

Creating intentional paths to citizenship: An analysis of participation in student organizationsJulianne Gassman
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This study examines undergraduate students' that graduated from a Midwestern university in May 2013 through December 2015 and their perception of their development of core competencies identified by Bok (2006), related to their participation in student organizations. The results indicated that students who participate in student organizations are significantly more likely to develop citizenship and other related skills and abilities. Furthermore, their degree of involvement, measured by the number of organizations they participate in, their level of involvement and the role students have within the organization can impact their development of competencies.

Recently, a university provost asked a group of students, "Why are you getting a college degree?" Most answered, "To get a job" or "To be able to make a living." No one commented they were at the university to learn the skills needed to be an engaged citizen. Clearly, getting a job was the primary goal for the students. This objective seems to be slightly different from the long-standing goal of colleges and universities in the United States (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Finkelstein, 1988; Ketcham, 1992; Newell & Davis, 1988). Though there have been some shifts in priorities, such as the need for educational specialization during the industrial revolution, the development of citizenship has been among the top priorities for higher education for hundreds of years (Sax, 2004). However, by the mid-1980s it was discovered that higher education institutions were failing to adequately develop civic responsibility in their graduates. A recent publication released at the White House, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012) urged higher education to specifically define across all programs the public purpose of their field and their methods of implementing civic learning outcomes. According to Lewis (2014), the American democracy is dependent upon higher education to develop not just informed and active citizens, but leaders.

Researchers have provided evidence that postsecondary enrollment is associated with an increase in civic responsibility. Specifically, college graduates are more inclined to help others, influence social values, influence the political structure and become engaged in community action plans (Sax, 2004). According to Astin (1977) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), attending college is associated with altruism and civic responsibility. However, the nature of specific activities may influence citizen development, such as attending religious services, as well as involvement that leads to creating a habit of involvement (Sax, 2004).

Habitual behaviors are thought to carry over into life after college. "Therefore, the message to institutions is to provide a variety of opportunities for student involvement, particularly in ways that expose students to diverse people and issues" (Sax, 2004, p. 78).

Both the variety of opportunities (Sax, 2004) and the student's degree of involvement (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, Ethington, & Smart, 1988) potentially influence and enhance the development of civic responsibility. Astin's (1984) student involvement theory emphasized the need to understand how students are spending their time, as both student time and effort are associated with developmental and learning gains (Astin, 1984). Studies have provided evidence of beneficial student outcomes associated with student engagement both inside and outside of the classroom, including an increased likelihood of completing a degree (Astin, 1984). Understanding a student's commitment and engagement in service-learning, co-curricular and extracurricular activities may provide insight on the potential influence of student involvement on the development of engaged citizens.

Brint, Cantwell, and Saxena (2012) discussed in depth how students are spending their time while attending a college or university. Today, the term "talent waste" refers to students devoting more time to their social lives and less time studying and working on their academics. "The amount of time students spend on their studies in and out of the class has fallen by about 15 hours a week since the early 1960s, controlling for socio-demographic and institutional affiliations, and the average now registers at a little over 25 hours per week" (Brint et al., 2012, p. 2). Babcock and Marks (2010) and Brint and Cantwell (2010) found that students spend 40 or more hours per week on other activities related to their social and recreational interests. Brint et al. (2012) suggested that institutions should "...begin the process of improvement by emphasizing

techniques for increasing student's classroom participation" (p. 21). Given the increasing body of knowledge indicating that much of a student's out-of-classroom time in activities such as service-learning, community-based learning and student organizations is beneficial (Kuh, 2008), it is suggested we study the impact of these experiences in more depth before increasing classroom time.

Bok's Framework

Derek Bok's (2006) seminal work, *Our Underachieving College: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should be Learning More*, provided a framework for what is important in a college graduate. Though some have criticized his framework, Bok outlined a set of competencies embracing knowledge, skills and competencies necessary not only in the workforce, but also needed to be an informed, active citizen equipped to participate in a democracy. Bok called for institutions to focus on development of the following competencies in students: (a) learning to communicate effectively, (b) the ability to think critically, (c) building character, (d) preparing for citizenship, (e) living with diversity, (f) preparing for a global society, (g) acquiring broader interests, and (h) preparing for a career and vocational development. Additionally, Bok (2006) noted that:

...attempts to prescribe a single overriding aim or to limit the purposes of college to the realm of intellectual development take too narrow a view of the undergraduate experience and threaten to impose a moratorium on efforts to nurture some extremely important human qualities during four formative years of students' lives. Instead, college should pursue a variety of purposes, including a carefully circumscribed effort to foster generally accepted values and behaviors, such as honesty and racial tolerance. Within this ample mandate, several aims seem especially important. (p. 66)

Citizenship in and of itself is a competency outlined by Bok, but the other competencies also relate to the development of citizenship. Kirilin (2003) identified four categories of civic skills, two which were communication and critical thinking. Dam and Volman (2004) noted that critical thinking is an important aspect of citizenship. Diversity and global understanding were both discussed as being important elements of civic mindedness by Bringle and Steinberg (2010) and Bringle, Hatcher and Jones (2011). The Center for Service and Learning at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis developed a framework for the civic-

minded graduate that includes three dimensions: identity, educational experiences and civic experiences (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Hatcher, 2008). The identity dimension represents a person's character as it reflects self-understanding, self-awareness and self-concept. The educational experiences dimension involves educational experiences, academic knowledge and technical skills, all of which support career preparation. Bok's framework outlines a set of competencies embracing knowledge, skills and competencies necessary not only in the workforce, but also needed to become an informed, active citizen prepared to participate in a democracy. A brief description of each competency provides definition for each area.

- Communicate: the ability to write and speak with precision, grace, clarity and persuasiveness.
- Critical thinking: the ability to define problems, identify interests on all sides, gather facts, perceive plausible solutions, exercise good judgment in choosing the best of alternatives considering forms of ordinary reasoning.
- Moral reasoning: the ability to identify ethical issues and think about them rigorously.
- Citizenship: the ability to be an informed and active participant in the process of democratic self-government.
- Living with diversity: the ability to live and work effectively with other people and form fulfilling relationships.
- Living in a global society: knowledge about international affairs, other countries and other cultures.
- A breadth of interests: the capability, knowledge and breadth of interests to fully enjoy life.
- Preparing for work: to be prepared for a career.

Regardless of an institution's defined goals, to develop citizenship or job placement, student success is central to achieving the institution's mission. High-impact practices are strategies and activities adopted by higher education that have proven to be effective in promoting student success, including academic performance, and rates of persistence and graduation (Ambos, 2015; Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh, O'Donnell, & Reed, 2013). Kuh (2008) explained high-impact practices as activities that demand considerable time and effort, involve learning outside the classroom, require meaningful interactions, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and involve feedback. Students invest time and effort,

actively participate in challenging learning experiences and discover the relevance of their learning through high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008). There are a number of high-impact practices that have been widely tested and proven to be beneficial for college students, such as service-learning, community-based learning, internships, and common intellectual experiences (Kuh, 2008).

High-impact practices tend to be categorized as curricular or co-curricular, such as service-learning. Service-learning is an instructional strategy that involves field-based “experiential learning” with community partners to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the course, therefore this is a curricular activity. “A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in a real-world setting and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences” (Kuh, 2008, p. 11). Suskie (2015) outlined that co-curricular learning experiences are out-of-classroom experiences that promote meaningful learning in concert with academic study. Such activities include first-year experiences and academic organizations and clubs. Extra-curricular activities are those not connected to academic programs, such as athletics and non-academic clubs and organizations (Suskie, 2015). It is rare that any activity is purely extra-curricular, for example an event is co-curricular for those organizing any event and “whether co-curricular or extra-curricular, should contribute to student learning, growth and development in some way, even if it is a subtle way of which students are unaware” (Suskie, 2015, p. 6).

While high-impact practices have been well tested and proven to be beneficial, we know less about the influence of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities on student development. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that because “individual effort or engagement is the critical determinant of the impact of college, then it is important to focus on the ways in which an institution can shape its academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement” (p. 602). Participation in student organizations is one form of student engagement that captures student’s time and attention. Student organizations can be characterized as curricular, such as service-learning, co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. Considering that students spend about 15 hours less on their academics per week than previously (Babcock & Marks, 2010), time is being spent elsewhere, possibly participating in student organizations.

