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Examining Civic Engagement and Volunteering Outcomes of Democracy's Colleges

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Abstract Community colleges educate nearly 40% of all undergraduates, many of whom are likely to be first-generation, minority, and low-income, demographics associated with lower civic participation. This study examined the relationship among community college attendance, credential attainment, employment outcomes, and civic engagement and volunteering. This correlational study examined 36,842 responses to the Civic Engagement and Volunteering (CEV) Supplement of the 2021 Current Population Survey (CPS) using Principal Component Analysis as well as Multiple Linear Regression. Findings revealed five principal components and statistically significant relationships between some college, 2-year degree completion, and 4-year degree completion. The general trend was that higher educational attainment correlated with higher scores in most components, with some college and 2-year degree completion yielding a stair step effect of increasing volunteering. In addition, participants in service-oriented jobs had higher levels of civic engagement on certain components. Results highlight the important role community colleges play in increasing civic engagement.

Keywords civic engagement, volunteering, social capital, employment outcomes, degree completion

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1. Background

Civic engagement includes individual activities aimed at making "a difference in the civic life of … 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 nonpolitical processes" (Ehrlich, 2000,p. vi). Higher education plays an important role in providing students with opportunities to develop interest and aptitude in civic engagement through campus non-academic opportunities such as volunteering and political participation (Astin, 1999). Higher education has positive benefits related to income, health, career satisfaction, voting participation, and charitable giving (Gallup & Lumina Foundation, 2023), and the relationship between higher education and the positive outcomes is consistent across racial and ethnic backgrounds. These findings are an important indicator of the need to examine the benefits of all institutions in higher education.

Community colleges, or "democracy's colleges," offer an open door of non-selective admissions access to higher education and opportunity for growth in democratic ideals (Boggs, 2011). For the purposes of this study, community colleges are defined as "any accredited public or nonprofit institution that awards the associate as its highest degree or that offers at least one baccalaureate program but confers more than 50% of degrees at the associate level" (Kisker et al., 2023, p. 5). Community colleges across the United States educate nearly 40% of all undergraduates, the majority of whom are likely to be first-generation, majority minority, and lower income than students at selective admission colleges (American Association of Community College [AACC], 2021). Students with these demographic characteristics often exhibit lower levels of civic participation (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Schmidt et al., 2007). The civic outcomes of this missing middle sector of higher education deserve attention. Though the contribution of higher education in general as a contributor to civic engagement is widely studied, insufficient research exists on the civic engagement outcomes of community college students. The purpose of this study is to explore the civic engagement outcomes of community college students using the U.S. Census 2021 Current Population Survey's Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement dataset(U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). Specifically, the study explores the research question: What is the relationship between community college attendance, credential attainment, employment outcomes, and civic engagement and volunteering?

2. Literature Review

The year 2022 marked the 75th anniversary of the 1947 Truman Commission report, *Higher Education for American Democracy* (Zook, 1947). The Commission recommended expanding higher education opportunity near population centers to meet local workforce needs. In response, states moved to establish community colleges, with the dominant feature of the colleges being the "*intimate relations to the life of the community it serves*" (Zook, 1947, p. 5).As of 2020, federal data show the 935 public and 35 tribal community colleges enrolled 7.7 million students or approximately 35% of U.S. undergraduates (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Though the pathways vary, community college campus opportunities to develop civic engagement behaviors can shape student civic outcomes.

2.1 Defining Civic Engagement

AmeriCorps is a federal agency providing opportunities for American citizens to serve the nation in areas of pressing need, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement (*AmeriCorps*, 2024). Approximately 250,000 AmeriCorps members engage each year in projects across the U.S. In addition to supporting civic engagement directly, AmeriCorps conducts research and evaluation of its various programs. The AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation defines civic engagement as "the constellation of activities individuals engage in to make a difference in their communities"(AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation, 2023a).

Engagement in civic life is highly correlated with education and the bachelor's degree is largely used as the benchmark attainment level for measuring civic engagement, overlooking community colleges. Dee (2003) notes increased educational attainment can shape preferences for civic activity and development of "democratic and pluralistic values" (p. 3) through increased cognitive functioning and decision making for political purposes. Dee also notes additional education enables students to expand their peer groups and to develop shared social norms a key student development mechanism noted by Astin (1999). These long-term benefits of higher education translate to adult civic engagement with Dee (2003) stating the returns to education justify government involvement in the market of higher education through student finance and regulation.

