

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN YOUTH

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Dedication

This dissertation would not have been a reality without my family. My sincerest gratitude goes to each one of them.

To my family in Texas: Da and Ma; Ate Malou and Alex; and Malyn, Joel, Mark and Emma, for the love and generosity throughout our stay in Texas.

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As I was completing the final stages of my dissertation work, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and severely the United States. The presence of the virus in the US stirred anti-Asian sentiment for the irrational reason that the virus originated from Asia. When acquaintances learn that my dissertation is on Asian American youth, they lauded my work as timely in the sense that it shines positive light on Asian Americans who have been at the receiving end of hate without any rhyme or reason.

It warms my heart to know that my work will be useful for the group represented by the youth who made my dissertation a reality. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Asian American student leaders who graciously gave their time to share their civic experiences with me. I hope that my dissertation did justice in telling their stories and that it captured their dedication and enthusiasm that I felt when they conveyed their stories to me. I wish that their stories will inspire other youth — whether minority like the Asian Americans or not — to thread the path of service and civic engagement.

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Abstract

Background: The current study aimed to analyze the civic engagement of Asian American youth specifically college student leaders. Civic engagement means connecting with other individuals to work for the common good or for endeavors beneficial to community members. Asian American youth civic engagement is less studied as compared to other ethnic groupings such as the African and Hispanic American youth (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Seif, 2010). **Purpose:** The research aimed to conduct a qualitative study on civically engaged Asian American youth. It addressed the following questions: What are the perceptions of civically engaged Asian American youth about their civic engagement? How have the school, family, and community influenced the development of the civic engagement? The study analyzed the various facets of the youths' civic engagement; namely, how and why did they become involved in the civic activities, the influences of family, school and community on their civic involvement, challenges they encounter in their civic activities, how do they balance the demands of their civic activities and schooling, the impact of their being an Asian American on their civic involvement, and their plans for the future. **Methods:** In-depth interviews using a semi-structured protocol were conducted with 15 Asian American student leaders at a Tier One urban university in Southeast Texas, which has become a major destination of Asian Americans in the South. The participants were aged between 18 and 22, with a mean age of 20. The interview transcripts, observation notes, and fieldwork journal composed the study data. The study used the grounded theory as research design to formulate theories to explain the various facets of the Asian American youth civic engagement. Following

the critical framework, the research investigated the link between the participants' perceptions and experiences of civic engagement and the structural context where they take place. The research data were analyzed using the constant comparative method, which entailed comparing parts of data with one another to identify similarities and differences. Data featuring similar characteristics or categories were grouped together. Labels representing key ideas were assigned to the categories. The categories were further analyzed to draw up themes. **Findings:** The findings generated the following themes about Asian American youth civic engagement: 1) social and institutional support develop civic engagement, 2) the virtuous cycle of civic engagement, 3) various forms of family support enhance youth civic engagement, 4) civic engagement as source of empowerment, 5) civic engagement not bound by ethnic concerns, and 6) the long-term impact of civic engagement. **Conclusion:** Results show that social and institutional support enhance the youths' competences that lead to their civic engagement. Youths' development of competences lead to their civic engagement which in turn results in the further enhancement of their competences. Immigrant parents who were not civically engaged imparted to the student participants values such as being helpful to others that molded the latter's civic engagement. Asian American youth regard their civic engagement as source of empowerment. They thrive because of the support of their fellow Asians, regard their ethnicity as advantage in a context that values diversity, and observe their civic engagement subverting negative stereotypes against Asians. The youth's civic engagement is not bound by ethnic concerns as they deal with issues that not only benefit their ethnic grouping. Their civic involvement affects their predicted adult civic engagement.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Study because we will need all your intelligence.
Agitate because we will need all your enthusiasm.
Organize because we will need all your strength.

—the motto of the first issue of L'Ordine Nuovo, the Italian revolutionary Left newspaper organized by communist leader Antonio Gramsci in 1919

The quotation above that is associated with the great Italian political thinker Antonio Gramsci captures the hope that is bestowed on the youth to lead societal reform. Indeed, youth activism has been a prominent part of numerous historic political actions for social change. In the United States, young people were at the forefront of important protest movements, such as the civil rights movement in the 1950s-60s and anti-Vietnam war in the 1960s (Gilbert, 2001; Ginwright & James, 2002; Hart & Gullan, 2010). Youth activism took center stage again in a movement for social change in this country with the “March for our Lives” protest event that took place in Washington and various parts of the U.S. in March 2018. The political demonstration was initiated by youth survivors of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Florida in February 2018. The demonstration was attended by about 500,000 people, with mostly youth in attendance (Grinberg & Muaddi, 2018). It was a protest against mass shootings at schools. The protesters demanded the government to implement stricter background check on all gun sales, increase the age of gun ownership from 18 to 21, restore the 1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban, and prohibit the sale of high-capacity magazines and bump stocks, among others. The

Parkland incident was the 18th recorded school shooting in the U.S. from January to March 2018.

Problem Statement

Given the wave of youth activism in the United States, it is thus interesting to study in-depth the civic engagement of the youth in this country. Broadly defined, civic engagement means connecting with other individuals to work for the common good or for endeavors that will benefit many individuals in a community (Flanagan & Lavine, 2010). Civic engagement benefits both society and the youth. Research have illuminated how civic engagement advances youth welfare involving their academic, behavioral and adult civic involvement (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2007; McFarland & Thomas, 2006). Studying civic engagement during adolescence is significant because it is likely during this phase when adult civic disposition take root and eventually develop (Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz, 2012). Because civic engagement crucially contributes to youth transformation into productive citizens, scholars have thus often examined the role of institutions – namely, the school, family and community – that are regarded as critically responsible for helping shape the youth’s civic consciousness (e.g., Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Duke, Skay, Pettingell, & Borowsky, 2009). The scholarly conversations revolve around factors and practices present in these institutions that nurture the youth’s civic disposition and skills, and how can these be harnessed to further youth civic engagement development.

Purpose Statement

This dissertation aimed to focus on the Asian American youth whose civic engagement is an under-researched area of study. Existing studies on youth civic engagement have mostly focused on African Americans (Hope & Jagers, 2014; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Zaff, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2008) and Hispanics (Torney-Purta, Barber, Wilkenfeld & 2007; Seif, 2010), who belong to sectors that are often perceived as marginalized. Specifically, my research aimed to conduct a qualitative study on Asian American youth about their opinions on their civic engagement, and how did they get involved in their civic endeavors. My research also analyzed the major influences among the youth that affected their decision to engage in civic activities. The roles of peers, school, family and community in the development of civic engagement was also examined.

A number of existing studies on Asian-American youth have focused on their educational experiences foregrounding factors that facilitated their positive educational pathways (Yoon & Gentry, 2009; Byun, & Park, 2012). However, their civic engagement has been an under-researched area of study. The less attention on the Asian Americans in the civic engagement discourse might be understood within the context of how Asian immigrants have been portrayed and type casted in popular consciousness – namely, as a model minority. Two prominent characteristics are often attached to the “model minority” label – namely, law-abiding and economic success. Such characterizations might not entirely cohere with those commonly identified as push factors for civic engagement or citizenship. One aspect of citizenship entails questioning the status quo and protesting against and disobeying unjust laws (Sherrod

et al., 2002). Such dimension of citizenship contravenes with the law-abiding construct attributed to Asian Americans. Moreover, civic engagement entails acting for the welfare of the disadvantaged members of one's community. If the common perception is that Asian Americans are not marginalized (at least economically), then advocating for the disadvantaged is not an imperative action. However, Asian Americans are not a monolithic entity, there are those who do not fit the "model minority" construct and therefore with needs that have to be addressed and advocated for. It is thus interesting to find out whether the youth sector recognize marginalization in their community and what civic action, if any, have they undertaken to correct the inequity.

The increasing number of Asian Americans in the United States presents another reason why the need to focus on this sector. As their population grow, Asian Americans will therefore increasingly contribute to the contours of civic consciousness of this country. The U.S. Asian population grew the fastest among the major racial or ethnic groupings. Their population grew 72% from 2000 to 2015 (from 11.9 million to 20.4 million), as compared to the second-fastest growing group – the Hispanics – which increased 60% during the same period (Lopez, Ruiz, & Patten, 2017).

Aside from the fact that Asian Americans comprise an increasing proportion of the country's demographics, my research on their youth sector contributes to the fulfillment of the mandate of the University of Houston (UH) to serve the Asian American community. Through my research, I hope to contribute to the thrust of UH to create more scholarly conversations about the Asian American community.

My Journey to Youth Civic Engagement Research

Biographical reflexivity entails reflecting how one's research is intertwined with one's biography (Ruokonen-Engler & Siouti, 2016). Having reflexive engagement allows the researcher to examine how the subject of study is related to one's biography. The following questions help frame such reflection (Ruokonen-Engler & Siouti, 2016, p. 749):

What personal experiences do I have with my research topic?
How did I come to study the specific topic in the field?
What is my relationship to the topic being investigated?

Biographical reflexivity allows the researcher to conduct deeper self-examination on why s/he was drawn to specific research matter. Probing into one's biographical experiences would help make clearer how the inclination toward the subject took shape. For the scholarly mind, the process of personal reflection could help in extending the rumination to the social and academic implications of the research undertaking.

My interest in civic engagement resulted from my previous encounters with similar acts of endeavor. My political or civic awakenings happened around middle school during the period of protests against the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos in the late 1980s in the Philippines. As mirrored in the literature (Youniss et al., 2002; Andolina, Jenkins Zukin and Keeter, 2003) and to be elaborated later, my political socialization transpired at home courtesy of my father's anti-Marcos sentiment at that time. I remember him making available anti-government newspapers and other related reading materials at home. I devoured reading these materials as a young teenager. Through my reading, I learned about the wide disparity in wealth

among socio-economic classes in my country. The Philippine president's family live a profligate lifestyle while a large number of Filipinos wallow in poverty. Millions of currency from the national coffers were siphoned off by the President's family at the expense of a considerable proportion of the masses living in destitute situation. Those who opposed the government were either detained or killed in the attempt of the former president to consolidate power and quell opposition. I learned about social and political inequality, and at the same time the power of political engagement and activism to correct injustice.

There were various manifestations of civic engagement at that time. Concerned citizens organized to assist the poor — whether in the form of providing them with basic services or in their political conscientization to deepen their understanding of the political issues gripping the country, including the structural root of their moribund existence which is corrupt governance. Through the political efforts of various groups, the corrupt Marcos presidency was ousted through a People Power revolution in 1986.

My interest in organized civic efforts was further honed when I enrolled for college in my country's premiere university that is known for student activism. I majored in Philosophy for my undergraduate degree at the University of the Philippines where I learned about critical theories that allowed me to better frame my thinking about socio-political issues. I learned, among others, about Karl Marx's treatise on capitalism's exploitation of workers, Antonio Gramsci's discourse on how the powerful maintain their hegemony, and Paulo Freire's critique on the oppressive education of the marginalized.

I also wrote for the college paper, which enabled me to be around critical-minded students who are into discussions of socio-political issues. My civic consciousness then that was birthed at home was further harnessed by my academic community, illuminating what has been established in the literature about the influence of school and community on the development of one's civic consciousness (e.g., Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Eckstein, Noack and Gniewosz, 2012; Andolina et al., 2003).

After earning my bachelor's degree, I worked as a researcher at the University of the Philippines-Third World Studies Center (UP-TWSC). At UP-TWSC, I was involved in research projects focusing on democratization issues, particularly how activism was conducted for socio-political causes (e.g. corruption, human rights) and for marginalized sectors (Wui & Banpasirichote, 2003; Wui, 2006; Wui & Encarnacion-Tadem, 2006; Wui, 2009). I had several encounters with inspiring activists who worked for the urban poor, farmers, children, environmental issues, among others. While working at UP-TWSC, I took my Masters in Sociology at the University of the Philippines. For my Master's thesis, I studied poor litigants in the Philippine justice system (see Wui, 2005). In the course of doing my research, I visited the courts to observe litigations and interview the pro-bono lawyers of my research participants. I also spent considerable time in a prison site talking to my litigant research participants and observing their prison life. In the prison site, I encountered several civic efforts given to poor prisoners such as those spearheaded by religious groups for their personal well-being and by lawyers providing free legal

services to poor litigants. Again, I witnessed the importance of organized civic actions in improving the lives of the marginalized in society.

Later, I earned a fellowship to study PhD in Sociology at the National University of Singapore. Studying abroad afforded me the opportunity to deepen my understanding of collective civic action by shifting my intellectual gaze of the phenomenon outside my country. For my PhD dissertation, I studied civic endeavors for foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong. Being a migrant myself living in a foreign country, I am intellectually curious to find out how my fellow migrants live their lives in a foreign country. My interest in civic endeavors likewise drew me to the foreign domestic workers who labor in difficult conditions, as almost all of them live with their employers and hence at the beck and call of their employers throughout most days except for the legally mandated off-work Sundays. As I talked to the domestic workers, I learned about their oppressive living conditions where they are required to work by their employers long hours until late in the night, not given enough food for their sustenance, and being subjected to verbal and physical abuse. This group of workers are in much need of civic actions from concerned sectors.

Civic efforts from various sectors for the domestic workers were available in Hong Kong. There were endeavors that provided the workers assistance for their psychological and legal needs, continuing education, and organizing for political advocacy. Many of the political organizing activities were spearheaded by Filipino activists who established non-government organizations in Hong Kong.

In my dissertation, I argued that the conducive political environments of the Philippines and Hong Kong facilitated the fruition of civic activities — especially the

political strand that advocated for the rights of domestic workers (Wui, 2014). The Philippines' tolerance for contentious politics brought forth the activists who worked for the domestic workers in Hong Kong. At the same time, Hong Kong's permissible political environment for activism allowed the establishment of the NGOs advocating for the workers in the territory. Likewise, I argued that the Philippines and Hong Kong are interacting sites of contention, where the activists advocate for the workers' rights and welfare at both ends of the migration chain (Wui & Delias, 2015). Activists advocate with the Philippine government to afford better protection to the workers through bilateral agreements with receiving countries, and enhance the services and support for the workers provided by the Philippine consulate and other concerned state agencies. While the Hong Kong government was enjoined to institute better mechanisms safeguarding the rights and welfare of migrant workers in the territory.

After graduating from NUS, I worked as a Research Fellow at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. At NIE, I did research on another marginalized group — namely, academically low-achieving students. We conducted a three-year longitudinal study on how actors in the students' academic environment, i. e., teachers, peers and families, affect the students' academic well-being. We outlined implications on how the school setting can be enhanced — for example, in the area of student relationships with their teachers and peers. My research at NIE reinforced my view about the importance of intervention in improving the lives of the marginalized. Whereas my previous research showed the importance of intervention in the well-being of domestic workers, my research at NIE illustrated its significance for students' academic well-being.

For my PhD research at UH, I decided to continue with my scholarship on civic engagement but now focusing on the youth. As in my previous dissertation, I am interested in understanding how individuals live in communities where they are the minority race and immigrant. In my current research, I am interested in examining the intersection between being an immigrant and minority on the one hand, and civic consciousness on the other. Having been living as a migrant myself in two countries for the last 12 years, I have experienced the various challenges of living in unfamiliar settings. One such challenge is how to forge social connection to experience feeling of belonging. However, this does not preclude the fact that my experiences may be different from those of my research participants. Social connectedness is crucial for the development of networks that facilitate civic engagement (Putnam, 1995). Given the challenges of initiating social connection and community in the case of immigrants, it is therefore fascinating to study how immigrants overcome the challenges of establishing social community and henceforth engage in civic endeavors. Although many of my research participants may be children of immigrants and are natural-born citizens of this country, still it is interesting to make sense how despite their coming from immigrant communities, they were able to develop community connection that resulted in their civic engagement.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the objective of my dissertation to study the civic engagement of Asian American youth. I discussed that youth activism makes up a critical part of the United States' history of political mobilization, as illustrated in the civil rights and anti-war movements in the 1950s and 1960s. The 2018 school

shooting in Parkland, Florida mobilized one of the largest youth protest in this country's recent history. Civic engagement is an important area of scholarship because of its benefits to the youth and the nation. Asian American youth civic engagement is an under-researched area of scholarship, as most research focus on African and Hispanic Americans. However, there should be more spotlight on the Asian Americans given their increasing number in the U.S., and consequently their becoming significant contributors to the framework of this country's civic consciousness.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The recent years saw an upsurge in the application of civic engagement in the context of young individuals (Adler & Goggin, 2005). This is because youth has been increasingly being expected to participate in civic engagement, as seen for example in college applications where their civic engagement is examined. It is important to focus on the adolescent years because it is during this period when young people search for identity. It is also during this time when young people are susceptible to various influences, including political socialization (Eckstein, Noack and Gniewosz, 2012). Moreover, it is during adolescence when individuals take on dispositions which they might carry onto adulthood. Studies have shown that adolescents who were exposed to and expressed civic awareness turn out to be more civically engaged as adults (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997; Zaff et al., 2008). Therefore, the seeds of civic disposition that is planted during adolescence are carried and nurtured onto adulthood. Civic engagement, which entails caring for others, likewise positively affect the growth and maturation of young people (Flanagan & Lavine, 2010).

The ensuing literature review examines salient concepts related to youth civic engagement. It starts with how civic engagement is defined in the literature, followed by various conceptions of civic engagement analyzed within the context of one's social and ethnic grouping. Next, the civic education curriculum in the United States will be examined, and subsequently the institutions that influence youth civic engagement – namely, school, family and community. Thereafter the benefits of civic engagement on youth will be discussed, as well as the limited research on Asian

American youth civic engagement. Lastly, the concept of social capital and positive youth development will be presented as a framework to guide the study analysis.

Defining Civic Engagement

Robert Putnam has been widely acknowledged to have popularized the term civic engagement in academic discourse starting in the 1990s (Ekman & Amna, 2012). Putnam's work *Bowling Alone* (2000) where he lamented the decline of civic engagement in the United States helped the topic of civic engagement to gain ground in academic political conversations during the said period.

Putnam (1995) framed civic engagement within the parameters of social capital which refers to the “features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 67). For Putnam, civic engagement is a form of social capital that enables people to work together for the common good of the community. Moreover, Putnam assigned wide-ranging characterization of civic engagement — from reading newspapers, social networks, involvement in associations, to political participation.

Meanwhile, Adler and Goggin (2005) characterized civic engagement as relating to community service, collective action and political involvement. They defined civic engagement as pertaining to “how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve condition for others or to help shape the community's future” (Adler and Goggin, 2005, p. 241). Likewise, they conceptualized civic engagement as involving two different dimensions. One dimension is the range between individual and informal activities, and the more formal collective actions that entail participation in organizations. The other dimension is the

difference between involvement in community activities (e.g., helping a neighbor, contributing to a charity) and involvement in political activities (e.g., voting, active participation in political parties).

The above discussion pertains to the general characterizations of civic engagement, but how are these related to the context of youth? The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, n. d.) defines youth as individuals between the age of 15 and 24. Given that electoral exercise is only available for those aged 18 and above in most countries, it is therefore interesting to ponder what other avenues are available for youth besides participation in electoral politics.

Developmentalists point out that electoral politics – concepts that usually figure in political science citizenship discourse – seem distant concepts for young individuals given their lack of direct experience with the political exercise. Therefore, developmentalists propose a general definition of civic engagement applicable to youth without specific reference to electoral politics, stated thus: “the ability to move beyond one’s individual self-interest and be committed to a larger group” (Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002, p. 265).

Conceptions of Civic Engagement

Youth have varied interpretations on what constitutes civic engagement. Some young individuals narrowly conceive civic engagement (Sherrod et al., 2002) as obeying laws and good behavior. Nonetheless, the critical strand of civic engagement entails being able to make informed judgment that at times requires criticizing the status quo or disobeying unjust laws. To be able to act in such manner, one should

have good understanding of rights (e.g., freedom of speech, right to fair trial) and responsibilities (e.g., support and defend the constitution, being informed about issues affecting one's community) (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010). Scholars propose that more research needs to be done to better understand how youth acquire understanding of civic engagement from acquiesce to the more critical mode of civic consciousness (Dudley, & Gitelson, 2003; Sherrod, 2003).

There is evidence to show that conducive circumstances (e. g., support of organizations and media for a cause) can hasten young individuals' appreciation of critical civic engagement and consequently their participation in protest actions, as illustrated in the earlier shown vignette on the Parkland students' protest action. In such instance, the circumstances in which the students found themselves in ushered their understanding of rights and responsibilities that facilitated their participation in political protest actions.

Meanwhile, Rubin (2007) contends that youth conception of civic engagement is largely shaped by their daily experiences within specific social, economic, institutional, political and historical contexts. Rubin's study among middle and high school students from diverse socio-economic background illumined that based on these differences of experiences, they expressed divergences in their opinions of civic participation as spelled out in the United States key civic texts, such as the Pledge of Allegiance and the Bill of Rights. More privileged youth in homogenous setting and some immigrant youth expressed congruence between their daily experiences and the ideals illustrated in key civic texts. However, urban students of color expressed disjuncture between the ideals and the realities they encounter in their lives.

Against the backdrop of their experiences, White students with wealthy background tend to have complacent disposition toward civic participation, expressing that voting and paying taxes are enough to fulfill their civic obligation. However, youth in racially and socially integrated community where social analysis is generally part of the daily discourse, expressed their desire to work for social change. In the case of urban youth of color in poor communities, some expressed that they felt inspired to work for social change, while others expressed discouragement and resignation in the face of the discrepancies between their experiences and the ideal.

A similar analysis was conducted by Sánchez-Jankowski (2002) on the impact of ethnic group history on perception of civic engagement. The differences in group history result in divergences in civic sub-cultures. There are three general ideal-type experiences that developed from the interactions between institutions and ethnic group histories. The first of these experiences is what Sánchez-Jankowski calls “history of racial exclusion” (p. 238). Members of this group do not belong to the White-dominant class and are perceived to be excluded from “full acceptance and participation in both the social and political system of America” (p. 248). Civic engagement is entertained by this group because it has the potential to challenge White privilege in American society. Groups that are often identified under this category are the American Indians, African Americans and Hispanic Americans.

The second historical experience is labelled as “racial inclusion” (p. 238). Prominent members of this group are the Italians, Irish, Chinese and Jews. They were previously discriminated because they were considered as a threat to the racial purity of the White Anglo -Saxon Protestant American population. However, they were able

to move up the socio-economic hierarchy and became accepted as members of society. It is their painful experience of being rejected and eventually accepted that inform their perception of group relations. Their knee-jerk reaction to groups being benefitted by affirmative action is to ask: Why can't the others act like them?

The third historical experience is the "history of racial privilege" (p. 238). The groups that have this experience are those belonging to the White Anglo Saxon Protestant strand, such as those from United Kingdom, France, Holland and Germany. Although some may have experienced discrimination when they first came to the United States, they nonetheless eventually joined the privileged category once they learned the language, customs, and rules of the United States primarily because their physical features resemble that of the dominant group.

As to their sources of knowledge for civic engagement, with regard to those in the exclusion category, their feeling of rejection despite efforts to be part of the civic culture of the two groups led them to focus on their group's interest. Hence, their knowledge of civic engagement centers on their group interest. Majority from this group believe that they must surrender their individual interest to the group. This is also related to their view that improving their group interest would be beneficial to their individual interest.

For members of the inclusion group, their civic knowledge is mainly sourced from official institutions. Their history of being excluded then eventually accepted inspired them to give something back to society that has been so generous to them. Hence, volunteering for them is a means to provide for the general good. They also feel that they have to help the political system as well as demonstrate loyalty.

With regard to the privileged group, knowledge about civic engagement is derived from the formal institutions of school, family and government. Civic engagement knowledge is more individually-oriented. This is in contrast to the exclusion group where civic engagement knowledge is more focused on the group. For the inclusion group, civic engagement is more nation-oriented.

With the above-discussed socialization process, youth in the exclusion group therefore will be more enthusiastic about helping their communities than the general public. Meanwhile, youth in the privileged group will have less positive attitude toward issues pertaining to welfare and civil rights, but will have more positive attitude toward issues pertaining to taxes and the economy.

Regarding members of the inclusion group, their attitudes toward issues and policies on civic involvement would be situated between the “excluded” and “privileged” groups. This is because they represent a transition process where they have become privileged, but they still have a collective memory when they were excluded. Therefore, they will be vigilant in protecting the gains made by their ancestors as well as embrace issues of national significance to demonstrate gratitude and loyalty to the system that benefitted them. Likewise, they will likely prefer the preservation of status quo to safeguard their gains.

The above discussion emphasized the influence of ethnic grouping in one’s conception of civic engagement. Sánchez-Jankowski’s analysis on Asian Americans is insightful. Following Sánchez-Jankowski’s framework, it would then be interesting to see whether my Asian American youth research participants would fit into the inclusion categorization – where their civic knowledge is said to be mainly derived

from official narrative, and that they are more concerned with national rather than issues facing their communities in order to preserve the political status quo to protect their gains.

Civic Education in the United States

Civic education is the “knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences to prepare someone to be an active, informed participant in democratic life” (Campbell, 2012, p. 1). Civic education primarily serves the purpose of maintaining and harnessing self-government in a democracy. Democratic self-government requires that citizens be well-informed and capable of critical reflection to participate in governance. Effective civic education is important because the skills that are necessary in sustaining democratic self-governance – such as the ability to participate in democratic processes, the capacity for critical thinking and acting deliberately in pluralistic communities, and the empathy that allows individuals to listen and consider other’s opinions – are acquired through learning (Avery, 2003; Quigley, 1995).

The objective of civic education is to enable citizens to competently and responsibly participate in a nation’s political life. To be able to participate, citizens should be able to a) acquire understanding of a certain body of knowledge; b) develop intellectual and participatory competence; c) develop certain character traits, and d) reasonably commit to the basic ideals and values of constitutional democracy (Quigley, 1995).