There is an apparent need to explore student involvement to discover the influence on student’s development of desired characteristics and dispositions associated with citizenship. Lewis (2014) stated:

There is a pattern of engagement that students are involved in. How can that pattern be enhanced and improved given the scarcity of resources and the intense competition for those scarce resources in higher education? How can universities work with their students to achieve a more powerful set of engagement experiences both within the curriculum and outside of it? That is our task. (p. 62)

Institutions should consider understanding the learning that is occurring in the ways students are spending their time rather than turning to quickly to past practices and increasing the hours required in the classroom as suggested by Brint et al. (2012). Lewis (2014) suggested that higher education institutions “build up and out” programming that is currently in place as one method of strengthening engagement experiences. Analyzing the involvement in student organizations as one form of engagement experience of students can further educate university administrators on the potential benefits of current programming in this area.

One of the key recommendations by The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) stated, “Expect students to map their capacity to make civic inquiries a part of their intellectual biography over the course of their studies and to reflect on and demonstrate their cumulative learning through general education, their majors, and their out-of-class experiences” (p. 32). This study seeks to understand students’ learning developed through their participation in student organizations. As higher education institutions continue to enhance their ability to develop citizenship in their graduates, and knowing students spend less time studying and more time engaged in other activities, the purpose of this study is to examine students’ perceptions of their development of core competencies during their experience at a comprehensive Midwestern university, specifically investigating the differences between those who participate in student organizations and those who do not participate. In addition, this study will outline the differences in student perceptions of their development of core competencies, based on the number of organizations students reported being involved in, their self-reported level of

engagement, and the role they had in the organization.

Data Source and Instrument

This study applied a cross-sectional design to investigate the influence of participation in student organizations on the development of Bok's (2006) core competencies using the Core Competencies Survey (CCS). The data were collected from graduating students over six semesters from May 2013 to December 2015 at a midsize Midwestern liberal arts university. There were 7,296 graduating students who were invited to participate in the study via online invitation with a link to complete the survey using the survey software Survey Monkey. More than 1,800 students responded to at least some of the research questions for a response rate of almost 25%. After the data cleaning, the final sample consisted of 1,116 cases. The survey procedures were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The CCS survey consists of 53 survey questions designed to measure student's self-rated competencies of communication, critical thinking, character development, citizenship, diversity, global understanding, widening of interests, and career and vocational development. Ruan (2013) and Ruan, Mok, Edginton and Chin (2012) compared Bok's framework with other institutional core competencies frameworks and noted that Bok's framework was the most comprehensive. Bok's (2006) framework embraced components of the UNESCO (Delors et al., 1996) report, Rychen and Salganik's (2003) knowledge, skills and competencies, and the key competencies suggested by the European Commission for lifelong learning (European Communities, 2007). In addition, Ruan, Mok, Edginton, and Chin (2012) analyzed the development and validation of the CCS and concluded, "Analysis using Rasch measurements (Bond & Fox, 2007) showed that measures of the CCS is valid and reliable for use by higher education students" (p. 228).

Each measure on the CCS survey is comprised of four to eight survey items related to Bok's core competency framework, and values were on a Likert scale with response options from (1) extremely low to (7) extremely high. Variables included (a) communication measures such as effective communication in group discussions; adjustment of oral presentations based on subject, occasion, audience, and purpose; and the ability to express views clearly to others; (b) diversity and culture items such as understanding the importance of positively engaging with diverse groups; and communicating and building positive

relationships with people with diverse backgrounds; (c) critical thinking measures including problem solving using previously learned knowledge, thinking critically on integrated knowledge, and the ability to receive constructive criticism; (d) career or vocational development measures such as the ability to establish professional goals to promote professional growth; time management; and identification of potential risks and liabilities in career choices; (e) global understanding items such as the ability to analyze global market opportunities and global issues; (f) widening of interests items including development of a variety of hobbies to enhance quality of life, and ability to share personal interests with others; (g) citizenship measures such as the ability to defend rights and responsibilities of citizenship, understanding the rights of all others, and understanding my own actions in the greater community; and (h) character development items such as the ability to cultivate a sense of responsibility for one's own behavior, making ethical decisions in professional practice, and awareness of moral dimensions and ethical consequences.

