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College Students' Development of Civic Commitment: Experiences of Service Learning Across the College Years

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC COMMITMENT:
EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE LEARNING ACROSS THE COLLEGE YEARS

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ABSTRACT

Functional democracy in a just society requires citizens who are complex thinkers and skilled, caring leaders. This study examines how undergraduate college students become committed citizens, the kind demanded by our changing world. In particular, it addresses the developmental and experiential factors that influence students' journeys of commitment to the public good, and how students understand their lived experience integrating these diverse influences. Framed by my constructivist epistemology, I used the qualitative tradition of narrative inquiry to address these questions. I interviewed twelve highly engaged students about their experiences in diverse community-based work and learning over four years of college. I share narratives of each participant, then use cross-case analysis to identify themes across their experiences. I learned how they came to identify their roles in society and how key developmental and experiential influences shaped their processes of becoming civically committed. Students experienced growth in three main areas: Connection (their sense of ownership around community work); Mattering (their sense of belonging among change makers and others); and Purpose (their sense of direction in making social change). This study allows educators within higher education to better understand the complex processes of civic commitment development and how to holistically support college students in fostering a sense of civic identity and responsibility that leads to lifelong nurturance of their commitment to the public good.

Keywords: Service-learning, Civic Engagement, College Student Development, Narrative Inquiry, Civic Commitment, Self Authorship, Purpose, Residential Learning Communities

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

College Students' Development of Civic Commitment: Experiences of Service Learning

Across the College Years

Democratic forms of government require engaged citizens. Specifically, society

needs complex thinkers and skilled, caring citizens to move us closer to a more just

world. Jefferson (1782/1853) stated our need for committed citizens to provide checks

and balances for those in power and make responsible decisions: "Every government

degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves,

therefore, are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must

be improved to a certain degree" (Jefferson, 1782/1853, p. 160). As our current society

becomes more diverse and complex, our attempt at democracy still relies upon and

requires well-informed citizens who are committed to the public good (Daloz, Keen,

Keen, & Parks, 1996).

Higher Education's Role in Citizen Preparation

Higher education purportedly aims to develop such individuals. Historically, we

established schools to cultivate active citizens (Astin, 2002; Dewey, 1916; Jefferson,

1782/1853; Thelin, 2004; Tocqueville, 1835/1981). After World War II, as a nation we

affirmed this commitment: "The first and most essential charge upon higher education is

that at all levels and in all its fields of specialization, it shall be the carrier of democratic

values, ideals, and process" (President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947, p.102).

The mission statements of colleges and universities across the country cite citizen

preparation as an educational goal, especially in the last twenty years, and state and

federal funding of higher education justifies its spending to the public based on that understanding (Astin, 2002; Palmer, 2011; Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U] *Report of The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement* [NTFCLDE], 2012; Thelin, 2004).

To do this, many institutions seek to understand what fosters civic commitment and to implement educational practices that increase students' community engagement (Jacoby, 2009). Attaining higher levels of education, in general, is a key predictor of higher likelihood of being an engaged citizen in measurable ways such as voting, volunteering time and services to non-profit organizations, and membership in charitable associations (Dee, 2004; Stroup, Bunting, Dodson, Horne, & Portilla, 2013; Putnam, 2000). Is that because higher educational levels are a proxy for other unearned privileges that confer high status, like race, gender, and socioeconomic level, that allow and encourage people to develop and act on civic inclinations more freely (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996)? Certainly, wealthy students have disproportionally greater opportunities to engage civically, starting in high school (CIRCLE, 2002). However, recent research shows that increased civic actions, and political actions such as voting in particular, are influenced by educational experiences' content, beyond the increased access that attainment of education (predicted by privileged identities) confers (Campbell, 2009; Stroup et. al, 2013, Weerts & Cabrera, 2015). In fact, researchers have shown that certain civic-focused curriculum can beneficially impact those with oppressed racial and economic social identities to a greater extent than their more privileged

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counterparts (Brickner-McDonald, 2015; Yeh, 2010). The *content* of educational experiences, then, matters greatly when it comes to fostering diverse, active citizenry.

What we teach matters, and quality civic learning also relies on how, when, and why we teach it. Research on citizenship education posits that *how* we teach—using real experiences and asking for critical reflection on them instead of using drills and fact acquisition, for example (Dewey, 1916) — educates and establishes structures for how people develop and come to participate in their world (Astin, 2002; Brookfield & Holtz, 2011). *When* we teach students about contributing to the public good matters, too. Civic habits formed in youth tend to persist across the lifespan (Amnå, 2009; CIRCLE, 2002; Damon, 2009; Mayhew & Engberg, 2011; Rhoads, 1997; Parks, 2011). Also, the general learning and career-preparation *goals* of universities align well with civic competency skills, in addition to civic competency skills aligning with the public missions of the institutions that I discussed above (Astin, 2002; Palmer, 2011; Ramson, 2014).

Despite these promising connections for higher education taking a greater role in educating citizens to become committed to the pubic good, the goal produces tensions. Barriers to promoting meaningful civic education include opposition to the progressive pedagogy that the topic invites (Freire, 2000), and the economic pressures that give some less complex career-based goals clout over educating for the common good (Astin, 2002; Ramson, 2014). Not all institutions choose to prioritize citizenship as a primary goal for education—there is a gap between the ideal and the real in terms of support for civic learning (Knefelkamp, 2008).

Enacting the Civic Mission

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For those educational institutions that do respond to this call, they do so in various ways. Examples of initiatives include providing (and sometimes requiring) classroom curricula about civic processes, internships with political campaigns, academic projects with a focus on current events, and community service and service learning programs (Astin, 2002; Hatcher, 2011; Jacoby, 2009; Stroup et. al, 2013), with varied levels and types of successes. High school and college support for community engagement has led to high levels of students' civic actions in their communities: About 86% of high school seniors in 2009 reported volunteering "frequently" or "occasionally" in a Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) survey, and about 82% of college seniors in the same survey engaged in "some kind of community service during college" (Pryor et al. 2009, as cited in NTFCLDE, 2012, p. 13). Many colleges have opened offices to facilitate community partnerships between the on- and off-campus communities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Hatcher, 2011; Jacoby, 2009). However, our nation's civic engagement levels, as measured by actions such as voting, protesting, or contacting political representatives and by a sense of responsibility for improving social systems, are at an all-time low (Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich, & Torney-Purta, 2006; Stroup et al., 2013). Several reports show that, while students seem to care about making social change by some indicators, they are still not equipped to take on roles as engaged citizens (Astin, 2002; NTFCLDE, 2012; Palmer, 2011). Increased exposure to and interest in community work via school-based service programs and requirements do not *necessarily* lead to more habits of community involvement that are integrated into students' long-term, meaningful role(s) or identities they see themselves enacting in the public sphere.

To support the translation of community-based experiences into deep learning and a sense of civic responsibility, service learning pedagogy emerged (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher, 2011; Jacoby, 2009). Service learning (SL) is often described as a pedagogy that builds civic commitment (e.g. Astin, 2002; Jacoby, 2009; Hatcher, 2011; Parks, 2011; Palmer, 2011; Rhoads, 1997). A form of experiential education, SL provides interactive, community-based experiences that meet community needs while supporting students' learning objectives. By design, it blends in- and out-of-classroom learning to build engaged community members, as…

> …the full competencies in civic learning cannot be learned only by studying books; democratic knowledge and capabilities are honed through hands-on, face-to-face, active engagement in the midst of differing perspectives about how to address common problems that affect the well-being of the nation and the world (NTFCLDE, 2012, p. 11).

There has been an increase in the use of SL in schools at all levels (K-20) in the past twenty years, implemented with intentions to meet the institutional mission of growing students' civic commitment (Jacoby, 2009; NTFCLDE, 2012; Stroup, et al., 2013).

Only certain types of SL are effective, though, at meeting this mission. For example, students in SL courses that do not use SL's best practices report reinforced prejudices and negative impacts on their future intentions to be politically engaged (Beaumont, et al., 2006; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). When implemented effectively using best practices, however, research shows SL's promising effect on supporting student commitment to creating positive social change (Eyler & Giles, 1999, Brookfield & Holtz, 2011; Miller, Sendrowitz, Connacher, Blanco, et al., 2009; Rhoads, 1997), as I will

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discuss in more depth in the literature review that follows. For some students, by the end of college they have grown significantly as committed citizens, and nurture a deep sense of responsibility to the greater good.

Purpose of the Study

Despite the muddy waters when it comes to *how* higher education leads to better citizenship for the public good, we continue to look to higher education as a powerful way to transform sympathetic youth into capable citizens. Service learning pedagogy in particular is pursued with the expectation that exposure to social problems outside the classroom and critical thinking about unjust social systems will have both immediate and longer term benefits, at the community and individual levels (NTFCLDE, 2012; Hatcher, 2011). Hence, I use SL experiences as the starting point from which I launch my inquiry into college students' civic commitment-building in this study.

My research will illuminate the developmental processes and pedagogical experiences of students with multiple SL encounters who *are* becoming the active citizens that colleges and universities desire to develop, and our democratic communities crave. I integrate theory from adult development and service learning fields to inquire about the types of cognitive and identity development that supports their emergence as active citizens. I identify the experiential pedagogy and programming that supports the developmental and learning tasks important for the participants' emerging commitment to create social change.

Student affairs professionals, university administrators, and faculty members with aims to develop active citizens have restricted resources. They must critically prioritize

the kinds of programming and support they provide to college students. By synthesizing, analyzing, and identifying emergent themes across the lived experiences of 12 college students who identify as strongly engaged community members, this study will provide higher education institutions and educators ideas for how to better support college students in the process of forming civic commitments and identities.

Research Questions and Methods

The following question started my research: *How do undergraduate college students become committed to creating positive social change?* Some college students identify as being committed to being active members of their communities by the end of their undergraduate educations. I learned from some of these exemplar students about their processes of becoming passionate, engaged citizens. I approached my initial, larger research question about how college students come to promote social change with the following sub-questions:

What aspects of engaged students' lived experiences do they see as being influential in shaping their identities as engaged community members?

How do pedagogical experiences and developmental factors shape committed students' paths to caring and acting for the public good?

How have change-making students made sense of their influential experiences, at different times and cumulatively, when it comes to defining and constructing who they are, and who they are in their communities?

The first section of my upcoming literature review provides definitions of the terms used in those guiding questions. After examining existing research that addresses

similar themes, I decided to use qualitative, narrative inquiry research methodology. I interviewed twelve students from a single mid-sized public institution of higher education in the northeast United States who met my definition and criteria of highly engaged citizens. That criteria included leadership in at least two SL experiences and being within a year of their graduation from college. Participants also provided at least one writing sample from at least two years prior in which they had reflected on their roles in their communities. I used tools from narrative inquiry (holistic-content analysis, in particular) and cross-case analysis from the case study research tradition to analyze their interviews and documents and find emergent themes in the data. Identifying themes in students' experiences aims to provide a better understanding of what sets of educational practices might be most effective for developing students as committed change-makers.

Organization of Study

I share this research experience through the six chapters in this dissertation. After this introductory chapter, I proceed to review existing literature in Chapter Two. As I defined above, I approach *commitment to creating social change* as a *developmental* process influenced by experiential *learning*. That approach instructed how I explored the literature. First, I define the key terms in the study. Then, I use civic identity development characteristics (Knefelkamp, 2008) and AAC&U's civic learning elements (2012) to frame a presentation of the developmental and pedagogical literature related to civic commitment. I describe how identity development and commitment development concepts overlap, how certain habits of mind and heart shape commitment-making, and how certain pedagogy influences students' community engagement actions and

understandings, highlighting service learning as an important experiential learning tool. Considering the existing research and the frameworks used by others to ask similar research questions, I construct and share a conceptual framework that shapes my approach to addressing my research questions. That framework concludes Chapter Two.

In Chapter Three I identify and describe the study's qualitative methodological design, including the procedures I used to choose the site and participants for the data collection, gather stories and writing from the participants, and think in a novel way about the data they shared. I discuss my background that influences how I conduct the research, and how I incorporated elements to provide trustworthiness and transparency in my research process for the readers. Chapter Four introduces each of the 12 participants via holistic narratives of their experiences in communities, as I understand them from interviews and written document analysis. In Chapter Five I look across the 12 cases to identify themes from their stories that illuminate their emerging civic commitment, and propose a developmental model to capture patterns of growth. Chapter Six concludes the study by connecting these themes and model to ways educators and institutions can apply the lessons learned from the study.

Conclusion

I began this introductory chapter by sharing the purpose and rationale for the study presented in this dissertation. In summary, our society needs engaged citizens. Higher education aims to develop students' commitment engagement as citizens, and is a uniquely positioned context for fulfilling this mission. Institutions and educators apply a variety of tools to achieve that goal, and one of the most relied upon tools is service

learning pedagogy. The implementation of quality programs at the institutional level is spotty, though, and outcomes in terms of students' persistent civic engagement are inconsistent; our need for active community members remains high and many feel disengaged and exhibit apathy. Understanding the lived experiences of some exemplary students will provide helpful insight into what key factors influenced their paths and how the sense-making of their experiences transpired.

I identified my research questions and briefly introduced the qualitative narrative and case study methods I used to select participants, gather data, and analyze it to find meaning. Finally, I detailed how I organized the rest of this dissertation. Next, I review foundational and current literature from the research fields most relevant to my study. I start by defining the potentially nebulous terms that I have been using and will continue to use in the study, as informed by existing literature on developing commitment for the public good.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this Literature Review chapter I provide a background on the literature, theories, concepts, and personal lenses that frame the study. I describe how I approached the different topic areas related to my research questions and on which I chose to focus. I define key terms, and identify how they contribute to the dynamic research that examines how civic commitment arises. I organize and synthesize them into theoretical and conceptual frameworks, which I describe in depth.

Approach

In my Literature Exploration Map (Figure 1, below), I visually represent how I initially approached certain topic areas within the literature, as directed by my research interests and questions. I looked at the higher educational setting as a space for fostering committed citizens, and the influences that students encounter in that context that might shape that process. I looked at internal factors using cognitive development and its concepts of commitment and complex thinking. Then, I explored pedagogical interventions frequently cited as responding to that public mission within higher education. I explored the literature on service learning pedagogy in particular. I also looked within and beyond the service learning and pedagogical literature to see what others were saying about commitment development and cognitive and identity development at large, and in connection to commitment-building for the public good.

When proposing this study and during data collection, that framework led my thinking and organized my study. After two rounds of data analysis, though, I started

Figure 1

Literature Exploration Map
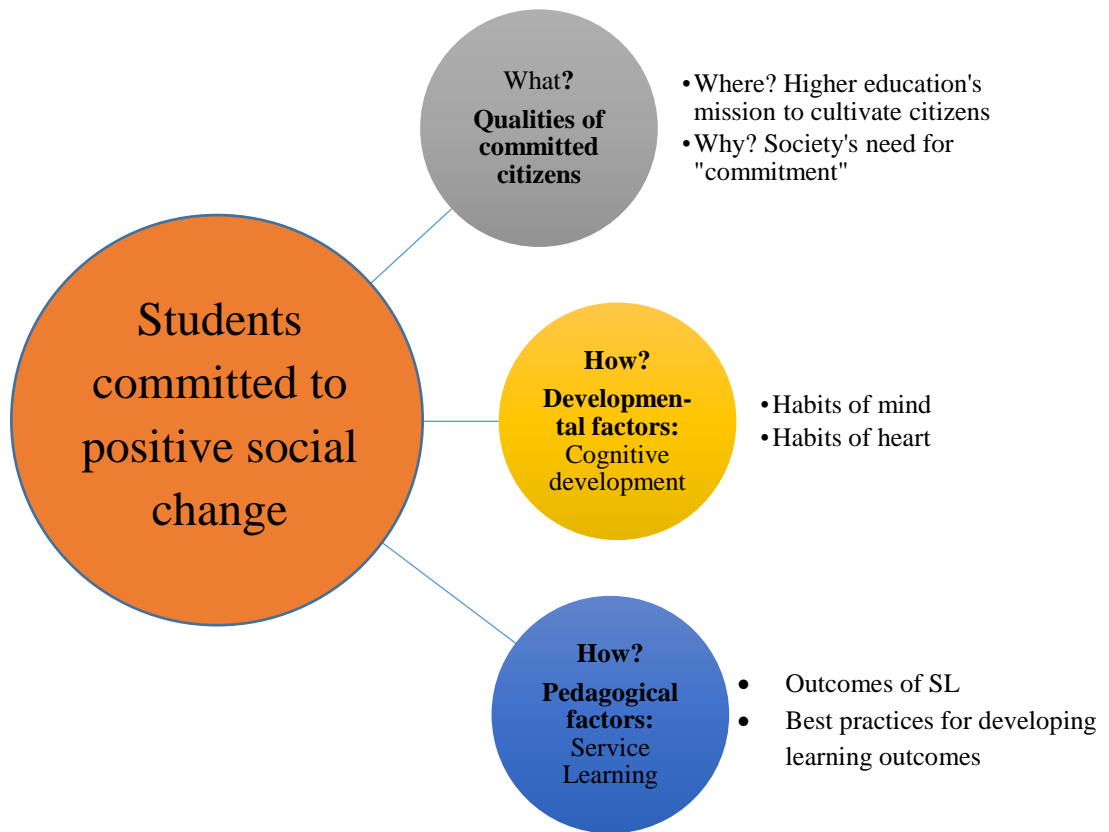
seeing how identity development was playing a key aspect in students' stories about

commitment to social change. Going back to the literature, I found civic identity

development as a useful concept with several current articles exploring its connection to

students' growth as civically engaged community members. I incorporated civic identity

development as an important aspect of the literature, and use Knefelkamp's (2008)

outline of four essential characteristics of civic identity development as the organizing

framework from which to share the existing literature on how college students build the

knowledge, skills, values, and actions (AAC&U, 2012) needed for community

engagement via developmental processes and pedagogical experiences.

I found that the kind of intentional engagement within communities that I am interested in is approached by many disciplines, and each discipline names and examines it differently (Amnå, 2009). I found the fields of cognitive development, social psychology, college student identity development, and service learning pedagogy most useful for informing my inquiries. Developmental psychologists generally frame civic commitment in the conversation about finding a self-informed voice in complex communities and 'commitment' as a stage of advanced cognitive development (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Perry, 1970). Social psychologists look at how contextual influences and processes shape individuals' propensity for collective action (Martínez et al., 2009; Amnå, 2009). Research in service learning pedagogy examines the educational practices and outcomes that lead to civic commitment, and, in particular, the civic values, skills, behaviors, and motivations it fosters in students (AAC&U, 2012; NTFCLDE, 2012). College student identity development uses civic identity development as the lens for describing the growth of individuals in communities into critically thinking, empathetic, contributing members (Knefelkamp, 2008; Torres et al., 2009). I looked into each of these three fields to provide background literature, and describe its contribution in more detail in the sections that follow.

In this chapter I first step back and describe how the literature defines concepts of commitment, public good, commitment to the public good, community engagement, and civic identity. I highlight which definitions I apply in this study, and introduce how I see those concepts connecting to each other theoretically. Next, I address each of

Knefelkamp's (2008) characteristics of civic identity, paired with cognitive development and service learning research, to illuminate how others have thought about each of the following areas, and how their thinking informs mine in this study.

In particular, I review research that explores how civic growth occurs in community contexts that help blend the personal and the public; the ways of thinking helpful for students to make commitments in our complex world; the development of moral and values-based lenses that help students relate to others different from themselves; and lastly the influential actions and experiences that scholars report as supportive for students in developing a commitment to try to improve society. Commitment to taking civic actions for the public good is identified as an important, desirable educational outcome, and possible through developmental processes that can be affected by certain kinds of experiences. The clusters of experiences that contribute to its emergence in students who express it remain under-examined in the college setting (Amnå, 2009; Johnson, 2015).

Defining Terms

Commitment

Commitment to the public good is widely recognized as a necessary component of a healthy, responsive democracy and satisfied, purposeful people (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Brookfield & Holst, 2011; Daloz et al, 1996; Damon, 2009; Dewey, 1916). While consistently seen as important to cultivate through our educational system, it is termed and defined in a variety of ways in different fields and studies. In service learning literature, the terms "social responsibility" or "civic

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commitment" are frequently used to describe individuals' desires to expand their sense of care and obligation to the public realm (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Abes, 2004; Mayhew & Engberg, 2011). Martínez, Peñaloza, and Valenzuela (2009) summarize various definitions into one: "Commitment to civic issues is best represented as a collection of cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral forces" (p. 475).

Among developmental psychologists, commitment has been described as a component in the development of "purpose" (Chickering, 1969; Damon, 2009; Erikson, 1968). The word "commitment" is also used to describe a point of arrival in ones' journey where an individual makes a decision to a certain point of view (Perry, 1970). More recently, commitment is described as a process through which individuals continuously and intentionally pursue a goal, and their ways of doing that can change over time (Daloz et al., 1996; King & Kitchener, 1994; Parks, 2011). I will follow this definition of commitment most closely, conceptualizing "commitment" as an individual's *process* of engagement and reengagement with a consistent and specific set of ideas, actions, and plans.

Public Good

The concept of the "public good" is also interpreted and defined in a number of ways. Depending on the study, public good is explored through different lenses (political, charitable, and/or social justice), using a variety of measures (e.g. intentions, behaviors, competencies) (Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich, & Torney-Purta, 2006; Bellah et al., 1985; Daloz et al., 1996; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Ngai, 2006; Robinder, 2012; Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000; Seidner, Gillmor, Rabinowicz, 2012; Simmons & Lilly, 2010;

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Stroup, Bunting, Dodson, Horne, & Portilla, 2013). Those who look at political responsibility often study behaviors of individuals and groups, such as whether or not students exposed to different environments or from different populations choose to vote, contact their representatives, participate in protests, or help with campaigns during elections (e.g. Seidner, Gillmor, Rabinowicz, 2012; Simmons & Lilly, 2010; Stroup, et al., 2013). Those using a charitable lens often ask participants their intentions to participate in or continue their community service involvement, or their belief that doing so is important (Astin & Sax, 1998). Those using a social justice lens often look at students' reported knowledge of social problems, awareness of their role in creating solutions, and skills needed to implement them (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Ngai, 2006). A few studies use a combination of some or all of the above to determine what influences different types of social responsibility outcomes from multi-dimensional community experiences (Beaumont et al., 2006; Mitchell, 2015; Robinder, 2012; Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000; Weerts & Cabrera, 2015), yet the more significant works that do this do not look at college students in their samples (Bellah et al., 1985; Colby & Damon, 1992; Daloz et al., 1996; Discher, 2011).

Many empirical studies define commitment to social change as an outcome, and measure it using quantitative methods. These studies track what specific behaviors occurred, and the behavior's relationship to participants' intentions for future behaviors, and/or shifts in participants' reported beliefs about their social responsibilities after the interventions (e.g. Beaumont et al., 2006; Mayhew & Engberg, 2011). Such studies choose from a variety methods to take the measures, the most popular being surveys

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before and after these interventions (e.g. Astin & Sax, 1998; Beaumont et al., 2006; Mayhew & Engberg, 2011; Ngai, 2006; AAC&U, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Others use mixed methods, taking survey data and also interviewing subsets of the sample for more details about how or why behavioral or belief-based changes may have occurred (e.g. Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Many qualitative studies use reflective writing samples and/or interviews from participants during and after interventions to study how civic commitment arises (e.g. Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Jones & Abes, 2004; Rockquemore & Harwell Schaffer, 2000; Roschelle et al., 2000). They use analytic approaches such as constructive epistemology (Einfeld & Collins, 2008), cognitive mapping (Rockquemore & Harwell Schaffer, 2000), and grounded theory (Daloz et al., 1996) to make sense of the interview or document data. Those who see commitment to social change as an on-going, multifaceted process often choose to use qualitative approaches to examine how its development came about and for whom (Bellah et al., 1985; Colby & Damon, 1992: Daloz et al., 1996; Damon, 2009; Palmer, 2011; Parks, 2011). I follow in this tradition in my research.

Bellah et al. (1985), Palmer (2011), Parks (2011), Daloz et al. (1996), and Rhoads (1997) approach commitment to the public good as a process. In particular, they see it as a process in which people integrate their public and private lives. Palmer (1981) described how, "…in a healthy society the private and the public are not mutually exclusive, not in competition with each other. They are, instead, two halves of a whole, two poles of a paradox. They work together dialectically, helping to create and nurture one another" (p. 31). In other words, people whom they identify as being committed to

creating social change are individuals who develop their individual identities and priorities in the context of others. Committed citizens' sense of personal responsibility is expanded to apply to a range of public (political, charitable, and social justice) realms.

Commitment to the Public Good or Civic Commitment

When I refer to commitment to the public good *or* civic commitment in this study, I will use an integrative definition from this tradition of scholars. I define commitment-making to social change as a process in which individuals come to know themselves, understand the world in a critical, systemic sense, desire to contribute positively, and integrate those ideas into actions. Citizens capable of such civic commitment have a complex, problematized understanding of social issues, obtain skills for taking action for social justice, and demonstrate a sense of responsibility in which caring for themselves involves also caring about the greater good. In this study I will refer to individuals who meet that description as change-makers, people committed to creating positive social change, or the civically committed.

Civic or Community Engagement

What it takes to become civically committed is a key question in my study. Civic or community engagement refers to as an essential component of the process and practice of being an engaged community member, a key part of civic commitment (Colby & Damon, 1992). Similar to definitions of the public good not just in content, the definitions of these terms can be blurry because they can take social, political, and/or justice-based focus depending on the source (Amnå, 2009). An influential report from Association of American Colleges and Universities, *The Crucible Moment* (AAC&U,

2012) identifies knowledge, skills, values, and action as four components of focus for

civic educators and practitioners to build to support "civic learning and democratic

engagement," and pervasive support of civic ethos, literacy, inquiry, and action among

their students as the goals of campuses across the country (AAC&U, 2012, p. 12 & 20).

These are similar to the six characteristics of the "Civic Learning Spiral" proposed in the

College Learning for the New Global Century study: self, communities and culture,

knowledge, skills, values, and public action (AAC&U, 2007). Here, when I use the terms

civic engagement or community engagement, I use Ehrlich's (2000) definition that

integrates those components and was used by AAC&U's team that developed a Civic

Engagement Rubric (AAC&U, 2009) and Hatcher (2011):

> Civic engagement is working to make a difference in the civic life of our
> communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and
> motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a
> community, through both political and non-political processes (Ehrlich, 2000, p.
> vi).

I use civic engagement or work and community engagement or work

interchangeably in this study. Practicing community engagement, or civic engagement, is

a key part of someone becoming committed to creating social change (Colby & Damon,

1992; Daloz et al., 1996; Knefelkamp, 2008; Martínez et al., 2009).

Civic Identity

Civic identity can be thought of "as the knowledge, attitudes, values, and actions

one has regarding civic engagement" (Johnson, 2015, p. 689). It is the "aspect of identity

that leads one to take public action" and is present "when people see themselves as active

participants in society with a strong commitment to work with others toward the public

good" (Hatcher, 2011, p. 85). Colby & Damon (1992) found that, among the five moral exemplars they studied, integrating community engagement into part of who they saw themselves to be was an important part to their persistence as civically engaged individuals. Hardy & Carlo (2005) see identity as part of commitment, as they found that a sense of identity provides the "moral motivation" to persist in civic work. Committed citizens do not just 'do' civic behaviors, or just do these behaviors thoughtfully and/or just repeatedly, although those elements are important. Rather, civic engagement done thoughtfully and repeatedly is seen as part of their identity within a community: they find a purposeful role in the world and their multiple identities contribute to a sense of self that is "one harmonious whole" (Knefelkamp, 2008, p.1).

Recently, studies are looking at how civic identity develops over time for youth (Martínez et al., 2009) and college students (Johnson, 2015; Mitchell, 2015; Weetz & Cabrera, 2015) as a way to strategically foster greater civic engagement. Johnson (2015) and Mitchell (2015) identify a dearth of research on this important aspect of college student experiences, and call for studies that look holistically at student community engagement to study the impact on students' identities and commitments. In my research I will explore the overlapping experiences of community engagement and civic identity development, and examine how these relate to college student development of civic commitment.

Literature Review: Four Foci

I organize my examination of the existing literature related to citizens becoming committed to the public good through civic engagement and civic identity development

using the four essential characteristics of civic identity that Lee Knefelkamp identified in

her lead article titled "Civic Identity: Locating Self in Community" in AAC&U's

Diversity and Democracy (2008). Knefelkamp's approach to civic identity development

suggests that those who exhibit a developed civic identity have similar characteristics to

those I have defined as exhibiting civic commitment:

> Individuals with a mature sense of civic identity are fully engaged, fully human
> citizens of their communities. They seek knowledge of both historical and
> contemporary conditions. They apply this knowledge using the skills and
> competencies they have developed, working independently and interdependently
> on whatever challenges they face. They approach these challenges with a sense of
> discernment, responsibility, and justice seeking. They are both idealistic and
> realistic, patient and persistent, committed to thoughtful engagement and aware
> that others may engage differently. They see their role in life as contributing to
> the long-term greater good. And perhaps most importantly, they have the courage
> to act (p. 2).

Knefelkamp's (2008) four essential characteristics of civic identity also align with

common civic engagement definitions and the call from *The Crucible Moment* for civic

knowledge, skills, values, and action as essential parts of students' higher education

experiences (AAC&U, 2012, which built upon similar components identified in *College*

Learning for the New Global Century, AAC&U, 2007). These aligned, two sets of four

components are listed below at the start of each sub-section of my review of the

literature, providing the structure for the following literature review and the theoretical

framework for my study in general. Below the sub-section, I provide Knefelkamp's

definition, and then, in italics, I share my interpretation of that in the context of the other

literature and my research questions.

Private Self in Public Communities: Knowledge of Self and Diverse Others

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1. Civic identity "develops over time through engagement with [diverse] others," in the context of social, political, and economic struggles (Knefelkamp, 2008, p. 2).

Civic identity development happens in community, with real-life experiences that increase awareness of injustices in our world and in the company of other people with different viewpoints. This first essential characteristic invites comparison of this civic identity development model to other types of identity development models. Johnson (2015) helpfully described how the civic identity development model outlined by Knefelkamp (2008) contains the three dimensions of identity development that Kegan (1994) asserted, which develops across: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal domains. Indeed, Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) describe identity development, in general, as the space in which individuals define their "beliefs about the self in relation to social groups (e.g. race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation [sic]) and the ways one expresses that relationship" (p. 577). Knefelkamp's (2008) description of getting to know the private self in the context of the complex public world, making sense of experiences cumulatively aligns it closely with this description, and several other identity development models (Evans et al., 1998; Hatcher, 2011).

A key aspect that matters for the development of the self involves being in community with others with diverse perspectives, and getting to know the multitude of experiences and viewpoints others hold. Using criteria applied to longitudinal survey data, Weerts and Cabrera (2015) found that cohort-based learning environments where students could interact with others across differences positively influenced civic identity

development. Hurturo and colleagues (2003) found that students in diverse classrooms were more likely to be politically engaged, as well. Roholt, Hildreth, and Baizerman (2009) described how cohorts help students build supportive relationships that allow them to take the risks necessary for growth as citizens, and also helped youth approach the difficult question of how they might best make an impact on their communities. Among Bonner Scholars (students in a civic learning cohort across four years of college), it was the dialogue about complex social issues with others who were different that was the most influential factor that supported students' growth as citizens (Keen & Hall, 2009). Strayhorn (2008) also found ties to others as key way that college students developed their sense of personal identity and goals as individuals, and that these personally formative interactions with peer groups increased their commitment to others beyond themselves. Certain contexts—in particular ones that foster relationships with others across differences— support individuals' development of a personal civic identity.

Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) also posit that there are three common elements across the many theoretical iterations of the identity development construct: that the nature of development moves from the distinct and simple to the synthesized and complex; that identities are socially constructed and reconstructed fluidly across periods of equilibrium and disequilibrium created by changing actions and experiences; and that the environmental contexts influence individuals' "behaviors, attitudes, and cognition" (Torres, Jones, and Renn, 2009, p. 582). Knefelkamp's (2008) model, especially in its first element that calls the environmental context to the foreground, embraces that multi-layered process paralleled in others' identity development models. The three common

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features of identity development (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009) also closely mirror the process defined by researchers who use the lens of cognitive development to describe individuals' growth, as the following section describes.

Habits of Mind: Skills in Complex Thought

2. Civic identity development is "deeply connected to complex intellectual and ethical development." While complex thought doesn't always lead to "moral discernment," it "expands capacity to think and act as moral citizens," even in uncertainty (Knefelkamp, 2008, p.2).

The habits of mind that accompany increasingly complex cognitive development are important for civic identity development. Over time, identity development in general supports individuals to "move from accepting simple definitions of self based on external factors to more complex understanding of the self within context" (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p.578). Identity development can be a parallel process to cognitive development. This cognitive aspect identified by Knefelkamp (2008) for civic identity development overlaps significantly with cognitive development research on the elements social psychologists identify as necessary and sufficient for students to commit to creating positive social change. The process and outcomes that Knefelkamp define as useful for civic identity development are similar to the features and goals of those who study civic commitment formation. Those who examine 'commitment,' civic or otherwise, through the lens of cognitive development establish 'commitment' as a milestone requiring certain internal conditions, supported by certain external experiences (Belenky et al., 1986; Damon, 2009; King & Kitchener, 1994; Parks, 2011; Rhoads,

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1997). The complex thinking—the habits of mind— needed for supporting commitments to the public good require certain kinds of cognitive developmental progress (Daloz et al., 1996). I highlight some of the key habits of mind that aid in this process, as identified by the literature.

The cognitive milestone of individuals knowing their own voices can allow for commitment-making in general, and another cognitive milestone of taking others' perspectives into account allows for commitment to the public good in particular. Theorists propose that individuals need the cognitive capacity to exhibit the following 'habits of mind' to do the latter: understand social problems that are ill-structured and complex (Daloz et al., 1996; King and Kitchener, 1997; Mezirow, 1991); see multiple perspectives and appreciate how the context/perceiver constructs truth (Belenky et al., 1986; Keen & Hall, 2009); reflect deeply on issues that have no easy answers (Palmer, 2011); construct their own knowledge from personal experiences and systemic understanding (Baxter Magolda, 2009); extract meaning from dissonance (Daloz et al., 1996; Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008); and integrate with congruency self and others, actions and beliefs, learning and life, questions and partial answers (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Belenky et al., 1986; Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Daloz et al., 1996; King & Kitchener, 1997; Palmer, 2011; Parks, 2011). This complex thinking cannot only influence the individuals' private minds, though, for it to lead them outside of themselves to "seek the well-being of the whole and act according to those commitments" (Musil, 2003, p. 7). Knefelkamp (2008) also identifies aspects of moral and ethical development as important parts of civic identity development.

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Habits of Heart: Integrated Values

3. Civic identity development is a "holistic practice." Critical thinking *and* empathy are both necessary. Identifying with others who hold perspectives different from the self, and "finding wholeness" in the self and with others are important elements of civic identity development (Knefelkamp, 2008, p. 2).

Habits of heart like empathy, perspective-taking, relationship-building, and self-awareness are important in forming a holistic civic identity. Complementing the skills of complex thought described above, researchers also identify 'habits of heart' as developmental factors for students in the process of commitment to the public good (Parks, 2011). Again, the elements of cognitive development mirror the process of identity development. 'Habits of heart' are cultural and moral inclinations, values, abilities, and practices that shape individuals' experiences (Bellah et al. 1985; Parks, 2011). Belenky et al. (1986) described how connected knowing, in which one sees self and others through the lens of relationships, helps adults make community-based commitments. Gilligan (1982), Rhoads (1997), and Josselson (2000) looked at how developing an ethic of care, where an individual's concerns are connected with the experiences of others, situates the individual's sense of self into a community context. Seeing common ground, and not just divisions, along with valuing others' beliefs and humanity, are 'habits of heart' that also help (Bellah et al., 1985; Daloz et al., 1996; Palmer, 2011). Other 'habits' include having intrinsic motivation, a sense of belonging and self-efficacy, and established personal beliefs and values around care, compassion, and justice. According to developmental theorists, pedagogy that supports students'

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growth in the service of citizenship supports the internal (developmental and values-based) conditions that are important for such growth (Astin, 2002; Baxter Magolda, 2009; Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Parks, 2011, Palmer, 2011).

Cumulatively Learning through Service: Commitment in Action

4. Civic identity "becomes a deliberately chosen and repeatedly enacted aspect of the self." Active critical reflection, experimentation with others, and thinking about the consequences of existing and potential actions complement civic actions. This "requires multiple experiences and opportunities for learning" (Knefelkamp, 2008, p. 2).

Repeated actions in communities, critical discussion, and synthesis of public responsibility into a synthesized sense of self are the final key elements of civic identity development. Here, Knefelkamp (2008) clarifies that knowledge of the self in the context of community issues, skills of thought that raise awareness of society's complexity, and valuing others are important but not enough for civic commitment. Sustained action on these intentions and understandings is what creates the engaged, committed citizens higher education aims to develop. To foster the blend of knowledge, skills, values, and action that supports students' civic commitment-making and civic identity development (AAC&U, 2012), many institutions, educators, and researchers turn to service learning as an effective community-based pedagogy (Astin, 2002; Brookfield & Holtz, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Miller, Sendrowitz, Connacher, Blanco, et al., 2009; Mitchell, 2015; Parks, 2011; Palmer, 2011; Rhoads, 1997).

Service learning is seen as one of the best tools for increasing students' civic knowledge, skills, and habits, whether used in the curricular or co-curricular environment (Hatcher, 2011; Keen & Hall, 2009). Its scholars persistently study how their experiential pedagogy affects students' learning outcomes after classroom SL actions and experiences (AAC&U, 2012; Astin & Sax, 1997; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Ngai, 2006). In particular, studies consistently find that SL increases students' knowledge, skills, and desires in the following key areas: critical thinking, collaborating, examining diverse perspectives, making personal connections to learning, questioning assumptions, improving leadership, desiring to serve more, developing a sense of mattering, understanding complexity in the world, expanding self-knowledge and self-efficacy, developing career prospects, and understanding and questioning of social systems (AAC&U, 2012; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Abes, 2004; Ngai, 2006; Williams Howe, 2013).

It seems that only certain types of SL create these desirable results, though. Importantly, the elements that educational researchers describe as best practices within service learning for increasing students' civic outcomes are congruent with the elements that researchers in the cognitive and identity development fields have also pointed to as essential for civic identity development and commitment-making. To achieve the positive outcomes, service learning researchers point to a few important practices within the pedagogy. Community-building is a powerful SL practice for faculty to embrace (Eyler & Giles, 1999). It encourages and supports strong relationships within community-partnership settings for students. Other practices include fostering supportive faculty-student and student-student mentoring connections, focusing on complexities, integrating

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community work into course materials and goals, and prompting reflection that asks big-picture questions consistently (Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Miller et al., 2009; Parks, 2011; Rhoads, 1997). These features are the elements present in many of the four elements Knefelkamp (2008) names as features of civic identity development. It is through the social change behaviors enacted as part of service learning, in particular, that Johnson (2015) found the strongest relationship to students' civic identity development.

Coherence among these active, experiential learning opportunities is also important. Knefelkamp (2008) calls for *repeated* experiences of civic learning to promote civic identity development. Academic curriculum, campus activities, and civic programs that are "integrated and whole" instead of "unconnected, unstructured, and unexamined" learning environments create the best spaces for student growth (Knefelkamp, 2008, p. 3). Service learning literature affirms this developmental assertion: Service learning experiences connected to one another coherently in a developmental progression (AAC&U, 2012; Rhoads, 1997), and explicitly connected to the multiple dimensions of self-reflection practice, political action opportunities, and conceptualizations of social justice, instead of being treated as disconnected, isolated experiences, are more productive for the development of students' civic commitment (Beaumont et al., 2006, Bellah et al., 1985; Seidner et al., 2012). An accumulation of experiences creates a sustained process of meaning-making and examination that is shown to have a lasting effect on participants' identities (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Mitchell, 2015). The processes and outcomes of quality SL are, notably, similar to the educational processes and learning

outcomes recommended to promote the cognitive and identity development that enable individuals to pursue the process of commitment to the public good.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

I have summarized and organized the concepts of the reviewed literature into Table 1: Theoretical Framework: Combined Elements for Civic Commitment. It suggests that, though a synthesis of the listed factors, college students can develop into committed citizens. Drawing from existing research, I propose that certain educational contexts support the developmental processes that seem helpful for turning community-based experiences into meaningful sites for the learning and growth that is necessary for civic commitment (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Belenky et al., 1986; Rhoads, 1997). I am curious about the holistic, lived experiences of civically committed students' across their college learning environments, and how they experienced and made sense of the pedagogical and social contexts in relation to their development as civically capable and committed individuals.

