

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: STRIVING FOR THE MAGIS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC
CASE STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND
SUSTAINED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AT A JESUIT
UNIVERSITY

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This ethnographic case study describes how civically engaged students at a Jesuit institution understand their commitment to social change. Literature on civic engagement and service-learning abound, yet gaps exist in understanding how students interact with campus mission and culture. Using the lenses of transformative learning, emerging adulthood, and civic engagement, this study attempts to understand a subculture of students at a Jesuit university. Ethnographic case study methodology is used in order to understand broader context and culture within which this subculture exists. Participants were identified through purposive sampling, and data was collected through interviews and participant observation. Findings help to further understand how students interact with campus mission and culture relative to civic engagement. Emic and etic themes were distilled into ten overarching umbrella themes. The discussion points to implications for future research at faith-based and secular institutions.

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OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND SUSTAINED CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT AT A JESUIT UNIVERSITY

by

W. Dennis McCunney

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Historically, college and university campuses have been a springboard for civic engagement and activism. Particularly during the twentieth century, students have made their voices heard about both large-scale, political and ideological concerns and smaller, more parochial issues. While large-scale movements and high-profile individuals have helped shape the notion of the socially and politically engaged campus, the causes have varied over the years—from financial aid concerns to civil rights and free speech to divestment movements to human rights causes. Through it all, the context of the university campus has remained a constant.

Classic images of student unrest and resistance have seemingly shaped the culture of higher education in the United States (Boren, 2001). The image of the student activist has been imprinted on the American psyche since popular images from the 1960s swirled about the airwaves. The iconic, tragic image of Mary Ann Vecchio protecting the lifeless body of Jeffrey Miller after National Guard members fired on demonstrators at Kent State University in 1970 has become an indelible part of the story of U.S. higher education. Other images—like Mario Savio's (1968) actions at Berkeley, including an impromptu sit-in and a speech delivered from the roof of a police car—gave both a face and a voice to the concept. Certainly, colleges and universities have borne witness to many forms and instances of student activism, from the earliest days of Harvard

College to divestment protests in the 1980s. Pictures of students carrying protest signs, marching in mass rallies, or blocking entrances to buildings abound. But the phrase *student activist* and accompanying images still strike an intangible chord on campuses today; the phenomenon seems to have inescapably altered the landscape of American higher education.

At the same time, competing criticisms of the passivity of students and the apathetic, indifferent campus are also abundant (Dreier, 1998). Other criticisms have questioned the “larger than life” depictions of students by each successive generation, particularly when reflecting back on the so-called high watermark of American student activism in the 1960s (Levine & Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, 1980). But, was there a qualitatively different level of passion and dedication? Levine and Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (1980) said, “With time and distance, generational images evolve into caricatures and myths” (p. 4). Even as early as 1970, the American College Personnel Association asserted that, for the sake of dialogue and understanding, “stereotypes of the activist must be avoided, and the distorted pictures created with the mass media should be viewed with skepticism” (Ellsworth & Burns, 1970, p. 6). These conflicting messages—seemingly true and misleading at the same time—highlight the challenges scholars, educators, and journalists have faced in dealing with student activism as a recurring phenomenon. Over and over, authors acknowledge the complexity of the history of student activism and its present-day legacy.

Yet, levels of student activism on college and university campuses have been relatively consistent since the late 1960s (Levine & Cureton, 1998). According to a 1998 survey of more than 9,000 undergraduates, findings showed that while 29 percent of students engaged in some form of campus activism in 1969, levels waned to only 19 percent in 1976 and then rose again to 25 percent in 1995 (Levine & Cureton, 1998). Overall, during the past 40 years, the numbers have been fairly consistent. Moreover, a significant number of the students in the focus groups of the study had experienced a form of protest within the past two years. The data show that students are engaged in working for change and have been for quite some time, both for internal causes that affect a particular campus and for external causes that involve neighborhood and local community concerns, as well as more globally-focused justice concerns (Prokosch & Raymond, 2002; Quaye, 2004; Rhoads, 1998).

The Emergence of Civic Engagement

Today, scholars suggest that sustained civic engagement is an appropriate and useful umbrella category and concept that includes traditional understandings of student activism as well as community service, political participation, and advocacy (Lawry, Laurison, & VanAntwerpen, 2006). Civic engagement connotes a range of activities and can be broadly defined as “acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities” (Coalition for Civic Engagement & Leadership [CCEL], 2010, p. 2). Civic engagement work focuses chiefly on creating conditions to engage students in “positive social change for a more democratic world” (p. 3). With the emergence of the concept

of civic engagement, lines have become blurred between traditional notions of activism and community engagement. Activism has been viewed as resistance to established systems and authority structures (Boren, 2001). Community engagement has been described as working within the system to bring about change (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). Now, both come together under the broad heading of civic engagement that emphasizes the educational value of “active democratic participation” (Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Barnett, 2005, p. 296).

As a learning tool, civic engagement has been described as a “high impact practice” within higher education (Kuh, 2008, p. 1). Other high impact practices include writing intensive courses, joint undergraduate/faculty research, internships and study abroad. These practices are noted for their strong educational value, ability to retain students, and overall channeling of “student effort toward productive activities and deeper learning” (Kuh, 2007, p. 7). Further, Kuh (2007) noted that these practices “help students develop habits of the mind and heart that promise to stand them in good stead for a lifetime of continuous learning” (p. 5). As a well-researched and proven educational practice, civic engagement has become an important educational offering within institutions of higher learning.

The Context of a Jesuit University

This study found root, then, in this milieu of contrasting and conflicting critiques, images, history, and stereotypes regarding students involved in civic engagement, community engagement, and activism. In particular, this study

examined the experiences of students involved in civic engagement at a Jesuit university. Known for promoting social change in an educational context, Jesuit institutions, led by the Roman Catholic order of priests known as the Society of Jesus and founded upon the principles of Ignatius of Loyola, are centered on the key principles of service, accompaniment, community outreach, and social justice. Each institution will put these principles into practice in their own unique way. But, essentially, the principles guide the overarching vision of Jesuit educational practice in higher education.

Emphasizing these values, and this particular style of education, has been a gradual evolution for the Society of Jesus since the late 1960s (Traub, 2008). This emphasis on social justice began officially in 1975 at the General Congregation meeting of the Jesuits when the order articulated its particular brand of education as the “service of faith and promotion of justice” (Moore, 2007, p. 462). This decision as an order stemmed from an earlier call to renewal from Pedro Arrupe, leader of the Jesuits from 1965-1983, who expressed concern about the Society’s ability to respond adequately to socioeconomic and political conditions in Latin America (Traub, 2008). Arrupe argued that the Society of Jesus “must rethink all its ministries and every form of its apostolates to see if they really offer a response to the urgent priorities which justice and social equity call for” (Traub, 2008, p. 147). At an address in October 2000 to educators at Jesuit colleges and universities, the leader of the Jesuits reaffirmed this commitment to social justice, arguing that students:

in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed. (Kolvenbach, 2000, p. 8)

These motivational challenges—the General Congregation meeting in 1975, Arrupe’s call for seeking justice, and Kolvenbach’s reaffirmation of this direction—became watershed moments for the Jesuits and form the backdrop for their educational and ministerial efforts today.

This strong social message has become, in practice, a type of mantra and clarion call at Jesuit institutions over the past 20 years. Students, parents, faculty and staff hear it frequently, either in print or in mass gatherings of community members. The question remains, then: How does this mantra take root in the lives of students as they are shaped by Jesuit culture? Based on this social justice charge, further questions emerge. How do students at these institutions describe their efforts and understand what they do when they strive to “let the gritty reality of the world into their lives”? Moreover, how can the language of transformative learning contribute to our understanding of these students? What role, if any, does their developmental stage as emerging adults play? And, how do the socially received notions of community involvement—largely uncritical understandings of *community service* and *volunteerism*—shift as students engage on a deeper level? This study attempted to answer these guiding questions and focused on student learning and student culture.

Coming to the Topic

I came to this research as both a graduate of Jesuit schools (high school, undergraduate, and graduate) and as a former Jesuit university administrator. I was raised in a Roman Catholic family with a decidedly progressive perspective on both social issues and religion, in general. This perspective, I believe, helped shape my approach to university life as I entered college. From my perspective, a university education was supposed to build character and help students sort out their values. Most importantly, this education should empower students to ask critical questions for the sake of the common good. For the most part, I knew that attending a Jesuit college would mean that I would be receiving a quality education. What that eventually came to mean for me was that I would be steeped in a particular way of looking at the world. I would be challenged to *consider the whole person*; that is, look at intellectual questions holistically. I would be encouraged to see myself as a *person for and with others*; that is, stand in solidarity as often as I could with persons who are suffering, particularly those living in material poverty, and question social structures that maintained inequality. And I would be pushed to strive for *the magis*; that is, aspiring to do more in order to bring about a more just and equitable world.

At the time, I was not aware that I was being immersed into a particular kind of culture. This culture was simply a given and had become like the air I breathed. But, as Nell Irvin Painter (2010) has stated, “What we can see depends heavily on what our culture has trained us to look for” (p. 75). I was not so much trained to look for this culture because I simply accepted it. This Jesuit

culture did shape how I viewed the world and my role within it. In particular, as I became more involved in civic engagement work, I saw those activities as flowing directly from the Jesuit mission of the university. From my perspective at the time, that was simply what needed to be done, and community service was how students at a Christian university should be spending a significant part of their time. Slowly, as I became more involved in the community, I began to realize that perhaps my contribution—my service to the community—was less about my individual actions out of my own goodwill and more about what the community could teach me, how I could use my social status and privilege to work toward changing structures, and how I could serve as an advocate and activist for causes that affect all of us. Further, as my own spirituality developed and my understanding of religious doctrine evolved, I began to question and critique the language that I was taught and the attendant worldview within which I was socialized.

My experience of dialoguing with the Jesuit mission of the university, both as a student and then later as an alumnus formed within this tradition, has played a significant role in my life. That personal learning has been both difficult and rewarding, for it has pushed me to question my place, but it has broadened my frame of reference. Numerous questions have been raised for me: What can this mission teach a secular world? How can mission-related language of *service* and *accompaniment* be translated into more secular language of *activism*, *advocacy*, *protest*, and *civic engagement*? Are the foundational values taught at a Jesuit

university transferable to a participatory democracy? Likewise, I witness these questions being discussed among current students.

Statement of the Problem

This ethnographic case study examined the thinking and actions of a subculture of students involved in sustained civic engagement activities to better understand the student culture of a Catholic, Jesuit university.

Conceptual Framework

The framework of this research employed four key concepts: transformative learning theory, emerging adulthood theory, civic engagement, and Jesuit pedagogy and practice. These theories helped to shed light on student motivations, perceptions, and behaviors. The framework used in this structure included: *what happens* (transformative learning), *when it happens* (emerging adulthood), *how it happens* (civic engagement), and *why it happens* (Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice). These theories also shed light on the role of culture as related to campus mission. As will be discussed, the theories overlapped and highlighted the interrelationships between the process of student learning, the individual and developmental context of student learning, and the types of learning activities in which students engage. These three concepts and theories, then, are built upon the ground of Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice. The culture within which students found themselves was a critically important component to this study, for it forms the foundation upon which students grow, develop, and engage in transformative experiences.

Additionally, the concepts built upon the Jesuit educational theoretical foundation align with each other, serving as complementary and interlocking supports.

Transformative Learning Theory

In the late 1980s/early 1990s, Columbia University psychologist Jack Mezirow proposed a theory of transformative learning and perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000). A fairly new concept in the field of lifespan psychology and adult education, the theory is far-reaching in its scope:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other[s]; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice. (O'Sullivan, 2003, p. 327)

While transformative learning theory has been used to explain the shifts in thinking that many adults might experience, Robert Kegan noted that it is “not the province of adulthood or adult education alone” (Kegan in Mezirow, 2000, p. 48). Instead, the theory can be applied to contexts where individuals might be experiencing significant shifts in thinking based on experience. The introductions of new concepts, experiences, theories, approaches, and worldviews ought to be within the province of higher education. Similarly, higher education is known for

the diversity of learning opportunities available—both inside and outside the classroom—with many university leaders encouraging students to take advantage of the experience in all its richness. Promoting learning outside the classroom has become the province of student affairs educators whose work is rooted in developmental theory and articulated in clear learning outcomes (Fried, 2007). The experiential learning promoted by many student affairs educators seeks to both complement and enhance classroom learning experiences.

In particular, Mezirow's (2000) conception of transformative learning is rooted in one's shift in perspective. He noted that, traditionally, "learning tends to become narrowly defined as efforts to add compatible ideas to elaborate our fixed frames of reference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18). When learning is viewed as an accumulation and subsequent organization of information, little room is left for alternative perspectives. Conceiving of thinking simply as placing ideas into black and white categories leaves little room for *gray areas* or even critical thinking. Mezirow (2000) challenged this conceptualization, commenting that "we transform frames of reference—our own and those of others—by becoming critically reflective of their assumptions and aware of their context—the source, nature, and consequences of taken-for-granted beliefs" (p. 19). Such critical reflection is particularly valuable when students are involved in civic engagement activities. Indeed, the service-learning movement has long been built upon the two pillars of service outside the classroom coupled with structured reflection on the experience, integrating experience with concepts so both can inform each other (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999).

As such, Mezirow's theory can provide guidance as students participate in these eye-opening, consciousness-raising experiences. He commented that "the most personally significant and emotionally exacting transformations involve a critique of previously unexamined premises regarding one's self" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). And, it should be noted that one stream of transformative learning theory found its home in the writings of Paulo Freire and his emphasis on freedom from oppressive and political structures. While Mezirow's work did not emerge out of a sociopolitical context like Freire's work, it could be applied to such situations where individuals are seeking liberation from oppression, for either themselves or their communities.

Mezirow's work was particularly useful for this study because of the changes in perspective that many students report after engaging in civic engagement work. Many carried perspectives with them that, to paraphrase their own words, could "limit or distort what [they] are able to perceive and understand" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4). But, after engaging with the local community, hearing and experiencing stories of human tragedy and triumph, and engaging in critical reflection upon their experiences, they came to "identify, assess, and possibly reformulate key assumptions on which [their] perspectives are constructed" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4). For Mezirow, and based on my experiences with students in this study and in my professional work as a whole, the outcomes that can be gained from viewing experiences through the lens of transformation can be powerful. He noted that at its core, transformative learning results in "individuals who are more inclusive in their perceptions of the world, open to others points of

view, and able to integrate differing dimensions of their experiences into meaningful and holistic relationships” (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4).

Ultimately, transformative learning theory places the emphasis on the individual and how they make meaning from accumulated experiences. For students engaged in the community, new meanings emerge continually and knowledge is an ongoing construction. Received points of view and perspectives are routinely critiqued in order to make sense of the experience. Transformative learning theory, grounded in a constructivist paradigm, asserts that “knowledge is not viewed as something ‘out there’ to be taken in by the learners” (Dirkx, 1998, p. 9). Instead, the theory claims that we “make sense of novel experiences” within communities of learners which can “contribute fundamentally to new ways of seeing and understanding our experiences” (Dirkx, 1998, p. 9). And, it is a theory rooted in change and “predicated on the idea that students are seriously challenged to assess their value system and worldview” (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

Emerging Adulthood Theory

Jeffrey Arnett’s (2000) work on emerging adulthood added a second dimension to this study’s conceptual framework. His work added a developmentally-specific perspective, positioning this research within the tradition of lifespan psychology. Emerging adulthood theory looks specifically at key developments between the ages of 18 through 24 years. Arnett (2000) was interested in making a theoretical contribution to the time period between adolescence (traditionally ages 10 through 18) and adulthood, particularly

because “most identity exploration takes place in emerging adulthood rather than adolescence” (p. 473). While these age distinctions can be fraught with complications, they also served as a useful starting point for this study.

Arnett (2000) noted that while earlier developmental thinkers contributed to our understanding of lifespan development and the underpinnings for emerging adulthood theory, the times have changed significantly. Now, because of demographic and cultural changes over the past twenty years, emerging adulthood is a newly emerging category with a number of variables depending upon one’s social location and identity. Further, the concept needs to be viewed as a cultural and social construct: “like adolescence, emerging adulthood is a period of the life course that is culturally constructed, not universal and immutable” (Arnett, 2000, p. 470). He readily acknowledged that the theory applied mainly to young adults living in industrialized societies.

Some character qualities help define emerging adulthood, namely accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and achieving financial independence (Arnett, 2000; Scheer et al., 1994). A fourth quality—coming to terms with changing worldviews—was most salient for my study. Arnett (2000) built on Perry’s (1999) writing for this character quality in particular. And Erickson’s (1968) insight that “youth seek to identify with values and ideologies that transcend the immediate concerns of family and self and have historical continuity” further supported the significance of paying attention to shifts in worldview (p. 32). Arnett (2004) observed that this period of emerging adulthood was one in which individuals were “neither beholden to their parents

nor committed to a web of adult roles” (p. 8). Received understandings of how the world operates, the values that guide it, how social roles are constructed, and so on, are all malleable and often in flux during this time period. Articulated more poignantly, Arnett (2000) characterized emerging adulthood as a time of peak identity exploration, instability, self-focus, transition and possibility.

Perry (1999) documented that changing worldviews were a key part of cognitive development during emerging adulthood. As students gain “exposure to a variety of different worldviews, [they] often find themselves questioning the worldviews they brought in” (Arnett, 2000, p. 474). Further, research (Arnett & Jensen, 1999; Hoge, Johnson, & Luidens, 1993) showed that as students journeyed through their college years, they accumulated experiences and then found themselves dedicated “to a worldview different from the one they brought in, while remaining open to further modifications of it” (Arnett, 2000, p. 274).

These shifts in worldviews can also be applied to religion, namely received beliefs, attitudes, and customs (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). In emerging adulthood theory, received religious beliefs are critiqued—perhaps leading to a more personal sense of spirituality—as students “consider it important... to reexamine the beliefs they have learned in their families and to form a set of beliefs that is the product of their own independent reflections” (Arnett, 2000, p. 475).

Research on changing beliefs during emerging adulthood showed that family socialization regarding religious belief and practice waned while social and cultural influences increased (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). This sociocultural influence can be extended to include campus mission and culture, which was

useful for this study in particular. Arnett and Jensen's (2002) article—"A Congregation of One"—suggested that emerging adults created their own religious beliefs so as to not abdicate responsibility for thinking on their own terms. For this study, since civic engagement activities are so closely aligned with the religious identity of the institution (and many of the students themselves), the theory helped frame how students' beliefs evolve.

Civic Engagement

The third component of this framework included civic engagement theory. For this study, in particular, civic engagement theory blended with Jesuit educational theory, where mission (Jesuit) and action (civic engagement) informed one another and were often inextricably linked. As discussed in detail in the following section, an important hallmark of Jesuit education is the attention that is given to learning from marginalized populations for the sake of building a more just and equitable social order (Kolvenbach, 2001; Rhodes, 1989). Civic engagement activities, in particular, facilitate these types of encounters for students. Being immersed in the local community introduces students to the realities of social inequities in an immediate way. Civic engagement often attempts to meet a community need but then also involves ongoing reflection on structural injustices and committing oneself to social change (Jacoby, 2009; Lawry et al., 2006). Encounters with real suffering mandate such reflection (Kolvenbach, 2001; Nicolás, 2011).

My framework blended the concept of civic engagement with Jesuit educational context. The definition of civic engagement has evolved based on

changes in perceptions around student activism and the developmental benefits of those kinds of activities (Biddix, Somers, & Polman, 2009; Boren, 2001). The most appropriate definition for this study was borrowed from the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership (CCEL). Based at the University of Maryland and chaired by senior scholar Barbara Jacoby, the CCEL is a faculty working group “comprised of university programs that have joined in common purpose to promote the integration of civic engagement and leadership into the educational experience of the university’s students” (CCEL, 2010). They define the concept using broad terms:

Civic engagement is acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities. This includes a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good. Civic engagement encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence. Through civic engagement, individuals—as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world—are empowered as agents of positive social change for a more democratic world. (CCEL, 2010)

The idea of a “heightened sense of responsibility” suggests that one engages in a learning process that changes over time based on varied experiences within communities. Many university educators use an *active citizenship* framework with students to help them understand the stages one might travel through as one dives more deeply into community work (Annette, 2004). This framework took into account the developmental context of

individuals, and highlighted the processual nature of civic engagement and understanding one's sense of responsibility to one's community. The broad concept of civic engagement, when viewed as "active democratic participation," involves a range of activities but also connotes a focus on worldview (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005, p. 296). Here, active participation affects a student's worldview, and in turn, the worldview affects how they participate. The two are interrelated.

Jesuit Pedagogy and Practice

The final component of my conceptual framework included Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice. There was not one individual theorist whose work shaped this part of my framework. Instead, a number of theorists' work was used, including Geger (2012), Kolvenbach (2001), Lowney (2003), and Rhodes (1989). I blended the work of these theorists with some of the foundational corporate work highlighted in the Jesuit's 1975 General Congregation meeting, a seminal gathering during which Jesuit educational theory took on a new identity and direction.

