SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

The Role of Organized Activities in Supporting Youth Moral and Civic Character Development: A Review of the Literature

Nicole Zarrett[1] · Yangyang Liu[2] · Deborah Lowe Vandell[2] · Sandra D. Simpkins[2]

Abstract

Organized activities have been championed as an important youth setting to nurture character development through childhood and adolescence, but scholars have yet to document the state of research on activities and youth character. Using guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses Statement (PRISMA, Moher et al., PLoS Med 6(7):e1000097, 2009), this study conducts an extensive review of previous research in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various ways in which organized activities support moral and civic character development. Through database and backward and forward citation searches, 65 studies were deemed eligible between 1999 and 2019, with 44 studies on civic character and 21 studies on moral character. Relations between organized activity participation and character development were assessed by five key dimensions of activity participation (intensity, duration, breadth, type and quality of the activity), and by youth characteristics (e.g., age, family income, gender, motivation/engagement in the activity). Review of the character literature provides evidence for the positive relations between organized activities and youth's concurrent and long-term moral and civic character development. For civic studies, findings suggest that the greater the intensity, duration, and breadth of participation, the more favorable youth character outcomes. For moral character, the type and quality of the activity setting appear to be particularly important for supporting development. Overall, findings suggest that moral and civic character development ought to be considered and intentionally nurtured within activities as two separate, yet complimentary dimensions of interpersonal character. Future research is needed that explores various mechanisms that explain these associations and examines variations by characteristics of youth.

Keywords Organized activities · Youth programs · Moral · Civic · Character · Prosocial behaviors

Introduction

Childhood and adolescence are important developmental periods in the lifespan to nurture character development, setting a foundation of personal attributes for which both the young person and their social worlds can thrive (Lerner 2019). With schools focused on the demands of instruction to increase academic skills, the U.S. has increasingly turned to other settings to provide opportunities to develop and exercise character. In particular, organized after-school activities have been viewed as a setting that is well-suited to foster character development (Eccles and Gootman 2002). In the last few years, special topic meetings on youth's character development sponsored by the National Research Council (2017) and the Society for Research in Child Development (2018), and journal issues have devoted attention to the potential role that organized activities play in youth's character (see Clement and Bollinger 2017; Lerner et al. 2017;

✉ Nicole Zarrett
zarrettn@mailbox.sc.edu

Yangyang Liu
yangyal@uci.edu

Deborah Lowe Vandell
dvandell@uci.edu

Sandra D. Simpkins
simpkins@uci.edu

[1] Department of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Carolina, 1512 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC 29208, USA

[2] School of Education, University of California Irvine, 3200 Education Bldg, Irvine, CA 92697, USA

Seider et al. 2017). However, scholars have yet to conduct a comprehensive review to document the state of this research on activities and youth character. The purpose of this article is to review and synthesize research on youth's organized activities and character development with the goal of identifying what, how, and for whom activities foster development in two areas: civic character and moral character. Findings are used to inform recommendations for future research, policy and practice.

Theoretical Perspectives on Youth's Activities and Character Development

Across all character frameworks, moral and civic dimensions are viewed as interpersonal aspects of character where people are oriented towards helping others and improving society (Clement and Bollinger 2016). Baehr's (2017) formulation of character extends the broad conceptualization of interpersonal aspects of character by arguing for the distinct nature of civic and moral dimensions. To this end, civic character includes acting in ways that support the good of one's community or larger society and includes qualities and ideologies focused on tolerance, respect, community-mindedness, and civility (Baehr 2017). Civic character can be demonstrated in the form of value, intention, and engagement in community service (e.g., volunteering, charitable giving) and political service (e.g., voting, political campaigning, political consumerism). Although acts of moral character could also benefit society at large, they are not executed with the intent of serving the larger civic society. Rather, moral character is viewed as being a "good neighbor" and includes thinking in ways that reflect compassion, empathy and understanding of others' perspectives, feelings, and needs and by acting in prosocial ways to help individuals in one's immediate surroundings including sharing, being trustworthy, helpful, and kind. Distinguishing moral and civic character is not only useful in providing a deeper understanding of human development, but these two dimensions have different histories in the research on organized after-school activities as will be made evident in the current review.

Developmental scholars have invoked Relational Developmental Systems Metatheories (Overton 2015) to understand character development, asserting that youth's character changes over time and reflects an interplay between the individual and their experiences within contexts (Nucci 2017). A related perspective, Positive Youth Development models emphasize that young people have the potential for positive development and that this potential is actualized when youth's strengths are aligned with positive contextual supports (Lerner 2005) like those provided by organized activities (Eccles and Gootman 2002). However, much of the existing literature and programs developed to improve

character have focused on school settings. Yet, some experts argue that teaching certain dimensions of character, such as moral dimensions, may be more challenging to integrate in classrooms given the current structure and requirements placed on teachers (Baehr 2017).

Organized activities have been championed as a context for character development (e.g., Lerner and Callina 2014). These settings are often more flexible than schools and high-quality programs (Kataoka and Vandell 2013) have many of the key qualities theorized in the PRIMED model to support character development, specifically: Prioritizing character development, positive Relationships with adults, Intrinsic motivation, adults who Model good character, Empowering individuals, and Developmental pedagogy (Berkowitz et al. 2017). Indeed, after-school organizations, such as 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, cite the development of character in their mission statements and define their programming around building youth's character. Adult leaders are charged with promoting positive youth development by providing an empowering context and developmentally appropriate opportunities that focus on topics that youth feel passionately about (Eccles and Gootman 2002). Youth report that organized activities provide more character development opportunities compared to being with friends or in the classroom, including opportunities to take on leadership positions, work as a team, be in a group with prosocial norms, and connect with their community (Hansen et al. 2003).

Variations in Youth Participation and Activity Settings

To understand the relations between youth's activities and their adjustment, researchers need to examine what youth are exposed to and their level of exposure. Different types of activities afford distinct opportunities providing youth unique normative systems, expectations, goals, and growth opportunities, as well as distinct networks of prosocial peers and adults (Hansen et al. 2003). Therefore, opportunities to develop particular assets may vary by type of activity. In terms of character development, some activities, like community-based activity programs (e.g., 4-H Clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts), more explicitly target character development in their mission and curriculum compared to others. Moreover, the quality of youth experiences in programs are linked to youth development (Yohalem et al. 2007). Participating in activities of high quality, defined by a range of context-based factors that support safety, interest/engagement, positive social interactions, growth and skill development, noticeably increases youth's positive outcomes (Kataoka and Vandell 2013) whereas participating in activities that are lower in quality has been associated with either no changes or increased problematic behavior (Durlak et al. 2010). Thus, the type and quality of

experiences are important to consider in terms of youth's character development.

The amount of exposure (or dosage) to activity contexts is also important to consider in order to understand youth's character development. Scholars have argued that the time youth spend in activities on a weekly or monthly basis (intensity) and over multiple years (duration) not only indicates youth's level of exposure, but have also been used as markers of youth's motivation, interest, engagement, and identity with an activity. An additional indicator of exposure is breadth, which is defined as the number of different types of activities in which youth are engaged. Participation in a breadth of activities is believed to expose youth to a diversity of experiences, reinforce important skills for development and to offer youth greater opportunities to contribute and build supportive relationships with a variety of positive adults and peers. Findings from previous studies generally suggest that youth who spend more time in an activity (intensity), sustain involvement/participation over longer periods of time (duration), and participate in a range of activities (breadth) benefit more from their participation than those with less exposure (Bohnert et al. 2010). Therefore, the current review set out to examine whether these five dimensions of activities (intensity, duration, breadth, type, and quality) are related to civic and moral character development; a synthesis of prior research that has not been done before.

According to the Positive Youth Development model (Lerner 2005), the processes that transpire between the youth and the activity setting and the benefits they garner vary across youth. Yet, much of the work on youth outcomes associated with organized activities focuses on average effects. Though helpful, average effects mask the rich heterogeneity in developmental processes where some youth benefit greatly and others very little. For example, some research has suggested that activities can play a compensatory role and are more beneficial to youth with limited familial resources (e.g., Vandell et al. 2015). It is also possible that the ways in which youth benefit from activities may vary by youth age (Roth et al. 2010) or by differences in the lived experiences youth associated with gender, race/ethnicity, and immigrant status (Vandell et al. 2015). Understanding these variations by youth-based characteristics can help inform the development/design and implementation of effective organized activities to meet the needs of youth with a diversity of lived experiences.

Current Study

Using guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses Statement (PRISMA, Moher et al. 2009), this study conducted an extensive review of previous research in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the various ways in which organized activities support the development of the two dimensions of interpersonal character: moral character and civic character. To our knowledge, this is the first synthesis of research to examine the extent of these relations. Given the opportunities to develop character through activities are likely to vary by the nature of youth's participation, this review set out to examine variations in the relations found between organized activity participation and character development based on key activity participation dimensions (intensity, duration, breadth, type, and quality of the activity). To address any variations in the processes that transpire between the youth and the activity setting, the current review also aimed to compile and assess any available evidence provided by studies towards understanding possible variations in how youth benefit from activities by youth characteristics (e.g., gender, age, family income, academic risk).

Methods

Literature Search

Studies included in the current review were located through a multi-pronged search process conducted between November 2018 and December 2019 that followed the guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses Statement (PRISMA, Moher et al. 2009). First, a literature search was conducted for peer-reviewed journal articles written or published between years 1999 and 2019 in major journal article databases including PsycINFO, ERIC, and Sociological Abstracts. In these database searches, it was specified that study abstracts contained keywords including "OST" and "after-school/extracurricular/organized" and variations of those words followed by "program/activities." Keywords for civic character development included "contribution," "charity," "civic," "civility," "political," "voting," "volunteering," "tolerance," "community service," and "respect." Keywords for moral character development included "moral," "generosity," "compassion," "integrity," "justice," "respect," "obedience," "caring," "kindness," "trustworthiness," "helpfulness," "prosocial," and "understanding." Database searches were then followed up with forward and backward searches to find additional relevant articles. The forward search was conducted by screening studies that cited the papers identified from the original database search using the "cited by" function provided by the database used. The backward search was conducted by searching through major review articles (i.e., Bohnert et al. 2010; Mahoney et al. 2009; Vandell et al. 2015) on the relations between organized activities and positive youth development.