Data Analyses

The data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 software. Descriptive analyses were used to explore participants' demographic characteristics and engagement patterns. Exploratory factor analyses were conducted on the 53 survey items as a data reduction technique and to ensure that the data for this study fit the a priori measures of the CCS survey. Though eight factors emerged consistent with the CCS measures, three survey items were omitted due to low factor loadings including one item from the diversity measure (my ability to serve the needs of diverse populations) and two items from the career and vocational development measure (my ability to articulate a solid set of career and vocational values; and my ability to establish personal goals that will promote personal growth). Factor loadings greater than .525 were retained. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2012), factor loadings greater than .55 are "good" and greater than .45 are acceptable. Each measure was comprised of four to eight items and factor scores were calculated by averaging the survey items associated with each measure. Each factor was tested for reliability, producing alpha reliability coefficients between $\alpha = .875$ and $\alpha = .940$ indicating good internal consistency (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Next, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if significant differences existed in students' self-rated development of core competencies based

on the four engagement variables: (a) participated in a student organization (yes/no), (b) number of student organizations participated in (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+), (c) level of involvement (minimally involved, participated in most/meetings/events, involved at the highest levels), and (d) role of member or leader (leader/non-leader).

Results

Descriptive analyses were used to explore participants' demographic characteristics and engagement patterns (Table 1). Approximately 66% of the respondents were female, and of those that participated in student organizations, almost 70% were female. Students of traditional college age, between 18-24, comprised almost 85% of the respondents, and of those that participated in student organizations, 88% were traditional college age. Almost 92% of the

respondents were white/Caucasian, and of those that participated in student organizations, approximately 92% were white/Caucasian. Descriptive statistics for the independent variables, participation in student organizations, are shown in Table 2. Approximately 72% of respondents reported participating in student organizations. The number of student organizations that students participated in were fairly equally distributed, with approximately 28% not participating in any organizations, 21% participating in one organization, almost 19% participating in two organizations, about 20% participating in three to four organizations, and 10% participating in five or more organizations. Fifty percent of the students reported being highly engaged in at least one organization and about 54% reported being a leader in at least one organization.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

	<u>All students</u>		<u>Involved in student organizations</u>	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Male	367	32.9	246	30.6
Female	745	66.8	557	69.3
No response	4	0.4	1	0.1
Age				
18-24	945	84.7	707	87.9
25-39	119	10.7	66	8.2
≥ 40	22	2.0	10	1.2
No response	30	2.7	21	2.6
Race/ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	25	2.2	18	2.2
White/Caucasian	1023	91.7	743	92.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	20	1.8	11	1.4
Black/African American	15	1.3	9	1.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3	.3	2	0.2
Multiracial	17	1.5	13	1.6
No response	13	1.2	8	1

Table 2

Involvement Variables

	All students	
	n	%
Participated in Student Organizations		
No	311	27.9
Yes	804	72.1
# of Student Organizations		
0	321	28.9
1 organization	233	21.0
2 organizations	208	18.8
3-4 organizations	230	20.7
5+ organizations	117	10.6
Level of Engagement		
Minimally engaged	131	16.7
Participated in most meeting/event	260	33.1
Engaged at the highest level	394	50.2
Leader/Member		
Leadership position	420	54.1
Member	357	45.9

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences between students on self-rated core competencies, based on participation in a student organization (yes/no), the number of organizations involved in (0, 1, 2, 3 or 4, 5 or more), the level of involvement (minimally involved, participated in most meetings or events, involved at the highest level), and role of member or leader (leader/non-leader). Tukey's post hoc test was conducted to determine between which groups significant differences occurred. Significant differences existed for all core competency constructs with the exception of global understanding. Mean scores were consistently significantly higher for students who were involved in more organizations, those who were highly involved, and those who held a leadership position.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance Results for Number of Student Organizations Involved In

Variable	0			1			2			3 or 4			5+			Total				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig
Communication	309	5.53	0.74	231	5.61	0.75	201	5.64	0.73	227	5.77	0.74	117	5.81	0.74	1085	5.65	0.75	5.03	.00
Diversity	313	5.57	0.94	230	5.62	0.89	205	5.59	1.01	229	5.78	0.87	117	5.90	0.85	1094	5.66	0.92	4.10	.00
Critical Thinking	316	5.46	0.79	227	5.59	0.74	207	5.52	0.79	228	5.65	0.76	116	5.75	0.73	1094	5.57	0.77	4.19	.00
Career and Vocational Development	317	5.66	0.84	227	5.72	0.80	206	5.67	0.80	229	5.86	0.76	116	5.85	0.81	1095	5.74	0.81	3.05	.01
Global Understanding	313	4.85	1.05	229	4.89	1.04	206	4.77	1.17	227	4.99	1.15	117	5.05	1.19	1092	4.89	1.11	1.75	.13
Widening of Interests	316	5.53	0.90	226	5.60	0.81	206	5.65	0.79	227	5.88	0.77	117	5.96	0.78	1092	5.69	0.83	9.90	.00
Citizenship	315	5.44	0.89	229	5.51	0.80	206	5.43	0.88	229	5.63	0.86	115	5.67	0.88	1094	5.52	0.87	3.00	.01
Character Development	316	5.56	0.80	225	5.68	0.74	206	5.59	0.73	228	5.75	0.70	113	5.83	0.74	1088	5.66	0.75	4.16	.00