My research questions would not be answered by developing a list of influential experiences or characteristics of engaged students (e.g. Amnå, 2009; Weerts & Cabrera, 2015). My curiosity is more about how the external and internal contexts blend and get constructed and reconstructed by college students and so become instructive for their lives. I seek to describe their process of making civic commitments, potentially inclusive of the elements listed in my Theoretical Framework, and how students participating in that process make sense of their journey within it. My way of using the Theoretical Framework in conjunction with my research questions is illustrated in Table 1, below.

Table 1

Theoretical Framework: Combined Elements for Civic Commitment

Civic Learning (AAC&U, 2012)	Civic Identity (Knefelkamp, 2008)	Developmental and Pedagogical Connections to Civic Commitment-Making
Knowledge	Development over time in connection with others, in context of real world	Identity formation, Community Context
Skills	Intellectual maturity	Habits of mind: complex thinking practices and capacities
Values	Empathetic, holistic practice	Habits of heart: ways of connecting with others
Actions	Repeatedly chosen, sustained actions with critical reflection	Critical Service learning using best practices

Epistemology

This approach is informed by a constructivist paradigm. Epistemologically, constructivism is congruent with my beliefs that reality is "multiple and socially constructed… local, [and] specific" (Manning & Stage, 2016, p.22). Many of the definitional qualities of this paradigm instructed my research approach: that I was interested in individual and idiographic data that "expos[ed] multiple perspectives" (p. 21) rather than aggregate data; that my data's scope favored "meaning and depth" (p. 21) over the generalizable breadth or cause and effect relationships of positivist approaches; that I pursued descriptive and interpretive findings via induction and close collaboration with participants; and that I expected any emergent themes in the data to be context-dependent and a "rich account of human action" (Manning & Stage, 2016; p. 22). This constructivist paradigm that grounds my work is accompanied and complemented

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Figure 2

Conceptual Framework: Aspects of Civic Commitment
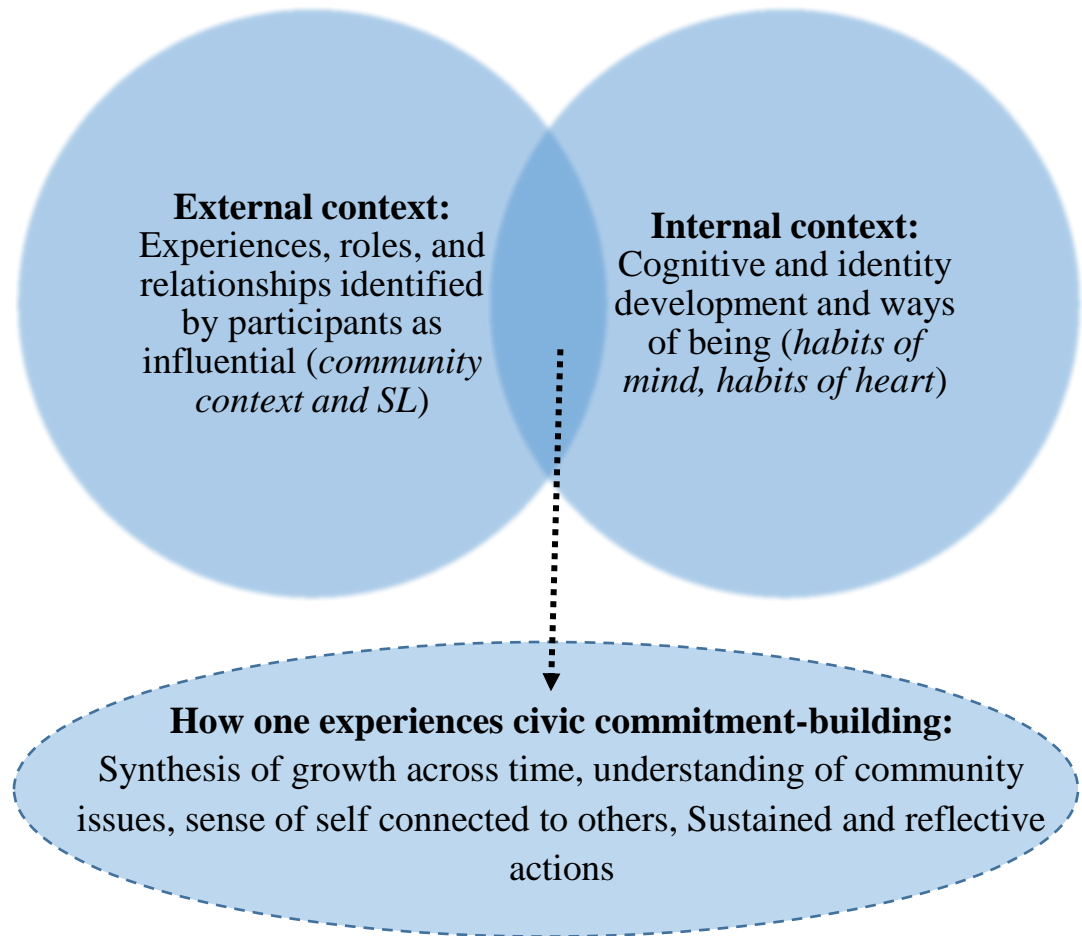
by a critical framework. My focus on the individual development of community-engaged

citizens is rooted in my belief that socially just change is urgently needed to address the

problematic inequitable distribution of power and privilege in society, and that such

change is made possible by people thinking critically about our culture, developing a

sense of responsibility towards and an ability to act effectively to transform unjust social

systems via organized, collaborative efforts. This interest in transformation for social

justice grounds the study. It guides the collection and analysis of data with hopes that

with better support for civic identity development college students would be better able to "change existing oppressive structures and remove oppression through empowerment" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 103). With this critical approach, it is appropriate that my "advocacy and activist stance" is not minimized or guarded (Manning & Stage, 2016, p. 32). Rather, it is important that I transparently and proactively own this stance "as a standpoint to advance [my] agenda of transformation and empowerment" and as a guidepost in the purpose and implementation of my research (Manning & Stage, 2016, p. 32). I provide further background on my experiences and identities that inform my research in the Research Methodology chapter.

Conclusion

In this Literature Review chapter, I defined key terms, reviewed literature in the cognitive and identity development and educational fields that relates to civic commitment-making. In summary, the process of commitment to creating positive social change requires certain kinds of cognitive development in individuals. In colleges, service learning pedagogy supports the developmental and learning tasks important for reaching such commitment. Civic identity development is a particularly useful construct and seems to be a closely connected process to civic commitment-development. I outlined my theoretical and conceptual frameworks, along with the constructivist, critical epistemologies that guide my work. To explore how the process of becoming committed to the public good plays out in the lives of several college students, and how they make sense of their experiences in the development of civic identity and commitment, I chose a

research methodology that aligned with my frameworks and curiosities. I describe the

research methods I designed and used in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

To better understand how some college students experience the process of developing civic commitment, I gathered and analyzed stories from twelve students whom I identified as being on pathways to such commitment. I learned about their perceptions of their journeys and the internal and external influences that shaped their paths. Framed by a narrative inquiry approach, I utilized the qualitative tools of in-depth interviewing and document review to develop a rich data set. To analyze the data I used narrative and cross-case analysis approaches. Below, I describe in detail why and how I used these data collection and analysis tools, and my identities as a researcher.

Rationale for Narrative Design

Narrative inquiry allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of complex lived experiences by drawing out the "biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (Chase, 2005, p. 58). Hendry (2010) describes narrative inquiry as a way to "generate situated knowledge" (p. 79), meaning that it is useful for learning how someone makes meaning and organizes their world through their particular lenses, contextual/social positions, and subjective experiences. My theoretical and cognitive frameworks similarly emphasize the importance of context. A narrative approach to data collection, then, allows me to pursue my inquiry into the nuances and significance of participants' journeys toward civic commitment (Chase, 2005; Hendry, 2010). To answer this study's research questions, I used the strengths of narrative inquiry to hear about individuals' experiences, how their experiences influenced their identities, and how they've come to understand themselves in the world (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). I wanted to

know *how* they have come to live and aspire to live "[a life] of commitment to the public good" (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 5).

Others with similar research interests took a similar approach. Daloz et al. (1996) used narrative inquiry when led by similar questions to interview an older (and larger) population. They captured stories from participants that explained "what led them to live the way they do" (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 8). Colby & Damon (1992) also used a narrative approach to find common characteristics among five individuals who they identified as exemplary moral characters, to see the common characteristics of their engagement. Three more recent publications also explored civic commitment of different populations (Chilean youth, nurses, and community college students) using narrative inquiry (Martínez et al., 2009; Discher, 2011; Robinder, 2012, respectively). In these examples from the literature, narrative inquiry was an effective methodological tool for helping researchers work with participants to describe influential aspects in their lives, construct meanings from their experiences, and identify personal development across time. This method served me in a similar manner, in this case illuminating college student participants' holistic journeys of civic commitment.

Even if taking a narrative approach, most existing literature about college students' civic commitment-development pursues the issue of commitment-development after or while participants have one SL experience in an academic, for-credit setting (e.g. Ngai, 2006; Jones & Abes, 2004; Robinder, 2012). Literature that identifies and describes impacts of experiences on individuals' socially responsible commitment-making after one SL experience is robust, as I outline in my literature review. However, there are a

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few researchers who look across multiple years to see how college students' cumulative experiences contribute to becoming civically engaged. I found one study that used surveys that included essay sections to look at student experiences across four years in a co-curricular SL program (Keen & Hall, 2009), and it found that SL conversations outside of classrooms were important for student growth, but still examined student experiences primarily through that one co-curricular experience. Another study used narrative interviews and surveys with thirty three alumni of curricular civic engagement programs that lasted one to four years in colleges and graduated four to ten years prior to see what experiences were influential on their lives, long-term, and in what ways (Mitchell, 2015). The study invited more research that looks at an accumulation of students' experiences, as it identified that sustained community work had lasting effects on their civic identities (Mitchell, 2015). What remains understudied is civic commitment development across multiple, instead of single-program, contexts, for college students in four-year university experiences.

I add to the conversation and examine the existing conclusions about community engagement experiences' impact by exploring the stories of civically committed college students' within a year of graduation that reflect back on their *varied* experiences in and beyond the college context. Narrative-style interviews invited students to share their stories about whatever *blend* of life experiences they identified as relevant to their development of social commitments, not just in the context of (one or even multiple) classes or one co-curricular program. This holistic approach answers the call from recent mixed methods and quantitative studies to gather more integrated views of student

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experiences in civic growth (Amnå, 2009; Johnson, 2015; Mitchell, 2015; Weerts & Cabrera, 2015). Narrative inquiry data collection with students who had multiple meaningful SL experiences was appropriate for my research questions because it allowed me to probe at the multifaceted, complex processes over time that Knefelkamp (2008), Parks (2011), and Palmer (2011) identify as a feature of becoming committed to positive social change.

I was curious about how students' self-constructed stories about their broader college experiences and development would align, or not, with themes from the course-specific literature. I was also curious to learn if their experiences would align with the theoretical literature about how service learning and community-based learning impact the development of civic identity and commitment (e.g. Baxter Magolda, 2004; Damon, 2009; Knefelkamp, 2008). Using a qualitative, narrative approach provoked college students' stories of their journeys—and provided the kind of rich data that addressed my research questions in unique ways.

While a good methodological fit for my research questions, narrative inquiry has limitations. As with any constructivist approach, it can be difficult to separate out the researcher's perspective from the data, and as such certain data can go unreported (Manning & Stage, 2016). A narrative, constructivist approach also limits generalizability of emergent themes, since all data is context-dependent (Chase, 2005).

Site and Participant Selection

In summary, of the narrative inquiry studies that address commitment-making and take holistic experiences into account (e.g. Belenky et al., 1986; Colby & Damon, 1992;

Daloz et al., 1994; Damon, 2009; Martínez et al., 2009), few focus on college students (Keen & Hall, 2009; Mitchell, 2015; Robindger, 2012). If they do focus on college students, either traditionally aged college students in four-year undergraduate programs are not included (e.g. Robindger, 2012, who studied community college students), the inquiry focuses on a specific programmatic context for growth (Keen & Hall, 2015; Robindger, 2012), and/or the participants look back on experiences up to ten years prior (Mitchell, 2015). Understanding the unique aspects of emerging adults' stories is helpful for the field of higher education (Parks, 2011). I address some of the gaps in the literature through my site and participant selection process. In this study, my subjects were twelve students at a public university in northern New England, that I'll call the Northern Forest College (NFC). These students met my criteria as "students committed to creating social change." My criteria for meeting this description is as follows. Each participant had:

- Taken at least two civic leadership roles related to a social issue;
- Been involved in one social cause for at least two years;
- Articulated gaining a sense of meaning through this work in advising meetings and/or reflective writing;
- Expressed desire to continue working for the public good in a career beyond college.

My intent is that by using purposeful sampling with the above criteria, I will provide the best possible examples to illuminate the experiential and developmental influences related to civic commitment-making (Merriam, 1998). Indeed, purposeful sampling to

find exemplars is a good choice for studies that seek rich information within a unique, particular situation (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990).

In addition to meeting the above criteria for expressing commitment to creating social change, I also wanted to speak with students who could look back across four years of college experiences and growth, and had experienced at least two years of SL involvement so that I could see if and how it influenced their development. Therefore, I selected my participants based on whether they:

- Graduated or planned to graduate within the year from the university;
- Took a leadership role in at least one of three kinds of service learning experiences during at least two years of their time at college: in a service learning focused Residential Learning Community, in co-curricular civic engagement programming through the Student Life department, and/or in service learning class(es).
- Had and were willing to share at least one document written one to four years prior in which they are reflective about their roles in their communities.

Due to the wide-reaching, complex factors that can influence commitment to the public good, I chose to limit my study to a population from the same institution and within a year of graduation, and with multiple experiences of at least one pedagogically similar experience in common (service learning). As discussed in my literature review, SL experiences are well positioned to foster commitment to the public good (Hatcher, 2011). I was eager to hear students' stories about whether that was part of their experiences, and if so, how. Their participation in a structured SL involvement also

provided me with convenient access to important data—specifically, their written

reflections about or applications to those roles from earlier in their college careers. Thus,

I was able to supplement participant interviews with participants' written materials that

provided a longitudinal perspective on their experiences and development. I will describe

the nature of these documents in more detail in the upcoming "Data Sources" section.

My purposeful sampling approach held the institutional context and near-

graduation student status constant to ensure that, as significant differences in experiences

and development emerged among the participants, those would most likely be due to

other factors. I ensured that all students participated in multiple service learning

experiences for at least two years. They participated in distinctive kinds of SL

involvement, though: Seven of the participants were students in a service learning themed

RLC (SLRLC). Two were teaching assistants in service learning classes, and I'll refer to

them as TASLs. Three were leaders in Student Life-based Co-Curricular SL (CCSL)

experiences, such as immersion service trips or presidents to service-based student

organizations. These experiences each applied some of the best practices of service

learning, as I will detail below. Due to variations of context within that criterion, though,

these different kinds of SL provided distinctive kinds of environments for development.

Figure 3: Qualities of Participants' Primary Service Learning Experiences also outlines

the different communities and their distinctive and common qualities (inserted below).

Following, I describe the features of the SL experiences participants experienced, starting

with the SLRLC.

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SLRLC students applied to live with students who had similar interests in SL, and spent their first year (if not two) of college in the residential environment. They had access to SLRLC-specific faculty and staff, regular programming related to the RLC theme that aimed to build community among the students, and one-credit classes that used experiential learning pedagogy with the goal of deepening their understanding of the topical theme, of how to use their interest in that theme to benefit the broader community, and of themselves. Five of the seven participants in the SLRLC population also received small annual scholarships that required them to write regular reflections about their civic experiences.

One significant difference among the student participants is that I knew the SLRLC students. As the Director of the service learning based residential learning community, I instruct and advise 25-45 incoming students each year. I maintain relationships with many of them throughout their four years at the school. With the SLRLC participants in this study, I had been their instructor of a service learning leadership seminar over their first two years at college, and acted at the time of the interviews as their informal advisor for ongoing civic engagement and social change endeavors.

Their engagement was with diverse social issues, as their unifying RLC theme was civic engagement writ large. There are about 70 students active in the SLRLC community at any given time. Participants had been in four semesters of one-credit RLC classes, and all four semesters of classes used service learning pedagogy to connect students with mutually beneficial community partnerships. I no longer had an

instructional role with these students, and therefore held no position of authority over them. Due to those existing relationships, I knew enough about the students to purposefully recruit them into the sample as good examples of students who met the criteria of being committed to creating social change.

The two TASL participants had enrolled in at least two credit-bearing SL courses, and in at least one of them had applied and been accepted into the Teaching Assistant program and role. I did not have existing relationships with these students. I relied on TASL staff to identify students who met the above criteria. These participants all had experiences getting trained in the best practices of SL with a cohort of about eight other TASLs, working closely with a faculty member teaching a SL class, leading critical reflection exercises among their peers, mentoring other students, and forming reciprocal community partnerships. These students took on leadership in their SL experiences in the third and fourth years of their college careers, which is later than many of the other students.

The three CCSL participants had applied to and been selected as leaders in alternative break programs and/or campus community engagement clubs. Before becoming leaders, they had been participants in the service immersion trips and student organizations, usually starting in the first or second years of college. While there was no formal course credit associated with these experiences, they participated in extensive training in principles of SL by professional student affairs staff. I also did not know these participants personally prior to interviewing them.

Figure 3

Qualities of Participants' Primary Service Learning Experiences

Service learning Residential Learning Community (SLRLC)

- *7 participants in sample*

- Common residence hall first and/or second year(s)
- Four 1-credit SL seminars
- Some received small scholarship
- Requirement of 60-80 hours of community engagement while in program
- Leadership project in second year

Teaching Assistants in Service learning Classes (TASL)

- *2 participants in sample*

- Enrolled in at least two 3-credit SL courses
- Trained in SL best practices
- TA in at least one SL course with faculty member

Co-Curricular Service learning Leadership Role (CCSL)

- *3 participants in sample*

- Alternative Break immersion program participant and then leader
- Student organization leadership training and practice over at least 2 years

All participants
- Applied and were accepted into program
- Peer connections with other engaged students
- Staff mentorship
- Leadership training and responsibilities
- Structured critical reflection experiences
- Partnerships with off-campus community organizations

Several SLRLC participants took part in some of the CCSL programs, and some CCSL students also took leadership roles in SL classes. To address the potential impact of these different, overlapping SL contexts, I asked the students about the roles of multiple experiences in their paths, and explored the influence of different kinds of SL experiences in my findings. Despite their noted distinctions, the SL experiences' significant similarities still allowed me to look across the participants' experiences to focus on my primary research questions, even if certain participants had only one kind of SL experience. All of the participants took the initiative to apply to leadership roles in their respective SL experiences. Also, they all had access to staff advising and training around their program and role, structured reflective experiences, and connections to a cohort of fellow students in similar roles. These fundamental commonalities among SL experiences are many of the key factors SL literature identifies as the most influential, best practices in the field (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mitchell, 2015).

Additionally, I selected an overall sample that is representative of the social identities represented in NFC's SL programming. Most of my sample identified as white women. About 30% of the students in the three areas of SL programming identify as men. I recruited four men and eight women participants. In most service learning studies, the majority of the students identify as women and many researchers discuss that this is a bias across the field (e.g. Astin & Sax, 1998; Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000). The university at which I am conducting the research is a predominantly white institution. I selected four students of color to participate in the sample, creating a higher percentage of representation than

the institution's 11% of students who identify as people of color. Considering how SL literature often assumes SL participants are white (Butin, 2006), that people of color are often underrepresented in SL classes (Miller & Scott, 2000), and how race can significantly impact students' SL experiences (Chesler & Scalera, 2006; Johnson, 2015; Novick, Seidner, & Hugley, 2011), a higher representation of otherwise underrepresented students of color in the sample than in the overall population seems positive. I explore the implications of the students' identities in my findings based on their emerging relevance.

To recruit participants, I reviewed SLRLC rosters and selected seven SLRLC students who met the criteria (described above). I shared the criteria with CCSL and TASL staff members and asked for the names and emails of five of their students who they believed met my criteria. In the recruitment email, I let the students know that they had been identified as students who met my criteria for being engaged community members. If they agreed that they met the criteria for participation and freely chose to be a participant in the research, I requested permission for a forty-five minute to one-hour individual interview and examination of their formerly created piece(s) of writing.

Data Sources and Collection

I used three types of data. I interviewed each student within a year of their graduation at the university using a semi-structured narrative-based approach. I also analyzed one or two artifacts of each participant's writing. I asked the students to reflectively analyze their own past writings in the context of their current civic commitment at the end of each interview, too. The data collection methods of narrative interviews and document reviews allowed me to gather the information I needed to

explore what students identified as experiences that influenced the process of becoming

engaged members in their communities and how the students experienced the processes

of their journeys to becoming actors creating social change. Notably, aspects of

participatory action research (PAR) and case study research also informed my data

sourcing and collection. I make note of the different methodological influences in my

approach as I describe them in more detail.

Interviews

The narrative approach, applied in each interview, allowed me to "[prompt] the

participant[s] to expand on various sections of [their] stories and [ask] the interviewee[s]

to theorize about [their lives]" (Creswell, 2013, p. 192). I invited the participants to think

about their experiences and perceptions of their experiences. In particular, I inquired

about how they identified their roles or identities in their communities, what they saw as

the influences that led to them taking on those roles/identities, how their development as

community members progressed in the college setting, what influences currently seemed

most important in their community experiences, what was challenging about their process

of making community engagement commitments, and how they saw their community

roles evolving in their futures. The specific questions that guided the semi-structured

narrative interview are attached as Appendix A: Interview Protocol.

The entirety of the interview, including the participants' review of their

documents that I describe shortly, was designed to be a reflective, empowering

experience. The participants seemed to benefit from the process and many thanked me for

the opportunity to reflect on their lives via the interview and document review

experiences. I conducted the interviews in a manner to "promot[e] personal growth" (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007, p. 33), where participants felt their voices were "supported, valued, and respected" (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007, p. 35). To do this, I used verbal cues, follow-up questions, and open dialogue to affirm their feelings of competence, validate their personal interpretations of their experiences, raise their consciousness about themselves, and inspire their further action (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007).

Document Review

Another kind of data in this study are the participants' analyses of their previously written documents. At the end of their interviews, they read their past writing(s) (described in detail below). I then asked them to share their initial reactions, and what seemed similar and/or different about their approaches to community engagement between when they wrote the documents and their current experiences. Following the traditions of narrative inquiry and PAR, the interviews themselves become sites of learning and creation for the participants (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013). This part of the interview was designed to inspire integrative, reflective thinking about their own development, providing an opportunity to explore their assumptions and learn from themselves (Chase, 2005; Huber, 2013; Savin-Badin & Wimpenny, 2007). It also provided the opportunity demonstrate how they thought critically and reflectively about themselves, which was useful for illuminating their cognitive development and, thus, address that aspect of my research questions.

Document review contextualized and enriched the interview data. See Appendix B: Documents Reviewed for a description of the types of documents I accessed, analyzed, and invited participants to analyze. Before interviews and asking students for their analysis, I also read and coded the participants' writing(s) independently. The types of documents varied among participants. Just over half were applications to leadership positions or membership roles in their primary SL affiliation. The format of the application-style documents was a series of short essays responding to three to ten prompting questions. The other types of documents were written as reflection essays in SL classes. Appendix C: Documents' Prompting Questions provides the specific questions that prompted the writing on each type of document. Across the different writing formats, participants were reflecting on their roles in communities, how they had contributed to their communities so far and how and why they planned to contribute to their communities in the future.

If the participant was affiliated with the SLRLC, I was able to pull the application and reflection documents from the SLRLC files, with participant permission, through my role as a staff member and course instructor in the SLRLC. The CCSL and TASL staff coordinators also were able to find the documents in their files to provide as data, after I obtained permission from participants for access to their past writings.

It was important to maintain the anonymity of each student so that they felt free to share their experiences (Yin, 1997). To protect the participants' identities, I changed their names in my research notes and write-ups to a pseudonym of their selection. I stored the digital notes and recordings from the interviews on a secure digital network. The written

works were moved from their web-based versions in staff files to Word documents on which I removed any identifying information. At the interview, I asked each participant verbally for her consent to participate in this study by sharing the "Research Consent Document" (Appendix D). The written document analysis, the interview, and the reflection on their writing in the second part of the interview provided diverse data from multiple sources that helped me find rich understanding and meaning in my analysis and findings (Yin, 1994 &1997).

Pilot Study Lessons Learned

In the months before I proposed this study I did a pilot study in which I interviewed two participants and looked at one piece of each of their writings. These participants were both in their fourth and final years of college, one identified as a woman of color and the other identified a white woman, and both had been part of the SLRLC and multiple SL experiences (including the TASL and other CCSL programs). The interviews, document reviews, transcription, and analysis processes for the pilot study shaped this following study in significant ways.

One way the pilot shaped this study was in relation to participant selection. Originally I thought I would have RLCs as the common experience across all participants. However, when I communicated with staff who would serve as gatekeepers to other non-SL RLCs, I discovered that many did not have access to their students' past reflective writings. Looking at the pilot interviews, I noticed that other SL experiences in the co-curricular and academic spheres of campus were significant to their development, and SL experiences as the common aspect across participants made more sense for my

research questions and focus. I was also able to connect with CCSL and TASL colleagues to gain access to students who met all aspects of my purposeful selection criteria.

My pilot study experience shaped my data collection tools, too. I found reading the writing of the participants (applications to the SLRLC program) to be instructive, and it often lined up with their descriptions of their understanding of themselves, but it also seemed very tidy (perhaps due to the nature of the writing: an application for acceptance into a program). I wanted to find a way of seeing how their perspective changed over time more deeply. Katherine Shepherd, a faculty member who is also on my committee, suggested I allow them to read some of their writing(s) and have them reflect during the interview on their writing themselves. They could name the places where they had smoothed things out for the sake of the writing format, how they would have written it differently now, and where they saw the most similarities in themselves across time, too.

The pilot interviews also influenced my initial analysis approach. I learned that coding the transcribed pilot interviews based on existing theories (a priori coding) was useful for describing and identifying activities participants engaged in, but did little for getting a deep, nuanced understanding of their experiences—the purpose of the study. I decided I would not develop a priori codes, but rather start with in vivo, open coding for initial read-throughs of this study's interviews.

Researcher Identity

My identities and roles outside of this research inspired this study and impact my unique perspectives as a researcher, which I remain keenly aware of. Considering my constructivist paradigm of this study, this is appropriate (Manning & Stage, 2016). A

narrative inquiry approach within the constructivist paradigm acknowledges and appreciates the influences of the values and perspectives of the researcher, instead of problematizing by background as a source of perhaps preventable bias, as occurs in quantitative research traditions (Creswell, 2013). For example, Hendry (2007) encourages us to see narrative interviews as potential "sites of communion" (p. 496) between participants and researchers, and cautions against objectifying and de-contextualizing the stories created in narrative interviews as dehumanized knowledge production centers. My constructivist, narrative inquiry-based approach invites the researcher to be a co-constructer of the story with the participants (Beuthin, 2014; Chase, 2005; Hendry, 2007 & 2010; Manning & Stage, 2016, Savin-Badin & Wimpenny, 2007).

Subjectivity in Narrative Research

While acknowledged and appreciated, the dual roles of researcher and collaborator can be difficult to navigate; Beuthin (2014) characterizes the interview process as "breathing in the mud" (p. 122). She describes how awareness of and attention to the tensions at play in such interviews (i.e. equality and power, leading and following, insider and outsider, influence and neutrality, trust and responsibility) allows researchers to generate more complete and trustworthy participant stories (Beuthin, 2014). These tensions, even when handled attentively, still create limitations within narrative inquiry methodology. The knowledge potentially illuminated by this research is produced collaboratively and is bound by the context in which it was developed (Manning & Stage, 2016), meaning it can be difficult to tell how different a participant's story would be if interpreted through a lens other than the current researcher, limiting its generalizability.

Since my perspective influenced the research, it is important for me to transparently share my identities, experiences, and background to provide a basis for the trustworthiness of this study (Glesne, 2011). By providing aspects of my own story that I understand to be relevant to the context of this study, I hope readers will see how my perspective directed me to my research questions, assumptions, and methods, and shaped how I showed up to interviews, made sense of the data, and chose to represent them to others. Below I share my narrative of how I have come to identify as someone who is committed to creating social change, personally and professionally.

My Civic Narrative

Growing up, my parents were highly involved as volunteers and coordinators for local civic efforts. Whether it was my mom starting a pedestrian safety committee with my town, making meals for friends' families who were sick, or organizing with local agencies to provide safe and celebratory neighborhood Halloween festivities, or my dad creatively teaching Sunday School, coaching track, and coming in to my elementary school science classrooms to do lessons on seeds or planets, I saw my parents stepping up and making our community better. They made it clear that being a responsible citizen meant taking action with others about the things about which you care. This, combined with my early fascination with history and how things got to be the way they are, informed me that everyday people make a big impact on our world. I came to believe in the transformative power of individuals making commitments to their communities and wanted to be one of them.

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My educational experiences supported this belief. I attended well-funded and progressive institutions in which my white and upper middle class privileged identities were the norm and personal efficacy was celebrated. Experiencing how these spaces attended to my needs, I came to see schools, and social systems in general, as places full of positive potential. Local and global service learning courses and co-curricular programs in college helped me realize that others without my racial and economic background, though, are not served by our pervasive, unjust systems—including our political and educational systems.

That awareness arose slowly, through many different experiences. In high school, I was enthusiastically over-committed outside of the classroom. I started taking on roles in the community through a service club and newspaper. I became co-leaders of both organizations by junior year. I taught Sunday School at the local protestant church, and got positively recognized by community leaders as an active contributor in my communities. It felt good to be a helper. I looked for undergraduate colleges that had a strong culture of community volunteering and chose well: The College of William and Mary provided challenge and support in and outside the classroom for getting engaged.

My first year I had the option to join a civic engagement residential learning community. I declined it, wanting to live in a hall that was part of central, historic campus. But hall mates in that building happened to be students who also wanted to get engaged civically, even if we had not chosen the structured space for that on campus. My Resident Assistant, within the first month of school, recruited me to organize my hall's team for a charitable fundraising walk for cancer research and join the international

house-building service club she was forming. With those initial engagements, I made good friends and got to travel abroad for the first time. I saw workers on the border of my country suffering without enough housing and food because of trade policies from which I benefited. Through critical reflection led by the student and staff group leaders on the international service trip, I became aware of my privileged identities for the first time and wanted to learn more about the systems that create inequality and do something to change them. I also joined a volunteering club that set me up to visit a local low-income nursing home weekly to read to its residents, that I wound up doing for all four years of college. I formed close relationships with the individuals there. I became interested in people with different experiences than mine, and I learned that I could find that abroad but also in my back yard.

Academically, I took courses in sociology and history that involved community-based learning and critical reflection. My peer group was mostly other civically engaged women, mostly majoring in Hispanic Studies and Sociology, and involved in clubs advised by the Office of Volunteer Services and/or faith-based organizations with a community-outreach focus. The campus ministry group I was part of introduced me to the term social justice and I connected that moral home-base with the civic actions I took as a community leader. I attended an anti-poverty conference with my friend funded by an undergraduate research office. There I learned about socially constructed inequalities' impacts on housing and food access. When I was there, I saw a sign that read "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention." I came back to campus ready to "pay attention." I started taking more sociology classes, talking with my peers about politics,

and in my co-curricular involvement I began organizing and training others to lead international service trips using a social justice perspective with support of the campus volunteer services office. I also became a Resident Assistant to pay for my housing and because I liked making bulletin boards. I was surprised by the other kinds of leadership I became exposed to: I was trained in how to build an inclusive, welcoming community in the smaller-scale sense, and got to practice that with all its challenges over three years.

I remember my high school friend's mom asking me about my academic departure from traditional history to sociology and community organizing, and realizing the thread between them in that moment: I wanted to know how social change happened, and how to make a positive impact. That became part of my personal narrative when explaining to others what I was up to. I liked being useful, taking leadership roles, learning about how society was constructed, and feeling connected to my communities through relationships. I started to think about what I might do after college and thought about how I could educate others about making change.

Unsure about what realm to do that in, I sought advice from others. I met with staff and faculty advisors, and had many long conversations with my friends. I wound up interning with an organization that did community organizing work. I became appalled with how state-wide policies on payday lending were shaped for powerful interests instead of for the public good. I interned and then got a job at a living history museum, excited to share revisionist history about colonial Virginia's formation. I found it fun, but defeating that most people on vacation didn't want to hear about racism. Questioning if education in the political realm was best for me, I took a job with a national organizing

group on a college campus. I learned important skills and burnt out while meeting their expectations. A professor at the institution heard my frustrations with the impersonal kind of organizing I was called to do, and wisely recommended Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000). It described a different way to educate that kept the process of individuals' learning in the context of their communities at the center. I also stumbled upon Mary Catherine Bateson's *Composing a Life* (1989) and reflectively recovered my 'thread' that got me into political organizing. It got me reflecting about what I learned that could lead to what was next: I loved working with inspired college students and still wanted to be an educator for social change.

After an encouraging phone call with a college staff mentor, I wound up applying to masters programs in education for student affairs with a focus in service learning and social justice. In summary, finding belonging in communities, internship and work experiences, meaningful mentoring and peer relationships with others who care, questioned assumptions, travel, burn out, critical reflection, and ideas in books are part of my experiences that led me to see civic commitment as part of who I am in my public and private roles.

These learning processes, still in progress, have led me to a fulfilling career as an educator in higher education, specializing in curricular and co-curricular service learning, with a relational focus. I worked in co-curricular and curricular service learning offices, a career center, and women's center either during or just after graduate school for Higher Education and Student Affairs in the same region of the institution at which I currently work.

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Currently, my primary professional goal is to support students in finding personally meaningful and publically purposeful lives. In particular, as the current director of a service learning themed residential learning community I see students entering college from diverse backgrounds and, across four years of learning, end up in many different places in terms of commitment to their communities. I see some of the aspects and influences of my journey in some of their experiences and how they develop meaning from their experiences, and just as many divergences in others' paths from my experiences growing as a community contributor, as well. Curiosity and enthusiasm about how my field and I can better understand and support diverse students in their processes of civic commitment-making leads me to conduct this research.

As appropriate for qualitative, narrative research, my background and experiences strongly influenced how I conducted this research study (Chase, 2005). For example, they helped me develop my research questions, be warmly affirming and developmentally supportive of student research participants, and feel motivated to embrace the complexity of my topic. They also created biased assumptions— for example, that others experienced schools as positive spaces, or that students in SL experiences did not belong to the communities with which the program partnered. I did my best to be aware of and critically assess my assumptions, and just described some of them to be transparent about my informing background.

Trustworthiness

Aware that my biases influenced the way I asked questions and inspired responses, I was sure to construct open questions. I had others check my interview

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protocol for assumptions, and practiced it aloud with a colleague in advance of using it with participants. During the interview's unstructured dialogue I also tried to remain aware of leading prompts and verbal cues that could bias answers. In reviewing interviews after they were conducted, I found that my questions and verbal cues were encouraging in manner, across the varied content of participants' responses.

I knew over half of the participants already, and of those I did not know, I made my role as a staff member at their institution apparent. As such, I needed to consider my insider status. PAR and narrative inquiry were useful in outlining the benefits and challenges of having personal connections to the research participants and contexts (Beuthin, 2014; Savin-Badin & Wimpenny, 2007). Already knowing some participants helped them trust me with their stories, but being aware of power issues such as my former course instructor status and current advising role was important (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Savin-Badin & Wimpenny, 2007). Some assumed that I could use my informal understandings of them as data. I asked them to speak with me as if I did not have as much existing knowledge of their experiences as I did in our other relationships. Of the students I did not know, I had the power associated with being a staff member at their college. Therefore, I acknowledged my role while sharing the purpose of the study and my different, specific role as a researcher in our interview and with the study in general.

Due to the intentionally mixed sample, I was able to compare my data collection experiences between the previously known and unknown participants to assess whether there was a difference between how my closer relationships appeared to have an

influence on my role as a researcher. I describe what effect I think that had in Chapter Six. I mixed the order of conducting the interviews among SLRLC, CCSL, and TASL participants so that I remained reflectively aware of that potential influence. Using twelve cases, with a mix of similarities and differences among the participants' contexts and identities, allowed for greater analytic generalization (Yin, 1997). By having the participants analyze their written work in the interviews, I got to compare my analysis of the documents to their authors' interpretations. Within my data analysis methods, below, I further discuss how I increased the trustworthiness of my interpretations by using other types of triangulation and rich description.

Data Analysis Methods

I used narrative and cross-case analysis methods for developing findings from my data. I first analyzed individuals' data using an approach informed by narrative inquiry. This methodology allowed for departure within my analysis from seeking a single Grand Narrative of how college students become committed to creating social change (Hendry, 2010). Then I used cross-case analysis to look across all twelve participants' data to see what larger themes emerged (Yin, 1994). In the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters, I share my findings by applying Wolcott's (1994) three phase model of working with qualitative data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation, respectively.

I took the following steps to apply these approaches and analyze the three data sources from each participant. Before each interview I read the participant's written document(s) and marked the margins of my copy of the printed documents with what I noticed stood out about their approach to civic engagement. I took notes in the margins to

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capture my thoughts and curiosities about the student's responses. Immediately after each

interview I wrote myself a memo about the experience, noting ideas and questions that

arose for me in the interviewing process. I noted if and how the student's written

reflections from the participant's past complimented and/or contrasted with the stories the

participant told in the interview. I also included comparisons of the participant's

interpretations of the participant's written documents with *my* initial analysis of their

writings. Then I had the interviews transcribed, keeping the audio files on record in case I

needed to refer back to them.

Informed by my pilot interviews, I began analysis on the 12 interviews by using

initial coding that employed in vivo, process, versus, causation, and values coding to

capture my first impressions (Saldaña, 2016). In initial coding, researchers look openly

for processes, properties, and dimensions in the data that help sort and label the data by

its meaningful properties (Saldaña, 2016). In this coding, I mostly used a thought-unit as

the unit of analysis. I identified a thought-unit as a statement the length of a few

sentences within the response to one question that addressed a single topic.

Initial coding allows the researcher to blend in other styles of coding that let the

researcher take in the many features that exist and initially stand out to her in the data

(Saldaña, 2016). I took full advantage of the flexibility in this approach, perhaps to my

detriment at first. Within my initial coding I used in vivo coding, in which the researcher

isolates a "word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data

record" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). By writing these short phrases in quotation marks in the

margins of the transcription page, it allowed me to note words used by participants that

seemed especially salient and evocative in their stories. I also used process coding, that captured participants' actions and their ways of doing the actions in the gerund tense; versus coding, that helped me compare how a participant identified their current approach to engagement with their previous approaches to community work; causation coding, in which I captured how participants attributed one event as following a previous one; and values coding, that highlighted spots where participants identified how their values intersected with their experiences (Saldaña, 2016).

Despite this full array of initial codes, my coding still seemed to leave significant gaps between what participants shared and what I was capturing as a new qualitative researcher (and very enthusiastic data coder). My initial codes showed what participants experienced, the order in which they occurred, and how they felt about the experiences. All of these tied closely to theories about learning and commitment-making that I knew of from the existing literature, and presumably the codes I chose highlighted these aspects because of my theoretical background. I struggled to code my way to capturing a deeper essence of their experiences, and started to add emotion, descriptive, and theoretical coding to my list of intended approaches (Saldaña, 2016). Recognizing that would make it even harder to find codes within individual interviews and documents that I could unite into broader, universal codes that would describe similar properties in the data across participants, I stopped. The narrative approach I had used in gathering the data invited richer, more holistic initial analysis than coding alone allowed (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

By my second round of analysis, I decided to capture the descriptions of participants' experiences by keeping the stories whole as case-specific, largely chronological narratives (Creswell, 2013; Hendry, 2010) that also included how the participant processed their experiences (Chase, 2013; Hendry, 2007). To do this, I first identified and described what set of experiences has occurred in the subject's life (Creswell, 2013), and paid attention to the order in which they occurred. I looked for "life-course stages or experiences" to describe when the previously identified influences and experiences shaped the individual's sense of civic commitment (Creswell, 2013, p. 192). This helped me track the external, experiential influences on the participant's path, and, as it appears in Chapter Four, will inform readers of the many experiences that the participant identified as influential, and how they made meaning of them in the context of their lives. While this does not attempt to be a complete account of the participant's involvements, it shows what the participants believed to be meaningful in their lives and important to share in the documents and interview. It also allowed me to get at the in-between parts of their narrative: the hard-to-code places where they described how and why they developed meaning from the cumulative experiences.