Screening of Eligible Studies

Following recommendations by the PRISMA system, a robust screening of the 3,202 studies identified from these sources was completed (Fig. 1). Studies needed to meet the following criteria to be eligible for final review: (1) had outcomes that examined at least one moral or civic character indicator; (2) examined organized after-school activities including formal after-school programs, extracurricular activities, or youth development programs conducted in organized settings outside of school hours; (3) was published between years 1999 and 2019; (4) was written in English; and (5) participation in activities was measured no later than age 18. The selection and analysis of the studies were independently conducted by the first and second authors. Titles and abstracts from the database search (3202

records) were screened by the second author to identify an initial set of 318 records for further review. Four randomly selected database searches were then rescreened by the first author to ensure interrater reliability and reaped no additional studies. Both reviewers reviewed the abstracts and methods of the 318 studies identified from the initial review and 117 were selected for full-text review. Any disagreements between reviewers in the studies selected were then re-reviewed and discussed to determine if they met inclusion criteria. Both reviewers then independently read all 117 articles and recorded what studies met the inclusion/exclusion criteria and had high agreement (93% agreement; $\kappa = 0.86$). The reviewers met again to discuss any discrepancies and to come to full agreement on the final list of studies that were included in the current review.

Results

Among the identified studies from various searches, 65 studies were deemed eligible, with 44 studies on civic character development and 21 studies on moral character development. Information about all studies reviewed in this paper can be found in Tables 1 and 2. The majority of studies that examined civic outcomes used longitudinal designs (27 out of the 44; 61%) with some overlap in studies using the same large national longitudinal data sets including the National Educational Longitudinal Study (Table 1; studies 5, 10, 11, 13, 21, 34, 43), National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (studies 3, 21), the Child Development Supplement of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (studies 19, 20), and the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (studies 4, 42, 44). Seventeen of these longitudinal studies measured the relation of activities on civic outcomes into young and/or middle adulthood. The remaining 17 studies that examined civic outcomes were cross-sectional in nature. All civic-focused studies included samples of adolescents ages 12 and older with the exception of one longitudinal study that began when participants were in late childhood (age 10, Table 1, study 44) and a cross-sectional study that included a wide age range (ages 10–18, study 19).

For studies that examined moral development outcomes, the vast majority of studies (17 out of the 21; 81%) used cross-sectional study designs. Three of these cross-sectional studies used qualitative focus group or case study approaches (Table 2; studies 7, 10, 15) for a more in-depth probe of youth experiences within after school programming. Only 4 studies employed longitudinal designs (Table 2; studies 2, 11, 13, 21), with two of the studies using the same longitudinal data set focused on boys' moral development resulting from participation in Boy Scouts of America (studies 13 and 21). Although several moral studies included cross-sectional samples of youth from a wide child-to-adolescent age range
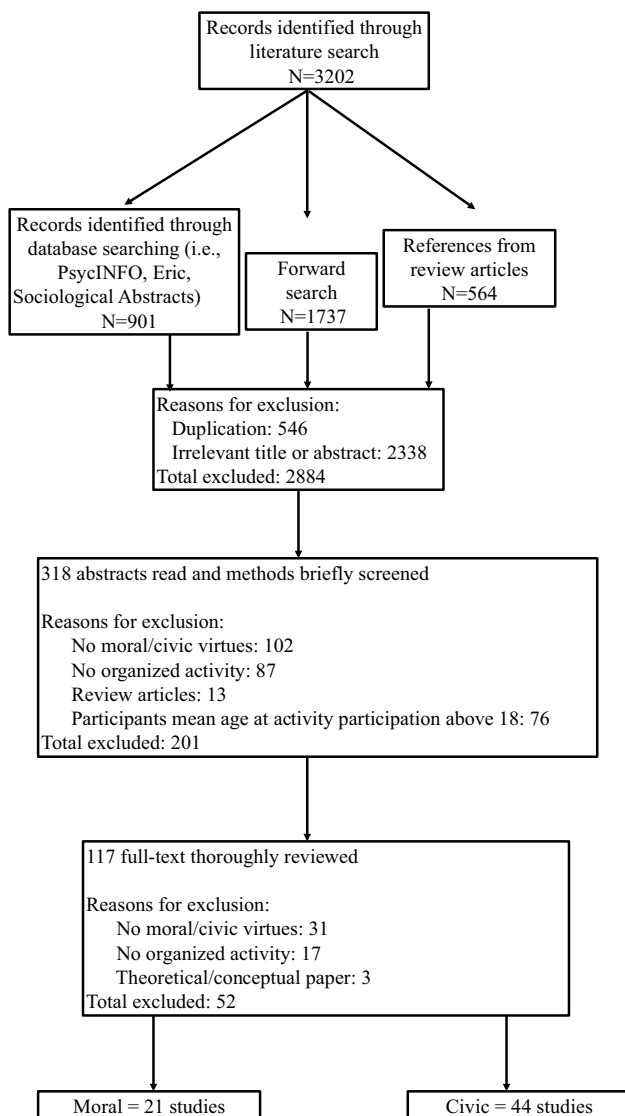

Fig. 1 PRISMA flow chart of literature search and screening

Table 1 Studies examining activity participation and civic character

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
1	Agans et al. (2014)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=927; Age: 7th–12th grade; Gender: 35% male; Ethnicity: 74% White	Global measure: Contribution action & ideology	Activity Profiles of participation intensity	A range of activities	Multi-Activity profile linked with high concurrent and future contribution. Reductions in breadth from 7 to 12th linked to declining contribution (LCTA)
2	Anderson (2015)	Cross sectional, correlational	N=9320; Age: high school; Gender: not reported; Ethnicity: not reported	Global measure: Ideology/intentions for volunteer/social issues	Yes/No	School debate club	Youth participating in debate club had higher civic commitment than non-debate club youth (OLS)
3	Barber et al. (2013)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=3165; Age: 12–26; Gender: 43.7% male; Ethnicity:55% White	Community service/ Volunteering (yes/no)	Yes/No	Instrumental activities,Expressive activities, Athletics, Volunteer, Hobbies, TV/Friends	All activities at ages 12–18 related to volunteering in adulthood (age 18–26). Only voluntary volunteer activities, not required, linked to later service (MLM)
4	Bobek et al. (2009)	Cross sectional, correlational	N=1890; Age: 8th grade Gender: 39.7% male; Ethnicity: 68.7% White	Global measure of civic engagement	Participation in 4-H vs. other YD clubs	4-H program vs. other Youth Development Programs	Both 4-H and YD clubs related to global civic engagement. Some variations between 4-H and other YD clubs in relation to subscales
5	Braddock et al (2007)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=1041; Age: 10th grade-4 years post H.S Gender: 44% male; Ethnicity: 100% Black	Political participation (registered to vote; voted in 1996 election)	Yes/No (any participation between 10th and 12th grades)	Team sports; individual sports; non-sport extra-curricular activities; non-participants	Non-sport activities and individual sports in H.S. related to adult registering and voting. Team sports inversely related to political participation compared to non-participants (OLS)
6	Denault et al. (2009)[a]	Longitudinal, correlational	N=299; Age: 7th–11th grade; Gender: 38% male; Ethnicity: 90% White	Community service Cognition (ideology and intentions)	Trajectories of intensity and breadth	A range of activities	Initial 7th grade intensity/breadth, but not participation trajectories from 7 to 11th, were related to more positive 11th grade ideology/intentions (LGM)

Table 1 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
7	Finlay et al. (2013)[a]	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 14,025; Age: 16–34; Gender: 50% male; Ethnicity: not reported	Community Service and Political activity measured separately (ages 26, 30, 34)	Profiles of participation intensity at age 16	A range of activities	Multi-Active profile at age 16 had highest likelihood for all political and community service outcomes compared to other profiles (LCA)
8	Fredricks et al. (2010)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 1060; Age: 11th grade-1 year post H.S. Gender: 49% male; Ethnicity: 33% White	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Breadth	School clubs, sports, prosocial activities, and community-based activities	Breadth of participation in 11th grade was related to political and community service 1 yr post-h.s
9	Fredricks et al. (2006)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 1060; Age: 11th grade-1 year post H.S Gender: 49% male; Ethnicity: 33% White	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Type; breadth	School clubs, sports, prosocial activities	Breadth and type matter. School clubs and prosocial activities, but not sports, were related to volunteering and civil rights activism post-h.s. (ANOVA)
10	Frisco et al. (2004)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 10,839; Age: 8th grade, 18 years old Gender: 49% male; Ethnicity: 78% White	Political activity: Voting behaviors (registration and voting at age 18)	Type	Scouts, religious, sports, 4-H, YM/WCA, B&G clubs, other nonschool activities, officer status	Scouts, religious, 4-H and leadership in an activity related to registering and voting. Sports related to registering.Variations found by race and SES (Logistic regression)
11	Gardner et al (2008)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 11,029; Age: 8th–10th gr; 8 years post-h.s Gender: 49.3% male; Ethnicity: 68.8% White	Community Service and Political activity measured separately 2 and 8 years post-h.s	School- vs. Community activities, duration, intensity	School-sponsored activities and community-sponsored activities	The greater duration and intensity of participation (8th–0th grades), the more civically engaged youth were 2 & 8 years post-h.s. Mediated by educ attainment (OLS)
12	Glanville et al. (1999)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 6353; Age: 12th grade-6 years post h.s Gender/Ethnicity: nationally representative sample	Political activity: Voting, working for political campaign, donating, attending political gathering	Yes/No	Expressive (sports, arts, etc.) and Instrumental activities (volunteer, political orgs)	Instrumental activities, such as student government, but not expressive activities in 12th grade were related to political activities in adulthood (OLS)