In *Characteristics of Jesuit Education*, the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, Jesuit Secondary Education Association identified key characteristics of Jesuit education (International Commission, 1986). They included characteristics such as insisting on individual care and concern for each person, focusing on the total formation of each individual within the human community, engaging in value-oriented formation of students, creating a spirit of community, and encouraging life-long openness to growth (Van Hise &

Massey, 2010). These characteristics formed the foundation for Jesuit pedagogy and practice. Of particular note for this study were the notions of value-orientation formation and creating a spirit of community. The first notion suggests that Jesuit institutions strive to ask the question: *Education for what purpose?* Not only should students be learning content and skills to master that content, but students should also learn to make value judgments related to that content. The second notion suggests that these value judgments and this kind of formation happens within a community of learners. Collective learning experiences—“a real community of learning”—take precedence over individualistic learning (Rhodes, 1989, p. 9). Jesuit pedagogy and practice took guidance from John Henry Newman’s (1996) exhortation that a university is “not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill” but a community built on “common principles” that knows “her children one by one” (p. 99).

Specifically, Jesuit educational theory suggests that teaching and learning are holistic processes and context is important. A learner in a Jesuit context “is expected to move beyond rote knowledge to the development of the more complex learning skills of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Jesuit Secondary Education Association [JSEA], 1993, p. 11). Learning experiences focus on both product—what the students learn concretely—and process—how the students get there. The language of student learning experiences, and the process of learning, is used extensively in Jesuit educational documents (Jesuits et al., 1984; International Commission, 1986; JSEA, 1993). In Jesuit educational pedagogy, experience connotes “any activity

in which, in addition to a cognitive grasp of the matter being considered, some sensation of an affective nature is registered by the student” (JSEA, 1993, p. 15). In simpler terms, attention is paid to learning with both the head and the heart. Learning becomes cyclical, so that experiences inform reflection, which compel students to seek out deeper experiences, and the cycle continues. These experiences then lead to further concrete action: “meanings, attitudes, values which have been interiorized, made part of the person, impel the student to act, to do something consistent with the new conviction” (JSEA, 1993, p. 19). Accordingly, the goal in Jesuit education is that actions increasingly become further aligned with values. This involves both private and public convictions.

Experiential learning within a Jesuit context, as noted, is always value-oriented. As mentioned earlier, the social justice mandate from the Jesuits’ 1975 General Congregation gathering paved the way for a new direction in Jesuit higher education. This emphasis has become a type of mantra within mission statements. The General Congregation’s emphasis on the “service of faith and promotion of justice” argues clearly that Jesuit educational practice cannot be value-neutral (Moore, 2007, p. 462). Taking a stand on social issues, asking critical questions in light of religious and moral values, and acting upon one’s conscience has become woven into the student learning process. One specific example involved student experiences with the issue of poverty and direct contact with persons living on the margins of society. Kolvenbach (2001) noted that “students need close involvement with the poor and the marginal now, in order to learn about reality and become adults of solidarity in the future” (p. 145).

Experiences as students help shape future adults who will, ideally, live out their values with an informed social conscience.

Jesuit educational theory and practice is essentially rooted in a broader social context and promotes a strong social justice message. Education in a Jesuit context is always education for something greater and more purposeful. The Jesuit slogan of *magis*—another type of unofficial cultural mantra at many Jesuit institutions— suggests that individuals and institutions should always strive for “the more” (Geger, 2012, p. 16). Lowney (2003) noted that this “simple motto captures a broader spirit, a restless drive to imagine whether there isn’t some even greater project” upon which Jesuit universities should be focusing their energies (p. 46). “The more” does not necessarily mean increasing the quantity of activities. Rather, it suggests that Jesuit educational enterprises should continually undertake an “examination of the societal implications” of their work in order to remain relevant, rooted in their value-based mission, and ultimately transformative (Rhodes, 1989, p. 11).

Striving for “the more” often becomes translated into striving for more thoughtful and critical social action. Kolvenbach (2001) paraphrased a Latin American Jesuit known for social activism when he commented that “it is the nature of every university to be a social force, and it is the calling of a Jesuit university to take conscious responsibility for being such a force for . . . justice” (p. 46). Students must be encouraged and continually challenged “to live in a social reality and to live for that social reality” (Ellacuria, 1982, p. 12). Further, Jesuit universities as institutions must “shed university intelligence upon” that

social reality and use “university influence to transform it” (Ellacuria, 1982, p. 12). In contrast to other types of universities and other educational approaches, Kolvenbach (2001) noted that Jesuit institutions have a very specific and unique mission: “Jesuit universities have stronger and different reasons than many other academic and research institutions for addressing the contemporary world as it unjustly exists and for helping to reshape it in the light of the Gospel” (p. 46).

Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice, then, seek to create a culture based on specific values. “Formation of students” involves creating a culture of “well-formed and well-informed solidarity” (Moore, 2007, p. 463). Viewed from the context of Jesuit higher education, Erickson’s insight that culture “constructs us as we construct it” suggested that there is a dialectical process between student and campus mission (Erickson in Banks & Banks, 2001, p. 38). Student experiences contribute to the formation of campus culture, while campus culture (and attendant values, language, history, etc.) shapes student experience. This awareness, construction, and transmission of culture, like my own personal experience as a student, may be “implicit, learned, and shared outside conscious awareness” (p. 38). Further exploration of this dialogue process—this construction of culture—is warranted to better understand Jesuit higher education.

Research Questions

Based on the statement of the problem and my conceptual framework, my research sought to answer these key questions. This research was guided by one main question and four sub-questions:

- How does civic engagement involvement in a Jesuit context shape student culture?
 - How do students make meaning from their involvement in sustained civic engagement activities?
 - How do their perspectives change?
 - What role does the developmental stage of students as emerging adults play in this student culture?
 - Based on their experiences, how do students make meaning of Jesuit ideals and values? How do these ideals and values shape their action?

Significance of the Study

Considering the context of the history of student activism and civic engagement on college and university campuses, and the social and political context within which today's students find themselves, this study sought to further understand the culture of sustained civic engagement at a Jesuit university. The meanings students ascribed to their experiences were also explored. Much has been written on civic engagement—ranging from engagement as a valuable learning tool to dissent as a violation of codes of student conduct and source of campus unrest—but actual student voices and observations of student actions made important contributions to the conversation (Biddix et al., 2009). The perspectives and lived experiences of actual students who were civically engaged in a sustained way helped advance understanding of what was clearly a cultural phenomenon.

Further, this study offered contributions to existing theory on service-learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kraft, 1996; Speck & Hoppe, 2004) and experiential learning (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001; Miettinen, 2000; Moon, 2004) by broadening the conversation to include student self-understandings, the role of campus mission, the influence of student subcultures, and the language of transformative learning theory and perspective transformation. The uniqueness of an ethnographic case study provided a “drill down” into the life of a subculture. The findings and discussion from this type of examination could be transferable to other mission-based institutions.

This study also contributed to the literature on Jesuit higher education in particular. As more and more universities are challenged to articulate their unique contributions and overall value to students (and parents), an understanding of the ways in which institutions approach student learning proved useful. Along those lines, the types of learning experiences and the context in which those experiences happen were important to consider. That is, Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice need to be put into action and student voices must be taken seriously. This study offered a platform for the voices of those students; their words are allowed to stand on their own to describe what happens in this kind of educational context and culture.

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

While this study provided an in-depth view of a student subculture, it still consisted of only one sample and a relatively small sample size. While 80 percent of students engaged in some form of community service and advocacy

work on the campus in this study (according to recent surveys), a much smaller number of students participated in this study, thus limiting the study's scope. Additionally, the relatively small size of the campus (3,500 undergraduates) contributed to this limitation in scope.

Another limitation of the study was in the fact that because the institution was a mission-based, religiously affiliated campus, a tradition of engagement with the community already existed. Language about learning from and listening to the community was prevalent in campus gatherings, promotional materials, official statements, and learning outcomes. As such, this reality could have affected the level of awareness that students possessed about civic engagement as a cultural phenomenon on campus. For some, that phenomenon was simply described as "the Loyola way."

Finally, a third limitation of this study was in one of the hallmark elements of ethnographic research itself. The researcher, as the primary instrument of the study, was a human being with human limitations. The researcher must have shared not only tales "of the field" but also tales "in the field." But making the familiar seem strange presupposes, in some way, that the researcher was able to maintain a significant distance, an almost childlike view of the culture being studied. In theory, this hallmark of ethnographic case study research offered potentially novel perspectives. In reality, such a task was difficult to not only undertake and sustain, but also to write about. Wolcott (1997) described this tension in this way: "The real mystique surrounding ethnography is not in doing fieldwork but in subsequently organizing and analyzing the information one

gathers and in preparing the account that brings the ethnographic process to a close” (pp. 155-6). As such, the written account of an ethnographic process can, at worst, paint only a small picture of the entire process. Throughout the process of writing, I strove to note my biases and perspectives, particularly as an insider and former campus employee.

Definition of Terms

Many terms used in this study had popular currency. On the one hand, this made the terms appear immediately recognizable. On the other hand, readers instinctively assumed that they knew the full meaning and/or history of the term based on the popular imagination. In order to suspend judgment and restrict reliance on preconceived notions, the study was guided by these definitions based in the current literature:

Student activism. Broadly defined, the term activism denotes "actions taken by groups of people, some small and some huge, [in] attempts to alter society according to the desires of those taking action" (Jordan, 2002, p. 8). As a category of action, activism often includes "forms of political behavior that extend beyond voting and include occupationally relevant social action" (Epstein & Reeser, 1990, p. 35). For the purposes of this study and insofar as it described contemporary student efforts, activism fell under the larger umbrella term of civic engagement. As will be noted in the literature review, however, only recently have conceptions of student activism moved from "detrimental to developmental" (Biddix et al., 2009, p. 134).

Civic engagement. An umbrella term, the notion includes activities such as community participation, political engagement, exercising political voice, as well as traditional notions of activism (Levine, 2007). Additionally, Ehrlich (2000) defines civic engagement as "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference... it means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes" (p. vi).

Sustained civic engagement. Research on youth involvement in civic engagement activities (protests, political demonstrations, advocacy and legislative efforts, etc.) discusses the importance of socialization and the role it plays in increasing youth involvement over a long-term period (Zaff, Malanchuk, Michelsen, & Eccles, 2003). Not only do positive experiences lead to sustained engagement, but informal mentoring by other students, parents, and teachers can prime students to have the motivation to continue (Zaff et al., 2003). For the purposes of this study, sustained civic engagement was defined as consistency and regularity of student participation and the extent to which these students viewed their efforts as inextricably linked with the campus mission.

Subculture. Perhaps the most widely used definition of a subculture within higher education is Tinto's model of cultural dissonance (Tinto, 1987). According to this model, the students' cultural and social values greatly affect their educational goals, involvements, and ultimately, degree success. While most often applied to minority student retention, Tinto's definition is useful in other research contexts, particularly when one considers that students who are heavily

involved in civic engagement efforts will most likely put their values into action in different ways than other mainstream students.

Culture. Merriam (2002) defines culture as the “beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape the behavior of a particular group of people” (p. 8).

Ethnography. As defined by Van Maanen (1988), “ethnographies are documents that pose questions at the margins between two cultures...they necessarily decode one culture while re-coding it for another” (p. 4). Others define written ethnographies as documents that re-create “for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993, pp. 2-3). A third definition states that ethnographies are “detailed accounts of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture and of the beliefs and social rules that are used as resources within it” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 10). These three definitions served as a guide.

Summary

This chapter provided a background on the history of civic engagement within U.S. higher education. Transformative learning, emerging adulthood theory, civic engagement, and Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice were reviewed as components that formed this study’s conceptual framework. There is limited research on how students involved in sustained civic engagement activities understand themselves and their efforts. Additionally, questions remain as to how Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice shape student culture. Because of this, research questions along with limitations of the study were

identified. The next chapter will review the available literature on the topic in order to situate this study within a broader scholarly conversation.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For the purposes of this study, empirical studies in both community engagement (community service, political engagement, service-learning, etc.) and activism (work for social change, advocacy efforts, etc.) were explored because they fell under the broad heading of civic engagement in higher education. Noted scholar and former university president Thomas Ehrlich (2000) defines civic engagement as:

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

Scholars have attempted to understand a number of topics under these umbrella categories, including exploring conceptual models related to the activist and engagement impulse; understanding the phenomenon through the lens of empathetic faculty; exploring the history of community service and how its roots affect current campus culture; and recasting the discussion around activism as developmental as opposed to detrimental. The body of literature was diverse and quite expansive; it spanned the fields of psychology, higher education administration, sociology, American studies, geography, and philosophy. Similarly, studies represented a variety of perspectives—or social locations—within higher education, including student perspectives, faculty perspectives, and

broadly conceived institutional perspectives. The diversity of disciplines, approaches, and concepts highlighted the expansiveness of the topic and the need as an author to be careful and intentional about which studies to review. The broad categories of qualitative studies and quantitative studies were used, with relevant subcategories under each primary category.

Part I: Qualitative Studies

There were a variety of qualitative studies focusing on student experiences with community engagement and activism. This review of qualitative studies divided the relevant research into five categories: conceptual studies, identity studies, institutionalization studies, activist methodology studies, and pedagogy studies. Conceptual studies examined existing frameworks and proposed new ones to evaluate student engagement. Studies grouped into this category also touched upon the history of community service as a cultural phenomenon within the United States. Identity studies considered the ways in which students involved in civic engagement activities constructed their efforts around a psychologically salient theme. Institutionalization studies utilized an organizational theory perspective and looked at the ways institutions helped or hindered civic engagement efforts, both on the individual level on campus and also on the strategic level within an institution's stated mission. Studies on activist methodologies examined the various ways that students worked for change and how students made sense of those methods. Finally, studies on pedagogy focused on how students, and supportive faculty, reaped the educational benefits of civic engagement on campus.

Conceptual Studies

Morton and Saltmarsh: Frameworks of service. Morton and Saltmarsh (1997) set the stage for a critical look at community service in the United States. For them, community service was a cultural phenomenon borne out of a crisis of community this country had experienced during the past century. Thus, while activism and engagement have been depicted by some scholars as a defining hallmark of higher education in the United States (Altbach & Cohen, 1990; Boren, 2001), Morton and Saltmarsh (1997) noted that service as a whole has been “defined by an educated, middle-class seeking ways to live lives of integrity” (p. 147). But, they delineated distinct historical paradigms within the history of service as exemplified by John Dewey, Jane Addams, and Dorothy Day. Each figure highlighted a different aspect of the phenomenon: Dewey’s (1916) focus on service as liberation, Addams’ (1902) insistence that service rights social wrongs, and Day’s idea that service brings wholeness to all involved. Each thinker-practitioner pointed to the origins of service in our culture, a phenomenon “defined by the intersection of capitalism and democracy” (Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997, p. 148). Still, Morton and Saltmarsh (1997) noted that the three paradigms, while rooted in the reality of injustice and a clash of values, also contained an antidote to the crisis because they each insisted “that we experience first-hand the suffering produced by our culture, an insistence that the problem is one of integrity or authenticity” (p. 148). This study, albeit somewhat earlier in the corpus of literature, framed the conversation on the study of civic engagement in our culture, and more specifically on college and university campuses.

Morton: Service as a continuum. Some of Morton's (1995) earlier work employed a similar critique, specifically aimed at the criteria we use to evaluate learning and growth within community service studies. In "The Irony of Service: Charity, Project and Social Change in Service-Learning," Morton (1995) attempted to challenge the traditional conceptual model of the continuum as the best way to understand the impacts of community service on students. In his interviews with students who were consistently involved in the community, Morton (1995) noted that most students did not neatly move along a developmental continuum from charity to a more complicated understanding of justice. Morton (1995) noted that "assumptions about progress are a powerful element in how many practitioners view, structure, and assess" student involvement in community service activities (p. 20). As such, he attempted to create a new model based on his interviews with students enrolled in a course titled "Introduction to Service in a Democratic Society." To balance out the student input, Morton also interviewed four community informants along with the provost of his university.

The interviewees confirmed Morton's (1995) suspicions about the inherent flaws and assumptions with a developmental continuum. Instead of assuming a linear progression of learning, Morton created three paradigms—charity, project, and social change—through which student learning might be viewed. He suggested that these paradigms "move away from the idea of a linear progress and suggest the theoretical possibility that people adopt distinctive ways of doing service" (Morton, 1995, p. 23). Each paradigm, Morton (1995) suggested,

contained “a worldview, a problem statement, and an agenda for social change” (p. 24). Each paradigm, as well, had thin versions and thick versions; Morton borrowed these terms from anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973). Thin expressions of the paradigms were paternalistic and self-serving, whereas thick expressions were internally consistent and authentic. Morton (1995) contended that students come to community service “with a primary orientation, and [they] work out of this orientation” (p. 28). It is out of their original orientation that they can ultimately grow. Ultimately, Morton posited, when these three paradigms are done well, then they all lead to transformation of individuals and communities.

Morton’s (1995) study, albeit somewhat dated now, stands as an important consideration of how best to understand the growth that happens when students engage in the local community. Writing within the context of American Studies and as a scholar of the history of community service in American culture, Morton’s aim was for authenticity in the service-learning programs he sponsored. Further, Morton’s (1995) paradigm approach reframed the discussion within community engagement circles by presenting comparative models instead of beginning “with an endpoint in mind” (p. 30). And, Morton’s work had implications for community service (and experiential education, broadly conceived) pedagogy by presenting various paths and approaches that students might take. In short, he offered a new way of thinking about what actually happens to students. Still, his study focused on only three paradigms; providing more options might be more inclusive of diverse student interests and approaches. The creation of additional paradigms, or typologies, can build on

Morton's foundational work and include more discussion on the role of campus mission in helping to shape a student's original orientation.

Foos: Challenging traditional uses of continua. Catherine Ludlum Foos (1998) built on Morton's study in challenging traditional linear models of learning. Responding to Morton's challenge that students might not move along a developmental continuum, Foos (1998) attempted to broaden Morton's work by offering a different, yet comparable, theoretical perspective based on his empirical study (p. 14). Foos (1998) herself was motivated by her wariness of the uncritical acceptance by service-learning and community engagement scholars of "a social justice rather than charitable framework" (p. 14). For her, that kind of thinking and intellectual righteousness was problematic. She compared Morton's creation of the three paradigms—charity, project, and social change—to Carol Gilligan's (1982) *ethic of care* and *ethic of justice* distinctions. Foos (1998) noted that exploring Gilligan's work and its parallels to Morton's thinking "can illuminate our understanding of the relation between charity and social activism and the notion of *mature service*" (p. 15). Foos' work emerged as another example of the need for new ways of conceiving of student involvement in community engagement activities. As Foos (1998) suggested, "we must guard against the temptation that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation, lest we silence a valuable voice and impoverish our understanding" (p. 20). Further, her work suggested the need for more nuanced and non-hierarchical paradigms for understanding student approaches and self-understandings.

Chambers and Phelps: Activism and leadership. Some scholars looked at the available theoretical literature on student development and leadership theory and applied it to student activism (Chambers & Phelps, 1993). For them, “student activism and community involvement share a seamless relationship” when viewed through the lens of student leadership and effecting social change (Chambers & Phelps, 1993, p. 22). Since “all student activism is student leadership,” then the perspective changes from attempting to understand the end goals of activism to understanding it as a developmental process in the lives of students (Chambers & Phelps, 1993, p. 24). Chambers and Phelps (1993) argued against the uncritical embrace of the “institutionally accepted organized [student] group” as the most important locus for student leadership development (p. 27). They contended that because activism had historically been considered “disruptive to the educational process rather than complementary to it,” the value of viewing activism as a tool for learning had been overlooked (p. 27). They argued for recognizing student activism as an important tool, valued largely for its constructive and progressive contributions to furthering institutional change. Further, studying activist efforts as legitimate and thoughtful activities can influence the “study and practice of leadership,” stretching scholars and educational leaders to think in new ways (p. 29).

Identity Studies

Kiely: Transformation through international immersions. Other authors have attempted to explore further how students’ perspectives change through involvement in community engagement activities. Two studies in

particular—Kiely (2004) and Cermak et al. (2011)—focused specifically on international service-learning programs, sometimes referred to as “high impact practices” (Kuh, 2008). Writing from the perspective of an education researcher involved in intercultural learning and transformational learning theory, Kiely (2004) undertook a longitudinal case study with 22 undergraduate students. Published in a well-established community service and service-learning journal, the article became a product of his dissertation research. All of the students in the study had participated in some sort of international service-learning experience. Kiely’s goal was to connect the meaning students ascribed to their experiences with specific, concrete actions they then took as a result of the experience. In particular, Kiely (2004) explored the idea of the chameleon complex that many students experience, the “internal struggle between conforming to, and resisting, dominant norms, rituals, and practices” (p. 15). Kiely (2004) noted that the students he worked with manifested an “ongoing struggle to translate their perspective transformation into meaningful action” (p. 16). Ultimately, the study’s conclusion was that the connection between meaningful, direct experience and changed behavior was complex and tenuous; one did not directly lead to the next. Neither did a change in worldview necessarily mean that a comprehensive change in a student’s behavior would follow suit.