Taking a whole narrative as the unit of analysis is identified as part of narrative coding by Saldaña (2016), and the particular approach within narrative inquiry analysis I used is identified as holistic-content analysis by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber (1998). Robinder (2012) used this methodology in his narrative analysis of community college student experiences with single service learning experiences. This method also fit better into my research questions and theoretical framework, in which I desired to capture

the descriptive picture of what a student experienced *and* how they experienced them,

highlighting the importance of the connective parts among the many experiences of each

participant. After writing each interview and document analysis into a synthesized story, I

went back and wrote reflective research analysis memos to myself about what stood out

in their narratives. I later reapplied coding processes from the first round of coding to

these summaries to identify what stood out in terms of external processes, internal

processes, and synthesis-based processes and, in Chapter Four at the end of each

narrative, shared with readers how those emergent codes connected to my conceptual

framework.

Through the process of writing up a narrative description and research analysis

memo for each participant, I noticed and noted themes within it that related to the

literature and seemed to align with initial codes across interviews from the first round of

coding. This helped me in my third round of analysis. I looked for "larger patterns and

meaning from the narrative segments and categories" (Creswell, 2013, p. 192) and moved

into comparison across the cases (Yin, 1994; Wolcott, 1994).

I looked across the initial coding, descriptive narrative syntheses, and my memos.

I listed issues that repeatedly came up and seemed to capture much of what participants

discussed: pre-college experiences, motivations, college experiences, how they saw

themselves, processes they identified as helpful, and challenges. I wrote those issues on

differently colored of pieces of paper and went back into the interviews and looked for

my initial codes that related to these issues. I captured the multitude of ways the named

issues appeared in my initial codes by writing those connected codes on post-it notes. I

used color-matching post-it notes to connect the codes to the issues. For example, if an initial code was related to the issue I had written on purple paper, I wrote that code on a purple post-it note. Afterwards, I went back and wrote the names of the multiple participants who mentioned each of the codes, and how their experiences within that code were different or similar. For example, around the issue of motivation, several students talked about coming to feel like their civic work was "theirs" over time, via a few different experiences (such as having their friends join them in the work; taking leadership among their peers after a mentor's urging; taking a class about a social issue that intrigued them).

I then took the color-clustered codes I developed and established new cross-color categories. The new categories identified more about *how* the codes were experienced by participants (like the examples provided in the parenthesis above) than just issues that participants repeatedly mentioned in interviews and writings. The data started to take shape into three sets of processes: those of *mattering*, *connection*, and *purpose*. I went back to individual narratives and drew maps (with images and words) of how each participant experienced each of the processes. This departure from traditional, words-only coding methods helped me think more creatively about what was emerging from the data (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

From those analytic maps, I went back to the issues as I had first identified and developed more interpretive themes. For example, I saw how exposure, exploration, and direction were three commons aspects of students' experiences with seeking and finding, and re-seeking and re-finding, *purpose* in their civic work. It also helped me notice, write

analytic memos about, and go back for another round of coding to identify the external

and internal contexts in which those processes were happening. I again re-clustered my

colored post-it notes of codes with examples and wrote about how they seemed to relate

to one another. From this iterative analysis process emerged a developmental model of

the different patterns of experiences that supported students' civic commitment

development. I share this model and the details about the processes and themes generated

by my analysis in Chapter Five. I use rich description and ample quotes from narratives

to illustrate my findings, so that I can avoid making my own voice the voice of the

participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 259; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007). With rich

descriptions I hope the readers will be able to see themselves and their students in the

participants' stories.

Throughout this process, I wrote memos capturing the commonalities and

distinctions I saw across the participants' journeys, between the themes that I found and

the literature's predictions, and my own inquisitive process as a researcher (Miles et al.,

2014; Yin, 1994 &1997). I also took pictures of the color-coded and differently arranged

notes, to track how my understanding of the data evolved. Describing how I went through

the different stages of analysis is what Kuzmanovic and Bandak (2015) describe as

providing access into the "black box" for readers to understand the messy processes

employed by the qualitative researcher to progress her thinking towards the shared

findings (p. 13).

The holistic-content analysis of each narrative and cross-case analysis using the

coding processes described above provided the foundation for further interpretation of the

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data (Wolcott, 1994). In Chapter Six, I interpret the themes I found as connected to the literature and how they can inform future practices in higher education. Overall, my interpretation allows me to take participants' narratives and weave together a nuanced picture that honors the processes in the individuals' lives, the elements of my participants' lives that are both shared and unique, and what theories correspond to and help explain their experiences (Creswell, 2013, p. 192).

Limitations

There are several factors that limit the findings of this study. It is taking place at only one institution. The participants and researchers are members of this institution, so subtle assumptions shared within that cultural context may be significant and remain unexplored. Although in the same institution, each participant had different backgrounds and experiences on campus. This limits the generalization possible from their narratives.

Being a qualitative study, I am relying on participant recollection of their experiences. This creates the risk of their reported memory being inaccurate. Participants may also desire to give answers they assume I desire, and inaccurately represent their experiences. Also, the majority women and majority white sample limits the potential generalizations to contexts where more students hold more diverse identities. Keeping these limitations in mind, I hope that my rich descriptions from multiple sources of data will allow the readers to see useful aspects of themselves and their students in my study.

Conclusion

In this Research Methodology chapter, I described how and why I designed this study to answer my research questions related to how college students develop civic commitment:

What aspects of engaged students' lived experiences do they see as being influential in shaping their identities as engaged community members?

How do pedagogical experiences and developmental factors shape committed students' paths to caring and acting for the public good?

How have change-making students made sense of their influential experiences, at different times and cumulatively, when it comes to defining and constructing who they are, and who they are in their communities?

Narrative inquiry was a good fit to address the process-based and integrative nature of my research questions, especially given my constructivist epistemology and calls from existing literature to provide more holistic descriptions of students' lived experiences of becoming civically committed. I described the higher educational context for the study, how I chose participants, and characteristics of the twelve students I interviewed and their collected writings. The data collection process was detailed, and I shared my background and other considerations as I considered the trustworthiness of this study. Finally, I outlined the narrative inquiry and cross-case data analysis strategies I employed to find novel connections from within the students' narratives.

CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

In this chapter I will share the twelve participants' stories. When I proposed this study, I planned to analyze the data by teasing apart the stories into codes, clustering codes into categories, and then grouping categories into themes across data sources. After a first round of initial coding, described above, I noticed that the splitting and lumping of the data into codes obscured the essence of the students' experiences that seemed essential in addressing my research questions related to process and integration. Initially I had been drawn to narrative inquiry for its utility as a data collection tool, but it was after this entry into analysis that I also appreciated its rich potential as a tool for analysis. Digging deeper into how others use narrative inquiry, I decided to start my analysis using the holistic-content analysis approach of Lieblich et al. (1998) in the tradition of narrative inquiry (Hendry, 2010) to maintain the integrity of the stories of these unique individuals in this first of two analysis chapters.

For the student participants, I provide an introductory chart that lists how they described their gender, racial, and student or alumni statuses and identities, and the college experiences they identified as influential. The language I used to identify their gender and race is the language they provided. Then I share a mostly chronological narrative that names the combinations and order of specific pedagogical experiences that supported participants' civic commitment development, illustrates how they made meaning of the experiences using their voices, and describes the roles they came to play in their communities. The quotes, unless otherwise noted, come from their words that my interview protocol (Appendix A) elicited. Woven throughout are reflections on their past

writings, both from themselves and from me, on both how they seem to have changed across the years and also what seemed to have remained steady. Occasional quotes directly from their writings are included, as well. At the end of each participant's narrative I returned to my conceptual framework to identify aspects of their lived experiences that seemed significant to their commitment-development. I use the figure, reprinted below, as the basis for summarizing themes that stood out to me in their stories that are relevant to my research questions.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework: Aspects of Civic Commitment

External context:
Experiences, roles, and relationships identified by participants as influential (*community context and SL*)

Internal context:
Cognitive and identity development and ways of being (*habits of mind, habits of heart*)

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Synthesis of growth across time, understanding of community issues, sense of self connected to others, Sustained and reflective actions

Overall, this chapter illustrates the process by which these college students experienced coming to a sense of themselves in communities via relationships, identities, and roles in the public/private spheres. It provides the groundwork for the cross-case analysis chapter that follows. In Chapter Five I move to integrating the data via analysis, synthesis, and interpretation.

Ashley

Gender, race, student status	Woman, White, College Senior
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"active and involved"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	SLRLC[1], CCSL[2]
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, CCSLs (3), Study Abroad, Honors Society

Ashley recalled that she has "always" been involved in her communities. She attributed her early involvement in civic engagement to her family. Her dad was "always volunteering" and served in a leadership role in their synagogue. From an early age, she saw her parents' community engagement and thought, "Oh, that's what people do!" So, she volunteered, too, with various projects. In the Key Club in high school she got exposure to many volunteering opportunities. As she started to pursue service experiences more independently, she realized she enjoyed doing them and wanted to keep up that kind of community participation when she started college.

From that sense of enjoyment, she decided to apply to live in the SLRLC at Northern Forrest College (NFC). She wanted to live with others who felt that purposeful

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[1] SLRLC: Service Learning Residential Learning Community
[2] CCSL: Co-curricular service learning student club

enjoyment, too, and sought out a community of "people who actually care." Being amidst other civically inclined students, she found her residence hall community very "welcoming" and "satisfying:" "It drew me in." After finding "awesome friends" and a feeling of comfort in her first year, she "wanted to give back." Ashley applied to the primary student leadership role in the SLRLC and became the student program director and mentor for first year students in the SLRLC in her second year.

From that home-base, she looked for co-curricular service clubs where she could take leadership and find a broader social circle. At NFC she saw the number of community engagement opportunities and at first felt overwhelmed: "Wow…there were just so many to choose from." She found an anti-hunger student organization and started working with them on a weekly basis. Ashley found the social aspect of this club "really nice," and took on a leadership role. She appreciated how they taught leadership skills and focused on educating her (and others) about the larger social issue they were addressing (world hunger). She learned so much about food insecurity that it influenced the environments where she wanted to work after college.

Describing how she moved into leadership roles in her many involvements, Ashley seemed driven by a desire to be effective and connected with others. She shared how "it's hard for me to be satisfied just participating. I like taking action and doing stuff, making sure that I think it's getting done the best way it can." She identified as one who finds social aspects and structures to be influential on her involvement: "…if I'm in a group or something and everybody else is doing something, then I'll do it." For example,

when she was in a club that needed food shelf shifts covered over the summer, she found the "external pressure" to meet the community need encouraging for her involvement.

Over time, Ashley found herself taking initiative, branching beyond her comfort zone, and rallying others more. She was in the school of education, academically, and decided to study abroad in an English speaking country in which native cultures strongly influence the educational system. Being there provided space where she learned about personality types. The first type that she identified with was the type that is organized and sensitive to others, and she thinks that is the type that comes naturally for her. The other type is a leadership type, and she saw that as an aspect of herself that she "aspires to" and works on developing through practice.

Upon returning to NFC over her third and fourth years, she got involved in a campus honor's society that promotes service and became the coordinator of a fundraising walk to support eating disorders awareness. In this second half of her undergraduate career, Ashley reflected that she's changed as a community member, honing that second personality type she desired to grow:

> As I've gone through college, I've taken a lot more initiative on my own. Whereas my first two years, I would kind of do what I was supposed to do, or just do what was expected of a certain role, but now I'm just more innovative in my roles. This year I'm the [walk coordinator], and I just asked to take that on. I'm in [the senior honor society], so I'm making the [walk] an [honors society] thing too, and I was like 'Hey, let's make this a [honor society] thing!' And everyone was like, 'Okay!' I'm getting more creative in the ways I can do stuff… and just being more confident in my ideas and not waiting for somebody else to suggest it or asking permission all the time, just being like, 'Hey, this is what we should do!'… And I think that just comes from more maturity and experience.

Something that was steady across her changing way of being involved, though, is the desire to "give back." She explained:

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I just feel very thankful for the life I have and the place that I'm at, so I feel almost obligated, but in a good way, to help out and give back. I really just like learning about different people, so in clubs or organizations where I can learn about people that have had much different experiences than I have, I find it a really exciting opportunity and just can help me.

This desire to be a learner motivated Ashley to become a teacher and work in schools with students from diverse backgrounds. Another part of her future teaching aspirations also involved inspiring others to be civically engaged:

I really want to be a teacher and I think I've learned a lot through these different volunteering…experiences that can shape me as a teacher, and then also give me examples of ways to show kids how important it is to get involved, and just the importance of community. I think having these experiences, and then creating a community in the class, is going to be really beneficial to them.

When she looked back on her writing from when she first applied to the SLRLC, she thought it sounded "just very young." Ashley noticed that when she described her skills that she would contribute to the SLRLC, her descriptions were very broad, "idyllic, and 'Let's all work together, team.'" Now, she described understanding how "there are just so many more things that go into making a difference on any project you're working on." In particular, she found interpersonal relationships and seeking to understand others first to be more important elements for creating change than the less-specific aspects she identified as a high school senior: positivity and desire to help.

Reading a reflection she wrote after her second year, she found that her approach to service changed significantly due to her experience "of leadership, working with peers, as well as older adults" in the SLRLC. She noticed how she recognized that it takes more than good intentions to get things done in communities. Looking back overall, Ashley reflected on her growth:

It's kind of cool. Because you don't really think about [the personal changes] as they're happening. I don't feel super different day-to-day as I did three, four years ago, but I guess reading my writing, I realize how much I've learned from just experiencing things and working with different types of people. I just feel like now I have a better idea of how to, I guess, get things done.

She realized her increased capacity to make change, both in having skills to logistically manage complex processes required to organize others, and in recognizing that relationships with diverse others is a cornerstone to being a positive part of a community.

Figure 4

Emergences in Ashley's Narrative

External context:

-Supportive , civically active community in family and college

-Role models in adults and peers

-Variety of experiences that fostered both independence and interdependence like Study Abroad, SLRLC, and CCSL leadership

Internal context:

- Increased appreciation and capacity for working with complexity and others

-Voice-finding and self-efficacy growth

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Appreciated growth of skills for interacting with others who are different; Increased sense of reciprocity in relationships; Focused on self-growth as part of leadership; Desired to lead others to get engaged in future/career

Anna

Gender, race, student status	Woman, White, College Senior
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"community leadership"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	SLRLC
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, community partnership with faith community, job, academic major, RA[3]

Anna described being interested in "community leadership" from a young age. Growing up, Anna remembered "coming home every day and having conversations with my parents about why it's really important and necessary to be involved in the community. It was a big push to continue to do that." With this parental direction, she chose a "social group" of friends who were also "into volunteering." Her family was closely tied to a Unitarian Universalist faith community. Anna used the coming of age ritual within that tradition to shadow five women she admired. One of them took her to a political rally that she found inspiring. She also had the opportunity to travel to Southeast Asia to volunteer on ecotourism and English teaching projects, that she described in her writing as more beneficial to her growth "academically, spiritually, and socially" than it was to those she was "incredibly lucky" to work with. Among her family, group of civically engaged friends, and faith community, Anna felt supported to be a leader, political, a woman, and someone who stepped up to "[plan] activities."

Anna entered NFC and experienced both a supportive structure to continue her community work by living the SLRLC, and also difficulty from missing the "tight-knit

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[3] RA: Resident Assistant

spiritual community" she left at home. She reflected on her transition to NFC and stated: "Being in the SLRLC was everything." Her friends that she's now had for four years came from that community, and she appreciated how it provided structure for when she felt "intimidated" by unknown people and places. In particular, the staff that could say: "Hey, I think you might be interested in this. What don't you give it a try?" and roommates in the same program experiencing the same support and who "[got] it" when it came to volunteering. She compared her experience to that of her high school friends who also came to NFC, who had been similarly engaged in civic work in high school: "I think that they really struggled to stay involved without the structure of a community."

Anna also wanted supportive structure for herself and others who wanted to "connect with other people with similar beliefs." It didn't exist already at NFC. Out of "selfish" desire for that space, she partnered with the local Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregation and created a UU Club on campus as a first year student. This is an example of Anna taking leadership in a community of which she was a member. At first, she was "unsure about how to begin. I was really nervous because it was concerning peoples' spirituality, and I felt an obligation to be really sensitive and understanding of how everyone comes to that space with completely different experiences and beliefs." The club struggled at first for regular membership. But, over time, she eventually went to the church and recalled saying: "Hey, I'm in a little over my head. I need some help." With help, "that's when things really turned around with the group." She led the group for four years, helped it develop a stable membership and started to take on roles like leading

services within the larger local congregation. When she graduated, she passed over leadership and the group continued.

Another key role that fostered civic growth for Anna was also in the community-building sphere, and among peers. Anna was a Resident Assistant (RA) her second year. Unlike the UU club leadership role, she had the added challenge of those she served having preexisting "negative connotations" about RAs. Particularly important were the daily leadership practice and weekly reflections with a Residence Life staff supervisor. That pairing was what she attributed to fostering "a lot of development" for her.

Steady across her high school and college engagement, and leading her to what would come next, was her belief in "interconnectedness." Anna thought that grounding belief might have first been inspired by her mom's work as a therapist and how her mom expressed daily commitment to nurture and support people in their need for connection with others. It is also in the UU faith tradition to feel connected to all humanity.

How she expressed this belief changed from high school to college. It was in the RA role and the SLRLC seminar that she "learned a lot… about how to talk about diversity and identity, and I didn't have that vocabulary at all in high school. I think I knew some of the ideas about it, I just didn't know how to talk about it." She reported growing in social justice, civic engagement, and leadership vocabulary and understanding through the trainings and seminars provided, and how they have changed her to become the leader she is still becoming. Anna learned about social systems that confer unequal privilege to different groups of people, and found that awareness particularly motivating:

"I'm just feeling really compelled to use that privilege that I have to be involved in correcting those systems that leave other people not privileged."

One of her key volunteer experiences was in a homeless shelter. She felt a strong connection to those she worked with across their differences, despite the gaps in privilege between herself and those experiencing homelessness. Inspired by volunteering and connecting with people while volunteering and hearing their stories, "really solidified the belief" in the value of interconnectedness. Her experience of that belief in action while working there, as she transitioned to working there full time in her senior year, "confirmed that I was moving in the right direction."

Anna planned to begin a graduate degree in social work after graduation. Looking back on past writing, she noted that she saw the that beliefs that most recently grounded why she cared about others similarly identified by her younger self: "I do think that [interconnectedness] is a driving force behind why I want to do the work in my professional life and continue to volunteer." At the time of the interview she was applying to graduate programs, and looking back at this trajectory of her community work prompted her reflection: "It's exciting. It's hard for me sometimes to stay present in my experiences, being so busy things are moving so fast…" but looking back to her past writing she saw her accumulated civic experiences that, "in the present may not have seemed so salient, but now looking back were really big deals."

Besides feeling busy and rushed, Anna experienced challenge balancing her social life and professional roles. An example of a challenge in the mix of her private and public lives was when she sometimes saw clients when she was at a bar with friends. She

wondered how consistent her public and private lives need to be, and what that consistency looked like: "…it's always really hard to think about that— how do I maintain all the things that I believe about leadership? And in those times when my social life is coming in contact with [my] leadership and professional roles" she found it hard to leave either role behind. Working at the homeless shelter, she asked how she could leave the identity that's not 'on' "at the door, in both directions?" Anna described figuring that out as her "growing pains" of doing community social work.

She stated the need for a clear mind as she went to work with others in her attempt to "just let me hold them and treat them nicely" in her daily work, in the larger and messier contexts of injustice. She also sometimes needed to debrief difficult work experiences at home so that she would not take in the trauma she witnessed in an unhealthy way: through her college experiences she built the "maturity and ability to really talk about that" in a way she didn't have when she first witnessed troubling injustices as a volunteer in high school and she only had her parents as resources. Getting support helped, she recognized again. In particular, her roommate was another SLRLC student who "gets it" and was good at processing her experiences with her. Anna realized that, going forward, "those support systems are really important, I think… And that's what community is, something like that."

Figure 5

Emergences in Anna's Narrative

External context:

-Family and church supported and modeled engagement

- Travel and work exposed to differences among people

-Community of those who also cared supported her in college

Internal context:

-Learned frameworks and language for how others described her experiences

-Recognized privileges

-Reflected on meaning of experiences across time

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Consistent value of interconnectedness; Reached out for help in the process of leadership to create better outcomes; Learned how others might perceive her; Tried to balance public and private lives

Sarah

Gender, race, student status	Gender Fluid, Black/Latina, Recent Alum
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"radical"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	SLRLC
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, ALANA[4] Student Center, Study abroad, CCSL, other RLCs

[4] ALANA: African, Latino(a), Asian, and Native American

Sarah grew up in a big city. Her high school had a requirement of serving 100 hours, and she contributed about 600— mostly with her church and a national environmental non-profit group that worked in her home community. Sarah helped neighbors and friends who needed it. They mostly had an environmental focus, thanks to her school's focus on the environment. She was "doing simple stuff instead of organizing things," with others in her community, like helping an older lady in her apartment building: "She was so sweet." Looking back on her writing to recall her early engagement, she realized she had "totally forgot[ten] about almost all of [those high school] experiences."

These experiences led her to apply for the SLRLC. Arriving a NFC, she realized "the rest of the world is very different" from the inner-city. In her first year, she took part in the activities organized by the SLRLC and experienced what life outside of a big city looked and felt like as a first generation college student and person of color on a mostly white campus. In her second year she took a student leadership role in the SLRLC and starting organizing service events for incoming students. She got experience "working in a community and helping run towards a common goal… getting people out into community and getting access to what they need." Although she reflected that she didn't use the language at the time, she recognized this now as "community building."

Sarah also helped lead a campus ministry that took an alternative break trip. It was during the alternative break trip that she realized, "I was the only one who was black serving other black folks." This sparked an awareness of her identities that had begun with her move to NFC: "I realized that my place in society is really affected by my

origins and by my race and by my class- by the things I had access to and the things I didn't have access to." These many oppressed identities "helped shape the way that I see things."

This critical perspective changed the way she thought about service, and what she would wind up focusing her service on for the rest of college and first job:

> I realized I needed to center that experience a lot more in my community service and make it not necessarily about saving people and a lot more about helping communities help themselves in certain ways and helping communities build on themselves.

Instead of outsiders who impose their views on communities of 'others,' Sarah wanted to support people from the community "doing the help and doing the change." This kind of "bottom-up" change used a "liberation" lens instead of a "charity" lens to focus community work. Sarah learned of this distinction theoretically in the SLRLC seminar, but it was through practice and first-hand experience noticing racism and classism in service work and daily interactions that it came alive. Sarah also joined the debate team, and gained skills useful for speaking up for social change: "Debate helped me learn how to speak my mind more freely…so I was more outspoken."

By her junior year, Sarah "realized racism [and other forms of oppression were] very intense and very real. I got sad." She lived in another Residential Learning Community (RLC) and had a harmful experience where someone told her she did not belong in a common space, based on her race: "Wow, people can just look at me and already know I don't belong here?" She got fed up with "people touching my hair all the time." Sarah started "speaking up and showing up" and "calling people out" about racism and oppression on campus to professors and peers. In the process, she experienced

isolation "and just losing a lot of friends…all of my white friends stopped talking to me." Feeling targeted as a person of color led to a year of depression. She remembered that she was always in her head, wondering "why people [weren't] hearing me. Is something wrong with what I'm saying? Or is there a better way to say it?"

She moved to another RLC that was affiliated with the ALANA Student Center and eventually became a student leader of that racial affinity space in her senior year. It felt "safer," and with help from RLC staff, the staff of the ALANA Center, and online communities of fellow activists, "[felt] like I was going to get through it." Speaking up in affirming and affinity spaces led to opportunities, not just isolation. Sarah was invited to speak or facilitate workshops on social justice topics: "It was awesome. I was like 'Oh my gosh, you asked me to do these workshops because I talk so much about this!'" She led one workshop about sexism in environmental work and got a campus club to change its all-male leadership, which was inspiring change to see occur based on her work. In the spring of her junior year, she studied abroad and saw different racial dynamics and similar racist treatment in another culture. Between traveling for service or study, and living in the NFC community, Sarah's experiences of life outside of her home community continually raised her awareness of where she came from, and the systems of oppression that play out in daily life that try to keep people like her marginalized.

In her senior year, Sarah created a culminating experience that she felt defined the way she wanted to make change. In her "free time" (she joked), she rallied a vigil and march in honor of an innocent black man killed by police. She organized all of the different clubs for people of color on campus into a collaborative space that allowed

people to "come together" in an empowering way as 'allies" for racial justice. This embodied her desire for social change work to be done by those in the communities they belong to—she gathered the NFC communities she was part of to stand up against systems of oppression.

After Sarah graduated, she continued that mission as a teacher at a school back in the city of her origins. Teaching in her home community, she identified it as a way to continue working in "one of the most adequate ways I can [to] help liberate kids from my community." In her first year she said she was "learning the ropes" as a first year teacher. As she stays, she said, she wants the content of her teaching to "be more radical." She was proud of the place she works because it used restorative justice practices to help end the school to prison pipeline, accepted students with disabilities, and accepted her proposal to start a gay/straight alliance club. Overall: it's "a great [place] for my justice-centered community building."

In this new role, she reflected back on her experiences at NFC for the first time during our interview. She said she had treated her NFC experience like, "'Well, that's over,'" but looking back Sarah acknowledge, "But I really did enjoy it." From this new space, she talked about a big challenge she faced while a student and still faces:

> I think the hardest thing is balancing gentleness with honesty. So racism and homophobia and transphobia, all this stuff, all this oppression makes me angry, right? So first of all, my anger is justified. It's okay [to express that despite the] 'angry back woman' invalidating racial stereotype. We're told, 'Stop, it's uncomfortable.' It's balancing my anger as well as being gentle… how do I do this in a productive way?"

Sarah questioned whether calling out others in college was "the correct thing to do." Regardless, the context she was most recently in was different so she could no

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longer respond in the same way she did in college to triggering oppressive behaviors. "Now that I'm a teacher… I can't just be like 'You homophobic child tadadadada!'" She saw the demands of her new profession and her new focus— to create "space for students to learn"—making that kind of response inappropriate. She found herself trying to be strategic, balancing "gentleness with my anger and honesty, because sometimes people just get really defensive when it's not necessarily a personal attack when talking about the privilege question." Also, she realized "my own mental health is more important than calling someone out" sometimes. "I need to take care of myself because if I am in a metal state than I can't speak up, then what's the point?"

Looking back at her writing from her high school and early college years, she was surprised that she didn't talk about race at all, considering the radical space she identified herself in most recently. She thought she "sound[ed] like a kid." At the same time, she was consistently helping out with her community in those early experiences, a similar value she had now, but with greater theoretical reasoning. "I didn't leave my community to go save people, but worked within my building to help whoever felt like they needed help… it was good." In college she got the "language" and "academic knowledge" of community engagement to frame what she was doing all along.

Figure 6

Emergences in Sarah's Narrative

External context:

-School and church supported engagement

-Experienced marginalization and belonging in groups doing service

-Invited to use her experiences to teach others

Internal context:

-Unaware of social systems' influence on public or private life at first

-Developed systems-thinking and justice-based approach to civic work along with racial identity development

-Learned to speak up and when it was and was not helpful

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Gained critical perspective of service; Struggled with self-care and burn-out;
Developed intentional mission for grassroots activism and relationship-building; Sought and created affinity spaces

Vale

Gender, race, student status	Man, white, college senior
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"committed" "mentor"
SL experience(s) that qualified him for study	SLRLC
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, RA

Vale reflected on his path to being a "committed" member of in his communities in a fairly consistent manner: with big-picture, values-based statements. His family inspired him: "We were always dedicated towards being able to help others that needed it." He set out to "treat people the way you want to be treated." Vale felt that his family had supported him in their hard times together, and he felt driven to "support others" in a similar way.

The kind of help he wanted to provide others was also largely consistent: Vale wanted to be a doctor starting in middle school. He named four women in his family in the caring fields: nurses, pharmacists, daycare providers, physical therapists. He also felt attracted to science as a topic, and surgery as a "very powerful form of medicine:" "I look at that and I see there is no greater opportunity to be able to help someone and… give them a second chance at life like that." This dream helped him "just pursing more goals and being helpful and accommodating," since "when you want to go into something like that…you have to be able to have a good manner when you're working with people." Connecting with others as a helper was very important for Vale.

In high school, his motivation led him to serve in positions of leadership in student government and community service organizations. In these roles, he "really learned a good strong responsibility on how to work with a team, work with individuals, in order to try and establish good connections with others." He saw the medical field as a place where he could be who he wanted to be: "… being a person that wants to provide that kind of comfort and care… I feel like something just clicked in my head in a way that just allowed me to go to it."

Vale chose NFC because it was close to home, had a hospital at which to make connections, and had a SLRLC for a "homey feeling" in his transition to college. The independent and group community projects invited and required by the SLRLC aligned with his personal goals and helped him find community partners with whom to connect. He lived there all four years of college, the first two as a resident and the second two as the SLRLC Resident Assistant (RA). In his first two years at school he showed up consistently to the events provided by the staff and student leadership—from rallies for gun control to youth mentorship outings— and took the lead to organize several fundraisers and a blood drive.

In those early years, Vale had a hard time. He identified his family as "lower middle-class" with high expectations that "pushed me to work hard." He had up to three jobs at any point during college. Academically, college was much harder than high school for Vale: "The workload is absolutely massive here." Add to that, his family experienced a "bad divorce" that "forced me to step up to a big mantle of responsibility." With family, work, and school, he struggled to find "balance." Vale wound up changing his major and changed plans to become a nurse in the operating room instead of a doctor.

He took these challenges and used them to become empathetic to others: "I've had to make a lot of sacrifices to get where I am, but at the same time, I'm able to come and use that experience to help understand other people's experience… to be there for them." To take on that mentoring role formally, in his third year, Vale applied to be an RA with a desire to provide a "safety net" for others entering the SLRLC. He described the role he took as similar to a father ("Papa Vale") and grandfather ("All I'm missing is

the cane!"): "This is like a second family I'm taking care of now." He became a Lead RA in his fourth year. In addition to empathy, Vale also applied a core belief in honesty in relation to his residents: "Be honest with them." He said that opened up conversations that led to success in his mentoring role, along with "carrying yourself like there's a job to be done and you can keep things organized," and "patience:" "Wait 'til they're ready to engage with you, openly." This position led to a strong source of identity and leadership for Vale. It helped him recognize his own social identities and gain skills as an organizer of others.

The RA role also provided challenges. It highlighted the "rule in medicine" that he learned through this time: "You have to be able to help yourself before you can help your patients or anyone else." Vale felt he had to improve his organizational skills to manage his heavy load of responsibilities, and also to "be able to put your trust in other people" when working in groups. He looked back on his reflective writing on leadership from after he organized a blood drive: "I was the one that was having to be the bridge and the pillars in order to keep everything together. But at the same time, I was able to call upon other people here who were either interested or wanted to learn the process." Similarly to how his dad ran a business, he had to lead a team because he could not do all he wanted to do on his own.

As he set up his future, Vale wanted to create consistency in a community "he knows" and already had connections. He planned to move home and go to nursing school at the local college that a sibling attended at the time, be a graduate advisor with the community service club he was part of in high school, and come back to the SLRLC for

community gatherings. He looked back on what he wrote at the end of high school and after his second year, and found many similarities to his current approach to community engagement. He affirmed his value in "close bonds" and "unity" among groups as some of the "biggest factors" for his leadership. Working with elderly, blood drives, and among his peers as a helper seemed consistent, too, although he wanted to do it "on a bigger scale."

Something he noted that was different as a college senior was trying to balance taking care of himself, and working with others like he planned to do as a nurse on a medical team. This looked like collaborating with others to "help make everything stay afloat," learning to recruit them ("It's like passing the torch along to a new generation"), and keeping them involved: "With [the SLRLC] and beyond [the SLRLC]… I'd like to know that there are people who have these similar pursuits and want to be able to continue that sort of legacy."

Figure 7

Emergences in Vale's Narrative

External context:

-Family encouraged engagement

-Structured leadership roles

-Experienced belonging within civically engaged circles

-Held many responsibilities

Internal context:

-Consistent values, articulated by others

-Focused on individuals and familiar communities as beneficiaries

-Learned organizational, delegation, and relational skills via service

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Connected community work to career goals; Desired to support others in finding community; Felt overwhelmed as a helper of others at expense of self; Paternal perspective of service

Thomas

Gender, race, student status	Man, person of color, Recent Alum
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"engaged"
SL experience(s) that qualified him for study	TASL[5]
College experiences identified as influential	Student Life Club leader, SL classes

[5] Teaching Assistant of Service Learning class

Thomas did not consider himself as an engaged member of his community in high school. The environment of NFC changed his approach—he's not sure he would have been engaged if he had chosen another school where the "physical place" didn't have "a community of people who really do care about change and how the community acts with us. I think it would have been very different" elsewhere— and he chose it by "flip[ping] a coin."

During his first year as a business student, he "didn't really like the coursework." However, he enjoyed getting involved with the outdoors club, advised by Student Life: "it was how I spent most of my time." He also took a service learning entrepreneurship class in a different department (that I will call Applied Economics and Community Development, AECD). In the entrepreneurship class, his group project required initiating a community partnership. Thomas had done that kind of work "accidentally" with the outdoors club, when the members had to reach out to outdoor gear stores and community trail groups. Looking back he could tell that there was some cross-over between the experiences in terms of outreach skills. At the time, though, the intentional approach of partnering with groups advancing the public good in the SL class seemed very new, and "it all went well."

These enjoyable experiences led Thomas to consider a major change, either to recreation management or AECD. "I knew that I maybe didn't necessarily want to do something that was always outdoor oriented in my work life," so he chose AECD. It wasn't until after he joined the department that he found a mentor in his faculty advisor, Professor T.D.: "I had him the semester after I joined, and that is what got me really

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engaged in it." In classes, T.D. got him taking action and thinking about his community in critical ways.

In Thomas's new department, he took many service learning classes throughout his sophomore and junior year. He stayed engaged with the outdoors club, too, and served as president during his senior year. It was his senior year that also contained the courses that had a "major impact" on Thomas's path of being "engaged:" "I knew that AECD was teaching me all these very different things, but I didn't know how to connect it together." Three things seemed to come out in these last classes for Thomas: questioning his impact, taking leadership, and finding a career direction.

Among the classes in his last year, and he was trained and worked as a TASL for a SL class that went abroad, which he had participated in as a student during his junior year. In his training to be a TASL, he learned the importance of "engaging students" in a community in a mutually beneficial way—a best practice of SL— but the challenges of doing so within the limitations of a short travel class. It led him to question SL courses' impacts:

> I always wondered… why [the partners wanted to be] part of a service learning class. Because sometimes it feels like it may be too burdensome for them… It takes work. I know that … they enjoy having the free work, I guess, if you want to call it free work. Where that balance is of partners that really want to help but also that… I feel like sometimes that the partners felt burdened by the students that have to come every week…trying to work with the college schedule and stuff like that.

With these concerns, he became very aware of the perceptions of youth and students doing community work. As the student leader of the SL class abroad, and also the leader within a group project in another local SL class, he wanted to provide quality

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work that left good impressions, as he felt that: "It puts a weight on your work to not just

represent you." Aware of stereotypes of students by the community as being young, "on

the hill," and having a negative impact, he felt that his students' and groups' work would

impact how community partners would shape their view all students, and he wanted it to

be positive. As a leader, he thought "that's something that needs to be explained" to SL

classes. Professor T.D. also "hammered in those points of making sure that you're always

checking in with your community partner, or… hearing all sides of everything, and those

little things that help build that… help shape the community."

Thomas wanted to make long term impacts and see the continuation of his

projects, and help other students to do the same. In particular, he reflected on his desires

in the class abroad where he worked with the same community over two years:

> …One of the reasons that I wanted to be a [TASL] was the value of being [in that community] before, and all of the students next year in the class would have no idea what it was like,…I remember some of the project partners were the same across the two years, so, I had met them before and they recognized me… I think I helped speed up the process of getting to know the community partners, and understanding the ways of [that community].

As a team project leader in another local SL class, he felt this motivation for

positively impacting the community. It led him to "catch up the slack of the other

students" and focused on the logistics and communication it took to get their concrete

project deliverables completed. Instead of thinking about community impact

theoretically, he applied it in action: "I didn't really deal with the grey part that much in

the transportation class." As a leader, in a SL class informally or formally, or in his

outdoors club leadership role, Thomas saw himself as someone who could create a

structure for "taking in all the information and help decide where resources need to go, or

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things like that." In other words, taking a "lofty goal" and get "things in place that needed to happen" to achieve it.

Another reason he applied to the TASL position was to "get more experience in the development field to help me have real world work to show potential employers soon, as I am close to graduation and that is scary," he wrote as he entered his senior year. He also wanted to use his "active listening" and "group management" skills that he had built in his outdoors club role and other SL classes, and build upon his "public speaking skills." It seemed important for him to show others the skills and experiences developed and demonstrated in SL work to prove his qualifications for a career. In Thomas's last SL class, he found a more internally-motivated purpose: it "helped me choose a further path, a career path" in the field of urban planning—a combination of his interests. To pursue it, he took a position after college with a national volunteering program in the same state as NFC. This position also seemed to allow him to approach community work with a similar combination of approaches that he enjoyed in college: He reflected that he enjoys working with a group that looks at the "technical aspects" of transportation planning, but also looks at "social policy" and bigger issues "like poverty and other sorts of things that planners might not necessarily look at…" He appreciated this "holistic" lens, similarly to how his SL classes allowed him to think about community impact from student engagement theoretically, and get positively impactful projects done practically.

Figure 8

Emergences in Thomas's Narrative

External context:

-SL Classes as first exposure to civic work

-NFC community encouraging taking action

-Faculty advising and training supported engagement and questions of quality/impact

Internal context:

-External pressure of career decision motivated to gain experience

-Developed critical perspective of beneficiaries of SL relationships

-Wanted to leave legacy among peers and community organizations

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Motivated by career selection to find integration of interests and skills; Desired to be representing his group affiliations well; Gained skills and perspectives across different experiences

Annie

Gender, race, student status	Woman, White, Recent Alum
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"connector"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	SLRLC
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, Orientation/Transfer programs leader

Annie started college at another institution, and transferred in for her second year. She had been involved in her first college's "day of service" type of events, but missed

the feel of her earlier involvement. Growing up, in middle school and high school, she

had been active in "little projects… I always wanted to be involved." Her church was a

liberal protestant church that was "very connected to philanthropy and doing the work to

give back to others." As part of her high school youth group, she started to step up to

coordinate projects and retreats. She worked in a summer camp with the church and "had

a lot of spirituality surrounding me." Her family encouraged such involvement, and had a

foundational core value: "…you need to be a giver. So I think that's where it started…. I

think it was a lot of just like that stepping up and joining groups that were doing stuff."

Seeking out that involvement also had "selfish" reason when she started college:

"I needed to make friends, and I knew that if I found communities in which other people

were reaching out in the community, then I would feel more whole and more connected."

When she tried but did not find that at her first school, she decided to transfer to NFC,

and found the SLRLC online via an application to a scholarship program connected to the

SLRLC (which she applied to but did not receive at first). "When I found the [SLRLC] I

was like, 'This is perfect. I don't even have to make this up. This is the real thing.'"

In addition to the desire for connection and belonging with others who cared

about community engagement, Annie also felt, "I've got a whirlwind of interests of how I

can use the talents I have in order to help others. That's in a general sense. Then I had a

specific interest, especially in the LGBTQ community." In particular, she wanted to be a

"community advocate," and it was through her experiences in the SLRLC course and

independent leadership project that she got the "language to know that I was interested in

[LGBTQ advocacy work]." Annie also identified the impact of her major on her role as a

community "connector". She changed from psychology to social work after she transferred, for its "kind of action, individual connection piece that I was drawn to- being able to speak to people about what they're going through, find those ways of connecting people to larger picture, to ultimately benefit them."

Annie identified her SLRLC leadership project as a turning point for many parts of her identity, including seeing herself as a community advocate and as part of the LGBTQ community itself, even though she "didn't always feel connected to it." She went from having a general interest of being a "giver" to having a personal experience that gave her a place to "know where to start" in terms of service. Due to her experience of having a bi-sexual, "non-binary" sexual identity that didn't fit in the more common categories of sexual identity, she felt a lot of "angst" around whether or not she belonged in the LGBTQ community. Annie felt "hesitant" to engage in service around that identity, even though she identified it as an important interest area in her application to the SLRLC. However, "…as soon as I started to put together that I could do work to connect others, and ultimately find healing in that, it came together in a way I'd never done service before." She felt that she had found a passion: "So it's like individual angst and then also like just seeing other people affected in a similar way." This personal connection inspired her to create a short documentary of narratives of others with similar experiences, celebrating and recognizing the diversity of experiences within the LGBTQ community—both for herself and others.