Table 1 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
13	Hart et al (2007)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=6925; Age: 12th grade-8 years post h.s Gender: 48% male; Ethnicity: 73% Caucasians	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Type; intensity	Community service activities vs. other organized activities	Community service and other organized activities were both predictors of adult voting and volunteering (logistic regression)
14	Homana et al. (2018)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=6142; Age: 14; Gender/Ethnicity: nationally representative samples from Australia and United States	Political cognitions: intentions for future political participation	Yes/No	Student council and volunteer organizations	Participation in student council and volunteer organizations were both related to greater intentions for later political engagement (ANOVA)
15	Ishizawa (2015)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=7970 Age: 10th–12th grades Gender: not reported Ethnicity: 77% White	Community service Volunteering,	Duration	School-based and non-school based activities	Measured acculturation-related predictors of engaging in volunteering. Activities was a mediator: highly predictive of higher levels of volunteering
16	Kahne et al. (2008)	Cross sectional, correlational	N=4057; Age: 11th graders; Gender: 41% male; Ethnicity: 14% White	Global measure: Intentions/ideology for future civic participation	Type	After-school clubs, team sports	School and community clubs was related to greater commitments to civic participation. Sports was not related (HLM)
17	Kim et al. (2017)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=14,688; Age: W1(7th–12h) to W3 (6 years later) and W4 (13 years later; Gender/Ethnicity: nationally representative sample	Community Service and Political activity measured separately (Volunteer/voting)	Type	Four categories: no volunteering, voluntary volunteer, required volunteer, voluntary + required volunteering	Voluntary volunteering or mix related to later volunteering, but not voting during adulthood. Required volunteering not related to later civic participation (OLS)
18	Kim et al. (2016)	Cross sectional, retrospective correlational	N=2512: Age: M=47.67, (SD=17.40) Gender: 100% male Ethnicity: 78% White	Community service orgs, volunteering, community activism Environmental responsibility	Duration	Boy Scouts of America	Duration of scouting during childhood was related to current adult community engagement either directly or indirectly through PYD indicators (SEM)

Table 1 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
19	Linver et al (2009)	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 1711; Ages: 10–18; Gender: 50% male; Ethnicity: 63% White	Community service (Charitable giving)	Activity Profiles	A range of activities	Sports + Activities, Religious groups, and School clubs profiles had higher charitable giving than Sports-only and Low-activity profiles. Sports-only had higher giving than Low-activity profiles (OLS)
20	Mahoney et al. (2012)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 1115; Age: 12–24; Gender: 49% boys; Ethnicity: 45% White	Community Service and Political activity measured separately (Volunteer/voting)	Intensity (20 + hr per week across activities)	A range of activities	Participation intensity in adolescence was related to volunteering, but not voting in adulthood (OLS)
21	McFarland et al. (2006)	Longitudinal, correlational	Two Datasets: NELS: N = 10,827; Age: M = 14–26; Add Health: N = 11,015; Age: 7th grade-age 26; Gender/Ethnicity: nationally representative samples	Political activity (Voting, engaging in political campaigns and organizations)	Type	A range of school- and non-school organized activities	All activities were related to some political engagement compared to no activity involvement. However volunteer and politically oriented youth activities had particularly strong associations with adult political participation (OLS)
22	Metz et al. (2005)	Longitudinal, quasi experiment	N = 486; Age: 10th–12th grade; Gender: 41% male Ethnicity: 78% White	Community Service and Political activity future intentions measured separately	Yes/No	Required service activities; other school-based activities	Required service activities, but not other school activities, were linked to future voting, volunteer community service, civic interest and understanding + (OLS)
23	Metzger et al. (2018)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 219; Age: M = 15.39, SD = .95; Gender: 42% male; Ethnicity: 92% White	Community Service and Political activity future intentions measured separately	Intensity within Type	Volunteering; Political/Social movement activities; Religious; School/ community clubs	Volunteer and religious activities, but not political, related to future community service intentions. Political activities, but not community-related, linked to political intentions (SEM)

Table 1 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
24	Mirazchiyski et al. (2014)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=73,739; Age: 8th grade; Gender/Ethnicity: representative sample across 38 countries	Political Service intentions	Yes/no	A range of school-based activities	School activities related to all future political activity intentions but only in newly forming democracies, not in established democracies in Europe (OLS)
25	Mueller et al. (2011)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=895; Age: 8th–10th graders; Gender: 37% male; Ethnicity: 65% White	Global measure: Contribution action & ideology	Intensity; Breadth	Youth development programs (4-H, Scouts, B&G clubs)	8th Grade participation related to 10th grade contribution. 9th grade self-regulation skills partially mediated these relations (SEM)
26	Nygård et al. (2016)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=1674; Age: 9th grade; Gender: 50% male; Ethnicity: not reported	Political Service	Yes/No	Range of activities (sports, choirs, scouting)	Activity participation was related to concurrent political activity (OLS)
27	Obradović et al. (2007)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=163; Age: W1(age 14–19) W2(17–23) Gender: 44% male; Ethnicity: NR	Global measure: Civic Engagement Competence	Intensity	A range of activities	Activities linked to later adult civic engagement. Competencies fully mediated associations (OLS)
28	Oesterle et al. (2004)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=732; Age: 18–27; Gender: 48% male; Ethnicity: 74% White	Community service (Volunteering)	Yes/No	Volunteering	Early volunteering at age 18 was linked to continued volunteering at age 26–27 (Time-series logit model)
29	Oosterhoff et al. (2017)	Cross sectional, correlational	N=846; Age: M=15.96, SD=1.22, range=13–20 years; Gender: 40% male; Ethnicity: 88% White	Political Ideology/ Values	Intensity	Volunteering, sports, church, community clubs, arts/music, school clubs	Church and sports activities related to higher spirituality. Sports also related to higher materialism & authoritarianism. Volunteer related to lower social dominance, and arts/music related to lower patriotism (SEM)
30	Polson et al. (2013)	Cross sectional retrospective, correlational	N=2512; Age: 18–94; Gender: 100% male; Ethnicity: 78% White	Community Service	Yes/No, Duration, Engagement	Boy Scouts of America	Participation during childhood was only related to current adult community service for those who were most engaged (achieved Eagle scout) (Logistic regression)

Table 1 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
31	Quintelier et al. (2010)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=3453; Age=16; Gender: 57% male; Ethnicity: not reported	Political Service	Yes/No	School council, service learning activities	School council and other service learning activities related to political participation (MLM)
32	Quintelier (2008)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=6330; Age=16; Gender: 57% male; Ethnicity: not reported	Political Service (civic participation, consumerism)	Type, Intensity, Breadth, Leadership	A range of activities	Breadth related to political activity. All activity types except sports/hobbies were related (OLS)
33	Reichert et al. (2018)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	Cohort 2010: N=5137; Age=10th grade; Gender: 49% male; Ethnicity: not reported Cohort 2013: N=4074; Age=10th grade; Gender: 50% male; Ethnicity: not reported	Political Service Intentions	Yes/No	Student governance; community organizations	Participation in student governance and community organizations related to intentions for future political involvement (MLM)
34	Smith (1999)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=5619; Age: 8th grade-2 years post h.s Gender/Ethnicity: nationally representative sample	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Participation	Extracurricular activities in school	Activity participation in h.s. predicts community service and political behaviors in young adulthood+ (SEM)
35	Srbijanko et al. (2012)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=3607; Age: 14-19; Gender: not reported; Ethnicity: not reported	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Breadth	12 activities (not specified) and civic education	Breadth and civic education activities related to higher rates of civic participation (OLS)
36	Vézina et al. (2019)[a]	Longitudinal, correlational	N=327; Age: 16-22; Gender: 39% Male; Ethnicity: 90% White	Global measure: Civic participation trajectories (age 18-22)	Intensity within type	Sports, prosocial/community-based, academic/vocational activities	Academic/vocational activities related to high sustained civic trajectory. Prosocial/community activities linked with high but steep decline trajectory (OLS)
37	Viau et al. (2015)[a]	Longitudinal, correlational	N=254; Age: 12-21; Gender: 39% male; Ethnicity: not reported	Global measure: (Civic action, competence, ideology)	Profile, intensity, duration	Team sports, individual sports, cultural activities, prosocial activities	Cultural+sports profile & diverse prosocial profile more civically engaged than individual sports profile (OLS)
38	Viau et al. (2015)[a]	Longitudinal, correlational	N=228; Age: 14-18; Gender: 35% male; Ethnicity: not reported	Global measure: (Civic action, competence, ideology)	Intensity; duration; breadth	Team sports, individual sports, cultural activities, prosocial activities	Duration related to civic engagement. Support from activity leader partially mediated relations. (SEM)

Table 1 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
39	Wicks et al (2014a)	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 876; Age: 12–17; Gender: 48% male; Ethnicity: 71% White	Political Activity (Boycotting and boycotting)	Volunteer, Political, vs. other activities	Volunteer, political activities, other activities	Volunteer activities and political activities, but not other activities, related to political consumerism; (OLS)
40	Wicks et al. (2014b)	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 876; Age: 12–17; Gender: 48% male; Ethnicity: 71% White	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Yes/No	Sum of the activities youth participate in (out of 9 categories)	Number of activities related to community service but not to political activity (OLS)
41	Youniss et al. (1999)	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 16,800; Age: 12th graders; Gender/Ethnicity: nationally representative sample	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Intensity within Type	Non-sport school activities; sports; performing arts	All types of activities related to community service. In turn, community service related to political behaviors (OLS)
42	Zaff et al. (2011)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 1554; Age: 8th–11th grade; Gender: 35% male; Ethnicity: 71% White	Global measure: Active and engaged citizenship	Intensity	Youth development program, religious activities	Youth development programs—> some components of active and engaged citizenship + Religious participation—> all components of active and engaged citizenship + (HLM)
43	Zaff et al. (2003)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 8599; Age: 8th grade-2 years post h.s. Gender: 47.3% male; Ethnicity: 75.4% White	Community Service and Political activity measured separately	Duration	School-based and community-based activities	Participation duration (8th–12th gr), related to likelihood of volunteer/voting in adulthood. No differences by type (OLS)
44	Zarrett et al. (2009)	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 1357; Age: 5th–7th grade; Gender: 42% male; Ethnicity: 64% White	Global measure: Contribution action & ideology	Profile, Intensity, Duration, Breadth	A range of activities	Multi-Activity Sport and Sport + YD profiles had higher contribution than all other profiles. All sport profiles higher than Low-engaged profile (OLS)