2.2 Community Colleges as an Asset to Civic Engagement

While the benefits of higher education and completion of the bachelor's degree are widely understood to be correlated to greater civic engagement, less is known about those who did not complete the bachelor's degree. Students enrolling at community colleges are more likely to hold minoritized and immigrant identities and to be low income than students in selective colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022). As such, community college students may be less involved in the political process and civic life and have more to gain from learning to have a voice in democracy and participation in civil society. Kahne and Sporte (2008) determined most low-income and less-educated citizens are underrepresented in the political process and have far less voice, with the votes of elected officials aligning with those of higher income citizens to a greater degree than with the rest of the population.

The institutions are an asset to the communities they serve as a central driver of economic development and social interaction in the community (Irwin, 2021) and can play a key role in driving public participation in democracy. Community colleges provide access to not just academic content, but also to interaction with a wider social circle for these students. Many bemoan the low graduation rates of community colleges, but this is akin to blaming the victim as the colleges are largely underfunded in state budgets(Romano & Palmer, 2016), and their success is undercounted in federal reporting(Fink & Jenkins, 2020) due to difficulty in federal classification of institution type. Further, the difference in students enrolling in open access community colleges and selective four-year institutions is enormous. Many community colleges are strictly commuter campuses enrolling no full-time residential students. This distinction is important to keep in mind when comparing institutions as many community colleges enroll more part-time than full time students (AACC, 2022). Newell (2014) found the difference between two-year and four-year civic engagement disappeared when controlling for full time residential status of students.

2.3 Building Social Capital in Community College Students

Building social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Fukuyama, 2001) is valuable for community college students. According to Fukuyama (2001), "social capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between individuals" (p. 7) and is important in both the economic and political spheres. Similarly, Putnam (1995) defined social capital as "social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 67). Social capital, while difficult to measure, may be reflected in activities such as meeting attendance, levels of trust, voting, and volunteering (Putnam, 2001). Social capital has value for both the individual and for society. As social capital increases, so do positive outcomes for society including philanthropy (Brown & Ferris, 2007), civic engagement (National Research Council, 2014), and community trust (Jachimowicz et al, 2017). In addition, social capital increases the development of human capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2001).

Social capital has been linked to increased civic engagement (Collins et al., 2014; Kim &Kim, 2022; Lewis et al., 2013), and social capital can be built. Social capital is often a byproduct of activities outside of government control such as religion and tradition (Fukuyama, 2001), but "the area where governments probably have the greatest direct ability to generate social capital is education" (p. 18). And this is true for community colleges. In a study of 2-year and 4-year students, although higher levels of education were correlated to higher levels of civic engagement, community college students who enrolled full-time, lived on campus, and worked on campus had higher levels of civic engagement (Newell, 2014). A separate study showed that "community college students' academic and extracurricular behaviors, as well as institutions' intentionality toward civic engagement, were associated with higher levels of civic agency, capacity, behavior, and knowledge" (Kisker et al., 2016, p. 315). Examples of student behaviors included participating in racial or ethnic organizations, taking courses in government or political science, working on campus, attending religious services, and political engagement (e.g., voting, obtaining news).

2.4 Community Colleges through a Dewey Lens

The noted educational philosopher John Dewey wrote that educators should recognize how to create a valuable learning experience and how to match the experience to an environment (Dewey, 1997). From a Dewey lens, community colleges provide the opportunity to experience vocation and education to determine the student's life course (Dewey, 1937, 2011).Civic engagement opportunities on community college campuses offer experiences for student development of civic agency. In *Democracy and Education* (2011), Dewey writes that education can provide a pathway for students to experience how they might live and work in society. Dewey viewed higher education as a

place where students could interact with others and learn in a social context, though Dewey insisted this was an intentional act across the institution to promote individual development and democratic communities of learning.

Prior research found community college students are more civically engaged than high school students, but less engaged than 4-year graduates (Newell, 2014). As institutions, community colleges can develop student agency by intentionally providing opportunities for students to develop civic agency and behaviors such as volunteering and voting (Kisker et al., 2016). Perhaps the most important function of the community college is developing student civic agency defined as a student's active participation to shape their world and the development of democratic behaviors (Hoffman et al., 2018; Mathews, 2016).

3. Methodology

This quantitative, correlational study examined 36,842 responses to the publicly available Civic Engagement and Volunteering (CEV) Supplement of the 2021 Current Population Survey (CPS) using Principal Component Analysis as well as Multiple Linear Regression.