Table 4

Analysis of Variance Results for the Level of Involvement

Variable	Minimally Involved			Participated in most meetings or events			Involved at the highest level			Total				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Communication	129	5.49	0.79	255	5.64	0.76	389	5.79	0.71	773	5.69	0.75	8.60	.000
Diversity	130	5.49	0.94	259	5.67	0.94	389	5.79	0.89	778	5.70	0.92	5.18	.006
Critical Thinking	127	5.45	0.77	258	5.60	0.76	390	5.67	0.76	775	5.61	0.76	3.82	.022
Career and Vocational Development	128	5.59	0.83	256	5.70	0.78	391	5.86	0.77	775	5.76	0.79	6.95	.001
Global Understanding	131	4.75	1.11	258	4.87	1.10	387	5.00	1.17	776	4.92	1.14	2.55	.079
Widening of Interests	126	5.51	0.85	258	5.72	0.77	389	5.85	0.79	773	5.75	0.80	9.01	.000
Citizenship	130	5.40	0.81	254	5.45	0.85	392	5.66	0.86	776	5.55	0.86	6.97	.001
Character Development	125	5.56	0.73	254	5.67	0.71	390	5.76	0.74	769	5.70	0.73	3.55	.029

Analysis of Variance Results for the Role as Leader or Member

Variable	Leadership Position			Member			Total				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Communication	415	5.78	0.71	350	5.59	0.78	765	5.69	0.75	12.52	.000
Diversity	414	5.78	0.90	356	5.60	0.94	770	5.70	0.92	8.04	.005
Critical Thinking	415	5.69	0.76	352	5.51	0.76	767	5.61	0.76	10.02	.002
Career and Vocational Development	416	5.85	0.78	351	5.66	0.80	767	5.76	0.79	11.25	.001
Global Understanding	412	4.96	1.17	356	4.86	1.10	768	4.91	1.14	1.49	.223
Widening of Interests	416	5.87	0.77	349	5.61	0.82	765	5.75	0.80	20.17	.000
Citizenship	417	5.63	0.86	351	5.45	0.84	768	5.55	0.85	8.85	.003
Character Development	415	5.74	0.72	346	5.64	0.74	761	5.70	0.73	3.28	.071

Communication

The results of the one-way ANOVA tests for the communication competency construct indicated significant differences for students who participated in a student organization compared to those who did not participate in a student organization, $F(1089) = 8.17, p < .01$; the number of student organizations involved in, $F(1080) = 5.03, p < .01$; level of involvement (minimally involved, participated in most meetings/events, involved at the highest level), $F(770) = 8.60, p < .001$; and role of member or leader, $F(763) = 12.52, p < .001$. In each case, the mean communication scores were significantly higher for students who were engaged in more student organizations. Tukey's post hoc test revealed significant differences between students who did not participate in a student organization and those who participated in three or more organizations. In addition, the mean scores of students involved at the highest level were significantly higher than those minimally involved, as were the scores for leaders compared to members.

Diversity

For the diversity and culture construct, significant differences existed for all engagement variables. Students who were involved in student organizations scored significantly higher than those not involved, $F(1098) = 5.65, p < .05$; and the number of student organizations involved in, $F(1089) = 4.10, p < .01$. The mean scores of students involved at the highest level were significantly higher than those minimally involved, $F(775) = 5.18, p < .01$. In addition, mean scores were significantly higher for students who held a leadership position in an organization compared to students who only identified as a member, $F(768) = 8.04, p < .01$.

Critical Thinking

A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in mean scores for critical thinking for all engagement variables. Students who were involved in student organizations $F(1098) = 5.89, p < .05$, had significantly higher mean scores than those who did not participate. A post hoc test on the number of student organizations involved in, $F(1089) = 4.19, p < .01$, and level of participation, $F(772) = 3.82, p < .05$, revealed that students who were involved in three or more organizations were significantly more likely to rate their critical thinking competency higher than students who were not involved, as were students who were involved at the highest level in comparison to those minimally involved. Those who assumed a leadership role, $F(765) = 10.02, p < .01$ were also significantly more likely to develop critical thinking competency compared to members.