Citizens need to be knowledgeable about key topics such as the nature and necessity of politics and government, the objectives of the constitution, the values and principles fundamental to constitutional democracy such as rights and responsibilities,

the rule of law, and justice and equality. Intellectual skills entail that one must have understanding of issues – including its history and current relevance – to be able to assess and justify personal stance on issues. Participatory capabilities are necessary to monitor political processes, and to be able to influence government and politics (Quigley, 1995).

The development of certain public and private traits harness individual competence that helps advance constitutional democracy. Public traits include: respect for law, civic mindedness, critical thinking, and capacity to negotiate and compromise. While private traits include: self-discipline, honesty, respect and empathy for others (Quigley, 1995).

Meanwhile, Robertson (2008) recommended that civic education develop the following three categories of interpersonal relationships for the flourishing of democratic political life: deliberation, negotiation and bargaining, and activism. Deliberation requires that when citizens face a public issue, they should attempt to work out the best possible resolution to the problem through dialogues in order to consider the advantages and disadvantages of proposed actions. Negotiation and bargaining entail accommodation of each other's position if there is no clear-cut answer to an issue. Activism aims to realize greater social justice. Activists usually use the strategies of protest and disruption to draw awareness to their causes.

The modern civic education in the United States dates back to 1916 when the National Education Association established the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education to comprehensively examine the entire secondary school curriculum to chart its improvement. The Commission's Civics Study Group

proposed reforms that would affect the teaching of civics up to the present. The first proposal is the introduction of the course Community Civics in 9th grade. The second is the introduction of the Problems of Democracy course in 12th grade. The Community Civics course in grade 9 combines elements of government, economics and the analysis of social structures and processes underlying the term community (e.g., being part of a group, doing tasks benefitting the community). The Problems of Democracy course in 12th grade focuses more specifically on the problems, issues, and conditions that students encounter in their daily lives in democratic society. The aim is to go beyond the exercise of voting, toward critical analysis of social problems and their causes (Cogan, 1999).

There is a long-standing debate as to the distinction between civic and citizenship education (Cogan, 1999). Although most educators use the term interchangeably; however, some point out the distinction between the two terms. In such framing distinguishing the terms, civic education refers to the formal coursework offered in schools. The focus would be government institutions (e.g., Congress, Supreme Court, Presidency), government processes (e.g., legislation, voting, checks and balances), symbols (e.g., national anthem, flag), and roles and responsibilities of a citizen. Citizenship education encompasses both in-school and out-of-school or informal education experiences that can be derived from community organizations, religious organizations, and the media that can help shape the individual's civic character and commitments.

Formal civic education enables students to acquire basic knowledge about civic life, politics and government. It helps them understand how American politics

relate to other political systems in other parts of the world. Formal instruction likewise lets students understand the rights and responsibilities of citizens, as well as the framework for responsible participation in an American constitutional democracy. Nonetheless, the curriculum should be enriched by pertinent learning experiences in both school and community contexts that will enable the students' participation in governance.

Another source of tension pertains to the teaching of civic education. There are two competing approaches: one is the content approach and the other is the reflective inquiry or critical thinking approach (Engle & Ochoa, 1988). The implicit rationale of the content approach centers on the assumption that good citizenship will emerge from acquainting one's self with the knowledge, skills, and methods of social science discipline. While the second tradition makes use of critical and reflective inquiry in examining social problems and issues as means to develop decision-making skills and analysis of values that are critical to participatory citizenship in a democratic society.

Educating citizens for democracy presents another challenging dilemma. A democratic society aims to promote liberty, which requires appreciation of diversity – whether politically, culturally and intellectually. Nonetheless, all societies whether democratic or not need to put in place semblance of conformity and consensus among their citizens in order to survive. There should be balance between these competing goals on how to develop democratic citizens.

This dissertation will follow the civic education definition discussed earlier featuring the afore-mentioned characteristics of citizenship education emphasizing

experiential learning and critical thinking. In other words, this dissertation will take the definition of civic education as interchangeable with citizenship education, as scholars (e. g., Quigley, 1995; Robertson, 2008) attribute activism (e. g., experiential learning, critical thinking) to civic education. The teaching of civic education should incorporate both the content approach on the one hand, and the critical and reflective inquiry approach on the other hand. Civic education likewise recognizes the need to promote liberty and appreciation of diversity, as well as conformity and consensus.

In spite of the general consensus that civic education is essential for democratic society, strong civic programs have been hard to realize. The Center for Civic Education cited the following reasons why such is the case:

Treatment largely through a textbook approach that is abstract, formalistic, and sometimes even incidental; lack of civic education requirements at state and/or local levels; lack of adequate course offerings in districts where civics are required or at the very least recommended; low priority both among curricular offerings and budgetary support, and poor teacher preparation and attitudes (Quigley, 1995, cited in Cogan, 1999, np).

The Center for American Progress likewise came up with the report *The State of Civic Education*, with the following key findings (Shapiro & Brown, 2018, p.11):

Only nine states and the District of Columbia require one year of U.S. government or civics; state civics curricula are heavy on knowledge but light on building skills and agency for civic engagement; while nearly half the states allow credit for community service, only one requires it; nationwide, students score very low on the AP U.S. government exam; and states with the highest rates of youth civic engagement tend to prioritize civics courses and AP U.S. government in their curricula.

A number of scholars (Adler, 2008; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Quigley, 1995; Robertson, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) expressed less optimistic prognosis of the state of civic education in the U.S. The declining state of civic education is

attributed to the systematic inattention to the subject matter (Quigley, 1995; Robertson, 2008), brought about for instance by the considerable attention to topics subjected to state-testing (e.g., mathematics, science and reading). Efforts at developing a civic curriculum that integrates experiential learning and critical analysis are likewise lacking. Moreover, when assessments on civic education do occur usually in secondary schools, the tests are in multiple choice formats that fail to assess whether students acquired civic skills such as taking and defending stance on political and social issues, and writing and speaking about those issues. In addition to such systemic impediment, another concern is teachers' inadequacy to teach civic education (Adler, 2008; Avery, 2003; Quigley, 1995).

Influences on Civic Engagement

Schools. The role of schools figures prominently in youth civic socialization discourse. This is because young people spend much of their formative years in school where they are socialized into values – including civic consciousness – which they could carry on until adulthood (Zaff et al., 2008). Moreover, schools have often expressed that one of their important objectives is the development of their students' civic consciousness (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Nonetheless, because civic engagement is not an examinable subject in state testing, schools have thus devoted less attention to it. Recent studies illustrate the school's potential to enhance civic and political participation (Campbell, 2008). Because of the importance of inculcating civic consciousness among young people for nation-building, it is thus significant to examine the role of schools in civic development.

While the earlier section discussed the civic curriculum in school and attendant issues that could impact the students' acquisition of a more holistic democratic civic education, the succeeding section closely examines the school practices that facilitate civic engagement among the students. As will be illustrated in the foregoing discussion, civic engagement is undoubtedly enriched by the students' experiences with civic practices — thereby foregrounding the significance of going beyond the formal textbook route of learning.

Schools facilitate the development of civic engagement when they ensure the presence of open classroom climate for the discussion of social issues, diligently teach civic content and skills, provide opportunities for service work, and stimulate a participative school culture where opinions of students on school matters are welcome (Andolina, Jenkins Zukin & Keeter, 2003; Campbell, 2008; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Torney-Purta, 2002).

A study conducted by Campbell (2008) found that open classroom climate positively influence the civic knowledge and understanding of political issues among adolescents. The study was based on the 1999 IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) Civic Education Study (CIVED) survey. CIVED is a school-based survey administered to a representative sample of 14-year-old students in 28 countries including the U.S. The full sample in the U.S. included 2,811 students in 124 public and private schools.

Open classroom climate is broadly associated with the discussion of political issues in the classroom. When students discuss and debate about real-world political issues, they not only learn about the people and issues that are significant during the

day but also deepen their knowledge about fundamental democratic principles and practices. In the CIVED survey, some items used to measure open classroom climate included whether the students were exposed to differing opinions from their classmates and whether teachers foster an environment of respect for political differences in the classroom.

The study included a number of control variables regarding individual characteristics that past studies have shown are related to political engagement. These include the number of books at home (a measure of intellectual environment at home), gender (some studies show that females fall behind in political engagement measures, but some studies show they are more politically engaged than males), and race/ethnicity (studies show that racial and ethnic minorities generally score lower than dominant Whites in political engagement). Other control variables pertain to the student's school and district characteristics; which include per-pupil expenditures within the school district, percentage of college graduates and the median household income within the school district, whether the school is in urban area, and percentage of children eligible for free lunch. Additional control variables pertain to classroom characteristics, such as the racial composition of the class, the aggregate education the students expect to receive, and how often the students have civic/social studies lessons. The results of the study show that open classroom climate affect the students' civic and political knowledge even after controlling for the students' individual, school district, and classroom characteristics.

Torney-Purta (2002) likewise illumined in her study the significance of school for civic education. Torney-Purta also analyzed the earlier mentioned IEA Civic

Education survey. The analysis of the survey data centered on addressing the question: What role does formal schooling play in civic education and engagement process? The following are school features that significantly facilitate civic engagement: the prevailing culture in the classroom and school, and the formal civic education curriculum. The study concluded that a classroom climate that nurtures respectful discussions of civic and political issues enhances civic knowledge and engagement. Students' confidence in their effective working with peers for school improvement and organizational participation (e.g. in student council) are significant predictors of students' civic engagement. Moreover, students' lessons about voting and elections positively impact their willingness to vote in the future.

Another study by Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin and Keeter (2003) analyzed the results of a survey conducted among about 1,000 individuals aged 15-25 in 2002. The study analyzed a multi-phase survey of youth civic engagement in the United States which examined their civic and political engagement nationally, as well as specific features of participation among young adults. The survey included 19 measures of civic engagement encompassing activities such as voting and wearing a campaign button, civic work such as volunteering, and alternative behaviors such as consumer boycotting, protesting, and sending email petitions. The survey found that "schools can provide training grounds for civic involvement, offer opportunities for open discussions, and create avenues for service work" which all result in higher levels of youth civic involvement (p. 277).

The civic engagement scores of the students in the survey measures improve when teachers encourage open discussions about matters pertaining to politics and

government. Students who were taught letter-writing and debating skills by their teachers are more likely than those who did not have such lessons to be involved in civic activities. Moreover, students' civic involvement improves when schools facilitate volunteer work, and even increases still when schools require it. As yet another illustration of the importance of classroom discussions, students who are encouraged to talk about their volunteer work in class are more likely to continue their volunteer work.

Meanwhile, Metz and Youniss (2005) examined the impact of school-based required service involving grades 11 and 12 students on their civic development. The study was conducted among 486 students in a public high school in Massachusetts. The required service participation involves 40 hours of activities in which the primary criterion to qualify for school credit is that the service was provided to at least one unrelated person. To gain credit for the required service, students should write a reflection that describe the nature of the service they provided and their perception of how their service helped the recipients and themselves. Typical service activities included: tutoring, coaching, organizing food or clothing drives. Services were mostly done under the auspices of school, community-based organizations and churches. Students should fulfill the 40-hour service requirement at grade 12 to earn high school diploma.

Surveys were administered to the students at the start and end of grade 11, and another at grade 12. The students were asked whether they have completed their service requirement or not. The students who were classified as the "more inclined" completed their 40-hour service by the end of grade 10 or 11, and 90 % of them did

additional volunteer work after completing the requirement. The “less inclined” group of students waited until they were in grade 12 to complete the service requirement and had not volunteered prior to completing the 40 hours. For measures of civic engagement, the students were asked about the following (similarly at the start and end of grade 11 and at the end of grade 12): the likelihood that they would vote after completing high school (future voting); likelihood that they would “volunteer” or “join a civic organization” after high school (future conventional civic involvement); likelihood that they would “boycott a product”, “demonstrate for a cause or work on a political campaign” (future unconventional civic involvement); and how often they “discussed politics with parents and friends” or “read about national politics in the newspaper or magazines or watch the news on TV” (p. 424).

The findings show that students who were already inclined to serve demonstrated higher scores in all measures of civic engagement throughout and showed no gains after meeting the requirements. Nonetheless, students who were less inclined to serve demonstrated gains on three of the four civic engagement measures after the completion of their school civic requirements.

Another illustration of the correlation between educational experience at school and civic engagement is shown in a research by Eckstein, Noack and Gniewosz (2012). The longitudinal research conducted over a period of four years pertains to the attitudes toward political engagement and willingness to participate in politics among adolescents ages 12 through 16. Students’ attitudes toward political engagement were assessed using four items (for example, “We should take the chance to participate in politics.”) While the students’ willingness to participate in politics was assessed by six

items (i.e., “participation in student council, environmental group, political party, donating money to political organization, demonstrating, voting”) (p. 488). The study found that students expressed differences in their opinions depending on their educational trajectories. Students who are attending the college-bound track expressed improvement in their attitudes toward political engagement and willingness to participate in politics over time. Additionally, the opinions of the students were shown to become more stable throughout the adolescent years.

Family and community. It has been traditionally acknowledged that political socialization begins in the family (Youniss et al., 2002). Young people who were raised in homes with frequent political discussions and where adults volunteer are more likely to be involved in civic activities (Andolina, et al., 2003; Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Moreover, youth who perceived that adults in their communities care about young people and work to make their communities better were more committed to civic participation (Kahne & Sporte, 2008).

A study conducted by Kahne and Sporte (2008) showed that parents who discussed current events with their children help enhance the children’s civic commitment. When young people witness concern for current events and community in their homes, they are more likely to be committed to civic participation. Data for the study were collected from a larger research project conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which analyzed school contexts and practices and their relationship to various student outcomes and educational policies. The research analyzed survey results conducted among 4,057 students from 52 high schools in Chicago that examined students’ commitment to civic participation.

Andolina et. al. (2003) likewise emphasized the importance of home as the source of civic learning among young people. Youth raised in homes with regular political conversations become more involved in civic activities. By conversing about politics, families convey and educate their children about the importance of paying attention to their community and the world around them and consequently act if needed. Parents, guardians and siblings are significant role models for youth civic behavior. Young people who were raised in homes where someone is civically involved are likely to be engaged themselves.

The importance of family influence on youth civic engagement is also illuminated in a study conducted by McIntosh, Hart and Youniss (2007). The research aimed to address the question of which parent qualities influence youth civic development. It analyzed data from the US Department of Education National Household Education Survey (NHES, 1996) involving 3,662 high school students and their parents. Youth civic engagement was measured using the following items: monitoring national news, political knowledge, public communication skills (on whether they could write to a public official or speak at a public meeting) and community service. Parental characteristics were measured by examining parents' civic skills, behavior, knowledge, and attitudes, including background characteristics such as ethnicity and income. Youth-parent political discussion was reported by the youth using a four-point scale questionnaire (hardly ever to almost everyday). Specific to the youth participants, the following control variables were used in the analysis: gender, academic grades, number of civic courses taken in school, and participation in organized youth activities in and out of school.

Results show that political discussion with parents broadly affect all youth civic outcome variables. Youth-parent political discussions turn out as the strongest parental predictor with regard to the youth's national news monitoring, public communication, and community service. The highest effect is evident in the national news monitoring. Youth who discuss politics more frequently with their parents tend to have higher levels of national news monitoring, political knowledge, public communication skill, and community service.

Another large scale study by Duke, Skay, Pettingell and Borowsky (2009) involving 9130 young adults aged 18–26 years showed that stronger connection to family and community correlates with civic engagement. The study showed that stronger connection to family and community predicted likelihood of voting in elections, doing community volunteer service, being involved in social action, education groups as well as conservation groups. Data were derived from home interviews from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (wave 1, 1995 and wave 3, 2001-2002) involving a sample of 9130 young adults aged 18–26 years.

Family connection was measured as to whether respondents were close to their parents, whether they are satisfied with the love, care and attention they receive from their parents and their overall relationship with their parents. The respondents were also asked about the number of activities they engaged with their parents — whether playing sport, talking about school and personal problems, and attending religious service, concert or movie, among others. To measure community connection, the respondents were asked whether they know most people in the neighborhood, whether

people look after each other in the neighborhood, and whether they feel safe and happy living in the neighborhood.

The influence of family and community on civic engagement is likewise illustrated in a cross-country study of more than 8,000 15-year old students in five countries (Belgium, Canada, Italy, Romania and England). The study showed that family affluence, perceived neighborhood social capital and democratic school climate positively affect youth participation in community organization (Lenzi et al., 2012). Family affluence was measured by car ownership, unshared rooms, number of computers at home, and times spent on holidays in the last 12 months. Neighborhood social capital was measured by asking the participants the following on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree): on whether people stop to talk to each other in the street, young children can safely play outside, people in their neighborhood can be trusted, and people can ask favor from neighbors. To measure democratic school climate, using the same Likert scale, the participants were asked whether students in their school take part in making rules, get involved in organizing school events, and are encouraged by teachers to express their views in their classes, among others.

Another study by Flanagan and colleagues (2007) among more than a thousand students about 15 years of age from African American, Arab American, European American, and Latino American backgrounds showed that regardless of ethnic background, youth civic commitment is stronger if they felt connected to their community. Items for civic commitment were grouped into the following three constructs: commitments to patriotism, building tolerance, and assisting people in

need. Adolescent's sense of community connectedness was developed for the study and organized into construct dealing with perceptions of trust (i.e., presence of trusted adults in the community), collective efficacy (i.e., residents help each other to make the community a good place to live in) and inclusion (i.e., residents are open and welcoming to newcomers).

Meanwhile, Balsano (2005) pointed out that living in stressful community could impede youth civic engagement. When youth live in stressful setting ridden with conflict and poverty, they tend to lose a sense of optimism and security, as well as trust in adults who are supposed to be role models for them. When the youth do not have optimism for the future, then they will not aspire to contribute to their community's well-being. The lack of adult models working for the community's welfare also deters the youth from having leaders who will inspire them to be involved in civic activities.

Overall, the above discussion emphasized the critical role of schools, family and community in developing youth civic engagement. The above-discussed research literature emphasized the important role of school in civic engagement. They illustrated that several school practices – such as maintaining open classroom climate, service learning, and civic lessons, among others – enhance civic consciousness among young individuals. Campbell's (2008) study is instructive as it illustrated that the school practice of maintaining an open climate for political discussions could even overcome individual and school socio-economic characteristics (particularly, economic status) that are often regarded as hindrance to political conscientization (Sherrod et al., 2002).

Moreover, youth tend to imbibe the civic atmosphere circulating at home. Youth become more civically engaged if they live with adults who are engaged in civic practices. Parents' political discussions with their children affect most the latter's civic involvement. Beyond the family, youth who live in safe and caring community are more inclined to give back and serve their community.

Benefits of Civic Engagement

Similar with adults, youth engage in civic activities because of "self-interest". As Tocqueville (2000) put it: they see something beneficial for themselves from the political involvement. The feeling of efficacy and fulfillment that the youth derive from their political involvement is an important motivator for their civic action (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002; Zaff et al., 2008). Research have documented the exhilarating feelings young individuals feel when they have their voices heard on issues that are important to them (Sherrod et al., 2002; Stoneman, 2002).

Involvement in civic action likewise helps the youth find their identities (Martinez, Penaloza & Valenzuela, 2012). Civically engaged youth find the meanings of their identities in alignment with the goals of their organizations. In an in-depth interviews, youth research participants expressed that they found meaning and purpose in their lives by joining organizations whose goals revolve around helping people and fighting for causes pertaining to poverty, environment, ethnic discrimination, among others (Martinez et al., 2012).

When young people find purpose from working for causes beyond their individual selves and their moral and civic fabric are in place, then they become

salient contributors to society's well-being. Young people who contribute to the common good further thrive as individuals. As Lerner (2004) elaborated:

When young people define themselves, morally and civically, as individuals committed to making valuable contributions to self, family, community, and society, they thrive – they enter into life paths marked by positive behaviors (such as competence, confidence, and compassion) and by active participation in their communities (by civic engagement), and they develop toward a future characterized by sorts of contributions to which they have become committed (p. 10).

The research literature is replete with studies pointing out the benefits of civic engagement among youth. In schools, civic engagement is enhanced through participation in service learning. A meta-analysis of 62 studies involving 11, 837 students (elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels) shows that as compared to non-participating students, those who take part in service learning programs showed significant gains in five outcome variables: a) attitudes toward self, b) attitudes toward school and learning, c) civic engagement, d) social skills, and e) academic achievement (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011). Attitudes toward self encompasses measures pertaining to "self-esteem, self-efficacy, personal abilities, and feelings of control" (Celio et al., 2011, p. 170). Attitudes toward school and learning relates to students' feelings about school (e.g., academic engagement). Civic engagement pertains to outcome measures oriented toward community welfare (e.g., civic responsibility and voting behaviors). Social skills pertain to those skills directed toward other individuals (e.g., leadership and social problem solving skills). Academic achievement includes measures of grades or test scores of students.

Another large-scale study using the National Household Education Survey involving high school students (n=4,306) and one parent each in the United

States examined the impact of the students' participation in service activities -- whether voluntary or school-required -- on academic, behavioral and civic outcomes (Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2007). Academic adjustment was measured using a 5-point scale using parents' report of their child's grade point average in all subjects (0= mostly Fs, 4= mostly As). The mean GPA for this sample was "mostly B's" ($M= 2.99$, $SD= 0.90$).

Behavioral adjustment was measured using variables from the parent's interview as to whether they had ever received notice from the teachers about academic and behavior problems regarding their children, and whether their children have ever been suspended or expelled from school. A 5-point scale ranging from 0= fewer problems to 4= more problems, was used to measure behavioral adjustment. The sample mean was 0.57 ($SD = 0.86$), which means that parents reported few behavioral problems.

Civic outcomes was divided into two separate categories of civic efficiency and civic knowledge. Civic efficiency was measured using items in which students reported whether they exert influence on the government or utilize their rights (e. g., expressing their opinions). The scale for this measure ranges from 6= less civic efficacy to 12 =more civic efficacy. The mean score for civic efficacy was 10.54 ($SD= 1.24$). Regarding civic knowledge, a composite variable was formulated to measure students' knowledge on politics, government and national issues. Student's knowledge on civic issues was measured using a 5-point scale ranging from 0=less civic knowledge to 5 = more civic knowledge. The mean civic knowledge score was

2.51. Overall, the study concluded that participation in service learning positively impacts students' academic, behavioral and civic outcomes.

Not only do youth and parents perceive the positive impact of civic engagement on young individual's life spheres, but school principals express similar opinion as well. A large-scale national survey involving 217,000 6th to 12th grade students from 2,002 schools and their principals in the United States examined the impact of service learning on student engagement and achievement (Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, & Benson, 2006).

The study probe the principals' perceptions of the impact of service learning on the mentioned dimensions. To measure students' conduct of service, students were asked how many hours on average per week they do volunteer work to help others (e.g., helping out at hospital, day care center, and youth programs). Choices for the responses were 0, 1, 2, 3-5, 6-10 or 11 or more hours on average per week. Students who reported at least 1 hour per week were considered as contributing service. School poverty level was measured by looking at the proportion of students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Student's socio-economic status (SES) was measured using student self-reports on the mother's educational level and whether student is from single-parent family.

Regarding grades, students reported whether they obtained mostly As, Bs, or Cs. For attendance, students were asked how many school days they skipped. Academic engagement was measured using items related to achievement motivation, school engagement, bonding to school, homework and reading for pleasure.

Results show that principals from high-poverty urban, and majority non-White schools were likely to have very positive assessment of service learning on their students. With regard to the students, those who reported higher level of service had higher grades, attendance and academic engagement. Low-SES students with more service reported better scores on most academic success variables than other low-SES students with less or without service. Community service may be related to academic success because it makes young people feel useful and valued which inspire them to do great things in other aspects such as their studies. Because of the positive impact of service learning especially on low-SES students, service learning can thus potentially reduce the achievement gap between low and high SES students.

The long-term positive effect of civic engagement was illustrated by Davila and Mora (2007) who documented that civically engaged students tend to be more academically engaged in the long run by completing their college education. The authors examined a large-scale longitudinal data set assessing the relationship between civic engagement and academic progress. The study analyzed the 1988-2000 National Education Longitudinal study involving a sample of 15,340 eight-grade students. The study analyzed surveys conducted in 1988 and subsequently in 1990, 1993, 1994 and 2000. Students were asked about their involvement in student government and community service activities. This item was correlated with students' test scores in standardized cognitive exams in reading, mathematics, science and history conducted from 1988 to 1992. The study likewise analyzed the students' college graduation rate. The results show that students who are more civically engaged tend to perform better

academically and more likely to graduate from college than their peers who are less civically engaged.

Because of its various benefits, civic engagement should be enhanced among the youth. Developing youth's civic disposition is critical because they will carry on the task of nation-building. Positive youth development (PYD) offers an insightful lens with regard to navigating the path toward nurturing youth civic engagement (Lerner, 2004). PYD enjoins that society's resources be directed at developing the strengths of all children, including their potential for civic engagement. It therefore repudiates the deficit perspective of the youth, and the general negative perception of adolescents. In the United States, adolescence is usually regarded as a period of "storm and stress" (Camino & Zeldin, 2002, p. 214). Youth connotes risky behavior, identity problem, negative peer influences, parental conflict and opposition to adult authority. Such perceptions of adolescents could prevent adults from appreciating and nurturing the youth's potential contribution to community development.

To summarize, civic engagement affects the various spheres of a young individual's life. Evidence shows that participation in civic activities enhances academic, behavioral and civic dispositions. Civic engagement is regarded as a cumulative resource (Putnam, 1993): the more it is used, the more it proliferates. The above-reviewed research illustrated the positive impact of civic engagement on the academic outcomes of low-SES students, thus pointing to the potential of civic engagement in reducing the achievement gap between low- and high-SES students. The various benefits of civic engagement necessitates its development among the youth sector. Following the lens of PYD, youth should be less regarded as

problematic, but rather as agents with potential to contribute to nation-building via civic engagement.

Civic Engagement of Asian American Youth

In my review of the extant literature on Asian American youth civic engagement, there is only one study dedicated to the Asian Americans while there are two that analyzed this youth sector in conjunction with other ethnic groupings.