3.1 Data Source

AmeriCorps is particularly interested in formal and informal volunteering as a measure of civic health and collects data every two years in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau through the Current Population Survey (CPS) Civic Engagement and Volunteering (CEV) Supplement (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a).The CPS is administered monthly to a probability selected sample of approximately 60,000 occupied households in the United States using both personal and telephone interviews. Participants must be 15 years of age or over, and one-person (usually the owner or renter) answers questions for everyone in the household. The CPS often includes supplemental questions, including the CEV Supplement used for this study.

The CEV Supplement to the CPS is sponsored by AmeriCorps and is administered by the U.S. Census Bureau every two years to collect information related to the nation's civic health (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). AmeriCorps conducts research on the civic health of the nation using the CEV data. Based on the National Research Council (2014) report, AmeriCorps researchers exploited the report's broad categories and measurable elements of social capital (p. 36) using Exploratory Factor Analysis to identify six constructs within the 2021 CEV data: 1) organizational engagement, 2) local collective action, 3) economic engagement, 4) informal helping and conversations, 5) exchanging with issues, and 6) political engagement. The AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation mapped the CEV questions to the six constructs: economic engagement, engaging with issues, informal helping and conversation, legal collective action, organizational engagement, and political engagement (Schlachter et al., 2023).

3.2 Current Population Survey –2021 Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement

CEV data for this study were collected from September 19 through 28, 2021 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023b). The CEV Supplement asks questions about interactions with family, friends, neighbors, and people from other backgrounds; political engagement; group membership and participation; frequency of volunteering activity; and donations to political or charitable organizations. New questions added to the CEV Supplement 2021 included questions related to employed individuals and their satisfaction with their work or employer and whether the employer or workplace encourages them to volunteer or contribute to a specific cause (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). For this study, a subset of the data comprising 36,842 individuals who had attained a high school diploma, completed some college, or held 2-year or 4-year degrees as their highest level of educational attainment was created (which excluded people who did not graduate from high school or had graduate degrees).

3.3 Data Analysis

Before data analysis began, the data were recoded. The 2021 CEV survey data were either numerical, binary, or ordinal. The binary data were recoded using 0, 1; ordinal data were recoded using increasing integers; and numerical data (only included hours volunteering) were recoded into quartiles. To minimize the number of variables while capturing the most meaningful and informative aspects in the subset of data, data analysis began with a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of the CEV Supplement. As noted previously, prior analysis of the complete CPS dataset by Schlachter and Brees (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation, 2023b)indicated a pattern among the data, removing the need for Exploratory Factor Analysis. Next, a series of regression analyses designed to test the

relationship among community college attendance, employment outcomes, and civic engagement (overall and for different subgroups) was conducted. A multiple linear regression model with the highest level of education as the predictor variable and PCA components as the outcome variables was conducted. The model included dummy variables for each level of education attainment compared to the 2-year degree level.

Component 1 = β0 + β1(HS-2yr) + β2(Some Col-2yr) + β3(4yr-2yr) + ε

Finally, a regression analysis was conducted for employment type and workplace-related items. Service employment types were defined within the dataset. The model for the interaction was:

Component 3 = β0 + β1 * (4-year degree – 2-year degree) + β2 * (HS – 2-year degree) + β3 * (Some Col – 2-year degree) + β4 * (Not Service-Oriented Job – Service Job) + β5 * (Not Service-Oriented – Service-Oriented) * (4-year degree – 2-year degree) + β6 * (Not Service-Oriented – Service-Oriented) * (HS – 2-year degree) + β7 * (Service-Oriented – Service-Oriented) * (Some Col – 2-year degree)

4. Results

4.1 Participant Characteristics

The primary demographic characteristic of concern for this study was educational attainment. The number of participants in each level of educational attainment were 12,952 high school diplomas, 7,872 some college, 5,057 2-year degree, and 10,961 4-year degree.

4.2 Principal Component Analysis Results

As noted previously, AmeriCorps identified six factors within the CEV data. As such, this study conducted Principal Component Analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test value was 0.760, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at $p<.001$, indicating that the sample was suitable for factor analysis. Five components had eigen values greater than 1. After removing variables with a loading less than 0.3 and those that did not load to the framework, five factors were identified that explained the maximum amount of variance in the dataset. The cumulative amount of variance explained by the components with eigen values greater than 1 was 55.9%. Five variables were eliminated from the dataset because they either cross-loaded into more than one construct with none of the loadings greater than 0.3, or a single loading was less than 0.5. Except for one scale, the reliability coefficients ranged from .65 to .75, which were considered acceptable. The reliability coefficients for the subscales of Component 4 were very low, indicating that this component may not be internally consistent. This component was retained for the analysis due to its theoretical importance but should be interpreted with caution. Table 1 shows the items that remained in the dataset and the factor loadings of each.