Career and Vocational Development

For career and vocational development, no significant differences were found between students who were involved compared to those not involved. However, a post hoc test on the number of student organizations involved in, $F(1090) = 3.05, p < .05$, revealed significant differences between students involved in three or four organizations in comparison to those who did not participate in an organization. In addition, students who were moderately or highly involved, $F(772) = 6.95, p < .01$, and those who had assumed a leadership role, $F(765) = 11.25, p < .01$, rated themselves significantly higher than those who were minimally involved or only indicated a member role.

Global Understanding

No significant differences were found for the global understanding construct; however, significant differences were found for two of the key variables related to global understanding, including the ability to develop intercultural competencies from multiple perspectives and the ability to develop feelings of global citizenship. The results of the one-way ANOVA test for the variable, "my ability to develop intercultural competencies from multiple perspectives," indicated significant differences for student who participated compared to those that did not participate, $F(1104) = 4.06, p < .05$; the number of student organizations involved in, $F(1095) = 3.90, p < .01$; and level of involvement, $F(778) = 3.04, p < .05$. The results of the one-way ANOVA test for the variable, "my ability to develop feelings of global citizenship," indicated significant differences for student who participated compared to those that did not participate, $F(1105) = 6.04, p < .05$, and the number of student organizations involved in, $F(1096) = 2.70, p < .05$. Students who participated in a student organization had significantly higher scores than those who did not participate in a student organization. For both variables, the mean scores were significantly higher for students who were engaged in more student organizations. In addition, the mean scores of students involved at the highest level were significantly higher than those minimally involved.

Widening of Interests

Significant differences were found for all engagement variables for the widening of interests competency construct. Students who were involved in student organizations scored significantly higher than those not involved, $F(1096) = 13.89, p < .01$. For the independent variable, number of organizations involved in, $F(1087) = 9.90, p < .001$, students who were

involved in three or more organizations had significantly higher mean scores than those involved in 0, 1, or 2 organizations. In addition, regarding level of involvement, $F(770) = 9.01$, $p < .001$, and role (leader or member), $F(763) = 20.17$, $p < .001$, the mean scores of students involved at the highest level and those who participated in most meetings/events were significantly higher than those minimally involved, as were those who identified as a leader compared to members.

Citizenship

For the citizenship construct, **significant differences were found based on the number of student organizations involved in**, $F(1089) = 3.00$, $p < .05$; the level of involvement, $F(773) = 6.97$, $p < .01$; and role as leader or member, $F(766) = 8.85$, $p < .01$. Post hoc tests revealed that students involved at the highest level rated their citizenship competency significantly higher than those minimally involved and those who participated in most meetings/events. Additionally, the mean scores of students who identified as a leader in an organization were significantly higher than those who did not assume a leadership role.

Character Development

One-way ANOVA results revealed significant differences for the character development construct for all involvement variables with the exception of the role of leader or member. Students who were involved in a student organizations scored significantly higher than those not involved, $F(1092) = 6.93$, $p < .01$, and the number of student organizations involved in, $F(1083) = 4.16$, $p < .01$. In addition, the post hoc test for the level of involvement, $F(766) = 3.55$, $p < .05$, supported that students involved at the highest level rated their character development significantly higher than those minimally involved.

Discussion and Implications

Generalizability of this study is limited due to the demographics of the sample and the data being collected at only one institution. It is also important to highlight that the development of competencies is based on students' self-ratings. The results, however, support the ideas of Boyte and Farr (1997), Dalton (2009) and Long (2002), indicating that participation in student organizations is an effective method in developing citizenship and other related skills and abilities as self-rated by students. While Brint et al. (2012) suggested that institutions of higher education should be emphasizing techniques for increasing a student's time in the classroom, this research suggests that students who participate in student organizations are significantly more likely to develop competencies

than those who do not participate in student organizations. Understanding the learning and competency development that is occurring through a student's participation in student organizations may suggest that the decrease in student's time spent on their studies is shifted to another learning environment. It is fairly easy to understand what students are learning in the classroom due to the traditional methods of assessment, such as quizzes, exams, writing papers and classroom discussion. In contrast, it is more difficult to measure a student's development from their participation in student organizations. This study expands the work of many researchers in their quest to understand the impact of a student's participation in service-learning, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (Abrahamowicz, 1988; Hall, 2012; Montelongo, 2002; Smith & Griffin, 1993).