Chan's (2011) study analyzed the civic engagement of Asian American college students (average age 19) by conducting semi-structured interviews among 14 student participants. The study illustrated three categories that are facilitators and barriers to civic engagement; namely: 1) relational, 2) identity, and 3) acculturation gap.

With regard to relational factors, some participants said that their siblings, extended family members/family friends, and/or friends influenced their involvement in civic activities. They said that they joined civic activities because these family members/friends, and/or peers are involved in the activities. Regarding identity factors, the study showed that the participants' social identities – for example, ethnic or religious – affected their choice of civic activity. Some participants expressed that they joined ethnic-based student organizations to meet other Asian Americans as well as learn more about their Asian American identity. Participants who identified as Christians expressed that their religion encouraged them to develop a sense of responsibility to others and be civically engaged.

Acculturation gap was manifested in two forms: one was between the participants and their parents, and the other was between the participants and their peers. Some participants said that their parents were not appreciative of their civic

engagement. The parents perceived their children's involvement in extra-curricular activities and clubs in school as too much exposure to American culture and a waste of time. While some participants who quit their ethnic-based organizations said that they cannot identify with their peers in the organizations. They said that some of their peers were very Americanized and do not really promote their ethnic culture. Moreover, the study illustrated that the youth's civic engagement positively affected them with regard to the following five domains identified with the positive youth development (Lerner, 2002): competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring and compassion.

Marcelo, Lopez and Kirby (2007) examined Asian American youth in comparison with those from African-American and Latinx groupings. The study found that African-Americans are the most politically engaged, while Asian Americans are mostly engaged in civic activities such as volunteering. While the Latinx youth are highly engaged in protesting. The study was based on the Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey (CPHS, 2006) conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. The study involved 1,700 youth, of which 184 are Asian Americans. Examples of civic activities that were tested in the survey included: engaging in community problem solving activity, regular volunteering for a non-electoral organization, and active membership in a group or association. While political activities included: contacting public officials, print media, protesting, signing e-mail and paper petitions, and engaging in boycott.

Meanwhile, a qualitative study of immigrant youth civic engagement from India and El Salvador ($N=40$, aged between 14 and 18 years) with 20 participants from

each ethnic grouping, found that the immigrants mostly agree that civic engagement is important (Jensen, 2008). Most of the participants were civically engaged, but largely at the level of community rather than national politics. Additionally, most community activities were cultural and took place through cultural organizations. Cultural motives were twice as likely to be cited as reason for engagement than disengagement. Seven engagement themes and three disengagement themes were drawn from these cultural motives. The seven cultural themes of engagement are: (a) cultural remembrance (maintenance of cultural identity and tradition), (b) tradition of service (their traditions prescribe service to others), (c) enhancing welfare of immigrants or cultural communities, (d) giving assistance to country of origin, (e) building of new social network, and g) appreciation for American democracy (which allows freedom of speech and political engagement). Inasmuch as cultural factors facilitate the immigrants' civic engagement, these factors could also lead to disengagement. The three themes of disengagement are: (a) working hard (being busy with work left them without time for civic activities), (b) ethnic exclusion (sense of not fitting into the American civic life), and (c) being immigrant but not yet a U.S. citizen.

Two insights can be gathered from the above-discussed research literature. First, the strong impact of ethnic identity on Asian American youth civic activities. For example, they tend to join groups where fellow Asians are present, and partake in activities targeting their fellow Asians. Second, Asian Americans are more into volunteering rather than politicized course of actions.

Social Capital

The theory of social capital by James Coleman has been applied to various research in education (Coleman, 1988). Social capital is most importantly defined by its function. Social capital consists of two aspects: some elements of structure and it capacitates actors to do certain actions. Social capital is productive as with other types of capital. Social capital enables the achievement of specific goals which would not have been possible in its absence. Social capital facilitates the development of human capital. Unlike human and physical capital, social capital is located within relations among actors in structure. Human capital is embedded in the skills and knowledge of individuals, and physical capital is embodied in physical objects for production.

There are various forms of social capital that can facilitate the fruition of certain ends. One form of social capital is what Coleman characterized as the obligations, expectations and trustworthiness present in the structure of relations. For instance, the presence of these elements in an organization ensures that members perform the obligations expected of them for the continued smooth functioning of the organization. Another type of social capital pertains to information channel. The possession of certain information can serve as the basis for action and the realization of certain goals. For example, parents who have access to information on how to better navigate the education system would put their children in a better position than those without access to such information. Norms and effective sanctions are another form of social capital. For example, effective norms that sanction crime enable individuals to walk freely without fear for safety in their communities.

Social capital can exist within and outside the family. Capital within the family can be in financial, human and social forms. Financial capital can be measured by income and wealth. Human capital can be measured by parent's education that facilitates cognitive environment helpful for the child's development. Social capital exists in the relationship between parents and children. Social capital enables children to access adults' human capital through their physical presence and attention to their offspring. When social capital is missing, then the child will be unable to profit from the parents' human capital.

Social capital that is crucial for young children's development can also be found in the community. This is illustrated, for instance, in the existence of the parents' contacts with institutions. For example, parents' contacts with organizations that provide leadership opportunities for young people can enable the parents to place their children in such organizations for training.

Robert Putnam likewise theorized about social capital. As discussed earlier, Putnam (1995) refers to social capital as networks, norms and trust that contribute to the cooperation of community members. Similar with Coleman, Putnam argues that social capital enhances human capital. Elements of social capital such as trust, norms, and networks are "self-reinforcing and cumulative" (Putnam, 1993, p.3). Successful collaboration breeds connections and trust, which are social assets that result in future collaboration in other endeavors. Similar with other forms of capital (e.g. human, economic, political), those with social capital tends to acquire more of it when utilized. Social capital is a "moral resource" (Hirshman, 1984, cited in Putnam 1993, p.3), which increases when used and diminishes when unused. Social capital enhances

human capital. For example, in case of two underprivileged youth, the one who lives in a community whose social capital is eroded will have a more difficult life than the one living in a community laden with social capital.

In gist, the theory of social capital argues that social relations and networks facilitate the fruition of specific actions. If applied to my proposed research, social relations can be in the form of social relations between parents and children, parents' social relations with others, or the youth's social relations with non-family members. Social capital can provide a useful lens for my research specially in addressing questions related to how the youth become involved in civic engagement.

Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework that emphasizes the strengths of young individuals. It deviates from the conception of youth as a period of storm and stress. From the PYD perspective, youth are not seen as problems to be fixed, but as assets that can be developed (Lerner, Dowling & Anderson, 2003). The PYD framework argues for the relative plasticity of human development where systematic change in human behavior can occur as a result of the reciprocal relationships between the developing individual and her environment (Lerner, Alberts, Jellicic & Smith, 2006). If young individuals have mutually beneficial relationships with families, communities and institutions, they will be able to develop key features of positive youth development that are referred to as the 5Cs: competence, character, confidence, connection and caring (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005). When the young person possesses these five features, she will then thrive and make productive contributions to the community and civic life. With this, the individual

will then develop the sixth C – contribution – which is analogous to the notion of civic engagement. The PYD framework models a mutually beneficial structure between the individual and social context. Individuals benefit from the inputs of the social context, while thriving individuals contribute to the flourishing of the social context.

Summary

The literature review explicates the various definitions that have been put forth pertaining to civic engagement. It asserts that the general definition espousing that civic engagement is moving beyond self-interest and be committed to the interest of a larger group is appropriate for the youth. This is because the concepts that are often foregrounded in political science civic engagement discourse -- such as government and voting – may be distant notions to the youth because of their limited encounter with government institutional processes. Next, the different conceptions of civic engagement were discussed emphasizing that ethnic grouping and experiences largely influence one's conception of civic engagement. The review then examined the civic curriculum in the U.S., where the tension between formal or textbook-based and experiential learning of civic engagement, as well as between content and reflective or critical inquiry of civic concerns were discussed. The section of the review concluded that the current curriculum needs to be improved because of the seemingly general absence of experiential learning and critical analysis in the teaching of the subject matter. Improving teacher competence in teaching civics is another area that need to be pursued.

As to institutional influences, school practices such as provision of service learning and discussion of socio-political issues enhance youth civic engagement.

Families and communities are likewise significant sites for civic development. Civic engagement thrive in families where adults engage in civic practices such as conversing about socio-political issues with their children, reading newspapers, and doing volunteer work. Parent's socio-political discussions with their children turn out to have the biggest impact on the latter's civic engagement. Civic disposition likewise tend to develop in communities where the youth feel secure and cared for.

Various studies attest to the benefits of civic engagement on the youth well-being. Aside from helping the youth find their identity and purpose, the literature is replete with empirical studies manifesting that civically engaged youth are better academically and behaviorally adjusted than those lacking civic engagement. Therefore, civic engagement should be developed to help nurture the potential of young individuals. The review likewise presented the findings of few research on Asian American youth civic engagement. Lastly, social capital and positive youth development were discussed as possible frameworks to analyze research findings.

As mirrored in the above literature review, many research on youth civic engagement are framed within quantitative research. As will be discussed in the next section, my proposed research will make use of the qualitative methodology. It therefore aims to enrich the literature on youth civic engagement by examining the phenomenon through qualitative lens. Likewise, the empirical studies discussed in the review dealt with diverse population of youth, with a dearth of focus on Asian Americans.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This dissertation aimed to study civically engaged Asian American youth — particularly college students — in Houston, Texas. While the Asian American population grew nationally, there was parallel unprecedented growth in the South and Midwest parts of the United States, which is beyond the Northeast and West regions where Asian Americans are traditionally found. The Asian-American population in the South increased 33% (over 1.1 million) between 2009 and 2014. While the population in the Midwest and the Northeast grew by 29% (538,000) and 26% (810,000), respectively, during the same period (Nielsen, 2015). Texas was the top destination among Asian Americans in the South. In Texas, the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington and Houston-The Woodlands-Sugarland (the Greater Houston Area) were the top two destinations, with about 75,000 and 71,000 settling in the said areas, respectively between 2009 and 2014 (Nielsen, 2015).

With the growing number of Asian Americans in the Houston area, they will thus eventually become salient contributors in shaping the city's civic character. In the greater Houston area, there are an estimated 470,000 (or 14.6 percent of the total population) who are classified as Asian or Pacific Islander in 2018.¹

¹ Race and Ethnicity in the Houston Area, Texas (Metro Area). (2019). Retrieved from <https://statisticalatlas.com/metro-area/Texas/Houston/Race-and-Ethnicity>.

Research Questions

The current study probed the opinions of Asian American college student leaders on their involvement in civic activities, as well as the influences on their decision to be civically involved. It also analyzed the roles of school, family and community in the development of their civic commitment. Specifically, the current study addressed the following questions: *What are the perceptions of civically engaged Asian American youth about their civic engagement? How have been the influences of peers, school, family and community in the development of the civic engagement?*

Research Design

This study presents a qualitative analysis of the civic engagement of Asian American college students. To collect data for the research, I conducted in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews with civically involved Asian American college students, observed their civic activities, and kept a journal detailing my reflections on the research process. The current study aimed to enrich the few existing research conducted on the civic engagement of Asian American youth (Chan 2011; Jensen, 2008; Marcelo, Lopez & Kirby, 2000). The qualitative studies by Chang (2011) and Jensen (2008) involved both non-civically and civically involved youth, unlike the current study that focused only on the civically engaged and so more in-depth examination of the youth participants' perspectives on their civic experiences was conducted. The study by Marcelo and colleagues was based on a quantitative survey involving Asian American youth. Likewise, the above-mentioned studies did not

examine the youth's perceptions as to the roles of peers, school, family and community on the development of their civic engagement unlike the current study.

The research design for the current study was guided by the grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is an “inductive methodology that provides systematic guidelines for gathering, synthesizing, analyzing, and conceptualizing qualitative data” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 6396). Grounded theory provides a methodology for constructing a theory that is grounded in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Theory consists of plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts. Grounded theory methodology provides guidance to researchers in constructing a theory that is conceptually dense or that which features various conceptual relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Grounded theory researchers are interested in studying “patterns of action and interaction” between and among actors (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278). They are also concerned with understanding processes such as changes in action and interaction patterns. When patterns of changes are identified for analytic purpose, then conceptualization of what occurs under certain conditions can be drawn. In this theory formulation, one can claim predictability in the sense that when approximately certain conditions occur, then approximately similar consequences occur. Nonetheless, theories are provisional and would need elaboration and qualification because they are formulated within specific historical context. When realities change, theories would need clarification and modification to be relevant.

The emerging theory should reflect the perspectives of multiple actors in the study. Although grounded theories are abstractions, they are nonetheless grounded in the perspectives of different actors about the phenomenon being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Charmaz (1996) likewise emphasized the close relationship of grounded theories with the participants' perspectives. She argued for the interpretative tradition in grounded theorizing in order to "capture the worlds of people by describing their situations, thoughts, feelings and actions and by relying on portraying the research participants' lives and voices" (Charmaz, 1996, p. 32). Grounded theory researchers should construct their analytical categories from the data and not from existing concepts or hypotheses. Therefore, the grounded theory methods require the researcher to closely study the empirical world being examined.

The type of theory often developed in grounded theory is substantive rather than grand or formal theory (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). Substantive theory is "typically localized, dealing with a particular real-world situation or complex setting" (Miller, 2015, p. 197). Substantive theory is applicable only to a specific field in contrast to a formal or grand theory which is more inclusive and with wider application (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Example of substantive theory is parental coping with a child's cancer diagnosis, while examples of formal theory deal with coping with any sickness or the practice of coping in general. Substantive theory provides the foundation for the development of formal theory.

Sample and Data Collection

The United Nations defines youth as individuals within the age range of 15-24.² This study focused on Asian American youth student leaders based at University of Hope (UH, pseudonym), which is the largest university in Southeast, Texas. The university also has one of the most ethnically diverse student populations in the United States, and with a large Asian student population: 32% of its students are Hispanic/Latino, 25% White, 22% Asian, and the rest are African Americans, foreigners or of unknown ethnicity.³ By focusing on college students, this dissertation aimed to foreground analyses and perspectives that might not have been generated when the focus are younger students. College students can share more detailed introspection about their experiences than younger students. In the case of the participants in the current study, they shared their reflections on both their college and high school civic experiences. Hence, with the college students as research participants, this study is able to present richer introspection on youth civic experience.

I utilized purposive and snowball sampling to invite study participants. I looked at the University Center for Student Involvement for the list of student organizations operating on campus. I started emailing the letter of invitation to leaders of the Asian ethnicity-based organizations (i. e., Filipino Student Association, Vietnamese Student Association, Indian Student Association, and Pakistani Student

² United Nations. (n.d.). *Definition of youth*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

³ College Factual. (2019). *University of Houston, Houston, Texas*. Retrieved from <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-houston/student-life/diversity/>

Association). Afterwards, I examined the list of officers of other organizations and identified those with Asian-sounding surnames to whom I sent the invitation for study participation. I also visited the student organization carrels at the University Student Center North to ask the members who among the Asian American officers in their organizations I can possibly invite my study. Likewise, I asked the participants during my interviews with them if they could refer me to acquaintances that I can interview for my study.

Fifteen Asian American student leaders participated in the study. Ten were females and five were males. The participants were aged between 18 and 22, with a mean age of 20. Eight of the students were of Vietnamese descent, two each were Filipinos, Indians and Pakistanis, while one was of Indonesian Mexican of descent. All of the student participants held leadership or officer positions in their organizations, with eight of them holding the highest position. Four of the organizations were ethnicity-related (Filipino Student Association, Pakistani Student Association, Vietnamese Student Association, and Indian Student Association), three were related to the students' field of study (Global Medical Brigades, Asian Student Business Association, and TeachHouston), three were university-sponsored organizations (Metropolitan Volunteer Program, Council for Cultural Activities, and Coog Radio), one was a sorority (Sigma Phi Omega), religious-based organization (Muslim Student Association), and the Student Government Organization. Regarding the student participants' area of study, seven were majoring in the natural sciences, three were into business, two each were into social sciences and communications, and

one majored in engineering. See Table 1 for the participants' profiles and Annex 1 for the profiles of the organizations.

The students were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Annex 2 for the interview guide). The interview topics included how and why the student participants engaged in the civic activities, the influences of school, family and community on their civic work, the challenges they face with regard to their civic endeavors and how do they address the challenges, how their being an Asian American influence their civic work, and their plans for the future. The participants were interviewed at the university campus. The interviews lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes. I reached out to the research participants again in person, or via phone call, email or text messaging for follow-up questions after analyzing the initial interviews. I also conducted several observations of the activities conducted by the organizations such as meetings, recruitment orientations for service work, voter registration campaign and inter-faith awareness campaign, among others.

All throughout the data collection and fieldwork, I kept and updated a journal detailing my reflections on the research process. Through the various data sources and reflections on how the data collection proceeded, I aimed to come up with rich data that addressed validity issues in qualitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Table 1: Profiles of Student Participants

Name*	Designation	Organization	Gender/Age	Major
1. Allan	Speaker of the Senate	Student Government Association (SGA)	M/18	Economics
2. Amaya	President	Sigma Phi Omega	F/20	Human Resource Management but plans to shift to Communications
3. Elsa	Chairperson	SGA Sustainable Environment Committee	F / 21	Biology
4. Elena	Chairperson	Filipino Student Association (FSA)	F/22	Sociology, minor Political Science
5. Qira	President	Global Medical Brigades	F/21	Biology, minor Sociology
6. Haide	Director of Marketing	Pakistani Student Association (PSA)	F/19	Biology
7. Daniel	Station Director	Coog Radio	M/21	Corporate Communications
8. Vera	Social Chair	Vietnamese Student Association (VSA)	F/20	Business
9. Luke	Environment and Sustainability Chair	Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP)	M/21	Mechanical Engineering
10. Jonas	President	Asian Student Business Association	M/20	Supply Chain Management (Business Ad)
11. Anya	President	Indian Student Association	F/20	Management Information Systems
12. Yani	Community Service Chair	TeachHouston Student Society	F/21	Biochemistry
13. Pablo	Council Liaison	Council for Cultural Activities	M/20	Biotechnology
14. Shaira	Secretary	Muslim Student Association	F/22	Biology/Business Administration
15. Mina	President	Muslim Student Association	F/20	Biology

* Pseudonyms for research participants.

Analytical Technique

The interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis. The transcribed interviews, observations, and the researcher's detailed field notes comprised the research data. Following the grounded theory method, the data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Holton, 2004). The constant comparison method involved coding, analyzing and categorizing the data. When conducting constant comparison: 1) codes are compared with other codes, 2) codes are compared with the emerging categories being developed, and 3) categories are compared with other categories (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Constant comparison entailed comparing parts of data with one another to identify similarities and differences. Data featuring similar dimensions or characteristics are grouped together. The dimensions are tentatively labelled. The labels then become a category representing a key idea. The objective of the analysis is to determine patterns or themes emerging from the data.

The initial analytic stage of the research analysis in constant comparative method is coding the data. Coding is "the process of defining what the data is all about" (Charmaz, 1996, p. 37). Codes, which are assigned to the data, are words or short phrases that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2013). In qualitative grounded theory, codes are not preconceived but are created as the data are being studied.

For the current study, initial coding was conducted at the start of the data analysis. Initial coding entailed the examination of each line of data (Charmaz, 2001).

Examining the data line by line for the coding helps the researcher to be close to the data and develop the analysis from the ground up. Initial coding is also referred to as open coding which entailed being open to all possible codes that can be generated (Noble & Mitchell, 2016).

After the initial or open coding, focused coding was conducted. Focused coding required “taking earlier codes that continually reappear in (the) initial coding and using those codes to sift through large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 1996, p. 40). Focused coding was more selective and conceptual, and allowed the creation of categories to capture the data. Constructing categories is an essential component of the developing analytic framework. Certain codes with overriding importance in explaining events or processes in the data were selected as categories. The categories or themes could be in-vivo codes that were taken from the research participants’ discourse or representation of theoretical or substantive interpretation of the data.

The ensuing chapter 4 presents the themes that were developed from the close examination of the data. Verbatim material or respondents’ narratives were presented under each theme to ground the abstract analysis (Charmaz, 1996). Using respondents’ stories helps illuminate ideas captured in the categories or themes.

Human story makes the conceptual analysis more understandable to a larger audience.

Summary

The research was conducted among civically engaged college Asian American students in Houston, Texas. It examined the perceptions of the Asian American youth about their civic engagement, as well as the roles of school, family and community in the development of their civic engagement. The research employed the qualitative

method of data collection and grounded theory as research design. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 Asian-American student leaders at the University of Hope. The interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Follow-up inquiries were conducted after the analysis of the initial interview transcripts. I also observed some activities of the organizations and kept and updated a field note journal throughout the research process.

The aim of the grounded theory is to formulate substantive theories which pertain to everyday occurrences rather than grand theories. Following the grounded theory method of data analysis, the data were analyzed using the constant comparative method, which entailed comparing parts of data with one another to identify similarities and differences. The analysis drew patterns or themes emerging from the data. The themes were analyzed to develop a grounded theory.

Chapter 4

Findings

Student Center is probably one of the busiest places on campus on any given school day. It is frequently throbbing with student activities. Student Center North houses the carrels where students hold office for their organizations. While the South hosts the venues where students hold meetings, symposia, cultural shows and fundraisers. I frequented the Student Center for about three months to conduct interviews and observations on the activities of the research participants. I also went to other areas on campus for my observations. The first part of this chapter details the results of the interviews where the student participants shared their perspectives on the various facets of their civic engagement. The second part discusses the observations I conducted on the activities of some student participants.

Interviews

The discussion on the interview results features the narratives of the student participants with regard to the following aspects of their civic engagement: how and why they became involved in the civic activities, the influences of family, school and community on their civic involvement, challenges they encounter in their civic activities, how they balance the demands of their civic activities and schooling, the impact of their being an Asian American on their civic involvement, and their plans for the future.

How they became involved in the civic activities. The student participants became involved in their organizations for various reasons such as being invited by

acquaintances, they actively sought volunteering opportunities, founded similar organizations in high school or were recruited to join the organization.

Through acquaintances. Allan, Jonas and Vera said that they learned about their current organizations through their friends. Allan said that his friend who was a senator invited him to attend one of the Student Government Association (SGA) meetings. While in the meeting, he was inspired by one of the senators who discussed his self-defense project for university students. After hearing the senator, Allan said he was inspired to join SGA and leave a legacy to the university community.

So, um, the way I became involved is, uh, through a friend actually. Um, one of my, uh, one of my friends was a senator two administrations ago, right. And back when I was still a young freshman, I didn't really know what, um, what getting involved in the... or how campus works and all of that. My friend, the senator, one night, he just said, I have to leave, I have an SGA meeting to attend. And I had no idea what SGA was. So I asked him and he told me, it's the Student Government. And he said, you know, it's open to the public, you can come and just observe if you want, like it's pretty interesting. So I did. And um, I, I came and I just, I watched the Senate happen, the Senate meeting happen, and not only did I find it really interesting, but the, I remember the first thing that struck me was, um, the senator, I do not remember his name, but he established a sort of self-defense class program called, uh, I think it was Cooler Combat Dough.

And, um, it just, it was very interesting because to me, when I saw that, when I saw that happened, that this was, um, something that he'd established and then during the meeting he talked about it. I'm happy that this happened because then that means I can leave behind a legacy, right? That means whenever I graduate and leave, I can look back at the university, I know that I created something, I change something for the better, right? And to me that was just really inspiring seeing that because it made me realize like, hey, this is something really cool. This is something where we can actually make like actual good change.

Allan was interested to become part of SGA but there was no position available at that time. So he first volunteered as a clerk where he took meeting

minutes, then he became the Legislative Chief of Staff when the position was created, eventually elected as a Senator and then currently as Speaker of the Senate.

So that I became interested and then, uh, there wasn't any position open. So I, um, my friend, when I first saw that meeting, it was at the end of the administration, so the 54th, which was two administrations ago, then the administration rolled over and my friend became speaker and there wasn't, there weren't any positions open. So, um, but I still wanted to get involved. So I kind of asked him, hey, is there any work that you'd need any help with because this is something that I want to be involved in. And so I kind of started working with him and then eventually I became clerk, which is the work where you just, you take minutes during senate meetings and then I became clerk and then ... a new position was created called legislative chief of staff. So I got that position and then eventually working out, working my way up to senator. That was during the last administration and then (I) ran for election for speaker and I'm here now.

For Jonas, a friend invited him to attend an event sponsored by the Asian Student Business Association (ASBA). He liked the experience and so he decided to join the organization.

Um, my friend, my best friend's brother was already a part of it. And then, um, he just said, Oh, just come out and try it. Um, I came out for the first event and I liked it. So then I just joined and then stayed with the organization.

Vera shared that being invited by her friend to join the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) helped her choose which organization to join when she came to the university as there were plenty of organizations to choose from.

So I'm a transfer student from Wharton County Junior College and, uh, I don't really understand or know what the college, I guess atmosphere is like. Um, I didn't know that there was plenty of organizations. I know about VSA through my friend Michelle who is now our president. Um, so she told me about VSA, she said like, come join.

Actively sought volunteering opportunities. Elsa and Luke joined their organizations because they wanted to continue the volunteering as they did in

high school. Elsa, who is currently with the university Student Government Association, was previously an officer of the Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP) and a Counselor at the Cub Camp. At Cub Camp, incoming freshmen are given orientations about the University Spirit as well as the various activities and organizations that they can join on campus. Luke is with the MVP. Daniel and Pablo became members of Coog Radio and CCA respectively by applying to the organizations.

For Elsa, volunteering made her feel connected to the university community. She shared that being a first generation college student, she did not get a lot of advice from her close kin on how to navigate college. She said that she felt lonely and isolated during her freshman year because she did not join any organization on campus. After some time, she applied at the Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP) and became happier when she started meeting a lot of people through her work at the organization. She went on to do more volunteering work at the university after her initial stint with MVP. She shared that unlike in high school where she volunteered to make her resume look good for college application, her volunteering in college was for the purpose of serving the university community, which made her happy.