Kiely’s (2004) work was one example of a study that was structured to listen directly to the voices of students who had been deeply affected by their work in the community. As the author stated, he initially took for granted what his

students were learning from their immersion experiences: “I assumed transformation was largely unproblematic and would provide students with... the passion to adjust their lifestyles and engage in social justice work” (Kiely, 2004, p. 6). However, after delving more deeply into students’ post-trip journeys, both in the short and long term, Kiely noted that the developmental process was not so cut and dry, and often ambiguous and problematic. As such, the study pointed to the value of attempting to understand student experiences and the need for additional research in exploring students’ self-understandings and how meaning connects to action. Kiely (2004) commented that further research on this topic “will enhance educators’ ability to connect service-learning more effectively to its transformative and social justice mission” (p. 18). I add that further research can not only benefit the field of service-learning specifically, but also enhance the broader field of civic engagement studies within higher education.

Monard-Weissman: Immersions and social justice awareness.

Questions of how students understand complex notions of social justice were also explored in the work of Kathia Monard-Weissman (2003). Her case study of students involved in a service-learning immersion program attempted to understand “ways students developed their sense of justice” as a result of their community engagement efforts (Monard-Weissman, 2003, p. 165). Data for the study stemmed from semi-structured interviews, observations, informal conversations, and written reflections. Three broad themes emerged from the students’ experiences: acquiring a deeper understanding of societal issues, nurturing a sense of responsibility, and planning for social action. Distilled even

further, the themes represented awareness of context, self, and future steps. While Monard-Weissman's (2003) study painted a picture of a selection of students involved in an immersion experience and drew out broad learning outcomes, the study did not address students' backgrounds, their preparation for the experience, and how they interacted with each other. And, while the author used concepts of justice borrowed from John Rawls as her conceptual framework, the study—or at least how Monard-Weissman wrote it—did not make clear what concepts of justice are used by the students themselves. That is, were they prompted to think about social justice questions by engaging in the program's curriculum or even in the interview questions for the study? This remained unclear. Still, the study provided one example of the depth of learning and the assorted concepts that students can glean from these types of experiences.

Cermak et al.: Service versus social change. Another more recent study addressed similar questions in the realm of international service-learning and cultural immersion. Cermak et al. (2011) continued this line of inquiry by exploring student perceptions of their own involvement in social change efforts. The authors interviewed 24 students who had recently returned from seven different international service-learning immersion trips. Cermak et al. (2011) concerned themselves with questions about the most appropriate and useful conceptual models when designing community engagement programs and assessing student learning. The authors commented in the introduction that while scholars “actively debate whether service-learning programs promote orientations to charity or social justice, few have considered how the paradigm of

service itself may be complementary or antagonistic to other paradigms of social change” (Cermak et al., 2011, p. 5). That is, the study sought to explore the relationship between the social constructs of service and activism, and how those constructs functioned in the mind of students. Rejecting the idea that service and activism were opposed to one another, the authors approached the discussion “not as a polarity but as two leading constructs that comprise civic engagement” (Cermak et al., 2011, p. 7).

In order to ground their thinking, Cermak et al. (2011) made use of the concept of *identity projects* as their guiding framework. Much like Kiely’s (2004) use of transformational learning theory and the concept of perspective transformation, Cermak et al. (2011) used service and activism as guideposts and “orientations around which students form their identities” in a dynamic fashion (p. 9). This type of framework was useful in that it could both test concepts to see if students found them relevant and to see how students acquired, modified, or abandoned these “psychologically salient themes” after new experiences (Cermak et al., 2011, p. 9). The authors acknowledged that these orientations were also rooted in institutional and social forces. Whereas service programming, for example, received significant institutional support on many campuses, activism was often depicted as disruptive and somewhat socially unacceptable. And, the majority of the students involved in the study uncritically described service as, for the most part, positive, while activism was described as negative, self-righteous, and overly emotional. On the one hand, students associated service with a particular stance or way of being; on the other,

activism was defined as specific tactics and strategies as opposed to a type of identity or orientation. The study highlighted the “defined borders” between both identities and the risk, according to the authors, that service and community engagement “reinforce the underlying values of charity” (Cermak et al., 2011, p. 160). Therefore, this study, too, raised concerns about the adequacy of available conceptual frameworks, and how those frameworks were affected by “social forces at work” (Cermak et al., 2011, p. 17).

Harre: Service and activism as identity project. Cermak et al. (2011) built upon the work of Harre (2007) from the University of Auckland who authored an earlier paper looking at community service and activism through a similar identity project lens. Harre’s (2007) work used identity project theory to understand young people’s commitment to broader social causes and working for the common good; she reviewed literature on service and activism and applied this particular conceptual lens. There were varying degrees of involvement in identity projects, and not all activities became a project per se. One’s level of investment in their own identity projects—such as “being a good Christian” or “being a contributing member of civil society” or “being a good student”—was largely determined by one’s “judgements about their projects” and “what action they take with regard to it” (Harre, 2007, p. 712). According to Harre (2007), one’s “activism or volunteerism may never become an identity project, as it may remain simply an activity” the person is doing as part of some social network (p. 715). Harre’s (2007) work, at its most basic level, was an attempt to explore what motivated young people’s sustained involvement in service and activism.

Whether people were involved in isolated, random experiences of service and activism or committed to longer-term identity projects, all experiences could “generate powerful experiences of belonging and integrity” (Harre, 2007, p. 719). For many, the hope was that isolated experience led to a “corresponding identity” with expanded participation and deeper commitment (Harre, 2007, p. 720). At the same time, Harre (2007) noted that much of the existing literature on youth involvement in service and activism acknowledged the obstacles to forming these types of identities. That is, commitment to service and activism carried “little social status,” there were significant time constraints for many young people, and too few parents served as “models for ‘moral endeavours’” (Harre, 2007, p. 720).

Rhoads: Activists as change agents and institutional self-reflections.

Harre’s (2007) work, while not seeking out the direct voices of young people themselves, synthesized literature on service and activism with a view to understanding identity project emergence. Rhoads (1997b), a well-published scholar in the field of higher education and student development theory, also addressed the notion of identity and its connections to campus activism and community involvement. Rhoads (1997b) used a decidedly qualitative approach to his case study exploring the phenomenon of identity-based activism at a collection of colleges and universities. He emphasized the value of qualitative approaches to understanding student activism, particularly phenomenological methods. He argued that this kind of approach removed “the black box from the category of ‘student activism’ and [pursues] the essence of contemporary activism to uncover what themes exist and... how the experience of participation

in student activism relates to students' construction of meaning" (Rhoads, 1997a, p. 509). The study examined the case of the 1996 National Day of Action initiated by the Center for Campus Organizing. Across the country, students mobilized to protest and take action for immigrant rights, defense of affirmative action, and educational access for minorities. Rhoads highlighted five campuses where activism rooted in multiculturalism and identity concerns was particularly prominent. Countering criticisms about identity politics as a potentially divisive and segregative phenomenon, Rhoads (1997a) suggested that identity politics "should be interpreted as a sociocultural phenomenon capable of revealing insights and understandings about the lives and developmental journeys of today's diverse students" (p. 510).

Looking specifically at cultural identity and how activist activities further shaped and enhanced those identities for students, Rhoads (1997a) concluded that the experiences of these students might have offered a unique perspective on the "fundamental institutional weaknesses" at each campus (p. 517). The lived experiences of students, if given real merit and voice, could offer new educational opportunities upon which institutions might capitalize. Students engaging as cultural identity activists called into question institutional practices and structures. Only from this collective group identity at each campus did individual students have the power to criticize and push for change. While the voices of the activists themselves were particularly powerful, the study's limitation was that it only included the voices of students from five relatively small institutions and lacked the generalizability of other studies. Additionally, Rhoads'

(1997a) study pointed to the value of conflict in creating dialogue. Conflict emerged out of student authenticity. That conflict led to systemic institutional change. Thus, being authentic in one's identity as an activist—namely, paying attention to and acting upon the concerns that caught your attention—enhanced the collective authenticity of the entire campus.

Chatterton: Activists and geographic space. While Rhoads' (1997a) study may have represented a small subset of campus activists whose work was rooted in particular concerns related to identity, it did point to a broader scholarly conversation about how the fundamental orientations of students shaped actions. Culture and context were important elements, apart from simply activist strategies, tactics, or even individual student identities. Chatterton (2006) endeavored to understand those fundamental orientations of self-described activists and the limits of stereotypical categories and labels. Chatterton (2006) wrote as a geographer interested about how activists create their own spaces. His writing and research centered around the “need to transcend activist spaces and identities” in order to focus more on the long-term ends as opposed to the short-term means (Chatterton, 2006, p. 260). Specifically, he posed the question of “how can we go beyond pre-determined identities and problematise our positionalities?” (p. 260). Is there room for “building commonality” and moving away from seeing others as opponents? (p. 260). Chatterton's (2006) research spoke directly to Cermak et al. (2011) and their follow up work with students involved in international service-learning immersions. For those students, the

term activism itself brought unhelpful associations, when the students actually desired to participate in social change efforts after their experience.

Chatterton (2006) explored this phenomenon even further through the use of a case study of activists protesting the G8 Summit. In keeping with his work on understanding activist spaces and identities, Chatterton embedded himself in the protests and gathered data from both protesters and those negatively affected (specifically, fuel truck drivers who had their route blocked by protesters who blocked an oil depot—a symbolic gesture to call attention to climate change policy, overproduction, and irresponsible consumption). Chatterton's (2006) interviews revealed the complexities of identities, because all activists were also consumers of oil and entrenched in a larger socioeconomic system. This led to interesting “on the ground” discussions with both protesters and fuel truck drivers. Even though civility was lacking in these encounters, Chatterton (2006) saw them as educational moments for both sides, and him as the researcher. In light of these conversations, he noted that seeking commonality and common ground did not mean refuting others “on the basis of higher morals or superior facts, but finding ways to continue conversations beyond these moments to uncover root causes of misunderstandings or prejudices” (Chatterton, 2006, p. 266). Certainly, however, this was supremely difficult work.

But Chatterton's (2006) main interest was rooted in the notion that individuals can “give up activism” (as the title of his article suggests) and move beyond static binary identities to seek commonalities. But he recognized that “collective identity is normally strong through strong bonds of trust, loyalty and

affection and there is often antipathy to outsiders and non-members” (p. 268). That antipathy toward outsiders often prohibited true dialogue and problem-solving. While the activist identity is rich in history and rooted within our culture, it is still often problematic when put into action: “The activist identity is one of the ontological essentialisms which obscures common agendas and negates a more hybrid sense of self” (p. 270). Ultimately, Chatterton (2006) concluded, it is only when people work diligently to “free themselves from institutional constraints and social norms” in order to be in solidarity with “disparate individuals,” that these essentialist identities will be eschewed.

Goodman, McIntosh, Howard: Activism and privilege. For the past two decades, a number of researchers have grappled with privilege as an identity, hoping to learn more about the role it plays in individual work for social justice (Brantlinger, 2003; Goodman, 2000, 2001; McIntosh, 1998). How do the activist experiences of individuals from privileged backgrounds differ from the experiences of others? Howard (2011), a researcher interested in the role that social class plays in education, explored this terrain by attempting to understand not what kept privileged students away from social justice work, but what generated and sustained their interest. Howard veered away from somewhat traditional research questions involving “privilege as a commodity” (McIntosh, 1988) and tried to understand the idea through the lens of “privilege as identity” (Howard, 2011, p. 4). He sought a “comprehensive framework for understanding the pervasive nature of privilege as it is woven into the fabric of people’s lived experience” (Howard, 2011, p. 4). Howard (2011) conducted interviews and

focus groups with 15 student participants involved in significant social justice advocacy work. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: responding to guilt, understanding self as a resource, and being rewarded for social justice work. These sentiments were expressed by almost all of the students. While some of the students saw their privilege as a commodity that could be used for both influence and leverage, the majority of the students characterized their privilege (albeit somewhat reluctantly and, frequently, out of guilt) as a lens through which they viewed the world and assessed their personal self-efficacy.

Howard's (2011) study broke new ground in understanding the dynamic of privilege as identity and as directly voiced by individuals. While he did not describe the institutional context in detail—only mentioning that the students attended a “highly selective, small liberal arts college in the Northeast”—the reader could infer that the culture of a predominantly affluent student body impacted the ways in which students might have characterized themselves (Howard, 2011, p. 3). Further, one of Howard's (2011) stated goals was to “explore the ways these... students make sense of who they are, who they want to become, and their immediate world” (p. 4). In the end, the students expressed a mixture of discomfort with their unearned access to resources and a utilitarian view on how it helped them further their own interests. Moreover, a small minority of the students (only two) openly criticized the fact that differences along social identity lines exist in the first place; they did not allow their guilt to take them that far in criticizing the overarching system and their place within it. Those two particular students commented that “viewing themselves as a resource in this

work [advocating for social justice causes] is to some extent exerting the very privilege that perpetuates injustices” (Howard, 2011, p. 7). Ultimately, Howard’s work focused on student self-interest and how it became intermixed with the interests of others. The students in the study were largely “concerned with negotiating rather than protecting their privilege” and this became the main reason for maintaining their privilege (p. 12). Their involvement in social justice causes enabled them to “feel more at ease with being privileged, to foster a more positive self-understanding, and to reduce negative feelings” (p. 12). Howard’s work highlighted the complex self-understandings of particular students involved in social justice work.

Institutionalization Studies

Biddix, Somers, Polman: Activism and learning outcomes. A number of studies have explored the roles that institutions play in promoting civic engagement, both as corporate entities and then for individual campus community members. Biddix et al. (2009) continued the focus on student leadership within an institutional context. Their study differed when they asked questions about how civic engagement—specifically campus activism—encouraged campuses as institutions to reconsider and rethink learning outcomes for students. The authors used the “activism’s journey from detrimental to developmental” mantra as a starting point to reframe the conversation (Biddix et al., 2009). Their research—a case study of a campus protest—not only examined the impact of a large-scale protest on students, but also how the protest impacted the institution as a whole in its conceptualization of

how it educated students for democratic citizenship. While the study focused on students working toward internal institutional change, the themes of working for the common good, social change, and seeing oneself as an engaged, global citizen emerged as well.

Interestingly, the starting point for the research was the challenge set forth by *Learning Reconsidered*, a two-part NASPA publication that focused on ways in which student affairs educators could identify learning opportunities for students (Biddix et al., 2009). The publication encouraged campuses to look for nontraditional ways of encouraging student learning. The challenge offered by a professional student affairs publication encouraged these researchers to consider adopting a new perspective on a phenomenon that can often be viewed as detrimental to campus communities. The protest in the case study encouraged students to learn two key lessons: a “commitment to public service through communities of practice” and “engagement in principled dissent” (Biddix et al., 2009, p. 134). In the end, fairly advanced learning outcomes were achieved within the broad categories of student development theory, democratic engagement theory, and digital age democracy. Specifically, students demonstrated “how to bring about change in society” (p. 141), displayed “a commitment to global citizenry through involvement” (p. 142), and “learned to preserve and legitimize the expression of a broad range of perspectives and judgments” (Biddix et al., 2009, p. 140). All of these outcomes were achieved within the confines of an institution. Ultimately, Biddix et al.’s (2009) research suggested that even though universities as institutions were inherently self-

preserving, fairly progressive and transformative democratic education can take place within these educational spaces. For these spaces to be created, institutions need to acknowledge that “perceiving injustice and questioning authority are foundational values enabled in a democratic society” (Biddix et al., 2009, p. 143). Institutional self-preservation and student activism/protest can conflict when these democratic values are not managed creatively.

Kezar: Partnerships between students and faculty. Kezar (2010) continued this line of research and focused on the intersection of institutional context and student activism. She honed in on the ways in which student activists interacted with supportive faculty. Using a five campus multi-site case study approach, Kezar’s (2010) conceptual framework was rooted in “tempered radical theory,” where student activists became both partners with and vehicles for faculty members interested in expressing broader social justice concerns (p. 452). Thus, she focused on the “behind-the-scenes work” and the relationships between faculty and engaged students that can support “more subtle forms of activism” (p. 453). On the whole, her research uncovered some significant student learning outcomes when supportive faculty served as mediators and mentors. Students experienced empowerment, they learned the “language of those in power,” they came to understand effective tactics, they learned ways of negotiating with those in power, and finally, they came to understand the ineffectiveness of “demonizing those in power” (Kezar, 2010, p. 473). Kezar’s work aligned closely with the work of Chambers and Phelps (1993; 1994) regarding student leadership development within the context of activism. And,

significantly, the study brought to light both the partnerships between faculty and staff that were already happening and the potential for new ones to emerge. In fact, many of the sympathetic faculty members in Kezar's (2010) study were involved in community-based learning, action research, service-learning, and teaching democratic practices within their classrooms. While the study was limited in scope in that only five campuses were examined, it did make an important contribution to the literature by de-emphasizing the traditional notion of activism as divisive and characterizing it as a partnership between like-minded individuals within an institution. What the study lacked was an honest discussion about how risks and stakes were different for faculty and student affairs administrators, and how the professional roles within institutions always contained a political element.

Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, Barnett: Student perceptions of administrators. While Kezar (2010) focused on student-faculty interactions, Ropers-Huilman et al. (2005) and Ropers-Huilman, Carwile & Lee (2003) focused on student-administrator interactions. They looked specifically at students' perceptions of administrators, and how those perceptions guided students' approaches to activist causes on campus. The researchers cast their net widely and worked with students who were publicly vocal about their "involvement in and commitment to social change" (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005, p. 298). They also used snowball sampling to gain access to student networks about which they were unfamiliar. The students themselves were involved in a variety of activities and causes—protecting lower-income workers, labor

conditions in international factories, raising awareness about safe spaces for LGBTQ students, and urging local ownership of the campus bookstore.

Interestingly, the researchers asked the students to define their understanding of university administration and administrators (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005). Most student activists “used *system* often [and] they did not have a firm delineation of what was in and out of “the system”” (p. 300). This ambiguous depiction of “the system” came through in student interviews. The majority of student activists discussed their antagonistic relationships with campus administrators, relationships involving very limited and untrustworthy communication. While some of the students described administrators as supportive, none of them described administrators as collaborative. This emerged as a key finding in the study. The clearly defined—and perhaps stereotypical—roles of students and institutional officials were viewed by many students as barriers. Moreover, the students had a very limited understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and daily experiences of administrators. As one student activist commented, “What do they do? Maybe if I knew that, if I was more informed about... what they had to do on an everyday basis—you know, what would work better with them as far as us communicating” (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005, p. 308). Overall, the students expressed a strong desire for a “reconceptualization of those roles, one that allowed more opportunity for joint efforts to work toward positive social change” (p. 309). In discussing the development of lifelong civic skills, the authors suggested that “student involvement in activism on campus may serve as a training ground for broader

civic development” (p. 310). But, only through collaborative, engaging, open relationships with administrators can this successfully happen. The authors pushed for this type of institutional and professional reorientation.

One drawback from this study was the lack of discussion of the institutional context and how that impacted student self-understandings. The authors also acknowledged that their sample only represented one campus (and 26 student interviewees on that campus). They suggested further research among “institutions of varying demographics” in order to paint a fuller picture (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005, p. 311). Further, the authors defined activism very broadly, so questions still remained about whether the study satisfactorily addressed students’ level of understanding and identification with activism as a concept and its rich and complex history on university campuses.

Checkoway: Institutional commitment to educating for democracy.

Some scholars focused on the larger impact and benefits of a civically engaged campus, involving the contributions and learning not only of students but faculty and administrators as well (Checkoway, 2001; Cuban & Anderson, 2007). In a study on research universities, Checkoway (2001), an accomplished scholar on public policy, community development, and urban planning, attempted to provide an historical account and meta-analysis of the civic mission of the university. Checkoway (2001) focused his critique on the uneven commitments of universities to seriously consider the societal benefits of their collective efforts. The twentieth century trend of turning inward within disciplinary circles has opened a chasm between real community needs and academic research. As a

result, Checkoway (2001) stated, “much classroom teaching does not develop civic competencies, much academically based research does not serve community needs, and... universities have lost their sense of civic purpose” (p. 128). Checkoway’s (2001) main goal was to renew the conversation about the dual purpose of universities: both “knowledge development and public participation” (p. 130).