Table 1: Principal Component Analysis Item and Factor Loadings

Item	**Factor loading**
Component 1: Volunteering and Organizational Engagement	
Hours volunteered	0.844
Volunteered	0.836
Belonged to an organization	0.759
Number of organizational memberships	0.718
Component 2: Neighborhood Interaction and Engagement	
Freq of talking with neighbors	0.826
Freq of exchanging favors with neighbors	0.813
Freq of discussing issues with neighbors	0.723
Took collective action with neighbors	0.519
Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement	

My workplace contributes to the community	0.798
I contribute to the community through my work	0.763
I am proud to be working for my employer	0.723
My main satisfaction in life comes from work	0.620
Component 4: Political Engagement	
Bought or boycotted	0.646
Donated to a political cause	0.622
Contacted a public official	0.571
Freq of posting views online	0.539
Component 5: News Intake and Social Engagement	
Freq of talking with friends or family	0.739
Freq of discussing issues with friends or family	0.682
Freq of news intake about issues	0.570

Note. This study found five factors through PCA and named the factors according to the item loadings.

4.3 Regression Results

Regressions results (shown in Table 2) followed a general trend that the higher the educational attainment, the higher the score for civic engagement with some college and 2-year degree the same for three out of five factors. Participants with 2-year degrees had higher rates of civic engagement than those with only a high school diplomas and lower rates than those with 4-year degrees. The exception was *Component 3Workplace Contribution as Engagement* resulted in no significant differences between 2-year and 4-year degrees. Table 2 indicates the significance levels of each component and the subscales. The significance indicated is the comparison of each category against the 2-year degree reference level. The table entry is the attainment level that was greatest.

For Component 1: Volunteering and Organizational Engagement, the regression analysis revealed a significant effect of highest level of education on this component, $F(3, 36383) = 586$, $p < .001$, R-squared = .0455. The intercept beta was 1.2068 ($t = 43.06$, $p < .001$). The combined factor indicates 2-year graduates had greater civic engagement than high school graduates, and the same civic engagement as Some College/No Degree respondents. The 2-year respondents had less civic engagement than the 4-year respondents.

For Component 2: Neighborhood Interaction and Engagement, the regression analysis revealed a significant effect of highest level of education on this component, $F(3, 36383) = 77.6$, $p < .001$, R-squared = .00628. The intercept beta was 3.435 ($t = 78.01$, $p < .001$). The combined factor indicates 2-year graduates had greater civic engagement than high school graduates, and the Some College/No Degree respondents. The 2-year respondents had less civic engagement than the 4-year respondents.

Table 2: Civic Engagement and Volunteering Factor Subscales by Educational Attainment

	HS v 2yr	**Some Col v 2yr**	**4yr v 2yr**
Component 1: Volunteering and Organizational Engagement			
Combined Factor	**2yr*** **	**Same**	**4yr*** **
Hours volunteered	2yr***	2yr*	4yr***
Volunteered	2yr***	2yr***	4yr***
Belonged to an organization	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Number of organizational memberships	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Component 2: Neighborhood Interaction and Engagement			
Combined Factor	**2yr*** **	**2yr** **	**4yr*** **

Freq of talking with neighbors	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Freq of discussing issues with neighbors	2yr***	2yr*	4yr***
Freq of exchanging favors with neighbors	2yr***	2yr*	4yr***
Took collective action with neighbors	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement			
Combined Factor	**2yr*** **	**2yr*** **	**Same**
My workplace contributes to the community	2yr***	2yr**	4yr**
I contribute to the community through my work	2yr***	2yr***	Same
I am proud to be working for my employer	2yr***	2yr*	4yr***
My main satisfaction in life comes from work	Same	2yr***	4yr*
Component 4: Political Engagement			
Combined Factor	**2yr*** **	**Same**	**4yr*** **
Bought or boycotted	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Donated to a political cause	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Contacted a public official	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Freq of posting views online	2yr***	Same	Same
Component 5: News Intake and Social Engagement			
Combined Factor	**2yr*** **	**Same**	**4yr*** **
Freq of talking with friends or family	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Freq of discussing issues with friends or family	2yr***	Same	4yr***
Freq of news intake about issues	2yr***	2yr*	4yr***

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Note. Table 2 represents a comparison of high school, some college, and 4-year degree completion compared to 2-year degree completion. The general pattern is 4-year degree completion is higher than 2-year degree completion except for Component 3 where 2- and 4-year degree completers scored the same.

For Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement 2-year degree is statistically significantly higher than high school graduate and some college but not significantly different than 4-year degree. The regression analysis revealed a significant effect of highest level of education on *Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement*, $F(3, 14702) = 38.7$, $p < .001$, R-squared = .000783. The intercept beta was 9.1121 ($t = 289.81$, $p < .001$). The combined factor indicates 2-year respondents had greater civic engagement than high school graduates, and the Some College/No Degree respondents. The 2-year respondents had the same civic engagement as the 4-year respondents. The item "*I contribute to the community through my work*" accounted for the same outcome for both 2-year and 4-year respondents.

For Component 4: Political Engagement, the reliability coefficients for the subscales of were very low (ranging from .208 to .522), indicating that this component may not be internally consistent. The regression analysis revealed a significant effect of highest level of education, $F(3, 36383) = 170$, $p < .001$, R-squared = .0146. The intercept beta was 0.5458 ($t = 42.01$, $p < .001$). The combined factor indicates 2-year graduates had greater civic engagement than high school graduates, and the same civic engagement as Some College/No Degree respondents. The 2-year respondents had less civic engagement than the 4-year respondents.

For *Component 5: News Intake and Social Engagement*, the regression analysis revealed a significant effect of highest level of education on Component 5, $F(3, 36383) = 296$, $p < .001$, R-squared = .0236. The intercept beta was 6.4394 ($t = 170.19$, $p < .001$). The combined factor indicates 2-year graduates had greater civic engagement than high school graduates, and the same civic engagement as Some College/No Degree respondents. The 2-year respondents had less civic engagement than the 4-year respondents.

4.4 Additional Analysis of Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement

*Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement*dis played a unique result that set it apart from other categories. Specifically, statistical analysis showed no significant difference in workplace contribution between individuals with 2-year degrees and those with 4-year degrees. This finding was consistent across multiple demographic groups, including race, age, and geographic location. It's important to note that only 40% of the survey respondents, who were currently employed, provided data for this category. Among these employed respondents, 67% were either Generation X (born between 1965-1980) or Millennials (born between 1981-1996). For these two age groups, the data showed no significant difference in workplace contribution between those with 2-year and 4-year degrees. In contrast, for other age groups, individuals with 4-year degrees generally had higher levels of workplace contribution than those with 2-year degrees.

To gain further insights into the finding for *Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement*, an examination of the employment type and its interaction with education level was conducted. The employment types were classified based on whether they were service-oriented or not; jobs such as assistance providing, care giving, health and social services, armed services, and public service were coded as service oriented. Similar percentages (36%) of individuals with 2-year and 4-year degrees were employed in service-oriented jobs, both of which exceeded the percentages of respondents with some college education (28%) and high school diploma (22%) employed in such positions. Regression analysis revealed a statistically significant main effect for having a service-oriented job, indicating that individuals with a service-oriented job had significantly higher scores on *Component 3:Workplace Contribution as Engagement* compared to those without a service-oriented job. The coefficient estimate for the service-oriented job variable was 0.37547 (SE = 0.0646, t = 5.187, p< 0.001), with the reference level coded as "No" for service-oriented job. However, the interactions between employment type and highest educational attainment did not yield statistically significant differences across any comparisons.

This implies that the impact of being employed in a service-oriented job on *Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement* remained consistent across all educational attainment levels. Further, respondents in service jobs were more likely to rate items within *Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement* higher regardless of education level, racial group, generation, or geographic region with one exception. There were far fewer respondents for Component 3 due to the fact those not in the workforce or those who were retired were not included in the analysis. Of those who were in the workforce at the time of the survey, a notable difference was observed between Generation Z and Millennials when comparing 2-year and 4-year degree Component 3 responses. Generation Z scored lower than Millennials for the overall Component 3.

5. Discussion

The study is significant for understanding the asset-based influence and Dewey's production function of community colleges, as well as the role of building social capital, on the democratic ideals of volunteering and civic engagement. With the community college sector of higher education educating nearly 40% of all undergraduate students, the opportunity for students to participate in and learn civic engagement practices is vitally important.