This project helped bring her personal and civic identities together, and she also recognized that finding this kind of community work also engaged her creative and

artistic skills and interests. She learned how to make videos, but the most important

learning she identified was through

> … marrying my community side with my art side. I think where the art and the
> community service met is where the passion came from to do the project, where it
> no longer felt like a project and I really felt like I was doing something enjoyable
> and serving.

It was during our interview that Annie started to see many threads of connection

across her academic, personal, civic, and spiritual realms, "which is kind of cool." She

saw her SLRLC leadership project as a space that defined how she wanted to do social

work, with: "…an interest in human connection and what are the stories that make us

individuals, and what connects us but then also makes us so vastly different." She

recognized that this "internal desire to learn more and more about individuals...to make

sense of what's going on around me… I will probably be that way for the rest of my life."

Annie also connected that path ahead to the social justice values she had grown up with:

the "…desire to see people finding their own justice and receiving justice from the

community." In terms of her spirituality during her "intense" time of identity

development in college, Annie didn't feel as connected to that "as much as I had it in

high school." However, "I think what did stick with me... [was] the desire to see that

there's good in everyone and that it's my job to be giving to others." Many common

threads grounded Annie during this transformative time.

As far as challenges, Annie identified time and energy as limited resources: "You

have papers or a break-up or whatever factors in your life at the moment." Other times,

the difficulty was "having a direction." Without one, "it's a challenge to know if what

you're doing is actually helpful… and you're not just getting volunteer hours." She asked

herself during her work, and especially her influential project, "Is this project really beneficial?" Annie also considered the challenge of "touching a sensitive subject for myself" within her advocacy work. She appreciated the support of many people to provide "safety… [while] diving into something that pulls out your own strings." Pushing her own boundaries through the structure of 'service' seemed to provide comfort in an otherwise challenging realm of exploration.

Others spaces of growth and skill-development related to Annie's community roles were her paid positions working with Orientation and Transfer Student programs, and also working as a building manager in the NFC student center: "I got leadership skills through that." She also noted the power of attending a social justice retreat twice. Cumulatively, involvement in these got her "on the list" for "going to a lot of things" like speakers and summits and events that addressed social justice. She was "trying to be a body" to show support for her communities.

Looking back at her writing, she was surprised "how much I knew about myself when I was applying." In particular, how she shared about her LGBTQ interests, even before she got comfortable with the idea that she would focus on those through service. Annie also reflected that, while she grew up with the consistent idea that "if you're not doing something, you're not doing enough. You should be giving all the time and think about how you're giving," that vagueness of 'giving' lacked something. After her project leadership experience, though, she

> can just tell that I have so much more language to talk about it, like talk about the ways in which I was working on change. But I also noticed that I talk a lot more about being a leader… I don't think I necessarily saw myself as a leader when I was applying [to the SLRLC].

Her language went from "giving" and "using my gifts" to seeing service as a "two-way street." Annie recognized that, in her later writing, she used words like "collaboration and inspiration and empowerment" while examining "How are we all part of this process and how can we create this stuff together?" She seemed to maintain that mindset as she spoke about her most recent work and future plans.

After college, she started work as a "connector" for college students with special needs in a residential facility and, at the time of the interview, was about to start a second job with the state as an aid to family social workers. From her college experiences, she knew she "would love to do research again… maybe within the LGBTQ community" in a way that influences programs or policies. She expressed how she was waiting for a focus to emerge before she took action to apply to graduate school and head in that direction—Annie knew the power of "direction" from choosing her SLRLC leadership project and moving it forward with passion. She also played with the idea of working in schools with struggling students and "maybe even help students find their own service work. So pushing them towards being better humans." Either way, she wanted to continue "that string of social justice within which I want to be able to be an advocate."

Figure 9

Emergences in Annie's Narrative

External context:

-Witnessed family, church, school communities gathering around service

-Sought belonging via service in communities

-Transitions in academics supported changing priorities

-Showed up to many social justice events once 'on the list'

Internal context:

-Struggled to address issues in service that impacted her directly, at first

-Saw service as "for" others, then as something done "with" others

-Desired to understand and help others' find belonging

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Social, civic, and personal identities developed in tandem; Held both general ideas for how to be purposeful and specific questions of how it would unfold; Skills and experiences in one area transferred to other areas; Integrated multiple interests into one passion

Sami

Gender, race, student status	Woman, White, College Senior
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"invested"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	CCSL
College experiences identified as influential	CCSL, RA

Sami grew up in the Midwest, in what she described as a conservative town. Her path to being an "invested" community member "started with my mom" who would "pull

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me along all the time" to give "social help." Sami's mom was on "lots of boards" and actively participated in "volunteer service." Her mom was a single mom and Sami was an only child, at first, and she saw her mom as a hardworking role model. Sami attributed this home life to "always" being very "driven and independent." Sami's move from "tagging along" with her mother to "doing stuff for my community" "on my own" was in high school. She recycled at home but doing so was unpopular elsewhere in her town, and she felt "passionate" about it enough to start an environmental club. Taking a leadership role, she "…realized, 'Wow, I really enjoy trying to convince other people why something might be good or beneficial for them in their community and leading people to do that.' …that just kind of got the ball rolling."

Sami continued her work in the community through an honors society at her high school that partnered with a nonprofit agency that worked on peace and social justice issues in the region. This work aligned "with my morals," but it was through an experience at a march against gang violence with the group that it became more than that. Sami saw a friend from her school who was a resident of the neighborhood in which she was marching, and "found that there's a very personal aspect to it, with the other people who were in it."

After learning that her mom had a chronic illness, Sami volunteered at a summer camp with children with similar health challenges—finding a personal connection of her own to community work. It was at the camp that she realized that "putting myself in someone else's shoes for a really long time makes you very humble and very aware… I'm super lucky." She saw how others have different experiences than herself, and that

many have lives that are more difficult than hers. This experience stayed with Sami: it "made me realize I should always consider other peoples' experiences first and maybe they're acting that way because of what they've been through, and that helps me… just go to a situation differently than some people."

In addition to her beliefs and the meaning she saw behind her actions, Sami's family background also influenced how she went about community work. She got good at "figuring things out and getting things done in a timely manner" because she grew up with "lots of responsibilities," and had to help out her single mom who had chronic health issues. In addition to these experiences that helped her build skills to be a "better leader" in her community work, Sami also felt a "drive" to "be more of an organized and dedicated individual, to prove myself to other people" in both high school and college. She named that she was also motivated to be invested through a consistent sense of "self-awareness and self-positivity" that came from her family telling her to be proud of herself.

Sami looked for colleges with a strong civic engagement focus, in order to "…come into a community where I could jump in from the very beginning, and find a role, and find a place where I could be passionate about something and make change." She applied and got invited to live in the SLRLC, but wound up joining another programmed housing option connected to her academics. Looking back, "I wish I would have lived there [in the SLRLC]… all of my friends lived there." Despite living elsewhere, she found a social circle that shared her desire to make a positive impact.

In trying to find a community space on campus, some of them did not work out. Sami joined a club sports team in her first semester. It soon became apparent that underclass students had to "put in your time" before being allowed to play. She left that group. She also applied to be a leader in the outdoors club, but did not get accepted. She "realized I needed to do something similar to home" where she could feel "engaged" and "allowed me to meet other people." Fortunately, her RA invited her to a CCSL club meeting that addressed hunger issues at the local food shelf. She started volunteering there regularly, and even when most first year students started dropping out of it when the weather to walk to the food shelf got cold, she persisted. Hitching rides with other student volunteers, she met her best friend "with so much in common." Both of them got invested in the CCSL.

In her second year, she took a role within the club's leadership after someone dropped out "by the luck of the draw." This move "got the ball rolling" in her college leadership with this CCSL. She had four years with this as her "big commitment." Senior year, Sami reflected: "I'm president, so it's a lot, but I've been doing it for so long that people at the food shelf know my name and stuff like that, so it's really good." Just when she started investing in this CCSL, she had also become a Residence Assistant. Sami found this stressful. She learned, "you need to just bow out of situations you cannot do successfully," and did not reapply for her third or fourth years. It helped her see herself as a leader, and she decided she wanted to do that more in places that she felt connected. She asked the staff member who advised the CCSL programs for other opportunities, and Sami became a service orientation leader. After a positive experience with a co-facilitator

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on that, she and her co-facilitator applied to be alternative break leaders together. They

also got those positions. She found her team, off the sports field, and played many

leading roles across these three CCSL clubs.

Similarly to her powerful high school experience of realizing the personal aspects

of her service-based work, Sami identified "relationships with people" as the top

influence for her investment in communities in college. Two factors seemed important:

the peers she worked with directly, and the reasons why they were working. First, she

talked about the social draw towards service as,

> not just 'my friends were involved in it, so I'm going to be involved in it,' but that
> I chose [to do] these things… knowing that the people who are involved in it have
> the same moral values and/or outlook on life. [Or,] not outlook on life, but
> outlook on what you're doing…

For example, she celebrated how all leaders in the hunger-based CCSL held a

"humanistic view" and described the commonly held knowledge that "we are there to

help people, so we give ourselves to that."

Second, she appreciated that they are a group with whom she could ask questions

about social justice. Together, they,

> are able to sit down and have a discussion about it instead of just [doing]
> service… we sit down and talk about the nitty gritty of 'why, as a white female,
> can I go out and so something?'… [and] it's not weird to bring that up. It's like,
> 'We hope you bring that up.'

She chose the word "invested" instead of "committed" to describe her community

work, overall, because "I feel like the people that I'm working with or the people that I'm

working for will affect me back in some way, so I'm somehow putting something into the

community that I will very much so get back." This acknowledgement of reciprocity

aligned with the perspective-taking and personal-connection-finding that has seemed consistent in Sami's community engagement.

A challenge for Sami along her journey was to say no to some things. Considering her background where she wanted to "prove herself," this made sense. It had been "frustrating" for Sami to have limited capacity with time, and she "still" found herself over-committed. Sami was offered a spot in the outdoors club leadership in her last year and found it difficult to turn it down—but she did, to maintain her strong work in the CCSL clubs in which she had already established herself and to open that opportunity for someone younger. As an "over-excited" "ideas and action" person, she sometimes struggled planning and carrying out the "long term contingency plans" after the exciting "beginning stages" of leadership. Sami identified this as part of her college growth: "I'm still learning how to make something long lasting if it needs to be long lasting, and have it so that I pull people in with different skills and use their abilities to make it easier for everyone else."

Asking for help from others instead of "taking it on personally" was another leadership challenge. Looking back at her writing, she saw how much she grew from working with a co-leader on projects. Mutual accountability and sharing responsibilities helped her think of leadership more collaboratively. It "was a great way for me to gain a ton of skills…realizing your opinion on a situation… isn't always right, and that two heads are definitely better than one." In particular, she reflected how she became "more of a listener than a talker" as a way to connect to the younger students she led. Instead of being "motherly," Sami also learned how to step back from a parental role to help others

"take responsibility for their mistakes," even at the risk of them not liking her. This was a different kind of leadership that grew across college. She learned in alternative breaks, with a co-leader, the importance of this responsibility-sharing, and then applied it in the hunger-based CCSL club: instead of "checking in with people 'Are you having a good time?' and thinking about what's going on in their minds… I've realized that if they're not having fun, maybe that's not on me." Sami linked this increase in confidence with finding her own voice in general. She became a TA for a public speaking class she'd originally been scared to take. Synthesizing her leadership lessons, she reflected on being less accommodating of others when speaking up: "Maybe it's because I gained more experience as a leader and realized…not everyone has to love you…"

As Sami looked forward, she was looking for a medical school environment that "fosters real people and you can do real things outside of school." For example, she wanted "to be able to say 'I can do this' and have people let me try to lead something." This was similar to what she was looking for when first starting NFC, where she also wanted to "have a strong community and be able to step into a role… as an individual from the beginning."

Figure 10

Emergences in Sami's Narrative

External context:
-Sought and found a sense of belonging among others with similar values
-Supported by family, staff, and peer mentorship
-Structured leadership roles supported desire to make an impact

Internal context:
-Identified consistent values
-Desired to understand others' perspectives
-Struggled with over-commitment
-Became aware of gender-based influences

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Took more personal ownership of her service engagement as it became part of her intentional purpose; Developed sense of personal connection to social issues; Practiced using her internal voice with others

Mia

Gender, race, student status	Woman, African American, College student
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"engaged"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	CCSL
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, major, ALANA Student Center, Study Abroad, Internships, CCSL, RLCs

Mia attributed her start as an "engaged" community member to growing up in a

small town: "It was really cool to have that small community and small environment,

living with the same people and growing up with them." When she had to transfer to a

larger school outside of her town, since her town was too small to have their own high

school, being "close" to the fellow classmates, adults, and the place in general is what

"grounded" her. That sense of place was strong for Mia, and an environmental club in

middle school that met during a structured period during the school day for co-curricular

interests initiated her care for the natural world. They started learning about "threats to

environmental safety" and she got involved with taking care of the "local environment of

the school property" doing trail maintenance.

Her mom also "pushed" Mia to volunteer at the local hospital, even though Mia

would have preferred to work more for her other job that paid. It was one of the many

involvements her mom encouraged, using the rationale, "'Well, you know, if you want to

go to college, you need to have something on your resume.'" Initially there for external

reasons, Mia started to enjoy volunteering at the hospital once her friends started doing it

("that was cool"), and hearing appreciation and feeling a connection with the people she

encountered there: "I started realizing … there's a lot of different people coming to the

hospital for different reasons… it was really nice to know that I was helping. …I got

really connected to the town and the townspeople." She began to care for more intrinsic

reasons.

Looking at colleges, Mia went back to her consistent interest in the environment.

She found NFC's excellent school for natural resources a good fit and decided to attend,

but was intimidated by the size. Mia asked herself: "How can I make that transition

easier?" She chose to do an optional service-based orientation program, partially because

it was less expensive than the outdoors-based orientation program. Also motivating her

choice was that she "definitely [felt] like the way that I could get connected to the community [was] to do service work." She wound up working at a state park with her service crew, and had a "bonding" experience with the other new students who became friends. It combined her environmental and service interests, and introduced her to a group of similarly-minded folks.

In Mia's first year of school, she lived in an environmentally-themed RLC, in a program connected to her academic interests: "…that definitely had an impact on why I wanted to get more involved and engaged in different areas." Over her first year there she explored different interests and found a homey feeling. By her second year she wanted to take leadership. As a student leader in that RLC, she started a yoga program, based on her sibling's experience as a yoga teacher, because she "felt like I became part of something, and I wanted to grow that and allow other people to feel part of that."

Academically, the natural resources school had faculty and staff that also gave Mia a "grounded" feeling. By the end of her second year she got more involved as a leader in her department, since she knew she was going to be moving from her RLC home and involvement center in her third year. This was another place where she felt "comfortable" and wanted to help "build" community. She also expanded her reach to be a tour guide of the whole campus. This helped her "understand that the community isn't just the people I see every day. It's a bigger all-around community."

At the same time, Mia was facing "uncertainty" of her direction, "of who I wanted to be, and where I wanted to go." The context of NFC was both supportive and challenging. As the youngest sibling in her family, and as an African American woman in

northern New England, Mia was challenged with the external messages that "I couldn't do anything." Specifically, she felt like she was being used as a "representative" of diversity on campus, wondering if she actually belonged, and knowing there are "other people questioning, it's just really hard sometimes to wonder is my success just based on the color of my skin, or is it based on the knowledge that I have, and who's looking at it in what ways." She came to frequently represent, and question, NFC's messages about diversity. Mia indicated that supportive relationships and structures helped her "overcome" these many barriers to seeing herself and being successful.

Mia described three areas that helped her in her path at NFC. Feeling part of CCSL programs, and the Student Life office in general, started from her initial service orientation group. Once a part of that, she became hooked in to the "word of mouth" that encouraged her to expand her engagement as a leader of alternative break trips. She found that department to have "a lot of things structurally to support people. Then just being around people that have done these programs" was also helpful: "…it definitely encouraged me to want to explore a little bit more about what else I can do." Knowing that they offered programs like a retreat for white students to work against racism was encouraging for Mia. Taking the lead as an alternative break facilitator, Mia created a welcoming environment for others. The ALANA student center also helped Mia understand and respond to the racist environment of the nation and her personal experiences of others doubting if she belonged: "I know that there are voices in support of who I am and also the identities I uphold."

The natural resources school was the third area that supported Mia's growth. It provided helpful mentors who provided encouragement and resources for internship and study abroad experiences that helped her "figure it out" so that she didn't have to "make it up" on her own when trying to figure out her next steps. She felt like "people were checking in like, 'Oh, how are you doing? We should talk,' kind of thing." Community members who had come into her SL courses for guest lectures connected her to two summer internships that helped her find how to blend her interests of community building and the environment. A staff advisor became a mentor, and helped Mia find a study abroad program that had a field school to combine her interests in public health with environmental justice. The school also had two required classes—both a first year seminar and a senior year capstone class—that addressed issues of identity and power that moved Mia from asking "Why?" she was taking it to appreciating why social identities matter: "I think they did a really great job of expressing why [talking about identities and power] is important, and it made me believe that it is important, and that there's other people talking about it." As an ambassador for her college, she helped lead others in those conversations.

Considering the barriers to success that Mia faced, this support helped her find direction and supported her questioning about whether she, as an African American woman, belonged on campus. With support, she found that she became:

> vocal in saying, 'No, I'm going to do this,' which I think finding my own voice throughout all these experiences was also very powerful for me. I'd never thought I would be able to do the things that I am doing, based not only just having the confidence, but also not having the resources financially. I didn't think I could come to NFC and be able to hold my jobs and the interests, the clubs I was involved in, and then additionally do well in school! …but I just kind of kept

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going… I used every possibility as momentum going forward… knowing that I could fall back on different communities that are supportive…. I really do feed off of the positive energy, whether that's me giving it or receiving it.

Mia expressed concern and a high level of attention to the questions, "Where am I going to go and how am I going to get viewed based on my success here?" as a senior. These questions remained important as she imagined life outside of NFC's context, where she worked hard to find the "structural things that make me feel comfortable in expressing who I am and expressing my identity." At the time of our interview, she had applied to graduate school in environmental epidemiology. This work combined the many interests she developed at NFC through the diverse experiences she pursued: "I guess thinking about service…[and] being invested in communities [and] environmental health, I was interested in how diseases can affect populations." Mia reflected how this next step "kind of makes sense" considering that "throughout my years I've been investing in the communities and then want to go on to that community, as well… [and] I've loved the structure of academics."

Looking back at her writing, Mia appreciated how she found in NFC what she was hoping for as she expressed it in high school: "being involved with people that are hopeful and want to do things." In more recent writing, she felt like she could "bring a lot more to the table" now. For example, she wrote about the world population nearing seven billion people. "I think I was really worried about getting lost within NFC and within the world just because I didn't know—I didn't have the direction that I have right now." In that piece of writing she had the general sense that she "wanted to help… but how? Or why?" By the time she wrote an essay in her second year, Mia "felt like I had a better

answer." In finding that better answer, she sometimes got "too involved… but I really just want to leave my mark on NFC but also try to get as much out of it as I can." Looking back as she planned for her future field, Mia appreciated her path: "[It's] pretty cool to look at all the things that I've done and now be okay in this position and feel like I'm doing okay with the experiences I have." In an effort to get experiences and support, Mia became equipped to provide support to others and blend her interests and experiences into a service-minded profession.

Figure 11

Emergences in Mia's Narrative

External context:

-Encouraged by mom and college aspirations to serve

-Academic major and advising opened doors to influential experiences

-Affinity spaces supported growth

Internal context:

-Desired to find purpose, with proving self to others and helping others as mixed motivations

-Navigated insider and outsider statuses in college, using critical thinking skills

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Moved from general to more specific interests via community work and relationships; Progressed from member to facilitator in her communities; Expanded circles of belonging and care; Integrated interests and strengths to find career path

June

Gender, race, student status	Woman, White, Recent Alum
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"building community"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	CCSL
College experiences identified as influential	CCSL, study abroad, RA, SL classes, internship, Honors College seminar

June has "always been really involved." She grew up in a "conservative area," in a family where the men were pastors and the women played "support roles." Between Girl Scouts and volunteering with her church, June was familiar with community service. Her parents wanted June and her siblings "to see as much of the country as possible" and traveled with them regularly. From visiting different places, June got interested in others and enjoyed "just seeing other people, getting to know them, talking to them, finding out what their motivations and life stories were." She attributed learning her values for community engagement at home, and then making them her own: "I was brought up in that tradition of service, but having my own crisis of faith just pushed me in a more secular direction." In particular, she remembered a history class in high school that watched President Obama's inauguration. June found the political messages of "hope and change" inspiring.

With a "curiosity" about others, June started at NFC as an anthropology and global studies double major. She also sought out community service opportunities "for the sake of doing it, because it feels good and other people benefit from it," and also because she saw it helping her "build [a community] for yourself to become invested in." In her first year, she found herself "[dipping] my toes into a lot of different pools" to "test

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out the waters" of many possible involvements. She described her mindset: "I had just been interested in a lot of things and wanted to learn more about stuff, and do a little volunteering on the side."

It was her second year she started to find academic and co-curricular communities, and a direction for her civic work. She became a member of an academic and residential program for honors students, an RA, and started working with a local anti-hunger club (CCSL) on campus. The CCSL club had a "huge impact, to say the least" on her college experience. She showed up to it "by accident," thinking it was another hunger-based club, but she stuck with this one because it also looked at "environmental and local agricultural impacts" more than other food security groups. June enjoyed how she and the other members were "helping struggling communities off campus, and… build[ing] some [community] up on campus," too. She stayed involved in this club all four years, and took on greater leadership roles each following year. In her senior year she served as its president.

Food security would become an organizing theme across June's college career, and beyond. It was in combination with other academic and co-curricular experiences that it became meaningful. As a new member in the honors program, June took a seminar class on women during her second year. The professor asked anyone who identified as a feminist to raise their hands: "I didn't." However, as friends in the class and the instructor explained "what it means to be a feminist, and just to be political in general rather than just interested in politics. That was the conversation that no one had ever had around me." Instead of just interested in politics, June wanted to be "interested in solving

[things]. That class and that conversation stuck with me." It led June deeper in her work with hunger, taking on a community-based internship with a local non-profit food security organization. While taking leadership roles in the CCSL and her internship, "…I got kind of frustrated… trying to alleviate hunger in our community, but we weren't trying to solve it." A professor advising her internship gave her a book that described the political changes that led to increased poverty in the 1980s, that "got me more angry and politicized." June studied abroad in her third year at a European university founded by an activist scholar, and she learned some community organizing skills that she brought back to campus to apply in her CCSL anti-hunger roles. She co-led an alternative break program that addressed poverty issues. In her senior year she got the grocery store she worked at to improve its food donation systems, worked with a service learning class to map the food-shed of local food pantries, and wrote a thesis on global food aid: "My volunteer commitments… shaped my academic interests." She finished this experience wanting to make more of a direct impact on her communities by changing systems that lead to inequities in power and access.

Across these experiences, she reflected that she grew to be a lot "more outspoken" amidst challenges. She attributed this to four years of "college experience and just finding who [I am]." After being "badly bullied" in middle school and high school, she desired to be an "advocate" for others. In her college RA role, she experienced a "backlash against political correctness" and personal "alienation" as she worked to "create a safe space" for others. June's first job after college had a similar mission—she took a job as a community organizer to work with college students to "overcome… disinterest and

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apathy" in the political process, and rally others against special interests in state and national government. Most recently, in this post-graduate role, she reflected that "I'm going to shout it out" if she had an idea, and that June even needed to keep her desire to "call people out on things" "in check" so that others could be heard over her loud voice. June expressed frustration over how, now, people even wind up "discounting things I say" because she's taken on an identity as an outspoken advocate for issues like college student political engagement and clean water. Her outspoken voice complemented the growth with her experiences as a "careful planner and organizer" during college.

Looking back at her writing, June was surprised to see how "sure of herself" she was, when "I didn't know what the hell I was talking about." A professor "had faith in me" and encouraged her to present her paper about genital mutilation at the undergraduate research conference in her first year. Reading it now, she thought it offered "short-sighted and naïve" proposals for solving a nuanced issue. Across these differences, though, she had a similar desire to come up with solutions for complex social problems. June also reflected that she "didn't have the language about diversity issues" that she gained more recently so that she could make her passion for equity accessible for others. Her RA role and experiences leading an alternative break trip (another CCSL) facilitating conversations about racism and classism helped her feel like she could most recently have those kinds of "fulfilling conversations… comfortably"—a "big change over four years." Those kinds of intentional spaces allowed June to fulfill the "community builder" role she identified with: "I gain a lot of satisfaction in making a

'we' among people who have common goals and interests, and work[ing] together through thick and thin."

Considering her time since attending NFC, she shared how she wanted others to know that service could be "an actual career, not just a fun activity." She wanted to come back to talk with students about the "power of organizing" and activism that is not isolated from its historical context. June also wanted there to be more intentional, holistic weaving together of service experiences to make them more meaningful for students. She reflected: "I got so much out of my NFC experience when I was able to tie together my career aspirations, my academic interests, and my extra-curricular engagements. It just means so much more when each part of your life flows into the next." Despite her experience that "no one talks about that," she was able to find it at college.

Figure 12

Emergences in June's Narrative

External context:

-Family, church, and travel initiated civic interests

- Academic classes, mentors, and peer circles supported engagement

-Leadership and internship structures aided growth

Internal context:

-Curiosity of others consistent

-Looked for solutions to social problems in simple ways at first, critical of status quo

-Became more confident with voice, experienced alienation

How one experiences civic commitment-building: Increasingly complex understandings of social issues; Integration of various interests coalesced around one social issue; Desired to bring others on board with what she learned

Jen

Gender, race, student status	Woman, White, Recent Alum
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"facilitator" "bridge"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	TASL
College experiences identified as influential	TASL, Study Abroad, major, community partners, internships, local context

Jen grew up in a small town in a neighboring state to NFC where few people

leave town after graduating high school. She wanted to "do something different," and

attributed that to "always being curious" and having read a lot as a child. She came to

NFC wondering what the off-campus city was like, and that curiosity "kind of turned into

motivation to get involved." During her first year, Jen was "still kind of feeling out

everything…figuring out what exactly I liked and what was going on just in [the

community]." She took a wide variety of classes and read all that was assigned in all of

them. Jen used her curiosity to research topics on her own outside of class if it interested

her. Slowly, these helped her start to "connect the dots to different issues" and she

"landed on food systems" as her main academic focus. Sophomore year was when Jen

started to "expand her horizons" and gained experience in that field with her first service

learning course.

This service learning class started her first collaboration with a local gardening

non-profit that she continued to work with over all four years. "I was super thrilled to

help out… [it] peaked my interest and I started taking more service learning and

community development courses." The overall local environment complemented her

academic interests:

> I would say, just living in [this state], it's hard not to pick up on those undertones
> of communities doing different projects, whether it's community gardening or
> supporting your local farms… and so that [supported] my string of falling into
> different positions that were involved with the local food system.
> Taking other service learning classes with similar food-system foci, and then

seeing a "random" flier in the student center for the opportunity, Jen decided to "travel

abroad [with a program that had] a focus on food systems there." She also had previously

visited family who vacationed in the Latin American country that she wound up going to,

and wanted to "further a relationship and have a different perspective on what life is like

there." Once studying food systems abroad, Jen knew she wanted to continue that work: "…that was kind of hook, line, and sinker." Studying there, "the whole experience was just really impactful to me and I learned a lot about different issues that are very much relevant, even here to us in [our state]."

From abroad, she applied to be a teaching assistant with the same service learning class she had taken previously as a student, and applied to an internship with the same community partner group that focused on gardening. She got both positions. Coming back, Jen "had a lot of motivation and wanted to do something constructive with it." She wanted to share the "energy" she gained with others: "I just wanted to get students to feel more excited, more motivated, and kind of lose that little apathy that some students feel about what's going on outside the [town] or NFC bubble." Jen realized that she was developing a tight network as she progressed with her engagement. Again, the local context seemed to support her work: "…everyone seems to know everyone else and your network just kind of builds… [O]ne relationship turned into many more." She was excited about helping "facilitate some sort of relationship" as a TASL to "generate similar experiences for [my] students."

While in parts of her interview she celebrated how those connections happened almost naturally, it also seemed that, initially, making those connections to others was "intimidating" for Jen. Since she identified as being "more shy than outgoing," and she would be "worried about what their thoughts or emotions are," she relied on her ability to "intuitively pick up on that and see if it's something positive that will turn out." Jen learned over time that, in the NFC's local community "in most cases, [people] are very

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willing to connect with you and help out." As a TASL, Jen enjoyed being "more than just a student" and helping others "think on a broader scale about how certain issues are manifested in their community." Facilitating community connections and educating others on complex systems was a "nice fluid transition" to taking on more, similar community roles.

A consistent value in Jen's life, as evident in her past writing, was building lasting networks and positive relationships among faculty, students, and community partners. The community partners she worked with early on continued to be her go-to organizations—after graduation she still was volunteering at one of them. Jen also maintained a relationship with the faculty member she worked with as a TASL. Looking back, Jen appreciated the consistency: "…it's really cool to see…" She also seemed to have a steady future-orientation, always asking, "What comes next? What is it that's something continually to build on? Whether it's personal or professional life, or combining that." Transitioning from a student to mentoring role, Jen noted how the TASL training provided her skills for lesson planning and "that transition of almost becoming some sort of educator." Jen saw that, through her experiences, "I just started to mature more into the idea of taking more of a leadership role." She could see the "natural progression" out of school into her first job, where she was using community networks locally to educate others about food systems—an extension of a summer internship experience. She hoped to stay in the state "long term" to continue similar work: "…it's unfolding."

Figure 13

Emergences in Jen's Narrative

External context:

-SL class in college as first exposure

-Classes, studying abroad, mentorship structures supported interests

-Felt like joining a network, with larger NFC community

Internal context:

-Desired to explore and follow curiosity

- Learned skills for working in collaboration with communities, transferred them to other actions

-Found purpose using strengths and pushing self out of comfort zone

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Initial structured exposure to SL; Saw connections across involvement and found consistent engagement with social issue; Learned to think more broadly and act more collaboratively about a social issue; Future orientation helped build consistency in community work

Joe

Gender, race, student status	Man, White, Recent Alum
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"passionate community member"
SL experience(s) that qualified him for study	SLRLC
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, faculty advisor, major, internship

Joe described having a big vision for how he wanted to impact his communities, and focused on one major issue area across his engagement: how climate change impacts people. His journey started at his "progressive high school." It was a private school that Joe looked back on as a place that "promoted critical thinking," "self-motivated learning," and collaboration with the teachers that encouraged him to think about himself "as a community member… on a global scale." He started to learn about climate change in his classes, and chose that as his topic for an independent research project. With the support of an advisor, he was pushed to "really understand it, not just on a superficial level, but really try to grapple" with the ideas. His two trips (during and after high school) to a country in Southeast Asia happened thanks to "supportive parents" who gave him the "privilege" to go abroad and had friends who could host Joe.

Those trips were formative: Joe saw the "human side" of climate change when he met and interviewed people displaced by rising sea levels. This added "urgency" to Joe's interest and he developed "passion" for making change. His college application essay described a catalyst moment where he promised to bring blankets to a family he met living in a slum, but was unable to deliver them. This small-scale experience of his behaviors impacting others opened his eyes to connections to "my behavior, and the world system" and others' "suffering." It "weighed deep." Joe decided he wanted to start a non-profit agency in a country in Southeast Asia to "facilitate humans [having] greater well-being, which would benefit natural systems." In particular, he saw during his travels how he was approaching a very "dense issue" and he needed to have a focus. Education seemed like a good angle to approach the many issues related to inequality and human

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displacement, he decided, and planned to start this venture during college. This motivation shaped how he approached his time at NFC.

When I asked him about his motivation outside of this specific issue-area, Joe described another influential factor: he grew up with the awareness that he was the only child of his mom, born prematurely and whose survival was due to healthcare access afforded to his family's "privilege and wealth." He felt "pushed to do things to feel exceptional." At the same time, he consistently talked about a steady moral motivation to "take responsibility for humanity." From these complex drives, he felt passionately about starting an organization to get started helping others right out of high school.

Others doubted him. An NFC professor told him to wait until he had his undergraduate degree first. An older family member said he'd get distracted by trying to have a social life outside of classes. Aid workers he met on his travels were skeptical of his youth and shared a "jaded" perspective on change-making. Joe found these discouraging at the time, although looking back he reflected: these doubts were "right." Joe set himself up for starting his organization by joining the SLRLC and choosing a community development major.

The SLRLC service learning seminar "structure" in the first year proved helpful for Joe. He described how it "gave me tools that I needed to think about engaging my community and peers, but it was also… like, 'No, no, no, you can't just do what you want to do. You have to think about broader issues.'" Learning about his own social identities helped him see "it wasn't all about me and my organization, obviously. It… forced me to broaden my perspective." He began to "grapple" with why he was motivated to do the

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work in the first place: "... it's not the white man's burden. You can make a lot of jokes about that, because I am a white man..." Joe's writing about his values helped him clarify that he felt a responsibility to mitigate suffering that he saw caused by his actions, and from which he benefitted: "It's a moral thing."

From a place of privilege, he felt a sense of responsibility that "any energy I put into the world should be to spread that [privilege] around, more or less." Joining the "development dialogue," he clarified that he didn't want to be "saving" others, but rather addressing: "You are who you are and everyone else is who they are, but what are you going to do in this world?" This led him to consider why he wanted to do his work abroad instead of locally. Conversations with a family member and an SLRLC project with new Americans in the community surrounding NFC "gave me some critical perspective" that led him to be more "reflective" in his non-profit building mission.

The second year SLRLC independent leadership project provided further support for Joe's thinking and actions in communities: it "really set me up for the future." Specifically, the requirements of the program "pushed me to do stuff I didn't necessarily want to do" and also provided the "institutional support to do something I don't think I could have done otherwise." Joe hosted a student research summit on the impact of climate change on humans, collaborating with peers and faculty to plan and deliver the project. "That was hard," he remembered, but it was a "good container" that had the "physical environment," "theoretical," and financial support he needed. Joe seemed to grow as a leader from that experience, and the lessons he learned, explained below, were

connected to the processes of working with different groups of people: peers, staff, and faculty.

Among his peers, he recruited a planning committee of other students "really passionate about helping me do what I wanted to do but also kind of bringing their own thoughts." Joe started their regular meetings by presenting knowledge to them from his expertise and interests. He reached out for feedback from a fellow SLRLC peer in the group, and she let him know that his language choices exuded "male privilege" and that he should let others share their interests more. Joe wanted to improve, and appreciated this: "[She] was really important at just… looking at how I was a leader or trying to be a leader." He changed the meetings to include more voices.

Three SLRLC staff members supported Joe's work with his project and the shift to more collaborative work. He described how they "brought in the human element" and helped him "see the relationships" theoretically among education, social work, policy work, and people, although this "took me a couple years to… work that through my head." More immediately, in the SLRLC class at the time, it got him thinking, "How do you work with people?" In particular, he "started to think about how to structure meetings. I know that sounds dry…but it literally allowed me to figure out how to run a meeting, how to be a leader." Staff helped him with developing his organization's website and applying for 501c3 status. Theoretically, logistically and practically, staff mentorship supported Joe's leadership development.

Joe also found a faculty mentor through the SLRLC project process. He invited a professor from his department who was a subject-area expert and mostly taught graduate-

level classes to be the keynote speaker: "That actually facilitated [our] relationship that has lasted for many years… and it really has opened my eyes and opened doors." Joe got to know this professor, who introduced him to thinking in complex systems and "[getting] involved at the policy level." Again, Joe's thinking was "broadened" by this influential relationship. He later did independent research around climate change and human displacement internationally with this professor, and most recently Joe was considering a master's program with him as the advisor.

In his third year Joe knit his interests more into his academic work with this faculty member, but his plans to continue working with his peers on another research summit fizzled: "None of them took off because I kind of got distracted…it didn't really take hold." Classes in education and economics and an internship doing state-wide research on climate change with his faculty mentor brought him through his senior year. After graduating, he was thinking about a master's program that could run in tandem with getting grants for his organization to become active, or becoming a professor or lawyer and partnering the academy with community engagement abroad. Joe summarized his pursuits, with a laugh, as, "saving the world." Joe also spoke seriously about "fulfilling my dream" of becoming part of climate negotiations, and getting non-profits at the international table that's making those decisions "before the window [of opportunity for change] closes."

In the midst of talking about specific plans, Joe seemed conflicted about what would come next:

> …I went to college, I did what the professor told me. I got all these, in theory, technical skills… but still, sometimes, I overthink, and I'm like, 'Well, I don't
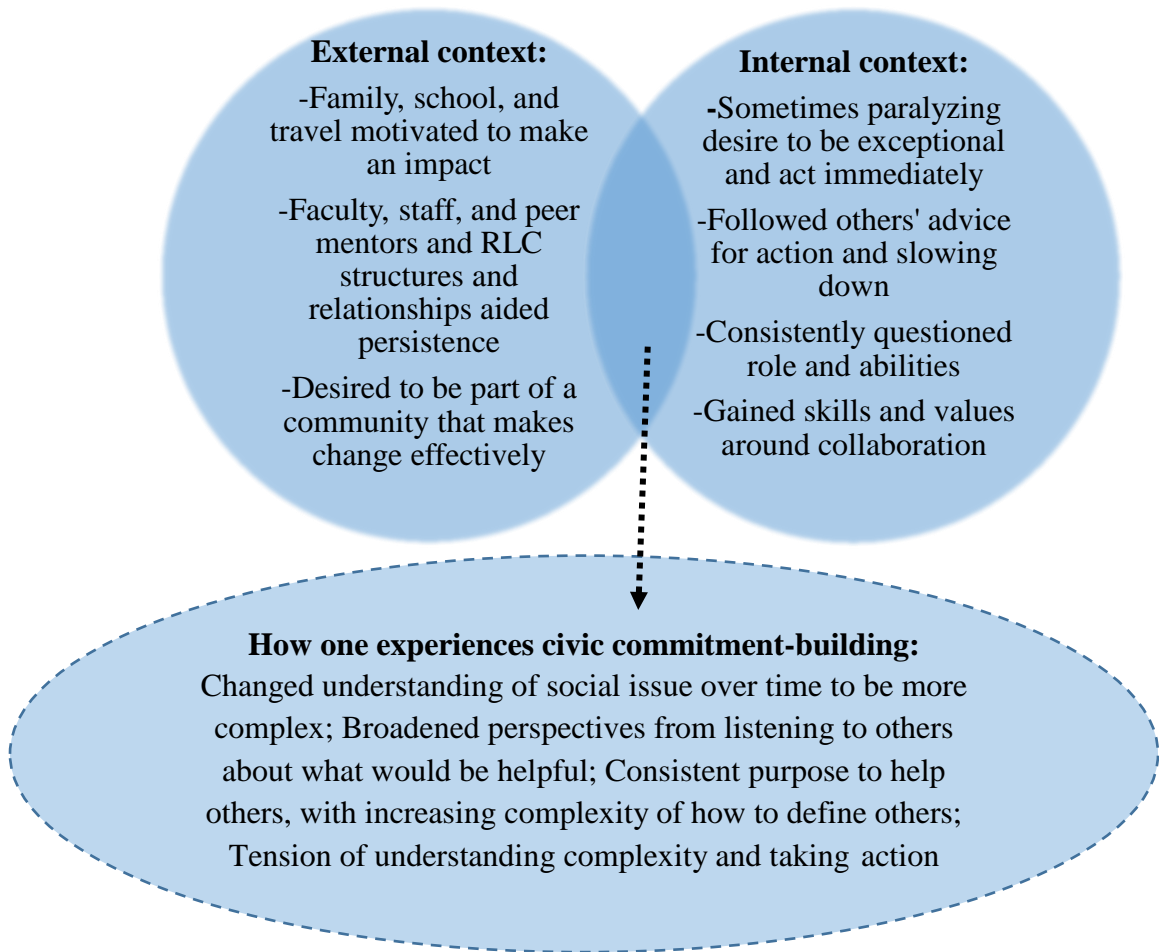
really know what I'm doing.' And I don't. No one does. So sometimes, of recent, I've felt this motivation to do something, but I kind of get overwhelmed by the fact that I'm not an expert in the field… Why me? I'm not special… maybe I'm okay at speaking, writing… and I've been passionate about it for a long, long, long, long time—but does that make me any more unique than anyone else?

He questioned that, and at the same time, answered his own question: "Yes… that *is* something." Joe recognized that he sometimes feels "paralyzed" between feeling extraordinary and especially suited for taking action, and feeling unqualified and unsuccessful compared to others. He thinks that conflict might continue "until it's like two or three years into being established." In our conversation, he recognized that that feeling might persist as long as he keeps challenging himself.

