic learning practices?
- Do you believe democratic simulation is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe participatory school governance is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe building social capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building linguistic capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building familial capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building resistance capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building navigational capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building aspirational capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe that voting counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that party membership counts as civic engagement?

- Do you believe that donating to campaigns or causes counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that political event attendance counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that artistic expression counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that protests and marches count as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that participation in church and/or faith based organizations counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that participation in race-based organizations counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe student choice is important in constructing an effective civic learning program?
- Do you believe intentionality around race is important in constructing an effective civic learning program?

*Modifications to this protocol will result from the initial document analysis to provide specific questions regarding the particular practices at each site.

Appendix B

Focus Group Protocol

Good afternoon. Thank you for participating in this study regarding your Civic Learning Program(s). This program you are a part of has been awarded by the State of California as a high quality example for other schools to look to. I am studying the effectiveness of the actual things these programs do to help improve programs across the state for students of color. It is important to note an important characteristic about the individuals in this room. You all have something in common that I do not. You are students of color, and this research is focused upon the stories, narratives, experiences, and voices of students of color. Why is this important? Why am I the researcher who is interested? Research has shown that persons of color vote less frequently than white folks. I am interested in how educators, particularly those who do not share experiences or culture with students of color, can improve their programs to encourage civic engagement. I am interested because I care you and other students like you. I care about your voice in our shared experience. I care about the success of our democracy, and we can only be successful if everyone is engaged. This meeting will last about an hour and all information is *confidential*. I plan to record this meeting, and would like your consent. Do each of you consent to have this interview recorded? Do you have any additional questions before we start? Please let me know at any point if you would like additional clarification or have any questions.

- I want to start with laying the groundwork and defining some terms. Are you all okay with that?
- How would you distinguish between terms such as government, politics, or civics?
- How would you distinguish between terms such as interaction, engagement, or participation?

- Okay, so we can probably all agree that voting is one for of participating in civics. What other forms of participation can you think of?
 - Delve into any disagreements
 - Being persons of color, how do you describe civic engagement?
 - How does being a person of color effect your engagement?
- How do you participate in politics or government? Why? (many answers here – continue to iterate and discuss)
 - How do you think being a person of color impacts this?
 - What are your experiences interacting with government?
 - What narratives are told by your families or in your communities about interacting with government?
 - How do these influence you?
 - What other groups are you a part of that have impacted your views? (use the students’ examples or the probes below as necessary)
 - How do these influence you?
 - If you go to church, what role does that play in politics for you and your community/family?
 - What is the role of music and art in politics for you and your community/family?
 - What is the role of protests and marches in politics for you and your community/family?
 - How does the history of your family and community impact your participation in politics?
 - Do you have any perceptions that are different as a result of your experience or the experience of people in your life? In what ways do those influence you?

At this point we are going to discuss your involvement in your school’s Civic Learning Program. Your school has been awarded for the quality of its program(s) and I am very interested to hear your experiences as a person of color and how those experiences have impacted your commitment to civic engagement.

- Please tell me why you are involved with this Civic Learning Program:
- What do you seek to get out of this program?
- What happens in your Civic Learning Program?
 - What do you like?
 - What do you not like?
- What aspects of your program have most encouraged your political participation? (use the students' examples or the probes below as necessary)
 - How has direct classroom instruction impacted your commitment to civic engagement?
 - How have discussions of current events and controversial issues impacted your commitment to civic engagement?
 - How have opportunities to learn through service impacted your commitment to civic engagement?
 - How has participation in extracurricular activities impacted your commitment to civic engagement?
 - How have opportunities to make decisions about the school impacted your commitment to civic engagement?
 - How have simulations of democracy impacted your commitment to civic engagement?
- Do you believe direct instruction is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe discussion of current events and controversial issues is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe service learning is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe extracurricular activities are effective civic learning practices?
- Do you believe democratic simulation is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe participatory school governance is an effective civic learning practice?
- Do you believe building social capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building linguistic capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building familial capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building resistance capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe building navigational capital is an effective learning practice?

- Do you believe building aspirational capital is an effective learning practice?
- Do you believe that voting counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that party membership counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that donating to campaigns or causes counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that political event attendance counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that artistic expression counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that protests and marches count as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that participation in church and/or faith based organizations counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe that participation in race-based organizations counts as civic engagement?
- Do you believe student choice is important in constructing an effective civic learning program?
- Do you believe intentionality around race is important in constructing an effective civic learning program?

*Modifications to this protocol will result from the document analysis, observations, and administrator/teacher interviews.

Appendix C

Reflective Journal Protocol

After hearing what other students have had to say in this group, I would like to give you the opportunity to provide some additional written answers. We are going to take the next few minutes to answer just a few more questions and expand on what you have already said:

- Please tell me why you are involved with this Civic Learning Program:
- What do you seek to get out of this program?
- What has been your personal experience with politics?
- What role does your family play in your political beliefs?
- What role does the experience of your community play in your political beliefs?
- What happens in your Civic Learning Program?
- What aspects of your program have most encouraged your political participation?
- Please tell me a story about a personal experience of a political nature:
- Please tell me a story about your favorite part of this program:
- Please tell me a story about your least favorite part of this program:
- How have you been impacted by each of the following aspects of your program:
 - Direct instruction about government and politics
 - Discussions about current events
 - Opportunities to learn by providing a service to others
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Opportunities to make decisions about your school
 - Simulations of democracy

*Modifications to this protocol will result from the document analysis, observations, and administrator/teacher interviews.

Appendix D

Student Interview Protocol

- In the focus group, you mentioned (...). Could you please explain that in further detail?
- What have been your personal experiences with civic engagement? How do you feel about those experiences?
- What have been your experiences of government power? How do you feel about those experiences?
- Do you believe your political actions matter? Why? Why not?
- Do you believe the political actions of other matter?
- Whose political actions matter the most?

*These interviews will be further developed following the document analysis, observations, administrator/teacher interviews, focus groups, and reflective journal.

Appendix E

Analysis Matrix

	Direct Instruction n	Curren t Events	Service Learnin g	Extra Curricula r	Participator y Governance	Democratic Simulation s		
Voting								
Joining political party								
Donating to politicians								
Participating in community organizations								
Running for office								
Protesting/Marching								
Producing/ experiencing art and music								
Participating in church organizations								
Participating in cultural/racial organizations								
Participating in social media politics								

*Additional columns and rows will be developed through each phase of the research.

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