[a]Study conducted on international sample; [b]Data reported by respondents other than youth

Table 2 Studies examining activity participation and moral character

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
1	Aciego et al. (2012)[a]	Cross sectional, quasi experimental	N = 230; Age: 6–16; Gender: NA; Ethnicity: NA	Moral Cognition: Peaceful, understanding attitudes towards others[b]	Yes/No	Chess, soccer/basketball	Participation in chess clubs related to gains in understanding of others. No gains observed among soccer or basketball participants (T-test)
2	Benson et al. (2018)[a]	Longitudinal, correlational	N = 100; Age: M = 13.24 (SD = 1.83); Gender: 45% male; Ethnicity: NA	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors towards teammates	Quality of experiences	Youth hockey	Prosocial teammate behavior in activity positively predicted self-reported prosocial behaviors toward teammates (MLM)
3	Bolter et al. (2018)	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 246; Age: M = 11.8 (SD = 1.2); Gender: 58% male; Ethnicity: 87% White	Moral behaviors: Prosocial behaviors toward teammates and opponents	Quality of experiences	Team sports	Coaches' modelling of good sportsmanship related to greater prosocial through relatedness with coaches and teammates (SEM)
4	Bower et al. (2015)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 107; Age: 12–17; Gender: 47% male; Ethnicity: NA	Global measure: Social responsibility	Type	Sports, art, cultural or other ECAs	Youth participating in sports plus other activities had higher social responsibility than non-participants (ANOVA)
5	Bruner et al. (2018)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 376; Age: M = 13.71 (SD = 1.26); Gender: 67% male; Ethnicity: NA	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors	Quality of experiences	Ice hockey	Perceptions of ingroup ties and cognitive centrality of group identity predicted prosocial behavior toward teammates (MLM)
6	Champine et al. (2016)	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 667; Age: 6–11; Gender: 100% male; Ethnicity: 74% White	Moral Behaviors: Kindness, trustworthiness, helpfulness	Breadth, Intensity	A range of activities	Neither breadth nor intensity, or the interaction between them, was associated with moral virtues (SEM)
7	Dworkin et al. (2003)	Cross sectional, Qualitative focus group	N = 55; Age: M = 16 years; Gender: 42% male; Ethnicity: 56% White	Moral Cognition: Respect, empathy, teamwork, and understanding	Participation	School-based and community-based activities	Youth reported learning about respect, empathy, teamwork and understanding in activities

Table 2 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
8	Forneris et al. (2015)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=239; Age: 9th–12th graders; Gender: 43% male; Ethnicity: NA	Global Measure: helping others, taking responsibility, and valuing equality	Activity Profiles	A range of activities	Youth in sports only and sports plus other activities had more "positive values" than youth not involved in activities (MANOVA)
9	Hansen et al. (2003)	Cross sectional, correlational	N=450; Age: 9th, 11th, 12th graders; Gender: 44% male; Ethnicity: 60% White	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial norms	Type	A range of activities	Faith-based, community-based, and service activities related to more prosocial norms than other activities (MANOVA) > arts, sports (MANOVA)
10	Holt et al. (2012)	Cross sectional, case study	N=8 teachers; 59 children; Age: M=12.4 (SD=1.5); Gender: 53% male; Ethnicity: 20% White	Global Measure: Social respect, empathy	Participation	Sport programs	Youth reported learning about empathy and prosocial moral behaviors in sport programs
11	Kataoka et al. (2013)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=186; Age: 6th & 7th Graders; Gender: 48% male; Ethnicity: 26% White	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors[b]	Quality of experiences	Afterschool programs and other organized activities	Overall quality, especially emotional support from adult staff predicted gains in youth prosocial behaviors with peers (SEM)
12	Linver et al. (2009)	Cross sectional, correlational	N=1711; Age: 10–18; Gender: 50% male; Ethnicity: 63% White	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors	Activity Profiles	A range of activities	Religious-focused profile higher in prosocial behaviors than sports-focused profile. Sports-focused profile higher in prosocial behaviors than low activity profile (OLS)
13	Lynch et al. (2016)	Longitudinal, correlational	N=737; Age: M=9.59 (SD=1.40); Gender: 100% male; Ethnicity: 86% White	Moral Behaviors: Helpfulness, kindness, trustworthiness	Intensity, Duration, Engagement	Boy scouts of America	Duration predicted increased helpfulness; Youth's engagement associated with greatest increases in moral behaviors when they were part of highly engaged pack (MLM)

Table 2 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
14	Molinuevo et al. (2010)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=867; Age: Boys: M=9.63 (SD=1.67) Girls: M=9.67 (SD=1.63); Gender: 51% male; Ethnicity: NA	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors[b]	Nonsports v.s. Sports	A range of activities	No statistically significant differences in prosocial behaviors was found between sport versus nonsport participants (t-test)
15	Muscott et al. (1999)	Cross sectional, case study	N=19; Age: 1st–6th graders; Gender: 63% male; Ethnicity: 95% White	Global Measure: Responsibility, respect for diversity	Yes/No	Service Learning & 'Prepared for Citizenship' after school program	Students reported learning about responsibility and respect for diversity in the afterschool program
16	Rutten et al. (2008)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=331; Age: 9–19; Gender: 100% male; Ethnicity: 51% White	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors	Quality of experiences	Soccer	Relational support from coach at the individual and team level both predicted more prosocial behaviors (MLM)
17	Rutten et al. (2011)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=439; Age: 14–17; Gender: 100% male; Ethnicity: 65% White	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors	Quality of experiences	Athletics: taekwondo, soccer and basketball	Relational support from coach and moral atmosphere at individual and team level predicted more prosocial behaviors in sports context (MLM)
18	Stanger et al. (2018)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N=275; Age: 11–16; Gender: 57% male; Ethnicity: NA	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial behaviors	Quality of experiences	Team sports	Mastery-oriented climate in activity predicted higher social support, which in turn, was associated with perspective taking and prosocial behaviors in activity (SEM)
19	Villarreal et al. (2016)	Cross sectional, correlational	N=186; Age: 7th graders; Gender: 53% male; Ethnicity:100% Hispanic	Moral Behaviors: Prosocial	Intensity within Type	Sports and nonsports extracurricular activities	Participation in neither sports or nonsports extracurricular activities was associated with prosocial behaviors (OLS)

Table 2 (continued)

#	Citations	Study design	Sample[b]	Indicator of character	Indicator of activities	Type of activities	Findings (Analysis Type)
20	Walker et al. (2017)[a]	Cross sectional, correlational	N = 4053; Age: 14–15; Gender: 51% male; Ethnicity: 85% White	Moral Cognitions: Moral reasoning	Type	Charity, music/choir, drama, art/photography, debating, and sport	Participants in charity, music/choir, and drama activities reported better moral judgment than non-participants. There were no differences between nonparticipants and participants in art/ photography, debating, or sports (ANOVA)
21	Wang et al. (2015)	Longitudinal, correlational	Scouts: N = 1398; Age: M = 8.59 (SD = 1.29); Gender: 100% male; Ethnicity: 82% White Non-scouts: N = 325; Age: M = 9.06 (SD = 1.43); Gender: 100% male; Ethnicity: 64% White	Moral Behaviors: Kindness, trustworthiness, helpfulness	Yes/No	Boy Scouts of America	Compared with non-scouts, scouts' self-ratings increased more positively on helpfulness (Latent growth-curve analysis)

[a]Study conducted on international sample; [b]Data reported by respondents other than youth

(age range 6–19), no studies examined differences by age, and there were no moral studies that examined moral outcomes post-high school.

Civic Character Development

The current review identified a total of 44 studies that examined the associations between organized activities and youth civic character development. These studies varied in their conceptualization of civic character with (a) some studies ($n = 21$) defining civic character in terms of volunteering, community service, and ideologies regarding service; (b) other studies ($n = 26$) defining it in terms of political behaviors and ideologies (14 of these studies included both community and political forms of civic character measured separately); and (c) a third set of studies ($n = 11$) measuring a more comprehensive form of civic character defined by a compilation of community and political service behaviors, ideology, and intentions which they termed 'citizenship,' 'civic engagement,' or 'contribution.' A review of the literature organized by these three categories is summarized below.

Volunteering and Community Service

Twenty-one studies (48%) included volunteering and/or other community service as a primary indicator of civic character. Eighteen of these studies measured civic character in terms of participants' active participation in community service/volunteering and three studies measured participants' value/ideology and intentions (commitment) for community service (Denault and Poulin 2009; Metzger et al. 2018) or a combination of ideology/intentions and behaviors (Metz and Youniss 2005; Table 1). All 21 studies measuring youth community service or volunteering indicated that participation in organized activities helps support civic character development as measured in this way. However, some studies indicated that the associations between organized activities and these civic behaviors depended on the intensity, duration, and breadth of youth's activity participation, as well as the type of activities in which youth are engaged.

Activity Intensity, Duration, and Breadth Several studies demonstrated the importance of considering variations in youth community service by youth's level of exposure/engagement in activities. Five studies (3 longitudinal studies from Grade 8 to 8 years post high school; 2 cross-sectional retrospective studies) found that the greater number of years youth participated (i.e., duration), the more favorable their civic outcomes (see Table 1; studies 11, 15, 18, 30, 43). Rigorous longitudinal designs that spanned from age 12 to age 34 have also demonstrated that the greater number of activity types in which youth participate (i.e., breadth; Table 1;

studies 7, 8, 9, 35, 40), as well as more intense participation (greater frequency/time spent in activities; studies 11, 20, 27), the higher the rates of later volunteering and community service. For example, using profile analyses, Finlay and Flanagan (2013) found that a multi-active profile including intense involvement in a variety of organized activity types (i.e., breadth) at age 16 predicted civic behaviors into mid-adulthood (age 34). Another study demonstrated that intensity was an especially strong predictor when coupled with longer participation durations (2 + years; Gardner et al. 2008), such that the longer youth participated at high intensity during adolescence (Grades 8–12), the more they were engaged in civic behaviors in young adulthood (2 and 8 years post high school). Denault and Poulin (2009) found that high initial levels of participation intensity and breadth during 7th grade were related to more positive civic attitudes/values in 11th grade; however, in contrast to other studies, the stability of participation from 7 to 11th grade (i.e., less decline) did not significantly predict differences in youth civic development. The authors argue these findings indicate that intense participation or participation in multiple activities during early adolescence may be particularly important for later positive civic outcomes.