So in high school I volunteered a lot cause I was just trying to get like more concept for my resumes or applications for (college), but I also like really enjoyed volunteering too. And so that's why I got interested in all of this. But actually when I got into college as a freshman I was just really shy, intimidated by like a big university cause like I was the first person to ever go to college in my family. So I didn't have really any guidance or help. It's kind of by myself trying to figure out the ropes on my own. Kind of very like withdrawn from like the community and ... I go to school and do my work after, it was all I did. So with that, I think kind of like lonely cause I didn't get too much interaction and then ... I wasn't volunteering... like in high school.

And so after that, I decided to like make it smooth to get involved. So that's when I got involved. I applied for the MVP position. I apply for uh, the environment sustainability chair. So I applied for that position and I got it. I was like, Oh that's great. I got it. And then that's kind of where my shift happened... I started getting involved with a lot cause like once you get involved, once you meet so many people who introduce you to so many different things, that's great, it's great. So um, starting a bunch of stuff with MVP. I was very happy to feel and meet so many people.

In the case of Luke, he applied at MVP so that he can do more volunteering work as he wanted to volunteer more than what is provided by the college-based organization (American Society of Mechanical Engineers) of which he is a member.

I just want to look for, like I was looking for a volunteer organization on campus cause uh, ASME didn't provide many volunteering opportunities. Not did any other student organizations. So I found the MVP folks, I heard they focus on this type of stuff. So I was like, all right, cool, let's get it.

Daniel has been a student leader before joining Coog Radio. He was previously a Camp Counselor and Co-Chair of university Cub Camp, university Student Program Board officer, Vice-President of the university Student Government Association, Founder and Coordinator of The Cougar Pack, and Student Life and Social Media Coordinator at the university. Daniel was given the Legacy Award for his service to the university. As Student Body Vice President, he was part of the committee that selects the Coog Radio station manager. There were no viable candidates at that time when they were selecting the next station manager. Daniel felt that he could put to good use his love for music and digital media at Coog Radio. Since his term with the SGA is ending, he decided to apply and got the position.

I applied for it (the position of Coog Radio Station Manager) because my position before, the Student Body Vice President appoints individuals to the committee that selects the next station director. And um, cause I plan a lot of committees and they were looking at, we don't have any good candidates for Coog Radio. Um, and I... I had one more semester. I didn't know what else to do and I figured, um, I'll try my hat, I could be in it because I love music. I've always, I've always loved, you know, digital media and all that. And so I applied and then I got in.

Founded similar organization in high school. Mina and Anya were invited to be part of their current organizations because they founded similar organizations in their respective high schools. Mina founded the Muslim Student Association (MSA) and Anya founded an organization similar to the Indian Student Association (ISA) but was open not only to Indian but South Asian students.

Mina said that the Muslims in her high school were not proud of their identity and were not comfortable in identifying themselves as Muslims. They were also not friends with each other and did not do things together as Muslims. Therefore, Muslim students at her school were unable to undertake projects that will showcase the Muslim culture. Mina said that because of the lack of unity, there were many misconceptions against Muslims that were left unaddressed. There were also a lot of misconceptions about Muslims because the Muslim community was not strong because they did not do things together as Muslims. Mina founded the MSA so that Muslim students can get to know each other, come together and become friends. MSA conducted activities aimed at improving understanding of the Muslim culture and religion at their school, like showcasing Muslim art and film showing. Mina said that the efforts of her organization improved the perceptions about Muslims at her school. She added that as there were no Muslim teachers at her school, she had to

request a non-Muslim teacher to be the faculty adviser. Mina said that she even had to expose the faculty adviser to Muslim culture so that she can learn more about their culture.

So in high school actually, I saw that, you know, I moved from a really small town and then I moved to a place where there was a lot more Muslims and a lot more... people like me. And so, but I saw that, um, the people there weren't very proud of their identity and they weren't very, um, like Muslims weren't friends with each other. Nobody would be comfortable with saying I'm Muslim. Um, it was a very... different atmosphere from what I was used to from when I was little when I lived in Philadelphia. So I saw that problem and I, uh, decided to create the Muslim Student Association at my high school... So I was 16...

So that's when I, um, started that organization and I really, really loved it because like through that I was able to like meet so many new Muslim people at my school. I didn't even know that they were there and we all became like really good friends. And I think it was very important to not only us as a community to kind of have that sense of community but to other people in the school to gain a more ...a better insight on what Muslim, like who Muslims are and what they're like and what it means, Islam really means cause... (in) my high school, there was so many, um, there's a lot of ignorance I think about Muslims just because the community wasn't very strong. So like I was able to um, do a lot of activities that kind of showed people non-Muslims like, okay this is what Islam means and it's not what you think it is. So even teachers, uh, like I had to ask cause there was no Muslim teacher (during) my first year, so I had to ask a non-Muslim teacher who I knew and even she was able, she came to a lot of activities. She visited the mosque once and she got a full tour and really, really liked it. So I think I was able to change a lot of people's perspectives, like about their (referring to the Muslims) own religion and then like non-Muslims on Islam.

Mina already knew about the MSA at the university way back in high school because they would often come to the campus for tournaments and activities. She said that she came from a small town where there were few Muslims at her high school. She was amazed at the substantial population of Muslims at the university. When she came to the university, she started attending MSA meetings. She was unsure at first if

she wanted to become the president because she was busy with school work and doubted her capability. However, the past MSA president convinced her to be so.

And um, so when I got to U of H, uh, I was like, I was amazed because the Muslim population here is like, it's crazy. There's a lot of us like... So I just, I, I love MSA from high school and I have been, um, during high school we would have a tournament at U of H every year, which was like with all the MSAs in Houston, actually all the MSAs in Texas. They would all come to U of H and participate in a big tournament. Like different activities, like art, writing, sports, everything. So I saw that like, you know, in Houston there's so many Muslims, like our MSA was just like 10, 15 people. But in other schools it was like hundreds. It was crazy. So I knew that at U of H it's like that also.

So when I got here, I immediately got involved with them (MSA), and I started going to meetings and then, um, the end of my freshman year I wanted to become an officer for a club, but I wasn't really sure which one. I went to MSA meetings and I wasn't very involved and I wasn't very sure, but one of the officers talked to me, she said, I think it would really be a fit. And so I just decided to apply and that's when I, I became outreach coordinator in my second year. And then at the end of my second year, I had no plans on becoming president. I was, um, cause I was kind of busy with school and I didn't think that I could do it. But my, uh, the previous president, he had a meeting with me and like basically convinced me that he thinks that I was the best person for the position. So that's how I ended up in the position.

In the case of Anya, when Indian Student Association board officers at the university learned that she co-founded a similar organization in high school, they invited her to become part of ISA. Anya said that the organization she co-founded was not only open to Indians but also to those from other South Asian countries.

So when I was in high school I started a group, um, that was like kind of similar to ISA, but it was more for like the South Asian community. So not just Indian students, but like all South Asian students. And I have a lot of friends here actually. And so one of my friends told the ISA president that like, I started (an organization) in my high school. So because of that, he kind of reached out to me and he was like, oh, you should join. Like you already have experience in this. So like I kinda just did it because I didn't know how to get involved on campus.

Like in college, it's a lot harder. I kinda just started and they put me on the board and I just like make my way up.

Through recruitment. Elena is the president of the Filipino Student Association (FSA) even though she is not a Filipino. She was approached by FSA members to join the organization. When she told them that she is not a Filipino, they told her that it does not matter, what is important is that she adheres to the Filipino value for “unity and family”. The FSA members said that they wanted to be a family for Elena during her stay in the university. Elena said that she was glad for her decision to be an FSA member because she found a place where she belonged by being around people whom she shares the same values. Elena shared that she attended a high school with predominantly white students, and so she feels at home being among Asian friends at FSA.

I came to U of H as a freshman and I didn't really know anyone. So, uh, people like officers and members, I'd like to say they came to me and reached out to me to join their work and I was kinda, no I'm not a Filipino, why should I join?

Uh, I didn't know these people at the time. They kind of just came out and reached out to me cause they saw me walking on campus.. oh you should join. And I was like, Oh I'm not Filipino. They are like, no the whole point of us being called Filipino students is like we follow their culture, which is unity and families. We want to be a family for you outside of your own while you're at (the university). So I was like, cool. So I joined and then um, I made a lot of friends. I made lifelong friends here and they really made me feel welcomed and like that at U of H. Like a lot of activities, they do sports, community service, fund raising. So I thought it was something fun to be around people, especially (with) Asian identity cause I I went to a predominantly white school, so I didn't really know anyone that shared the same culture as me. So to be around people that have the same values and morals as me is nice. So in a sense I found the place where I belong.

Why engage in civic activities. When asked why they engage in civic activities, some student participants mentioned they want to serve their communities. Others mentioned that their civic work is related to their areas of study. While others said that they joined their organizations in order to re-connect with their culture. Another reason cited by the participants is that they are learning a lot of life lessons from their civic involvement.

Service to the community. Daniel, Elsa, Elena, Luke, Elena, Amaya, Jonas, Shaira and Mina engage in civic work because of their aspirations to serve their communities. As earlier mentioned, Daniel held several positions at the university student organizations before becoming Coog Radio station manager. He said that he is most proud of his contribution to the university when he was vice-president of the Student Government Association (SGA). While at SGA, Daniel spearheaded the Golf Cart project where student volunteers drive golf carts to fetch students from the library past 7 pm in order to safely bring them to their dorms or to their cars in the parking lot.

I think my personal biggest contributions to campus, if I can talk outside of Coog Radio...I really liked the Cougar Ride..(it) is a brand new program. So we, it was an idea that I had last year when I was in SGA and it involves having students drive golf carts and pick up students late at night from the library and drive into their cars and dorms because there was a lot of concern about, you know, walking home late at night and safety. And so I had the idea of just... getting golf carts from (university) PD (police department), training students to both like be an escort and also provide a comfortable experience and you know, we safely take people to their cars and dorms and we get them home. Yeah, it's still ongoing. They've expanded, they added new golf cars. It used to be two days a week, now it's four days a week. So I think right now, it's first come first serve. So if you're leaving the library and it's after seven o'clock, um, they'll be like, hey, would you

like to (go) on a group ride ... in the golf cart to your car or dorm? And they're like, most of the time they're like, yeah.

Daniel also talked about his other accomplishment of lowering by 50 cents the price of a basic Taco Bell meal (from \$1.89 to \$1.39) at its university branch.

I was doing that and I did ... the Taco Bell. That was another thing. So, Taco Bell, uh, there's a value menu, right? So when you go to a regular Taco Bell, there is a dollar menu for all their items, but when you come to (the university), it was a dollar and 89, almost twice that. And so one of my initiatives was to bring it down ... to a dollar and 39, which is.. 50 cents cheaper. That was my other accomplishment.

Elsa, as mentioned earlier, was part of Cub Camp at the university where she served as counselor and helped in orienting the freshmen about how they can become involved at UH so that they can imbibe the Cougar spirit. Elsa said that she was withdrawn and not involved in campus activities as a freshman. She wanted to change that among the freshmen and make an impact to make them more involved in campus activities. Elsa shared she felt happier and her love for her university grew when she became involved in campus organizations.

I joined Cub Camp. Um, I don't know if you know what Cub Camp is, but it's like, um, a camp for incoming freshmen here at UH where they go to camp and then they learn everything they need to know about UH, like how to get involved, campus community. Like we did as freshmen. Cause when I was a freshman, I was like upset, not upset, but like just kind of like withdrawn from community and didn't really understand or know anything.

My sophomore year was when I started to get involved. Because I needed to make a change, you know? And so I joined Cub Camp and that made me even more like so like prideful of UH. Cause like what I said, in Cub Camp you teach incoming freshmen, like everything you need to know about the university and how to make friends and whatnot. I didn't have that as a freshman. So like I wanted to make a change and have like impact and help freshmen, not be like how I lived (inaudible), but try getting involved and everything.

Elsa said that she is helping freshmen students to be more involved in campus activities because she did not want them to commit the same mistakes she did. She said that being involved and interacting with others can make people feel happier and successful. Elsa shared that she started to take more chances like going for overseas studies when she became more involved in campus organizations and activities.

So once I've helped other people get more involved on campus and then teach them and show them like not make the same mistakes I did. Cause I want people to be more involved on campus. Cause when you're more involved, interacting, you're more happy, you know, you become more successful. So that's what I did. I went through Cub Camp, um, it was my sophomore year and then also with MVP at the exact same time, really where I was doing all this stuff. So I was doing all this and then I got even more involved. I decided to go study abroad cause I wanted to take more chances. So I went study abroad, I studied somewhere in the Galapagos Islands and that was really fun.

Elena wanted to become an officer so that she can give back to FSA. She said that FSA gave her so much by giving her lifelong friends. When she does community service, she does not feel like working at all, but it is more like doing enjoyable activities with friends. Because of the friendships she gained at FSA, she wanted to give back to the organization by being an officer. Elena is also able to contribute to the FSA's objective to help members throughout their academic journeys at UH. She said that FSA wants members to feel like they have a family when they enter UH. FSA helps members to excel in their academics and extra-curricular activities.

Alumni also help out members and the organization with its projects.

So they basically like through becoming friends with the people in this org. When you do community service or like the time you are using, it's not like, oh it's work. It's like, oh I'm doing this with my friends, it's fun and it's enjoyable. So um, through that, like I've been in FSA for three years now. Like they gave me my lifelong friends, they give so much. So that's how I became an officer essentially. Cause I was like, oh I want to, they gave me so much I want to give back... I became an officer and I've been an officer. This is my second year being an officer.

...

Yeah, we try to emphasize inclusive, inclusivity. And like making sure everyone is welcome as they come to U of H. So that's like our mission statement in a sense is to make people feel like they're in a family when they come to U of H and also help guide them throughout their college journey. So we help each other with academics and like extra-curriculars and as well as just like socially so then they can branch out. Cause um, a lot of times our alumni, they ended up coming back and like sponsoring us or giving us a hand and stuff. So it's all about connections as well while you're in college. So that's how, um, FSA helps people.

Shaira came from a small town in Texas where there were few Muslims. She wanted to do community service for the Muslims way back in her home town but she could not find suitable opportunities. When she moved to UH and saw the vibrant Muslim community on campus, i.e., those who openly identify themselves as Muslims, she decided to volunteer for the community.

So I, I'm a little different because I moved from a small city. I grew up in a really small city called Tyler [inaudible]. It's super small. My graduating class was like 60 people. So I just was very like (inaudible) on doing other things. When I went here, that's when I really got exposed to different cultures. Seeing someone with hijab on campus, like wearing the scarf and it's like when I saw that here, I was like, wow, that's crazy. Cause that wasn't even like a concept in Tyler. So for me, I've always been the one to be like I want to get [inaudible] out of Tyler because the opportunities weren't there. So I moved here, and um yeah, the opportunities were here. So I just kind of forced myself to get involved in this community. Cause I've always wanted to do that. But I just never got the chance to.

Shaira said that she loves being a part of the purpose of MSA because it is very hard to find people in their twenties in the place where she came from who are working for the Muslim cause. She said that she wants to do something for the community, for Islam and God because she wants to bring religion to people. She wants people to openly practice their religion because

it is comforting to be able to practice one's faith. She said that people being able to pray at designated places at UH is a huge accomplishment because such was not the case in her previous university. Therefore, this is something that should not be taken for granted by the Muslims at UH.

I think it's because I love the purpose (of MSA). Like I just love the events that we do. I think it's so like, I don't know, I think like so many people, it's so different where I grew up, it's very hard to find many in our age to be so involved in their religion. Like it's usually when you grow older, like 30 or 40. Well like it's very hard to find someone who's in their twenties to be involved in their religion, and like seeing that here.

Yes, doing something for the community and also just doing something as a Muslim. Like for Islam. Like for God. I think the biggest thing for me, cause I like to, I like to bring religion to a lot of people. And I think another thing is finding comfort. Cause practicing your religion openly is a very big deal. People don't really, I feel that people take it for granted. Like the fact that students can pray on campus is huge. Like (when) we pray there's a designated spot in the basement of the library, like the fifth floor Brown wing. Like those things are really big accomplishments that I think people here take it for granted cause they don't realize it. But from coming from a small city, I see that, yeah, like it's cool.

Mina also talked about the MSA activities that bring awareness on the struggles of Muslims. This is shown for instance in the symposium sponsored by MSA on the Kashmir issue. The Kashmir conflict is a territorial issue involving India and Pakistan over the control of the Kashmir region. The conflict has resulted in human rights violations against the Muslim population and humanitarian crisis in the region. Mina said that her encounter with an individual whose family was affected by the Kashmir issue increased her concern about those whose lives were impacted by the crisis.

Recently MSA did, um, this is something unique that we did this year, we did an event about Kashmir, which is like raising awareness for what's going on in Kashmir. This was very like tricky because I would say MSA has never done anything like political..., we just wanted to raise awareness for the humanitarian crisis side of it. Um, but, you know... there were a lot of insights to the issue. But um, yeah, I talked to somebody after the event and she said she, like for me, you know, Kashmir is like, it hurts me, but technically if I just didn't care about it, I didn't want, it wouldn't affect me. Like, yeah, I could go on with my daily life. But I talked to her over and after the event and she was like crying, ..she said her brother's been in jail for like over like three months and she doesn't ... and so she was like, I don't know if he's alive or like, you know...

Aside from the Kashmir conflict, MSA has also conducted a symposium about Black Muslims. Mina said that learning about the difficulties faced by other Muslims motivates her to do more for her community. She reiterated:

Stuff like the Kashmir event, I think especially cause that kind of educates you like, okay this is something that we need to worry about. There's also this semester because of the Kashmir event, we started doing more events like that. Like we're doing one called a Refugee Panel. So we have three different refugees who are in our community who will just talk about their experiences. So I think those kinds of activities like motivate me to... Last semester there was one, a Black History Panel, so three um, black community members came and they talked about their experiences as Black Muslim and that kind of stuff gives you like inspiration. Like okay, you know, these people came from this background and they were able to get to this role and like they've been through so much in life. So I think those activities definitely motivate me like to do more.

Luke said that being able to make an impact is a primary motivation for giving service. He also benefits from his service work by being able to gain friends along the way. Luke said that seeing his service-related accomplishments makes him feel proud. When asked about his motivations for doing civic activities, Luke said:

As cheesy as it sounds, you know you're making a difference I guess. You know, making an impact and then I guess, you know, making friends here and there as well. It's pretty fun just seeing what happens and all that stuff. Looking back at your work and be like, hey I did all this. So it was pretty cool that way I guess.

Amaya's sorority Sigma Phi Omega provides support to a community center involved in giving service to women who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Amaya said that they hold a philanthropy week that is allotted for raising funds for the center. Aside from community service, Amaya said that being a leader enables her to help develop her sorority sisters to be leaders themselves.

I believe we do a safe week. It's our philanthropy week, meaning like we only raise money for the Houston area women's center, which is a center where women who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault go there. Um, well we raise money to help whatever they need. We give them clothes and things that they need to survive.

For Jonas, being able to help people and meet new acquaintances motivated him to get involved in the Asian Student Business Association (ASBA). He said that he learns a lot from people that he meets through his ABSA work. Jonas said that he is glad that ASBA is able to help especially freshmen students to get a head start in their careers by linking them up with companies that they want to gain internship with and apply for future jobs.

I think, so for me it's like, I like helping people. Um, whenever I get the chance, I like helping people and, um, just being able to get to know different people of course, like it's eye opening and that's what I like. For example, this past semester, like these past few weeks, I've been getting to know the members more and I'm like learning, Oh, you're from here? Like how'd you get here? kind of deal. Like hearing their stories and just seeing how they are. And then after an event things like, Oh, I really liked the event. Like you guys did a great job. And just like, Oh, that feels good. Like I'm doing something that makes them happy and they're learning something.

So we stand on three pillars. Um, first one being professional development. We want to make sure that everyone is able to start, um, their professional side, especially freshmen. They don't really know what they need or what thing, what companies are looking for when it comes to talking to them. So we prepare, um, freshmen, the more younger people in hopes that when they get to like their junior year, they're there, they can easily talk to companies and get those internships and job offers that they want.

Related to area of study. Yani and Qira said that they became involved in their organizations because these are related to their areas of study. Yani became a member of TeachHouston because they were given an option in their class to either work on a capstone project or volunteer at TeachHouston. She chose to volunteer at TeachHouston because she was interested in teaching. When she became a TeachHouston member, she was convinced by fellow members to vie for an officer position. She became the Community Service Officer because she previously did community work in the organization. As Community Service Officer, Yani arranges students from TeachHouston to volunteer in an after-school educational facility for children catering to a depressed community in the Houston area. Many of the children are newly arrived immigrants. One of the goals of the facility is to help the children adjust to their new life in the United States.

I contact a lot of people, um, in the Houston area who have, um, programs that have to do with tutoring children or, um, or working with children. So for example, one of them, that I do is, uh, with CHAT. So it's a chapter for Culture of Health Advancing Together. And it's actually this, uh, it's located in an apartment complex and then it's like a facility where they invite all of the kids in primarily the apartment complex, but it's open to all kids. So parents can drop their kids off after school and then, um, for an hour they do like tutoring activities for an, for another hour, they do play activities.

Yani said that the after-school facility caters more to children who just immigrated to the United States to help them in their transition – in order for them to have a community, friends and do well in school. She said that the program does not have a lot of funding because the facility does not charge the parents, and so it primarily runs on the goodwill of volunteers.

And then the purpose of it is like, it's directed towards kids whose parents are, they're not really from here. And, um, it's hard to assimilate like their children. In some cases the kids may not be from America either. So the purpose, like the purpose of it is to, um, assimilate their kids into American culture and to be able to have a community and, um, alongside that do well in school and to just have friends, you know. So I created them an opportunity for teachers, some (UH) students to go out to the CHAT facility and uh, and just spend their time with these kids. They're young, they're about, uh, elementary school to middle schools. They would be dealing with whenever, when they actually teach. But it's so good that they do that.

So yeah, the program actually runs on volunteers, so they depend on people to come out and volunteer because it's not really funded... It's hard to get people who are willing to pay, um, for a daily, uh, for a place daily for their kids to go and, um, would just be somewhere after school. So it's not that heavily funded programs. So that's why they involve a lot of volunteers.

For Qira, she applied at the Global Medical Brigade after learning about the organization in one of the Learning Abroad Fairs at UH. She wanted to eventually go to medical school and so the experiences she will gain from the organization will be helpful for her eventual medical career with a focus on public health. When asked why she joined Global Medical Brigade, Qira shared:

I guess it just had a lot to do with like my own academic interests also because I'm interested in public health, especially with my minor (which) is medicine and society and how they interact. I think that this organization brings a lot of that interest and perspective.

Reconnecting with one's culture. Through her work at VSA, Vera said she was able to reconnect with her Vietnamese identity. Vera said she used to not like being a Vietnamese so badly in high school because she felt out of place among her predominantly White school mates. She shared that she was in a difficult situation where she felt she did not belong because she was too Vietnamese among her White peers, but too Americanized among her Vietnamese community. But with her being at VSA and with fellow Vietnamese, made her better appreciate her culture and find her identity.

The high school that I went to was predominantly White, like a lot of, there wasn't a lot of diversity when I was there... It's a predominantly White high school. And I remember feeling at one point, which was so weird to me now. When I was younger, I was like, I wanted to be not Vietnamese so badly because I didn't feel like I belonged anywhere. I was in this like weird limbo. Like, Oh, I'm too Vietnamese for, you know, the white folks, but I'm too Americanized for my own community. Like I couldn't relate to either. And so I was in this middle part, and then that's when I was like, regardless of how I thought, I should still feel connected.

...

I'm very fortunate to be in VSA and try to get in touch with my Vietnamese side and I met a lot of new people and it's just, it's always very comforting to be surrounded by people that are similar to you... It was nice to have someone with a similar background, that thought came to me in high school. And then throughout college I try to ease my way into the Vietnamese community. And here I am an officer VSA. So I think I'm getting somewhere.

Being part of ISA enables Anya to connect with her Indian culture. She became very interested in Indian culture when she started watching Bollywood movies in middle school. She also became particularly curious about the Indian culture because her parents who grew up in the United States did not raise her practicing Indian traditions and festivities like Diwali and Holi. These Indian traditions and

festivities are celebrated by ISA at UH. Anya narrated how her parents were amazed with her interest in the Indian culture.

Because my family's always like, Who are you? Like whose kid are you? Because I, I'm like very interested in my culture and like being Indian... But my parents were never like, because they were raised here, they never really like showed me like a lot of the like Diwali and stuff. I didn't grow up celebrating Diwali all my life... So, and like, even Holi, like I didn't know what Holi was until I ... went to high school. I was like, ...why are people throwing colors at each other? I really had no idea.

When I was in middle school, I started watching Bollywood movies. And so that's why I started learning about everything and I was like, why don't we do this? And they're just like, cause like, why, what's the reason? What's the point? But so, yeah, they're not, they never were really into it, I guess. So, but it didn't bother me. I just kinda like, why didn't we do this?

Diwali is the festival of lights, celebrated from October to November. It is associated with the goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi. It symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, evil and ignorance. Holi is known as the festival of colors to signify the arrival of spring including the blossoming of love and hope.

Being with people of the same culture. Haide said that she joined the Pakistani Student Association (PSA) so that she can meet people on campus who share the same background and values as hers. She said that her family is very Pakistani and traditional, and so other people who do not have the same background as her cannot understand her family values.

I mean the volunteering and stuff was just like some phase...of like volunteering in hospital ...because I wanted to go into bio and then like joining PSA (because) I wanted to meet more people on campus who have the same background as me. Seeing the ethnicity as me and stuff...

My family is like um... joining PSA. Like cause like my family's very like, they look very Pakistani, really traditional and things. So other

people you meet like don't understand the same values you have at home but people who are of the same background as you, they understand your values and stuff.