Looking back at college via his writings, Joe saw that he got better at "the human element" of creating change, and, in particular, "helping others participate" instead of taking charge on his own. He mentioned how he thought he should be sharing his experiences in a "linear" way, but that wasn't how he experienced them. Joe also reflected that he had "never really thought about how guilt played a role…" in his early motivation for social action and that it sounded like it had. His beliefs in "universalism" and thinking globally as a "humanitarian" were steady, too, though. He questioned, "[W]hat is really pushing me?" He acknowledged that "It's something to think about… I don't think I have figured that one out." At the same time, he stated, "Okay, I'm still going to go for it."

Figure 14

Emergences in Joe's Narrative

External context:

-Family, school, and travel motivated to make an impact

-Faculty, staff, and peer mentors and RLC structures and relationships aided persistence

-Desired to be part of a community that makes change effectively

Internal context:

-Sometimes paralyzing desire to be exceptional and act immediately

-Followed others' advice for action and slowing down

-Consistently questioned role and abilities

-Gained skills and values around collaboration

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Changed understanding of social issue over time to be more complex; Broadened perspectives from listening to others about what would be helpful; Consistent purpose to help others, with increasing complexity of how to define others; Tension of understanding complexity and taking action

Moe

Gender, race, student status	Man, White, College Senior
Self-identified word/phrase that captures role in communities	"communicator"
SL experience(s) that qualified her for study	SLRLC
College experiences identified as influential	SLRLC, internship, RA, research, other RLCs

Moe's engagement focused on education from the beginning. He tracked his origin to wanting to be a "communicator" within his communities to his experience of being a student in a special education program in elementary school in his "pretty rural, small, relatively conservative town" in the same state as NFC. Among the students in his cohort, he recognized that he "had parents who cared, and that was not a universal thing." During a service experience as a first year high school student, Moe worked with a young reading buddy with special needs. This mentee predicted that he (the mentee) would end up in prison: "That was the moment I realized that kids know… they know what's going on in their environment and whether they have advocates. That was just like, yeah, I couldn't not want to continue that work." When he became part of the mainstreamed student population in high school, he heard his friends in the special education program struggling. He heard them and shared their issues with teachers and the school board: "I felt like I owed it to them because I was given the privilege to have advocates. So I … needed to be their advocate." He had the "opportunity to speak outside of special ed[ucation] but from a place of understanding" due to his former insider status.

With this motivation, Moe became his town's student representative on the school board. A local nonprofit group recruited him to train him on taking leadership to make education more inclusive by including student voices, and with their help he "learned what it really meant to listen, be effective at speaking, how to communicate ideas…" Moe noted that he was still learning how to do this, while he was taking action imperfectly. He recognized that, along with his positive action he was still "making mistakes, but that's just how it is."

Moe chose NFC because of the SLRLC. "I wanted to be part of a group… of people who really had a sense of meaning and focused on wanting to address a bunch of different issues in the community." More broadly, Moe also "just want[ed] to learn a lot… to be exposed to some different folks with different passions and different ideas." He thought he wanted to do something in educational policy, but didn't know "what it would end up looking like or what area specifically," and chose political science and history majors.

In his first year at NFC Moe took part in various one-time service projects organized by the SLRLC, and decided that he wanted to join the student government. This was intriguing for him because he wanted to see how policies arose in relation to "where the people are coming from," and, from a "community service point of view," to take part in initiatives that were "there to help out." This led to a summer internship with the state department of education, where he could do research back in his hometown, and learn about policy at a different level, off-campus. This was the beginning of enacting his vision to learn about education policy creation at as many levels as possible, from the classroom to the national level, and all places in between. Within each level he learned about, he felt a driving curiosity to understand: How did policy get made? What's needed? What's the interpersonal and legislative process?

Moe took on leadership roles within NFC. He continued serving as an SGA senator, became a Resident Assistant, and created a new student-led program nested within another RLC with other SLRLC members. He also became a teaching assistant and experienced being an educator inside a classroom. Across these experiences, Moe

reflected that his confidence increased around speaking publically. He also appreciated that he became more culturally competent through classes and trainings where he learned different, marginalized perspectives, and "[got] called out when I [said] something wrong." Moe continued to seek opportunities at different levels of education, and interned in one of his Senator's offices over the summer. He felt the most successful in this role during a culminating citizenship ceremony where he felt the "excitement and enthusiasm" of many people who worked together to reach a common goal.

This internship led Moe to an internship in a national government office in the Capital in the fall of his senior year. This influential experience exposed Moe to new things, and brought many questions to the surface. Facing complex problems like incarcerated youth, veteran care, and affordable housing, Moe asked: "'What can I do as an outsider?'… how can I help a community and… also be respectful of that? It's ultimately not mine… Should I be helping? Should I not be helping?" Overall, Moe described his challenge of choosing the scope and scale at which to try to make change, and at what level he should focus:

> So, I think the biggest struggle I'm always thinking in my mind is how to not get discouraged about not being able to change a whole…Twain said that change ultimately happens on the edges, with people and with conversations, and I think more and more I'm realizing that. It really is the small interactions every day, and… with small acts of kindness, of support, of standing up for people. And that systematic changes reached through that….I think a lot about that.

Moe provided three stories of individuals encouraging and enacting change at the smaller scale, local level that he encountered while at the national level, and how each inspired him to think about "going home" to do good community work. He spoke of people trying to do work at any of the "many different levels" at which change happens

and "getting discouraged" when they are not sure if their contribution has an impact, which sounded like a struggle to which he could relate. He identified part of his community work as letting people know *their* small actions mattered, recognizing others' potential as advocates for their communities, and helping amplify others' voices.
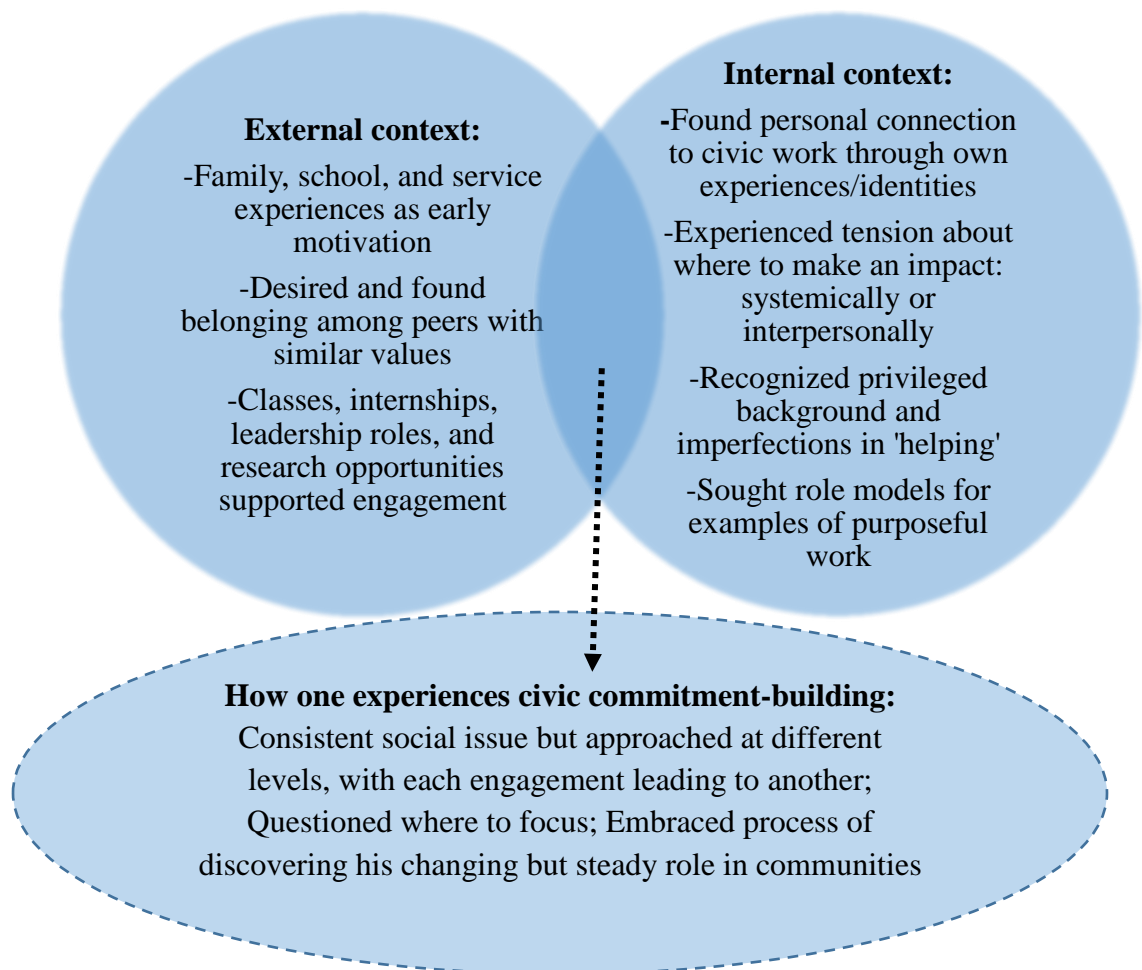
Seeing the power of smaller, one-on-one interactions helped Moe see the kind of "active member of communities" he wanted to be. Moe reflected that he tries to stick with the basics: "Never assume anything about anyone and give everyone the same level of attention and respect" even when they have different perspectives. Being honest as a communicator to communities, such as "…recognizing when you don't have a solution, owning that, being real," when holding power seemed important, too, especially when there are no easy answers. Seeking a place of common ground and mutual understanding through a "strengths-based" perspective was another strategy Moe found useful for connecting with others to make positive change together.

Reviewing his earlier writings, Moe saw that he was trying to "prove" that service was "important to me" in his application. He appreciated his tone: "I think to want to do this work you have to be a bit naïve." He reflected on his current beliefs that a community-service orientation is less about activities you do and is "…just part of you. I think I've realized that more and more." Similarly, across the years, he saw his difficulty with saying 'no' when he was not the best fit for a leadership role. Something that he identified as a "big change" was his ability to not "shy away" or feel intimidated to stand up "for something that's important to me."

Looking ahead, Moe wanted to continue the challenge of "…defining for myself what an impactful life looks like." He was asking the questions of whether it would be best to take more positional leadership roles at higher levels and bigger scales, or more interpersonal, locally-focused roles that had direct results from "small interactions every day." Appropriately, he felt pulled between his two job choices post-graduation— to be a classroom teacher or work with a political campaign.

Figure 15

Emergences in Moe's Narrative

External context:

-Family, school, and service experiences as early motivation

-Desired and found belonging among peers with similar values

-Classes, internships, leadership roles, and research opportunities supported engagement

Internal context:

-Found personal connection to civic work through own experiences/identities

-Experienced tension about where to make an impact: systemically or interpersonally

-Recognized privileged background and imperfections in 'helping'

-Sought role models for examples of purposeful work

How one experiences civic commitment-building:
Consistent social issue but approached at different levels, with each engagement leading to another; Questioned where to focus; Embraced process of discovering his changing but steady role in communities

Conclusion

In Chapter Four I explored the twelve participants' narratives using holistic-content analysis. I addressed my research question about what aspects of engaged students' lived experiences they saw as being influential in shaping their work as committed citizens. My narrative inquiry and document analysis methodologies also invited participants to share their internal meaning-making, along with the externally provided structures, that formed their experiences impacting their civic lives. Keeping the narratives together, at least at first, helped me, and hopefully readers, see the many intersecting types and complex levels of influence that participants attributed as significant along their paths. Some of these influences came through in the introductory charts of each participant, some via specific stories within students' narratives, and others in participants' broad attributions.

I noted the overlapping motivations, experiences, identities, processes, and challenges that I noticed arising for each participant in the figures I created, based on my conceptual framework, at the end of each narrative. In the process of developing the personal narratives and each participant's connections to external contexts, internal contexts, and experiences of the process of civic commitment building, I began to play with how the stories related to each other and how these patterns of relations addressed my remaining research questions. The twelve narratives individually started to show patterns and divergences among the students' experiences in developing a commitment to the public good. Chapter Five's cross-case analysis develops my perspective on what I

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learned and think others can take from listening to these participants' experiences

together.

CHAPTER FIVE: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

Cross-case analysis allows the researcher to look beyond each participant's story as a singular case, and become curious about the convergences and divergences across individuals' experiences within the group. In this chapter, I describe what emerged in my thinking as I analyzed the participants' stories collectively. Student experiences captured in this study bolstered and fleshed out descriptions of civic commitment development as social and cognitive processes related to increased practice of community work, in which structured reflection and support developed their interests (Knefelkamp, 2008). Participants' narratives provide a holistic view into how those processes unfolded together in a developmental manner, under-examined by other research (Miller et al., 2009).

I use the image of a river to describe the themes I noticed and how the themes related to participants' experiences of civic commitment development, my research questions, and the existing literature that frames this study. The river image is useful for three reasons. First, the image helps structure my writing. It provides organization for discussing the themes and subthemes that emerged from my analysis, and the image gives a clarifying visual for how I see the concepts relating to each other. The image is also useful because it shares metaphorical meaning: A river– flowing, though sometimes impeded, and responsive to the larger ecosystem of which it is a part– is a good representation of how I have come to see civic commitment developing in the lives of many of the participants of this study. As such, I use metaphorical language related to the

flow of a river to share the meaning I made from the data, such as currents, waves, and banks– language that relates well to the concepts it describes. Third, a river image is appropriate because many participants used language related to water in their interviews to describe their community experiences. For example, June described "dipping [her] toes" in many pools as a description of trying out many service learning opportunities in college, and Jen saw "ripples" of impact with one connection to the next as she built a community network.

In this chapter I share description, analysis, and interpretation of my data through a guiding image (Figure 16). I briefly describe each part, conceptually, defining the themes I identified ('currents') and elements ('flows') I saw taking place within the themes in a cyclical way. I show how these concepts connect to each other (in 'waves'), the clusters in which students experienced the themes. I illustrate these by sharing the participants' data from which the themes and their elements emerged. In my descriptions and analysis, I illustrate how the themes and elements expressed themselves differently and similarly across cases. I discuss how participants experienced those themes and elements in the contexts of participants' internal development and external environments ('banks' with 'features'), and how the findings connect to existing literature and my research questions.

While the different currents, flows, waves, and banks are most interesting, useful, and connected to students' experiences when considered together, I separate each at first as if it existed distinctively from the others. This is for the sake of clarity and to share directly the specific parts of the students' voices and stories that led to the generation of

Figure 16

College Student Civic Commitment Development: Processes and Contexts
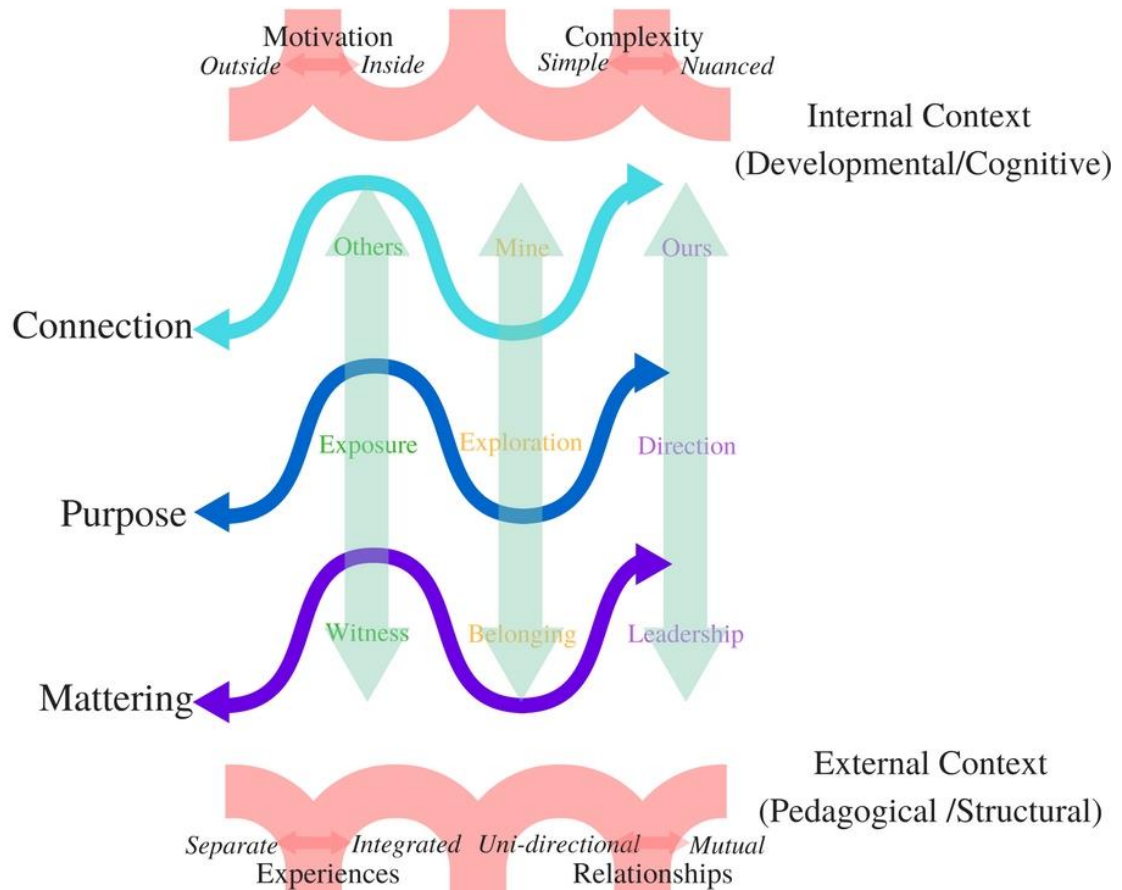
those general themes and elements in my thinking. While I pull them apart in early parts of the chapter, I bring them back together as I go, to illustrate more genuinely how they showed up in the lived experiences of the participants.

Defining Processes and Contexts

How do college students become committed to creating social change? I identified three themes from students' stories that shed light on that process as experienced by this study's participants. These three themes contain the aspects I found

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most significant across their journeys in becoming committed to consistently caring and acting for the public good. Three themes, or 'currents,' that emerged are Connection, Purpose, and Mattering. Participants' journeys in civic commitment involved making sense of themselves in these three areas: making sense of their *connection* to how community work gets accomplished, their *purpose* in terms of acting for the greater good, and their sense of *mattering* among others within communities. Within each of these currents, a dynamic cycle of three elements, or 'flows,' occurred repeatedly and not necessarily sequentially or separately. The twelve journeys of civic commitment development I explored, while individually unique as you read in Chapter Four, all seemed to deal with these themes and elements within their evolving experiences of civic commitment-making.

   Three currents: Connection, purpose, mattering. Here I briefly preview each of the currents, before I go into more detail and provide examples of students' experiences within the currents/processes in the following section. Describing these currents and the flows within them helps address one of the research sub-questions: *How do pedagogical experiences and developmental factors shape committed students' paths to caring and acting for the public good?* In short, I saw pedagogical and developmental factors support civic commitment by providing arenas and tools for students to progress their experiences and conceptions of connection, purpose, and mattering. I identify the components of the three currents, ushered along by pedagogical and developmental forces, that shaped students' paths to acting and caring for the public good.

The Connection process describes how students came to understand their relationships with civically engaged groups and individuals and, for some, the perceived beneficiaries of civic engagement. Growth in this current seemed to deal with conceptions of ownership. In the Connection current, participants experienced flows that I call *Others*, *Mine*, and *Ours*—different understandings of and perspectives on the connections between participants and their communities.

The Purpose current's cycle flowed among *Exposure*, *Exploration*, and *Direction*. These describe how students approached taking action and focused their engagement. In the exposure flow, participants got introduced to civic engagement opportunities through various means. That exposure often sparked interest that led to more intentional exploration of various options for engagement, and that could lead to a sense of direction and a specific path forward for their role in communities.

Building a sense of Mattering also factored in heavily to shaping how participants came to feel committed to creating social change. How participants related to their immediate peer groups in general influenced their civic identities in significant ways. The ways they related to these groups seemed to cycle among flows of *Witness*, *Belonging*, *Leadership*. Each flow in Mattering's current addresses how a student related to others interpersonally.

Waves of experiences: Processes of development. The flows identified in Figure 16 relate to each other in at least two ways. As I described above, there is a cycle of three flows *within* each current/theme. The flows also related to each other across currents. In students' experiences, these three themes were constantly interacting with

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each other. In that interaction, certain flows clustered together across currents into 'waves.' These waves (*A, B*, and *C*) occurred, at least initially, in developmentally progressive patterns.

The waves connect flows that bear common elements across the currents and seem to be clustered together within participants' experiences of changing identities within their communities, moving them towards commitment. Wave A includes the flows of Others, Exposure, and Witness; Wave B has the flows of Mine, Exploration, and Belonging; and Wave C encompasses the flows of Ours, Direction, and Leadership. They are wrapped in the contexts of their changing external, pedagogical experiences and relationships, and internal, cognitive and moral development—elements infused in the examples and descriptions of students voices in the following section. I summarize the currents, flows, and how they relate to each other (in waves) in Table 2, below.

Banks: Internal and external contexts of development. The currents and flows I identified take place for participants in the shifting contexts of their internal and external circumstances. These contexts are the two sets of 'banks,' the upper and lower boundaries in Visual 16. The two 'banks' of the river are the internal (personal, developmental) and external (social and experiential) environments. In my theoretical framework I identified these as the areas I wanted to pay attention to in my data collection and analysis, and doing so proved useful. Describing and analyzing these contexts helps me address the research question: *How have change-making students made sense of their influential experiences, at different times and cumulatively, when it comes to defining and constructing who they are, and who they are in their communities?*

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Table 2

Processes of College Student Development of Civic Commitment: Waves and Currents'
Relationships

		WAVES		
		A	**B**	**C**
CURRENTS	*Connection*	**Others** View that social change is created by other people or groups, not self.	**Mine** Personal sense of ownership over creating social change.	**Ours** Shared sense of community ownership of creating social change.
	Purpose	**Exposure** Exposed to civic actions in one-time opportunities, by chance or through encouragement from others.	**Exploration** Expanding and/or deepening engagement, with some self-initiation.	**Direction** Intentional focus to make social change in a certain manner or within a particular social issue, largely self-led.
	Mattering	**Witness** Aware of communities that derive meaning from shared values and practices of social change.	**Belonging** Membership and feeling at home among communities built around creating social change**.**	**Leadership** Gathering and welcoming others into communities that create social change.

I identified two important features of the internal growth and development of

students (the upper bank in Figure 16): changing motivations morally and socially, and

levels of complexity in thinking and understanding. This bank is useful for showing the

ways students approach their work from their changing developmental capacities—a

constant influence on how they approached their experiences and relationships with their

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communities. Because these internal, developmental contexts were ever-changing, individual participants could experience currents in different ways across time.

The external, experiential bank (the lower bank in Figure 16) has two main features: experiences within communities, and relationships with others. I use this bank to describe the structures and environments students identified as influential in their paths, that provided the contexts for their changing cognitive development and civic commitment-making. When I describe this bank, it further addresses my research question that I largely covered in Chapter Four: *What aspects of engaged students' lived experiences do they see as being influential in shaping their identities as engaged community members?*

At the start of each participant's narrative in Chapter Four I included a chart that identified the specific pedagogical experiences they brought up in their interviews. I progress from those cursory lists of experiences to talk about the meaning-making and relationships those experiences fostered that were common across participants at different points in their development. I will share participants' stories and voices to show how these external, social, and experiential contexts influenced civic commitment making among the study's college students. Table 3 previews how I saw students' increased sophistication in thinking and relating to themselves and others as the contexts of their civic commitment development.

In this introduction, I identified the river metaphor that provides the map for my data analysis. I identified the different processes and contexts that changed, in a developmental manner, within students' experiences as they moved toward civic

Table 3

Contexts of College Student Development of Civic Commitment: Shifting Banks

BANKS OF DEVELOP-MENT			
	Internal Contexts	**Motivation**	**Outside** Authority of others guides motivation to engage civically
			Inside Inner voice and internal authority guides motivation to engage civically
		Complexity	**Simple** Dualistic thinking with easy answers guides understanding of self, others, and community
			Nuanced Increasingly complex thinking guides understanding of self, others, and community
	External Contexts	**Experiences**	**Separate** Each involvement seen as distinct from other areas of engagement and ones' identity
			Integrated Different engagement areas understood in the contexts of other engagement areas and of a whole self
		Relationships	**Uni-directional** Beneficiary of relationships seen as mostly one party or another
			Mutual Reciprocity seen as key feature of relationships

commitment. Using Figure 16 of the river, I illustrated the relationships I found across those elements and how they fit together in students' lives. I also defined and briefly described the kinds of growth I saw within those elements using Tables 2 and 3. In the rest of this chapter, I provide rich descriptions and connections to the literature that inform and substantiate these models. In doing so, I describe the developmental trends that I saw across my college student participants as they grew as civically committed change-makers. I use isolated parts of the river image (Figure 16) as a guide.

Students' Civic Commitment Making: Processes in Contexts

In this section, I connect students' voices and stories from their interviews and writings to related existing literature and my theoretical models. Using Visual 16, I organize the data analysis by three waves, or sets of processes, as indicated by the three vertical arrows across the currents. Within each wave, I discuss how a flow within each current showed up across different participants. I conclude with describing the banks and how pedagogical and developmental features provide the contexts in which the processes of civic commitment-making take place.

Wave A: Others, Exposure, Witness

In this wave, participants experienced flows of seeing and understanding others as being most connected to creating social change, getting exposure to civic participation as outsiders, and witnessing communities formed through shared values and civic actions. In Figure 17 below, it is the Wave highlighted within the wide, vertical arrow.

Connection: Others. All participants talked about others they saw taking civic actions in their narratives of civic commitment. Other peoples' lives were answering their largely unarticulated questions: What does an active citizen look like? Who is an active citizen? 'Someone else' was a resounding answer that came out in the data, at some point in most participants' journeys, even as they started taking actions and caring about their communities individually, too.

Early on, civically engaged individuals, in the eyes of the participants, were not part of their peer social spheres—mostly parents and family members. Seeing others engage civically provided individual role models and expectations, formally or informally, for becoming community members. For example, Ashley's dad was "super-

Figure 17

Wave A: Others, Exposure, Witness
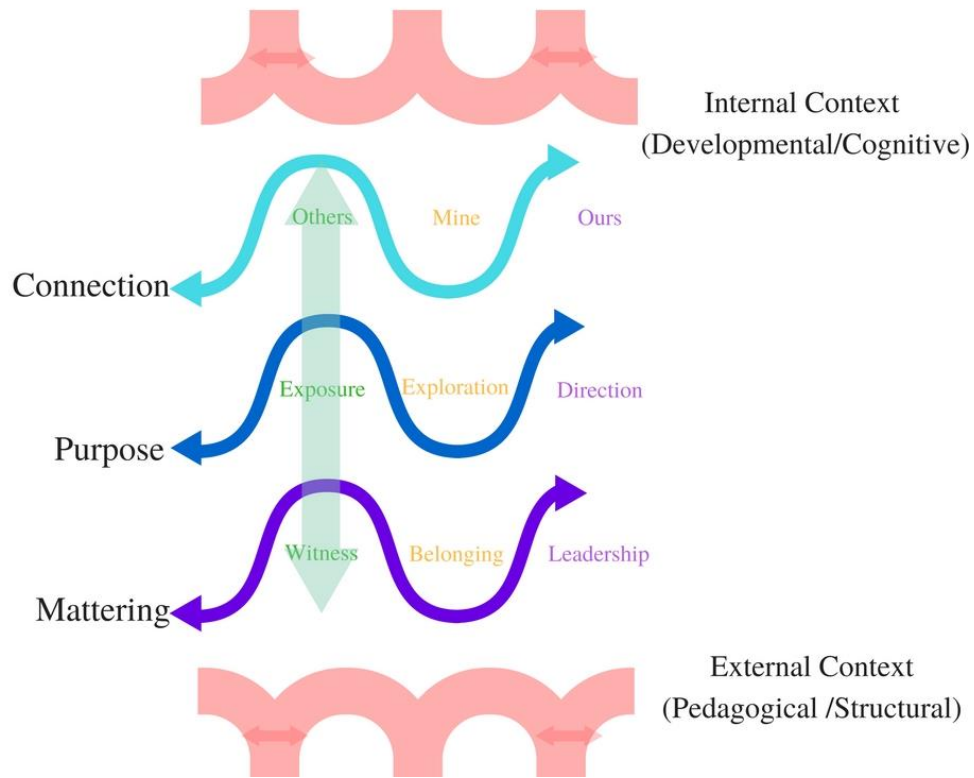
involved in different stuff… I think I just grew up seeing him do all this stuff like volunteering and being involved" and assumed, "'Oh, that's what people do.'" Moe identified his parents as "advocates," June was "brought up in [the] tradition of service" of her family's church leadership, and Sami's mom was "very involved" as a volunteer and board member of non-profits. Joe saw family friends doing development work abroad and, witnessing the impact of those working and accepted as experts, became inspired to become part of that. This early type of inspiration was similar to that reflected

in quantitative literature: parental engagement predicted higher rates of engagement of civic work in youth (Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003).

As participants joined "them," the others who were into community engagement, they became members and participants of the work. However, involvement often started as someone else's 'thing.' If they joined, many felt only temporarily part of the action, as an outsider. Sami noted how her mom would "pull me along" to the community volunteering. When Mia started volunteering at a hospital, she "hated it" at first. June liked community service, but planned to "just do a little volunteering on the side" at college. Initially, watching others and not identifying with those who were civically engaged still provided an entry point into civic commitment for those in this study. Jones and Abes (2004) found that external motivations were common among college students first getting involved in civic engagement. In developmental literature, this kind of others-led initiation into service shows thinking that relies on others, outside the self as the authority, instead of using internally-sourced guidance. King and Kitchener's (1994) reflective judgement model would describe this kind of part of pre-reflective thinking, with similar characteristics with received knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986), and the phase of following external formulas (Kegan, 1994).

Seeing others do work that they were not part of, and feeling and acknowledging themselves on the outside of that work, continued beyond the initial, introductory experiences of 'other' had by most participants. This 'outsider' perspective stayed with several participants and served to inform their changing approaches to community work.

In particular, Moe and Ashley seemed to learn from observing others throughout their civic experiences.

Moe told stories of seeing others do what he had not imagined doing in his community, but then wanting to follow in their footsteps, all throughout his civic journey. Early on he experienced his parents advocating for him, and seeing the personal benefits he reaped from their advocacy made him feel like "I needed to be [an] advocate" for others. It kept happening: Moe saw a fellow political intern have a conversation with a homeless veteran instead of walking by dismissively and appreciated the listening approach, taking a lesson that shaped his conception of what "being an active member of a community really is." He found these exemplar 'others' at all levels—politicians, peers, mentees, Deans. Moe kept open to seeing people he came to admire doing work he wasn't doing and adding it to his repertoire of options for thinking and acting.

Ashley also looked at learning from others as a continuous part of her civic journey. She looked back at her writing and noticed how she thought, before college, that all you needed was good intentions to make a change. Over time she realized that awareness of others was an important, complicating factor in making real change. At the time of the interview, she reflected, "I think it's a lot about how important each interpersonal relationship is." She named how important it was "to seek first to understand, not to be understood," and that she learned and grew from "working with different types of people." Recognizing that not all folks thought and experienced life like her, that her perspective was unique to her background, and that her experiences were not universal were growth areas for Ashley, spurred on by seeing and appreciating others as

distinct from herself. Seeing others doing community work, either at the start of initial community engagement or while already engaged, played a significant part in forming many participants' journeys of civic commitment-making. Service learning literature purports those as some of the reasons it is an effective pedagogy— it puts students in community contexts where they can learn from those different from themselves (Rockquemore & Harwell, 2000) and gain outside of class conversations and coaching from others (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Keen & Hall, 2009). This also showed that these students' development occurred in a broad community context, surrounded by a wide array of relational influences, affirming developmental models that stress the social context of individuals as influential to growth and learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Dewey, 1916; Knefelkamp, 2008; Parks, 2011).

Purpose: Exposure. Many gain exposure to what will eventually feel purposeful before college through structures in the family, school, and religious settings—where all they had to do was show up. Early on this looked like parents who set expectations for involvement, high school structures and requirements, and/or faith community rituals and values. Exposure to new aspects of community engagement, within the familiar or unfamiliar, continued to happen later in college as participants found a more specific or changing purpose for their civic commitments.

From early involvement, before participants were making independent decisions, some participants, including Annie, Vale, and Sarah, felt like they were "always" engaged. In the family and faith community she grew up in, Annie saw others consistently helping and early exposure had her feeling like involvement was a given.

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Being part of Annie's youth group meant being "involved" in service projects. She grew

up "with the idea that…if you're not doing something, you're not doing enough." Vale's

family also was "dedicated towards being able to help others that needed it." Sarah

helped others around her, too, and due to the expectations around her she felt, simply,

"This is what you should be doing." Given a family commitment, they got thrown in to

civic engagement practices without opting in at first. Civic engagement literature reports

the positive correlation between parental engagement (Zaff, et al., 2003) and religious

upbringings (Bekkers, 2005). These participants' experiences suggest that social pressure

from these groups, paired with the developmental readiness to follow plans set by others

(Kegan, 1994; King & Kitchner, 1994; Baxter Magolda, 2008), combine to make early

environments and expectations influential in students' civic involvement.

Outside the family, faith community or high school-facilitated service experiences

were emphasized by many participants as important starting places in their journeys.

Before it was a personal or purposeful choice, independently sought out or critically

examined, exposure to volunteering often occurred in structured programs. For some it

was integrated into the high school experience, like Sarah and Joe where their schools'

curricula involved intensive civic engagement. For others like Vale, Annie, and Ashley,

co-curricular service clubs like Key Club provided leadership opportunities and good

friends, often using a charity-based framework. For Anna, her church had a structure for

coming of age that involved shadowing several adults she admired. One of them brought

her to an "exciting" peace rally and sparked her interest in being a community leader:

"there was a lot of energy there." Pre-college church and school organizational structures

for getting involved provided initial exposure to civic work for many. Indeed, high school exposure increased college student likelihood to get involved in service programs (AAC&U, 2012; Weetz & Cabrera, 2015), and connections with faith communities also helped (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Bekkers, 2005). While literature emphasizes how the values instilled by these programs are significant, it also seemed that the structures of the service programs associated with those groups mattered for helping students try things out.

Experiences of travel before college also provided a useful backdrop for learning about others who are different, a vital piece of community engagement. Traveling led June and Jen to feel a general "curiosity" about others, and Joe and Anna also saw different worlds and wanted to be of service. For some folks, this exposure, by travel or otherwise, led to chance, critical moments of inspiration. Joe experienced and wrote about a key "catalyst" moment while abroad that left him with a strong desire to "try to facilitate…greater well-being" for others, even if he didn't know exactly how it would play out. When Moe volunteered as a mentor in high school for a younger mentee who expected to be in prison later in life, he felt inspired—"I couldn't not want to continue that work." Early interpersonal encounters helped some participants develop personal connection to their community work—a key motivation and outcome of service learning experiences (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Support from family, through finances or expectations, helped create contexts in which those moments could occur for some participants. Civic habits in youth tended to persist into later life stages (Amnå, 2009), and the personal connections students made might be a reason why this is the case.

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While specific pre-college moments stood out for some, for most of those with notable pre-college experiences, it was the overall feelings that seemed to stick with them from their initial encounters of community engagement: June said it "feels good." Annie realized she liked "joining" things in general. Mia remembered enjoying feeling "vaguely helpful" and described it as "cool." Ashley recalled that she "really liked" her initial engagement, finding satisfaction in "just the act of being involved and making a difference." These kinds of interactions felt good for these participants for various reasons, like being near others who they found friendly and shared their values, others expressing their gratitude for their work, seeing how others found meaning acting on what they cared about, and the work itself being fun. The feelings were positive enough to lead to interest and initiative for future exploration, more driven by themselves. An emotional connection to community work has been cited as an important step to caring for others (Gilligan, 1982). Early in engagement, for these participants, an important emotional experience that motivated them to return to the work was simply to enjoy it. Chesbrough (2009) talks about how one-time service events, many of the participants' first exposure to service, while often lacking many of the best practices of service learning, can be a good first step to spark students' curiosity about social change work and lead to their deeper engagement in the future. Bernacki and Jaeger (2008) also talk about how experiences that first expose students to service learning create a desire for them to engage in more service, and that although, in their study, it did not lead to development in greater moral reasoning, it had the potential to plant seeds that could eventually change behaviors or deepen understandings.

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For the two participants who did not get exposed to civic engagement involvement before college, their exposure to community work came later in the college process and through SL courses. A second year SL class introduced Jen to a partnership with a nonprofit and the field of food systems: "…it was through several different courses and my studies here at Northern Forrest College (NFC) that I became involved with different organizations, and it just kind of developed from there." Thomas's exposure to civic engagement was also not until college—his second-year major change introduced him to an academic department where he identified service learning elements "in every class." His "class circuit" involved multiple SL courses. His initial one "went well," and his advisor encouraged him to do more. Even when first exposure to civic work started later, high level of structure, encouragement from others, and leaving it with a positive feeling seemed to be common across these participants who continued to be engaged, in increasingly meaningful ways.

Most participants experienced exposure to some form of civic engagement before college, and a few not until college. Either way, exposure kept being a meaningful element for their community engagement paths after their initial experiences. Exposure to new kinds of engagement—by encountering a new social problem, a different way of conceptualizing or approaching an issue, or a new environment in which to do familiar work— continually arose, intentionally or unintentionally, as they stayed involved. For some, exposure that sent them in a new direction came by paying attention to current events, like Sarah witnessing rising racist police violence, and Joe hearing about an upcoming global climate change conference. For many, it was through relationships that

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they got exposed to a new engagement opportunity. For example, Sami tagged along with her RA to a CCSL club meeting in her first year to make friends, and it led her to think, "Yeah, I want to do this." A similar sense of discovery happened sometimes within doing a familiar thing, but finding a new perspective on the work, thinking about the action in a more complex way, again through the support of a relationship. For example, June's internship advisor gave her a book about policy solutions to hunger, when June's focus had been on direct service. It got her "angry and politicized." Exposure kept things fresh and kept them growing, even when they thought they'd found a steady spot to be involved. Continued exposure changed the specific direction of students' commitment, even as it deepened it in general. This illustrates, in one way, how commitment making was experienced by students as a process that was both a "composition" and being "composed" at the same time, which is how Parks understood and explained emerging adults' purpose-finding experiences (Parks, 2011, p. 45).

Exposure often happened within structures provided by others. Exposure experiences sparked curiosity for those who otherwise may not have created those opportunities for themselves. Developmentally, early exposure in these structured ways with the support of relationships with others makes sense, as those early in their cognitive development use others' influence as an important guide and authority (Belenky, et al., 1986; Kegan, 1994; King & Kitchner, 1994)., and the community context of development strongly influenced the directions taken by participants (Knefelkamp, 2008).

Mattering: Witness. Witnessing communities that came together around the common values and actions of creating social change was a final flow in the influential

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wave of seeing other individuals engage civically and gaining exposure to service

opportunities and approaches. Interpersonally, participants witnessed their social

environment and saw others gathering in ways that provided meaning and identity.

Experiencing social groups that derived that belonging from a shared, civic orientation

often initiated a desire for becoming part of something like that in their futures, and led

them to seek out not just what to do, but with whom to do it.

Of those who engaged in their communities before college, many witnessed

communities that had a shared sense of mattering in this work. Many of the parents

whom participants saw being engaged did so as members of communities that came

together to help others. This was most commonly through a religious affiliation. For

Sarah, June, Anna, Annie, and Ashley's families, service was not an individual endeavor.

"…[D]oing the work to give back to others" was pursued in an intergenerational space

among others with shared beliefs and goals, often with communication of the values

behind their work and encouragement for others to join them. Annie reflected that "at the

root of why I ended up getting involved throughout high school and then college I think

goes back to my family, their core value being: you need to be a giver." In their church

community, she joined them in "philanthropy." Anna's family was also "really involved

in our church." They made the connection with others via service an explicit value:

"…coming home and every day having conversations with my parents about why it's

really important and necessary to be involved in the community was a big push to

continue doing that." Anna hoped to find others with similar community aspirations in

college. For Sarah's early involvement, "It wasn't me serving, it was me just being a

participant in a place I would call home." Faith communities provided models of communities formed for contributing to positive social change, not just the individual role models of which they were comprised, for this study's participants. All of the participants who witnessed and sprung from these circles described seeking a similar sense of community in other settings. This suggests that, for these participants, faith backgrounds encouraged service not just by providing opportunity structures, but also in providing an image of what an engaged community looks like. Images and models were described by Palmer (2011), Parks (2011), and Daloz et al. (1996) as important features for individuals to become purposeful change-makers. Parks (2011) spoke about the need for emerging adults to have access to key images to inspire meaningful vocation, and how communities that practice "worthy dreams" can act as those models and images (p. 192). Daloz et al. (1996) also pointed to communities who work together in "good company" (p. 144) to provide inspiration that social problems can be faced with courage and action instead of hopelessness.