Activity Type and Quality Studies have also demonstrated mixed findings regarding whether the type of activity matters. Though several researchers have found that participation in all types of activities during the middle school and high school years is positively related to youth community service and volunteering into adulthood (Table 1; studies 3, 13, 26, 35, 41, 43), two studies (9, 19) reported that specific activities or certain combinations of activities were more predictive of civic character development than others. After several selection factors were controlled, Fredricks and Eccles (2006) found that 11th grade participation in school clubs (clubs, school government) or prosocial activities (volunteering or civil rights activities) but not team sports was associated with civic engagement 2 years later. Likewise, in a cross-sectional study of youth ages 10–18, Linver et al. (2009) found that although youth who only participated in sports were more charitable than low activity involvement youth, sport-only youth reported fewer charitable efforts than those who combined sports with other activities, or those who participated predominantly in school clubs or religious activities.

Studies that focused solely on youth volunteer/community service activities or civic education provide further evidence of the particularly strong positive association between early civic activities (as early as Grade 7) and later civic behaviors (as late as 13 years post-high school; Table 1; studies 13, 17, 22, 23, 28, 35). Interestingly, Metzger et al. (2018) even demonstrated differential impacts of activities among different types of civic-related organized activities (community

service, political engagement, religious activities, social movement), where high school volunteer activities and religious activities, but not political engagement or social movements, predicted young adult community service values/beliefs. Both Kim et al. (2017) and Barber et al. (2013) also made distinctions between voluntary and required volunteering and found that youth volunteering across the middle and high school years was related to long-term commitment to community involvement and volunteering into adulthood (ages 24, 26, and 31) only if it was voluntary or a mixture of voluntary and required, but was ineffective when it was all required volunteering.

Little is known about characteristics of activities responsible for these relations (there were no studies examining quality indicators/activity features), however four studies (11, 18, 27, 34) did examine growth in key youth assets resulting from activity participation that could account, at least in part, for the relations between participation and volunteer/service behaviors. These intrapersonal assets included academic, social, and conduct competencies (Obradovic and Masten 2007), indicators of positive youth development (confidence, competence, connection, character, caring (Kim et al. 2016); and educational attainment (Gardner et al. 2008). Smith (1999) found participation influenced self-concept and locus of control, but these self-beliefs did not translate into greater civic character (i.e., community/volunteer behaviors or political participation).

Political Engagement

Twenty-six studies (59%) included specified measures of political engagement as a primary indicator of youth's civic character. 20 of these studies measured participants' active participation in political activities, including voting, involvement in school politics (e.g., school government), and forms of activism (e.g., attending political meetings, rallies, protest, working for a political party). Six studies (14, 22, 23, 24, 29, 33) measured participants' ideology and/or intentions (commitment) for political service with assessments including beliefs regarding citizens' responsibilities and values of being involved in civic affairs, as well as one's intentions of civic involvement as adults (See Table 1). The majority of studies (92%) measuring political engagement suggest that organized activities can play a positive role in promoting current and future political involvement. However, several studies indicated that the type of activities in which youth participated, as well as, to some extent, the level of intensity and duration of participation, were important determinants of whether activity participation was associated with political forms of civic character development.

Activity Intensity, Duration, and Breadth Several studies found evidence of the importance of activity intensity, dura-

tion, and breadth on youth political engagement (studies 7, 8, 9, 11, 20, 27, 32, 43). Along with community service, Fredricks and Eccles (2006, 2010) found that, after controlling for a rigorous set of selection factors, breadth of activity participation at 11th grade was a critical predictor of political engagement 2 years later. Likewise, Finlay and Flanagan's (2013) activity time use profiles at age 16 indicated that the multiactivity profile also predicted political interest and civic action through early- to mid-adulthood (age 26, 30, 34) and a large cross-sectional study of 16-year-old youth in Belgium (Quintellier 2008) found breadth of participation, but not intensity, was related to both political participation and consumerism. In contrast, a cross-sectional study of youth ages 12–17 did not find relations between the number of activities in which youth participated and their political engagement (Wicks et al. 2014b, study 40) in a model that controlled for a number of other correlates of engagement. Two studies using the National Education Longitudinal study (NELS) found activity duration across the adolescent years (8th through 12th grade) was related to greater voting 2 years and 8 years post high school (Zaff et al. 2003; Gardner et al. 2008). These studies found that although some participation (1 year) was better than no activity participation during the adolescent years, participation for 2 or more years was predictive of the highest rates of civic engagement. Studies that measured intensity of participation reported mixed findings. One study, using a rigorous longitudinal design that controlled for early selection factors, did not find significant relations between frequent participation in organized activities among adolescents (12–18-year-olds) on their later voting behaviors in young adulthood (6 years later; Mahoney et al. 2012). However, Obradovic and Masten (2007) found that youth total time spent across activities during adolescence (age 14–19) and emerging adulthood (ages 17–23) each uniquely predicted adult citizenship activities (e.g., voting in elections, serving jury duty) during adulthood (age 28–36) and another study indicated intense participation during high school, especially for 2 or more years, predicted better political outcomes 2 and 8 years post-high school (Gardner et al. 2008).

Activity Type and Quality Among the 16 studies that examined differences by type of activity, seven studies found that participation in any type of organized activity was related to greater political forms of civic character (see Table 1; studies 10, 13, 24, 26, 34, 35, 43). In contrast, nine studies found variation in sociopolitical values (study 29) or political engagement by type of activity, with all eight of the studies that measured political engagement behaviors reporting that civic (e.g., volunteering) and political (e.g., campaign involvement; school government) activities were either more influential than other activities (e.g., sports, drama; studies 5, 9, 21, 32), or were the *only* activities associated

with youth's later political engagement (Table 1; studies 12, 22, 23, 39). For example, Glanville (1999) found that participation in instrumental activities (i.e., involvement in service organizations, volunteer work, political organizations), but not 'expressive activities' (e.g., sports, arts) during 12th grade predicted political involvement in early adulthood net of self-efficacy, sociability, political interest, political awareness, and community attitudes. Frisco et al. (2004) found that participation in any type of 8th grade activities predicted registering to vote at age 18, but only those who participated in Scouts or religious youth groups, or served in a leadership role in their activities was predictive of voting at age 18. Metzger et al. (2018) proposed domain specific effects of youth civic activities, and demonstrated that even among different types of civic-related activities (community service, political engagement, social movement), only high school political activities were predictive of later young adult political engagement. In contrast, Youniss et al. (1999) proposed an indirect relation of organized activities on political engagement, showing in a cross-sectional study of 12th grade youth that participation in all types of activities was associated with community service, and in turn, youth participation in community service was associated with greater political engagement.

Five studies took a closer look at civically-oriented activities (Table 1; studies 14, 17, 31, 33, 41) and, with the exception of one study (study 17: Kim et al. 2017), provide further support that participation in civically-oriented activities during adolescence is related to greater political engagement in adulthood. Several reasons have been proposed for these relations including the development of a personal involvement and civic identity through participation (Youniss et al. 1999), an increased awareness of social problems (Wray-Lake and Syvertsen 2011), surrounding oneself with a network of people that share similar civic values and can discuss civic issues with (Crystal and DeBell 2002). However, similar to community-based engagement studies, none of the studies that examined political engagement explored potential activity-based characteristics responsible for fostering political engagement. Findings from Frisco et al. (2004) suggests that opportunities for leadership may be critical but this was not directly tested. One study examined growth in intrapersonal mechanisms (Obradovic and Masten 2007) and found that social and academic competencies developed from early activity participation (i.e., adolescence and emerging adulthood) fully mediated the associations between activity involvement and later political involvement during adulthood. Moreover, these relations can also, at least partly be due to an individual's own initial interest, value, commitment, volition, to be engaged that predicts both early and later participation (Wicks et al. 2014b). McFarland and Thomas (2006) controlled for a large battery of these youth-related factors, as well as a large set of

social background, parent, peer, and school factors that are related to youth political participation, and found involvement in politically-based youth activities across the middle and high school years had significant, positive returns on adult political participation 7 to 12 years later even in these highly conservative models.

Citizenship/Contribution

11 of the 44 studies (25%) defined civic character using a broader construct of community and political forms of service and ideology. The majority of these studies ($n=8$) used longitudinal designs (spanning Grades 5 through age 36) and rigorous methods that controlled for early selection factors, and examined both civic behaviors and ideology (Table 1; studies 1, 25, 27, 36, 37, 38, 42, 44).

Activity Intensity, Duration, and Breadth Several studies that used a global measure of citizenship/contribution also demonstrated that intensity, duration, and breadth of participation were important determinants of engagement (studies 1, 25, 27, 37, 38, 42, 44). For example, Agans et al. (2014) demonstrated causal relations where high levels of participation across several activities (a combination of intensity and breadth) across Grades 7 through 12 was linked with high levels of concurrent and future contribution, and reductions in breadth across the mid-adolescent years was linked with reductions in contribution. Viau and Poulin (2015) also found that duration and breadth mattered, with those who had less consistent participation (duration) and those who had a more specialized pattern of activities (less breadth) during adolescence (ages 14–17) reporting less political engagement in young adulthood (age 21).