This overarching problem of insular, solipsistic academic and institutional culture, then, carried over to how students were educated, mentored, and prepared. For Checkoway (2001), the university of the past was committed to “strengthening social values” (p. 129). Now, particularly for research universities working out of—and thereby rewarding faculty and students for utilizing—a positivistic framework, that commitment became attenuated and much more secular. Checkoway (2001) challenged university leaders to take seriously their civic mission so that it did not become simply a tagline in their official mission statements. In terms of faculty incentives, this meant thinking carefully about tenure and promotion, recognizing the scholarship of engagement, and moving away from singular definitions of scholarship. In turn, this played out in the educational experiences of students at these institutions. Checkoway (2001) made three specific suggestions: involving students in research that has clear community impact, incorporating service-learning courses across the university, and giving equal weight to the educational benefits of co-curricular learning activities by attempting to link those experiences with curricular objectives. On the whole, Checkoway’s work was an assertive challenge to research

universities—institutions that became overly specialized, insular, and potentially irrelevant—to reconsider their role in educating for democracy. In some ways, the study foretold *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*, a 2012 publication of the Association of American Colleges and Universities that laid out many of Checkoway's (2001) concerns but on a larger national scale.

Cuban and Anderson: Service-learning and institutionalizing justice.

Cuban and Anderson (2007) took a very different approach than Checkoway (2001) in their exploration of barriers presented by institutional structures and the challenges of employing a long-term “social justice perspective” when involving students in service-learning activities. They attempted to challenge the practice of “involving students in public contexts but not challenging them with social issues” (Cuban & Anderson, 2007, p. 144). They asked the question, “Where’s the justice in service-learning?” and explored how a social justice perspective became institutionalized through service-learning practice (p. 144). The authors discussed the prohibitive boundaries within institutions that can limit a strong orientation to social justice. These limitations included university image, concerns for institutional self-protection, and traditional conceptions of rigor within academic culture. Other boundaries were external, including “partnerships [with the community] that may result in one-way exploitative relationships” (p. 147). These types of “partnerships” were often the result of unexamined power differentials between communities and universities as well as projects emerging out of traditional conceptions of outreach, volunteerism, and community involvement.

An important strength of Cuban and Anderson's (2007) work was the diversity of data they collected and analyzed—from students, faculty members, and community partners. The data helped form a compelling argument that university members, however well-intentioned, must be taught how to engage with and act on behalf of the community. This meant a commitment to “finely tuned practices” and ongoing nurturing of campus-community relationships (Cuban & Anderson, 2007, p. 152). Ultimately, their findings and discussion highlighted the serious commitment and difficult work that was involved in sustaining service-learning from a social justice perspective. One key point from the study was the suggestion that for universities to institutionalize this social justice perspective, students and faculty “may need anti-oppression training and opportunities to immerse themselves into communities to understand how to perpetually nurture collaborations while respecting boundaries and changing needs of community-based organizations” (p. 152). More often than not, students (and faculty) resisted the notion that they lived within an oppressive system, let alone recognize that they themselves may gain unearned advantages and benefits from that system. Cuban and Anderson (2007) argued that universities—faculty, administrators, and thereby, students—needed to understand the implications of working for social justice. First and foremost, university community members needed the “skills to enact it and an awareness about its processes and goals” (Cuban & Anderson, 2007, p. 153).

Activist Strategy Studies

Biddix: Technology use. Instead of focusing on the motivations and theory behind student civic engagement, some scholars looked at particular strategies and how those strategies affected student activist identity. That is, can exploring students' activities in the arena of activism tell us something about how they understand themselves and their role as social change agents? Biddix (2010) explored some of the specific techniques employed by student activists. Using relational learning and leadership as conceptual lenses, Biddix attempted to understand further how activists used technological tools to further their own goals. Biddix built upon an earlier study by Laird and Kuh (2005) and noted that "technology and engagement may have become so closely linked that it is difficult to separate activities (engagement) from the means (technology use)" (Biddix, 2010, p. 680). While several studies explored the prevalence of technology usage on university campus (DeBlois & Oblinger, 2007; Montgomery, 2008; Wilen-Daugenti, 2009;), Biddix (2010) honed his study to ask what impact this technology use had on learning outcomes and how it contributed to the civic learning environment.

Ultimately, Biddix (2010) uncovered a strong link between social connections and effective learning. Much knowledge acquisition for student activists in this study happened socially and collaboratively. For example, rather than sharing a link to a story about a political issue through email, students often sent the text of the actual words and all were empowered to contribute and add their voice. Democratic structures of leadership, rather than hierarchical

arrangements, prevailed. Biddix (2010) noted that information sharing among the community of activists “was dependant on ethical practices within the community where information shared was reliable and valued” (p. 689). The students held each other accountable in sharing trustworthy information from credible sources. Another similar theme that emerged was the opportunity that technology use offered for meaningful participation. Biddix (2010) found that students could “quickly recognize the organizational culture and existent structures in a community to evaluate the potential to make contributions” (p. 690). Much like Wikipedia and its emphasis on democratic participation and knowledge sharing, the students in this study were able to focus their attention almost singularly on the issue at hand rather than organizational structures or established authority roles.

One key question from Biddix’s (2010) study was “whether or not civic engagement can be accomplished on the go” (p. 691). How does reliance on technology, whether completely or partially, help or hinder student activists from accomplishing their goals and maximizing learning? In the end, the participants in the study valued how technology allowed them to “connect quickly to direct information or expert advice” (p. 691). Thus, reliable, useful, and publicly available information was the most beneficial aspect of technology use instead of promoting a type of uncritical “clicktivism” on the go as many campuses witnessed with the Kony 2012 campaign that spread rapidly through social media sites (Al Jazeera Media Network, 2012). Overall, Biddix’s work highlighted the

role that technology played in students' abilities to affect change, their sense of self-empowerment, and unexpected complexities brought on by technology use.

Pedagogy Studies

Bickford & Reynolds: Acts of dissent. Research on student development theory, service-learning theory and practice, and experiential education has focused more recently on the ways in which campus and community can come together through institutionalized civic engagement (Boyer, 1994; Checkoway, 2001). Often centered on the pedagogy of service-learning, the practice brought the community into the classroom and encouraged students to get directly involved in social change within the confines of an academic course. Still, scholars raised concerns about the potential dangers of promoting activism and community engagement incorrectly (similar to the “thin” versus “thick” versions of service as explored by Morton [1995]), as well as the call for anti-oppression training suggested by Cuban and Anderson (2007). Bickford and Reynolds (2002) explored how the nonthreatening concept of “volunteerism” can be reframed as an act of dissent. They noted the inherent risk in undertaking service-learning as a pedagogy, commenting that “despite well-designed projects and responsible guidance, students may remain convinced that misfortune can always be overcome by a bootstraps attitude” or that social problems are “inevitably the result of individual circumstances” (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002, p. 243). The authors suggested that educators who promoted service-learning as a pedagogy should have had concerns if students walked away from learning encounters with such a one-sided view. Still, “few students understand their

service as a contribution to structural social change” (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002, p. 238). So the authors’ stance throughout their entire article was one of caution, but guarded optimism about the potential benefits of service-learning as institutionalized activism and subversive pedagogy.

The authors also addressed the issue of cultural distance, perspective, and how students are already firmly rooted in their own culture before engaging in civic engagement activities (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). “Immersion in culture makes perspective difficult to achieve”; new perspectives through civic engagement experiences can provide a “jolt of unfamiliarity” for students (p. 236). This jolt of unfamiliarity, though, cannot be experienced in isolation. Tools for processing and analyzing experiences—structured reflection—must accompany each encounter with difference. Service-learning as a pedagogy can help students explore received notions of self and other, campus and community, server and served, helper and helped.

When educators emphasized the connections and potential relationships that could emerge out of service-learning situations, difference as a construct was minimized while the common desire to work for social change became the primary focus. Bickford and Reynolds (2002) noted that different social positionalities cannot be ignored at first, particularly when working with relatively inexperienced students: “we each inhabit different social positionalities... as we join together to change the social structures that produce inequality, our different positionalities may be assets” (p. 237). Ultimately, activism can be a useful conceptual framework to challenge service-learning educators and “explode the

self-other binary” because of its emphasis on common interests and community-mindedness (p. 237). For “activism argues for relationships based on connection” (p. 237). In this sense, Bickford and Reynolds’ (2002) work on pedagogy supported Cuban and Anderson’s (2007) work on institutionalization, where both sets of researchers called for careful approaches to community work to minimize the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and rigid dividing lines between “self” and “other.” The notion of resisting binaries as suggested by Chatterton (2006) also came into play. Much of that was dependent upon how students are prepared; “the way we frame projects and activities impacts both what our students do and how they understand it” (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002, p. 241).

Hamrick: Democratic learning outcomes. Other pedagogy-focused studies use a similar approach of reframing. In her article on “Democratic Citizenship and Student Activism,” Hamrick (1998) looked at the internal campus community as the place where students can exercise their democratic skills. Hamrick’s work highlighted the need to listen to the voices of students when they engaged in principled dissent. Like Rhoads (1997b), Hamrick (1998) approached the institution as both the object of critique and the hands-on laboratory for exercising a “necessary set of citizenship dispositions and skills” (p. 457). She noted that learning outcomes could be similar to those achieved through external community activism, organizing, or service-learning, but universities themselves could be targets of critique and contexts for learning through dissent (Hamrick, 1998). She challenged educators to view student activists as “loyal citizens who make supreme act of commitment to the campus

and to its democratic arena” (p. 457). The study examined a protest at Iowa State University where student leaders worked to challenge the naming of a building after a donor and alumna who had made blatantly racist comments. Hamrick (1998) noted that the students challenged the symbolism of the public act as contrary to the values of the institution. Administrators grappled with how to both honor the educational opportunity for the students but also respect the contributions of the donor. The university as both self-preserving institution and locus for democratic citizenship—and the internal conflict that can come with those dual roles—became the object of discussion for Hamrick’s (1998) study.

Ultimately, Hamrick’s (1998) case study analysis presented a challenge to educators—administrators, faculty, student affairs staff—to not view opportunities for students’ democratic education myopically. She argued that “conceptions of what makes up the civic life of students and the appropriate campus environments for learning democracy and citizenship must not be limited only to formal student governance bodies” (Hamrick, 1998, p. 458). But, because institutional forces are almost always at work, educators must make a conscious choice to view principled dissent and campus activism as a learning opportunity, ultimately “preserving and legitimating the expression of a broad range of perspectives and judgments” (p. 458). Hamrick noted that the majority of American citizens thought that the main task of colleges and universities was to “develop contributing citizens” (p. 449). According to Hamrick’s theoretical exploration, if universities were being true to their purposes—both externally

imposed and internally conceived—then space for dissent needed to be respected and welcomed.

Swaminathan: Hidden curriculum. Swaminathan (2007) explored the role that community partners played in shaping a student's civic engagement experiences, particularly through academic service-learning. The author sought to understand the "hidden curriculum" that community agencies attempted to teach students and how that curriculum could either mirror or significantly differ from the learning goals of a particular course (p. 134). Much of the study focused on the unique role that community partner contacts and supervisors played in educating university students. Data gleaned from extensive interviews with community partners were categorized into three distinct messages (curricula) being conveyed by the partners—instrumental curricula, social capital curricula, and cultural competence curricula. The three distinct curricular perspectives of the community partners emerged out of their professional responsibility to educate students for "the real world" (p. 134). Swaminathan (2007) noted that "most community supervisors... differed in what they meant by preparing the students for the real world" (p. 137). As a result, students emerged from their community experiences with different learning outcomes. Some students gained a new understanding of the policies and protocol of workplace environments (instrumental knowledge). Other students developed a larger social and professional network, as their partners believed that developing social capital was one of the most foundational starting points for new professionals. Still, other students came away from the experience with new perspectives on

cultural competence. One partner stressed that “white and middle-class students needed to learn about different cultures and had to learn to change their attitudes about them” (p. 139).

Swaminathan’s (2007) study, then, explored the role of community partners as “oblique transmitters” of values and professional perspectives (p. 141). What the study also emphasized was that teachers did not regularly communicate with community partner supervisors/contacts. Therefore, shared learning goals were often not discussed or agreed upon. These missed opportunities for shared learning and viewing community partners as co-educators meant that students had very different experiences and learned very different lessons. Ultimately, the study revealed that “service-learning experiences are complex and require sustained dialogue” in order for mutual learning goals to be achieved (p. 142). Additionally, the author’s work supported the work of others (Cuban and Anderson, 2007; Bickford and Reynolds, 2002) who emphasized caution when encouraging students to engage in the local community. Unexpected results—both problematic but sometimes beneficial—can emerge if care is not taken to think through complexities, particularly with community-campus partnerships.

Part II: Quantitative Studies

Relatively few quantitative studies existed regarding student involvement in civic engagement, and even fewer when looking specifically at traditional notions of activism or the context of Jesuit universities. For those that did exist, researchers looked at longitudinal trends in civic engagement (Syvertsen, Wray-

Lake, Flanagan, Osgood, & Briddell, 2011), political engagement styles of college students (Craig, 1984), psychological well-being of self-identified activists (Klar & Kasser, 2009), and the relationship between activism and leadership development (Page, 2010). These studies, when looked at broadly, painted a varied picture of students involved in civic engagement activities over the past 30 or so years.

Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Osgood, Briddell: Trends in youth civic engagement. One advantage of a quantitative approach to this topic was the public availability of a large amount of data on students. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System was one significant repository of data. Another was the data from the “Monitoring Our Future” survey, a collection of data dating back to 1975. More than 50,000 secondary and college students were surveyed each year. Using these large data sets, Syvertsen et al. (2011) sought to uncover trends in civic engagement attitudes and behaviors, whether social class plays a role in engagement, and whether cynicism or optimism characterize different generations of youth. Sample sizes for this study ranged from 80,000-90,000 young adults and the data spanned from 1976 to 2005. Measures assessed civic behaviors such as writing to public officials, voting habits (deemed “conventional”), or participating in protest demonstrations (deemed “alternative”). The survey instrument also measured trust and “public hope,” where students were asked to evaluate political leaders on perceptions of “crookedness” and “trustworthiness” and to assess their own outlook for the world (Syvertsen et al., 2011, p. 587). The authors also looked at covariates

alongside the civic indicators by measuring participants according to their college aspirations.

Overall, the results of the study were “consistent with popular perception” in that the data showed declines in both conventional and alternative forms of civic participation (Syvertsen et al., 2011, p. 588). Conventional participation over the 29-year span remained fairly consistent, beginning at around a 25 percent participation rate and ending at a rate of about 17 percent in 2005. Alternative forms of participation waxed and waned over the time span, spiking to their highest levels of 25-30 percent during the early to mid-1990s. But, on the whole, the patterns were inconsistent with “the steady upward or downward trend often portrayed in commentaries on the civic lives of younger generations” (Syvertsen et al., 2011, p. 592). The authors acknowledged that their findings “underscore the need for a historical perspective and suggest that a snapshot of youths’ lives need a wider interpretive lens” (p. 592). While the snapshot provided by such a large sample size did prove to be helpful and compelling, the authors also implicitly opened the door for qualitative approaches to the phenomenon of youth civic engagement.

A final interesting note about the study was the finding that young adults preferred volunteerism instead of traditional or alternative forms of political engagement (Syvertsen et al., 2011). Overall, the rate of student participation in volunteerism and community service (not adjudicated service or restitution-type community service, but voluntary service) rose over the time span. But, that participation rate rose most drastically for those planning to attend college. The

authors commented that these findings were of concern “as they suggest we are preparing some youth to engage in politics and community affairs while some are being left behind” (p. 593). Clear class divides emerged from the data.

Additionally, the authors acknowledged that “civic engagement is continually being (re)invented by new cohorts of young people, often by taking advantage of technological innovations” (p. 593). Per Syvertsen et al.’s (2011) suggestion, more research questions need to be asked about this phenomenon, its continual reinvention as a concept and as a practice, and how it spans involvement in conventional and alternative forms of engagement as well as volunteerism.

Craig: Civic participatory styles. Syvertsen et al.’s (2011) study built off of Craig’s (1984) much earlier work examining the relationship between civic participation styles and political discontent. In a study involving 1,500 undergraduates, the study explored whether political discontent leads to particular civic behaviors among college students (Craig, 1984). Participants in the study were categorized according to five main types of activity based on their overall level of discontent with the political system: dissenters, voters, military enlistees, community activists, and campaign workers. The participants were also rated according to their own sense of internal efficacy. A major limitation of the study was that the majority of respondents were white males, so the results need to be viewed with that in mind. However, what emerged from the study was a more nuanced view of “the multidimensional character of both political discontent and political behavior and...the numerous factors that will affect the translation of one into the other” (Craig, 1984, p. 489).

In order to arrive at this conclusion, Craig (1984) set up an empirical study with three related hypotheses. First, the author posited that “feelings of political discontent are positively related to campaign, dissent, and group behaviors” (Craig, 1984, p. 479). A second hypothesis suggested that “feelings of political discontent are negatively associated related to voting behavior and to military service.” Finally, a third hypothesis stated that “feelings of political discontent are most intense among those who combine conventional and unconventional tactics” (p. 480). While no resounding results emerged to either prove or disprove the hypotheses, the author did discuss some of the noteworthy items within the data. The author noted that all students within the study who scored high on the “internal efficacy” scale tended to generally support all five types of political activity. That is, there was a strong correlation between one’s sense of self and the power at one’s disposal, and the variety of methods from which one could choose to move the levers of social and political change. Further, the author noted that the students in the study were “predisposed to participate” and “willing to consider a broad range of participatory styles as possible means for communicating” their social and political values (p. 489). These comments spoke further to both the major limitation of the study (the homogeneity of the participants) and the importance of the social and cultural context within which students engaged as citizens. A mixed methods approach to the study may have yielded a more nuanced view of the participants’ motivations and self-understandings.

Klar & Kasser: Activism and well-being. Moving away from looking at downward trends in participation and negative perceptions of political/civic engagement, several quantitative studies looked at previously unexamined benefits of activist behavior (Klar & Kasser, 2009; Page, 2010). Klar and Kasser (2009) continued to explore the notion of internal self-efficacy and “intrinsically motivated behavior” as they relate to motivations for volunteering, engaging in activism and other social interest activities (p. 2). But, they also attempted to understand whether participation in activist behavior led to greater overall well-being and “flourishing” (Keyes, 2002, p. 207). The authors approached the issue very scientifically by “more directly measuring the concept of activism” and “experimentally manipulating activism to determine whether it might have causal effects on well-being” (Klar & Kasser, 2009, p. 3). They also looked at the strength of one’s activist identity in determining behavior “because research suggests that a strong predictor of activist behavior is the relative position of the activist identity in a person’s hierarchy of roles” (p. 3). In their work, they combined three distinct studies that involved both citizen and campus activist participants.

Overall, Klar and Kasser’s (2009) work showed support for the hypothesis that “engaging in...activism is associated with higher levels of well-being” (p. 17). A contesting view from Klandermans (1989) noted that activism could only emerge from a comfortable social context and privileged perspective. Klandermans (1989) suggested that activists’ “happiness might reflect the basic sense of security people need to become actively involved in their society” (p. 61).

But, Klar and Kasser (2009) acknowledged that while the “starting point” for activism is complicated, their studies showed that the “causal arrow” flows from activism to well-being and other measures like life satisfaction, personal growth, purpose in life, and social integration (p. 17). In the end, the authors suggested further research on healthy activist behaviors versus more high-risk activities that may include violence. Interestingly, they also suggested further research on how activism might allow individuals to experience less overall cognitive dissonance (and thereby experience greater well-being, perhaps) by making their deeply held political beliefs fall in line with their concrete actions. This suggestion seemed to support my qualitative approach to understanding student motivations, but with a nuanced view and directly relying upon participant voices.

Page: Activism and leadership development. Page (2010) looked at another benefit of activism—namely, leadership development. Using data from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (a sample of 12,510 students), Page (2010) found a strong positive correlation between high levels of campus/community engagement and attitudes regarding socially responsible forms of leadership. Page looked at a number of demographic and identity variables with participants, and women and LGBTQ students showed the strongest interest in supporting activism. In particular, those students showed “a desire to improve on the status quo while demonstrating comfort with transitions associated with the process of change” (Page, 2010, p. 107). And, as relates to my study, Page found that institutional characteristics had little impact on students’ attitudes toward socially responsible leadership. Page noted that

quality and quantity of student experiences of engagement tended to have more of an effect over institutional characteristics. Here, an opening for a qualitative approach existed. At the close of Page's (2010) dissertation, he recommended further qualitative studies, particularly ethnographic studies "for developing a more complex understanding of activism" (p. 131).