Whether participants had or had not witnessed communities formed through civic commitments before college, the on- and off-campus communities at NFC provided environments where participants witnessed groups with a sense of mattering via community engagement. While Thomas and Jen's SL classes first exposed them to specific opportunities, the greater community's ethos mattered, too. Jen attributed the city's community context as a spark to her curiosity: "I would say that just living in [this state], it's hard not to pick up on those undertones of communities doing different projects" related to the social issue to which she was exposed. Jen furthered her

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involvement to become part of that engaged community. Thomas also attributed his desire to join in as part of the larger culture around NFC, describing it as "a community of people who really do care about change:" "I think the physical place is what originally inspired [being involved]." If he went to school elsewhere that did not have such a civically active community, he mused, he did not think he would have become civically engaged. Just as communities before college provided models and images of engagement, the on- and near-campus communities supported engagement, too. Service learning literature upholds that the campus culture communicates the importance and value of civic engagement in ways that can encourage or discourage student involvement (AAC&U, 2012; Barnhardt, Sheets, & Pasquesi, 2015; Kuh, et al., 2005). Witnessing the energy and pull of a community formed through actions of its members that mattered played an important part in participants' development as citizens.

Questions prompted by Wave A. Within the three currents, participants experienced others as those who do community work, gained exposure to various forms of engagement, and witnessed communities coming together around civic involvement. These three flows often occurred together, often clustered together early in their engagement though not exclusively so, and prompting related questions that moved participants deeper into their development of civic commitment. Seeing others doing community work, participants addressed questions of Connection: What does community membership look like? Why are others approaching their communities in the way that they are? Do I have a place here? They wondered about Purpose: What's good to do? How do I feel about what I'm doing? Should I stay involved [in this way], and if so, how

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and with whom? Participants also explored Mattering: How can I feel part of something bigger than myself? With whom do I want to connect?

**Wave B: Mine, Exploration, Belonging**

Participants experienced themselves as becoming 'insiders' in their communities. In this wave I describe the flows of: 'mine'—getting connected to their civic work and identities through a sense of ownership; 'exploration'—seeking purpose through trying new things for themselves, and; 'belonging'—feeling part of a larger community. It is highlighted in Figure 18 with the wide vertical arrow.

Connection: Mine. Participants experienced flows of strong personal ownership of civic engagement work. While their sense of connection to those making social change was distant at times, identifying inspirational "others" and not themselves as the chief agents in work for the public good, periods of feeling like community engagement was theirs ("mine") often followed. This often came through feeling like they could contribute something uniquely, which fostered deeper commitment to public engagement. It also led, for some, to experiences of stress and/or isolation.

Many participants described how feeling a sense of personal connection to civic engagement deepened their commitment to their communities. Thomas, Sami, June, Ashley, and Mia provided examples of how students often felt a closer connection to civic work by finding a particular way they could contribute to meet a community need and trusting in their ability to make a positive impact. In SL classes, Thomas heard from community partners how students sometimes under-delivered, being "burdensome" instead of helpful. He became the student that "picked up the slack" of his group, to make

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Figure 18

Wave B: Mine, Exploration, Belonging
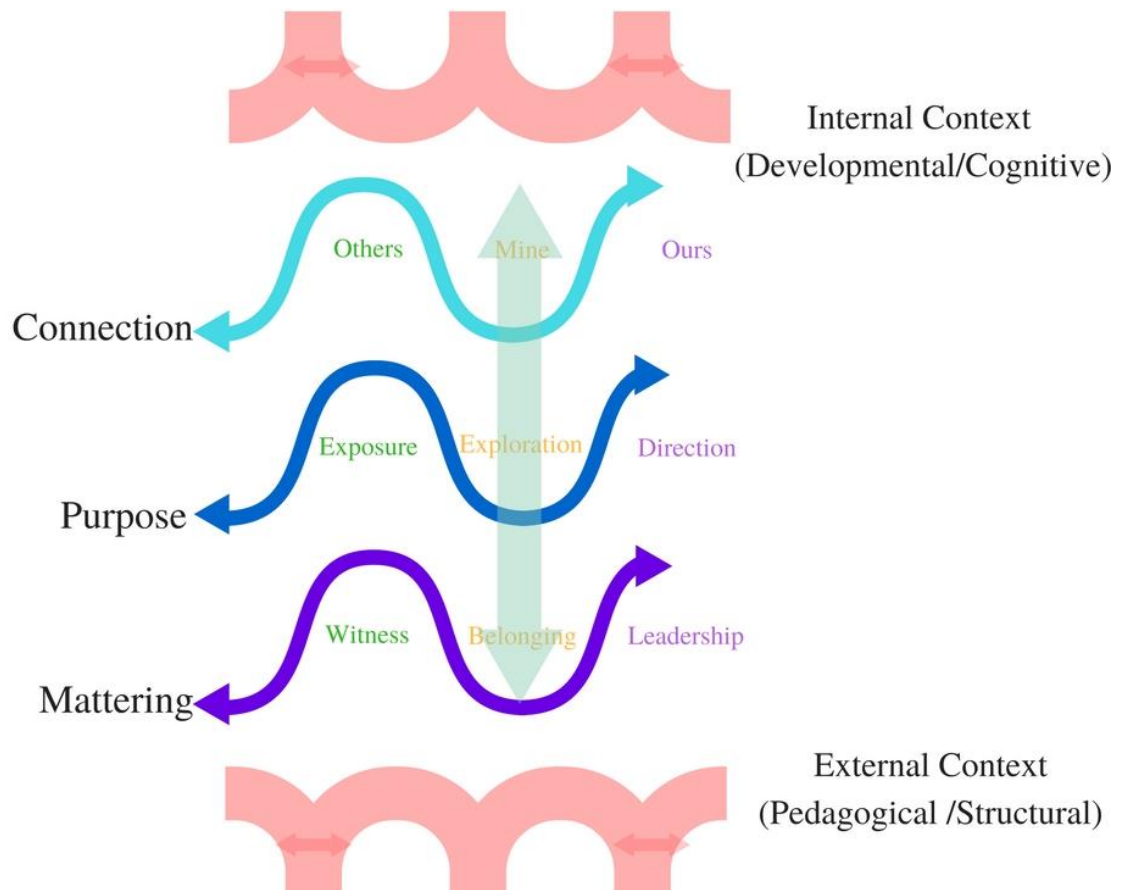
sure he made a positive impact. For Sami, her service became more "individualized" and "mine" when she focused her engagement to address others who shared her mother's chronic health condition. It gave her an opportunity to put herself "in someone else's shoes," which she identified as a strength that helps her "just go at a situation differently than some people." She talked about how that helped her connect with others in helpful, unique ways in her civic leadership.

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June also got more engaged when the work felt like "hers." Coming from a family that was very engaged civically through their church, June thought she would continue civic engagement work at college, "on the side." She experienced a "crisis of faith" where she "secularized" the values promoted by her family and she decided that she wanted to do "community service for the sake of doing it" in a new community, one that she could "build yourself and that you become invested in." Once doing community work for her own reasons, a faculty-led class discussion inspired June to become "political in general, rather than just be interested in politics." She wanted to do something different from those she saw around her—she wanted to think critically about solutions, instead of stopping at short-term fixes—and that feeling of having a unique contribution and ownership over a particular kind of service led her to more, deeper civic engagement.

Ashley and Mia also gained a belief in their unique abilities to make a positive impact as they practiced them regularly. When Ashley got back from studying abroad she felt more "creative," "comfortable," and "confident in my ideas and not waiting for somebody else to suggest it or asking permission all the time." She wanted to impact her community using these traits. Ashley reflected how her later work looked different than her early engagement: "I've taken a lot more initiative on my own" instead of just doing what others "expected" of her or of the role she filled. Reflecting on this change, Ashley celebrates the development her voice (Baxter-Magolda, 2009; Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982) and not having to ask others for permission to share her creative ideas. Similarly, Mia wasn't sure what she had to contribute when her mom made her volunteer at a hospital in high school. Hearing appreciation from those she helped and reflecting on

the skills and experiences gained over college, she reflected: "I can bring a lot more to the table now." These experiences corroborate with service learning research's repeated finding that experiences in community work increase students' self-efficacy beliefs around creating social change, for many even after only one SL class (Astin & Sax, 1998; Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Ngai, 2006; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Participants often experienced a development of their own voice and a sense of self-efficacy in tandem. This makes sense, considering the literature that identifies that learning from first-hand experiences, instead of the authority of others, is supportive for development towards trusting an inner authority (Belenky, et al., 1986). Putting their own spin on community work through using their unique voices built a sense of personal ability and ownership over their actions and roles. A feeling of commitment to being civically engaged built from these experiences.

A feeling of ownership sometimes came from beliefs of being able to uniquely contribute with interests and skills for many. It also arose for some from a recognition of social injustice and the impact of systems of power and oppression that benefitted some and excluded others. Joe, Ashley, and Anna experienced awareness of their privilege as a site of personal connection for their community engagement. Development of a social justice framework sometimes results from service learning experiences, though not universally (Enfield & Collins, 2008; Moley, Furco, & Reed, 2008). One way a social justice framework can evolve is to recognize inequitable experiences of privilege, as service learning experiences can promote (Jones & Abes, 2004). In two studies that looked at student outcomes after one semester of service learning, increased

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understanding of unjust systems and community problems increased students' sense of ownership and responsibility to make change in them (Roquemore & Harwell, 2000; Simons & Cleary, 2008). The participant experiences I describe below give us a view of how those developmental shifts clustered together in the lived experiences of some college students beyond the one-semester timeframe.

Joe talked about how a feeling of ownership over his work was fostered, and the impact of that on his civic engagement journey. His family and school pushed the general idea of personal empowerment in service to community, and he felt both the empowerment and stress of his perceived need to be "exceptional." Due to reflections while traveling and content in the SLRLC seminars, he came to recognize his social identities: "I … come from a place of wealth and privilege… They make me feel like…any energy I put into the world should be to spread that around, more or less." He seemed to struggle with how guilt might play a role in his work, and at times seemed paralyzed by a desire to accomplish something broadly impactful. Ideally, he wanted to use the recognition of injustices and his privileges to motivate his work: "'You are who you are and everybody else is who they are, but what are you going to do in this world?'" Anna also recognized unearned benefits from her background and felt a sense of individual responsibility to make a positive impact because of them. She engaged civically while

> …always feeling really privileged and recognizing that there were people who didn't experience this same privilege that I did. I'm just feeling really compelled to use what privilege that I had to be involved in sort of correcting those systems that leave other people not privileged.

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Ashley, similarly, named her feeling of "obligation" to respond to being "thankful for the life I have and the place that I'm at" with service to others. A departure from charity-based frameworks of understanding community work that lack a grounding in why inequity exists systemically, many participants came to understand a personal role and responsibility for civic engagement to be "theirs" through adopting a social justice framework.

With awareness that they were connected to others and could make a unique impact—due to skills, strengths, interests, or privilege—came feelings of responsibility that pushed them to be involved, but not always in healthy or sustainable ways. Several participants felt like they had to "do it all," and do it perfectly to a standard outside of themselves. This often looked like embracing the "helper" identity in an autonomous way, to the point of over-commitment to others. Gilligan (1982) identified this kind of self-sacrifice as a developmental stage after egocentrism and before equality and an ethic of care, a more balanced approach that cared for the self as part of the community. Students' over-commitment also seemed to reflect a struggle of their desires to please others, a developmental trait of someone who takes the expectations of others as "subject" and does not have a "self-authoring" mind that can separate others' expectations of themselves as "objects" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 624; Kegan, 1994). Parks (2011) seemed to be speaking to these students' experiences directly when she talked about a part of emerging self-authorship where the internal voice manages between two yearnings: "distinct agency" where individuals want to make a difference independently, and "belonging, connection, inclusion, relationship, and intimacy" (p. 91).

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This is what that commitment to others that took over from self-care, common among participants, looked like: In the RA position Vale took on, he felt like he could care for the members of his hall like a grandpa ("only missing the cane"). While this was a fulfilling role when he could act on his strong sense of "empathy" as he helped others, he was simultaneously supporting his family as they went through a tough time, too. He felt like he was "juggling it all" and struggled to stay "afloat." He described his challenges realizing that "you have to be able to accommodate yourself sometimes." Anna also discussed the difficulty of connecting with others deeply and maintaining boundaries. She hoped that she would "[learn] how to leave things at the door in both directions" of her community work, to avoid burning out. June talked about "always being busy," Moe noted his "impossible" desire to "do it all," and Sami articulated her struggle to say no when asked to do more:

> I say yes to a lot of things, obviously, and then I can't give 100% of myself to everything that I say yes to. It's so frustrating… I take on a lot and I take it on personally instead of asking for help, it's a huge problem.

Trying to help, autonomously, seemed like a struggle. It reminded me of the "taboo" motivations for service and "shadow sides" of civic commitment described by Daloz et al. (1996, pp. 176-177): pleasing others and burning out. However, these experiences also seemed to create transformative, disorienting learning moments where students were able to see that their schema for engaging with others did not work and needed to change (Mezirow, 1991). With more autonomy and confidence came a recognition of the need to establish their own selves (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Kegan, 1994). While a feeling of ownership, sometimes encouraged by others' expectations, lead

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to investment and self-efficacy in their communities for many, it also lead to stress that opened them to consider more collaborative, interdependent ways of being 'helpful.'

Strong feelings of ownership over making change also led some participants to speak up to others in powerful ways. While it fulfilled a call to create justice, it also led some participants to experiences of social isolation. These experiences also led to developmentally rich questions. June described how civic engagement became a passion for her in a parallel process to finding her voice and realizing that she had something to contribute. In her RA role, she wanted to "create safe space" for people with diverse identities, but experienced feeling "vilified" and "alienated" when some of her residents rejected her approach. A similar feeling existed as she became more "outspoken" about implementing progressive policies: people "dismissed" her as someone with strong opinions. She spoke of this as a hardship to be "overcome." Sarah experienced rejection from others for her vocal ownership of creating change, too. Sarah experienced being targeted by fellow students for her marginalized identities, and started being "outspoken" and "calling people out" for their hurtful biases. Many of these people stopped talking to her and former friends abandoned her once she shared how she and others were negatively impacted by their behaviors. Looking back, she knew that her anger was "justified." Sarah reflected that she felt it was her mission to teach others how to be less oppressive, but that it "exhausted" her, mentally and emotionally, and she questioned the efficacy of her approach for others' learning. She looked back and questioned her need to address all of the things she encountered: "I need to take care of myself because if I am in a mental state then I can't speak up, then what's the point?" She talked about the

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challenge and the learning she took from feeling like it was *all* hers, then realizing she could step back to take care of herself while still creating change.

Overall, students' personal ownership of their service helped them engage in different, deeper questions about their civic identities and roles than when they saw creating change belonging to "others." Addressing these questions pushed them closer to developmental experiences of interdependence and self-authorship (Chickering, 1969; Baxter Magolda, 2009; Parks, 2011).

Purpose: Exploration. For participants, a feeling that community engagement was "theirs" often came with more self-initiated purpose-seeking for their civic work. Exposure, in Wave A, brought participants to the river's edge and others nudged them into the water. I saw that, over time, participants dipped their toes in on their own, trying out new and different streams in which to find purposeful direction, or took a few strokes in a promising path to see where it led. This kind of expansion happened at different points on their journeys, often repeated after new types of exposure to intriguing civic experiences and with the support of mentoring relationships. This often happened in concert with their developing of 'mine' and 'belonging' mindset about their communities. It provided students initial civic engagement experiences that led to others, expanding on literature that found that exposure to one service learning experience increased students' desire to do more community work (Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Chesbrough, 2009). These following students' experiences also connected to developmental theories that describe the importance of supported growth towards a capacity and desire to take initiative from an increasingly inner authority (Belenky et al., 1986; King & Kitchener, 1994) and the

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helpful nature of repeated encounters with complicated problems that bring their assumptions into question (Mezirow, 1991).

Most participants worked within existing structures, like classes, non-profit organizations, campus clubs, or residential learning communities, to explore social issues and individual roles of interest. Or, if they wanted to begin something on their own as part of their exploration, they were most successful when they got support from existing structures, at least at first. Self-initiated exploration of areas for engagement looked different depending on what structures students choose to frame their exploration.

Students who began in RLCs had a meta-structure in which to explore new engagement in college. All seven participants who had SLRLC affiliations (Moe, Joe, Anna, Ashley, Sarah, Annie, and Anna) named at least one, and usually many, of the structural features of that community as influential and supportive of them to act on their desires to find meaningful civic engagement in their first year: the requirements and expectations to contribute at least sixty hours of service in their first year, the instant peer group of about fifty others also trying to find purposeful engagement, a small service learning seminar with group projects that involved building community partnerships with scaffolded support, regular co-curricular service project programs to show up to, and staff, faculty, and peer mentors to suggest opportunities for exploration. The one student in a different RLC also experienced structural supports for early exploration.

Generally, exploration started earlier for RLC students, who had shown up to college already opting in to structured civic engagement involvement. Within the SLRLC, Anna, Ashley, and Joe used it to get staff, peer, and academic support. For

example, Anna recalled "…coming in and having structure and having people here to be like, 'Hey, I think you might be interested in this, Why don't you give that a try?'" She noted that her similarly engaged high school peers who also attended NFC "really struggled to stay involved without the structure of a community." Ashley appreciated "meeting people who actually care about things and want to talk about real stuff," and felt welcomed to begin getting "active and involved" right away. Joe addressed the helpfulness of requirements to focus his many ideas and busy schedule: they helped him "broaden" his perspective on how to start the non-profit organization he entered college wanting to create, and held him accountable to exploring the paths to creating it. He kept exploring because the seminars and instructors meeting with him communicated: "You have to do this." Mia was not in the SLRLC, but provided a good example of how an RLC can be supportive place for students to explore their interests in their communities. When Mia got to NFC, she joined an environmentally focused RLC that had close ties to her academic department: "…that definitely had an impact on why I started liking communities and why I wanted to get more involved and engaged in different areas." She tried out taking leadership in that community in her first year, and, with the advising staff and friendly faculty in her RLC and academic department, felt "grounded:" "…people were checking in, like, 'Oh, how are you doing? We should talk,' kind of thing." They helped her identify curricular and co-curricular opportunities like internships, research projects, and peer mentorship roles all related to her evolving interests. These participants who participated in RLCs had models, relationships, and structures to support early, regular civic engagement exploration in integrated ways in college. Like

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the practice of service learning, RLCs are touted in the literature for improving the quality of college students' learning experiences through meaningful connections to faculty and staff (Blackhurst, Akey, & Bobilya, 2003; Frasier & Eighmy, 2012; Kuh, et al., 2012). Daloz et al. (1996) found that highly engaged adults had been supported by "threshold" people— trusted individuals in their communities who helped them find their ways (p. 53). Participants described their experiences of RLCs as spaces where those kinds of relationships flourished and helped them connect many areas of their lives together.

Participants who did not join the SLRLC usually took until their second or third years to find, through exploration, involvement that would become connected to their sense of purpose. June tested the waters by "dipping my toes into a lot of different pools" of involvement during her first year, "just… interested in a lot of things and wanted to learn more about stuff." She acknowledged: "[NFC]'s not a huge school, but it's big enough that you could feel lost." In her second year she became an RA and joined a CCSL that helped "struggling communities off campus [while building] community on campus." This club informed her academic curiosities and opened a door to a social issue she came to care about deeply, and connected her to a Student Life staff advisor who got her involved in other civic leadership opportunities, too. Jen also felt like she was "feeling it out" early on, and found a community connection to explore in her second year. For her, it was through a SL class. Once curious about the social issue her community partner addressed, the SL faculty mentor and community partner supervisor helped her grow her network and gave her options for exploring. Jen tried out

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opportunities related to that social issue theme, like internships and study abroad. Like many other participants, programmatic and pedagogical structures provided support for exploring personalized paths in social issues to which they had been exposed. Co-curricular civic engagement clubs, RLCs, and service learning classes provided engaging environments for students to make influential, multi-layered connections with people and action opportunities. This aligns with how Kuh et al. (2012) identify those high impact practices as "educational assets" that promote student development (p. 103).

Individual relationships seemed important within those structures for helping students become aware of and try out more opportunities for finding meaningful engagement. From exposure to various contexts, most participants had interest for some kind of civic engagement experiences in their lives, and then tried to find various ways to feel purposeful within that issue by trying out new things in college. It took this study's participants longer to find the structures and relationships that aided their explorations if they were not in RLCs. Regardless of when it began, that exploration typically did not stop once it started, although it changed in nature as it went, as I'll discuss in Wave 3.

Mattering: Belonging. Being ready to explore was often connected to participants feeling like they had a home-base from which to launch and return. Witnessing how civic work had the potential to foster communities with a mission also often led participants to desire belonging to such a group. A sense of home—being part of something larger and feeling included, cared for, and caring about others— was a key flow in the currents of civic commitment for this study's participants. This pattern also showed up for adults in Daloz et al.'s (1996) study: starting from a home, they are able to

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explore spaces beyond home. The home Daloz et al. (1996) referred to was in a family of origin. The home that participants described here as a launching point was the home they found or created in college.

A feeling of belonging among others who are passionate about creating social change seemed like a common inspiration and support for persistent commitment among students. Several of the participants in the SLRLC stated that as their reason for applying—some in both their initial written applications and interviews as fourth year or recently graduated students, although more stated that in their more recent interviews. It stood out as one of the most frequently named influences of their first years and second years. Those not in the SLRLC sought being known and a sense of belonging as a part of their civic engagement journeys consistently, as well.

Anna and Ashley described how a feeling of belonging among peers in the SLRLC supported their civic commitment-making. Anna became friends in high school with people "who were also volunteering," and that friend group "helped me continue to be involved." She desired a community like that in college, and that led her to join the SLRLC, and she found it helpful: "I was intimidated by how to start in a place that was new," but that it helped "to have roommates also be in the same structured situation." As she continued in college, she felt that she was with people to "come home to" who also were in the SLRLC and had experiences in communities and were supportive as she experienced challenges in her community work and needed support. She came to identify these support systems as "what community is." Similarly, Ashley came to college seeking out the SLRLC and CCSL clubs to make friends with similar hopes for making the world

better. Ashley described the SLRLC as space that "allowed me to make really awesome friends and find a lot of different ways on campus to feel comfortable." She found welcoming and close relationships with those on her hall and those in the service club she joined.

Those not in the SLRLC desired this after high school experiences of belonging or desired for a general sense of belonging in their transitions to college. Many of them found it in CCSLs. Sami wanted to be part of a community in general where she could "jump in from the beginning, and find a role, and find a place where I could be passionate about something and make change," after realizing she "needed to do something similar to home" to "allow me to meet other people." She tried to find this in a club sports team, but they were not welcoming of first year students in the way she desired. After her RA invited her to a club meeting, she found a place to feel belonging among those with similar values in a CCSL club. By consistently showing up, she found friends among others who cared about developing an internal community while helping others in the larger community. As Sami looked to what was next in graduate school, she knew she wanted a place that would welcome her as a contributing community member "from the beginning." A feeling of belonging among peers was a continuously motivating factor in many participants' civic work. These experiences illustrated how human-scale learning spaces helped students feel "known," a condition in which students thrive in general (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 106) and a helpful condition from which to pursue social change work. In these cases, gaining supportive peer connections was a primary motivator for engagement, as well as support once involved. Once involved, the benefits of being part

of close peer cohorts—well documented within the service learning classroom as a supportive context for taking risks (Roholt, Hindreth, & Baizerman, 2009), dialogue across difference (Keen & Hall, 2009), and clarifying of values (Strayhorn, 2008) — happened primarily out of the classroom. A sense of belonging among peers provided a developmental context for getting and staying involved in community work.

Seeking and finding belonging as a motivator for specific kinds of social action also stood out in some participants' stories. Experiencing marginalization due to their social identities pushed many to take action to find a crowd that understood this marginalization and worked for inclusivity. Many of those who experienced such exclusion turned their civic work to creating places of belonging that became healing spaces for both themselves and others.

Mia, Sarah, and Annie provided examples of the importance of belonging playing out in this manner. Mia sought a feeling of home as she transitioned to college, and was "worried about getting lost." She signed up for service orientation and an RLC, both of which provided "bonding" that gave her a meaningful community from which to branch out in college. Her "feeling part of something" helped her reach out to others in her civic work. This helped her feel ready to be a tour guide for the whole campus, then to leave campus to study abroad. She sought out engagement in "expanding circles," that seemed to be rooted in her greater sense of belonging and responsibility to others. These widening circles of connection with others are indicators of moral development, towards an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Rhoads, 1997). As she expanded outwards, though, she experienced a world that questioned if she, a black woman, belonged in her roles. From

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this, she wondered about why she was welcomed by these circles: was it her blackness and their desire to have a "representative"? She sought out belonging among others in the ALANA student center who had to hold similar questions, and found support for "who I am." Facing marginalization, she returned to a home-base of belonging in a smaller circle to support her as she moved care outwards.

Sarah also relied on a home-base when she experienced exclusion for being concerned with creating change elsewhere on campus. Sarah found belonging among others with similar struggles at the ALANA student center, where "nobody touched my hair" and she could relax into herself more. Her civic work turned towards ending bias incidents for others experiencing exclusion. Annie also sought out belonging from a place of feeling excluded due to a marginalized identity. She described how she did not seem welcomed by the LGBTQ center on campus, because she identified with having non-binary sexuality. She found support for herself while she gathered support for others in helping others with non-binary sexualities tell their stories, through an SLRLC project. As an "advocate," she found belonging. Attending a campus-led social justice retreat also fueled her identity as someone who was part of the justice-seeking community on campus, and she came to see herself as a leader within that circle by showing up and "being a body" for other leaders, fighting "-isms," too. Participants who experienced marginalization reached out to others, something Daloz et al. (1996) found to occur more easily among older adults who had experienced marginalization, too. To expand their circles of care, they sought places of safety and belonging to ground their expanding outreach.

Participants' feelings of belonging in college drove much of their engagement work, whether they came to a feeling of belonging in community through a short application process to a SLRLC after experiencing a comfortable community in high school, seeing others in college experiencing belonging and working to find a club in which to develop that connection, finding it in a small way enough to want it in a larger way, or being excluded in a larger way and finding it within a smaller group. Once describing their place as "homey," a "home base," or "my crew," they seemed better able to ask questions that expanded or challenged their worlds, and actively welcome others into it. This phenomenon is noted by service learning research as typical in peer learning cohorts (Keen & Hall, 2009; Roholt, Hildreth, & Baizerman, 2009). Its appearance here supports Knefelkamp's (2008) assertions that civic development occurs over time in connection with others in a variety of real world contexts.

Questions prompted by Wave B. Wave B, visited and revisited by students along their journeys, was important for developing students' greater sense of ownership, community, and focus that furthered their civic commitment-making. With the feeling of "mine," came some answers to the questions participants had about their Connection to changing their communities. Some found that it was among others who cared about similar things. It also brought up questions: How much involvement is enough? Can I ask for help? What scale is most important for me to work to address pressing needs— big or small? In the current of Purpose, participants asked questions around the flow of exploration: Where can I apply and build my interests and skills? Who will support me as I try out new things? What might come next? As seeking and finding belonging in a

social circle happened for participants, they wondered about Mattering: Who am I drawn to? What defines my crew? If I feel included or excluded, what about others?

**Wave C: Ours, Direction, Leadership**

With time and persistence, some participants flowed to more blended understandings of the elements that arose in the other waves. Their connection to who creates social change became a mix: themselves working with others. Their purpose focused to a more intentional direction, one that incorporated continued exposure and exploration. In terms of mattering, participants took leadership as they noticed how others might be witnessing but not taking part in their gathered group and desired to expand their circles of belonging. These developmental experiences of civic commitment-making involved students balancing tensions and keeping multiple truths in mind while choosing the ones that could ground their work. Readers will note that I found it useful to provide more detailed subheadings within the *direction* and *leadership* sub-sections, to better address the increased complexity of this Wave. Wave C is illustrated in Figure 19, with its components highlighted in the far right column, within the vertical arrow.

Connection: Ours. The current of Connection addresses participants' ideas of who creates social change and why. It flowed among the answers: 'others, 'me,' and 'us.' At times, participants felt at a distance from those who took action ('others'), or a strong sense of agency and ownership over making an impact ('mine'). Some participants, usually later in their experiences, experienced and articulated a *shared* sense of ownership and responsibility ('ours') for creating social change, both in their individual roles and with others. This reflected a balance that Parks (2011) and Daloz et al. (1997)

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Figure 19

Wave C: Ours, Direction, Leadership
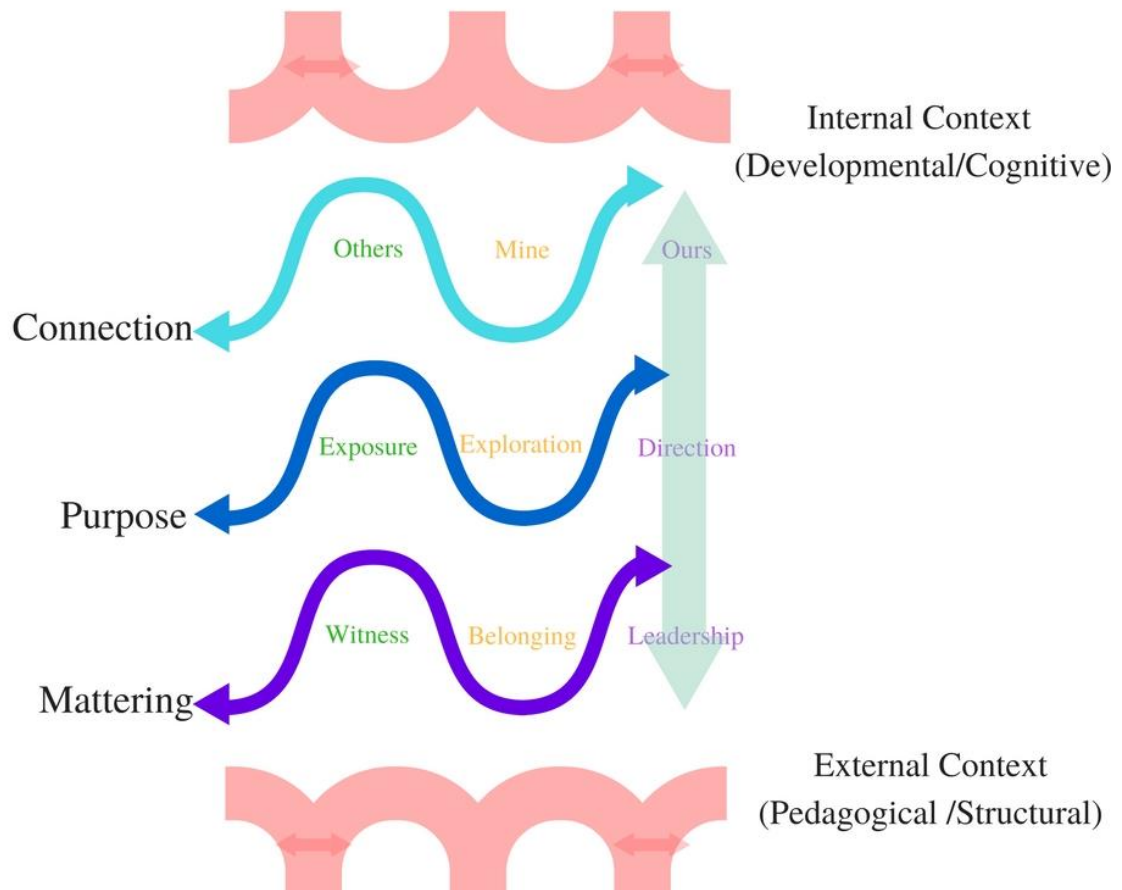
consider important for civic commitment—feeling included in groups making change and in trusting relationships with others is complemented by understanding a personal role in impacting communities, as well. Seeing others as important in the work, and not losing your place in it, is recognized as an important step for being a change maker. The following descriptions of experiences illustrate how that dialectic experience took place through experiences and relationships in college. It required some capacity to take action

within contradictions, a cognitive "habit of mind" that Daloz et al. (1997) recognize as important for civic commitment development.

The awareness of a shared 'ours' connection to social problems and solutions and how that impacted individuals' actions often came with the application a social justice lens. Connecting their community work with personal and systemic understandings of power and privilege began for many in the 'mine' flow of the Connection current and continued here. It also connected to concepts of mattering, that I will talk about in the 'leadership' flow shortly. I describe how this experience of 'ours' played out in different ways, at various levels of depth, for a few participants.

'Ours' involved both a conceptualization of communal ownership of making change and the functional influence and practice of that concept in collaborative civic work. Anna, Moe, and Sarah were some of the participants who came to define their connection to their communities using the 'ours' concept, and applied that to their work. Anna aimed to create a shared space for spiritual growth among her peers, but at first she wanted to lead the group on her own and not receive assistance from others. She eventually asked for help ("'Hey, I'm in a little bit over my head. I need some help.'"), and saw that it made all the difference: "I think that's where things really turned around with the group… That's when more people started showing up to meetings. Our discussions were more interesting and awesome." Her desire for the community outcome (a collaborative space) eventually opened her up to working on a shared process of getting there.

Moe questioned, continually, how to navigate creating social change—as an insider, an outsider, or a listener who could bridge both sides. He wanted to do the latter. When he spoke up for those in the special education program at his high school, he felt like he could "represent" them because he had been in the program at one point— "I was no longer in special ed, so I was going to get the opportunity to speak as outside of special ed but from a place of understanding." His sense of connection to those he was helping was blended with a former identity of his own. He struggled with his experience late in college while hearing a teen describe the trouble in her neighborhood: '"How can we address this? What can I do, ultimately as an outsider?...How can I help a community...and also be respectful [when] it's ultimately not mine?...Should I be helping?" He talked about the discouraging nature of whole systems that make immediate, systemic change impossible but the persistent need for "acts of kindness, support, and standing up for people." Moe provided a good example of using the questions of Connection to find his role within a whole community of others with different experiences and contributions. His emphasis on "listening" and "facilitation" in his work represented his conundrum, and spoke to his commitment to the process for finding a meaningful role: honor the balance between feeling a sense of ownership ('mine') while recognizing that most social change needs other perspectives and actors ('others'), too. Moe's work expressed his belief in his desire for collaborative processes that would share the work with all members of a community.

Before Sarah knew she valued working from within communities "with" others instead of "for" them, she was acting from that perspective during her high school

service. When trying to create social change alone through solitary awareness-raising of oppressive systems in the NFC community in college, she felt isolated and questioned her efficacy. In Sarah's last year, though, she returned to acting out her belief in "grassroots" work to create change. Sarah built a coalition among student clubs that supported various populations of students of color to respond as a united voice against police killings of black people: "I thought [it] was really helpful." She welcomed in allies and built a community around her desire for justice—creating action to reinforce her belief in shared ownership of the issues. She saw this play out at the event she coordinated:

> …in order to fix a problem… in the community, people from that community need to be in allyship with the people in that community and help empower those people…and not try to fix situations that we can lead ourselves on… [S]upplying those resources from other communities is so helpful.

Indeed, she reflected, "…coming together… [made] more of an impact" than acting alone. In her job post-graduation, Sarah talked about how she continued doing "justice-centered community work" and wanted to keep it up for the long haul, with a multi-year plan for her teaching position that could build activism into her classroom and co-curricular advising. She also talked about the value of welcoming others into the work of dismantling injustices though effective learning experiences, and adding "gentleness" to the "justified anger" to share her message and invite others to join her "in a more productive way." Her vision and action plan embraced social change as shared work, with her unique role helping others come together.

Among those who embraced the "ours," there was a sense of relief in this shared ownership, it seemed. They worked to balance doing their part as best they could, and being part of a bigger picture of others finding and practicing their meaningful roles, too.

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This balancing act of maintaining shared ownership of social change work had to be discovered and rediscovered in different contexts. Knowing there was shared agency among all community members for creating positive change, and still knowing individuals, including the self, had powerful roles to play was an important current moving through participants' civic engagement journeys. This influenced the way they found purpose and took leadership among others, too, as described below.

Purpose: Direction. Many participants spoke of feeling purposeful direction in their community and life work by finding a smooth and exciting mix of many aspects of their lives: among their academics, co-curriculars, values, social connections, social issue concerns, role interests, and future work plans. A "ripple" effect that moved them from one experience to the next helped create a sense of "flow" among their engagement that helped them "connect the dots." Many, looking back at their journeys from their first years, found it "cool" to see how one thing led to another even if it "didn't seem like a big deal" at the time. Some stream of consistency formed from a blend of exposures and explorations that didn't necessarily, in its forming moments, seem significant. Over time, many participants found a steadiness through their continued exposure and exploration that helped them move forward in a meaningful way, or at least feel confident in how to take the next steps in their lives as engaged, active citizens.

This connects to service learning literature that discusses community-based experiences as key for learning values, beliefs, actions, and knowledge (AAC&U, 2012; Astin, 2002; Jones & Abes, 2004) that support students' choices to become professionals and citizens who support the public good (Ramson, 2014; Rochelle, Turpin, & Ellis,

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2000; Simons & Cleary, 2006). These experiences showed how a sense of coherence, that allowed for feelings of purpose, came from a mix of experiences from many areas of their lives and was possible through processes of reflection and action. The process of finding what was important and trustworthy in life through actions, behaviors, and decisions, again and again, provided what Parks (2011) calls a "canopy of significance" (p. 36). It is from this canopy that purpose emerged for many students in the study.

Academic and co-curricular. For many, the integration of their academics and community involvement was a key aspect for feeling a sense of direction. This combination is often touted as academic service learning—the package deal that integrates both structurally (Eyler & Giles, 1999). For some, that was how it started, but for others it was a blend of non-academic co-curriculars and academic engagement that created the blend organically. Exposure to an issue or approach for making social change in co-curricular involvement complimented academic exploration in that area, and vice versa. June's social issue interest and CCSL club membership helped guide her academic decisions and led to a meaningful first job after graduation: "It just means so much more when each part of your life flows into the next." She wanted to help others could find a similar blend for themselves. For Jen, her one SL partner and class relationship grew to more involvement in a social issue, across her classes and co-curricular engagement. It inspired her to study abroad, where her social issue interest area got her "hook, line, and sinker." Returning for her senior year, she wanted to facilitate connections for others like the ones she experienced across her classes and communities. Her job post-graduation "unfolded" in a "natural progression" from her internship, study abroad, and SL

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experiences. In this fulfilling work, she continually questioned: "What comes next? What's in this to continually build upon? Whether it's in your personal or professional life or combining that." Jen and June enjoyed the sense of direction that grew from streamlining multiple aspects of their lives into a purposeful current. The coherence came retrospectively, after experiences built upon each other. Development of civic commitment of their work in the future came over time, with a variety of "repeatedly chosen, sustained actions with critical reflection" across various contexts that helped them identify paths forward (Knefelkamp, 2008, p. 2).

Process. For Annie and Moe, they sought a combination of interests but those did not lead directly to a specific job or career. Their senses of direction came from finding a process for direction-seeking that might be replicated in the future. Moe knew he wanted to use his voice to "represent" and "empower" others, and had a steady social issue passion starting in high school: education policy. Throughout college he tried to understand more and find what approach he should take within it. Faculty advising and staff-supported service learning projects helped Moe explore in this process, as he sought experience in the multiple contexts and roles where education policy played out. Choosing between "big" and "small" scale involvement, he wanted to recognize for himself and help affirm to others that doing the unnoticed, small scale, interpersonal work matters: "I think a lot of people become discouraged" when they're not sure what they are doing is "meaningful." Moe was uncertain about where to focus—at the smaller or larger scales— but he had a stable social issue of interest and seemed to embrace the process of "defining for myself what an impactful life looks like" by gaining exposure to

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new experiences to fuel continued exploration. Direction-finding was not a one-time thing, but an on-going current of exposure and exploring that allowed his focus to zoom in and out.

Annie also got a taste of purposeful direction that centered on commitment to continuing the process of direction-finding. Annie combined her zests for art and hearing others' stories for a project assigned by the SLRLC and she found "passion." It "came together in a way I'd never done service before." This informed how she chose next steps for herself: she was looking for a similar blend of interests and values for her career, unsure of how that would evolve but knowing what questions to ask: "How are we all part of this process [of creating social change] and how can we create this stuff together?" Annie found direction within a particular project, and it informed how she wanted to explore in the future, in different contexts. Overlapping and integrating experiences *and* processes helped individuals find a thread of consistency to guide their paths forward. Their experiences highlighted how individuals develop in a continuous process in the context of others and relationships (Josselson, 2000). They came to see specific clarity of their direction not as the demand, but rather a process of being with others as the goal—aspects of an ethic of care (Belenky, et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Rhoads, 1997).