Activity Type and Quality There were seven studies that considered variations in these relations by type of activity (Table 1; articles 2, 4, 16, 36, 37, 42, 44). Bobek et al. (2009) and Zaff et al. (2011) evidenced the positive relations between youth development programs (e.g., 4-H, Scouts, Boys' and Girls' club) and a global measure of civic identity and engagement from 8 to 11th grade, but Zaff et al. found that these relations largely emerged for youth participating at high intensity. Vezina and Poulin (2019) examined youth's participation in sport, prosocial/community-based, and academic vocational activities during 10th and 11th grade and the trajectories of civic engagement from 18 to 22 years old and found that academic/vocational activities were particularly beneficial, related to greater likelihood of being in the high-sustained civic engagement trajectory. Controlling for prior civic commitment 2 years earlier, Kahne and Sporte (2008) found that participation in 11th grade school- and community-based activities other than sport was related to greater commitments to civic participation. Using a mix-

ture of pattern-centered and variable centered approaches, Zarrett et al. (2009) found that 5th grade youth sport participants had higher levels of civic commitment ("Contribution") in 7th grade compared to youth who did not participate in activities even after controlling for participation duration, breadth and intensity. However, those who participated in multiple activities along with sport (high engaged) and youth who participated in youth development programs (e.g., boys and girls clubs of America, 4-H, etc.) along with sports (Sports + YD) were significantly higher in contribution compared to youth of all other activity profiles. These findings highlight that beyond activity participation, the type of activities and how activity types complement one another in building youth strengths is at work in promoting civic character.

Only one study out of all 44 civic-focused articles highlighted other qualities of the activity setting beyond activity type for supporting civic commitment. Viau et al. (2015) demonstrated that support from activity leaders partially explained the relations between duration of participation and civic engagement. Two studies examined growth in intrapersonal mechanisms. Along with the social and academic competences identified by Obradovic and Masten (2007, described in the sections above), Mueller et al. (2011) found that the impact of activity participation on improvements in youth self-regulation skills, partially explained the significant relations found between 8th grade activity participation and 10th grade youth contribution.

Moral Character Development

The current review identified 21 studies that examined the relation between youth's organized activity participation and their moral character (Table 2). Among the 21 studies, researchers have predominantly examined behavioral aspects of moral character ($n = 15$) with only a few studies focused on moral cognitions ($n = 3$) or a more comprehensive indicator of moral character that consisted of a combination of both moral behaviors and reasoning ($n = 4$).

Moral Behaviors and Cognitions

Fourteen studies (67%; Table 2; studies 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18 19, 21) included measures of prosocial moral behavior such as sharing, being trustworthy, helpful, or kind. Three additional studies (14%; studies 1,7, 20) focused on moral cognitions, considering how activities may influence individuals' thinking in ways that reflect empathy and understanding of others' perspectives, feelings, and needs. Overall, these studies provide some support for the association between activities and moral development during the childhood and adolescent years (Grades 1 through 12). However, the majority of studies suggest that associations

between organized activities and these moral behaviors depended on the type and quality of activities in which youth are engaged. These findings are reviewed below.

Activity Intensity, Duration, and Breadth Only three studies (Table 2; studies 6, 13, 19) considered participation level and provide minimal support for the association between activity intensity, duration, or breadth and the development of moral behaviors. Among a cross-sectional sample of boys ages 6 to 11 who participated in Cub Scouts, Champine et al. (2016) failed to find associations between either intensity or breadth with youth helpfulness, kindness, and trustworthiness. In another study of Hispanic youth in 6th and 7th grade, researchers found that children's self-reported moral behavior was not associated with the number of hours they spent in either sports or non-sport activities (Villarreal and Gonzalez 2016). Likewise, Lynch et al. (2016) did not find relations between intensity of participation and a range of moral behaviors in a 1-year longitudinal study that examined 1st through 5th grade boys' participation in Cub Scouts, (a branch of the Boy Scouts of America). However, as the only study to examine participation duration and youth moral development, Lynch et al (2016) did find that duration was related to increased helpfulness. There were no studies that examined associations between participation intensity, duration, and breadth on youth moral cognitions. However, in a qualitative study of high school students' participation across a variety of organized activities, Dworkin et al. (2003) found several themes of moral cognition that students discussed including developing greater respect for leaders, a greater understanding and ability to get along with those different than themselves, and learning the benefits of working together, as important growth experiences resulting from their participation in activities.

Activity Type and Quality Though measuring participation across a range of activities enables researchers to examine broad relations between activity participation and moral development, it often fails to capture the nuances of youth's experiences that occur within different activity types. Among the seven studies that considered type of activity (Table 2; articles 1, 9, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21), five indicate that affordances for moral development vary across activities. Hansen and colleagues (2003) found that among youth in high school faith/religious-based activities and activities related to community were particularly effective for promoting moral norms and behaviors compared to all other activity types measured. Likewise, Linver et al. (2009) examined profiles of activity participation across a range of activity types and found that although adolescents (ages 10–18 years) who participated in a sports-focused profile had higher moral behaviors compared to low participation youth, youth who had a predominantly religious-focused activity profile

benefited most from their activity participation. In a sample of 1,398 Boy Scouts (average age 9 years old), Wang et al. (2015) found that scouts' self-ratings increased significantly for helpfulness compared with non-scouts, but not for kindness or trustworthiness over a two-and-a-half year period. Among Spanish youth ages 6 to 11, participation in chess clubs was related to significant gains in individuals' understanding of others (i.e., moral cognition) over the course of a year whereas no gains were observed with peers participating in soccer or basketball (Aciego et al. 2012). Researchers in the United Kingdom found that compared with nonparticipants, middle school adolescents (ages 14–15) who participated in charity, music/choir, and drama activities reported better moral judgment though there were no differences between nonparticipants and participants in art, debating, or sports (Walker et al. 2017). While studies examining specific type/profile of activities found differences in youth's behaviors, studies that used too broad of a categorization of activity type (e.g., all sport activities compared to all non-sport activities) failed to detect such differences during the childhood years (Molinuevo et al. 2010) or early adolescence (7th grade; Villarreal and Gonzalez 2016).

Beyond type of activity, research on activity quality captures the programmatic and process characteristics within activity settings and the quality of youth's experiences in organized activities that may be important for promoting moral development. Across the eight studies that examined quality (Table 2; studies 2, 3, 5, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18), leader support, peer relations, and the motivational climate were each related to the development of moral behaviors. In a study of youth in 6th and 7th grades, Kataoka and Vandell (2013) found that overall activity quality predicted gains in youth moral behaviors at school. When specific quality indicators (i.e., leader emotional support, positive peer relationships, perceived opportunities for autonomy) were examined, youth's perceived emotional support from program leaders emerged as the strongest predictor of youth moral behaviors with peers. In a study that examined boys' (1st through 5th grade) experiences participating in Boy Scouts of America across 40 different scout "packs", Lynch et al. (2016) found that boys' individual level of engagement in the program was associated with the greatest increases in moral behaviors when they were part of a highly emotionally- and cognitively- engaged pack. The remaining six studies that examined the quality of activities, focused on youth's experiences in organized sports activities. Although studies focusing on activity type suggest that sport activities may not be well-positioned to promote moral behaviors, other studies show that the effectiveness of sport activities in promoting moral behaviors is contingent on their quality. For example, in a series of studies on competitive team sports, Rutten and colleagues found that social processes such as perceived coach support and prosocial atmosphere

in the activity predicted moral behaviors among athletes ages 9 to 19 (Rutten et al. 2008, 2011). Similarly, Bolter and Kipp (2018) examined coaching behaviors in team sports and found that coaches' modeling of good sportsmanship promoted individuals' relatedness in the activity, which in turn was associated with greater moral behaviors among a cross-sectional sample of early adolescents between the ages of 10 to 13 years old. The peer climate also matters, with two studies on youth ice hockey (mean age = 13 years) indicating that perceptions of ingroup ties, cognitive centrality of group identity (Bruner et al. 2018) and perceived prosocial behaviors from teammates (Benson et al. 2018) positively predicting moral behavior toward teammates. Research on sports activities has also examined the association between motivational climate and participants' moral behaviors (Stanger et al. 2018) and found that when youth (age range 11 to 16 years old) perceived a more mastery-oriented climate in their activities, they also perceived more social support, which in turn, was associated with perspective taking and moral behaviors in the activity. Although findings from these studies indicate the potential of sport activities in promoting moral behaviors, the current literature is largely cross-sectional in nature. Longitudinal research is needed to test directionality and longevity of the benefits of participation.

Comprehensive Measure of Moral Character

Four studies used a comprehensive measure of moral character that consisted of both moral behaviors and moral cognition (see Table 2; articles 4, 8, 10, 15). None of these studies using a comprehensive measure considered youth participation intensity, duration, or breadth. Rather, all four studies examined either activity type or quality of experiences. Although few in number, identified studies provide support for the positive influence of organized activities on moral character and which activity processes may play an important role in promoting moral character.

Activity Type and Quality Using composite measures that combine both behavioral and cognitive indicators, researchers found that participating in sports plus other activities was associated with "positive values" (e.g., helping others, taking responsibility, and valuing equality) among Canadian adolescents (Grades 9 through 12; Forneris et al. 2015) and "social responsibility" (e.g., operating from a strong values base, and understanding others' perspectives) among middle and high school Australian adolescents (ages 12 to 17) compared to adolescents who did not participate (Bower and Carroll 2015). Though adolescents who participated in sports only had high positive values compared to non-participants (Forneris et al. 2015), all other comparisons across activity types (e.g., non-sport activities) were not significant. In a qualitative study examining the impact of an after

school mentoring program for 1st through 6th grade youth with a disability ($N = 19$), Muscott and O'Brien, (1999) found that participants reported learning about responsibility and developed a greater understanding of diversity in the program. In another qualitative study on sports programs (Holt et al. 2012), youth in middle school (ages 11 through 14) also reported learning about empathy and prosocial moral behaviors. In addition, staff reported that moral character development is better facilitated when programs are structured and rule-guided, when prosocial norms are promoted in the program, and when student development was prioritized over winning.