This research contradicts the findings of Brint et al. (2012) who concluded that college students do not significantly develop their analytical and critical thinking skills while in college. We found that students who participate in student organizations are significantly more likely to develop critical thinking skills than those who do not participate. Sedlak, Doheny, Panthofer, and Anaya (2003) and Gellin (2003) all found that undergraduate students who were involved in clubs enhanced their ability to think critically, which aligns with the findings of this study. These findings also bring into question Brint et al.'s (2012) suggestion that more time in the classroom is needed. It should be considered that time outside the classroom may be beneficial, and rather than reverting to a more traditional method of teaching, we should be attempting to understand the learning that is happening outside the classroom and be more intentional about building on the competency development associated with student engagement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

This research suggests that not only are students who participate in student organizations significantly more likely to develop skills that would contribute to their ability to be engaged citizens, it suggests that their degree of involvement also impacts their self-rated development of competencies. In this study, the degree of involvement was measured by the number of organizations a student participated in, a student's self-rated level of engagement and the role they had in the student organization. The results related to the degree of involvement support the work of Astin (1984) and his student involvement theory. The research revealed that the more student organizations students participated in, the more engaged they were, and

if they held a leadership position, they were significantly more likely to have developed competencies that could contribute to their ability to become engaged citizens. The results support the work of many researchers and the notion that a student's degree of involvement enhances one's development of civic responsibility (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, Ethington, & Smart, 1988; Sax, 2004). Not only are students who are engaged in extracurricular activities less likely to drop out, according to this study, they are significantly more likely to develop competencies and build the skills to be an engaged citizen.

Furthermore, both quantity and quality of participation matters in optimizing the development of desired skills and abilities of graduates. Advancing the work of Astin's (1984) student involvement theory, knowing that students are spending less time on academics (Brint, et al., 2012), and understanding it is likely at least some of that time is being spent participating in student organizations, understanding the optimal quantity of participation is recommended. This study also suggests that the quality of participation is important. Students who join an organization, but do not actively participate in the activities may not be developing their skills and abilities in as meaningful a way as those highly engaged. It appears not only being highly engaged, but also taking on the responsibility of a leadership role is optimal. It is recommended that institutions of higher education be thoughtful about advising students to get involved. With further investigation, faculty and staff can more precisely advise students on how to spend their time outside of class. They can guide students on the type of organizations to participate in, how many to join, and the role to have within the organization. More research in this area could help determine the "tipping point" so development is optimized.

As Sax (2004) noted, institutions of higher education in their earliest years educated students for citizenship, but this has shifted over time. Today, there is a call to embrace the development of citizenship once again. While the development of citizenship was an original goal of higher education, recent research, including this study's findings, suggests that the method of graduating engaged citizens can take on many forms. In addition to the important role of service-learning and curricular activities, it is recommended that colleges and universities recognize the development of skills and abilities that happen through co-curricular and extracurricular activities such as participation in student organizations, and the opportunity to be

intentional about the activities and programming of those organizations. University administrators, and faculty and staff student organization advisors, should consider methods to intentionally develop the desired skills and abilities of its graduates.

This study points to the need for additional research in this area. One study to be considered is how students in different types of student organizations develop citizenship differently. This study did not differentiate the various types of student organizations; however, it might be that service organizations promote citizenship differently than an academic organization. More research in this area would allow administrators to be more intentional in program design and in cultivating a campus culture that elevates citizenship. In addition, this study focused on self-perception of competencies, and did not directly measure a student's skills and abilities. Conducting additional studies that test actual competency would clarify if participation in student organizations has a self-perceived student learning benefit only, or if students are actually developing the skills and competencies outlined.

The story at the start of this article, in which a provost asked the students their goal for getting a degree, happened at the institution where this data was collected. The students who were asked this question were all members of various AmeriCorps programs. It seems if anyone was going to identify with the goal of attending the university to become an engaged citizen, it would be AmeriCorps members. Or maybe in their perception they were already engaged citizens. After all, they served their country in a variety of capacities through AmeriCorps. It should be considered, as noted by Boyte and Farr (1997), Dalton (2009) and Long (2002), that there is a new, evolving perspective of what citizenship is and how it is realized. Institutions of higher education need to consider the multitude of experiences, possibly more varied than in the past, and determine how to capitalize on the strengths of today's young generation.

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