Shaira also shared that joining MSA lets her be with fellow Muslims who understand her struggles as a Muslim. Her fellow Muslims gave her the company she needed when she moved to Houston as she did not know anyone from the city.

I think I wanted to, because I find really comfort in having Muslim friends, like I have friends that are obviously non-Muslim as well, but I like to have friends that are also Muslim because uh, I guess they understand, you know what I mean? It's very hard to find someone who actually understands the struggle of being a Muslim unless you're Muslim. I mean there are people out there who actually do understand it. Like don't get me wrong, but I think it's just so I think for me. Also when I first moved here, I moved by myself. I didn't know anybody when I moved here. So it was like I was completely alone in a new city. So I thought the best way to get myself out there was to find new friends and just like kind of build off of that.

Life-lessons from the organization. Mina said she is learning a lot of life lessons at MSA because she has to deal with a variety of issues in the organization. Some of these include: making decision on whether certain activities to be undertaken by MSA are consistent with the teachings of Islam or whether some individuals with certain background should be allowed to be part of MSA. Mina said that addressing such issues makes her tackle the social and religious ramifications of her positions. She said that her work at MSA broadens her learning beyond the academic.

I really like what I'm doing. I think it's worth it. So I think, um, I think what I've learned from like so far this year is that MSA activities and like managing MSA, um, there's a lot of dimensions to what you have to deal with... You do deal with different people. A lot of different issues that come up because you know, it's MSA is like entire society, it's not just like a strictly academic or strictly social or strictly, um, something. So it encompasses broad variety of things. So you also have to deal with issues that you would never think would come up like, oh, this one person has this background, should we allow them in MSA or is this

event like Islamically okay to do.

There's a lot of things that come in just because of the overlap or of like religiousness and like socially. So I think that because of that, I've learned a lot from this role. I definitely feel like I'm learning a lot more from doing this than in my classes. So all my, obviously my classes are teaching me like academic stuff, but, but this is like real life stuff. Yeah. I think it's worth it for sure.

Elena said that doing civic engagement in college helps in finding herself. In high school, Elena said that she did volunteering activities to look good on college application, but in college she did them to actually be that good person. Elena added that it is usually in college when individuals are trying to find meaning for themselves, and she felt that it is through volunteering that she found such meaning.

In high school? I was in a lot of like um, extra-curricular things but it was more like I want to add it for my resume. It was never for like, I just want to do it to have fun. But then that's like the difference between high school and college. Like in high school we did it just so we could look good for colleges. In college we do it like for ourselves. So there's like a difference in that. That's why I'm thinking high school, I did Key Club, which is a volunteering and community service. I also did FPLA which is Future Business Leaders of America. That's when I was planning to do business coming into college. So it's where we compete against each other in different areas of business. In high school you did it for your resume or like application. Basically just to make us seem more polished for colleges to be like, wow this is a great kid. But then in college you do like, because you generally want to be that great kid. It's not just so colleges can see, it's more for yourself and so cause in college or I would say in college, that's usually when you're finding yourself. So by helping others it helps you kind of realize how you want to present yourself to the world.

Influences of family, school and community on civic engagement

Family influence. Consistent with the literature, the influence of the family on the development of civic engagement (Andolina et al., 2003; Kahne & Sporte, 2008) was acknowledged by the research participants.

All the respondents credit their family, mostly parents, for their civic engagement. The participants gave varying reasons on how their parents and family backgrounds influenced them. Some of them said that their parents' teaching of civic values, pride in one's culture, hardship in the family and family's country of origin helped shape their civic character.

Teaching civic values. Mina credits her parents for her civic disposition. She said that her parents keep abreast of the news every day. Aside from what is happening in the US, her parents also care about what is happening in their home country in Pakistan and in other parts of the world. Mina said that talking to his father about what is going on in the US and around the world makes her care more about political and social issues.

Um, my dad is very, um, like politically, he cares a lot about politics. Both of my parents, like they watch news every day and they even like, involved in what's going on...Even though, you know, they've been here for a long time, it's very easy to just, um, it's very easy to just like turn off the TV and say, okay, like now we live in the U S it doesn't matter.
...

Or even some people might even see it negatively, like, Oh, they should be living. Like they should be more caring about US politics, but there's, they care so deeply about the issues like in their country and they're so involved with it that, and they really do, like, they, my dad especially is always telling me about issues around the world. Um, he really cares for that. And so, .. I think just like literally talking to him and, um, having those conversations with him, like that made me care about what's going on rather than just ignoring it.

Elena said that her grandparents and parents taught her to be empathetic and helpful to others. Elena said that she was very close to her maternal grandparents whose practice of the Catholic religion engraved in her the importance of reaching out and helping those who are in need. She said her grandparents were very committed to

practicing the Catholic way of life, which is being there for those in need. Her family also taught her that there is more to individual success, what is more important is to help others to become successful as well. She said that these teachings motivated her to do more for her community and step into being an officer in her organization. Her father's Buddhist religion similarly emphasizes the Catholic faith of helping others. The Buddhist religion likewise underscores that happiness should not be based on material things.

Um, so I'm actually a first gen college student, so like, no one, none of my, like my parents didn't go to college and stuff, so I'm the first one. But like, um, growing up my family talk was, had high values and like respect and like being kindhearted towards others and being compassionate. So they've always tried to teach me not to be selfish in my decisions and be more empathetic towards people and through that, like that's why I feel like, so feel my whole, when I help people, because my family taught me there's more than like your own success, you should help others be successful as well. So do that. Like, yeah, that's what I kinda wanted to do more in my community and that's why I stepped into being an officer.

Uh, so my mom's side is extremely Catholic and so, um, my grandparents, they have they're the presidents of a church. But it's in Mississippi....My parents are divorced. So I live with my mom. So I came with my mom and my stepdad and then my dad is still in California. But yeah, so like, um, my grandparents influenced like a lot on like, cause um, the Catholic religion like emphasizes on being there for your brothers and sisters. So my grandparents are really strict about it, so they kind of engrave that into my life, how I should help others no matter what the situation is. If someone's in need, I should reach out. So yeah. And then like my, uh, my dad's side, they're Buddhists, so they believe in, they especially believe in helping those in need and pursuing happiness in the sense and not seeing materialistic things. So yeah. So I kind of grew up based on that. So because of that, it leads, it guides a lot of my decisions.

Daniel said that his parents taught him to be a decent human being. His parents are also monitoring the news all the time which influenced his interest

in current events. Such parental influences helped carved the path for Daniel's civic involvement. Daniel also shared that he abides by the tenets of Quran. However, his father did not bring him a lot to the mosque when he was young in the aftermath of the 9/11 event because his father wanted to protect him from the backlash against the Muslims and for fear that he might be radicalized.

I think the biggest impact that my parents had on me was really just like the teachings of how to be a decent human being more so than anything else. I think they provided me with that and then they let me like, okay, now, go on and do your own stuff. And I was like, yeah, okay. And I was ready.

My parents, my or my dad always said that he never took me to the mosque as much because, um, he never wanted me to be radicalized that is what he said. Because I think when I turned four, it was when 9/11 happened. And I think the pressure and like the global few points against Muslims was really scaring him, I think. And so I think, um, I wasn't religious partially because of that...That's why like I don't, I never memorize the Quran, you know, but I know like the tenets of it.

Anya said her mother founded the South Asian Women Professional Network. The organization is for South Asian women who wish to do networking (e.g., for information sharing) for professional advancement. Anya's mother founded the organization because there are networking organizations available for other minority women like the African Americans and Latinas, but there has been none for South Asian women. Anya has been helping her mother with coordination work in the organization. While meeting up with the professionals in the organization, Anya was also able to get in touch with organizations where her acquaintances and friends at her university and Indian Student Association could gain internship opportunities. Her mother has told Anya that she started the organization for her, and so she will have to take over it in the future.

My mom started an organization called the South Asian Women's Professional Network. So because of that, like it's kind of geared me to also participate in that. So I already do participate. I help other students get internships and I just, I'm just like, uh, I kinda help out where I can, you know, I go to all the events and I sign people in and I make a lot of connections through that. So it's been really great. Like, yeah, I mean she always tells me like, I started this organization for you so you're gonna keep it up. So that's something that I'll definitely be doing for the rest of my life...

We just had our two year anniversary, so it's pretty new. Yeah, it's pretty new. But yeah, this past Friday was our two year anniversary party, so it was fun. Um, and it's always a good time. We have like quarterly events, so yeah. And we have women from all different backgrounds and all from South Asia. So it's like, not just [inaudible] Indian, but like Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Nepal.

Anya said that her mother founded the organization for the women because many of the existing similar organizations are for men and none for South Asian women. The organization is open to both non-working and working professionals.

So my mother goes to a lot of networking events, but they're all like very male centric or they're very not diverse in culture. Like there's not really one like you would see...., oh African American networking association or like Hispanic networking association, but they never found like a South Asian women's association. Cause like there was none. They looked around and they couldn't find it. Even in places like New York, they couldn't find one. So that's why her and one of her close friends decided to start it because they felt like there was a gap. Like it wasn't there. So a lot of them joined it and they said the same thing. They were like, yeah I couldn't find anything that was like this.

I mean it's not that we restrict people that don't have a job to come because obviously we want it to be a place for people to come if they don't have a job. Maybe find, get experience in networking and like finding people that can maybe help them. Um, but it tends to reach a crowd that has, that are professionals, so working professionals. So it's not like it's closed off.. like we've had men come to her things. I mean it's not that they say no to them, but like, you know, it's primarily for South Asian women that are working, but it's open to like anyone that sees the event and comes.

The organization likewise aims to foster cooperation among South Asian women and lessen competition that sometimes mark the relationship of these women. It is important the women should help and build each other up for their advancement.

They wanted to help everyone kind of get exposure and start networking with each other to support each other in our community too. Cause I think that's something that we don't do. Like in our community is we don't, we don't like to support each other because it's like some people think it's like a competition and so that's what they were trying to break. Like that barrier of thinking that it's a competition when in reality we should all be helping each other and like trying to build each other up. So that's what they're trying to emphasize a lot...

Jonas said that his parents being role models helped shape his interest in civic work. His father does volunteer work at his school and his mother is a nurse which is a profession that focuses on helping people. Jonas also shared that his parents extend help to those in need in the Philippines. In fact, Jonas said that his parents do more civic work in the Philippines than in the U.S.

I think it's just my parents. Um, they're big role models for me. Since we were in a smaller school, my dad would usually volunteer his time in helping out on campus. And then my mom was a nurse, so of course she helps, like her patients and stuff like that. So I guess just a mixture of seeing both and how they help people. Like it grew to me like, Oh, like helping others is like a nice thing to do...

Um, I know my mom, if there's like thing my parents, they usually do more things in relation to the Philippines. So if my mom has like, people who need help back home, then she'll help out there. But not really here in a sense.

Pride in one's culture. Mina said that she was inspired by her parents to work for the Muslim community. She shared that her parents have always been very proud of being Muslims. Mina said that it makes her sad to see other Muslims being uncomfortable to let others know that they are Muslim. Hence, through MSA, Mina

hoped that other people learn about Muslim and eliminate their prejudices against it.

When people become more accepting of Muslims, then Muslims would be more comfortable in asserting their identity.

So I think, um, my parents, uh, growing up my parents have always taught me to be like very proud of like, Oh you know, don't be afraid to say you're Muslim. Like, especially even like nationality, like don't be afraid to say like my parents are from Pakistan. I think because they are very proud of my culture. My parents aren't the type to try to fit in to society. They don't try to take away like personal things, you know, they don't try to assimilate in a negative way. They like to keep all their culture and everything very close to them. So growing up like that was a very obvious thing for me, that I was really comfortable with that. So when I see other people (being).. so uncomfortable with saying I'm Muslim, it just made me sad.

Family's country of origin. Luke said that the hardships he saw among the people in the Philippines where his parents originated inspired him to do good for others. He said he was fortunate to be in a better position than many Filipinos and so he wanted to give back and make a difference through serving others. Luke said that through small contributions, he hopes to make a significant difference. When asked about his family's influence on his civic character, Luke said:

I think it's both a mixture of my family influence and where I came from as well. Every time I go back to the Philippines, you know, I kind of realized like, wow, I'm really, really super lucky just to be in this position. You know, like I think of the alternate scenarios where I could be in the Philippines, maybe not as fortunate as I am today. And so I kind of think about it and I'm just, you know, just feel kind of bad about it. So it's like, I want to make a big difference, but it's just not big enough at times. You know, it's like I can't really control that, I would say. So that's one of the biggest motivators I have. Even, you know, small contributions I can give is just maybe over time it'll be big.

Uh, so that's one of the big influences I had, which is my home. Really just seeing all the poor people and all that stuff, that poverty, I sounded horrible, but just the poverty and the unfortunate situation there.

Hardship in the family. Amaya said that her challenging family life molded her into a leader. She is an only child and her mother had been sickly. When her parents divorced, she had to step up to take care of her mother. She had to take a job at the age of 15 to help the family's finances, and bring her mother to hospital and doctor's appointment because she does not speak English well. Amaya narrated:

I'm an only child. My parents do not know English. My parents divorced like when I was in fifth grade and being the only child and my parents kind of like getting into divorce and like my mom ... she's ill meaning like she has like diabetes, high cholesterol, stuff like that. And like it's pretty bad and it's not like a, not like a level one. It's like a level two, three, that's pretty bad.

Um, she knowing no English, I knew I always had to step up and help her, you know, like I have to take care of the bills and take care of like her going to the doctor and making everything was alright for her just because I knew my mom didn't know any English. And I guess that just made me always be more mature than my class because I had to get a job when I was 15.

I knew I had to learn how to drive when I was 15, just to be able to help my mom out because she is a single mom and I'm an only child and she has no like, education background. So I guess that also molded me as a leader and my traits since I was very young. I've always, always been strong willed. I don't take, I don't take, um, what do they say? I don't take excuses. I don't.

Familial non-community involvement. Many of the student participants are first-generation college students and with parents who acquired their citizenship after migrating to the US. Some of the participants shared that their parents were not involved in civic endeavors in their communities. Such could be due to the lack of community connection and rootedness that are often regarded to facilitate community civic engagement (Wong, 2006). Although many of the participants' parents go to church and hang out with acquaintances in their ethnic circles, however they do this

more in order to socialize and not for civic engagement. The student participants also shared that their parents have been so busy with work and so they lack time for civic endeavors. This is illustrated for instance in the story shared by Allan.

Honestly, I would say not really because, um, all right. So in order to, for this to make sense, you have to understand my parents were born in Vietnam, right? They were both born in Vietnam, but then they move to France, right. And that's where they met. That's where they had me and my sister. And then they settled down in France for a really long time until they moved here.

...

So, um, since they spent a majority of their life in Vietnam and then even a bigger part of that in France. And then, um, they moved to the U S they... it's still hard for them to get, you know, to settle here because, and get involved in their community because you know, they don't speak English well at all.

So if anything, the community that they've been involved with is, I would say the Vietnamese community, but they're so busy with work that even then whenever they do get involved, it's more of hanging out with friends. I know they're going to the Vietnamese community more than volunteer and all of that because they just don't have the time. They're working all the time and when they're not, they have, you know, they have two kids to take care of that are going through college.

However, the parents' non-civic involvement was less of a factor as there are other aspects of the parent-student relationship – for example, teaching the student participants to care for others – that were influential in shaping the students' civic engagement.

School influence. In the current study, the examination of school influence takes place in the context of the participants' high school experiences because studies attest to the potential development of civic engagement in high school (Eckstein, Noack & Gniewosz, 2012; Metz & Youniss, 2005). This is also in order to assess the effects of the participants' educational journey preceding their civic engagement in

college. Probing the high school civic experiences of the participants likewise aligns with the objective of the current study to draw implications for K-12 civic education.

Most of the student participants were active in organizations and clubs in high school. Their involvement in college is therefore a continuation of their civic experiences in high school. Two student participants even founded their organizations in high school. However, one student participant shared that his non-involvement in high school motivated him to be more involved in civic activities in college.

Involvement in organizations and clubs. Active involvement in organizations and clubs is reflected for instance in the case of Amaya who took leadership roles in various organizations during high school. Her leadership capability was honed by her circumstance of needing to take care of her single mother as a young teenager.

I don't put back in high school, I was in everything. I was in student council, I was a wrestler, I was in the student body council, I was in the student body board for senior class and all of that. I was part of a choir, so I was also a leader in there. Um, we did, uh, I did a lot in high school, now I think about it....I did a lot like homecoming committees. I ran the school store. I did my best to be involved on campus.

Elsa said that she was able to apply in her college organizations the skills she honed while actively involved in organizations in high school. For instance, she used to make videos in high school and even won competitions for video production. When she joined MVP and Cub Camp at UH, she also made videos for the projects of the organizations.

And then what else I am involved in? Um, like I was involved with BPA, Business Professionals of America and uh, I was in that because one of my hobbies is like video production. I love to make videos, like YouTube videos and everything. At BPA.. where we would create a video to compete. And so I made it to nationals. Like there's local

level, like local and state level and the national level. And I made it to state, then to the nationals one year. I made it to state for two years. And then that was all I did. But it was really fun. Like I said, my hobbies is like video production. I would make a lot of like, uh, like record, like videos and like put it together like a little videos.

I did that a lot with MVP. We have video for them. For one of the events I did was adopt the beach was like a big event I had planned. Um, I did that and I made a video for them also. And then, uh, with Cub camp I would make like all their videos with Cub camp.. Promotional videos and ...like throughout the recruitment stuff. And then I also made a video, uh, at the end of Cub Camp ...like the entire Cub camp experience.

Haide said that she wanted her active involvement in high school to continue unto college. Aside from being active in school-based organizations, she also has volunteered in a hospital and active in organizing fashion shows. She felt that her leadership roles in high school honed her leadership capabilities in college.

I was really involved in high school. So I was really involved in clubs in high school so I wanted to stay that way throughout college as well...

Well, I didn't go to high school in Texas. I was part of the CSF, which was California scholarship Federation. It was like a volunteer based organization and then I was also part of like, um, there was this like fashion group that I was in, those in advanced fashion class. So we've like put on a fashion show every year. So I was in that as well. That took up a lot of my time. And then I volunteer at the hospital as well. So I was really involved in high school.

...

Um, yeah, I feel like, cause I've always had like, I mean I had a lot of leadership roles in my clubs in high school so that just kind of made me now, like know how to run things and know how to talk to people, engage with people.

Jonas said that he graduated from a small high school where he was friends with everyone. Because he gets along well with everybody, he is urged by his school

mates to vie for the position of class president. Jonas said that he also wanted to do extra-curricular activities as a breather from his academic work.

In high school? Uh, I would say I was just as active. Um, I was in rocket club. Um, I was president, student body president. Um, I had a lot of leadership roles in high school as well. So this is nothing new to me... I think motivation, um, I think it was a mixture of family and friends. Um, my, I was in a small high school that my graduating class was only 109.

So I was pretty close with everyone since we were a smaller class and they just kept telling me like, Oh, you should just run for president. Like everyone loves you and you get along with everyone. So that's that. And then my parents and my grandparents, they were like, Oh, you can like focus on school. Um, and you'll do great things. And of course I would be focusing on studies, but I also needed that way to relax and, you know, let myself out (through extra-curricular activities).

Aside from organizations that are solely school-based (e. g., honor societies and clubs), Luke was also a member of Habitat for Humanity. He became a member of Habitat for Humanity after a friend asked him if he wanted to build houses, which he found exciting at that time as high school teenager. He also reached out to them at the time of the hurricane Harvey disaster oh how he can help out. Luke also helped other organizations for fund-raising and bold drives.

Yeah, not so much nowadays because I haven't actually been a part of their organization now (Habitat for Humanity). Um, but back in high school I think we were always just trying to help. Uh, especially after Harvey actually I kind of just, you know, called them back. Hey, how's it going over there guys? You know, what do we want to do? Um, since, you know, I was an officer back there too and I think I was, I think it was a VP, vice president of that (in high school).

Yeah, cause I was one of the founding members way back, but it was really rough, you know, just trying to make community projects here and there. We just tried to tag along with whatever they tried to do. Say for example, build homes for, uh, someplace around the third ward or some someplace around Houston... Besides that, Key Club, I would

say it's volunteering here and there for different organizations. Um, who needed people, fundraisers, I suppose blood drives.

Involvement in non-academic activities in school was very important for Daniel. He said he did not remember much his academic classes in high school, but his involvement in organizations definitely enriched his school experience. He said that grades did not matter much to him, but what is important are his involvement in school activities. He credits his involvements as what got him into UH. Daniel shared that academics were never his priority, but what is important are the experiences he gains from his schooling.

In high school I did, uh, I was part of marching band for two years and then I was part of theater. Um, and then in middle school I was in student council...

When I look back at it I don't remember many of the classes in high school. And I don't because I mean, even now, um, I think I'm a bit privileged in the sense that I don't, yeah, don't tell my dad he'd be upset, but I don't think that my GPA matters as much as the experiences that I've been in. And my GPA is okay. It's fine. But the, I think the experiences that I've had make up for it. And so like, um, my grades were decent, they were good in high school, but in other things I was involved in were what helped me get into UH. And I think maybe from that point I was like, okay, I'm going to do things. Classes and for me, I'll give it the bare minimum and I'll still pass because that's, I think that's always been the student that I've been, I'll study much and I still get these, which is fine, but it's, it's definitely the things that you involve yourself with...

I don't think academics has ever been a priority for me. And I don't think once.

Founding of organizations. As previously mentioned, two student participants founded their organizations in high school. Mina spearheaded several activities to establish and gain support for the Muslim Student Association (MSA) that she founded in high school. MSA had monthly meetings where they talk about events

where they could volunteer in the community or the mosque. They volunteered with the Islamic Arts Festival every year that happened in a mosque near their high school. Mina said that through this event, they were able to see the other Muslims in their community. The non-Muslims likewise came to the event to see the beautiful art.

So we did, uh, meetings where we would just like, it'd be like every month, I think like every Thursday or something, we would have a meeting where we would kind of talk about like events in the community that we could volunteer at or involvement with the mosque.

And then we did, one thing we did was the Islamic arts festival every year in November. It happened in a mosque close by. So we would volunteer at that and we would also invite all the, we would invite all of our teachers and friends to come to the festival. And that's where like my um, history teacher, the one who was my sponsor, that's where she came with her family and she got a tour of the mosque and stuff like that. And a lot of people from our organization and they were able to, I think from that we were able to be exposed to a greater Muslim community and see like how many people there are here. And um, also the Islamic arts festival was open to everybody. So a lot of non-Muslims came. Um, and that they were able to do the, seeing like the beautiful art.

When people see the beautiful Muslim art, Mina thought that they might think that Islam cannot be that bad if the art is beautiful. People also became curious and asked questions when they see the art works. Mina has been volunteering at the arts festival since she was in 10th or 11th grade.

I think they were able to see like, okay, Islam can't be as bad as we think it is, if the art is so beautiful and like they, it made them more curious, ask questions. So, because of that, I've been involved with the Islamic arts festival for like past ever since 10th grade or 11th grade. And so it's actually this weekend. So I'm going to it again.

Mina said that they also hosted the film showing of “Kite Runner” which was adapted from the book of famous Muslim writer Khaled Hussein for fund-raising at

their school. The movie showing served the purpose of educating people at their school about Muslim. Mina also organized the attendance of Muslim students at her school to the MSA inter-school tournaments at UH.

We hosted a movie screening of a, have you heard of the author Khaled Hussein? He's, he's an Iranian author. He's a very um, very, very popular and so he has a book called the Kite Runner... So we hosted a movie, a movie screening of that for charity and we raised like \$400, which was like a really big deal for us. Now it's almost like, cause right now it sounds like, oh whatever. .. We showed it in our school, so a lot of people, we charged, we charged like \$3 or something per ticket. So it's that kind of like, cause there's a movie about Muslims, so it kind of exposed people to that also. I think that was a good effort. But other than that we did, um, the biggest activity was probably the tournament here at UH.

Mina said she would have wanted to propose Friday prayer sessions at her school, but was constrained by the fact that praying will happen during lesson hours and where to hold the prayers. Besides, she said that some students are not even comfortable identifying themselves as Muslims, much more to ask themselves to excuse from class to pray. Still, Mina thought that she should have pushed through with the proposal.

Um, one thing, um, I wanted to establish where we, I never got a chance to was Friday prayer. So Friday prayer is a big deal in high school. So, um, at the time that was like such a far stretch for people, because people weren't even comfortable with saying I'm Muslim, to tell them to like, you know, tell their teachers they have to go pray at this time would be like a whole another ... really big steps. So I wish I had done that in high school, but we weren't able to establish that cause it would be like during class and we'd have to find a place to pray. Um, so that was something I wasn't able to do other than the activities we did.

Anya said that she founded the organization for South Asian students in her high school in order to provide a venue for South Asian students in her school to come

together and engage in activities. Anya said that the main purpose of the organization is for the socialization of and planning of activities for South Asian students. She said that she thought of starting the organization because although they have substantial number of South Asian students at their school, they do not have their own ethnic-based organization unlike in college where there are a lot of such kind of organization.

So we tried to as best as we could and we like hosted little events where we all brought food and watch movies and stuff like that. But it wasn't like anything major. I just tried to start it because my school actually has a really big, um, South Indian community or South Asian community, sorry. So, um, because of that, that's why we decided to start it.

...

So yeah, the main purpose was because all of us were friends and like we all already knew each other, but like for some reason we just didn't like, you see in college and we have Indian Students Association or Pakistani Students Association or Bangladeshi, like we have all of that.

But in high school, like there's not enough of us to have our own individual group like that. So we, I kind of just thought of the idea because I was like, it would be kind of fun if we could all just get together and do things together since we're all already friends.