Variations by Youth Characteristics

Aligned with the Positive Youth Development model (Lerner 2005), this review also set out to examine available evidence towards understanding the degree to which relations between activities and youth's character varied depending on youth characteristics. Among the 44 studies that assessed civic character, five examined person-level moderators. Among the five studies, three examined demographic characteristics as moderators including gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Fredricks and Eccles (2006) examined the potential moderating effects of race and gender, and found that the relations between activities and community involvement did not vary by these characteristics, but did vary by race for political engagement; high school sports (11th grade) predicted political activity involvement 2 years later for African American youth, but not for European American adolescents. In contrast, Frisco et al. (2004) found that racial/ethnic minority youth, especially Latino/a youth, did not benefit from their participation in activities during the 8th grade as much as White youth in terms of later political engagement at age 18. Frisco et al. (2004) also found that the estimated effect of religious youth group and non-school sports team membership was negative for low SES youth when compared to higher SES youth. Viau et al. (2015) examined whether characteristics of the activity setting (e.g., activity leader qualities) responsible for mediating the relation of activities on civic development differed for boys and girls, and, similar to Fredricks and Eccles (2006), found no differences by gender. None of the civic-focused studies examined possible variations by youth age; however, comparisons between studies that examined middle school participation to those that examined high school activity participation on high school civic development outcomes and/or young-to-middle adulthood outcomes suggests youth benefit in similar positive ways from their activity participation across the early-to-late adolescent years. Likewise, a single study (Zarrett et al. 2009) examined activity participation in elementary school

on a global measure of civic character development suggests activities during the late childhood years may also support character development during early adolescence.

Along with the three civic studies that considered variations by youth demographic characteristics, there were two additional studies that examined other youth indicators that could influence the impact of activities on civic development. Mirazchiyski (2014) found that participation in school-based activities was related to youth political engagement for youth in countries with newly formed democracies but not well-established ones, highlighting how an adolescents' internalization/socialization within different societal contexts can also influence these relations. Polson et al. (2013) found that the positive impact of participation in Boy Scouts was only apparent for those individuals who were the most committed or engaged with the activity (i.e., Achieved the rank of Eagle Scout), accounting for any variance that may have been explained by participation duration.

Among the 21 studies on moral character, five examined potential effects of specific youth characteristics on the relations between participation and moral development and found little variation. Among these five studies, three examined demographic characteristics, predominantly gender, as a potential moderator and found mixed findings. In a cross-sectional study of high school youth (9th to 12th grade), Forneris et al. (2015) found that youth participating in *sports only* and *sports plus other activities* had more "positive values" than youth not involved in any extracurricular activities, and that these relations did not vary by gender. In contrast, Walker et al. (2017) examined a cross-sectional sample of similar-aged high school youth and found gender differences in the association between sports participation and adolescents' moral judgment. For girls, sports participants reported better moral judgment than sport nonparticipants, however the reverse was true for boys. No gender moderation effects were found for other types of activities (i.e., charity, music/choir, drama, art/photography, debating). Along with gender, Villareal and Gonzalez (2016) also examined bilingual status and economic status on the association between activity participation (i.e., sports, nonsports) and prosocial behaviors among Latinx youth and did not find any moderation effects across any of the three youth characteristics. Although there were no moral studies that examined the differential influences of activities on moral development by youth age/development, comparisons between studies with childhood samples (Table 2; studies 6, 13, 14, 15, 21) to those of early-to-middle (studies 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 18, 19) and late adolescent samples (studies 7, 8, 9, 17, 20) indicate activities have the potential to influence moral development across childhood and adolescence, albeit findings were mixed at each age level. There were no moral studies that extended post-high school to draw inferences about the impact of activities on adult moral character development.

The remaining two studies examined other youth indicators that could influence the impact of activities on moral development. Linver et al. (2009) examined whether benefits of activity participation varied by youth academic risk and found that participation in sports plus other activities (compared with sports alone) predicted more moral behaviors among youth at high academic risks, but there were no differences between sport groups for those at low-academic risk. In a regression model that included intensity and duration of participation, Lynch et al. (2016) measured the direct effects of youth self-reported engagement in the program, a measure of youth motivation and emotional investment in the activity, and found that youth level of engagement in Boy Scouts was a better predictor of gains in moral behavior (i.e., associated with increased helpfulness and kindness but not trustworthiness) than either intensity or duration.

Discussion

The nurturance of character development during the formidable years of childhood and adolescence not only functions to support other positive outcomes of individual development but also equips individuals with the tools needed to make a positive difference in the world as a moral agent and contributing citizen. In recent years, organized activities have received increased attention as an important context for supporting the development of civic and moral character development during childhood and adolescence (Lerner 2019). The current study is, to our knowledge, the first to review and synthesize research on youth's organized activities and character development with the goal of identifying what, how, and for whom activities foster civic and moral character development. This review entailed a focused examination of these relations by key dimensions of activity participation including the intensity, duration, and breadth of organized activities as well as the types and quality of activities. The review also examined whether relations between activities and character development varied by youth characteristics, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, bilingual status, family income, academic risk, and personal motivation/emotional investment in the activity. Using guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses Statement (Moher et al. 2009), findings from the systematic review of the character literature provided substantial evidence for the positive influence of organized activities on youth concurrent and long-term civic character development and preliminary evidence for the positive role that activities can play in supporting moral character development. Detailed examination of key dimensions of activity participation indicated that associations between organized activities and character development are related to the intensity, duration, and breadth of youth's activity participation, as well as the type and quality of activities in which youth are engaged. For civic character development, the greater the intensity, duration, and range of activities in which youth participate, the more youth appeared to benefit from organized activities. Relations between activities and political forms of civic character were also stronger if the activity was civically/politically focused. For moral character development, the type and quality of the activity setting appear to be more important for supporting development than youth levels of participation (i.e., intensity, duration, breadth). Available evidence provided by studies also suggests some possible variations in how youth benefit from activities by youth characteristics with some differences observed by race/ethnicity, bilingual status, economic status, and by youth academic risk and youth motivational/emotional investment in the activity. Moreover, the current review found clear distinctions between moral and civic character and their relations to organized activities, providing further support for considering these as separate dimensions of character development (Baehr 2017).

Dimensions of Activity Participation

The review of the studies of civic character development provided consistent evidence that the more intense, the longer the duration, and greater breadth of youth participation in organized activities, the more youth demonstrated community and political indicators of civic character (e.g., volunteering, charitable giving, forms of political engagement). The longitudinal studies further indicated that higher levels of participation in activities during middle adolescence can have long term influence on civic character development well into middle adulthood even after controlling for a battery of potential selection effects (e.g., Gardner et al. 2008; Obradovic and Masten 2007).

Contrary to civic-focused studies and other research in organized activities (e.g., Bohnert and Fredricks 2010), the few studies that measured intensity or breadth of youth activity participation did not find these participation indicators were strongly associated with moral development. However more studies that examine these activity participation dimensions are needed to draw more definitive conclusions about the nature of these relations. Likewise, there were no moral development studies that focused on duration of participation to draw any conclusions about the potential benefits of long-term engagement in an activity.

For both civic and moral character development, research suggests that activity type can also matter. Although several rigorous longitudinal studies provide evidence that all types of activities are supportive of civic character development, there was some evidence to suggest that certain activities provided more developmental opportunities and resources to support civic development than others. In particular, civic

(e.g., volunteering) and political (e.g., campaign involvement; school government) activities were more influential than other activities (e.g., sports, drama), and, in some studies, were the *only* activities associated with youth's later civic character. This was especially true for political indicators of civic character development. For community-based civic outcomes, organized activities did not necessarily need to be tailored towards volunteering/community service to support civic character development, but rather tailored settings like volunteer opportunities and more generalized settings like sports and music were found to contribute in their own unique ways to predict/explain youth later civic engagement and development (for examples see Hart et al. 2007; Srbijanko et al. 2012).

For moral character, there was also some preliminary findings that suggested differential effects of activity participation by type of activity, with activities that directly targeted youth growth/development, such as faith-based/religious activities, scouts, and other community-based activities identified as particularly effective for promoting moral norms and behaviors compared to other activity types (see Hanson et al. 2003; Linver et al. 2009) and mixed findings for sport (see Holt et al. 2012 for example of positive impact; see Villarreal and Gonzalez 2016 for example of no impact). However, additional research is needed to draw conclusive evidence.

Different types of activities, on average, provide variant developmental opportunities, such as service-based work and teamwork (Larson et al. 2006); thus, it is not surprising that character development was consistently observed to vary somewhat by type of activity. That said, organized activities also vary in terms of quality. Even specific locations within the same general program can vary in terms of the quality of the content, the people, and the microprocesses that transpire. For example, all packs in Boy Scouts of America share a common mission statement and detailed programming information and training, but vary from pack to pack in terms of quality, specific activities, and youth engagement (Lynch et al. 2016). The extent to which particular aspects of character may be emphasized or discussed varies by pack as does peer dynamics and the ways in which leaders intentionally (or unintentionally) support youth's character. The few studies that measured activity quality were able to capture variability in the programmatic and process characteristics across activity settings and the quality of youth's experiences in organized activities that are important for promoting character development. For both civic and moral character development, studies indicated that support from activity leaders was an important quality feature that helped explain the relations between participation and character development (See Viau et al. 2015 for civic character; see Kataoka and Vandell 2013 and Rutten et al. 2008, 2011 for moral character). However, compared

to the civic character development literature, more studies on moral development measured the quality of activities, and quality appears to be a more important activity dimension for supporting youth moral character than either participation intensity or breadth.

Some studies examined the intrapersonal processes and growth that might account for the mechanisms by which participation affects character development. Activities nurture important areas of development including academic and social competencies (Obradovic and Masten 2007), self-regulation (Mueller et al. 2011), educational attainment (Gardner et al. 2008), and competence, caring, and other indicators of positive youth development (Kim et al. 2016) that, in turn, were found to support civic character development. Although research has only begun to examine the qualities of activities responsible for nurturing these intrapersonal processes and growth, the variations in youth character development by type and quality of the organized activity setting reported in the initial studies reviewed here have clear implications for practice. Identification of these key activity-based and intrapersonal mechanisms will enable practitioners to intentionally design effective activity curricula for supporting civic and moral character development.