Community colleges serve a vital role in producing civically engaged citizens. Results of this study indicated consistently higher levels of civic engagement on multiple components for participants who had attended a community college as compared to those who had only attended high school. This supports prior research showing that civic engagement increases with education (Lewis et al., 2013), but acknowledges the role of the community college as a steppingstone along the higher educational continuum. Further, the study points to the contribution of the colleges as the missing middle in the research and literature on levels of civic engagement.

Social capital represents relationships among individuals and the value that exists in those relationships (Putnam, 1995; Fukuyama, 2001). Building social capital is especially important for the first-generation, minority, and lower income students who attend community colleges as it is associated with many positive benefits (National Research Council, 2014). Specifically, social capital is linked to increased civic engagement (Kim & Kim, 2022), and this social capital can be built through education (Fukuyama, 2001). Prior research (Newell, 2014; Kisker et al., 2016) supports this notion since students enrolled in community colleges who were more engaged at the college, arguably building higher levels of social capital, were more likely to be civically engaged.

Community colleges also play a role in increasing civic engagement through their preparation of students for careers in service-oriented fields. This study showed no statistically significant difference between participants with 2-year

and 4-year degrees for *Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement*. In addition, individuals with a service-oriented job had significantly higher scores on *Workplace Contribution as Engagement* regardless of demographic characteristic.

Whether students take courses (Some College), or they earn a credential (transfer or vocational), the students are more likely to be civically engaged than those who merely graduated from high school. The normative standard for measuring civic engagement remains attainment of the 4-year degree, but from an asset-based perspective, community colleges play a role in civic engagement and volunteering outcomes. The Some College, No Degree and 2-year degree completers were likely afforded an opportunity to participate in higher education that may otherwise not have been available in a selective admissions process. While it is unknown why the students attended a community college, the civic engagement and volunteering outcomes are positive for society. Dewey's notion of the "intermediate conditions" (Dewey, 2011, p. 98)associated with attendance at a community college speaks to the potential of each person to grow in civic capacities.

Further research is needed to explore the how and why of community college production of civically engaged citizens. With a focus on equity and outcomes, the research should examine the civic production function and the equity producing role of community colleges utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The open door of access at community colleges remains a hallmark of democratic ideals.

6. Limitations

The study is limited by the CEV data and survey process. Though a randomized sample, the survey is administered by phone which may skew responses to those willing to answer a call from an unknown phone number. The study is also limited by quantitative analysis in answering the question of what occurred. Also, although most of the regression analyses yielded statistically significant results, the explanatory power of the models was limited, as evidenced by the low R-squared values.

7. Implications and Future Research

Democracy requires civic participation and higher education is documented to contribute to the production of civically engaged citizens. This study's findings reinforce the fact that civic engagement increases with more education and adds to the literature on the contribution made by community colleges. The study reinforced the known phenomenon of increased civic engagement with increased education. Two-year graduates consistently had higher civic engagement than high school graduates, but less civic engagement than four-year graduates.

This study had one instance where this was not the case. For *Component 3: Workplace Contribution as Engagement* the 2-year and 4-year respondents were equivalent. Further analysis of Component 3 indicated the type of employment mattered in that service-oriented jobs scored higher across all demographics for the combined factor. Perhaps a decline in civic engagement in social contexts is being replaced by a rise in civic engagement through the workplace. If employees can volunteer during work hours and be paid, perhaps they choose to not use their personal time. This finding deserves future research.

Regarding community colleges and civic engagement outcomes, this study points to the promise of the colleges as incubators of civically engaged citizens. As democracy's colleges, the responsibility to focus on the social mission of the institution is important and as Harbour (2015)notes should not be overshadowed by a focus on college completion. A challenge for community colleges will be to reach all students with opportunities, especially those colleges serving large numbers of part-time and non-traditional working age students. The time to rise to the occasion is now as democracy is bombarded with polarizing forces.

8. Conclusion

As with all challenges, community colleges can rise to the moment, but resource constrained colleges may need outside funding assistance to establish and maintain civic engagement opportunities. The development of local philanthropy in support of community service, volunteering and political dialogue is needed. This is especially true in rural and underserved areas where the workforce is local and stays local. Community colleges deserve the attention they will receive from this study's evidence of their role in producing civically engaged citizens for democracy. With additional support and focused attention, community colleges can expand their role as social capital incubators with

positive outcomes for society. Future research should survey community colleges to obtain an inventory of practices across geographies and college types to determine the extent of civic engagement across the colleges.

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