Interest in social studies. Almost all of the study participants said that the subject closest to harnessing their civic engagement in high school — which is the social studies — did not memorably inspire their civic engagement. However, Elena, who is currently majoring in Sociology, said that her social studies in high school in a way made her realize people's unequal access to opportunities, and that those who are privileged should use the opportunities available to them to benefit the underprivileged. When asked if her social studies in high school influenced her civic engagement, Elena answered:

Um, in a sense, yeah. Cause um, when you learn about social studies, you learn how there's people out there that don't have the same opportunities as us. So with the opportunities that we do have now and the privileges we have, we should take advantage of it to help people that don't have the same things as us. So that's just how I see things.

Not being involved. Unlike the other student leaders who were active in leadership roles and extra-curricular activities, Allan and Vera shared that they were not involved. However, their non-involvement in high school influenced them to be better involved in college. Allan said that he 12 years old when he started high school. As he was younger than his batch mates, it was a challenge for him to be more involved and take leadership positions as those usually go to his older school mates. Likewise, he went to a small early college high school where there were not a lot of opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

To be honest, I wasn't involved at all in high school. Part of it was. Um, all right, so I'm 18 and I'm a junior right now. So when, uh, I started in high school, I was 12 years old... Um, I wasn't actually the most socially active because I was two years younger than everybody else. It just, it felt very awkward. So I was never, and on top of that, I went to an early college high school, which is a, was a high school on a college campus. So it was very small. We didn't have many extra-curriculars because it was just, it was literally just a building on a college campus. We didn't have our own football fields. We didn't have our own, like we had our own rooms, but they were all classrooms. Like we didn't have a lot of space, so there just wasn't much space to get involved in the first place.

However, being not involved in high school in a way influenced him to be involved in college. When he attended the senate meeting, he realized that getting involved and being part of something is important. When he became more involved and integrated, he felt happier and enjoyed college more.

And then I don't talk about that, that I was two years younger than everybody else. It was just, I never got involved. So, but in a way that did influence me though, because that's what kind of drove me to get involved once I got to college because I realized that.. When I saw a Senate meeting, I realized getting involved is actually like really awesome, right? You can do a lot of, not only can you do a lot of good things, but it's also like, it keeps you busy and it's just, it feels good to be involved in your campus. It makes you more integrated into the university. It makes you enjoy college more even if you're busy. So, um, yeah, so if I would say not getting involved was an influence in its own way.

Vera said she was not actively involved in organizations in high school because she felt it was not important. However, she decided to change that when she got into college, specially when she became part of the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA).

In high school, I wasn't, I honestly wasn't very involved with any of the organizations or the clubs because I, I felt like it wasn't really worth my time because I, I didn't understand why the students did the things they do. Like I never understood what it's like to be a part of that community as much as I wanted to. There was never an incentive for me to want to be an active member in the club. Like I was part of different clubs, but it wasn't very like I wasn't active, like consistently going to meetings or participating outside of school. Now that I'm in college, I wish I did because I felt like that would've really helped me out. But, um, I, yeah, I was in like an environmental club. I was in student council and there was this business club that I was in, but I also wasn't very active in that either. Um, but I think through VSA I wanted to do something that was like, I'm going to prove myself wrong, that I'm going to be active in work, I'm going to run for an officer position and then change that mentality.

Community influence. Community civic engagement is conducted by the student participants through their organizations. The students said that their organizations have several projects aimed at addressing community issues such as hunger and the environment. To address such issues, the organizations have been partnering with the Houston Food Bank and environmental groups

working in the Galveston area for beach clean-up. Amaya's sorority has also been working with an organization in Houston on the issue of domestic violence. While the Student Government Association has had several collaborations with organizations working on HPV (Human papillomavirus) awareness and fund raising activities for individuals with special needs. In the case of Yani, TeachHouston has been partnering with an organization to give after-school care and lessons to school-aged children in an underprivileged community.

Although most of the students have engaged in community work in college, Luke and Allan were involved in community work in high school. As previously mentioned, Luke was involved in Habitat for Humanity. While Allan shared his involvement in church service activities pre-college that entailed taking care of school-aged children during summer school break so that their parents can go to work.

Um, well, I used to be involved with my, um, with my Catholic church. I would volunteer every summer. They had this, um, vacation Bible school where it was basically, you know, kids don't have school anymore over the summer, but parents still have to work over the summer so they can't watch their kids the whole time. So it would be this 8:00 AM to I believe noon for, um, it would be 8:00 PM to noon, well 8:00 AM to noon where they would just drop off their kids and then they would, you would just participate in activities with the kids and then just basically just watch over them, make sure they're okay and all of that. So, yeah. So it was a vacation Bible school. I haven't been involved in that in a long time though because ever since I've gotten involved in student government, I've just, especially this year I've been really busy.

Challenges encountered in civic work. One challenge pointed out by the student participants is how to meet the demands of their schooling and their civic

engagement work. While others mentioned organization-related issues such as meeting the objectives of their organizations. Others mentioned personal-related issues such as the need to be more articulate.

Meeting the demands of schooling and civic engagement. Elsa said that her major subjects in the natural science are demanding, and so she has to conscientiously divide her time between her studies and civic work. She said that she needs to study a lot so she can get good GPA to be able to get into dental school.

So right now I'm moving on with SGA ... but um, I am trying to become a dentist, so my grades are very.. and NSM, so my grades are very important to me. And so, um, and since I'm a senior and like I was junior, like through all of this, like your classes begin to get very difficult. You start to take upper level classes and you know, science like biology is not the easiest thing.

Like STEM courses are not easy. So like it takes a lot of time and studying to like new things. It was not like my other classes like English or social studies to where I can just do my work and like be okay. You know what I mean, like I had to study like in advance and do all this stuff and my grades are important and I need to make a good GPA to get into dental school...

However, Elsa also recognized that she had to accept that her GPA could drop as a result of her being busy with her civic activities. She said that she is willing to take the trade-off of not getting the highest grades so that she can attend to her civic activities. Elsa said that she can go to school and just study, but that is not what she wanted to do. She said that interacting with people on and off campus, and being able to help freshmen students become successful through her work at Cub Camp bring her happiness.

So I have to be very, like take priorities in like where I want to put them because um, yes I could like not do anything at all and, and go to school, make great scores, but that's not what I want to do. I'd rather

like willing to drop my GPA a little bit, like drop your scores and that does happen when you get involved.

Like your grades do drop, but that's the (inaudible) like the pressure really to be involved. Um, just cause you get like a sense of fulfillment within yourself and then you can begin to be happy. And like I said, like freshman year I went to school and I wasn't entirely happy, so how can I ever like continue anything if I'm not happy, but like getting involved, interacting with other people, interacting with different communities outside of the university in this area. And it's like a sense of fulfillment to me and I'll meet students on campus, like with Cub Camp and helping them become successful, like really, really makes me happy and I want to do that. And so, um, that's kinda how I like do everything and um, but I just like really had to like pick and choose and put on my priorities where I need to put them at.

Time management is also a challenge for Shaira. As the director of operations at MSA, she is in charge of booking events (which they have almost everyday) and ensuring that the logistics for the events are provided. The latter entails communicating and coordinating work with MSA officers which can be a challenge given that the officers are also busy with school and extra-curricular work. Aside from MSA, Shaira is likewise a member of an academic sorority. She is also taking an overload of 18 hours of academic work at the time of the study.

The challenges I would say like, okay, well one, it's just like, it's just a lot of work on my end. Uh, just being, just being director of operations, like I have to book events all the time, but that's just, that's just kinda like the logistical stuff. Like it's a lot of processes to book everything. And we have events every single day, every single week. So like booking those is really hectic and like organizing and getting the officers to communicate. Um, I guess this is the challenging part, but I mean as long as you just keeping nagging at them, they'll come to you.

...
Yeah, it's a lot of time. It takes up a lot of my time and I'm taking 18 hours this semester, so it's like a lot of school and a lot of like being an MSA officer, cause I'm actually a part of academic sorority as well. And so I'm involved in that and I'm officer for MSA and I'm

taking 18 hours. So it's kinda like just a lot of time management I guess.

Yani, Vera and Daniel have to manage their time for their work at school, organizations and part-time work. For Yani, properly managing her time for school, TeachHouston, and part-time work in a restaurant is a challenge she has to contend with. She said she sometimes go to therapy to help manage the stress of attending to her responsibilities.

I feel like a lot of time management for sure. I'm waking up at 8:00 AM. That's definitely a challenge. And, um, and time is a huge thing. And also the stress component. Um, I've had to go to like therapy because I would feel very overwhelmed in doing a lot of things and um, I just feel as so... not stressing yourself out and yeah.

And, and just getting caught up in life's work is a huge challenge for me as well as um, balancing like, um, would be going out with people as well as going to school because I've noticed, um, especially when I go to work, um, my coworkers invite me to go out all the time and then I just say, hey, I have to do homework. And they think I'm so lame because I have to do homework instead of going out. But it's important, you know.

Vera said that she has to work better on her time management. To be able to block her time for responsibilities for Vietnamese Student Association (VSA), she requested her employer not to give her work schedule on Wednesdays and Saturdays because these are the days when VSA have activities. She does not mind the pay cut because VSA is a priority for her. Nonetheless, school is a priority for the VSA board, and so members can request for leave from work if they need to attend to urgent school work.

Um, time management is the biggest pain in my bottom because I'm, I'm very bad at it because I put off things a lot. But I feel like with VSA I have to be strict on time. I think also, um, all our members have different, very different schedules. So uh, my workplace, it's just a, it's

just a restaurant, but they're very strict with schedules. So I tell them specifically, I want to take Wednesdays off. I should never be scheduled. On a Wednesday because I have VSA duties and I also took Saturdays off because a lot of our events fall on Saturdays. So I want to be able to be free the whole day and focus on that instead of having to work. I mean I understand everybody has bills to pay, but VSA is also one of my priorities.

...

What I really like about our members and our board and VSA is that school always comes first. So if we need to have time off of VSA, we can, I think I might take that week of leave, maybe sometime next semester, maybe this semester.

Organization-related issues. For Qira, the biggest challenge is how to do get more people to be involved in the activities of Global Medical Brigade. They have been doing advertisements for their study abroad fairs, meetings and volunteering projects such as the food bank. However, they have not attained their desired membership number.

I think we have the biggest challenge was with getting people involved in activities, finding people who are interested in these things and then getting people to come out to our events. Probably the biggest challenge.

We have been going to different study abroad fairs. Advertising our meetings, we've been doing a few volunteering events like food bank, the CHAT Program I believe.

Mina said that she considered maintaining a good image of the Muslim Student Association (MSA) as a challenge she has to contend with. Given the long history of MSA, Mina was aware that she has to help carry on the work to ensure that MSA functions according to its mission and to the satisfaction of MSA alumni. Mina is also aware that maintaining a positive image of MSA can help counter the negative

stereotype against Muslims. Mina likewise shared that there are possible MSA projects that the officers were unable to undertake because of their busy schedules.

I think a lot of, um, a lot of challenges are maintaining image. So, a lot of people like alumni of MSA, there's a lot of alumni. So because I'm gonna say it's been around since 1964 at U of H. So there's a lot of alumni, older alumni, younger alumni, they have a lot of opinions.

So if we're doing something and you know, they don't like it, then it's like, there's a lot of things you have to deal with. Like, okay, is this, does this seem okay? Are they going to be okay with it or their current members is going to be okay with it. Um, I think that's a big challenge, especially like at U of H Muslim community, there's a lot of like prejudice with MSA. Like, Oh, I'm gonna say cliquey or I'm gonna say is this... So you kind of have to like manage that image and make sure that there's not too much negativity about it. Um, another thing is just like time, I would say like, because I know it's, we have, we're a team of 16 officers, but we're all college students, so we all like have our classes in our schedule is, and like on top of this, on top of that we're doing this. So sometimes we want to do things, but the time and the resources are so limited that we can't always make it happen. So that's definitely a challenge.

Personal-related issues. Jonas and Pablo shared that the challenge they encounter relates to their communication skills. Jonas feels that he needs to be less soft spoken and be more forceful when speaking to a large crowd. However, Jonas said that such is not really a challenge but something that he needs to work on.

Challenges? I would say it's more personal for me. Um, I'm not really outspoken. I'm more soft spoken... Um, but well when it comes to like talking to a large crowd, I'm more soft spoken, but that's more on a personal, like those are like personal challenges for me. When it comes to being (president) ..., I don't really see anything as challenges. Um, I'm really optimistic about things. So if I see a problem or challenge, I tried my best to not look at it as like a negative but see it as like something I could, Oh I could get over that. I just need to think about it, about the situation and go over it.

As for Pablo, he said that it is sometimes difficult to communicate with the staff at the Center for Community Affairs because English is not his first language.

I would say communication because English is not my first language, so it's hard to express what I want, but I'm trying to learn how to do that. I learn English (in Vietnam) but it's not so much. I would say I'm not, I'm not really proficient in English.

Balancing demands of schooling and civic engagement. When asked how do they balance the demands of schooling and civic responsibility, the student participants said they try to manage their time properly and be organized, get the support of and delegate work to their fellow officers, set organization work as priority, and having a supportive family helps them fulfill their responsibilities.

Time Management and being organized. The participants said that they try to manage their time and be organized in order to cope with the demands of their schooling, and responsibilities in their organizations and paid work.

For Mina, she tries to create times in the day that are allotted for school work and the Muslim Student Association (MSA). Because MSA activities are mostly scheduled in the evenings, she therefore wakes up early and do school work in the morning, or study late in the evening after the MSA activities.

Um, so I try to, that's definitely something I'm still working on, but I, but I tried to do is I create times for myself on the day where I'm like, okay, this is my study only time and this is my like MSA only time. So this year I know MSA events are usually in the evenings. So what I tried to do is like wake up early and try to do my homework in that time. And then like, I know that I'm going to be busy in the evening. So I'd either study like late at night or early in the morning.

Jonas said he treats his responsibilities at the Asian Business Association as a class and so he allots specific time for his ABA work as he would study for his classes.

Oh, it's a lot of my time. Um, I would say I treat it like a class. Um, so if there's certain things I need to be done, then I put it on my schedule right away just because like the amount of effort you need to put into something in this case is just the same amount of effort that you need to put into your classes.

So with me treating it like a class, I'm like, okay, I have certain time. Excuse me, I have a certain time for school homework, but I also need to set aside like, okay, I need to get this done, I need to get this out for the organization.

Yani and Qira use planners to calendar their tasks so that they can keep track of what needs to be done. Yani shared that she uses both online and paper-and-pen tools to list and track her activities.

Um, I would say having a planner for sure. Um, like I, I love Google calendars. It's probably the best tool that was created because it like, it puts your planner in a digital form and then it creates the calendar for you. And then I also have, I have like a bullet journal that I create my own calendar and I'm like, I create, there's nothing here (showing the journal to me). There's still nothing there. So this is like my monthly, um, I mean the whole month and then this is a weekly and then I just create my weekly things.

Aside from her school activities, Qira has to manage her time for work as a server. She said that writing everything down can help with her time management.

Well, I use a planner that's currently in my car because I was looking for your number all the time, but I definitely write down everything so I can get all my different events straight. But between school and work...I'm just, I'm a server, but I just have to balance time management was probably the biggest thing...It's not too hard. As long as I write everything down with the times that I'm supposed to do this and that and I can keep on track.

Anya and Haide try to keep a schedule of the activities they need to do. Anya said that if she veers off from her schedule, she ends up studying for her classes in between schedules which is not good because she does not want to take her studies for granted.

I tried to keep a schedule as best as possible. Um, a lot of times I'm like forced to do school in between things, which like can be like a problem sometimes. And like a lot of times I like to do my other things rather more than school. So, um, that's like something that I always deal with though. Like, you know, school is never fun for everyone. So sometimes, um, yeah, but I don't take like my major is hard but it's not like super time consuming. So I have like the flexibility of taking two online classes. So I only go to class three times a week, um, or three days a week. Like I only have class so I don't have to get like a four day weekend to rejuvenate, go to work, stuff like that.

Haide said as she works on weekends so she gets school work done during Fridays and weekdays.

It's just honestly just time management just to figure out how to fit everything into my schedule. So I know like weekends I'm always working so I know like okay I have nothing, I can't, let's do something on the weekends and I'll do something on Fridays and like during the weekday. So just time management.

Vera and Luke said that they need to create a strict schedule to be able to attend to all their responsibilities, and to cut on their leisure time. For Vera, adhering to a strict schedule means being able to eat breakfast to keep her energized throughout the day. She also tries to squeeze in exercise in the morning to keep her energy level up throughout the day. She also tries to study more on weekends because she needs to work on weekdays to be able to pay for bills for school and living expenses.

Yeah, I do. I really, I really need to touch up on my organization skills, but I think what I'm doing now is I'm creating a strict schedule for myself because I feel like I taken up too much leisure time. Um, but I, yes, I do. I have classes mainly in the afternoon now. So in the morning I try to eat breakfast because it really is the most

important meal of the day. I didn't realize how important this was until I started having afternoon classes. I have time to eat now, so I'm more energized and I have more things to do throughout the day than if I skipped breakfast, went to class and I just kind of die down a little bit. But you know, so in the morning I try my best to go to the student rec because it's free. We'll kind of paying for it, but it's still like, it's like a gym. So I want to be active in the morning, get ready for my classes and then whenever it's done, usually on Wednesdays we'll have our meetings. And then I like doing my homework at night. That's when I feel like I'm the most productive. I try studying on the weekends. I'm more free on the weekends now so I can use that time to study, catch up on homework. And throughout the week I work actually work a lot more than I'm supposed to. But because of the way I'm paying for classes now is through installments and I'm also paying, I'm living on my own now, so I have to pay rent.

Luke said he cannot afford to be sitting around for long because every hour of the day counts or else he will lose his pace and fall behind his academics and Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP) work. Sometimes he focuses more on MVP then he makes up time for his studies, but sometimes he is busier with studies, and then catch up with his MVP work. Luke shared that he sometimes turn down invitations from friends to go out in order to not lose track of work that need to be done for school and MVP.

Uh, time management is super important when it comes to it and you know, every hour of the day really counts and you gotta make up for it. You know, like, I can't be, I can't be sitting around for way too long. Or else, I'm gonna lose my pace and work. I'm going to fall behind in academics and MVP as well. Sometimes though it does come to a point where I need to focus more on say engineering than MVP and once I get the free time, you know, I focus back on MVP and it's work again, you know, it's like behind the academics. Then behind MVP, fix it. It's just, you're juggling, you're just juggling and basically, um, two responsibilities, you know. And then you also have to worry about your social groups as well. Your friends, they expect you to go, Hey, you want to go to this place or do you want to get drunk this day? You want to go to a party or pool and ... it's tough. But I mean, I wouldn't, I'm gonna miss it some days, so, you know, I might as well

just keep going with it, struggle through with it and it's not too bad, I guess.

Setting organization work as priority. Daniel felt that he has to prioritize his work at Coog Radio because he only has six months left to work in the organization. He wants to leave a positive impact on Coog Radio, and once the six months are finished then he cannot do anything about it anymore. Daniel knows he is going to graduate and earn his degree, and so he feels more compelled to focus his energy on Coog Radio so he can leave a legacy on the organization. When asked how he balances the demands of his various responsibilities, he answered:

It's hard. It's really hard. I think, uh, I don't think school is my last priority, like in terms of academics, but it's, it's down there because, um, I feel kind of not rushed, but I feel pressed to leave a positive impact in Coog Radio cause I only have it for like six months, you know, and when I'm gone, I'm gone. There's no redo. And so like I want to put as much into that because when I'm out, that's it. Yeah. Um, my fiance gets mad at me. She says, no, you need to spend more time at school. I know. I'll graduate, I'm fine. Um, but yeah, balancing, it's very difficult.

Support from fellow officers. Elena and Shaira shared that they get the support and delegate work to their fellow officers when they feel swamped with other personal responsibilities. Elena said that when she became the Filipino Student Association (FSA) president, she was apprehensive about her ability to attend to the demands of her various responsibilities for her FSA work, schooling and law school application. Although she previously did a lot of work as secretary at FSA, she knew that being the president would require more responsibilities. She felt the burden of representing the biggest student organization at UH and how her decisions will impact the organization. However, when she assumed office, she informed the officer board that she will need their help in order to properly discharge her function.

Like, you know, like you already know how everything works. So, but I was still like, Oh, if I become president, like I essentially become the face of the org and people will be reaching out to me most of the time like for things. So like I was worried about like how am I going to balance 700 members while also like balancing school, to graduate, and then balancing the studying for law school. So then, um, so when I started like this, like the school year, I was kinda like nervous and scared of how things would turn out cause that of course like FSA is the largest org I have to maintain our reputation at U of H. So like I was worried about the decisions I make could impact heavily but then I can balance everything because I made it clear with my officer board that I need them to step up like what their positions and like help me essentially.

Elena emphasized to her fellow FSA officers that although she is the main face of FSA currently, they are also represented in the organization. She is glad that the officer board stepped up and they have been doing a lot, and so the new members have been very enthusiastic to take part in FSA activities.

It's my job to encourage them and help them. So I brought emphasis on how there, I'm not the only face of FSA of course I'm the main face as of right now, but they're also represented and like I need them to work as a team to maintain the organization initiative just to be on me. So because of that, like my officer board, they definitely stepped up. They've been doing a lot in like the start of the year. The turnout has been better than ever. Like yeah, it's like the new, the new members are very enthusiastic about our work because last year, new kids, they were more like kind of like, cool, I'm in college now. But then this year they were like, Oh my God, I'm so, I'm so excited to be in FSA, ... like I want to come out to all that events and like activities and you're like, oh wow.

Shaira shared that she can count on her fellow officers for support when she feels swamped with school responsibilities. She said that her fellow officers have been supportive and they pick up the slack on her MSA tasks when she needs to do school work.

Um, but if it's too much like one, I think like one week I had like three exams in a week and so I told the president, I was like, I can't do this. Like I'm way, I was like, please like tell everyone to just like not hit me up for a week. And then she's like, okay, that's fine. So like nobody, I was like for that entire week, like nobody did anything. And I just focused on school and stuff. So I think it's challenging. But my team's very like cooperative. So it's very helpful. It's not like, Oh no, you have to do it. Like they'll understand, they'll pick up the slack. So cause we're 16 officers, so it's like a lot of officers. So it's able, it's easier to like divide the power.

Family support. Elena said the support of her family helps her a lot in balancing the demands of her various responsibilities. She said that she does not have a typical Asian family where they demand the best from her academics. Elena said that she is a first generation college student and so her family does not really know how to help her regarding college life. But they try to be as supportive as possible. When she is being hard on her self because she was not able to attain the best outcomes with respect to her academics or FSA work, her family tells her not to be hard on herself. What is important is that she gave her best to what she does, and learn from her experiences. Her family also teaches her not to live with regrets with regard to how she performs academically and with FSA, but always think of ways on how to move forward and not be down when things did not turn out as expected.

So, um, yeah, like my officer board is a big factor on how I'm balancing other things as well as my family. And my family, they, yes, like they emphasize to do well in school... like (other) Asian families where it's the best or nothing. But my family, they are very considerate of my situation cause they know like I'm a first gen and like, because they've never been to college, they don't really know how to help me, but they're like trying to be as supportive as possible. They always tell me like, um, my best is something like trying my best is better than nothing at all. And like I shouldn't be too hard on myself and like situations where I believe I could have done better cause um, they taught me to accept how things are and like go forward from it and learn from it. Cause, um, they basically taught me not to regret anything I do, to

consistently move forward in my life and find ways to be better. So, um, because a lot like I always evaluate how I do things academically and with FSA and instead of being down, if it's not the way it should've been, I learn from them. How I could've done better in through there. I can make better decisions.

She said her family also understands why she sometimes spends less time with them because of school and FSA work.

My family's very supportive in everything I do. So, um, they also like understand if I'm really busy cause I live kind of far, like I live 45 minutes from campus and I commute every day at home. So like my family knows if I'm not around, like if I'm not home for dinner or if I can't come to something, they know why because they know how important school and FSA are to me. So they're very understanding on that and very flexible about it.

Impact of being an Asian American on civic engagement. The student participants acknowledged that their being an Asian American impacted their civic engagement. Their ethnicity guided the student participants to take up causes related to the Asian Americans. Another pointed out that being around fellow Asians inspires self-development. While another student said that being an Asian American is an advantage in the UH community that values diversity. Some students pointed out that being an Asian American makes one work harder being a minority and be more empathetic. Lastly, one student stressed that being civically engaged counters the stereotype against Asians.

Asian American identity defines civic engagement. Mina said her Asian American identity, particularly her being a Muslim Pakistani, largely shaped the path and character of her civic engagement. Her being a Muslim drew her to the MSA, and her being a Pakistani drew her to the Kashmir issue and was able to interact with those who were caught in the problem. Being aware of those who were victimized made her

more empathetic and inspired to work harder for the cause of those who are experiencing difficulties.

Um, yeah. I think that, I think it definitely will because like my background kind of, um, pushes me to continue, pushes me... Like I think if I was just born here and I didn't have any issue (with my) background and I wouldn't really be able to see past my own demographic, like I wouldn't be able to see like, okay, these issues right now I'm in close contact with, um, these issues that are happening in Pakistan. Or like that lady wouldn't ever have spoken to me if I wasn't Pakistani. And so I think, um, being in close contact with that culture and like with the people that are back there and suffering, then that kind of pushes me to work harder for a reason.

Being around fellow Asian Americans inspires self-development. Elena said that being around fellow Asian Americans inspired her to come out of her shell and do more for her community. She said that before she was with FSA, she was shy and did not want to really interact with others. But her being with FSA inspired her to interact and help other people, as well as focus on goals that are not material.

I think so because um, before I really found my place in my community, like I was kinda to myself, I didn't want to come out to things cause I was kinda shy and I didn't want to talk to people. I didn't know but then because I was around people more like me more frequently. Um, they encouraged me to come out of my shell and like do that. I started coming out to these events and like helping people and finding out how much it gives to your life in a sense. Cause um, like I said, people, some people would go into life with the focus of just being so successful in a sense seeing things, materials.

The more she become involved in the Asian American community, the more she realized that she can do things that are helpful for the others. Being with FSA enabled Elena to do service, which consequently inspired her to decide on focusing on a law career.