Summary

This chapter reviewed civic engagement literature using the overarching categories of qualitative and quantitative empirical studies. Within the qualitative studies, literature was placed into the five subcategories of identity literature, conceptual literature, institutionalization literature, pedagogical literature, and strategy literature. Quantitative studies covered topics such as leadership development, longitudinal trends in political and civic engagement, and the social well-being of activists. The next chapter will review the research method and design.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

One of the more interesting aspects of educational research is the variety of methods available to the individual researcher. Those methods allow the researcher to employ a multiplicity of perspectives to understand a problem and attempt to clarify pressing questions. But, choosing a particular research method is more than a simple choice, as if one can randomly choose one tool over the other to investigate a research problem and hope to arrive at relatively similar results. Among other reasons, the choice of method and overall research paradigm emerges in dialogue with current literature on the topic. While both quantitative and qualitative studies make contributions to higher education research, the research questions that attempt to uncover, describe, and further understand campus culture are often explored using qualitative methods. Along these lines, a qualitative ethnographic approach was most appropriate for my study that looked at how civically engaged students at a Jesuit university came to understand and described their involvement in such activities.

Choosing Between Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

When asking research questions and initiating a study, researchers not only must consider the best process for trying to answer those questions, but they also must consider their fundamental philosophical orientation. So, the choice between quantitative and qualitative involves both the researcher's view of how knowledge is unveiled (or constructed) and, to a lesser extent, but still

critically important, how the problems, subjects, or participants present themselves for further study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) commented on this choice faced by the researcher, noting that “at one level quantitative and qualitative refers to distinctions about the nature of knowledge: how one understands the world and the ultimate purpose of the research” (p. 12). On another level, “the terms refer to research methods—how data are collected and analyzed—and the types of generalizations and representations derived from the data” (p.12).

How one chooses a research method involves a variety of factors, including prior experiences of the researcher, one’s individual research goals and interests, the traditions of the intellectual community of which one is a part, and the overall direction of current research on the topic. At the heart of a methodological choice is the claim one makes about knowledge and whether it is socially constructed or objectively “out there” waiting to be discovered. For post-positivists, the “objective realm is independent of the knower’s subjective experiences of it” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 23). For constructivists, knowledge is found in “specific historical, economic, racial, and social infrastructures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 205). Additionally, the constructivist relies heavily on “the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p. 9). Qualitative methods tend to align with theories on social constructivism and quantitative methods are most often based on post-positivist claims. Mixed methods approaches paint a different sort of picture by using the resources provided by both types of methods. Ultimately, all three approaches make

different philosophical assumptions about reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and values (axiology). And, these assumptions affect how the research is fundamentally conducted, reported, and utilized for public good.

Hallmarks of Qualitative Research

A key distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods is the concept of simplification. While quantitative researchers attempt to further explain an objective social reality and distill that reality into its simplest parts, qualitative researchers “make holistic observations of the total context within which social action occurs” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003, p. 30). That is, rather than simplifying a situation through a process of deductive reasoning, qualitative methods move inductively from the seemingly simple to the richly complex. Avoiding the use of terms such as *generalizability* and phrases such as *universal applicability*, qualitative research focuses more on rich description, context, and the potential transferability of newfound knowledge. As Shank (2002) noted, “rather than applying the simplifying moves of the scientist, [qualitative researchers] are the sort of empirical researchers who want instead to develop a more complex picture of the phenomenon or situation” (p. 7). This newly created complex picture brought a particular problem or phenomenon into a new light for the sake of further analysis and making a contribution to other studies.

Empirical Data

Questions about academic rigor are sometimes raised in reference to qualitative approaches. Because empirical science has been so deeply engrained in our collective psyche as the premier mode of uncovering truth, other

attempts seem to fall short, at least in our collective, Western imagination. But, qualitative data are empirical. Although qualitative methods are conducted in a manner that is essentially different than quantitative methods, qualitative data are just as valid and useful as data that can be counted or measured. In fact, for qualitative research, because the data are not locked into preset categories, those data have the potential to direct the study in radical ways. In his reflection on the value of naturalistic inquiry, Blumer (1969) commented on the primacy of data, stating that “reality exists in the empirical world and not in the methods used to study that world” (pp. 27-28). The argument, in effect, further legitimated the use of qualitative methods in a world that was often dominated by hard science and the scientific method. Qualitative methods are just as rigorous because the data provide deep meaning to the phenomena being studied. Merriam (2002) commented that “in qualitative research, it is the rich, thick descriptions—the words, not numbers—that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings” (p.15).

Inductive Reasoning and Flexibility

Further, because the data in a qualitative study are given so much power, the overall design of the study should be loosely defined by a broad framework and tentative data collection methods. By doing so, the researcher avoids burdening the study with unnecessary rigidity. For example, if a conceptual framework and literature review frame a study too tightly, then findings and subsequent interpretations of data will be limited by that narrow framework; participant voices may be stifled and prevented from speaking fully. Grady and

Wallston (1988) suggested that “applied research in general requires a flexible, non-sequential approach” (p. 10). The process is essentially reflexive. Wolcott (1990), an established scholar in the field of ethnography, commenting on the value of flexibility, noted that “some of the best advice I’ve ever seen for writers happened to be included with the directions I found for assembling a new wheelbarrow: *Make sure all parts are properly in place before tightening*” (p. 47). Qualitative research not only involves a broad conceptual framework and flexible collection methods, but it also relies on open-ended research questions that introduce a general line of inquiry. While quantitative studies make use of comparison and control types of questions, qualitative studies, in contrast, center around issues of meaning that are site- and content-specific. Maxwell (2008) noted that qualitative research questions employ an “inductive approach to discover what these meanings and influences are and *how* they are involved in these events and activities—an inherently processual orientation” (p. 232). Meanings uncovered by the research during the entire research process, then, direct the study to a significant degree.

Clarifying Meaning

Qualitative research is, in effect, the process of clarifying meaning by way of systematic observation, conceptualization, and reasoning. That is to say, when we look, picture, and think carefully about a phenomenon, then patterns emerge and a hazy picture slowly comes into sharper focus. But, in qualitative research, that sharper focus does not emerge from a comparison with a previously discovered theory, so as to attempt to prove or disprove it. Instead,

“all qualitative research is characterized by the search for meaning and understanding” in a particular place, moment in time, and cultural context (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). The meanings that participants ascribe to their experiences are the raw data with which the researcher inductively attempts to answer a pressing question.

Related to the notion of meaning is the concept of qualitative research as a process of “repairing metaphors.” Individual metaphors—or put more simply, tools to explain everyday phenomena—can only shed so much light on a situation. When those metaphors only bring a researcher to a certain point, then other metaphors need to be considered so that the researcher can be led to “previously undiscovered modes of meaning” (Shank, 2002, p. 121). By being open to new metaphorical lenses, the researcher can be surprised by the seemingly mundane so that more can be learned and the meaning of a situation can be clarified. Qualitative research involves “walking the tightrope between creating meaning out of thin air versus insisting that, just because some interpretation is meaningful, it has to be true. Between these two poles lies the target—the ability to make meaning clear” (p. 88). Navigating this “tightrope” involves using tools such as “etic” (emerging from the culture) and “emic” (applied by the observer) categories, member checking to verify the validity of collected data, and journaling. These techniques, and particularly the use of etic and emic categories, both preserve the integrity of the data and help the researcher see the data from a different vantage point. Shank (2002) argued that “putting things into abstract form is one of the best ways to avoid confusing

the new with the familiar” (p. 5). Overall, these strategies of collection, analysis, and interpretation help ensure that the most authentic meaning is voiced.

Researcher as Instrument

The researcher, then, must resist the temptations of either resorting to interpretive “flights of fancy” or holding the data on too high of a pedestal. A qualitative researcher must routinely acknowledge preconceptions, prior experiences, and conceptual perspectives. This required, intense level of self-awareness necessarily requires both a sense of humility (i.e., not taking one’s interpretations too seriously, at face value) and a spirit of courage (i.e., being confident in one’s analysis while respecting the responsibility to be ethical and honest that is shouldered by the researcher). As Creswell (2003) noted, the process of analysis of data often relies on “insight, intuition, and impressions...undeniably, qualitative researchers preserve the unusual and serendipitous” (p. 142). One’s background and interest in the topic are a key part of the research. Unlike quantitative research that uses prepared, external instruments, the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research. The researcher’s background can offer a “a valuable source of insight, theory, and data about the phenomenon” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 220). Unlike the mandate to avoid bias often cited in quantitative research, qualitative researchers acknowledge that objectivity is never the goal. Rather, the goal is to understand and acknowledge how “a particular researcher’s values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study” and to use that influence productively (Maxwell, 2008, p. 243).

Making the Familiar “Strange”

Once collected, analyzed, and interpreted, qualitative data help to paint a rich description of seemingly familiar phenomena. In *Talk and Social Theory*, Erickson (2004) unpacked the dynamics of human conversation and interaction within a community by making familiar occurrences seem strange and unknown and paying attention to the “wonders of the mundane” (p. 10). As such, Erickson (2004) argued that there are important connections between interpersonal dialogue and social forces. According to his analysis, in individual conversations, what is discussed and how it is discussed is the “result of social processes originating long before the encounter at hand” (p. 102). Thus, micro-level conversations are always connected to the broader, macro-level context, no matter how private or personal those conversations might seem; conversations are both “local and global simultaneously” (p. 103). There is a richness in talking that should not go unnoticed simply because the contents of particular conversations might seem mundane; the richness always points to a larger reality (and realities). The feminist slogan of “the personal is political” seems to attempt to describe this idea, in that all people exist in a context and are affected by social, political, and economic forces. As such, qualitative data—and the resultant interpretations by the researcher—illuminate that larger reality. Like symbols, the data both stand on their own and *point to* a wider cultural landscape.

Research Design: Ethnographic Case Study

This study employed an ethnographic case study methodology in order to help understand and describe student involvement in civic engagement activities.

A case study is unique in the world of qualitative approaches because it focuses on the subject matter more than the actual approach to that subject matter. As Stake (2000) suggested, a case study is less of a methodological approach and more of a “choice of what is to be studied” (p. 435). Further, Stake (1995) noted that as a bounded system, “the case is a specific, complex, functioning thing” (p. 2). Because my study used an ethnographic method in order to make room for discussions of context and culture, the choice of case study simply limited the scope of the area of study. The choice of using an ethnographic approach to the subculture being studied enabled me to take campus climate, culture, mission, and history into consideration. This provided a means to understand and describe the actual dialogue between students and campus mission.

On a deeper level, this methodological choice involved the two levels of the concept of “research method” as mentioned by McMillan and Schumacher (2006)—the appropriateness of specific investigative methods *and* an understanding of the nature of knowledge. First, my understanding of the nature of knowledge as socially constructed rather than “out there” waiting to be uncovered was an important consideration. This paradigmatic choice as a researcher means that I saw categorizations of human behavior and experience as fluid, culturally construed, and always contextual. Second, the methodological options available to most qualitative researchers aligned closely with the constructivist paradigm that I supported. This was particularly relevant to research on a university campus. As Brown, Stevens, Troiano, and Schneider (2002) commented, “because many aspects of the college experience do not

divide neatly into discrete variables, qualitative methods of inquiry are the best suited for understanding the complex phenomena that come together to form the college experience” (p. 173). Qualitative methods allowed new categories to emerge from the complex phenomena being explored in this study.

Ethnographic Case Study Over Other Methods

Regarding methodological choice, why an ethnographic approach to the case over a phenomenological, grounded theory, or critical approach? As noted earlier, most civic engagement and student activist efforts happen within a particular community of students, on particular campuses, and in a particular historical moment. And, the “complex systems of power” on campus must always be navigated with respect to the specific context (Boren, 2001, p. 5). Rhoads (1998) made use of Blumer’s theories on collective consciousness to explain how student social movements grow and develop, contributing to a fledgling theory of activist identity development within a certain kind of community. While certain students, administrators, or political figures might provide an initial impetus for involvement, students often participate and engage as members of a certain kind of subculture. Like Erickson’s (2004) contention that individuals are always affected by and affecting the surrounding culture, students too never live and learn in isolation. Thus, paying attention to student culture seemed of paramount importance in further understanding the reality of civic engagement and activism.

Instead of primarily attempting to understand the essence of the activist impulse for the individual, an ethnographic approach to the case incorporated

“detailed accounts of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture and of the beliefs and social rules that are used as resources within it” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 10). Such an approach broadened the lens through which the situation was viewed, taking into account the entire context and the implicit and explicit rules, assumptions, and expectations associated with that context. And, regarding civic engagement efforts on college and university campuses, Colby et al. (2003) highlighted the importance of considering the specific campus context, stating that there was real value in a campus culture that helped “create an overarching sense of commitment that goes beyond specific programs and makes the institution’s commitment to its students’ moral and civic education a holistic effort” (p. 83). The culture of the campus and attendant structures, customs, and expectations were just as—if not more—important as particular programs and their accomplishments.

Describing Culture

Written ethnographies, then, attempt to describe for the reader a culture that may at once appear familiar, but upon further investigation, is both familiar and strange (Erickson, 1973). In one sense, ethnographies have the power to bridge two cultures. The culture of the reader is the culture of “everyday” reality and, if presented comprehensively and convincingly, the culture being studied is the culture that operates with its own rules, symbols, language, etc. The earliest ethnographers, particularly pioneers in the ethnography of schooling and educational ethnography, actually questioned the value of their work at first (Spindler, 1982). They wondered what, in fact, they could learn through this

methodology because they faced the “mirror of their own cultural strangeness,” unsure of just what they should be observing (Spindler, 1982).

Slowly, the familiar did, in fact, become strange and new learning began to emerge. Van Maanen (1988) described this phenomenon between ethnographer and the examined culture in his own definition of ethnography: “ethnographies are documents that pose questions at the margins between two cultures...they necessarily decode one culture while re-coding it for another” (p. 4). Others described ethnography as documents that re-create “for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people” (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993, pp. 2-3). Both of these definitions attempted to describe the practice of stepping outside of one's own current cultural context in order to view another culture anew. From this perspective, ethnographies are similar to phenomenology in their efforts to bracket assumptions and see with fresh eyes. Whereas phenomenology directs attention to individual meanings, ethnography directs attention to the lives of cultural groups.

Describing and attempting to understand cultures and subcultures has evolved and changed as a methodology. What was once seen as an effort that provided a privileged glimpse into the life of an altogether unknown culture (particularly within the field of anthropology), today, ethnographers recognize that, in a globalized world, ethnographies only provide one perspective among many. The results of ethnographic research are “never reducible to a form of knowledge that can be packaged in the monologic voice of the ethnographer alone” (Marcus,

1997, p. 92). Today, ethnographers attempt as best as possible to give voice to an entire community as opposed to one privileged interpretation.

Voices of Participants

Ethnographers now move away from terms like “subject” and “observation” and employ terms like “dialogue” and “collaboration,” acknowledging the relationships between researcher and the context being studied and how those relationships are both unavoidable and valuable for the research (Angrosino, 2005). This is an important point because it places value on interactions between researcher and participant, further blurring the lines between the categories and respecting the role that participants play in studying the cultural phenomenon. In this newly emerging conception of ethnographic research, similarities can be made between ethnography and action research; both participants and researchers have a vested interest in “making the familiar strange” and paying attention to the “wonders of the mundane” for the sake of acquiring a deeper understanding of their cultural experience.

Finally, the collaboration and dialogue that can happen between researcher and participant allows for a multiplicity of perspectives to emerge. Instead of the ethnographer’s sole voice being reported in a somewhat positivistic manner, collaboration acknowledges that all voices, ultimately, have value. Colyar (2003) commented, “objectivity negatively suggests a positivistic form of writing that excludes the researcher’s emotional, sociohistorical, and political stances” (p. 63). Duranti (1997) observed that compelling and convincing ethnographies are presented in a “style in which the researcher

establishes dialogue between different viewpoints and voices, including those of the people studied, of the ethnographer, and of...disciplinary and theoretical preferences” (p. 87). In this way, the written ethnography has the capacity to paint a picture of the culture being studied with a broad brush.

Research Instrument and Role of Researcher

Regarding research in educational settings, there have been numerous studies looking at the phenomenon of schools and the various happenings within them (Fetterman, 1989). Harry Wolcott’s (1973) classic study, *The Man in the Principal’s Office*, painted a picture of a person filling a key social role in American society by employing a microethnographic approach. As Colyar (2003) suggested, “in order to understand the individual [the principal], Wolcott studied the constructed contexts in which [the principal] was embedded” (p. 66). Likewise, Spindler’s (1982) study of a fifth grade classroom and the ways in which the teacher created a culture based on his own presuppositions and perspectives had, in Spindler’s words, “become part of the lore, if not the scientific corpus, of educational anthropology” (p. 27). The study stood as a classic, pioneering example of ethnographic exploration in an educational setting. Within the realm of higher education, Robert Rhoads’ (1994) *Coming Out in College* considered the formation of personal and group identity for a subculture of undergraduates. Similarly, Michael Moffatt’s (1989) *Coming of Age in New Jersey* recounted an ethnographer’s immersion into college life and culture at Rutgers University, attempting to understand his own campus through a new lens.

These important studies in educational ethnography served as both precedent for additional future studies and examples of how researchers have specifically conducted studies in these settings. Further, these studies described how ethnographies and ethnographic case studies could be conducted broadly within educational systems. Within higher education, these studies could be conducted on macro levels across institutions and at micro levels in individual classrooms or with subcultures of participants. Because the individual ethnographer was the instrument, being knowledgeable about how the ethnographic research process took shape in other studies offered important guidance to the researcher. Just as instruments in quantitative research need to be calibrated to ensure accuracy, so do qualitative researchers need to be continually mindful of the types of data that need to be collected and relevant background information in relation to the study's research questions. Further, as the primary instrument, the researcher brought perspective, interest, presuppositions, and the energy to enable findings to speak for the sake of deeper understanding.

Ultimately, even though a researcher begins a study with an overarching plan, the importance of flexibility must be remembered from the outset. That is, the research instrument must be flexible as more time is spent in the field and new opportunities arise that may add to the study. So, although an ethnographic research plan may include “enumeration to document frequency data, participant observation to describe incidents, and informant interviewing to learn

institutionalized norms and statuses,” the researcher must be open to considering new forms of information at every turn (Zelditch, 1962, p. 567).

Emerging Data

One of the key design features of ethnographic research is its emphasis on cyclical questioning as opposed to linear questioning. Parenthetically, this characteristic fits qualitative research as a whole, particularly regarding the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. As new data are discovered, new patterns emerge and new questions can be asked of the data. Because ethnography involves the ongoing “discovery of cultural knowledge people are using to organize their behavior and interpret their experience,” that cultural knowledge can emerge in a variety of ways depending on the setting, particular conversation, group of persons assembled, specific activity, and so on (Spradley, 1980, pp. 30-31). For example, a cyclical pattern develops whereby one observed interaction can be used as material for later structured interviews, either with individuals or small groups. Moreover, material collected from the interviews can help build questions for future interviews. And, those questions can be useful in interpreting other interactions and helping participants reflect on those interactions. So, information collected helps to shape future data gathering and interpretation techniques, all involving both researcher and participants. I used this approach for this study.

Ethnographic data collection also involves attempting to describe the “feel” of a situation. As mentioned in *Participant Observation*, Spradley (1980) noted that through the process of data collection, “you will observe the activities of

people, the physical characteristics of the social situation, and what it feels like to be part of the scene” (p. 33). Such a suggestion takes seriously both verbal and nonverbal communication and how participants navigate public space. Paying attention to how participants communicate with one another is critically important.

Some questions that I considered include:

- Does communication happen mostly through electronic media or otherwise?
- Do people gather in small groups or in pairs?
- How do participants communicate with authority figures and with those with little social power about mission-related topics?
- What is the tone of each form of communication? Is it formal, informal, or both?
- What jargon is used? Who conveys the mission-related language/jargon and when is that language used?
- Are certain kinds of terms and concepts preferred over other types? Is there value placed on these terms and concepts and the use of them?

Regarding observations, Spradley (1980) suggested a slow narrowing in scope, first making descriptive observations, then focused observations, and finally, selective observations. Each successive step helps to bring generalities into clearer focus. In the end, my choices about what to highlight—that is, the specific direction of the study and how to, ultimately, write the ethnography—were made trustworthy by the process of “member checking” and by maintaining

a research journal (which will be discussed further in the Trustworthiness and Validity section).

Participants and Site

For the purposes of this study focusing on sustained civic engagement, the culture of a subset of students was observed at a private, liberal arts, Jesuit institution in the mid-Atlantic part of the United States. Known for its commitment to civic engagement (and, most recently in 2010, earning the Carnegie Classification on Civic Engagement for its community-based learning efforts), the university had incorporated this goal into its mission—at a growing level of seriousness and intensity—for the past 25 years. In advertising materials, the university regularly mentioned its commitment to both intellectual rigor and engagement with the local community. Like other universities committed to civic engagement, the institution had various units and divisions attempting to live out this part of the university's mission. Some campus groups worked collaboratively, and some worked independently on civic engagement efforts. In large measure, the university's civic engagement office, School of Education, and community-based clinics took the lead on community engagement initiatives. In terms of student culture, the university was comprised of a largely upper class, predominantly white student body (during the 2011-2012 academic year, students of color represented only 14 percent of the undergraduate student population). Many of these students were graduates from religiously affiliated high schools. Findings from recent surveys showed that nearly 65 percent of the study body was consistently involved in civic engagement activities, particularly

through community service (Loyola Office of Institutional Research, First-Year Student Profiles, 2008-2011).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection took place in the university's civic engagement office. The department's space served as an informal, unofficial student center. On any given day, 75-100 students passed through the office to register for an activity, help plan an event as part of a team or committee, or simply to socialize. So, the location served as a useful starting point to observe student behavior, particularly students whose identities were strongly tied to the civic engagement component of the campus' mission. Based on previous experience, at any given time, at least 50 students considered themselves to be regular "student leaders" in civic engagement programs through the university's engagement office. Likewise, of students who were consistently involved in these types of activities, approximately 75 percent of students were female and 25 percent were male (Loyola Office of Institutional Research, Student Profiles). Therefore, after an initial recruitment period, about 20 students agreed to participate in interviews. Participant ages ranged from ages 18 to 23 years.