Values. Clarification of values also helped participants find a sense of direction. For many, looking back on their former writing and thinking about what was next for their lives brought up consistency in their values, and appreciation for how consistently applied values led to feeling purposeful. Many participants noted how their knowledge

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and language for explaining their values developed over time. Being able to articulate those values seemed to affirm a sense of direction in how they wanted to make change in their communities, even as their experiential focus fluctuated frequently. Anna appreciated seeing constancy in her work. Her value of "interconnectedness" came up in her interview before she read about it in her earlier writings. Anna identified it as her "driving force" for why she wants to "do this work in my professional life and continue to volunteer." How that value got expressed and identified had changed, though: "I think I knew about some of the ideas about [diversity and identity], I just didn't know how to talk about [them]," reflected Anna. Anna saw how her value for interconnectedness showed up explicitly in her first job and graduate school plans after graduation, and seeing it there helped her feel like she was "moving in the right direction."

Sarah also discussed how values that directed her civic engagement were steady in her work, but not understood in a shareable language until college experiences provided frameworks for knowing why her actions and approach felt right. Her exposure and origins of service never involved "saving" people, but supported a framework of working 'with' others in her neighborhood, as modeled by her neighborhood church. As she explored on her own, though, she wound up as the only black participant of an alternative break trip that was indirectly affiliated with NFC, and noticed that her fellow white participants' experience of serving a black community was "just different." She saw "outsiders" taking a charitable approach and realized: "'Oh yeah, this is why [you should have] people who are from the communities that need help… be the ones doing the help and doing the change.'" From this exploratory trip, Sarah "realized that I needed

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… to make [my community service] more about helping communities help themselves…helping communities build on themselves." She returned back to her focus on acting as an "insider." The experience and reflection led to a clarification of her values, and her direction to ultimately return back to her home community to do social change work after college. She saw how she had worked from within her community to bring others together, but "didn't have 'community building' in my vocabulary. I didn't have the language to talk about all the impact that I was actually doing." Working to make social change consistently did not make it feel purposeful, necessarily, but having language to tie her smaller deeds and instinctively 'helpful' actions together into a describe-able whole seemed to have that effect.

Annie, who also got direction from blending her interests and knowing that direction-finding was a process as I described above, was also driven by her values. She talked about how she recognized a value from her childhood church "stuck with me" in her work across the years and her hopes going forward: she wanted to "understand humans more" and "promote justice," sourced from her steady " desire to see that there's good in everyone." While at times she struggled to feel like she made an impact on others, Annie reflected on her former writings: "I can just tell that I have so much more language to talk about …the ways in which I was working on change," even when she doubted if the work she doing was "actually helpful." After the interview, Annie wrote me an email to say how she appreciated the space to reflect: "It was a really great refresher on some of my values" and that our conversation inspired her former SLRLC classmate and current roommate to have "a long conversation about our 'roots' in service

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work." It seemed like being able to articulate the meaning behind her work helped her renew her sense of purpose when she felt unmoored in continued exploration and exposure. Reflecting back in the interview was meaningful in this way for many participants, as it helped them see the current of purpose that was woven among their actions and values, steady across the different years, experiences, foci, and relationships.

Service learning coursework, leadership trainings, and peer discussions helped students identify and clarify their values, following literature that identifies those spaces as useful and that process as important (AAC&U, 2012; Astin, 2002; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Keen & Hall, 2009; Knefelkamp, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008). Looking at these narratives, I saw that it was those spaces cumulatively, over time, that enabled students to draw connections among their values, actions, and paths forward. Working with others in those spaces helped them get to know themselves, affirming literature that discusses development as a relational process supported by seeing others asking similar questions and needing to articulate to others ones' beliefs and ideas (e.g. Erikson, 1968; Josselson, 2000; Mezirow, 1991; Rhoads, 1997; Yates & Youniss, 1996). Those spaces nurtured their "inner teacher" (Palmer, 2011, p. 161) through reflective practice and helped them see how their public and private lives could integrate purposefully (Bellah, 1985; Brookfield, & Holst, 2011).

Career. Values, and being able to articulate them to the self and others, provided a consistency and sense of direction for many, amidst changes on the surface. The source of a through-line for others was most closely linked to their career journey—seeking and finding a professional field and job that would feel purposeful. The question and pursuit

of career post-college was a driver for others to find purpose, although it played out in different ways. Mia described herself as "future oriented," and worked to blend her community work and academics into a career that combined her interests and skills. She was relieved to have found the "perfect" combination for graduate school. Thomas was motivated to take on community engagement leadership near graduation. In his application to be a TASL, he named how he wanted to "get more experience in the development field to help me have real world work to show potential employers soon as I am close to graduating and that is scary." He felt pressure to gain "as much experiences as possible" to be "competitive" in the job market. That desire for career experience led to increased civic engagement work. Thomas was relieved to find a job path that helped him feel like the "pieces came together:" He "was inspired because of that [SL] transportation planning class" to be in a job that combined his interest in "technical things" and also the "social policy." For Vale, he knew what he wanted to do in his career all along, and getting qualified and ready for that career was the driver of his engagement. He felt the need to "step it up" to build experiences and skills to achieve his personal goals. These goals were "humanitarian" in nature, and broad: "to help out others." The career focus narrowed how he would achieve that goal. Knowing he was:

> interest[ed] in the medical sciences… really helped me out in just pursuing more goals and being more helping and accommodating to people here because when you want to go into something like that pursuit, you have to be able to have a good manner when you're working with people. You also have to be able to be very open… to being able to help provide comfort to those individuals.

He attributed his involvement, from early in high school through his last years of college, to these aspirations. It seemed like many participants with this career-focus saw

finding a career as an end point in terms of direction and purpose. Developmentally, setting a specific career path could be advanced thinking: synthesizing multiple, complex options into one actionable choice (King & Kitchener, 1994). It could also be less sophisticated thinking: an answer to meeting externally affirmed and structured way forward after college, relying on others' formulas for success and approval (Kegan, 1994) and relying on certainty without doubt, rather than integrity that allows for flexibility and uncertainty (Perry, 1970). I am curious about what the career-focused participants' journeys in public work will look like and if their understandings of their directions will change over time to a process that balances continued exposure and exploration, as others have (for example, Moe's and Annie's more process-based approach to purpose).

Participants found a sense of direction in their civic engagement work when it was connected to a larger sense of purpose— their academics, co-curriculars, decision making processes, values, or careers. It often took many different exposure and exploration opportunities before they found a link across experiences and values that felt directive for their next steps. Being able to reflect and put language to their experiences helped with that meaning-making, and recognition of what was both steady and unsteady aided in their process of purpose-finding. When participants experienced a sense of direction in their civic work after exploring various options, exploration and exposure did not stop, although some with a career focus tended to believe it would. Continuous exploring helped them focus their approach and choose a more specific context for their impact, and new exposure continued to expand their ideas for what directions were possible. The narratives illuminated how participants' consistency and dedication to

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repeatedly seeking and finding direction, in expanding and focusing processes in sustained actions over time, played an important role in their civic engagement commitment-making, as Knefelkamp (2008) emphasized in her model of civic identity development.

Mattering: Leadership. Participants witnessed others doing social change work in communities, and sought and found a sense of belonging in communities through joining others in that work, as I described in the 'witness' and 'belonging' flows of the Mattering current. Participants' leadership behaviors and roles as individuals in groups furthered their sense of mattering in communities, and played an important role in their burgeoning commitment to creating social change.

In this 'leadership' flow, I discuss students' experiences coming to understand what leadership meant for them. Many participants experienced leadership as giving purpose to their community work through rallying others to join their communities and/or ways of making change. This experience was linked to the 'direction' flow described above. They recalled their experiences of witnessing groups as outsiders to being welcomed to becoming welcoming to others, expanding their circles. Their stories showed how they came to expand their empathy to connect with others in more active ways—a key element of civic identity development (Knefelkamp, 2008)—and how the desire to mingle with others "outside of [their] club" after they found their own sense of "membership" (Palmer, 2011, p. 117)—a key "civic capacity" (Palmer, 2011, p. 14)— grew over time.

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Many participants also found that leadership was a way to be with others and effectively make a positive impact in their communities, not as a solitary, positional task. These experiences were closely connected to the development of shared ownership over creating change that I discussed as the 'ours' flow in the Connection current, also in this wave. Sharing the responsibility of making an impact relieved the pressure of going it alone on complex social problems that emerged in the 'mine' flow, and pushed against traditional conceptions of leaders as individuals acting alone. Taking a leadership role in a collaborative way, formally or informally, enhanced the feeling of 'belonging' in communities that grounded many participants' engagement. The understanding of 'ours' and the felt sense of 'belonging' applied to leadership helped participants feel that their civic engagement was fulfilling and sustainable. Pursuing leadership as a communal learning experience also enhanced participants' sense of mattering. It seemed that most wanted to welcome others into shared values, not just shared actions, as leaders of communities creating social change.

Enhanced belonging, welcoming witnesses. Several participants talked about realizing how leadership positions enhanced their sense of mattering within a community, and it led them to want to rally others to join it. Vale and Mia described how leading was a way to make their communities feel like home for themselves and welcome more people into their circles. Mia combined her health interests with her environmental interests from high school volunteering and helped start a yoga program on her first year hall and became a leader in her RLC. With that leadership role she felt "like I became a part of something and I wanted to grow that and allow other people to feel a part of it,"

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and she continued to expand her leadership involvement. Vale also found a "homey feeling" through his membership in an RLC, the SLRLC. He took leadership in the SLRLC with his RA role to "build unity" within the community. In this role helping others find belonging, he found a "second family" among his residents. He helped the new students "get ties" with resources he had found, like community partners, and continued leadership for two years with hopes of leaving a legacy for others who could take action similarly: "I want to be able to find people who I know I can pass down the torch here, and be able to still continue those kind of projects that I have been able to start up here in the past." These participants are examples of students who found a deeper sense of belonging for themselves while leading others to feel included and part of those spaces of community engagement, too. Leading within their "club" (Palmer, 2011, p. 117) or "tribe" (Daloz, et al., 1996) to engage those initially outside their circle, but with a shared student identity, seemed like a gentle step towards leadership and expanding their reach.

Career as leadership. While many participants found campus opportunities to rally others to their sense of meaningful 'mattering' in their campus communities, they also found purposeful direction in doing this in a circle beyond that home-base: for and with others as a leader in their careers or planned careers. Ashley aspired to be a teacher and stated how she wanted to share with her students how community is important: "I really want to be a teacher and I think I've learned a lot through these different volunteering and community engagement experiences that… give me examples of ways to show kids how important it is to get involved, and just the importance of community."

Sarah became a teacher and her goal was to "liberate" her students by raising their awareness of and inspiring actions to promote social justice. Jen initially felt a desire to motivate others to think more broadly about their roles in communities as a TASL, and then continued to rally others to join community networks working to make change in her first job after graduation. June, in her post-graduation job, liked bringing students together to use their power politically, building a community and "making a 'we'" to build power around public interest issues. As they looked beyond college, participants looked for a professional community in which to belong and continue rallying others into civic work. As they navigated the change of roles from student to professional, a piece they desired to keep steady in their identity and work was around civic engagement and leadership. This desire relates to a key piece Parks (2011) identified as a part of exploring, or "probing," commitment: asking what is dependable amidst change (p. 92).

Challenges of collaboration. Many participants also found rewards in leading social change as a collaborative leader. Many of the community-based roles and identities that participants identified with were as these kinds of leaders: Jen as a "bridge" across communities, Anna as a "community leader," Moe as an "educator" and "mentor," and Annie as a "connector." Participants became inspired to make change across social groups, and realized that process of working closely with others was important intrinsically and also in terms of creating their desired outcomes. It also became clear that this was difficult and required practice.

Leadership required holding both insider and outsider statuses within groups—a witness to the bigger picture and group dynamics in order to help guide it, and a member

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of the team that belongs in the shared space of a group. Balancing those sometimes contradictory roles was hard—a good example of the challenge that Palmer (2011) named as the civic capacity of "tension holding" (p. 23), and that Daloz et al. (1996) described as the habit of mind of critical thought beyond dualism. A way students held this tension was through collaborative leadership.

Sami noted how she thought of leadership as an independent endeavor until she had a co-leader of a CCSL alternative break. Sharing responsibilities and holding each other accountable helped her "[realize] your opinion on a situation, or your take, isn't always right, and that two heads are definitely better than one." Sami saw her role as a leader become less "motherly" and consumed with taking care of peoples' emotional experiences of service, and more about helping others on her team be "responsible for [their] own actions" and learn from their experiences: "It's a different kind of leadership." Similarly, Vale talked about the use of collaboration to take the pressure off of being the lone "pillars" of support in his leadership project, or leaning too heavily on the 'witness' role: "I was able to call upon people who were very either interested or wanted to learn the process" to join him, and "I was able to help lead the team towards doing what needed to be done in order to help…" Skills of collaboration, like listening, were growth areas he gained in his RA role that came in handy for finding some balance between acting as a witness and a member of the group as a leader.

Knowing collaboration was important was different than using it. Ashley took leadership early, after she had a desire to "give back" to the SLRLC community that helped her find belonging. She became the student leader in charge of community-

building at the SLRLC. In general, she described how "it's hard for me to be satisfied with just participating. I like taking action and doing stuff, and making sure it's getting done the best way it can." These were her first experiences of leadership—getting things done well, independently and separately from others. While she felt a sense of personal efficacy as a leader, Ashley knew team work was important and talked about it in her early writing. Looking back, though, she reflected that her description of collaboration seemed "very idyllic, and 'Let's all work together, team.'" In her "leadership or community engagement experience since then" and she gained "a better idea of how to work with… different types of people" than she used to, and knows it can be difficult. She found her ability to "organize people" and learn from "different perspectives" helps her "do things a lot better now." She also recognized how this didn't always come naturally to her and that she had to grow her leadership intentionally. Working individually *and* with others has helped Ashley create social change more inclusively and effectively.

Joe also found collaboration to be challenging to his idea of leadership at first, and over time gained appreciation for working among others as a leader that welcomes others into spaces of mattering. Joe's beliefs that the world's injustices are 'ours' were more prevalent in his description of why he sought to create social change than how he planned to make change. In practice, he tried to get others on board for the climate change summit he was organizing by "lecturing" to others, holding them away from making substantive decisions. Treating his supposed collaborators as 'witnesses' failed to rally participants to his cause. Sharing ownership felt like a complicating obstacle, but it

quickly became a strategy once he got "feedback" from his peers on his leadership. "It wasn't all about me" hit home: "They helped me do what I wanted to do but also kind of [brought] their own thoughts." Indeed, sharing ideas and getting others' perspectives on his ideas helped him question and learn: "How do you work with people?" and "…how I was a leader or trying to be a leader." Joe appreciated how each leadership experience "broadened [his] perspective" and took some, though not all, pressure off him to make systemic change as an individual. He named that he was "still working on" encouraging "participation" instead of "prescription" to others as a leader, stating that the former has been more effective.

Working collaboratively as a leader came as a learned skill and value, needing constant practice, and balancing the sometimes contradictory witnessing/guiding and belonging/joining roles. These students' narratives illustrated how the knowledge, values, skills, and action components of civic learning blended together in their lived experiences (AAC&U, 2012). Even if they believed that collaboration mattered, it became deeper knowledge through hands-on experiences and action, the kind of learning that helps students construct and appreciate the knowledge as their own instead of others' (Belenky, et al., 1986). Leading with others also required skills and knowledge: Service learning has been shown to help students build capacities for working with others effectively (Enfield & Collins, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Here, we saw how those beliefs and capacities grew in both academic and co-curricular spaces, and with support from peers as much as faculty and staff mentors.

Leadership as learning and teaching. Positional leadership roles helped many start taking leadership at first, and then they moved to creating their own spaces to lead that were less formally defined and more focused on learning. Ashley, Sarah, and Annie's narratives showed how some participants came to experience leadership as an exploratory process with others. Their stories also show how these women departed from the expectations of others, expressed structurally in formal leadership, and built and expressed their own voices through civic leadership—possible through the development of sophisticated habits of both mind and heart.

Ashley came back from studying abroad and created a role for herself on campus: she went to a national organization with a loose campus affiliation and let them know she wanted to lead their awareness- and fund-raising walk on campus, and then rallied others in a different club she was in to join in organizing the walk. It was part of her desire to "work on developing" her leadership and learn to be more creative and collaborative. Sarah also found her most meaningful leadership work in her "spare time" (she joked) when she formed a coalition to initiate an event that rallied many other groups of people together for a march and vigil, without a formal role. This kind of blended initiative where she had a meaningful role for herself but embraced collaboration and inviting others in to a broadening community allowed her to experientially apply the values and lessons from her former engagement in a meaningful, customized way. Annie also talked about taking a leadership role as a learning experience. At the end of a project in which she felt useful, she wrote about her biggest "takeaway" from her work: "…leadership comes in many forms and will change depending on the context we put ourselves in. I

look forward to working on projects in the future and coming to a more full understanding of my leadership style." Leadership as a process of finding individual mattering within a community, and knowing it can take many useful forms aside from positional roles, came out in many participants' experiences.

Many also embraced a teaching role via their leadership. Within the common desire to rally others to join their work once they found belonging in a group that took a particular civic action, participants also frequently wanted to teach others the values that their communities shared. This stood out to me as similar to how many participants first witnessed others serving in communities with shared values that invited the participants into joining them and gaining belonging. Sarah, Jen, Ashley, Moe, Anna, Joe, June, and Thomas expressed how they wanted their community leadership to help others not just to take action, but to understand what they had learned about how best to do that from their experiences. Whether that meant being more reliable community partners, listening to others first, framing their work in a social justice frame, or knowing that they had more power to make a difference than they thought, they aspired to be leaders that shared their learning. This educational role as a leader was less about positional leadership and more every-day, grassroots actions and facilitating learning for others— demonstrating cognitive capabilities of stepping aside from traditional expectations and assumptions of positional leadership and developing their own ideas of what was useful in a community. This reflects self-authorship beliefs driving their actions in communities (Mezirow, 1994).

A sense of mattering deepened in participants as they explored leadership that involved welcoming others, collaboration, and learning as leaders with others. This kind of leadership was experienced by many participants after feeling a sense of belonging, and it took that experience of mattering for them to rally others to recognize their importance in creating social change, too. Developmentally, this seemed to happen in parallel with finding stronger internal authorities.

Questions prompted by Wave C. Participants continually engaged with questions of connection, purpose, and mattering in this third wave, and in more sophisticated ways than the previous waves. These curiosities included questions about who makes social change and finding a personal role alongside others ('ours'): How do I work together with others to make change? How is my role unique, and limited? Participants also pondered their direction and purpose: What's been consistent for me across changes? What has changed? How does my public, professional life reflect my personal values and priorities? What work will give my life meaning? What level of change should I focus on? What does active citizenship look like for me going forward as an adult? Questions of how they mattered within communities addressed their roles as leaders: What does community leadership look like? What assumptions do I hold that are not useful to my leadership practices? How do I remain part of a group while also helping guide it? What are effective ways to make change as groups? How can I bring others on board to expand and improve our impact? These questions often led students around to revisiting previous waves and currents, to continue their processes of civic commitment development.

Waves in the River's Banks: Developmental Processes within Contexts

This study's participants' narratives provide insight into how Knefelkamp's (2008) model of civic identity development and AAC&U's (2012) framework of civic learning played out in the lived experiences of college students. Detailed views of their experiences, provided by participants' rich narratives, give a unique perspective into how college students experienced civic commitment development across time, in community with others, and with many converging influences. Engagement with processes of connection, mattering, and purpose moved participants deeper into their development of civic commitment.

Participants in this study described experiences of Wave A: viewing *others* as *connected* change agents from the outside, being *exposed* to ways of being *purposeful* in their communities, and *witnessing* communities that shared a sense of *mattering*. This cluster of experiences often served as a launching point, sparking expansion, curiosity, and desires for new kinds of engagement—sometimes initially in high school when they had never done civic work, and/or later in their college career when they had gotten deeply involved in a social issue but then found a new way to think about or act on it.

Wave B built from that launching wave. It involved feeling a *personal connection* towards being a change agent, initiating *exploration* into ways for the self to be *purposeful* in communities, and gaining a sense of *belonging* and *mattering* in communities. In this set of experiences participants described feelings of ownership and arrival, and a broad, sometimes overwhelming, drive to make a positive impact. Elements of this wave emerged at the start of civic commitment if someone started taking action

because of a strong sense of "always" being part of it. For others, it occurred by following their curiosities consistently, or by seeking out or building communities that seemed distant at first. A combination of those influences occurred frequently.

From there, the Wave C included *sharing* a *connection* with others in the work of creating social change, focusing on a *direction* towards *purposeful* action in community, and taking a *leadership* role in a community to share a sense of *mattering* with others. Noted features in this Wave were holding tension between and sometimes blending the two other flows within the current. It looked like sharing responsibilities and actions for change with others, feeling that their purpose would continue to unfold, and rallying others to joining them.

The waves occurred continuously and concurrently within participants' experiences. Some participants experienced all flows and Waves A, B and C, repeatedly and deeply, and others experienced parts of them, swirling within one wave or between two with occasional glimpses of the third. While these waves were often experienced in the sequence in which I presented them, especially the first times students experienced them. However, that order was not universal across participants or fully consistent within any given participant as they continued to revisit the Waves.

I noticed patterns in how most participants experienced the Waves' processes, though, and these patterns depended on their external, experiential and internal, cognitive contexts. The students experienced and influenced these Waves of civic engagement development in ways that generally increased in sophistication over time. How these college students became committed to creating social change is best explained in

describing how their internal contexts (cognitive development) and external contexts (experiences and relationships) influenced those processes. Across individually different ways of handling questions of mattering, connection, and purpose, these patterns in their ways of thinking formed common paths. These paths are in line with other research. By taking these contextual banks into consideration, one can see how the Waves' processes could be experienced in different developmental phases in students' civic commitment-making.

Internal, developmental contexts. Motivations of participants changed across their college years. Students expressed their push to do civic work coming from outside of themselves and from within themselves to varying degrees across time. The level of complexity in their thinking changed over time, too. They moved between simple and more nuanced perspectives of understanding themselves and their world. I first discuss the contextal 'banks' highlighted along the top of Figure 20.

Motivations. Overall, participants described increasing levels of personal agency in relation to motivation. This showed up most in the current of Purpose across the waves. Many participants first engaged in their communities because others exposed them to volunteering opportunities and encouraged them to do so, as I described in the "Other" flow. Some participants initially joined in to show something about themselves to others, for others. For example, Sami wanted to demonstrate dedication and organization to "prove myself to other people," Vale talked about how his service work would show that he's suited for a medical career, and Joe felt the need to be "exceptional" within his family and do so by making a positive impact in a global way.

Figure 20

Internal Contexts: Motivation and Complexity
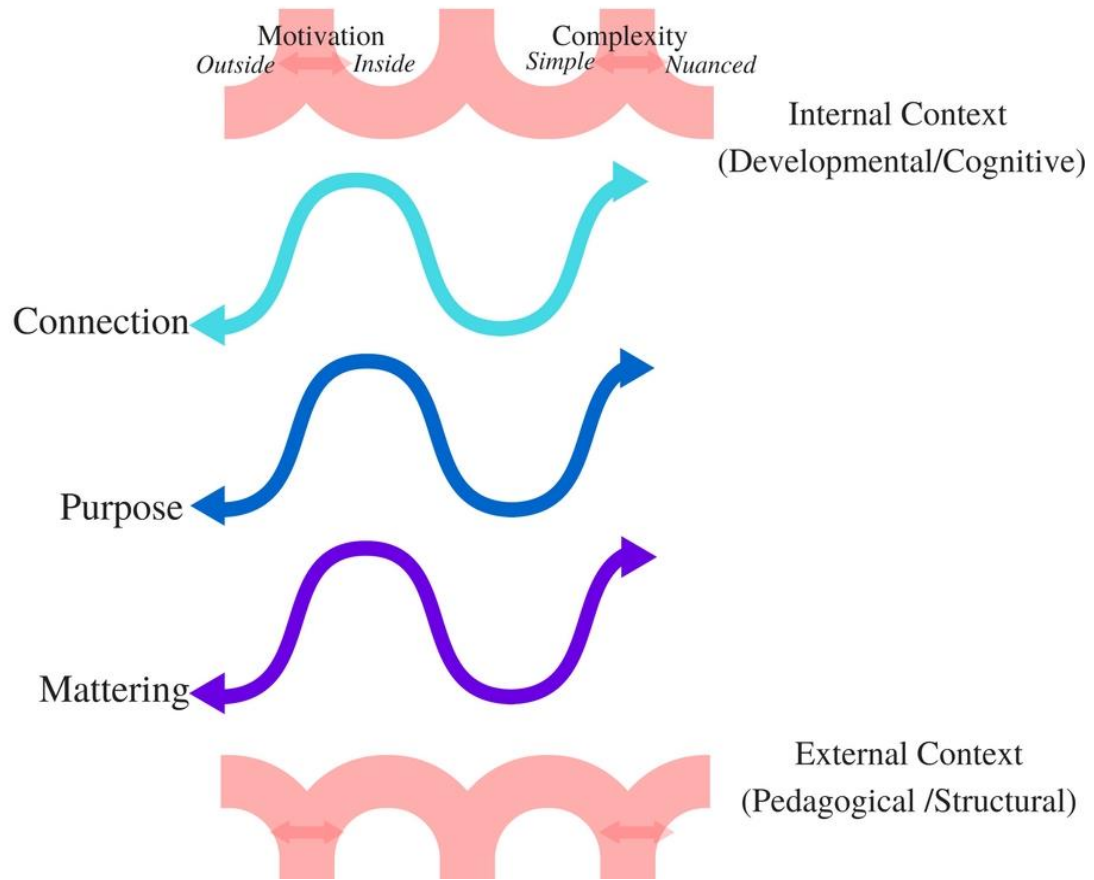
Some of these participants struggled throughout their journeys to meet or exceed others'

expectations, in ways that were both encouraging and challenging to their dedication to

community engagement. Developmentally, this demonstrated listening to others as

authorities and external sources of knowledge (Belenky, et al., 1986; Kegan, 1994; King

and Kitchener, 1994).

Often with the college transition, students moved to taking the initiative and

exploring civic engagement on their own in a more self-led way, and then constructed a

path that reflected a combination of their personal values, skills, and interests, and also community needs. This current revealed increasingly intrinsic motivations, with awareness of the greater world blended in. Feeling a greater sense of ownership over their decisions looked like deepening capacities for self-authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2009; Kegan, 1994), an aspect of intellectual maturity important for civic identity development (Knefelkamp, 2008).

Motivations from outside sources worked in getting participants engaged at first, and sometimes even throughout their civic work in a blend with their more internal motivations. For Mia, her mom made her start volunteering initially, but she felt service becoming hers after friends joined her as fellow volunteers and she enjoyed feeling appreciated by those she helped. Instead of showing up because of another's value of the community involvement, she did it because she liked how it helped her feel "really connected to the town and the townspeople" that was becoming hers. Ashley knew she enjoyed and cared about civic work upon entering college and followed internal motivations to pursue it. The "social aspect" in which she could meet "people that care about things that I care about," came up repeatedly for Ashley as an important reason to be engaged, though. She chose to surround herself with others with similar passions so that she would be more likely to act congruently with her values: "If I'm in a group or something and everyone else is doing something, then I'm doing it." Internal and external motivations blended together in practice for Ashley. Knowing that external environments provided useful motivation, and internal desires also could support their work at the same time, was a sophisticated blend of motivations not experienced by all. Being able to hold

the tension of internal and external motivations was significant developmentally, as a departure from dualistic thinking (Palmer, 2011; Perry, 1970), and as a recognition of interdependence (Chickering, 1969).

Complexity. Students generally expressed more complex levels of thinking over time. This was evident throughout students' progressive experiences in all of the waves and flows. It showed up strongly in the current of Connection. A common thread at some point for most participants was conceptualizing civic work as service done by one party for another—whether the helpers were the self or others, helpers met a need of a population needing services. That there would be a simple solution, and one that would be understood from a single perspective, is a charity-based mindset that aligns with dualistic thinking (Baxter-Magolda, 2009; Williams-Howe, 2014; Yates & Youniss, 1996). Development of more nuanced ways of thinking is identified by Knefelkamp (2008) as a key element to civic identity development.

Many participants realized over time that they also benefitted from the work via skill-building and enjoyment, and some came to recognize shared ownership of community well-being in which they were also members of the community and sometimes benefitted from the injustices that created the need for services in the first place. This shift to a social justice perspective required increasingly complex understandings of social systems and the fluid, influential interactions of individuals and communities. June's early ideas for civic solutions assumed she knew about and could control all of the variables—she remembered coming up with the answers to ending female genital mutilation in a first year class and presenting the paper at a conference.

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Looking back, she saw how she had misunderstood the complexity of the issue and overestimated her role in making change. She saw that it was a more complicated situation that required viewing many perspectives at once, but came to that only with time and reflection. A nuanced, social justice perspective requires understanding the self in the context of others in a complex way, and has been shown by other research to not happen naturally in civic engagement. However, with explicit inclusion in reflections and teaching, students can develop a richer, more nuanced approach to tricky social problems (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mayhew & Engberg, 2011; Yates & Youniss, 1996).

Finding a personal role within the complicated work of social change also relied on more complex thinking. Parks (2011) and Palmer (2011) write about how individuals moving away from easy answers can be overwhelmed by relativistic thinking, in which all of the ways to approach something seem equally good without trusty external authorities guiding the way. More sophisticated thinking allows for using outside evidence to develop informed truths, constructed by the knower (Baxter Magolda, 2008; King & Kitchener, 1994; Kegan, 1994). Some participants were able to act in response to increasing awareness of complex social problems, and find their own paths to meaningful action while still questioning the fitness of their backgrounds and skills at impacting the social issue about which they cared— in Moe's case, education policy. Annie similarly desired to address the social issues she cared about from all sides, and learned that her part was just a small slice of the shared pie, but that she could do her best acting on the work that seemed most important to her, from her unique perspective.

Just as increased complexity in thinking moved them along in their currents of Connection to social change work, it also propelled participants through the current of Purpose, helping them find direction. New understandings of complexity could reintroduce familiar work in a different, more effective way— like Joe continuing to address climate change but broadening his perspective to see how his originally conceived action plan was inadequate, and using that learning to develop a more sophisticated approach. In this case, one could cycle back to exposure of a new approach to the work and explore with greater awareness, to find a sense of direction that took more perspectives into consideration. Hands-on learning in the context of communities deepened students' understandings of what it took to create lasting change, and their role in doing it (AAC&U, 2012; Belenky, et al., 1986; Bellah, 1985; Knefelkamp, 2008: Kuh et al., 2005).

Understanding that different approaches to civic work kept happening, but that there was some underlying steadiness in their values, is another good example of participants adopting complex thinking within the Purpose current. Anna and Sarah were two of several participants who came to approach civic engagement from a social justice framework. They were able to see their sense of direction clearly despite the surface changes to their awareness and approach along the way, naming how their language and actions changed but their instinctive values were constant. Balancing relativism and truth, messiness and simplicity, also came out in the 'direction' flow when some participants, like Moe, found their focus by establishing a process of finding his role as part of his purpose. Holding tensions and still being able to act, identified by Palmer (2011) and

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Daloz et al. (1996) as key capacities for change makers, seems closely connected to Knefelkamp's call for intellectual maturity in those with developed civic identities (2008). Complexity in thinking allowed them to see where some parts of their civic engagement work were steady and progressing, despite their appearance of chaos or non-linear movement and growth (Bateson, 1989). Being able to make meaning of their community work by using complex levels of thinking assisted some participants in feeling the purpose that sustained and propelled their civic commitment.

     External, experiential contexts. Students' interpersonal, experiential encounters provided sites for civic learning. Certain pedagogical experiences, like the RLCs, SL classes, and co-curricular SL club involvements that helped me select these civically engaged students as participants in this study, were heavily cited by the participants as influential experiences for their commitment to creating social change. Studying abroad, faculty and staff advising, community-based internships, affinity group spaces, and Residence Assistant positions were also named frequently as common contexts of their civic development, as I listed in the introductory charts of before each student's narrative in Chapter Four. These widely overlap with educational practices researched by Kuh and colleagues (2005) as meaningful sites of learning in college, which they call high impact educational practices. Some of the key pieces of learning provided by these sites, such as faculty and student interaction, collaboration among students, and community connections, were reflected in students' experiences that I have described above (Kuh et al., 2005).
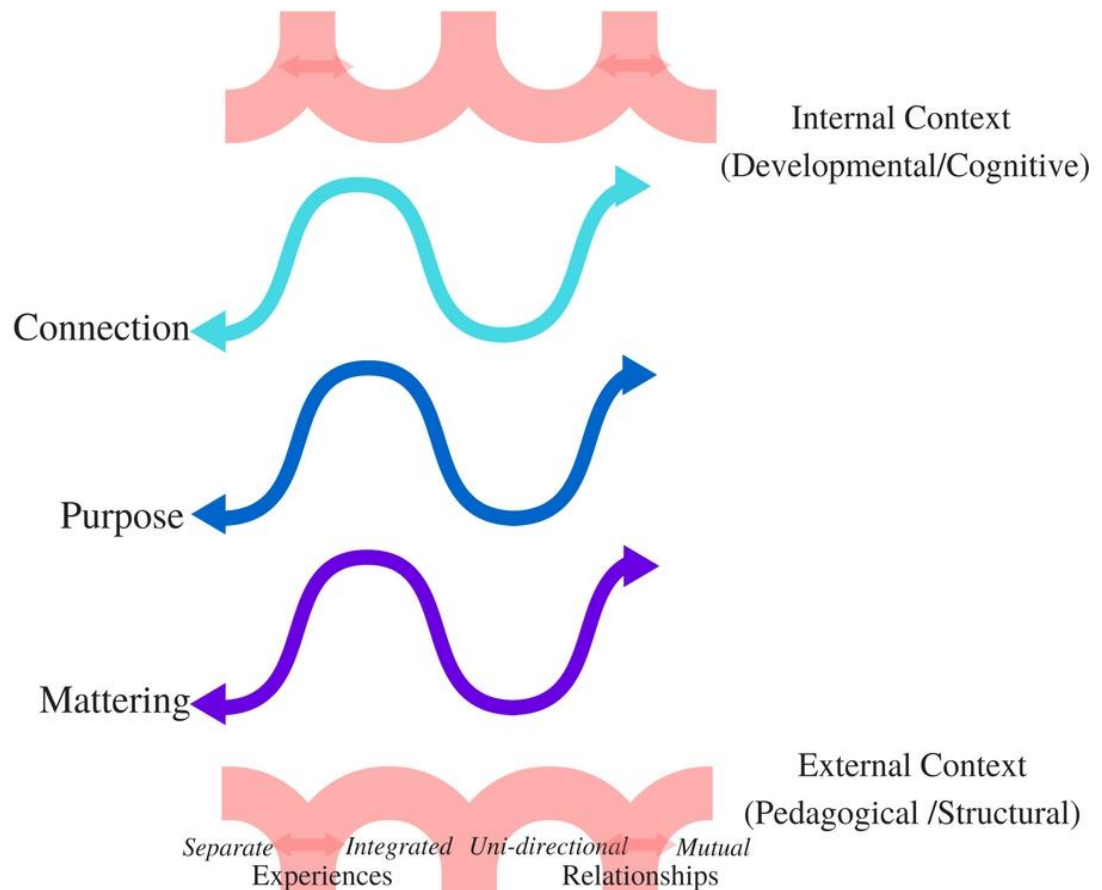
Participants described how they made sense of their learning that took place within certain experiences, towards a trend of integration and coherence. Their narratives also illustrated how those experiences introduced relationships with individuals and organizations that impacted their paths and their overall views of how relationships function—more reciprocally than they first envisioned at the start of college. These two areas—integration of their experiences and increasingly reciprocal relationships—captured ways of thinking and being that moved participants along the currents of civic commitment and identity development. They are indicated along the bottom bank of Figure 21.

Experiences. Gaining multiple experiences, in general, helped students build commitment to creating change. Kuh et al. (2005) saw that institutions that offered one of these effective practices often offered many. I noticed that students who got involved in one effective educational practice often got involved in others, with the support of the communities they joined. From that experiential foundation, they had many aspects of life from which to draw lessons, and access to many arenas in which to make meaning.

In their experiences, with reflection, participants moved between taking each experience as an isolated incident to seeing the experiences as integrated in their journeys. This showed up most in the current of Purpose, where I began to mention integrative thinking. Frequently, participants described their early years of civic engagement as isolated service experiences, both in their writings and reflective interviews. June's early intention to have service be something that happened "on the side," separate from both who she was and other areas of engagement, represented how

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Figure 21

External Contexts: Experiences and Relationships

Internal Context
(Developmental/Cognitive)

Connection

Purpose

Mattering

External Context
(Pedagogical /Structural)

Separate ← → *Integrated* *Uni-directional* ← → *Mutual*
Experiences   Relationships

civic involvement could be relegated to the margins. Students' experiences of 'exposure'

to civic engagement remained marginal to their lives, even if done regularly, when they

viewed others as the main actors in making change and did not identify closely with a

community defined by shared civic values and actions.

When participants explored on their own, having to make decisions using some

internally formed criteria about where to invest their time and interests, they began to

synthesize their involvement in meaningful ways, as I described in the 'exploration' flow.

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Annie found leadership lessons in her building manager role at the Student Center that clarified her community role as a "connector." This learning happened in the context of her SLRLC reflections and focus on community leadership skills. Thomas saw similarity across his work of building business partnerships for the outdoors club and navigating community partnerships for his TASL role, clarified in his TASL trainings and conversations with his faculty advisor, and got "inspired" to be someone who helped link the campus and local communities. It was when their civic engagement interests and learning lost rigid distinctions from and blurred into their classes, co-curricular clubs, interests, jobs, internships, research, friend groups, learned skill set, and, importantly, their identities, that students started mapping streams that informed paths forward in integrated community and life work.

Parks identified how the cognitive tool of "imagination" helps emerging adults "compos[e] a consistent and trustworthy pattern of meaning from disparate parts" (Parks, 2011, p. 137). Parks (2011) noted how people can find those threads of purpose best in reflective, mentoring environments where it feels safe to hold doubt and ask questions. Seeing an integrated "flow" within their lives sometimes happened unintentionally at first for participants, and not necessarily because of institutional, structural integration of learning environments, as is recommended in the literature (AAC&U, 2012; Knefelkamp, 2008; Kuh, et al., 2005). Rather, it was through their increased personal capacities to reflectively draw connections across their distinct learning environments that integration began. Relational support and designated spaces for that reflective work helped many construct a path forward, and to bring intention and joy to that path. Service learning's

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use of reflection, either in or out of the classroom, was helpful, as the literature would

suggest (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Williams Howe, 2014), and

mentoring relationships in less formal spaces also supported growth (Palmer, 2011;

Parks, 2011).

While the integration of interests, involvement, and learning elements could be

positive and aid with students' sense of purpose and identity, it invited some boundary-

setting, too. In Wave B's Connection current I outlined how a sense of close connection

with an area of civic exploration could be overwhelming to participants. Balancing a

sense of personal purpose and ownership with social change work, while negotiating

boundaries and sustainability of the work, was an ongoing challenge for many. Anna took

initiative to connect her academics, spirituality, social life, and career around creating

social change. She also questioned how to manage the conflicts that arose from linking

her "social" life with "leadership roles and… professional roles," and recognized that she

needed to create some distinctions. Sarah also decided to pull back from *always* speaking

out about oppressive actions, to take care of herself. In doing so, she focused her work to

maintain a sustainable identity as a "radical" educator in her communities. As students

integrated their lives around their sense of civic identity and purpose, some realized they

needed to nurture their sense of self apart from total immersion in their community work

and public cares. Gilligan (1982) described this kind of change to part of the

developmental process towards an ethic of care that included the self with others as

worthy of care. It also sounded like students being able to use their developing inner

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voices to establish priorities instead of relying on others' expectations (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Belenky, et al., 1986; King & Kichener, 1994).

A balanced approach or plan for integrating public and private purpose, leadership, and shared responsibility emerged only for a few participants. Integrated domains in their lives allowed for an integrated identity that supported their commitment to socially responsible work, consistent with Jones and Abes' (2004) findings. Partial or full integration of meaning, learning, and identity across multiple experiences across time was a key feature in how participants' civic commitment-making developed.

Relationships. Overall, participants named the important influence of mentors, peers, and a community of belonging that helped them get and stay engaged in their communities. As the above section made explicit, mentorship supported the growth of integrative thinking and reflection for students. It was in the contexts of meaningful relationships with others that students learned about their communities, themselves, and their individual roles within their communities.