But when you actually have these experiences it gives more to your life in a sense so like because of my ethnicity, like my identity, like I was able to keep people with the same, same background as me in a sense and like through that it like guided me to where I am today to where I want to be able to reach out to people who are in need more cause I'm coming into like college, I didn't like my mind was on law right away. Like as kind of like, I don't know what I want to do. But then because the more I became involved with the community, the more I saw, like things that could help with things I can change

Being Asian American is an advantage. Elsa said that she was able to thrive and develop as a student leader at UH because of its emphasis on diversity. She said that she feels like it does not matter who you are or where you come from at UH. Elsa does not feel discriminated in such a way that would require her to change anything in herself. She felt equal with everybody else. Her being an Asian is even an advantage because she believed that some opportunities were bestowed on her to satisfy the diversity goal of the university.

Like when I got to university, um, things changed, you know, like this university is so diverse and so great. Like it really, like, honestly, like I said, it really doesn't matter who you are, where you come from. Like everyone's here having the same goal. And I don't see myself as different from anyone else. I don't see myself like discriminated against in any way or change at all, just because, you know, like an Asian. I see myself as equal as everyone else here. Um, and so, um, and if anything, to be honest, I feel like I have more of an advantage of being an Asian here just because like when you come from different culture, um, when you're, they want diversity in orgs. And so I guess it's kind of like, you know, like they say like we want diversity and we want like different people... But then like that kind of puts me at an advantage, but like getting accepted to different things, you know? ... I have a little advantage just because I am Asian and like they want look more diverse.

Jonas also believes that Asian Americans are able to thrive because of the tolerance for diversity in Houston. Everybody is given the opportunity to experience leadership role because of the openness to diversity. Because of the available

opportunities, Asians are able to prosper and become influential. These successful Asians are the role models that Jonas emulate.

I don't know. Um, it's hard to say just because through being in Houston, um, we're like the third most diverse city in the United States. So being able to experience like leadership in this melting pot, like I don't see it as a problem because everyone has a chance to do so. Um, but with the, I would say with the rise of Asian American influences in culture and like society, I think that might've also like not a big motivation for me, but like a small motivation on the side. Like, Oh, a lot of Asian Americans are doing big things. You could be that person too.

Being Asian American inspires hard work. Nonetheless, Haide believes that Asian Americans do not have a lot of opportunities and privileges because they are a minority, and so they have to work harder in everything they do including civic engagement in order to be recognized.

Cause it's like when you're like being an Asian American is still being considered a minority, so you don't have as many chances of being a minority. Like you don't have all the other privileges that other people have. And then you have to work harder to be people with respect too.

Being in the minority develops empathy. Shaira said that being in the minority has given her perspective about the conditions of the larger segment of the population and be more empathetic about the situation of those in the minority.

I think being like a minority like makes you put into perspective what if like you know...Like it allows you to like look at things from every angle or like a lot of different perspectives. Cause like if you're a majority, you know, ethnicity, then I don't think you take into account other people around you. But I think if you're a minority you take into account of every single person or not every single person, but the majority of people, like try to look at everybody's aspects or look at everybody's culture.

Counter stereotypes against Asians. Qira acknowledged that there is negative perception of Asians' ability, especially women, to handle leadership role.

I also feel like maybe because when people look at me and they see like a small Asian girl, they don't think automatically, oh, she's the president of this organization. They might think like a taller guy and one of the officers is going to be the president. People are always kind of shocked. Oh, it's hard.

Vera said that her being an Asian American and her desire to counter the negative stereotypes against her ethnicity drives her work at VSA. Through VSA, she wants others to know how interesting her culture is, and to prove that Vietnamese women are capable to be a leader through her work at VSA. She also wanted to show the younger generation that they are capable of being anything they aspire to be and not be boxed into certain stereotypes.

Yeah, it's definitely right. Yeah, I'm definitely like, that's definitely like my driving factor. Like I'm proud to be Asian-American because we have so much cool stuff. Like we're so cool. We have so many different ethnicities, culture and we have so many different types of people. I feel like because the media portrays us a certain way, we were like molded into this like stereotype and then that's how some people see us and maybe they, they like weren't exposed to the culture and they're, or they're just plain ignorant. I just want to prove to, especially the younger generations, you can be something more than what people think you are.... Like we have, like we've been branded a certain stereotypes, so that's how people think of us and sometimes that's very degrading. It's degrading ...

Um, I want to say especially for Vietnamese people like, Oh, your dad. Well not mostly not the dad, but like, you know..., your dad is like a typical tiger dad and your mom is like, you know, your mom works in the nail salon and she doesn't know how to do anything else. Or like that stereotype where we talk badly of other people in our own language. It's like that's not the case. That's not the case.

Luke also pointed out the negative stereotypes against Asians that might limit their ability to become leaders and make an impact. However, Luke said that to

counter the stereotypes, one needs to keep showing up and shouldering through to attain the goals that one has set out to attain.

Um, maybe there are some restrictions, that's for sure. Uh, stereotypes and all that. So that's, you know, limiting I guess Asian Americans as it is to make an impact.... But I said it just, you know, just keep showing up to all these kinds of stuff, you know, just keep powering through it, I would say. And then in the end just kind of gets it. I get, I guess better, I guess if that's what you're looking for.

Plans for the future

Continue with civic engagement. The student participants said they will continue with their civic engagement after they finish college or when they have a stable career.

Elsa said that if she is admitted to dental school, she will figure out how to continue with her civic engagement given the demands of dental schooling. She heard from friends that dental school is very demanding, and so she will need to figure out how to proceed with her civic engagement when she gets into dental school. But if she does not go to dental school, she will work as dental assistant and do research for the environment as she previously did in the Galapagos island. She also wants to do volunteering work again in less developed countries like she did in Panama for the Global Dental Brigade.

So it depends to be honest, cause I know dental school is very, very intensive. So a lot of times, uh, my friends tell me who are in dental school, they tell me like, it's like you study, like you're studying for finals every single day. So like finals week, it's finals week, every single day. ...And then you're expected to do a lot of like, um, outside stuff like with your clinicals and everything and go to the office and do some practice. So you're starting to do a lot. And so, um, I'm sure there's like volunteer work that you can do there and I can try and get involved. But as of right now, I probably like.. if I get to dental school, I probably like, I don't know how it's like in dental school, so

I really don't know if .. I have time or if I can, but if I don't get accepted then um, I'll probably be like, I'm already a certified, so like registered dental assistant and then do some like some research on the way, like I did in the Galapagos islands.

I probably like do some more research and other things. And then I'll probably do RDA (work), I'll probably go like, um, abroad again and do some volunteer work with like dentistry cause you know, I did that with Global Dental Brigades. I went to Panama and did some work there, uh, as a volunteer. And so if I'm like... certified, I could do like more work for these communities and um, go to like the rural countries and help out with stuff there.

For Daniel, he wants to do work for Houston's music scene along the lines of doing publicity for the music or musicians through a magazines or website. He wants to say in Houston and do something for the local musicians. Daniel envisions the music he will promote as means for empowerment in the sense of promoting a cause or bringing people together. He considers music as a powerful means to promote a movement. When asked about his plans for the future, Daniel shared:

I would like to have some kind of, um, cause like Houston now, like Houston music and arts. Um, like big goal is, you know, to work publicity and do publicity for musicians. But I also want to have like a, probably like a magazine, um, for Houston musicians and people who are interested in getting into the scene. Um, so it would start as like a website, maybe go to a magazine, um, and just talk about, you know, what's going on in Houston in terms of music because I can't, I hate when people leave and take their talents elsewhere. You know, I feel like if you harvest it and yeah, you invest in here, it'll grow.

Um, a lot of movements have been started and supported by music. Um, and you see that, you know, in the 60s where they're fighting for yeah (civil rights). With Woodstock and also, you know, in the Ohio, you know, in Kent state, you know, there was a big outcry, outrage. And then, um, Crosby, Stills and Nash did a song called Ohio and everyone who didn't know about it suddenly knew about what was going on because they heard the song.

Daniel believes that music has the power to bring awareness of issues to people, gather support, and act for a cause. He added that he will work on a lot of “indie alternative music,” and will try to make opportunities for such genre of music in Houston.

And I think music has, it transcends a lot, you know, cause even if you don't care about what's going on in your community, people like music. If you listen to a song and they're like there is something that's going on, like, Oh I didn't know that. I think it has the opportunity to provide a lot of information but also an awareness and gathering support and like acting... Yeah, on the genre. But yeah, like a lot of indie alternative.

Daniel is the only one among the student participants who is thinking of entering politics to represent his constituents in the future. He believes that to be able to represent constituents in government, one should serve them first. In other words, service first before representation. With this, one is able to get to know the needs of the community first before representing them in government.

And then in terms of civic engagement with politics, I've, I've always wanted to do something like that, but I feel like people who want to do that in the beginning might not have the best intentions in mind. Or maybe that's my personal belief because I feel like you have to contribute something to your community. You have to establish something and then you represent your community. You know, you don't represent your community to serve them. You serve your community and then you represent them. Um, so I'm thinking about like city council and all that much later.

He previously interned in the office of the only Asian councilman in the city of Houston. Daniel said that despite the growing Asian population in the Houston area, Asians are underrepresented. He added that he hopes to change that in the future.

I also interned my freshman year for a Councilman, Steve Lee, who I think is the only Asian in city council in Houston. And so because it's district F and district F, you know, Bellaire, there in that area. And so it's a shame that it's very underrepresented, but hopefully I can change that on one side and get the ball rolling.

For Anya, she said she will continue with the organization for South Asian women that her mother founded. Her mother said that she founded the organization for her that is why she will have to take over the organization later.

She (her mother) always tells me like, I started this organization for you so you're gonna keep it up. So that's something that I'll definitely be doing for the rest of my life.

Jonas and Haide said that they will continue with their civic involvement after college. Jonas shared that he originally did not plan on taking civic leadership position in college. However, now that he is into civic work, he will most probably continue with what he is doing. When asked if he will continue his civic engagement, he shared:

Um, most likely I will. Um, just because that's how I've been, uh, these past few years. Um, out of high school, I wasn't planning to do anything leadership related in college. I just wanted to do studies, hang out with friends and then go back home. But, um, coming from that and now like having a leadership position, I could still say the same thing. I plan on taking a break, but at the end of the day I'm probably gonna end up helping people, do like events and stuff like that in the future.

Haide said that her parents have always been volunteering and so she will likely do the same in the future. She added that she started civic work at a young age as compared to her parents, and this is something that she will most probably do for the rest of her life.

I mean, yeah, I would hope to. I'd want to. Well, I've always seen my parents from when I was little that they would always volunteer

in the community. So like that would make me want to like continue. So I started from such a young age and seeing my parents do it throughout their life. So like I would want to do it too.

In the case of Amaya, she said she wants to focus on finishing her studies and finding work when her term as president in her organization ends. She said that she wants to do corporate work in the meantime but might work for government in the future. When asked about her plans for the future, Amaya said:

I will be honest with you this year after my presidency, I will leave Greek for good. Um, I need to focus, I've done so much community work and so much leadership skill stuff. After this year, my senior year I will focus on myself. ...But more of like doing things I want to do and just be a follower and like I want to get into flight attendant school....Um, make more connections because of how I am, my background and stuff.

I don't think it would be hard for me because since I'm such a leader now and when I find my route and my internship or whatever, I believe that they will see how I would impact the company or how well I do anything. How passionate or driven I can be for them you know, I feel like sigmas have like grew me to be a good leader. Um, gave me a lot of skills, gave me a lot of life lessons. I mean how to deal with others, how to work with others, how to lead others. All that will lead me to where I want to be in the future. Even though flight attendant is not being the biggest thing, but it's an enjoyment I find in life and I love helping others. I love traveling and like I can grow from that... I can start working for corporate and just growing from there. You know, it may even lead to government (career), who knows?

Law and medical schools. Elena and Allan plan to work on their application to law school, while Mina and Qira on their medical school application. They said that their dreams of becoming lawyers and doctors are intertwined with their aspiration of continuing their civic engagement, as they plan to practice their future profession in the service of others.

Elena said she is not yet certain in what area of law she is going to practice, but she is certain that she will use the law to help people. She said that there are people who are not well represented in the legal system. Elena said that she wants to be able to represent such people. She said that the law has been used to disadvantage the underprivileged, and so she wants to contribute to correcting the injustice by giving law service to the underprivileged. She added that she wants to practice law properly so that she can bring justice to the people.

So I guess I find it very fulfilling to be able to help people that can't, that don't have the resources... to do what they want to do. So I want to go into law because I know that there's people who are not represented well maybe in the community or in the situation they are in. So I want to be that person that they can look to for help. So, um, I'm not sure what kind of line I want to go into yet. So I'm looking into tax law, immigration law, corporate law, and um, I also thought about criminal justice. But my mom's kind of scared about that. She was like, Oh, that's, that's very scary. And like, you never know that the person you are representing is actually guilty, and so I'm like considering all my options. But I know for sure that I want to go into law, just so I can help people. Because in today's world, the law is everything, in the sense like how community is built or how decisions are made and what we do in our everyday lives. So I know that sometimes people are taking advantage of the law.

Law should be about bringing about justice, but it's become, so systemic that it's like it'll take advantage of people that don't have as much privilege or something. So I want to be, I want to practice law properly to bring justice for people and just help them as much as I can.

In the case of Allan, he said that when he finishes his term as senate speaker, he plans to do internship with a law firm that will allow him to do service to the community. He wanted his law internship to be not just opportunity to get good work experience but also help the community. He said that his work at the student government has prepared him for advocacy and community work.

So, um, for after this year, I feel like I'll be done this year. I want to pass on the torch or I want to just, I feel like I've served my time, but I do want to keep being engaged... So what I'm looking at, especially with law, right? Being pre law, I don't know how much time I'll have to be civically engaged. But what I'm looking at are internships and I am really hoping that I am able to find an internship at a law firm where I'm not only able to get good experience, but also help out the community in a way. So whether that's a family practice, practice law firm or something like that. Or, you know, immigration law firm. So, I am hoping to find an internship where I can not only get experience but also help out in the community. ...I can see that is what I'm used to from being so long in student government advocacy. It is a lot of what I've done and it's what I see everyday in student government. So, if anything, it's a field of comfort for me.

Mina said she wanted to serve the medical needs of people in Pakistan or Muslim people in Asia. She said that it is sad that these countries lack doctors, and so she wants to fill the need for medical care of people in these parts.

I've always wanted to help people in the best way I could, the way that I wanted to continue my civic involvement was, um, you know, my dream is to become a doctor. There's a lot of people suffering in countries like Pakistan and Muslim countries, like in Asia, everywhere. And I think that a good way to help them is that those countries lack professionals. They lack doctors, lawyers, that's why I would want to go back there and help. That's something I really want to do. Even if it's for a little while. I think it's just sad that all the educated people from those countries end up leaving. I think they need more support. So that's something I'd like to do.

Observations

Observing the activities of the student participants enabled me to better understand the projects they are undertaking. Observation likewise served the purpose of triangulating some information that I gathered from the interviews (Becker & Geer, 1957). The activities I observed included: Student Government Association (SGA) Senate meetings, the SGA-sponsored Halloween night where students learn more

about SGA projects while participating in Halloween-related activities, SGA-sponsored registration for first-time voters, Global Medical Brigades' volunteer orientation for medical missions to serve depressed communities in Panama and Houston, Muslim Student Association (MSA) inter-faith table where MSA members discuss with students questions related to Islam, Pakistani Student Association members' dance practice for a cultural celebration, Metropolitan Volunteer Program's "Coogs for a Cause" where students are invited to volunteer for the university's community partners, and the Vietnamese Student Association's orientation for its new members. I also visited the student organizations' carrels numerous times where I witnessed how students interact with their fellow members in their organizations and their camaraderie. Although most of the student activities take place in Student Center, there are others that occur in other parts of the campus. Following are highlights of observations I conducted on some of the SGA Senate activities featuring Allan and Elsa, and the Global Medical Brigades (GMB) activity spearheaded by Qira.

SGA Senate. I attended two Senate meetings that were held at the Senate Chamber located at the second floor of Student Center North. The meetings started at 7 pm and lasted for about four hours. The Senate chamber is a huge venue with the size of about three regular meeting rooms at the Student Center. Upon entering the Senate chamber, one can see a desk structure with about 50 chairs that are arranged in a horseshoe position in the middle of the room. College representatives to the Senate are seated on that part of the room. At the other end of the room where the horseshoe arrangement opens up and where a large projector is perched on the wall, there is another desk structure with about 10 chairs behind it. Allan and other Senate officers

(e.g. chairs of Academic Affairs, Internal Affairs, Student Life, and Administration and Finance) sat on this side of the room. Three walls of the room, except where the projector is located, were lined with chairs where spectators are seated. In the two meetings that I attended, almost all of about 50 members of the Senate were present. There were some 20 spectators during the meetings. Many of the spectators were part of the invited speakers who convey to the Senate body their projects so that the Senate officers and student representatives can feedback the information to their constituents to get support for the projects.

The meetings were presided by Allan being the Senate Speaker. After the Speaker's roll call of attendance, the invited speakers addressed the Senate. One speaker talked about the Dance Marathon that aimed to raise funds to improve healthcare access for underprivileged children. The Dance Marathon is a six-hour event of music, entertainment and food where attendees pay entrance fees to the event. Patients at the Texas Children's Hospital will benefit from the event.

Another speaker was from the University Counseling Services who talked about their new program where workshops are conducted for students who are experiencing stress and depression. This will supplement the one-on-one counseling service provided to students. The workshop will also help clear up the backlog in the one-on-one scheduling as some students will be better after the workshop without need for the one-on-one consultation.

After the invited speakers, the officers and college representatives shared to the body their bill proposals and on-going projects. One of the bills discussed was the request for fee waivers (e. g., payment fee for student recreation center) for students

undergoing financial hardships. The bill will be subjected to a referendum among the university student body. When approved by a majority of the votes, the bill will be submitted to the university administration for possible adoption as university policy.

One of the projects discussed was the Halloween event that featured various activities such as haunted house, trick or treat, raffle draws and giving out free pizza. The Halloween event was conceived to inform students about the various programs of SGA. Elsa was one of the organizers of the event. I stayed for about two hours in the Senate meetings. After I left, the members continued to take up other matters in the agenda.

I went to the Halloween event that took place at two conference halls of Student Center South. I met with Elsa at about 8pm who first brought me to the haunted house where I and my fellow students were startled by the scary “ghouls” inside the house. I shrieked and laughed with the other students in the haunted house. After the haunted house, Elsa toured me to the booths put up by the Senate members at the other conference hall showcasing the projects of the Senate members. One Senate member featured her project about requesting graduates at the College of Natural Science to donate their laboratory gowns to current students. While another showcased his project on improving the dormitory facilities. Elsa’s booth featured program on how to improve trash collection during football games for recycling purposes.

After my booth tour, I thanked and said goodbye to Elsa. At the same conference hall where the booths were located, there were tables and chairs where the students had pizza for free. I sat down to have a bite of pizza. There were about 50

students in the conference hall who were either looking at the booths, chatting with friends, listening to the music or eating pizza. Overall, the Halloween event was a well-attended affair.

Global Medical Brigades. The orientation for students interested in medical volunteering for depressed communities in Panama and Houston was conducted by the Global Medical Brigades (GMB) at a classroom located at the first floor of Agnes Arnold Hall from 6 to 7 pm. Eight GMB officers were present during the orientation, while 15 possible student volunteers attended. The classroom was brightly lit and there was a projector located in front of the classroom that was used by the GMB officers for their presentation. After I entered the room, I said hello to Qira and she introduced me to the other GMB members. Qira started the presentation by greeting everyone and introducing herself and fellow GMB officers to the audience. Qira started the presentation and then followed by the other officers. The presentation started with the purpose of the GMB volunteering work which is to shadow health professionals when they provide free service to depressed communities. Volunteers are expected to assist in intake, triage, packing of medications, and health education. The presentation pointed out that the volunteering work is valuable for the students because they can contribute to improving medical access to poor communities, as well as provide them with real-life experience in the practice of medical care. Information on the cost of stay and travel to Panama as well as scholarships to cover the cost were provided. As well, information about the medical mission in Houston were provided. After the presentation, blood pressure monitors were brought out by the GMB members to teach the student attendees on how to use the machine. After the

presentation, Qira approached to ask me how was the orientation. I told her it was very informative and thanked her for inviting me to the session. I left the session at almost 7 pm while the students are still trying out the blood pressure monitors.

Reflections. Through my observations, I was able to learn more about the activities of the participants as well observe how they perform their responsibilities. I was also able to triangulate some of the assertions expressed by the respondents in the interviews. Allan said in the interview that he wanted to leave a legacy to the university that is why he joined the SGA. While Elsa said that she joined the SGA and other organizations on campus because of her aspiration to serve the university and that volunteering makes her happy. Qira shared that she joined GMB because of her interest in public health and to be part of its mission of service.

Their aspirations to serve and leave a positive impact on the university are evident in the way Allan and Elsa conducted their work at SGA. Allan efficiently moderated the flow of the SGA meeting to ensure that the topics in the agenda were discussed. The fund-raising activities and the bills that were taken up will have important impact on the students. The students being part of fund-raising activities will enable them to experience the spirit of giving and camaraderie with fellow students. Elsa's desire to serve the university and enthusiasm are evident in the way she performed her work. I was able to witness Qira's interest in advancing the cause of public health for the underprivileged in the orientation session for volunteers. She efficiently discussed the topics for the orientation to ensure that the objectives were met and encourage students to volunteer. Moreover, the long hours that Allan, Elsa and Qira devote to their civic work lend credence to what they expressed in the

interviews about the demands of their civic work and their need to balance the requirements of their civic responsibilities and studies.

Summary

Based on the interviews, the students shared various reasons on how they became involved in their civic endeavors. A number of them said that they were invited by acquaintances to join their organizations, while others said that they became part of their organizations because of their aspiration to do volunteering work. Two of the student participants were contacted by officers of their present organizations because they founded similar organizations in high school.

As to why they engage in civic activities, the student participants cited their desire to serve their communities. While others said that they joined their current organizations because the latter's objectives are related to their areas of study. Another reason shared by the participants is that their civic activities let them connect and learn more about their culture. The participants also said that their civic involvement allows them to learn life lessons such as empathy for the less fortunate that they do not learn from their classes.

Regarding the influences to their civic engagement, the student participants credit their families for teaching them values that shaped their civic character. Another student participant shared that the economic hardship she experienced in her family helped develop her leadership capability. While another student said that seeing the hardship in his parents' country of origin made him realize how fortunate he is and so he is inspired to do good for others. The parents' instilling in them pride in their culture also helped shape their civic character.

The student participants' high school civic activities helped prepare them for their civic endeavors in college. Two of the student leaders even founded organizations in their schools. Two participants said that they were not active in organizations in high school. However, such non-involvement inspired them to be more civically involved and take up leadership role in college as they wanted to experience another facet of their school life.

The community influence is illustrated in the fact that the student leaders take up causes related to social issues confronting their communities such as hunger, environmental problem and domestic violence.

When asked about the challenges they encounter, the student participants said that balancing the demands of their civic endeavor and schooling is a primary challenge. Others mentioned the challenge of fulfilling their responsibilities to meet their organization's objectives. While others shared that personal-related challenges such as their aspiration to be more articulate in expressing matters related to their organization when dealing with individuals both inside and outside their organizations.

The student participants said that they try to do their best to manage their time properly and be organized in order to meet the demands of their schooling and civic responsibilities. Some of them said that getting the support of and delegating work to their fellow officers and members help ease their workload in their organization. While others have set as their objective prioritizing their civic work as against getting high grades. A number of the participants shared that having the support of their families helps them carry out their civic responsibilities.

Being an Asian American or their ethnicity influenced the civic engagement of the student participants. They take up causes that are related to Asian Americans or their ethnic communities. Some participants said that the support and encouragement they felt from their fellow Asian Americans inspire them to be their best selves. Some of the respondents said that being an Asian American is an advantage for those who want to be more involved in the university's community because it supports diversity. While others said that being an Asian American minority makes them work harder and be empathetic to other minorities. One student participant pointed out that being civically engaged helps subvert the stereotype against Asian women as incapable of leadership roles. The student participants said that they will continue with their civic engagement after they graduate from college or establish a career.

This chapter likewise featured observations that I conducted on the activities of three student participants. The observations allowed me to learn more about their organizations as well as witness how they conduct their work. The observations likewise enabled me to triangulate the participants' assertions in the interviews. Their desire to serve and be able to positively impact the university are evident in the way they enthusiastically and efficiently conduct their work.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This dissertation analyzed Asian American youth whose civic engagement is less studied as compared to other ethnic groupings. It focused on Asian American college student leaders who are engaged in various civic endeavors in their university and communities. This study analyzed the perspectives of the students about their civic engagement: it probed how and why they engage in their civic activities; how the family, school and community influence their civic engagement; how their being an Asian American impact their civic endeavors, and their plans for the future with regard to their civic activities. Guided by the grounded theory, this dissertation probed how the research participants interpreted their experiences to make sense of their civic engagement. The findings will also be interpreted against the frameworks of how civic engagement is analyzed in the literature; namely, social capital and positive youth development.

Critical analysis likewise guided the data analysis. Critical analysis in the context of civic engagement is underpinned by the critical examination of existing social arrangements and how these have disadvantaged certain segments of society. Civic engagement encompasses a range of action -- from giving service to the underprivileged to questioning the unequal social arrangement and correcting the inequity. Critical civic engagement is categorized in the questioning and correcting the inequality stream of social action. Critical analysis likewise involves the examination of the root cause of the phenomenon. When applied to the current study, such entails the examination of how the students' personal circumstances affected

their civic engagement. Likewise, in line with the methodological self-reflection that framed the dissertation analysis, I will reflect on how my experiences and beliefs affected my data collection and analysis.