Semi-structured interviews consisting of both key informants (consistent student leaders) and occasional visitors were conducted. These interviews could be characterized as maintaining a plan but also maintaining a sense of flexibility depending on the course of the interviews. Kvale (1996) noted that this strategy incorporates "themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions...yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions

in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told” (p. 124). Field notes—my reactions, emerging questions, and potential follow-up discussions—were also recorded during the interviews.

Recording Data

An interview protocol was used for each individual interview; interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and each participant was told that they may be invited to participate in a second interview if needed. Based on Gee and Ullman's (1998) model, the interview protocol included grand tour questions, mini-tour questions, example questions, and experience questions. The researcher also borrowed from life history interview techniques—a method that "provides focus on somebody rather than on everybody"—in order to understand "how people view or choose to portray their own lives" (Wolcott, 1997, p. 161).

Interviews explored the following themes: types of service and civic engagement activities in which participants are involved, internal and external incentives for participating in these types of activities, recent conversations on current event topics with likeminded students, perceptions of civic engagement and social justice activities by peers, mentors, family, etc., and the role of questioning and critical thinking in service and civic engagement activities. Additionally, after gaining permission from student leaders and/or staff advisors, informal participant observation—observing scheduled student leader meetings and gatherings—were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of each semester.

Findings, Themes, and Conclusions

Hymes' (1974) model of speaking and its eight elements—setting and scene, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, genre—served as a useful interpretative tool for this study. It also served as a reminder that all talk happens in a certain cultural context. This cultural context affects what is said, who says it, how it is being said, to whom it is being said, etc. As such, Hymes' (1974) model encouraged us to understand human communication never as an isolated event, but as a culturally conditioned one that is affected by attendant forces. Additionally, this model helped to categorize a variety of types of communication, categorizing that can aid in the process of developing codes and themes within the data. As mentioned earlier, these codes can emerge from the data—as “emic” codes—or be affixed by the researcher's own process of analysis—as “etic” codes. For the purposes of this study, then, Hymes' (1974) work was an important guide in assessing information that was collected. Additionally, Spradley's (1980) suggestions for using guiding categories in data collection—moving from descriptive to focused to selective observations—was a useful framework to probe more deeply into recurring themes.

Each interview was conducted using a set of common questions. These questions served as a broad guide rather than an unchangeable script. The interviews flowed like a guided conversation and certain topics were explored more in depth depending on the issues raised by the students. When analyzing and assembling the student narratives into readable form, key emic and etic themes began to emerge. In large measure, emic themes emerged and were

used to structure the data. These themes emerged in relation to the four pillars of the study's conceptual framework. The framework gave direction to the selection of the themes. In a few cases, etic themes were used when a student's narrative could not easily be summarized using their own words. Some students used more precise language than others; some students talked around a concept but did give words to it exactly. In those cases, the researcher applied an etic theme that attempted to capture the sentiment behind the student response.

Once emic themes emerged and etic themes were applied, those themes were compiled into a master grouping of all themes. Again, the majority of themes were emic themes. The themes were then summarized into a short, one-word summary term in order to try to encapsulate the key message of the theme. In a sense, the themes were factor loaded onto singular summary terms. What emerged was a list of summarized themes—nearly 30 in all—that described the overall content and tone of the student narratives. Those summarized, one-word themes were then tallied in order to determine which themes were touched upon most frequently. The 10 themes that occurred most frequently were used to then create a composite sketch of a prototypical student. This sketch served as a narrative summary and compilation of all the student narratives, a way of highlighting the most frequently occurring sentiments within entire the collection of student stories.

Trustworthiness and Validity

Stake's (1995) standard question of "do we have it right?" is an important question for any qualitative data analysis and interpretation. In ethnographic

research, trustworthiness is “the sum of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability” (Shank, 2006, p. 115). To get to that point, certain measures and steps must be taken. And it is the researcher’s responsibility to make sure “interpretive flights of fancy” are avoided. Certain techniques guard against that. This is a critical part of the interpretation of findings that will both strengthen the conclusions and, ultimately, respect the experiences of the participants.

Certainly, interpretation is always rooted in the researcher’s experience, for “it is the researcher’s values that provide contextual meaning” (Byrne, 1998, p. 4). With qualitative methods, the researcher is both instrument and researcher. But the contextual meanings ascribed to students’ experiences were verified at various stages in the collection and writing process. I validated conclusions in two main ways—through both member checking and triangulation. Member checking involved “determining whether the actors whose beliefs and behavior are being described recognize the validity of their accounts” (Creswell, 1998, p. 211). Triangulation involved making sure that multiple informants and a variety of perspectives were included. Multiple sources of information—artifacts (using document analysis, for example), interviews, and participant observation—also strengthened the final account (Creswell, 1998). These safeguards helped to preserve the integrity of the data and share a trustworthy account.

Summary

This chapter reviewed distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research, situating this study within the tradition of qualitative research as the most appropriate approach for exploring the stated research questions. Site-

specific details, characteristics of participants, and methods of data collection were also discussed. Themes, conclusions, and overall trustworthiness were reviewed as well. Because civic engagement on campus can be studied through the lens of student culture and its attendant meanings, a qualitative, ethnographic case study approach was most appropriate to explore how that engagement is sustained on college and university campuses. Employing this type of methodology enabled the voices of students to be shared and further contributed to the literature on the topic.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

CAMPUS AND ENGAGED STUDENTS: A PICTURE OF A WAY OF LIFE

Introduction

This study set forth to explore these research questions: How do students make meaning from their involvement in sustained civic engagement activities? How does civic engagement involvement in a Jesuit context shape student culture? How do the perspectives of the students change? What role does the developmental stage of students as emerging adults play in this student culture? And, finally, based on their experiences, how do students make meaning of Jesuit ideals and values? How do these ideals and values shape their thinking and action?

What follows is a glimpse into the rituals, behaviors, and assorted perspectives of a group of students involved in the community service office at Loyola University. The chapter was divided into three main sections. The first section painted a picture of the university. I reviewed its history, demographics of the student population, and other facts and figures related to the university's mission. I also discussed my particular role at the institution [researcher perspective] and how my perspective shaped my approach to the context. The first section also included a snapshot of the first few weeks of the academic year for students involved in the service office. Signature programs that kick off the academic year were highlighted, including three key events—a student orientation program involving first-year students, a leadership training for established students, and an on-campus welcome week of service events. These events

helped to tell the story and capture the ethos of a particular part of the life of the university.

The second section of the chapter included selections of biographical sketches of students. These students had all been involved to varying degrees in service, advocacy, and civic engagement activities on campus. Their stories helped to paint a picture of how individual students live and operate within a particular context within this particular type of university. Their individual stories—while unique to each student—often overlapped with the stories of the other students who were included. Their stories showed a developmental pattern, and spoke to the four pillars of this study’s conceptual framework.

The third section was a composite sketch—a type of ethnographic fiction—that combined the most salient themes from the student stories into one broader story. This sketch created a type of “ideal student” based on the most common elements that emerged from the student stories.

The University and Its Signature Events

Setting the Stage: The University

Loyola University was situated in north Baltimore on a suburban campus, about 80 acres of wooded Maryland landscape. Founded in 1852 by the Society of Jesus (a Roman Catholic order of priests, hereinafter referred to as the Jesuits), the university originally was housed in a small building in center city Baltimore. As the institution grew and academic programs developed, the university moved to a larger plot of land in the northern part of the city in 1922. Wealthy merchants and city leaders lived (and continue to live) in this section of

the city—the two main neighborhoods that adjoin the campus are known as Homeland and Guilford. Like many other universities, Loyola educated only white male students for most of its history. In 1971, the campus became co-educational as it merged with a local women's college, the Mount St. Agnes College. The university changed its designation from Loyola College in Maryland to Loyola University Maryland in 2009.

Today, the university enrolls nearly 6,000 (about 4,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate) students (Loyola University Maryland Office of Institutional Research, 2014). It offers programs in 35 academic majors, ranging from fields in humanities, sciences, business, education, and the social sciences. Graduate programs are offered in business and management, computer science, education, emerging media, liberal studies, pastoral counseling, psychology, speech-language pathology/audiology, and theology. About 430 faculty members serve the campus. The most popular undergraduate programs are biology, psychology, and speech pathology; 75 percent of enrolled undergraduates participate in these programs. For graduate students, the most popular programs are education, counseling, and business and management (2014).

The majority of undergraduate students at the university (between 70-75 percent) represent the mid-Atlantic states of Maryland, District of Columbia, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York (Loyola University Maryland Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The remaining percentage of the student body (about 20 percent) comes from the New England area, largely. In 2011, 78 percent of students identified as Roman Catholic. Many graduated from Roman

Catholic high schools as well. Male students make up 39 percent of the student body; female students make up 61 percent. Many students are top students in their high school graduating classes. As of 2012, the average SAT score was 1300. A large percentage of students—roughly 81 percent—reside on campus, so the university is known as a residential institution and provides programs and services for a large resident population. There is a 12:1 ratio of students to faculty (2015).

The university is also staffed by a number of Jesuit priests and brothers—Roman Catholic priests who live in a community house (called the Jesuit Residence) on the campus. The university is one of the educational ministries of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, an administrative division of the Society of Jesus within the larger United States. There are nine Jesuit provinces across the country; each manages its own staff, organizations, and overall financial affairs. While the university is self-sustaining as a nonprofit educational institution, it receives financial support from the Maryland Province of the Jesuits. And, since the Jesuits live in community (receiving a living allowance but sharing much in common), the salaries of those who are employed by the university are often donated back to the university. Of the 50 Jesuits who live on campus in the Jesuit Residence, the university employs 15 of them in various roles (professors, administrators, chaplains, etc.). Within the Maryland province of the Jesuits, there are 250 Jesuits who are on the roster of active priests.

Campus Ministry plays an active role on campus as well. During any given school year, 500 students participate in spiritual retreats off campus. The

retreats are thematic by special topic—environmental ethics retreats, class year retreats, men’s and women’s retreats, team retreats through the athletics department, and community service-themed retreats. The retreats involve a mixture of group activities, silent prayer, group worship, and personal talks from student and professional staff retreat team members. During Sunday worship services, hundreds of students file into the campus chapel to attend services that are offered three to four times each Sunday. Jesuit priests, most of whom live on campus among the students, lead the Sunday worship services. The services are staffed by students, however. They serve as readers, worship assistants, greeters, communion ministers, and choir leaders and soloists. In accordance with the Jesuit mission, many of the sermons focus on community involvement and social justice themes—serving the poor, taking care of the “least of these,” working for peace and promoting justice.

Community/Civic Engagement in Action

A key component of the university’s mission was service to the community. Throughout much of the university’s marketing materials, the themes of academic excellence, faith, justice, and service were present. The school recently received a “community engagement classification” from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, recognizing the institution’s commitment to the local community. The service mission was actualized through a main office on campus called the Center for Community Service and Justice (CSSJ). While several offices on campus had a community engagement function as part of their work, CCSJ was charged with putting this mission into practice

and integrating it throughout the university. Founded in 1992 as the Center for Values and Service, the office provided experiential learning opportunities through volunteerism and academic service-learning. Originally, community service activities were offered through the university's Campus Ministry office. As more students began to get involved and faculty started incorporating service-learning into their courses, university administrators created the Center for Values and Service as its own unit within the institution. Now, 10 professional staff and 45 student staff members facilitate its many programs. From the beginning of the office's founding, it stood out as a challenge to the institution to live up to its stated mission. Similarly, the office and its staff viewed themselves as animators of the university's mission through the programming they offered. The office and its staff were largely known for raising questions about social justice issues on campus, frequently asking whether decisions on campus square with the justice mission of the Jesuits.

CCSJ's program offerings ranged from student leadership development, community partnerships, faculty development, alternative break programming, social justice education programs, and one-time community service activities in the community. Academic (or course-based) service-learning, while not a requirement for graduation, was a popular offering on campus. A pedagogy involving ongoing reflection and integration of course material with community service activities, service-learning courses had grown in popularity since the founding of CCSJ in 1992. Faculty members from a variety of departments taught service-learning courses. As of 2012, there were 75 courses that were

officially designated as service-learning. Other students got involved in co-curricular service activities—programs that were not required but simply offered as a student activity. These programs might have been one-time service activities, where students might have donated blood at an American Red Cross Blood Drive or spent time with residents from local senior centers at an on-campus Senior Citizen Prom. Alternative spring break experiences—called Spring Break Outreach—engaged about 100 student participants each year. Students traveled to places like inner city Baltimore, rural Appalachia, and Newark, New Jersey. They lived in dormitory-style residences and participated in community service projects throughout the week. Reflection sessions were led by students each evening, and faculty or staff members participated in the reflections with the students. The reflections tried to summarize the day and help students articulate goals for the upcoming days.

According to surveys of enrolled students, CCSJ staff members estimated that about 75 percent of enrolled students participated in some sort of service activity during their four years at the university (M. Howell, personal communication, February 2, 2013). Yet far fewer students were regular, returning, weekly participants in CCSJ programs—perhaps 500-750 students in any given year. Even smaller was the number of student staff and unpaid student leaders who run the programs and recruit other students. This number was about 75 students. Before being hired or chosen as leaders, these students often had experienced several CCSJ programs already—whether as one-time or ongoing volunteers.

My Work at the University

I worked at Loyola University's CCSJ for seven years. Prior to that period, I had attended the university as an undergraduate student. As a student, I was heavily involved in the office from the start of my freshman year. I had originally applied for a Federal Work Study position in the office. At the time, it was known as the Center for Values and Service (referred to frequently as CVS, or "the Center"). The position, while initially intended to be an administrative support position, turned out to be a program leader position. All the other student staff members—all paid, all either sophomores, juniors, or seniors—had attended the Center's student leadership training just a few weeks before I began. I had just begun my freshman year in college, and was now entering into an established group of experienced students who had already bonded with each other. In many ways, these students took me under their wings and served as influential mentors and role models.

From the start of my student position there, I was able to glean two key pieces of information. First, this office seemed unlike other campus offices that employed students, largely because the students were given significant responsibility. These students seemed to work with a different level of autonomy than other students on campus. This office just seemed to do things differently. In fact, the early vision for the office was that students—after receiving quality training and consistent supervision—would recruit and supervise other student volunteers who would serve at various sites in the local community. The student leaders—or "student staff members"—would serve as liaisons between the

community partner agency and student volunteers. Professional staff would supervise the student staff members, but on the whole, the students would be the first points of contact and would “run their programs” with a fair amount of independence.

Early on during my time as a student staff member at the office, the founding director of the Center shared with me a story about how she created the student positions. She said:

When I first told my colleagues in Student Development, Financial Aid, Campus Ministry, and Student Employment that I wanted to give students the responsibility of serving as liaisons between the University and community partner agencies, people looked at me as if I had two heads. (E. Swezey, personal communication, ca. April 1995)

At that time, she was going against the grain at the university in how it handled student employees. For the most part, students had traditionally been given administrative and clerical duties. Many students were employed as Federal Work Study students. Except for student positions in residence life (e.g., resident assistants), student job categories and descriptors like internships, peer educators, and student staff were largely nonexistent. The founding director’s vision and way of working with students represented a significant shift in how student employees were managed on campus. The founding director placed significant responsibility into the hands of these students, effectively having them serve as de facto representatives of the university.

From my initial impression, as a new student staff member and first year student, the office and its professional and student staff seemed to be on the cutting edge of social justice issues. They were living the mission of the university like no other department or individual on campus. Further, the professional staff members were seen as individuals who might 'push the envelope.' This impression remained throughout my time there as a student employee and later as a professional staff member. To me, there was a certain aura or mystique that surrounded these students. That initial impression remained unchanged as I entered into my professional role in the office.

Several years passed before I was offered a position as a professional staff member. My intention was not to return to work at the Center, but circumstances allowed me to accept a position there seven years after I had graduated from the university. My professional work focused on helping students to get involved in the community through community service. I supervised nine students directly, and oversaw a staff of 42 student staff members, as shown in Figure 1. These students were charged with recruiting other students to participate in community service programs. Most of the students worked closely as liaisons with community partner agencies—nonprofits in the Baltimore community mostly working on human service issues. My work involved recruiting and hiring students, organizing leadership trainings, evaluating performance, and mentoring and supervising. I served as a professional staff liaison to more than 10 community partner agencies as well, often serving as the intermediary between student staff and agency contacts.

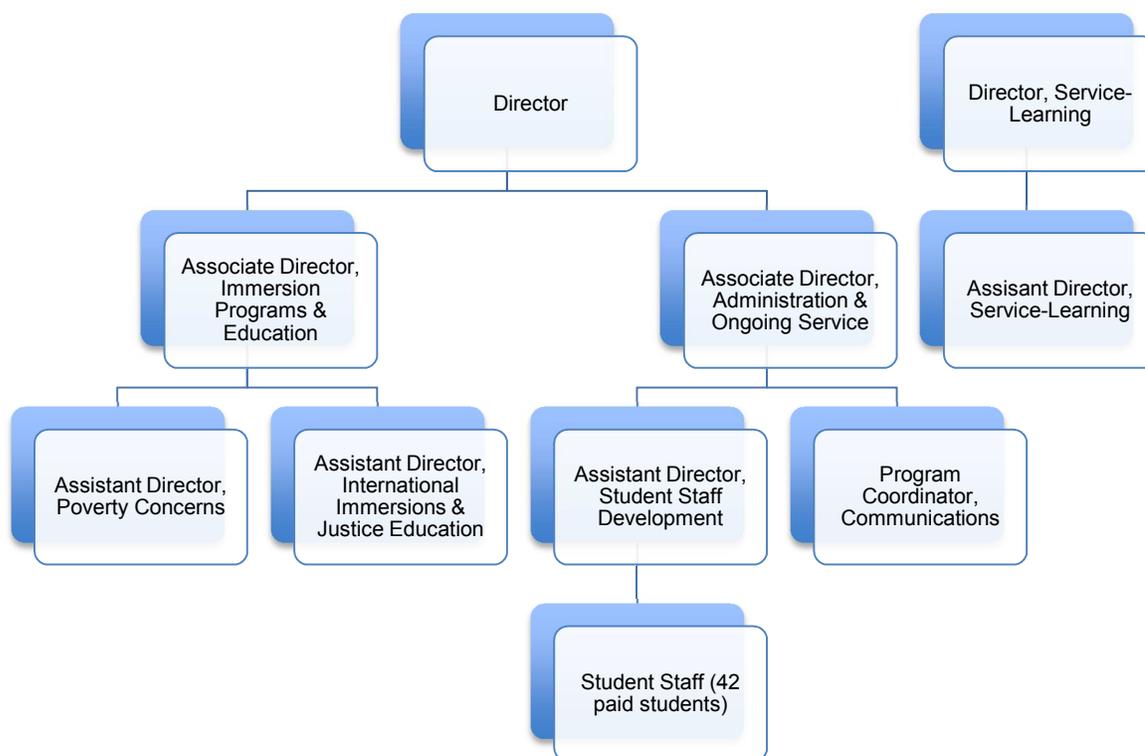


Figure 1. Organizational chart showing CCSJ professional staff.

The Mission of CCSJ within the University

Within the administrative structure of the university as a whole, I worked as an administrator within the division of academic affairs. Our office reported directly to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The office was closely linked with the Campus Ministry office that reported directly to the university president. In many ways, this decision to locate CCSJ in academic affairs was very intentional. Originally reporting directly to the university president when the office was part of Campus Ministry (in the late 1980s and early 1990s), the office was

placed within academic affairs when it became its own university unit in 1992. To many, this move would make sure that the office and its offerings would be viewed with credibility and academic rigor. Faculty would take the programming much more seriously if it reported to the Academic Vice President's office, and the office could leverage this structural positioning to enhance its authority on campus.

Frequently, the tagline of "learning through service" was used around campus and specifically around the CCSJ office. All students were expected to be able to articulate not just what they did in the community, but what they learned. In terms of leadership, the director of service-learning was a former faculty member with a Ph.D. in sociology. That individual was a regular participant at academic senate meetings (similar to a faculty senate). Similarly, the CCSJ director was a regular attendee at the council of academic deans meetings (similar to academic council or academic deans and directors meetings, usually convened by the chief academic officer).