Relationships with others helped participants expand from ideas to actions, interests to leadership. As I described in the Mattering current, participants sought belonging among others. They "selfishly" joined community service groups to find a home-base. In bids to join civically engaged communities and find friends, they showed up to get involved even if their mission for creating social change was undefined. In these communities, they gained civic exposure and the relationships and exploration opportunities that arose from being in those contexts. Literature highlights that a feeling of home matters for students' success (Daloz, et al., 1996; Kuh, et al., 2005). In this

study, desire to create that feeling of home by developing relationships was a key motivator, not just an outcome, of engaging in service in their communities.

Relationships with individuals who could help them explore, a piece of the Purpose current, furthered their engagement. Indeed, research has shown service learning to be a valuable due to its assistance in connecting students to faculty, staff, and peer mentors that help students learn about themselves and others (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). This study's participants' experiences further supported such claims. Mentors, in the form of staff, faulty, and peers, were the reasons many were asked and then stepped into leadership roles—such as Anna, Mia, Jen, and Sami's experiences of staff, advisors, community partners, and peers asking them to try something new that deepened their civic involvement and broadened their networks and learning. When the participants were unfamiliar with how to grow their interests at NFC and were still unsure of their own abilities, having people familiar with opportunities and students' interests recommend or push them into action helped. With these supportive relationships, participants furthered their community relationships and kept them in the contexts and environments where civic learning occurred.

How students conceptualized relationships influenced their progression in the currents, flows, and waves of their civic commitment development. I discussed above how increased complexity of thinking shifted participants to make sense of their community work in a social justice framework. Often, in a parallel process, participants saw their community work benefitting them, not just those they 'helped.' They moved from considering their community work and leadership as one-directional in terms of

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benefit to multi-directional and mutually beneficial. They identified their relationships in service as more reciprocal as they became more aware of their complexity, a process identified as common in service learning literature (Jones & Abes, 2004; Roquemore & Harwell, 2000). In Anna's SLRLC application she talked about her most meaningful service experience of teaching English abroad: "I think that these students have made more of a contribution to my life, than I have to theirs..." She recognized the benefit to herself in her 'helping' relationship. Sami used the word "invested" instead of "committed" to describe her role in her communities, recognizing that her work for others "will affect me back in some way, so I'm somehow putting something into the community that I will very much get back." Relationships with others also helped Sami recognize that if something mattered to others, it could matter to her even if she was not directly impacted by it. This feeling of mutually beneficial involvement is described in the developmental literature as an important part of expanding circles of care, towards a more interdependent, inclusive definition of "we" (Chickering, 1969; Gilligan, 1982; Parks, 2011, p. 181; Rhoads, 1997). Perceptions of reciprocity in relationships came with an expanded view of who benefited from civic work and why it was important to continue the process of civic commitment.

For some, this shifting understanding of the nature of relationships shook up participants' ideas of purpose and mattering, and sent them back to the flows of exploring their direction and community roles anew. New understandings of relationships as reciprocal changed what leadership looked like: Sami and Ashley stepped back to be followers intentionally when they knew others were better suited to lead, or could benefit

from leadership roles more than themselves. Recognizing reciprocity within communities also played out in how Annie returned to the exposure stages of Purpose by introducing herself to groups where she felt like an outsider, to learn new things and "be a body" at events coordinated by other social justice organizers in the community. It could also reintroduce familiar work in a different way, like June continuing to work with the food shelf but paying more attention to the perspectives of the meal recipients to learn about the causes of local food insecurity. Stepping back from leading and implementing changes based on experiences sounded like the cognitive ability to be more permeable and open to new ideas, question their assumptions, and freshly consider why they acted in certain ways (Brookfield & Holst, 2011; Mezirow, 2001). The participants' widened care for their communities and desire to learn as leaders—both aspects of their appreciation of reciprocity in relationships—came with more sophisticated cognitive capacities of flexibly and the ability to critically examine their civic impact.

Relationships yielded opportunities that expanded the participants' exploration in their communities. Working in communities over time and with reflection increased students' awareness of the reciprocity within relationships. Participants' actions and perceptions of their roles in their communities changed as they developed relationships with others and changed their conceptions of relationships.

Conclusion

Existing research, students' narratives, and my model of developmental processes and contexts illustrate how students experienced elements of the civic learning (AAC&U, 2012) and civic identity (Knefelkamp, 2008) frameworks in holistic, longitudinal, and

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dynamic ways as they developed civic commitment. Participants engaged with currents of mattering, connection, and purpose in waves that moved them from feeling as an outsider (in the Wave A flows of 'others, 'exposure,' and 'witness') to an insider (in Wave B flows of 'mine,' 'exploration,' and 'belonging') to balancing the mix of elements of the other waves (in Wave C flows of 'ours,' 'direction,' and 'leadership'). They experienced these Waves in repeated, flowing processes that built upon each other. Table 2, provided again below, summarizes these processes. Descriptions of these processes addressed my research question of how pedagogical and developmental experiences shaped committed students' paths to caring and acting for the public good.

Those processes were fueled and ushered along in the contextual 'banks' of increased complexity in thinking, blended internal and external motivations, integrated experiences (with some boundaries), and recognized reciprocity in relationships. Table 3, provided below again, summarizes these contexts. The descriptions of these changing contexts addressed my research question of how students made sense of their community-based experiences at different times and cumulatively.

Participants questioned and adjusted their understandings and practices of civic engagement through their experiences moving between and among the different currents and flows. Development of commitment to creating social change happened in the processes of participants learning how to move fluidly and reflectively across their many experiences. In the current of Connection, the processes were of cycling between gathering and letting go of ownership; Purpose's processes involved flowing between

Table 2

Processes of College Student Development of Civic Commitment: Waves and Currents'
Relationships

		WAVES		
		A	**B**	**C**
CURRENTS	*Connection*	**Others** View that social change is created by other people or groups, not self.	**Mine** Personal sense of ownership over creating social change.	**Ours** Shared sense of community ownership of creating social change.
	Purpose	**Exposure** Exposed to civic actions in one-time opportunities, by chance or through encouragement from others.	**Exploration** Expanding and/or deepening engagement, with some self-initiation.	**Direction** Intentional focus to make social change in a certain manner or within a particular social issue, largely self-led.
	Mattering	**Witness** Aware of communities that derive meaning from shared values and practices of social change.	**Belonging** Membership and feeling at home among communities built around creating social change**.**	**Leadership** Gathering and welcoming others into communities that create social change.

expansion and contraction of focus; and Mattering's flows showed up as moving in and

stepping back within groups.

Participants engaged in these processes in increasingly sophisticated ways, in meaningful

experiences and relationships. When the processes of Connection, Purpose, and

Mattering are viewed in conjunction with the internal and external contexts of

Table 3

Contexts of College Student Development of Civic Commitment: Shifting Banks

BANKS OF DEVELOP-MENT	**Internal Contexts**	**Motivation**	**Outside** Authority of others guides motivation to engage civically
			Inside Inner voice and internal authority guides motivation to engage civically
		Complexity	**Simple** Dualistic thinking with easy answers guides understanding of self, others, and community
			Nuanced Increasingly complex thinking guides understanding of self, others, and community
	External Contexts	**Experiences**	**Separate** Each involvement seen as distinct from other areas of engagement and ones' identity
			Integrated Different engagement areas understood in the contexts of other engagement areas and of a whole self
		Relationships	**Uni-directional** Beneficiary of relationships seen as mostly one party or another
			Mutual Reciprocity seen as key feature of relationships

students' experiences, the Waves (A, B, and C) can be useful as developmental phases

for students' civic commitment-making. For example, Wave A (with flows of others,

exposure, witness), when experienced in less sophisticated cognitive and situational

contexts (like less complex thinking, externally motivated actions, uni-directional

relationships, and separate and not integrated experiences), describes an early starting

place for students' civic commitment. In this early development, if a student was in a

particular Wave in one current (Wave B's Connection current: seeing social change work

as 'mine,' for example), she strongly tended to also be in Wave B in the other Currents

(Mattering: feeling a sense of belonging in communities, and Purpose: inclined to explore engagement opportunities in a self-initiated manner, to continue the example).

A Wave's flows, though, could be and often were experienced more than once. When students moved to more sophisticated internal and external contexts (like using a blend of internal and external motivations for action and understanding relationships as mutually beneficial, etc.), a Wave was experienced again, later in their more progressed development of civic commitment. Wave A in the less sophisticated contexts tended to occur before Waves B and C in the less sophisticated contexts, and with all of its Currents in similar positions (exposure, witness, and others occurring together). But with greater sophistication in the contexts, different parts of Waves A, B, and C could be experienced in concurrent and mixed ways. In this way, I propose a model that can explain developmentally distinctive positions during experiences of early civic commitment. Once a student is thinking in more sophisticated ways the processes involved in civic commitment came to be experienced in a more fluid, less linear and predictably clustered manner. The most relevant themes in their continued civic commitment development remained largely explainable within the three Waves of processes I outlined, however the clustering and order of the Waves and the Currents lost some of their distinctions as students' contexts became more sophisticated.

In this chapter I described how I made meaning of the participants' narratives and experiences in becoming committed to creating social change using a data-inspired theoretical model (Figure 16) to describe the patterns and themes I heard in participants' narratives of developing civic commitment. In the introduction I previewed and

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summarized the defining characteristics of the developmental processes in the model, in

Table 2, and the developmental contexts in the model, in Table 3. I made connections

among participants' narratives, my theorizing, and existing streams of research to

describe and analyze my findings. I use Chapter Six to identify implications and

applications for these emergences of thought to the fields of college student development,

service learning, and higher education.

CHAPTER SIX: INTERPRETATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This research study sought to understand the lived experiences of traditionally aged undergraduate college students' experiences of becoming committed to creating social change. I used narrative inquiry and document review to better understand the experiential and developmental aspects of twelve exemplary students' civic journeys. In Chapter Four I shared the participants' stories as individual cases, and in Chapter Five I synthesized the patterns across the cases to answer my research questions in regards to the experiential and developmental aspects common in students' paths of civic commitment.

In this final chapter I interpret my findings, and discuss three implications and recommendations for practice that I gleaned from the data analysis and discussion in Chapters Four and Five. I then identify limitations to this study, reflect on the research process, and discuss areas for further research. I conclude with a general summary of the study and the lessons I gathered as a researcher and learner.

Interpretation

In my literature review I identified four key elements involved in students' commitment to creating social change, supported most specifically by Knefelkamp (2008) and AAC&U (2012). Those elements were: knowledge and experience of the real world with others over time; complex thinking skills; empathetic and values-based ways of connecting with others; and reflective, sustained civic actions. This study contributed to the literature by describing and analyzing *how* twelve college students developed in

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those areas over multiple years and across overlapping service learning, academic, co-curricular, community, intra-personal and inter-personal experiences.

Across a wide array of engagements, students moved through increasingly sophisticated *processes* that build their senses of mattering, connection, and purpose. Within the changing internal and external *contexts* of blended sources of motivation, increased complexity in thinking, integrated experiences, and mutually beneficial relationships, participants developed as committed citizens over time. The model of the river I created emphasizes the ongoing nature of these interconnected processes (currents) and contexts (banks) in students' lives. It provides a developmental model (waves) of how occasional interest and exposure in civic engagement can develop into more holistic, sustained civic commitment for college students.

Students experienced the elements of the connection, mattering, and purpose processes multiple times as they encountered new, different environments. Their repeated encounters posed fresh questions due to their shifting internal and external contexts. Some students grappled with finding a grounded sense of connection, mattering, and purpose in each unique, challenging environment. For others, they gradually learned the ups and downs of the waves and trusted themselves to be uncertain explorers amidst the currents of civic commitment development. Their contextual 'banks' did not feel entirely swept away each time a new wave introduced itself. Rather, more sophisticated thinking allowed them to access all the different lessons they had learned from previous experiences of Waves A, B, and C. Those who embraced the shifting, continuous nature of the complex processes, saw consistency in patterns across time in their work,

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reflectively developed their own voices, and found support from meaningful relationships seemed to enjoy and pursue their commitment to civic engagement in more adaptable, sustainable ways.

Implications for Practice

Considering what lessons emerged in this study, I propose three areas for improving practice in higher education to support college students becoming committed change makers. Each area was developed using existing research and this study's unique contributions. These are practices that I believe will help students continue to reengage meaningfully from one civic experience to the next: strengthening students' community contexts; supporting development of their internal authorities; and building places for integrating their multiple levels of experience.

Build Communities of Engagement

Doing *with* others seems key for early engagement and moving from initial involvement to future, deeper involvement. This affirms research on the importance of cohort models for learning (e. g. Keen & Hall, 2009; Roholt, Hildreth, & Baizerman, 2009). It follows Knefelkamp's (2008) emphasis on civic identity development as happening among others, and Colby and Damon's (1992) finding that those who stayed committed to the public good had strong social networks. This study's participants illuminated how cohorts and supportive communities initially, and continuously, shaped their civic commitments.

Whether in motivation, role models, or friend circles, participants repeatedly gained understandings of their roles and social injustices via their community-influenced

experiences. While many service learning researchers focus on individual learning and outcomes or institutional practices, this study's participants indicated that peer circles and structures that promoted peer connections kept them engaged and learning in ways that supported their growth as change makers.

The desire to find good company among others with similar cares initiated the desire to explore civic experiences for many students. Some students knew to look for this in college, branching off of their pre-college experiences in communities of caring. In marketing of civic engagement experiences to students, an emphasis on finding belonging within the work by doing it with others would support long term engagement. For students who came to community work through service learning classes, providing space for group comradery within the classes, not just individual creation of deliverables or singularly focused discussion of the project at hand, could help make those academic spaces better launching pads for students new to civic work. Making explicit connections with ongoing opportunities within student groups outside the classroom could also further support students to pursue broader civic work outside of their initial exposure.

In programs that welcome students to campus, emphasis on civic engagement as places to find on-campus community could spark interest and exposure for entering college students not already seeking that out. Existing early residential and campus experiences that aim to build community among students could be linked to learning about and acting on off-campus community needs, the way many colleges' service-based orientation programs operate. Expansion or introduction of these programs could help build the community contexts that support students' lasting civic involvement.

Programs that already emphasize and accelerate peer connections, like residential learning communities, can be intentional about setting up student leaders as the mentors that the service learning literature recommends. These "coaches" could be faculty and staff, as Eyler and Giles (1999, p. 185) endorsed, but ensuring peer leadership presence, too, in both academic and co-curricular settings could help foster community connections and belonging at multiple levels.

Foster Voice-finding

Understanding college student development theories and applying them in the best practices of community engagement can help university educators increase students' capacity for complexity and care, key aspects of developing commitment to the public good (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Brookfield & Holtz, 2011; Hardy & Cardo, 2005; Hatcher, 2011; Martínez et al., 2009; Parks, 2011). Voice-finding, or building of an internal authority that can navigate external demands with integrity, is a key facet of such development (e.g. Baxter Magolda, 2008; Belenky, et al., 1986), and showed up as an important process in this study's participants' civic commitment experiences.

That process was largely cultivated in reflective spaces, which is consistent with Colby and Damon's (1992) finding that regular moral reflection was a characteristic of exemplary citizens, and the service learning field's emphasis on thinking along with doing (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Dewey, 1916; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Often, those reflective spaces were in community settings, both in and out of the classroom—many of my recommendations in the community-building section above could create the supportive environments in which students could pay better attention to their learning

from their collections of experiences. To make those community spaces more reflective and supportive of voice-development, university educators could weave in narrative inquiry. The narrative interview space was a reflective learning environment for this study's participants. Narrative inquiry, beyond use as a research method, is effective in and outside of the classroom. Narrative approaches applied to reflections effectively use the power of stories of experience to aid students in learning (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013).

Narrative inquiry could come in many different flavors within a university setting. In classroom spaces, even those that aren't designated as service learning classes, it could show up as sentipensante pedagogy. Proposed by Rendón (2008), it calls for more integrative teaching that honors students' reasoning and feeling parts of themselves and encourages self-reflexivity and wisdom-seeking. Nash and Murray (2010) and Parks (2011) point to college faculty and staff as mentors in advising roles to create relational spaces where supported story-building can help students figure out what matters in their lives, from their own perspectives. Engaging students in more large-scale questions (Parks, 2011), like asking students to talk about their beliefs across assignments or conversations that invite introspection across time, can be applied in all areas of the university. Expanding the realms and kinds of reflection, inside and outside of its traditional housing in academic service learning, could support students' capacities for civic commitment.

Personal development, like developing internal authority, is necessary for students to become engaged in their community spaces in more sophisticated, self-driven, and

sustained ways, but personal development alone is not sufficient for creating engaged citizens. Reflection prompts that focus on "personal development versus reflection that emphasizes an analysis of systemic social inequalities" create predominantly personal development outcomes (Enfield & Collins, 2008, p. 106). Personal development alone is not the goal for civic engagement. Civic educators need to construct a balance of raising students' awareness of self concurrently with raising awareness of self in community.

Support Synthesis Space

Thinking about students' civic commitment as processes of repeating waves and currents within contextual banks could help educators to provide developmentally appropriate support for students becoming committed to creating social change. In particular, it could help them nudge students towards conceiving of their many, diverse experiences as part of a continuous, larger river of commitment.

When students were able to gather their community experiences into a general storyline about themselves, their work gained meaning. Having multiple and repeated civic experiences was necessary for the possibility of integrating those experiences to occur. Service learning research suggests clusters of civic experiences to aid in that process (Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich, & Torney-Purta, 2006). AAC&U (2012) recommends that higher education institutions "deliberately orchestrate" civic experiences for students to build their engagement.

While there was no NFC campus-wide system for building civic commitment, certain structures helped participants build their journeys over time—whether that was programmatic expectations and required 'exposure' events in the SLRLC, or common

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language and frameworks of social justice that were used to frame experiences across different NFC contexts—consistent structural elements assisted students to see their own growth and learning. Creating reflective learning communities for incoming college students that maintain connections to students across all four years of college could help students consistently engage and make sense of their engagement across the college years. This could also provide the important community context for sustained and growing involvement, the reflective elements that develop aspects of self-authorship, and consistency and clustering that supports their sense of integration with their civic actions and selves.

Intentional, integrated civic experiences implemented at the institutional level seem ideal. If students do not have the ability, motivation, or relational capital to figure out a 'flow' on their own, these coordinated structures could help students have a better chance at gathering and connecting the dots of their community experiences. However, that would be difficult to implement, requiring significant desire, time, and resources. Butin (2006) discussed the many challenges for institutions to create cohesive service learning programs. But, we can see in this study's participants' experiences that synthesis often happened without wide-spread institutional structures, and often outside of strictly service learning environments.

As I mention in Chapter Five, AAC&U and Kuh (2008) identified high impact educational practices, specific interventions that lead to greater student engagement, learning, and success. Service learning is one of these, and I focused on it as the educational pedagogy in this study. However, when participants were free to discuss all

of the influences on their civic journeys, participants often named multiple high impact

practices, and found ways to weave them back to their civic identities. Focusing on

making relational structures among mentors and peers more prevalent and accessible

seems like a more attainable implementation goal to encourage integration of experiences

in students' lives, and it could also support students' integration of areas in their

supposedly 'not civic' lives into their civic identities and roles.

Within advising and mentoring relationships, increasing the emphasis on the

process of becoming committed could be helpful for increasing students' potential to

integrate their diverse experiences into their stories. Assignments or conversations that

celebrate the progression of students' engagement and thinking over different semesters

(among classes, studying abroad, internships, etc.) and years (across leadership roles,

residences, awareness of their identities, etc.) would invite students to synthesize their

experiences and the meaning of those experiences. While higher education institutions

usually highlight the individual completion of certain tasks, encouraging students to take

risks and attempt collaborative endeavors with less defined end-points could help

students embrace the non-linear nature of continuously building civic commitment.

Integration from areas not typically defined as civic learning spaces would also help

students explore all they enjoy bringing to their communities. Asking students to weave

together learning from multiple areas of their lives (like the transferable skills from their

retail jobs or their confidence in networking that came from leading an outdoors club)

and having them consider what equips them to contribute as citizens could help students

blend their private and public roles. This is in line with Adams, Brock, Gordon, Grohs,

and Kirk's (2014) recommendation to use portfolio-building as an assignment to help students integrate "seemingly disparate" domains in their lives (p. 183). Providing students educational spaces and supportive mentors that help students develop an integrated understanding of themselves, their experiences, and their communities across their college years could support more students in deepening their civic commitment.

<div align="center">**Research Limitations and Reflections**</div>

In the process of analyzing and writing this dissertation, I became aware of the limitations of my research and how my background and ways of understanding the world impacted my work. I describe the boundaries around my findings, how I paid attention to my roles and identities, and what I learned through my process as a novice researcher. The research methodology chapter described steps I took to build trustworthiness in my work, and these additional descriptions allow readers to further contextualize my uniquely formed interpretations of the data.

Limitations

Being a qualitative study, there is limited transferability and generalizability in this research. The small number of interviews (twelve), while they reached a saturation point where similar themes came up repeatedly among them, could be increased to be able to broaden the application of the findings. The majority of the participants were white, female-identifying students. This was representative of the service learning population at NFC, but a more diverse sample would capture the nuances of more college students' identity-informed civic experiences. The participants also came from just one university, a mid-sized public school in the northeast. Since institutional cultures impact

student experiences of civic engagement (e.g. Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Young, Shinnar, Ackerman, Carruthers, & Young, 2007), repetition of this study across different institutions would illuminate how different higher education environments shape students' experiences. Participants were traditionally-aged college students. Research with non-traditionally aged students, a growing population in undergraduate education, could see how different life stages, ages, and college experiences mix to shape civic commitment journeys.

Researcher Identity Influence

My personal experiences of college being an instructive and transformative space for civic commitment formation, and witnessing and supporting students becoming engaged in their communities through my work in higher education drew me to this topic and research questions. Research, personal experiences, and professional observations previous to this study shaped my perspective. I transparently described these background lenses in my literature review and methodology chapters. I noticed and critically examined the parallels in my pre-college and college experiences and many of theirs, such as similar family of origin role modeling and expectations for civic engagement, peer group support early in college, and challenges in self-care. Getting students' reflections on their former writings in the last sections of the interviews helped ground my analysis in students' stories and their understandings of them, affirming that my experiences informed but did not overly mold analyses of others' journeys. My interview protocol organized by theme, such as origins, progression, influences (external and internal), challenges, future, and reflection (Appendix A) allowed me to converse with

the participants in ways that addressed my specific curiosities but allowed their stories to take the lead.

I was attentive to any patterns of difference between the participants I had already known before our encounters as researcher and participants, and those whom I met in this process. Something I noticed was how I had to ask the previously known students to be explicit about things, since they assumed, correctly, that I remembered aspects of their lives without fully explaining them in the interview setting. I started the interviews thinking that the quality of the interview data might be lower with the students I was just meeting, however the previously unknown students seemed to enjoy the opportunity to detail their experiences to someone new. Reflecting back on their writings seemed especially important among these participants to facilitate their sharing the parts of their stories that were challenging, and I am grateful for their willing vulnerability to share the less smooth and easy parts of their civic journeys.

Another distinction, and potential limitation, I was aware of during the interviews and analysis were the reported SLRLC experiences among the participants I previously knew. Were they talking up their SLRLC experiences because I, the director of that SLRLC, was the researcher? That identity of mine inevitably influenced our interactions, even though I made it clear that I was acting in the role of a researcher during our data collection interactions. The SLRLC participants' common focus on peer connections within the SLRLC, though, an area I was not directly involved in, implied to me that their SLRLC attributions of influence were not mentioned only because of my dual affiliations. Furthermore, non-SLRLC participants addressed their living environments as

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influential, too, and RLCs in general came up as supportive spaces for a sense of belonging. My SLRLC connection, then, seemed not solely responsible for students' mention of its (generally positive) influence.

Parallel Processes

As I constructed meaning from participants' stories, and wrote up what emerged, I found myself alternatively overwhelmed and inspired. I experienced times where I would zoom in to a particular way to code, for example, and for several hours would review twelve interviews using that method, feeling very productive. When it came time to zoom out and integrate what I found into the broader work, though, I could get stuck for days. Eventually I would find a way to focus my thoughts, usually in a series of reflective memos to myself, through talking about it with a writing buddy, my advisor, or my partner. By the end of the week I would have been able to write about my ideas productively and learn how to approach a writing roadblock differently, even if only in my beliefs and attitude, the next time around. In a process of zooming in and out, and connecting with others and my own voice, I came to trust the cycle of data analysis, meaning making, and productive writing.

My experiences and growth as a qualitative research analyst and writer occurred concurrently while developing ideas of what processes inform students' civic commitment experiences and growth. At times I felt accomplished and confident in my independent decisions and capacities, with a clear path forward ("I'm doing it! This makes sense, is fun, and I'm a rock star qualitative researcher!"). At other times, I felt unsure of my approach and like I was moving around blindly, convinced I was not

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making progress, doubting my decisions and looking for outside affirmation of my choices ("I am making this up, poorly, and if I ever finish this, which I probably won't, I hope no one reads it.") As I chugged along in my writing, I found similar experiences in my participants' processes of civic commitment development—building confidence in their internal authority through self-efficacy, exposure to new ideas altering their sense of direction to create doubt and eventually new direction, and supportive relationships influencing their motivations, progress, and persistence. The processes of moving among and within tensions and cycles that I came to identify and describe in participants' civic commitment journeys felt parallel to the processes I experienced as I grappled with the complex and shifting work of research and writing. This reflection subtly influenced my findings. It connected to my understandings of development, in how the varying contexts of our lives and levels of comfort and novelty with those different contexts and tasks can locate an individual in multiple developmental positions at once, and in how development follows a cyclical stream. It also confirmed my interest in looking at overlapping areas of lives, through narrative inquiry, to understand how different spaces of learning can influence development in the others. Further, it pointed to a process philosophy perspective. At its extreme, it is an approach that focuses on "becoming" instead of "being" (Whitehead, 1978, p. 23), although the process-based approach also appears as paying attention dually to "composing" and the "composition" (Parks, 2011, p. 34), which I find more applicable. This approach would be a useful lens for future research on iterative learning and creation spaces, like civic commitment making, other complex

processes such as generating qualitative research, and comparisons of the human experience across these processes.

Further Research

Prompted by the research process and data analysis, I see multiple areas for continued exploration. These are sparks that came up as I analyzed my data and constantly tempted me to deviate from my research questions, but deserve distinct attention by myself and others apart from this dissertation. Applying similar methodology in a more longitudinal way, learning from non-engagers, attending to social identities more closely, and making career and leadership connections are areas for future research. Each of these four areas is described in detail below.

Methods

The methodological approach can lead to future studies. This dissertation responded to the call from other literature for a more broad and integrated look at students' community engagement journeys (e. g. Amnå, 2009; Johnson, 2015; Mitchell, 2015; Weerts & Cabrera, 2015). Indeed, using narrative inquiry with students who had multiple influential experiences across multiple years in college helped me answer my research questions about students' lived experiences of overlapping influences in a unique way. Narrative inquiry supplemented by document analysis by the researcher and the participants also provided an important perspective, as students' document-assisted reflection on their pasts yielded some the most insightful aspects of their interviews. Other reflective methodologies, like the use of artistic expression, group conversations, and metaphor-generation, would be other ways to learn about students' holistic

experiences, and may reveal stories left untold in the more one-on-one, linear oral and written research traditions I employed.

Participants

Selecting different participants would also enrich this research vein. I am curious about what direction these participants' journeys will take as they move through and past graduation and their first jobs. Mitchell (2015) looked at college alumni two to three years after graduation to examine the long-term impacts on career choice and civic engagement involvement of their college cohort service learning experiences, but the study was the first time Mitchell's participants were studied in that way. It would be interesting to follow this dissertation's group of participants forward, and conduct interviews about their community commitment into the future to see how they continued to develop, using the same interview prompts as they had within the year of their graduation. In my study, their previous writings that captured snap shots of their experiences and perspectives guided their reflections in the interviews to new levels. Ahead, students could listen back to these interviews from within their graduation year to assist and enhance the longitudinal and reflective nature of potential future research. Do, or how do, civic development patterns persist after college? How do themes of mattering, connection, and purpose continue to unfold in their lives? Following the same group across time, and using data from previous collections to prompt self-reflection, could give practitioners useful information about how to prepare students for the life transitions that follow college graduation.

Another study that would be interesting to pursue would be to speak with students who did not choose to engage civically in college. It would illuminate, from negative cases, what pedagogical and developmental influences impacted their choices to leave the processes of civic commitment making behind. Especially interesting, to focus on the cognitive developmental side of this research, would be speaking with college students who had similar pedagogical experiences to the students in this study but with different engagement outcomes. Weerts and Cabrera (2015) created a typology of civic involvement among college students in a mixed methods study. Non-engagers were a category of students who did not partake in civic engagement (Weerts & Cabrera, 2015), and one could use their typology to engage in the methodology used by this dissertation to see how their college experiences and development compared to those who became more committed to civic work.

Identities

Different civic commitment experiences and approaches are influenced by differences in social identities such as race, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and gender (e.g. Chesler & Scalera, 2006; Johnson, 2015; Novick, Seidner, & Hugley, 2011). I included in my findings how experiences of marginality influenced students' journeys, including their openness to perspective-taking and outreach to others (Daloz, et al., 1996) and their seeking to create spaces of belonging for themselves and peers with similarly marginalized identities. I did not spend time unpacking how gender seemed to influence civic commitment development of this study's participants. How does gender influence students' civic journeys and identities, in the contexts of their communities? Considering

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the majority of students participating and being studied in service learning research identify as women (e.g. Astin & Sax, 1998; Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000), and the community context seemed to impact students' civic growth significantly, more information on how various gender identities might affect experiences of engagement would be useful for educators creating civic learning environments.

Leadership and Career Development

Students' responses pointed to connections of their civic lives with their lives as leaders and professionals. Underdeveloped areas in this research include links to career development and leadership development. Career development and civic engagement literature mainly focuses on the skill formation and networking provided by service learning (e.g. Ramson, 2014; Williams Howe, 2014). Considering the Purpose current, though, and its overlaps with career development models (Sharf, 2002), further exploration of the psychological development of students and their civic and professional aspirations, influences, and decisions could yield useful insights into supporting students integrated post-graduate paths as professionals and citizens. Connections to models of collaborative, feminist leadership for social change (e.g. Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Komives, 2009; Wielkiewicz, Fischer, Stelzner, Overland, & Sinner, 2012) and students' experiences in the Mattering current also provide areas ripe for exploration.

Conclusion

The need for more active, engaged, and competent citizens is paramount in our quickly changing, diverse world rife with complex social injustices. Higher education

aims to meet this demand, and attempts to meet its public mission using a patchwork of pedagogies and programs with inconsistent outcomes. Scholarship on service learning and cognitive development around building civic purpose supports that certain educational practices make an impact on students' lives, and certain characteristics of development are helpful for engaging in the process of civic commitment. This study's findings were largely consistent with that literature, and provided in-depth perspective on how civic learning (AAC&U, 2012) and civic identity development (Knefelkamp, 2008) models play out in students' civic commitment development.

I examined how the variety of practices and perspectives synthesize in the lived experiences of students' journeys of commitment to creating social change. While each participant's story was unique, patterns of common experiences emerged in processes and contexts that I described and analyzed through a new model of civic commitment development (Figure 16). Participants cycled through currents of questions and meaning-making around the themes of connection, mattering, and purpose that continuously reengaged and deepened their understanding and practices of civic engagement. Their thinking and ways of knowing generally became more sophisticated as they gained more experiences over time, and their more sophisticated thinking allowed them to approach their civic engagement from a more self-led place that took increasing levels of complexity into account. Supportive relationships and integration of their experiences helped build students' commitments to the processes that progressed them along, overall, to feeling a greater sense of a personal role in social change work, greater feeling of belonging within their communities, greater sense of direction for their civic work.

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Creating this model of development, I was able to both address my research questions of how students experienced becoming committed to creating social change, and provide a useful model for understanding and actively supporting college students' civic commitment-making.

In the personal statement I wrote for my doctoral program application, I identified my research interests in the following questions:

> How can we best use service learning to help students understand and respond responsibly to social injustice? How do students come to care about their community impact? How does experiential learning in educational environments shape that 'coming to care' process? How do the ways different students get there create the different places they arrive? How do students' social identities impact their development and learning?

Those questions flowed consistently through my doctoral studies, and this dissertation project in particular helped me dive into those curiosities. In the process, it grew my appreciation for: the variety of research traditions that approach the questions around developing social change makers; the pressing need and high potential for higher education to attend to its social mission more actively; the wisdom students bring to making sense of their own experiences; the power of communities and relationships for nurturing transformative action and reflection; the importance of supporting voice-finding for students as educators; and, the possibilities and challenges of generating and interpreting narratives. The meandering streams that led me to this inquiry, analysis, and interpretations still generate wonder and passion for my future research and work.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I am trying to understand how people in college become committed to creating positive social change. Can you share your understanding of the kind of person you are in your communities? In other words, what identit(ies) or role(s) do you play in your communities? *IDENTITY/ROLE*

I'd like to understand more about how you came to be a [identity/role named by participant: e.g. someone who takes action in community, a change-maker, an active citizen, a committed community leader]. What are some ways/how did that came about for you? *ORIGIN*

      Probe if necessary: How did you start to care about being a [identity/role]? Stories or examples of how that came to be how you are in your communities?

      Probe: Why did you start to care about [identity/role named by participant]?

What sorts of things have you done that express that [id/role]? How has this [identity/role named by participant] looked at different points in your life at college? *PROGRESSION*

I'd like to hear about some of the key influences that have shaped your path to being [identity/role named by participant]. What are some key external factors

that have influenced you? …like experiences, relationships, or contexts that have had an impact? *INFLUENCES (external)*

Probe: Now that you've named what those are, how have they done that?

Probe: What about influences present in your college years?

What about your RLC involvement's impact?

What are some key factors about who you are, personally, that you think have influenced your path to becoming the kind of person you are in your communities? *INFLUENCES (internal)*

Examples: skills, ways of being, beliefs, identities, understandings you hold within yourself

Probe: To get at how those internal influences have influenced your path, can you give me a specific example of ways that internal influence plays out in your current work?

These influences encourage your engagement as a [id/role]. Do you experience any challenges to living that out on a regular basis?

Do you have ideas for future plans?

I'm going to share two pieces of *writing* you've done previously—[describe source of documents].

Take a few minutes to read over your writings (provide documents). After reading

them, I'll be asking you about if there are parts of yourself and your community

work that seem similar across the years, and if there are any parts that seem to

have changed over time.

What were those like to read? Any initial reactions that stand out?

Are there any similarities of how you understand and enact your community

engagement then and now?

Are there any differences of how you understand and enact your community

engagement then and now?

What is it like to notice those things that are similar and different, looking back

from where you are now?

Appendix B: Documents Reviewed

Type of document	Year in college written	General nature of prompting question(s)	Who had it	Primary SL Affiliation of authors
Application to SLRLC program	Winter before starting college	Experiences of community engagement and leadership; Most meaningful involvement, and hopes for civic engagement in college	Anna, Ashley, Joe, Sarah, Vale, Sami, Moe, Annie	SLRLC
Reflection essay on SL Leadership project in SLRLC seminar	End of second year of college	Define leadership and if/how/why concept of leadership changed through project work	Anna, Ashley, Joe, Sarah, Valley, Sami, Moe, Annie	SLRLC
Application to TASL position	Third year of college	Experiences with and interest in SL; Community-based leadership skills, qualifications, and experiences	Jen, Thomas	TASL
Application to CCSL Alternative Break (AB) Leadership position	Third or fourth years of college	Interest in program and role; leadership style, strengths, qualities, challenges, and examples;	June (Wrote in 4th year), Mia (3rd), Sami (3rd)	CCSL

Type of document	Year in college written	General nature of prompting question(s)	Who had it	Primary SL Affiliation of authors
Application to CCSL Alternative Break (AB) Leadership position (Continued)		understanding of social justice concepts		
"This I Believe" essay reflection for class	First or second years of college	Belief statement about a grounding belief you hold	Joe (Wrote in 2nd year), Mia (1st year)	SLRLC and CCSL
Reflection at closing of TASL experience	4th year	Descriptions of highlights, challenges, and learning moments in TASL experience	Jen	CCSL

Appendix C: Documents' Prompting Questions

Type of document	Specific Prompting Questions
Application to CCSL Alternative Break (AB) Leadership position	About 200 words for each question: Have you been on an AB before? If yes, what trip did you go on? Why do you want to spend your spring break volunteering with Alternative Break? Why do you want to lead a trip instead of participate? What do you hope to gain from this experience? How would you describe your leadership style? What are two strengths and two challenges you face as a leader? Please give a brief example of each. What qualities would you most like to see in your co-leader? What is your understanding of social justice? What does social justice mean to you? Is there a particular population or type of project that you would feel uncomfortable working with? Given your class schedule, extracurricular activities, and/or work obligations, will attending a weekly site leader meeting and upholding other AB-related commitments be problematic? Please describe your other time commitments.
"This I Believe" essay reflection for a college class	Write a 500-600 word statement of a personal belief. **Tell a story about you:** Be specific. Name your belief. Be positive. Be personal. In the contexts of the classes in which this was assigned: relate to your civic engagement commitments.
Application to TASL position	Have you taken other SL classes? Which ones? Why do you want to be a TASL? Please describe how your experiences with service learning, community service, or the non-profit field, as well as any experiences with teaching or leadership in educational settings qualify you for this position. How did you learn about the TASL Program? Please describe any additional experiences or training you have had in project management, intercultural communication, or cultural competency.

Application to SLRLC program	In about 250 for each prompt— Describe three service experiences and your responsibilities in each; Describe your most meaningful service experience; How will you contribute to an atmosphere of inclusion in the SLRLC program?
Reflection essay on SL Leadership project in SLRLC seminar	In about 700 words, Reflect back on our definitions of leadership from the first class. How would you define it after the leadership experience you've had with your project? Why?
Reflection at closing of TASL experience	Discuss the following prompts, reflecting on your semester-long TASL experience. Most Rewarding Experience: Most Challenging: Accomplishments: Something you'd do differently: Most enjoyed:

Appendix D: Research Consent Document

Title of Research Project: College Students' Commitment to Social Change

Principal Investigator: Kailee Brickner-McDonald, M.Ed., Ed. D. Candidate
Faculty Sponsor: Jill Tarule
Sponsor: University of Vermont

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you meet the following criteria. You have:

- Taken at least two civic leadership roles related to a social issue;
- Been involved for at least two years working on a particular social issue;
- Gained a sense of meaning in your life through working for the public good;
- Articulated a desire to continue working for the public good in your career beyond NFC;
- Have graduated or plan to graduate within the year from the university, and;
- Participated in a service learning experience during your time at college, and have at least one written document in which you reflect on your role in your communities available for analysis.

I am currently a student who is doing this study as part of my dissertation for my Doctorate in Education.

Why is This Research Study Being Conducted?

I am conducting this research to explore how college students become committed to creating positive social change in their communities.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

Twelve students within a year of their graduation from NFC, previously or currently either a member of the Service learning Residential Learning Community, leader of a Co-Curricular Service Learning program, or service learning teaching assistant.

What Is Involved In The Study?

I, the researcher, will interview you individually to hear your stories about what influences shaped your path to contributing to the common good. I will also ask to examine two pieces of your reflective writing from your past four years, and invite you to do the same during our interview. Some questions will include what role(s) you play in your communities, how you came to care about your place in your communities, and what key influences have shaped your path to caring for the public good. The face-to-face interview will take approximately one hour. The session will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only.

What Are The Benefits of Participating In The Study?

There may be no direct benefit to you for your participation. However you may gain some insight about your contributions and process of commitment to creating social change.

Are There Any Costs?

There are no costs associated with this study other than your time.

What Is the Compensation?

There is no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

Can You Withdraw or Be Withdrawn From This Study?

You may discontinue your participation in this study at any time. There are no consequences for discontinuing this study and withdrawing will in no way impact your relationship with anyone at NFC.

If you choose to discontinue your participation in this study, please send an email to me (kbrickne@uvm.edu) asking that you be removed from the study. All collected information including audio digital files will be deleted.

What About Confidentiality?

During the interviews we will use a pseudonym of your choice to talk about you, and in all observations and transcriptions you will only be identified by the pseudonym. I will remove identifying features in transcriptions or your writings and in any quotes or other written materials. I will use your selected pseudonym on your writings (otherwise anonymized) to link your audio recorded and transcribed interview to your writings. I will keep the audio digital files for one year before deleting them. I will store paper research materials in a private, locked office to ensure security, and I will store electronic documents and digital audio files on a secure, password protected digital network.

Contact Information

You may contact me at (802) 656-2575 or kbrickne@uvm.edu, or my advising faculty member Jill Tarule (jtarule@uvm.edu) for more information about this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project you should contact the Director of the Research Protections Office at the University of Vermont at 802-656-5040.

Statement of Verbal Consent

You have been given a summary of this research study. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice. If you agree to participate in this study, your verbal consent to participate will be documented in the research record.

Please keep a copy of this consent document for your record.