Social Capital

Social capital in the form of networks or norms facilitate the fruition of civic engagement (Putnam, 1993). As mirrored in the current study, the student participants' network – i.e., acquaintances and friends – led to their membership in their organizations. Likewise, the norms that are present in the university such as the values placed on diversity and community involvement helped facilitate the student participants' civic endeavors. Social capital also resides in the relationship existing between parents and children (Coleman, 1988). When parents have productive relationships with their children, they pass on to their children traits and characteristics that enhance human capital. Children can develop as caring and productive individuals contributing to the welfare of their communities with parental support. The current study has shown that the parents of the student participants have imparted to them values that contributed to their civic character.

The findings in this study painted a different picture of family support with regard to youth civic engagement. The literature emphasized that civically engaged parents produce civically engaged off-springs (Andolina et al., 2003; Kahne & Sporte, 2008) because children typically imbibe behaviors that they see in their parents. Results in this study showed that the youth immigrant parents were not civically involved. Nonetheless, the parents imparted to their off-springs values, such as being

compassionate and helpful to others, that inspired civic engagement among the youth participants.

Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) argues that the development of the youth's competencies through the support of the social context via the efforts of the family, institution or community can help turn them into thriving individuals possessing capabilities (the 5 Cs, competence, character, confidence, connection and caring) that enable them to contribute to society's welfare (Lerner, Dowling & Anderson, 2003; Sherrod, 2007). As illustrated in the case of the student respondents, the support of their families and schools (both high school and college) have enabled them to thrive as young individuals. In return, as thriving individuals they are able to contribute to the welfare of their communities. The student participants envisioned their contribution to go beyond college, as they expressed their aspiration to continue with their civic engagement even after completing their degrees. This illustrates the long-term impact of youth civic engagement on adult civic disposition (Youniss et al., 1997; Zaff et al., 2008).

Youth civic engagement creates a virtuous cycle: civic engagement makes the youth find their identity and become better socially adjusted (Cielo et al., 2011; Martinez et al., 2012; Schmidt et al., 2007). The participants in this study shared that they felt happier, better integrated into their communities, and became better individuals — which thus mirror the 5Cs of the PYD framework — from being civically involved. When youth possess the various competencies, they become more

civically involved, and when they are civically engaged the more they develop their 5Cs.

Institutional support from schools was illustrated via the various opportunities for membership in organizations that allowed them to serve their communities. However, the other institutional support from school in the form of critical discussions of social issues in the classroom were apparently mostly non-existent in the student participants' middle and high school education. Research suggest that classroom discussions — where students openly discuss and share opinions on issues — facilitate student's civic engagement (Campbell, 2008; Godfrey & Grayman, 2013).

Asian American Youth Civic Engagement

Civic engagement as empowerment. Following the grounded theory, Figure 1 presents the substantive theory developed by this dissertation illustrating the central idea “civic engagement as empowerment.” It encapsulates the notion that civic engagement brings forth positive transformation within the self and group identity of Asian American youth. The student participants said that they have blossomed to be their best selves by being with fellow Asian Americans as they conduct their civic activities. They also regard their ethnicity as an advantage in their university which values diversity. Being an Asian American minority makes them work harder to avail themselves of opportunities that are not easily accessible to them. They feel more empathy towards others who are also in minority position which makes them better leaders. Being civically engaged subverts the stereotype against Asian Americans as incapable of leadership roles. The socio-political context that considers Asian Americans as minority provides the general backdrop of the conceptualization. The

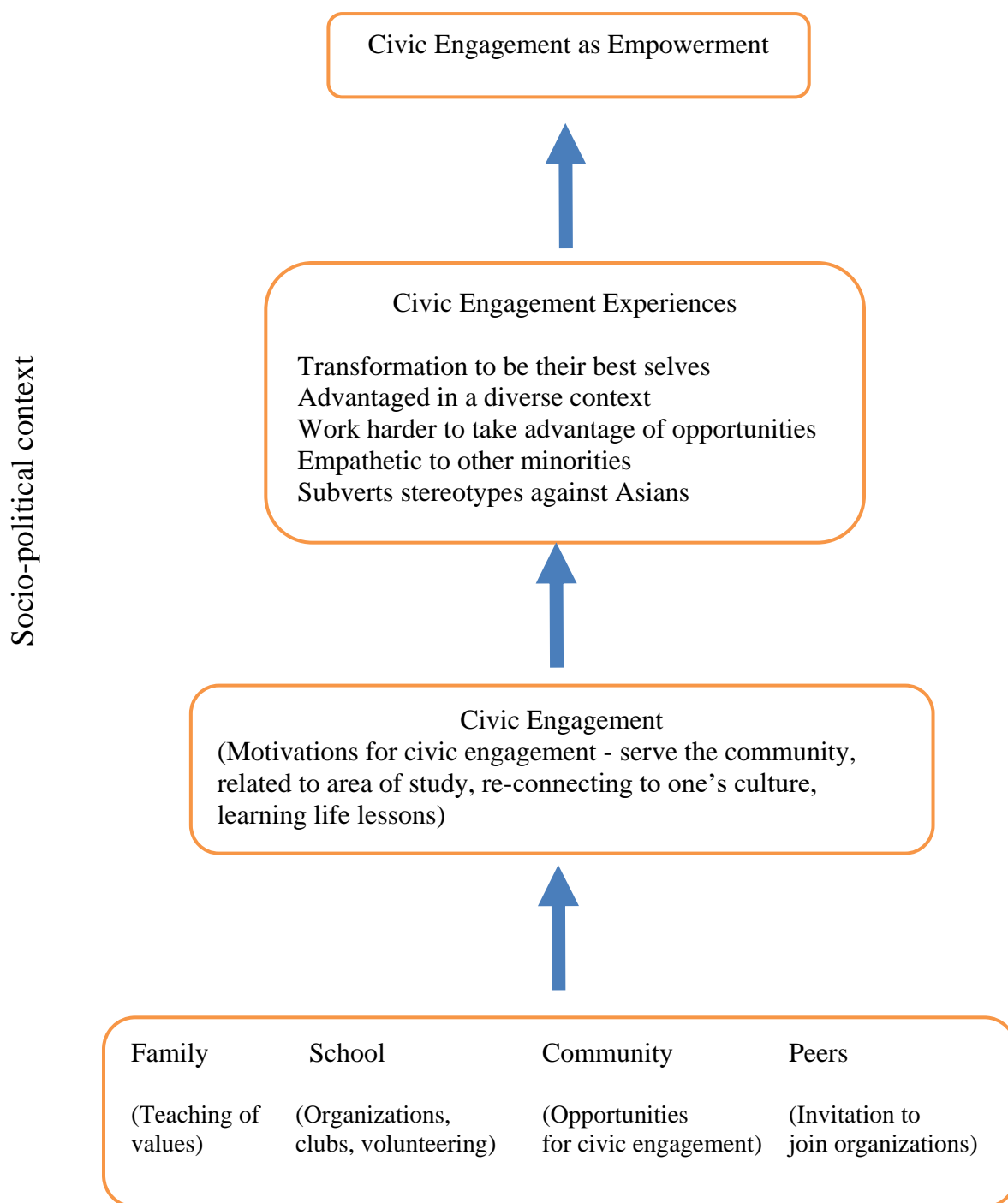
youth participants perceive that their civic engagement has resulted in improvements in themselves and identity as Asian Americans in light of their minority position.

Figure 1 also presents the patterns of relationship of the various analytical categories and themes that were discussed in Chapter 4 to bring forth answers to the research questions set out in the current study. The research questions are: *What are the perceptions of civically engaged Asian American youth about their civic engagement? How have been the influences of peers, school, family and community in the development of the civic engagement?*

Family, school, community and peers provided the social capital that facilitated the youth's civic engagement. Family members taught the research participants values (e.g., to be caring to others) that helped develop their civic disposition. The school, both high school and college, made available avenues for students' participation in civic activities. Organizations in the community (e.g., church, Food Bank and Habitat for Humanity) provided opportunities for the research participants' civic engagement. Peers are another sector that helped develop the research participants' civic engagement: they introduced the participants to organizations that they became civically involved with.

The research participants were motivated by various reasons on why they engage in civic activities. Among the reasons are: their aspirations to serve their communities, civic work related to their area of study, they want to re-connect with their culture (in the case of those joining ethnic-based organizations), and learning life lessons (e.g., learning about other people's difficult life situations). As earlier

Figure 1: Conceptual Explanation of Civic Engagement among Asian American Youth



discussed, the youth participants perceived that their civic involvement resulted in positive transformation to their self and group identity as Asian Americans.

Depiction of Asian American youth civic engagement. The earlier chapter of the dissertation referenced the model minority characterization attributed to Asian Americans. In the context of the current study, the model minority characterization conjures up a stereotypical image of Asian students faithfully fulfilling academic obligations sans the distraction of activities misaligned with such objective such as civic endeavors. However, the current study contravenes such portrayal. Instead, this study painted a portrait of Asian American youth passionately pursuing civic activities even at the expense of attaining the highest academic accolades. The academic path of Asian American youth may be more complex than what is commonly portrayed, in which as illustrated by this study, civic activities are welcome distractions in the youth's academic journey.

The literature foregrounds two aspects that prominently defines Asian American youth civic engagement. One is social identity — for example, ethnic and religious — that influence their choice of civic activity (Chan, 2011). Asian Americans tend to become part of organizations and endeavors that are ethnically or religiously related to them. Another is the seeming inclination of Asian American youth to engage in service or volunteering activities as compared to the African Americans and Latinx who are more into political activities like protesting, signing petitions and contacting government officials (Marcelo, Lopez & Kirby, 2007).

Although it is shown in the case of about half of the student respondents that their social identity tend to have influenced the path of their civic engagement;

however, this was seemingly not the case for the other roughly half (7 out of 15) of the participants who were officers of university-wide organizations (e.g., Student Government Association, Global Medical Brigades, Metropolitan Volunteer Program, TeachHouston).

Moreover, this study showed that most of the study participants were involved in service and voluntary work. However, two of them were involved in political activities. One worked as an intern for a Democrat official with the Houston City Council, while another was involved in advocacy work for the plight of the Muslims.

This current study has shown that in contrast to what has been depicted in the literature, the social identity of the participants does not entirely define their civic engagement. Rather, they work on causes not entirely related to their ethnic identity. Likewise, while most of the student participants were involved in voluntary and service work, some were involved in political work as well. The findings in this study illustrate a less definite characterization of the Asian American youth civic engagement.

The students' family background might shine light on the less involvement of the participants in critical political civic engagement. Most of the students said that their parents were not civically engaged in their communities. They said that their parents were first generation immigrants who came to the United States as adults and who did not experience the US education system. The inability to experience the US civics education as well as the lack of rootedness in the community could explain the parents' lack of civic engagement (Wong, 2006). The students' lack of exposure to parents who are civically engaged in the community as well as the absence of critical

discourse in the household might not embed critical civic disposition among the students. The generally conservative political context of Texas might have contributed as well to the participants' lack of critical civic engagement.

Methodological Self-Reflexivity

I was drawn to the topic of my dissertation because of my Asian ethnicity and civic engagement experience during my youth. My social identity as Asian and a UH student facilitated my access to the student participants' stories. I can feel their sincerity and excitement when they share their stories with me. I felt like they see me as an older sister that they excitedly share their stories with. I can feel their sincerity when they say that their "love for UH has grown more" and they "felt at home" with their work in their organizations. I could not have asked for a better research setting. The students enthusiastically referred me to their acquaintances for interviews, answered my text messages and emails for follow-up questions, and invited me to their activities.

Being invited to the activities of the participants' organizations allowed me to witness their enthusiasm in conducting their civic work. I witnessed how the student participants in the Student Government Association patiently tackled student concerns until very late in the evening, such as whether students who are struggling financially can request for fee waiver for student facilities like the recreation center. I also attended a meeting where one of the participants presided over a meeting inviting students to medical missions in Houston and Panama. I was also invited to an inter-faith table meeting on campus where anyone who is interested to learn more about Islam can drop by to ask questions and discuss any topic about the religion. I likewise

visited a Metropolitan Volunteers Program-sponsored event where organizations recruited students to join their cause-oriented programs. Overall, I witnessed a vibrant community of youth who wanted to make a difference and make society better.

As I talked to the student participants and read the transcripts of their interviews, I ponder upon my own youth civic involvement. I remember that my college civic involvement was more critical in the sense that I and my fellow students in my organization wrote critical pieces and joined protest rallies against the government. But I lived in a context different from that of my research participants. I have a household that helped hone my political consciousness. Political protesting was also very much a part of my university culture. Regardless, the enthusiasm of the student participants about their civic engagement is inspiring. Their civic engagement may not exhibit criticality at this time; nonetheless, their caring attitude toward their communities is very much evident. Such caring attitude is the foundation of any forms of civic engagement, even that which exhibits criticality.

Implications

As reflected in the findings, the school context – both high school and college – importantly helped develop the students' civic engagement. The opportunities for involvement in organizations that are available in high school and college played pivotal role in the development of the students' civic disposition and skills. Almost all of the student participants started to become involved in organizations in high school and which continued unto college. Some of the participants admitted that their involvement in high school organizations was primarily propelled by their desire to look good on college application; however, their motivation seemed to have changed

in college as they expressed their aspiration to meaningfully contribute to improving the welfare of their communities. Some of them also shared that since they were active in school affairs in high school, they wanted such to continue in college. Opportunities for involvement in high school planted the seeds for the next stage of the students' civic involvement.

However, the social studies classes in which the teaching of civic engagement primarily take place did not make an impact on the students, except for the case of one student who is interested in the social sciences and eventually majored in a related discipline in college. Therefore, ways in which the teachers could enhance their civic education teaching should be put in place. The teaching of civics should not be confined to rote learning of government and its processes; rather, critical discussions of social and political issues should take place in the classroom.

In order to develop teachers' capabilities to enhance students' civic engagement, professional development programs that have been proven to improve the teaching of civics (see for example, Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Vontz & Leming, 2005) could be implemented. Some of the PDs showcased close partnerships between schools and universities. In one PD model, university instructors taught the teachers how to conduct research with their students on social issues (Mirra & Morrell, 2011). The teachers and students held critical discussions of their research experiences and the findings. At the conclusion of the research, the students presented the findings to university-sponsored symposia. Students' reflections showed that they better understood the social problems (e.g., poverty) they studied because of their research experience.

As discussed, some of the student respondents said that their immigrant parents were mostly pre-occupied with work and do not engage in civic work. The parents' lack of rootedness in their communities constrains their becoming more civically engaged as the case with most immigrants (Ebert & Okamoto, 2013). As school is likely the institution that immigrant parents will be in contact with because of their children's education, schools therefore should come up with programs that will encourage parents' participation in their activities (e.g., Parent Teacher Association and other volunteering work) to make them better integrated into the community.

Future studies

A future study could focus on the question: How does the civic engagement of Asian American youth compare with other ethnic groupings?. This dissertation's conceptualization of civic engagement as empowerment proceeds from the acknowledgement of a socio-political context that considers Asian Americans as minority. Future research could put a spotlight on ethnic groupings sharing similar backgrounds with Asian Americans as immigrants and minority. The research could center on questions along the lines that were posed by the dissertation.

Another area of research on civic engagement could focus on high school students and teachers. High school is the concluding stage in young individuals' schooling where they are required to study civic education. Hence, in-depth examination on how civic education is taught in high school could be conducted.

The focus on high school students could be on those who are active in civic activities in school and those who are not. By analyzing the experiences of these two groups of students, the profiles of those who are civically engaged as against those

who are not can be drawn. Likewise, the factors that facilitate and those that constrain the students' civic engagement can be analyzed.

Lastly, another study can focus on social studies teachers. The study can examine the teachers' opinions of their teaching of civic education to their students — for example, their perspectives on fostering critical thinking through debates and discussions of social and political issues in the classroom and going beyond the rote learning of government processes, as well as how they teach civic education in their classroom. The research on teachers can also examine existing Professional Development programs for the teachers and how they impact their teaching of civic education.

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Annex 1: Profile of the Organizations

Organization	Profile
Asian Business Student Association	<p><i>History</i></p> <p>The Asian Business Student Association was founded by a group of former officers of various reputable university organizations (i.e. Beta Alpha Psi, Accounting Society, Finance Association, MISSO, etc.) with the shared goal of providing guidance to the Asian-American community within the College of Business and the university.</p> <p>ABSA initiative began with a shared dream of fostering a community that would provide the resources necessary to enable students to become active leaders within their community not only academically and socially, but also professionally.</p> <p><i>Mission</i></p> <p>The Asian Business Student Association at the university is the premier professional student organization founded on the principles of professionalism and philanthropy. Our mission is to provide guidance to our members as they integrate themselves into the corporate world by exposing them to various industries and career opportunities. Our corporate sponsorships allow us to host various workshops and events that develop our members into strong candidates for internship and career opportunities. Although our main purpose is to help young Asian-Americans integrate themselves into America's corporate culture, we value diversity and welcome all ethnicities. We continually strive to foster an environment of networking and provide our members with a sense of camaraderie and community in the university.</p> <p><i>Vision</i></p> <p>ABSA aims to assist the Asian community within the university as well as the International business students studying abroad international from Asia adjust to the university life and integrate them into the American business culture. We envision that our network of Asian-American business student will encourage future generations find their paths to successful careers.</p>
Coog Radio	<p>Coog Radio is a fee funded online radio station operated and staffed by students from the university. Coog Radio not only provides a creative outlet for fellow students to express themselves over the air but also introduces them to the world of broadcasting.</p> <p>With more than thirty different shows a week and fifty-plus DJs on the roster, it is easy to find familiar favorites, but there is also the promise of discovery of something new. One need look no further than the university itself to understand why the station is so diverse in its staff and musicality. Show genres range from classical to electronica to international music while others focus exclusively on local acts. It is a point of pride for Coog Radio</p>

to promote and support artists and groups from Houston so as to instill a sense of community within the university and city.

Council for Cultural Activities	The Council for Cultural Activities is a university sponsored organization that promotes cultural awareness and appreciates the diversity at the university. Our mission is to enrich student life by supporting inclusive and educational programming. We are comprised of individuals and member organizations that represent the diverse student body and interests of the university.
Filipino Student Association (FSA)	FSA has grown to be a very active non-profit cultural, student organization at the university. FSA promotes its mission statement with cultural performances, demonstrations, social gatherings as well as attending camaraderie events in relevance to Filipino culture. Through strong membership base and support from current and even former members, FSA has enhanced the Houston student community and continues to do so.
Global Medical Brigades	Global Medical Brigades of the university brings together students to a medical mission brigade each summer. Members will attend biweekly meetings throughout the fall and spring semesters and if interested, can participate in an annual brigade. We fundraise and volunteer throughout the year.
Indian Student Association	<p>The Indian Students Association (ISA) at the university has evolved to one of the strongest and fastest growing DESI student organizations on campus. Re-initiated in 2007, ISA is a non-profit student organization that strives to unify all Indians on this campus no matter what their background. We are a team of dedicated and enthusiastic students, whose mission is to instill culture and pride among the UH COUGARS, as well as the greater Houston community. Our goal at ISA is to provide a social network and experience to all students who share and spread the joy of our Indian culture with pride and dignity.</p> <p>The annual events include: Member Socials, including Ice Breakers, Dance Nights, Bollywood Movie Nights, and a charity benefit event! Bake Sales, General Meetings, Banquets</p> <p>ISA concludes each year with our traditional talent show, NASHA, which attracts over 1000 performers and audience members from all over the state of Texas. ISA will continue to grow with the support of our university campus and community, and we look forward to sharing our culture with all of our future members and supporters.</p> <p>Over the past years with the profits from the NASHA show, we have donated more than \$5,000 to local charities, including Senior Homes, and Children International, where we fund the education of underprivileged children in India.</p>

Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP)

The Metropolitan Volunteer Program is a student organization at the university that creates and provides service opportunities for students by collaborating with campus and community partners. Membership in the Metropolitan Volunteer Program is entirely free and open to the entire student body. Our primary areas of volunteering and service learning include: children & education, health & wellness, hunger & homelessness awareness, and the environment & sustainability. Volunteering with MVP not only provides students with the opportunity to make a positive impact on our campus and community, but also to gain leadership skills, build relationships with fellow students, and gain experience in their field of interest.

We have volunteer opportunities to fit the needs for every student, whether you are looking to assist with our smaller, ongoing service projects or the larger annual service events that MVP hosts each semester. Listed below are just a few of the service projects that we will be hosting this semester.

Muslim Student Association

Established in 1964, the UHMSA was founded as a place for Muslim students attending the university from all backgrounds and cultures to make friends and find a supportive community. The MSA seeks to create a strong unified Muslim student body as well as contribute to bettering our community through public service and outreach programs. Through our community efforts, the UHMSA aims to educate and inform the at large community what Islam truly teaches and what being a Muslim all is about.

Pakistani Student Association (PSA)

Pakistan Student Association at the university established in 1965 has been one of the most enterprising and dynamic Student Organization in the greater Houston Texas area, By spreading or promoting cultural awareness in the community. We strive for professional development working and partnering up with local and international sponsors PSA spans a, influential network like no other across the nation. PSA is the voice of Pakistan at the university. We strive to help our students connect with each other, build lasting relationships, and most of all keep our cultural alive by educating the cultural background to the community around us and keeping it at heart in our core values.

PSA strives for development and professionalism, it launched its first professional development program in 2014 with its University Career Panel, which build a platform for students and employers to communicate and get a personal insight to various industries such as Oil & Gas which Houston is known for, Information Technology, Energy, Business, Health Care, Food & Beverage, Hospitality and build connections with successful entrepreneurs.

Sigma Phi Omega	<p>Sigma Phi Omega Inc. was founded by 17 women in 1949 at the University of Southern California amidst lingering anti-Asian sentiment left behind by World War II. At the time, women of Asian descent were generally not allowed into sororities. Initially, our founding mothers were invited to join Chi Alpha Delta and start a chapter at USC. However, they decided to form their own sorority instead. The Greek letters were chosen at random and were not used by any other existing fraternities or sororities at the time. Although we did not originate as a sorority, one could speculate that the choice of Greek letters was a public way of voicing a dissatisfactory opinion about the treatment of Asian Americans, specifically Japanese Americans, by the campus and Greek Organizations. Sigma Phi Omega is the oldest continuous Asian-American sorority at USC and has helped young women adjust to college life for over sixty years. College is a time for new faces, endeavors, and experiences. Among this whirlwind of unfamiliarity, being in a sorority can help brighten your path and put things into perspective. It provides a base for lasting friendships and special memories. Sigma Phi Omega prides itself on its diversity in membership as we embrace the unique qualities and gifts each sister brings. Our alumni have gone onto successful careers in business, law, medicine, entertainment, and education.</p>
Student Government Association	<p>The Student Government Association exists to serve as the official voice through which student opinion may be expressed and empowered in the overall policy, decision making process, and services offered at the University. As such, the Student Government Association is committed to understanding the needs of students and advocating on their behalf. Through continuous interaction with students, faculty, staff, and administration, the organization works to improve and enhance the quality of the student experience.</p>
TeachHouston Student Society	<p>Mission Statement: To enhance the quality of education by providing support for undergraduate natural science and mathematics teachers-in-training through opportunities to serve their community, network with potential colleagues, and gain mastery of pedagogy and STEM content within the TeachHouston program.</p> <p>TeachHouston is a student organization built to support students through not only the TeachHouston courses, but also math and science paths.</p> <p>TeachHouston is a society of students majoring in STEM fields who strive to become inspiring educators in our field of expertise.</p> <p>TeachHouston members with free professional development workshops, social events, and community service opportunities. Its ultimate goal is to help create math and science teachers who will BE THE CHANGE for their students and impact the world.</p>

Vietnamese Student
Association (VSA)

VSA's mission is to promote and preserve the Vietnamese culture, give back to the community, and encourage unity by offering various cultural, service, and social events to both Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese individuals.

Source: <https://uh.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/>

Annex 2: Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me about your background (e.g., age, study major, year in college)?
2. Can you tell me about your civic activities in your school and/or community?
3. How did you become involve in these activities?
4. Why do you engage in civic activities?
5. Can you tell me how your school, family or community members influenced your civic involvement?
 - 5.1. How was your civic classes in high school?
 - 5.2. What specific lessons or activities in school that helped develop your civic engagement?
 - 5.3. What specific activities in your family that helped develop your civic engagement?
 - 5.4. What specific activities in your community that helped develop your civic engagement?
6. What challenges do you encounter in your civic work now?
7. How do you balance the demands of your schooling and civic endeavors?
8. What are your plans for the future? Will you continue your civic involvement?
9. Do you think your being an Asian American in any way impact your civic engagement? If yes, how?

Annex 3: Schedule of Interviews

1. Allan, Speaker of the Senate, Student Government Association (SGA), Sept 18, 2019, 1 pm.
2. Amaya, President, Sigma Phi Omega, Sept 23, 2019, 11 am.
3. Elsa, Chairperson, SGA Sustainable Environment Committee, Sept 30, 2019, 10 am.
4. Elena, Chairperson, Filipino Student Association (FSA), Sept 30, 2019, 12 noon.
5. Qira, President, Global Medical Brigades, Sept 30, 2019, 2 pm.
6. Haide, Director of Marketing, Pakistani Student Association (PSA), Oct 2, 2019, 2 pm.
7. Daniel, Station Director, Coog Radio, Oct 2, 2019, 3.15 pm.
8. Vera, Social Chair, Vietnamese Student Association (VSA), Oct 2, 2019, 4.30 pm.
9. Luke, Environment and Sustainability Chair, Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP), Oct 9, 2019, 11 am.
10. Jonas, President, Asian Student Business Association, Oct 14, 2019, 12 noon
11. Anya, President, Indian Student Association, Oct 14, 2019, 4 pm.
12. Yani, Community Service Chair, TeachHouston Student Society, Oct 16, 2019, 10 am.
13. Pablo, Council Liaison, Council for Cultural Activities, Oct 16, 2019, 12.30 pm.
14. Shaira, Secretary, Muslim Student Association, Oct 16, 2019, 3 pm.
15. Mina, President, Muslim Student Association, Nov 6, 2019, 12 noon.