Much of the office's day-to-day collaboration involved work with colleagues in the division of student development (similar to student affairs divisions at other institutions). Because colleagues in that division facilitated so much programming for students focused on experiences outside the classroom, our collaborative work made a lot of sense. The Campus Ministry office functioned in a similar manner. The CCSJ office and its professional staff were viewed as "honorary" members of the student development division. CCSJ staff worked with student development colleagues on such activities as joint

assessment efforts, leadership training for students, and student engagement events like activity fairs and orientation events. In many ways, the office acted as a type of bridge between academic affairs and student development. It could offer professional development and pedagogical support to faculty—and academic rigor—but it could also provide engaging opportunities for students rooted in student development theory. Even though much of CCSJ's offerings were not offered for course credit (apart from service requirements in academic service-learning courses), the message of “student learning through service” was a type of mantra throughout the office and across the institution. The office was known to take learning in the community seriously.

My direct colleagues, like me, also worked closely with student staff members. Some also supervised unpaid student leaders. Many of these students, depending on their role within a particular program, would also be considered student staff members. All students—whether paid or unpaid—were considered student leaders. Figure 2 describes the student staff structure.

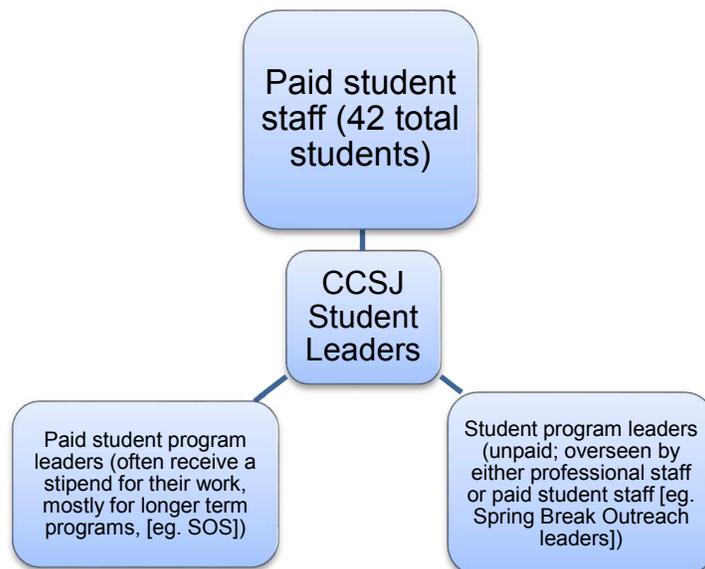


Figure 2. Organizational chart showing CCSJ student staff

Depending on the program, certain students were unpaid but still received leadership training and regular supervision. In terms of professional staff qualifications, many of my colleagues had backgrounds in ministry, college student personnel, higher education administration, social work, and nonprofit management. The office was divided into two structural divisions. One division facilitated co-curricular programming—activities that were largely not connected with an academic course, but were still considered to be experiential learning outside the classroom (and referred to as “learning through service”). The other division facilitated academic service-learning, working mostly with faculty to incorporate service into their courses. While some of my colleagues directly supervised student staff and student leaders, I had responsibility for the overall professional development of the entire staff of 45 students. Hence, my title was

Assistant Director for Student Staff Development. On a daily basis, my schedule involved individual supervision meetings with students, planning professional development activities for them, and communicating with community partners with whom those students worked.

In large measure, and especially during the start of the Spring semester, my work centered around planning student staff training for the upcoming Fall semester. The planning was a significant effort. Logistical details—such as meeting with community partners to set goals and expectations, developing program timelines for the upcoming year, making sure student drivers to the partner sites were official approved by the university—were put in place during the early Spring semester so incoming student staff members could plan accordingly for the next academic year. Once the Spring semester ended, the planning team—chaired by me—started its work in earnest. Training themes, potential guest speakers, hands-on activities, and assessment techniques were all items for consideration by the planning team each year. Some sessions were kept from year to year, and some brand new activities and sessions were introduced based on student needs and assessment results from previous trainings. The planning for student staff training happened simultaneously with planning for two other key events on campus: Student Orientation to Service and Initium week activities.

Student Staff Training

It was mid-August in Baltimore. The temperature approached triple digits. On Loyola's campus, preparations for new students were in full swing. First-year

orientation staff members hurried to make sure the fall orientation program was ready. They expected more than 800 new first year students to arrive during the last week of August. “All hands on deck” was an appropriate slogan to describe the feel of the campus. Residence halls were readied. Landscapers made sure the campus looked green and healthy, trimming trees, watering flowers, ensuring all grass—especially on the main campus quadrangle—is bright green.

In the CCSJ office, the action was just as hurried. The staff prepared for the arrival of over 45 student leaders and paid student staff members. These students, having been hired in February of the previous academic year, had been prepared for their early arrival back to campus. In April, they gathered as a new student staff to hear from outgoing student staff about their experiences. Meetings were arranged between incoming student leaders, future supervisors, and outgoing student staff. The coaching and mentoring had begun there, and continued informally—in person, over email, and by phone—throughout the rest of the Spring semester and into the summer. Discussion focused on important details about the programs the new students would be inheriting, tips for working with community partners (local nonprofits affiliated with the university), specific expectations of the supervisor, time management tricks, how best to encourage peers to participate in reflection, and relevant social justice topics the incoming student might want to explore as they take on their new official leadership position. Depending on the program, the coaching conversations ranged from being heavy on logistics to heavy on conceptual, “big picture” social justice topics.

Several student staff members had been hired to work in the CCSJ office over the summer. Their work involved helping to get the office ready for the incoming students for the next academic year. Typically, these students had served as paid student staff members previously. So they brought experience and perspective with them into their summer positions. Their summer duties varied. Some students worked on planning new reflection activities for the incoming students, assembling binders of resources to be used by their peers. Other students analyzed assessment data from student satisfaction surveys that were distributed during the previous academic year. Still, other students helped to plan immersion trips (sometimes referred to as alternative break trips or mission trips) and prepared curricular materials for the upcoming year. In many ways, the summer student staff members helped direct and shape the educational content of the service programs for the upcoming year.

When student staff and leaders were selected in the Spring semester for the upcoming year, they were expected to attend a two-week leadership training session before the start of the new academic year. Summer student workers served as members of the “student staff training committee” to assist with preparations for this training. Working alongside professional staff members, the students helped to plan the training content. The training involved teambuilding activities, an opening retreat, a group service project, and a variety of didactic sessions. Session topics included mission-focused content with titles such as “CCSJ and Loyola’s Mission of Service,” “Stories of Service and Justice,” “Service and Spirituality,” “Why Justice? Why Service?,” and “Community Asset

Theory.” Other sessions were skill-based and covered topics such as professionalism and time management, student volunteer recruitment, facilitating group discussions, social identity awareness, and managing the process of preparation and reflection for other students. Guests from the university and local community also attended and presented to the student leaders.

The training involved an experiential learning component, where students participated in a service project as a group, most often at a meal program for hungry and homeless guests in Baltimore city. Before the activity, they participated in a preparation activity using a “what, so what, now what” format. The “what” component involved details about the upcoming experience and asked students to consider past experiences they had with this particular social issue. The “so what” component considered the reality of hunger and homelessness in Baltimore—statistics, trends, policies, and media coverage of the topic. The “now what” component encouraged students to articulate personal goals they might have wanted to accomplish as a result of the experience. The students were asked to put themselves in the shoes of a typical student who might participate in this kind of activity during the school year. After the service project, students engaged in a group reflection, focusing on memorable encounters, new perspectives on the social issue, and take-away action steps.

During the training, the students and professional staff all had regular contact with one another. The feel was relaxed, especially during the opening retreat. Students and professional staff did team-builders together, prayed together, ate together, and socialized together in the relaxed evening hours. The

professional staff engaged in the small group discussions just as much as the students, sometimes serving as facilitators and sometimes as regular participants. As most professional staff members participated in the majority of the two-week training, the students became accustomed to having the professional staff present. Many of the professional staff led sessions and served as instructors during training. They also joined in the group service project. While the professional staff were leaders and university administrators, there was a sense of equality and egalitarianism during the training (and largely throughout the year). These relaxed interactions continued throughout the school year with frequent informal gatherings over leftover food and dessert in the CCSJ office. There was a community feel, a sense of shared mission and purpose.

The annual training was a hallmark of the year and one of CCSJ's most significant investments of staff and financial resources. All professional staff members attended and helped facilitate the majority of the training. Most CCSJ professional staff members provided some input on training plans and helped facilitate the sessions. The training was referred to consistently throughout the academic year, and it was seen as the stepping stone for many students to begin their leadership journey at CCSJ. In mid-August, the training participants began to arrive. They checked in at the CCSJ office with bright enthusiasm, bringing stories from their summers but seeming anxious to be back on campus in a familiar environment. As they checked in, they received room keys, a training manual, and an official welcome letter from the CCSJ professional staff. They were told that the next two weeks would be full, busy, and hopefully, energizing

and inspiring. And, each year, training began with an official welcome and kick-off with all students and staff present, a celebratory event kicking off the academic year for this group of students.

Student Orientation to Service

Many of the student leaders and staff members who arrived for training began their first steps in getting involved by participating in a pre-orientation program before first-year classes began. The three-day orientation—called “SOS: Student Orientation to Service”—involved teambuilding and icebreaker activities, service as a group at a local soup kitchen/meal program, and reflection opportunities. The students prayed together as a group and with homeless and hungry guests at the meal program. The students arrived on campus after the pre-orientation, prepared to begin their freshman year. They applied to the program in the summer; SOS is one option among several thematic pre-orientation programs offered by the university. The bond—the collective commitment to service—that was formed was often spoken about throughout the students’ four years at the university. Many of these students went on to play an active role in leading service activities on the campus, largely through the CCSJ office. Some saw it as an implicit expectation that they would “carry the torch” and assume a leadership position. The experience set the stage—in a very intentional way—for students to find a home in the service identity of the campus.

The SOS program began shortly after the leadership training for the CCSJ student staff and leaders. The training participants were expected to welcome the first-year SOS participants to campus, helping them move in to their on-

campus residences. All of the first-year students lived in university residence halls. The program began with an official opening banquet on the day the SOS students arrived to campus. Family members (mostly parents and siblings), university administrators and faculty supporters, community agency representatives, and CCSJ student staff and leaders all attended the banquet. It began with prayer and a welcome to the families led by the university president. The tables were filled with chatter among parents, students, and campus community members. The CCSJ professional staff welcomed each student as they entered the banquet room. During the dinner, selections of the participants' application responses were read; the assembly heard stories about why participants chose to apply, what service has meant to their own lives, and how they hoped to be involved in the Baltimore community as a Loyola student. Key leaders on campus referred to "Magis"—"the more"—in their remarks to the incoming students. Heard frequently around campus, the Latin "Magis" was a regularly spoken slogan referring to always striving for something better and holistic.

Once the banquet ended, students and parents said farewell to each other. Later that evening, students met with the SOS program leaders—professional staff and paid student leaders—to travel to inner city Baltimore using the public bus. Using public transportation was part of the experience of being immersed into the community, especially learning how low-income and marginalized residents might live. Students and professional staff took the bus to downtown Baltimore and walked the rest of the way to the Beans & Bread meal program.

Along the walk, staff and leaders pointed out items of significance in Baltimore. They pointed out where social service agencies were located around the city, where homeless people might find a meal or a dry spot to sleep, and how law enforcement agencies attempted to manage the problem. The students and staff arrived at their destination—a meal program that served hundreds of homeless and hungry guests each week. Their accommodations were a second floor apartment above the meal program (a furnished apartment often used for professional development meetings, community gatherings, retreats, or volunteer orientations). For the duration of the program, students learned about hunger and homelessness in Baltimore, met social service providers, and engaged in direct service in the community. Each night was spent in communal reflection. Finally, students returned together to campus, went their separate ways to their residence halls, and began the start of first-year student orientation.

Initium

At the beginning of each school year, the campus was filled with signs about the upcoming Initium Week. The Latin word for “at the beginning,” Initium was a long-held tradition on campus that kicked off the school year. The use of the Latin word situated the beginning of the school year in the long history of Jesuit education and its use of Latin terms and phrases (Traub, 2008). Filled with activities to welcome first-year students, Initium Week also included several informational fairs to encourage students to get involved from the start. One of the biggest events was the Service Fair. Usually held on the campus quad—a large green space in the center of campus—the service fair brought students

together with representatives from local community partner agencies. Signs, banners, sidewalk chalk, and table tents all scattered about the campus advertising the fair. Students in first-year experience courses attended in place of class. A buzz of excitement was in the air during the fair, especially as community partners arrived and started setting up their tables to recruit student volunteers.

The majority of students interviewed for this study mentioned that they first really heard about service at Loyola during the service fair. Many students learned about the fair during first-year student orientation over the summer. Excitement built as the date for the fair approached. The fair was coupled with another activities fair during the same week, so students received a plethora of information about ways to get involved. Student leaders stood at the intersections of the campus walkways, greeting students and community partners. Service-learning faculty mingled with community partners, looking to make connections for the experiential learning components of their courses. Cookies and lemonade welcomed visitors throughout the walkways.

Student staff members who were charged with marketing duties in the CCSJ office—Creative Interns—spent weeks over the summer crafting a brand for the Service Fair. The marketing materials often contained symbolic images about community, equality, social justice, and common humanity. At the entrance to the service fair, the “Service Like Never Before” banner welcomed visitors. CCSJ banners, all color-coordinated, lined the walkways, and color themed balloons adorned each of the 75 tables. The brand created by the

Creative Interns seemed ubiquitous; it set the tone for the fair and introduced new students to important themes on campus. And, as such, the brand set the tone for the academic year in the CCSJ office among student leaders and staff, where it was often referred to, mentioned, and used in promotional materials.

During the Initium fair, students, faculty, administrators, and community partners all mingled with one another. In recent years, the weather had been warm and sunny during the fair. So, the outdoor location offered a somewhat festival-like atmosphere. Students checked in at the welcome table and received a map of partners who were in attendance and student-led programs that were represented. Each student was given a promotional item—a pen, a magnet, a bag clip with the CCSJ logo and “service like never before” tag line—as they entered the fair. Student and professional staff all wore name badges and staff polo shirts as they greeted visitors. Community partners brought their advertising materials and displayed them on their tables and enjoyed the lunch provided for them. Faculty members shared potential service-learning projects with partner representatives. Students signed up for one-time and ongoing service activities, often placing their name on many volunteer sign-up sheets (more than they could actually attend). At the end of each brief conversation between interested students and community partners, an invite was extended to attend an upcoming preparation session.

At the end of the fair, materials and supplies were brought back to the CCSJ office. Student and professional staff members all regrouped, congratulating each other on a successful event. There was often leftover food

from the fair to be enjoyed. Soon, evaluations would be tallied and results shared with staff and student leaders in order to look ahead to next year's fair. Much of the planning, preparation, and recovering from the fair happened in the CCSJ office.

The CCSJ Office

The CCSJ office was a centralized campus space that seemed to be home for many students, particularly involved student leaders. Originally housed in the lower level of the campus chapel, the office recently moved to the Humanities Building, a large tudor-style mansion and one of the main academic buildings on campus. The office was tucked deep within the building, feeling a bit like an enclave. The space functioned as a type of unofficial student center. Many students participated in late night conversations in the office with other groups of students. These conversations were often informal, usually over leftover catered food from the day's meetings and events. A pot of coffee was usually brewing in the kitchenette. Because the office served as a type of enclave where only student employees and associated student leaders had access, there was often a feeling of privacy and secrecy. In a sense, only a privileged few could participate in these conversations—only trusted friends, student coworkers, and peers.

The student office was surrounded by many professional staff offices and formed a rectangular lobby area. Comfortable couches, tables for small group meetings, a counter full of desktop computers, and a large screen and LCD projector fill the space. Fairly traded handcrafts, posters of upcoming events,

and social justice-themed artwork were everywhere. There was a large mural in the center of the common space showing a stylized map of Baltimore city, including the variety of neighborhoods, some more well-known and tourist-focused than others. The map stated “The Service Thing” at the top in bold font. “The Service Thing” was a fairly new program that required all students who participated in ongoing service activities to participate in at least one group reflection session. The program also required students to post responses to reflection questions through an online portal. The name of the program was meant to be fun and whimsical, yet convey a sense of membership and ownership among the students. Students often pointed to The Service Thing map when giving tours of the space and office.

Student staff members gathered for staff meetings each wee—usually on Wednesday evenings—to participate in a combination of “inspiration, education, and information.” Meetings usually began with an “opening”—a prayer, poem, brief inspirational reading—which was led by either a student team member or professional staff member. Updates about student programs and events were shared—from social justice speakers to volunteers needed for specific events like the Loyola Sunday at Beans & Bread meal program for people who were hungry and/or homeless. Other students shared highlights and concerns about other student volunteers; those concerns ranged from worries about lack of consistency in attendance to recent responses to reflection questions posted online. The student staff members managed the posting of the online questions, and they monitored student responses. Basic, descriptive questions were posted

online, such as “what have you learned so far at your service site?,” “what have you seen and heard lately that surprised you?,” and “recall a recent conversation you had with a guest at your service site—what did you take away from that conversation?” Student staff members posted responses and then discussed their responses with peers at the staff meetings. They offered feedback to each other, often discussing the best ways to encourage, offer a challenging perspective to their peers, and create sustained dialogue.

At most staff meetings, a current event article—often referred to within the group as the “so what”—was shared among the students and discussed. During one week’s meeting, an article entitled “Homeless Hotspots” was distributed. The students engaged in a lively discussion about a conference planning team who employed homeless individuals to serve as roving Wi-Fi hotspots for conference attendees. “This is really just exploitation at its best,” one student lamented. Another said, “but there is an element of entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency here.” The majority of students came down on the side of “exploitation,” but the conversation was cordial, measured, civil. The staff meeting closed with a round of “kudos”—a weekly ritual in which students complimented each other around the circle for the good work they did during the previous week. Many “kudos” began with, “I don’t know if anyone else noticed but me, but I’d like to give kudos to Alex.” The students applauded for each other regularly.

After the staff meeting, the students dispersed into smaller groups. Some worked individually on laptops, using the space to get schoolwork finished or to

study for exams. Some students sat in corner spaces, quietly talking with other students to continue the staff meeting conversation. They occasionally sought input from other students: “Hannah, what do you think about this issue?” Other students visited with a professional staff member who had recently popped into the office after attending a campus lecture, checking on email one last time or just interested in visiting with students. Students stayed in the office late into the evening and early morning hours, sometimes napping and occasionally ordering take-out food. They talked, finished schoolwork, and relaxed. The space served as a comfortable and safe space for conversations to unfold and students to be themselves. Different than a residence hall lounge, this space seemed to have a unique sort of purpose—more intentional and focused, relaxed but always civilized. On any given night, students were there. As one student commented, they went to this place “for deeper conversations, to feel connected with likeminded students.”

Signature Events

Another signature event was the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice. The Teach-In was an annual event held in conjunction with the School of the Americas protest and vigil and Fort Benning, Georgia. For the past several years, activists have gathered at the gates of Fort Benning to call for an end to the School of the Americas, a military training school known for hosting Latin American military leaders who have committed serious human rights abuses. Recently renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, the school played down its history and claims. Protestors and regular visitors to

the annual event were not convinced. Since the late 1990s, Jesuit educators have brought groups of students to the protest and vigil as a show of support. Eventually, the Jesuit student attendance at the protest evolved into a weekend-long event focused on a variety of social justice topics. The phrase “A Faith That Does Justice,” an oft-quoted saying from Peter Hans Kolvenbach, former superior of the Jesuits, was seen and heard regularly at the Teach-In. A tour bus full of students and other campus community members traveled to the Teach-In every November (as of 2012, the Teach-In was relocated to Washington, DC and served as a type of networking and conference opportunity for students who were interested in all types of advocacy and social justice issues).

Many students were also involved in signature events involving hunger and homelessness awareness. Events like Meet & Eat—a program that brought together Loyola students and individuals experiencing hunger or homelessness in Baltimore—were popular among students. Guests from local community partner agencies were invited to participate, and transportation to campus was provided for them. The event seemed to have become a trademark of the office’s program offerings, something most students wanted to attend at some point during their time on campus. Conversation over a catered meal, prayer and poetry, and informal musical performances were all part of the event. Other students participated in a UNITE weekend (Urban Needs Introduced Through Experience), a weekend-long immersion program where students stayed in the second floor apartment at a local meal program in downtown Baltimore. The weekend involved active learning exercises, simulations around hunger issues,

and spending time with guests at the meal program. After the weekend, students regularly gathered for reunion activities (called “Re-UNITE”) for fellowship and conversation. They discussed how the weekend continually impacted them, and they found support for some of the challenges they experienced now that they had a new perspective on hunger and homelessness in Baltimore.