Variations by Youth Characteristics

Another source of variability in organized activities and character development is the youth. Aligned with the positive youth development literature (Lerner 2005), it was expected that the effects of youth's organized activities would vary, with some youth experiencing larger gains than others. For example, provision of civic opportunities within programming may be particularly beneficial to youth from high crime neighborhoods who, given their circumstances, may have limited opportunities to engage in their local communities. However, few studies have examined the moderational effect of key youth characteristics (e.g., SES, gender, age, prior adjustment) on these relations between activities and character development. Among these studies, only a few suggest possible variations by youth characteristics. For instance, among the five studies that considered gender as a moderator (two studies for civic; three studies for moral), only one study identified variations in the relations between activities and character development by gender. Similarly, the three studies (two civic studies; one moral study) that examined differences by youth race/ethnicity or bilingual status and the two studies that examined differences by socioeconomic status (one political-focused civic study; one moral study) suggest some possible variations by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status for only politically-related civic outcomes (no differences were found for either community-based civic development or moral development;

see Fredricks and Eccles 2006; Frisco et al. 2004; Villareal and Gonzalez 2016).

More studies will be needed to draw any definitive conclusions about how these youth characteristics may influence the way youth benefit from their activity participation. There are several additional characteristics, such as parent education, family immigrant status, urbanicity (e.g., whether youth reside in a rural, suburban, or more urban location) and youth age that also likely influence youth access to and experiences in activities for fostering character development that also need to be considered in future studies.

Although no studies to-date have considered how youth age (as a proxy of developmental period/age) may moderate the relations between activities and their civic and moral outcomes, comparisons between studies with childhood samples to those of early-to-middle adolescent samples, and to late adolescent samples indicate activities have the potential to influence both civic and moral development across childhood and adolescence. However, more studies are needed to better understand how processes within the activity for supporting character development may differ depending on youth age in order to inform best practices for meeting the developmental needs of youth for nurturing continued character development across the childhood and adolescent years. Among the 44 civic studies, the majority of studies examined relations between activities and character development during the middle adolescent to late adolescent and adulthood years with only a single study that examined these relations during (late) childhood (5th grade) to the early adolescent years (Zarrett et al. 2009). More research is needed to examine the nature of activity-character development processes earlier in childhood, as early exposure is likely to make a difference (Ma et al. 2020; Simpkins et al. 2020) and can inform ways to optimize on early initiatives during childhood (Astuto and Ruck 2010).

Of the 21 studies of moral development identified in the current review, nine included childhood and early adolescent samples, however more studies are needed that examine relations between activities and moral character development using longitudinal designs (only 4 of the 21 studies used longitudinal designs), and that consider the long-term influences of activities into adulthood. As a result, little is known about how organized activities shape the trajectory of civic and moral character development and vice versa. It is possible that civic and moral development will peak and stabilize during adolescence/young adulthood with the 'optimal' outcome targeted becoming maintenance through participation, not change (improvement). It also is possible that one might see declines among nonparticipants or participants who are not engaged. Studies that map growth trajectories of civic and moral development from childhood through adulthood will provide insight into the targeted outcomes of youth programming.

Along with demographic/demand characteristics, the youth who attend activities vary on the strengths they bring to activities as well as how much they invest in the activity. Several qualitative studies by Larson and colleagues suggest that some, but not all, adolescents have these growth experiences in the same activities (e.g., Larson and Angus 2011). Some of that variability is likely due to how much youth engage in the activity, whether they take on leadership roles, and the extent to which the activity is core to their identity. The few studies that measured commitment or level of engagement/motivation within the activity (i.e., Lynch et al. 2016; Polson et al. 2013) suggest that these are important person-by-context relations that influence the effectiveness of organized activities for fostering character development that need to be considered in future studies.

Future Directions for Research and Practice

Findings from the current review provide substantial support for the role that organized activities can play in fostering the two interpersonal dimensions of character development. However, little research has illuminated the processes or mechanisms that help to explain these relations. Moreover, there was variability in the consistency of the findings based on the type of activity and level of participation. Finally, there were also a few methodologically rigorous studies that suggested that activities were not related to character development (e.g., Mahoney et al. 2012) or that just highly tailored activities were related. These mixed findings are likely, at least partially, due to the lack of specificity in measuring the rich variability in organized activities. Most indicators of youth's experiences in activities were focused on the number or time spent in activities or compared various different "types" of activities that were often constructed in different ways. The few studies that considered activity quality typically used broad measures of quality. It is not surprising that those broad measures inconsistently predict specific youth outcomes. According to the specificity principle (Bornstein 2017), certain interactions, experiences, and processes in activities will foster certain outcomes. More research is needed to identify which activity qualities and experiences foster specific dimensions of character (e.g., empathy versus voting behavior) and for whom. Developing a stronger alignment between contextual indicators and youth's character development within studies of organized activity participation will thus, inform what mechanisms should be targeted within these settings to foster such development. Thus, to better inform practice in organized activities, additional research is still needed to capture the complex processes between youth and activity settings and to identify specific key ingredients within programs that support specific aspects of character development. This will entail further tailoring of measurement and the development

of a clear conceptual model that targets both intrapersonal and activity-based mechanisms, and accounts for variation by youth characteristics.

Theories and the existing literature on schools contain ideas on which experiences in activities might promote youth's character. For example, Berkowitz et al. (2017) described six effective school-based practices linked to character development, including adult modeling and making character development a priority. Each of these six practices are described with specific indicators that could be measured within organized activities. Adult modeling, for instance, includes adult role modeling, mentoring, and discussing other role models. Research and practice could also benefit from studies of other character dimensions, such as kindness that have their own literature on what promotes this area of development. Together the literature on schools and character development, as well as the literature on the development of each character dimension could enrich the field's scholarship on how organized activities promote civic and moral character.

Limitations

This systematic review offers a comprehensive summary of peer-reviewed studies and considers relations between multiple aspects of organized activities (intensity, duration, type, breadth, and quality) and both civic and moral character. However, there were some limitations. Given the inconsistencies with which researchers have studied the dimensions of participation (i.e. intensity, duration, breadth, type, and quality), definitive conclusions cannot be drawn regarding what aspect of participation matters for what aspect of character development. For example, little is known about the quality of the setting for supporting civic development or whether quality of the activity will function as an important moderator of other activity participation dimensions (e.g., intensity, duration, etc.) on civic outcomes. Thus, conclusions drawn about the influence of each specific participation dimension in this review may be later altered by findings of future studies. Similarly, although findings from this review indicated that the quality of the activity appears to be particularly important for moral development, until additional studies that use rigorous methodological designs better test the influence of intensity, breadth, and duration of participation on moral outcomes these conclusions are only educated speculations.

There were also several limitations related to measurement of moral and civic character in the literature that impedes the ability to draw definitive conclusions about the relations between activities and character development in the current review. According to emerging theories on character development, both moral and civic character should be driven by intrinsic motivation for the good (Baehr 2017; Nucci 2017).

However, many of the studies included in the current review used behavioral indicators of character (and sometimes only a single behavioral item; e.g., "have you volunteered in your community in the past year"), without distinguishing the motivation behind the behaviors. For example, in the study by Bruner et al. (2018), prosocial behavior towards teammates was measured by asking youth whether they "gave positive feedback to teammates". While such measures are created to capture moral behaviors, it is hard to tell if the motivation behind such behaviors is totally for the good of others. To move the field forward, it is important for researchers to use theoretically robust measures to capture valid indicators of moral and civic character.

Though this article focused on the extent to which youth's organized activities were associated with their character, it is likely a bidirectional process where youth with particular strengths, such as civic values, select to participate in activities and continue to participate over time. The current review highlighted several rigorous studies where possible that controlled for a large battery of these youth-related factors, (along with other social background, parent, peer, and school factors) related to youth participation to help draw evidence for the directional nature of these relations. These studies found involvement in youth activities had significant, positive returns on adult civic character even in these highly conservative models (e.g., McFarland and Thomas 2006; Fredricks and Eccles 2006). However, because there were no studies that examined the possible role that individual strengths/factors may play in supporting youth receptivity to, and adoption of, the positive influences of activities on moral and civic character development, the current review could not fully rule out that certain initial intrapersonal capacities that may draw a certain set of youth to activities can play a role in the positive relation found between activities and character.

Lastly, processes for nurturing moral and civic development likely start early in development (Astuto and Ruck 2010; Ma et al., 2020; Simpkins et al., 2020). Despite many studies having rigorous longitudinal designs, some of which extend into middle adulthood, the vast majority of studies in this review focused on experiences and character growth within activities during the adolescent years, and no studies considered how variations by youth development/age may moderate the relations between activities and civic and moral outcomes. Therefore, this review was limited in the ability to draw conclusions about developmental age-related variations in youth experiences and support for character development within activities.

Conclusion

Adolescence has been identified as an important time in the lifespan to nurture civic and moral character development, setting an individual on the course to act as a moral

agent and contributing citizen through adulthood. Organized activities have been touted as a setting that nurtures positive youth development, including character development. This comprehensive review of previous published research was conducted in order to understand relations between organized activities and the civic and moral dimensions of interpersonal character. The synthesis of findings provides evidence for the potential positive role that organized activities can play in supporting youth concurrent and long-term character development. Findings across civic studies suggest that the greater the frequency/time spent in activities, the greater the number of years of participation, and the greater the range of activity types in which youth participate, the more favorable youth character outcomes. For political forms of civic character, certain types of activities, specifically those that were politically- and/or civically- focused, were also found to be particularly supportive of youth civic character development. For supporting moral character development, youth levels of participation (e.g., intensity, breadth) appear to be less important than the nuances of youth's experiences that occur within different activity types and the quality of program delivery. Overall, findings suggest that moral and civic character development ought to be considered and intentionally nurtured within activities as two separate, yet complimentary dimensions of interpersonal character and that the benefits accrued from organized activities during adolescence can have far-reaching (long-term) positive impacts on character development through the lifespan.

The current review also identified several gaps in the literature that still need to be addressed in order to gain greater understanding of the complex processes between youth and activity settings and to identify key ingredients within programs for ensuring youth character gains. Although research has only begun to examine the qualities of activities that are responsible for nurturing interpersonal character, preliminary findings suggest that tailoring activities so they include intentionally-designed character curriculum and experiences, and provide a mastery-oriented climate with supportive prosocial leaders, a sense of belongingness with a positive peer group (i.e. group identity), and group-wide engagement, are key practices that practitioners can implement to improve the effectiveness of all activities for supporting civic and moral character development.

Compliance with ethical standards

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