Student Leadership

A recurring message in the CCSJ office was the significance of taking on a leadership role on campus. These leadership positions were seen as rites of passage for most students involved in service and civic engagement activities. Part of the student leadership role involved regular contact with a supervisor from the CCSJ office. The supervisor took on a mentoring role, but also made sure that ongoing leadership and job-related tasks were being accomplished. The supervisors took their role quite seriously, often meeting as a “supervisors committee” to discuss student concerns, share advice regarding mentoring skills and techniques, and discuss the overall educational curriculum for the student leaders as a whole. If one supervisor had a concern or praised a student’s work, then all supervisors would soon know about it. Several of the students in this study noted that they admired the career history and life examples of their supervisors, both past and present.

Even if students were not paid student staff members, they still regularly gathered in small program-focused groups for planning and fellowship meetings. The group gatherings involved a mixture of inspirational activities, education about current events and social issues, and logistical information. The

gatherings all began with some type of meeting opening—a poem, prayer, inspirational reading, or brief video. Certain articles were used frequently, including one piece by Rachel Naomi Remen (1998) titled “Helping Versus Serving.” The reflective essay was written as a first-person account of how the author had been helped too often, and not served enough. As Remen (1998) pointed out, “helping is the work of the ego, serving is the work of the soul” (p. 16). The article gained traction within the student groups that gathered together, and it served as a starting point for conversation. Students asked themselves and engaged in frequent discussion about how one’s starting point—one’s stance toward others and the local community—mattered. “Helping Versus Serving” was now a key part of every meeting, training opportunity, or reflection gathering. The overall message and the article’s language were both referred to frequently by students and professional staff.

Preparation and Reflection

Student leaders were regularly charged with facilitating preparation and reflection activities for other students. These two terms were heard frequently in both formal meetings and informal conversations. On the office website, an entire section was devoted to the importance of the PARE Model—Preparation, Action, Reflection, Evaluation. The model was rooted in various experiential learning theories, from Dewey (*Experience and Education*, 1938) to Borton (*Reach, Touch, and Teach*, 1970) to Kolb (*Experiential Learning*, 1984). The PARE Model language was borrowed from early work done by service-learning practitioners at the University of Maryland’s service-learning center (Enos &

Troppe, 1996). Students were trained in putting the model into practice. Even in the promotional video for the CCSJ office, students mentioned the value of reflection as part of their learning process. Each student, in every program sponsored by the office, was expected to participate in a preparation session. The term “prep session” was often used as shorthand. Within the past several years, the term “prep session” replaced “orientation session” in order to convey a sense of more intellectually engaging content.

At staff meetings, student leaders shared their plans for upcoming preparation and reflection events. One shared an opening that he used at a recent prep session for students who served meals to people who were homeless in downtown Baltimore. The opening focused on the reality of hunger in America from the advocacy group “Share Our Strength.” Another student talked about how she engaged her incoming volunteers in a brief discussion about educational disparities in the United States. She seemed pleased that they all weighed in on her discussion prompt, relying on their experience at an afterschool high school tutoring program to inform their comments. An ongoing concern was attendance at prep sessions and reflection events, and students regularly expressed their dismay that their peers thought they could easily skip out on these events. As much as they stressed the mandatory nature of the sessions, many students did not attend or had scheduling conflicts. At the same time, the student leaders worried that they lacked the authority and willingness to prevent students from being permitted to participate in service programs. They routinely expressed this quandary. They wanted to staff their programs, but they

also wanted students participants to have the “full educational experience.” But the student leaders still expressed pride in their planning of these sessions; they worked together and closely with supervisors to construct a meaningful outline for each event. Supervisors then collected these agendas, offered critiques, and shared them with future student leaders.

In an effort to increase attendance and coordinate the curriculum for these preparation and reflection events, the CCSJ professional staff recently created a new program to help students understand the importance of full participation. In keeping with the office’s mission of “educating through service,” the program centered on both ongoing commitment and ongoing reflection. The goal was to reinforce that students’ experiences with service should be one component of a broader experiential education curriculum. Hence, the staff—in partnership with student leaders who offered input and ideas in planning—created “The Service Thing” program to enhance the educational value of service experiences. Students seemed excited about its potential to generate enthusiasm around learning through service. At the time of the study, though, the program was new and untested. Enthusiasm about it was building.

Summary

This introduction to the chapter reviewed the chapter outline. The study’s research questions were revisited. A brief outline of the chapter was also introduced, including the two main sections—the context of the university and biographical sketches of students. This section provided an overview of the history, traditions, and demographics of the university. Key events were

discussed, along with student participation and messaging around those events. Activities like student staff training, Student Orientation to Service, and Initium week helped to paint a picture of the ethos of this particular place and space on campus. Student leadership activities and dynamics, as well as some signature events in which students participated, helped to describe the ways in which a particular group of students spent their time. The following section—Part II—will complement this introductory session by providing some biographical snapshots of engaged students. These sketches—obtained from ethnographic interviews of students—placed each student within the context of the Jesuit tradition of higher education, the university, and the CCSJ office. The sketches described how each student fitted into campus traditions, signature events, and traditions.

Student Stories

Selection of Students

Many of the students interviewed for this study were “regulars” in the CCSJ office on campus. They were frequently around my office, often doing schoolwork, talking with friends or coworkers, or simply lounging in the office. They were never difficult to locate. Most of the interviews took place in either my office or in the student center directly across from the CCSJ office. The coffee shop in the student center was a regular meeting place for one-on-one supervision meetings between CCSJ professional and student staff. Student staff members also gathered there in small groups to continue conversations that had begun in the office. The interviews started with easygoing small talk and slowly became more official, but the majority of them always had the feel of a

casual conversation. For all the interviews, it felt like there was a common denominator of shared experience on campus.

Interview Structure

I entered into these conversations with students with an interview protocol in hand. But I also knew that, because of my relationships with them and the closeness of the community of students and staff on this campus, the conversations would flow in an unpredictable pattern. What emerged was a collection of student stories. What also emerged was a pattern of discussing taken-for-granted rituals and artifacts. Students within this study all had common experiences within an office and through the programs it offered. They all acknowledged the office feel, the types of conversations in which they regularly engaged, common readings and texts, regularly used slogans and sayings, how students gathered and interacted with each other, and how the mission and values of the place were continually reinforced.

A variety of topics rose to the surface as students in this study shared their stories. While a semi-structured ethnographic interview protocol was used, the interviews turned into contextualized conversations. Students shared willingly and freely. Many of the topics we discussed—and the language we used to describe these topics—were assumed by the students to be “business as usual” on campus, and specifically within their peer groups. They had become part of the everyday cultural discourse, often unexamined and generally accepted as how things were on campus. These topics included: how one enters into the subculture on campus, initial and ongoing personal influences (including family,

religion, and mentors), the necessity of reflection, a preference for justice over charity, their own understanding of Jesuit education, and the value of sustained involvement in service and justice activities.

The following student stories touched upon many of the themes mentioned previously. The accounts were told as stories in order to show the contextualized nature of the students' experiences. Many of the student accounts overlapped, and similar emic themes arose within each. What follows was a condensed and abbreviated version of each student's story. This allowed for the salient points of each student's story to emerge and limited overall repetition among the collection. The students represented a variety of class years and majors, and they also represented several different parts of the country. Some brought years of experience with Jesuit education, and others had only started on their journey in Jesuit education. All of the students had been consistently engaged in CCSJ programs and in the Baltimore community, some for the entire four years of their college career. As such, they spoke of plans for the future, how they would take what they had learned and how they had been shaped into the next chapter of their lives. Some students participated in follow-up interviews shortly after graduation. Those interviews appear at the end of the section. In the end, all were very interested in sharing their stories and, ultimately, reading about the stories of other students who participated.

Hannah

“Being with people,” “Swept up in the culture,”

“Reflection and thoughtful conversations”

Introduction to the interview. Hannah was a lively student who was immediately enthusiastic about participating in this study. She was a self-described “extrovert” and overwhelmingly positive and ebullient. On the surface, her shortness in stature did not seem to match her gregarious personality. She regularly gave hugs to anyone who would walk into the CCSJ office, offering a cheery welcome and genuine excitement to see a new face. Hannah was frequently referred to as the one who smiled the most in the office. She seemed to carry the office’s spirit of hospitality with her as she moved through her days on campus. I knew her throughout her four years on campus, meeting her for the first time as she moved into the residence halls. When I invited her to participate in an interview for this study, she enthusiastically agreed. She had just graduated from Loyola when I interviewed her. So, she appeared very pensive and reflective about her ensuing next steps and what it meant to leave the comfortable confines of campus. About one year after the initial interview, I had the opportunity to speak her again. At the time, she was participating in a full-time volunteer program in Boston and trying to decide if she would attend graduate school or commit to another year in the program.

Backstory. Hannah grew up in Boston and attended Catholic schools for her entire life. As she entered Loyola, she looked to get involved in service activities right away. She relied heavily on the example of other students from

the start. In fact, much of her interview touched on how she interacted with and looked up to other students. She said:

I've always relied on other students to be role models, to set the tone. I definitely looked up to them, just watching them be passionate and excited about things made me want to be the same way. I wasn't just thinking that they were doing lots of good things, but to see them also be passionate about the lack of programs for youth in the community and other things like that, it all came together in a way I hadn't witnessed before.

For Hannah, something about the passion of other students left an impression on her. Their example, guidance, and leadership remained with her as she began to immerse herself in campus life from the beginning. "Culture is major part for me," she said. "I love being able to get swept up in the culture and having that as a motivating piece... being around like-minded people who believe in similar things, who can have intelligent conversations."

Learning compassion/presence from other students; learning the style. The depth of involvement of other students also left an impression on Hannah. She talked about her perspective while she was a high school student, and compared it to the new ways of thinking to which she was exposed upon entering college. She said, "for example, in high school, I was part of a program where we made soup for elderly members of our parish who never really left their homes." She said that, now as a student at Loyola, and through participating in CCSJ programs, her outlook was different. The meaning of her efforts had changed. She continued reflecting on her experience serving the elderly: "I

never even thought of starting a program where maybe we could just stay and visit too. So we just dropped off soup. But, it never occurred to me that it might be a problem that these seniors were alone all day.” In college, she came to understand that presence and “being with people” was just as valuable (if not more). She noted the common humanity that she had come to recognize through her service experiences. “Seeing other students [stay and visit with people] was so helpful. I guess I realized that the relationships were more important than anything else. And the hope it instills in people to see that someone else cares.”

Swept up in the culture. One year later, Hannah had a broadened but similar perspective on the role of other students in learning and conveying culture. She had the advantage of offering a seasoned, more mature perspective after reflecting on questions from the earlier interview we conducted together. Now a City Year member in Boston (an education-focused program that places full-time academic coaches in underperforming schools), she was immersed in a city school doing academic mentoring and life skills coaching. Her enthusiasm for her work, and her newly emerging professional identity, bubbled over. She had clearly longed for the support and community and somewhat more manageable pace of her college days, but she was also energized by her new work. A naturally ebullient personality, her enthusiasm would most likely come through in any work that she would do. But this new placement, this new chapter in her life, had seemed to light a spark within her. She spoke mainly of the importance of

culture, and how she had come to appreciate it and value its role in shaping a community.

Much of that culture formation happened, from her perspective, through the mentorship of second year and former corps members. Those individuals set the tone and, as she noted, were described by senior leaders as the “heart and soul of the organization.” They had been through the experience not too long ago, and from Hannah’s perspective, those older corps members’ experiences were “fresh and raw.” She compared their tone setting to the tone setting that juniors and seniors naturally did while she was in college. Those students were the ones she looked up to and admired; they provided a clear example of progression, love for learning, intellectual and personal development, and broadened perspectives and horizons. They had somehow moved beyond just individual acts of service and had awakened to the big picture. They had shed light on the meaning of service, that it was more than just actions, but from Hannah’s view, a “way of being.”

Peers as “tone-setters.” Hannah reflected on the role of peers in creating and sustaining culture, and she compared and contrasted the influence of those with her experience as a college student: “This year [as a City Corps member], I’ve never been more acutely aware of the impact culture has on morale and team spirit. The culture within an organization can be created so intentionally. That has really affected my overall attitude and the way I serve.” She recognized the importance of being a member of an institution, being part of something larger than herself and her own individual actions. For her, culture

forms when individuals interact with the mission of an organization. Her peers in college served as a type of “cultural role model.” She said, “I think back to the seniors who I worked with in college... seeing them as role models, and I realized that having role models in service is so important.” Those students modeled a way of being for Hannah, a way of interacting with others and a way of reacting to new situations: “It’s important because they show you that it’s OK to be excited, or humble, or how to deal effectively with others... but they also set the tone.” In her post-college position, older corps members were viewed as “the heart and soul of the organization.” Unlike the professional staff or the board of directors, experienced corps members “know what questions to ask to, they know the struggles we will go through, they’ve been there.” In comparison, her experience with older students at CCSJ was very similar, and they gave her a model of what mentors and role models could do for her: “they serve that purpose in the same way.”

Reflection in a Jesuit context. Hannah also came to appreciate the value of reflection, especially as she transitioned into her role as a full-time professional working in a human service field. She had significant, consistent experiences with structured reflection while in college, both as a participant and student leader. As a full-time staff member in a program focused on education reform, direct service, and poverty reduction, taking time to make meaningful connections seemed more important to her than ever. She commented, “reflection is important, and being in a culture that encourages discussion and one that is full of people interested in thoughtful conversations and digging

deeply is so important to me.” For Hannah, the reflection process—not simply in isolation, but as a member of a supportive community—grounded her. It also minimized “burnout” and feelings of despair when working in challenging social contexts. She continued, “[reflection] allows for your service to become something else completely, and you can go to a different level and let it impact you personally as opposed to it just being thing that you do, another activity.” For Hannah, reflection—as a critically important tool—allowed a person see to service as a way of being in the world.

Kallie

“Thinking about service in a new way,” Service as “ministry of presence,”

“Probing questions and asking ‘why?’”

Introduction to the interview. Walking into the community service office at Loyola, a large banner stood in the doorway. In all capital letters, the message “SERVICE LIKE NEVER BEFORE” welcomed students into the entryway lobby. The banner was also used at first-year orientations to welcome new students. The professional staff designed the banner in order to share a key message—that service on campus should not be seen as a requirement, but as an opportunity. This message became engrained and enflashed by many students who served as regular student leaders or employees in the office.

One of those students who slowly grew into heavier involvement in the office was Kallie. Kallie was a junior who had worked in CCSJ for two years. I knew that she was a soft-spoken student who seemed to choose her words carefully. While I did not work with her regularly in my professional role in the

office, I did have occasional interactions with her. At first, she seemed a bit reluctant to participate in the interview. When I invited her by email, she approached me in person later that day, and said, "I'm not sure if I'll have much to really contribute, but I can try." She did not seem to engage in very much "small talk," opting to engage in more intellectual conversation whenever possible. At the same time, my observations of her while she spent time in the CCSJ office seemed to contradict her self-described shy, reserved nature. She seemed comfortable and very much "herself" when she interacted with peers and mentors in the CCSJ office.

Backstory. Kallie grew up in a Catholic family. While at college, she became increasingly involved in community service. She had chosen to pursue an English major and was also a student in the honors program, often taking accelerated classes. Coming from high school, her experience of service was largely externally imposed. She reflected on how the types of activities in which she was involved were very different, in her view, than her high school involvements: "My activities have changed since high school. In high school it was volunteering at my local library or at my school... 'safer' type activities. All kinds of opportunities were offered through my school, because it was a requirement." But to Kallie, it was just one more box to check off the list and nothing quite memorable or meaningful. "I didn't see it in any special way, or the way I should have, because it just *felt like* a requirement," she said. She knew it was a requirement, and it also felt like a requirement.

Other students as mentors. The students who went before Kallie served as mentors for her, paving the way and setting an example as mentors. Her perspective on service as a requirement slowly started to evolve as she watched other students on campus get involved in the local community. She not only noticed the specific activities in which they were involved, but she also noticed the way they “thought about” service. She commented, once she started to get involved in weekly service activities, “that helped... for me to see the older students and how they responded to service and thought about it.” She noticed their presence and way of being in the community. Noticing their style encouraged her to think about her own presence differently: “I kind of started reflecting on it in different ways, and I think that’s when it started to change for me.”

Service as “ministry of presence.” Not only did her perspective on service change from a requirement to a responsibility and opportunity, but the types of activities in which she was involved also shifted. She began to consider more involved, higher impact types of service activities. She continued, “So I did Spring Break Outreach [a week-long domestic alternative spring break experience]... and now I do all sorts of hunger and homelessness awareness things in Baltimore.” She was particularly proud of her involvement with a local meal program that was fully staffed by student volunteers. The program was called Care-A-Van and it had a long, respected history on campus as a way that engaged students had fought, in small ways, against the problem of hunger in Baltimore city. Kallie continued, “I am a Care-A-Van volunteer now. Care-A-Van

is a meal program, a unique meal program that we run downtown, and we provide not only food and drink and snacks and toiletries.” She trailed off a little, seemingly wanting to describe the program in more detail, more depth. She continued, “we also [offer] conversation... sort of a ministry of presence to the people who may be experiencing homelessness or could use an extra meal or two.”

Kallie’s involvement in the community was more than simply doing service activities and then leaving the community to travel back to her life on campus. Now, she saw her involvement in the community through the lens of relationships, conversation, and presence with people who were often ignored on the streets. She saw herself as a member of the larger, local community. At first, she came across as a bit reserved, but she came alive when talking about what the experience meant to her. She talked about how her comfort level working directly with people experiencing homelessness had changed over time with more exposure: “When I first did Care-A-Van, I was a little nervous. And when you’re nervous, you don’t really ask questions, you just sit in the background. But on the ride home, people started to ask questions when they may not have asked questions in the beginning.” She now saw herself as much more engaged and invested. And, she started to lead others in the program, often serving as the reflection leader and initiating the questions for the group to process.

Being at a “deeper place.” Kallie also had a changed perspective on other students. She noted that most students get involved in service and “don’t necessarily think on a deeper level about how it’s going to affect them and the

larger community.” She used adjectives like “deeper” to describe what she hoped most students would move toward, where they would end up and what they would grow into. At the same time, she did not seem to distance herself from “other students,” for she was there at one point and in some ways continues to be at that place: “because I thought I was in one place... and then I did study abroad, and I realized I wasn’t quite there [at that place].” She continued, noting that many students “come in thinking that they’re going to help people and volunteer and do good for the community, and they don’t always understand the idea of reciprocity.” She focused on students “coming in,” as if they were entering into a world and way of thinking and type of education. She underscored her point, “I think students normally just come in with basic ideas of wanting to go and do a good thing... wanting to go and help people.” For her, *helping* was contrasted with a deeper sense of *servicing*.

She continued, “I think people just want to do good things, they get that from their faith sometimes, they want to enact what they hear at church every Sunday.” She seemed conflicted and hesitant to judge other students too quickly for their motivations and behaviors. “I know some students who take service-learning classes to just get out of writing a paper, but at the same time, they sign up for the class to do something different, to engage in the community, rather than just sit in a classroom.” She noted that some good can always come from that, but it could be difficult to see where and when the planted seed would grow.

Religion as “passageway to service.” Kallie noted that church and her religious experiences were important but they did not “always inform how I live

my life.” She somewhat reluctantly agreed, that “in theory, it’s important to me.” She continued, “I try to follow them [church teachings] to the best of my ability, but I don’t want to get bored with it. But they do inform how I live my life, and there are values that are important to me. I appreciate the tradition and the history.” She seemed to want to make sure the church’s teachings are new, bold, exciting and challenging. But, those teachings and that religious authority should not, in Kallie’s view, “always have the importance that is mandated.” From her perspective, those teachings were one stream of influence among many streams, including direct experience, peers, family, and culture.

Kallie shared more about her experiences within a religious tradition, and commented, “I think that it has influenced what I do, because a lot of times a particular faith tradition has been a passageway to doing service and related things.” She recalled her experience with the Catholic chaplain’s office when she studied abroad in Scotland. She reflected on similarities with her home campus: “So when you’re doing service with people that are coming from the same place, then it informs the service in the same way.” Kallie seemed to appreciate the community that could be built around service, and she noted the impetus that brings the group together in the first place: “I think that there is this sort of universality to doing service because of your faith, or because it comes from a certain place.” Still, she was quick to note that religious motivation was only part of her personal drive. She said, “I don’t think it’s the main reason why I do service... it’s one of them, but it’s not the only one.” For Kallie, she seemed hesitant to identify too closely with religious motivation, understanding that it was

part of the overall picture for her. She commented again, “I just don’t want to get bored with them—they have to matter to me, and inspire me.”

“Changing your perceptions.” Kallie shared some thoughts on what sustained her in her service work. From her vantage point, sustained effort was key. “I think it takes continued involvement in the service that you’re doing... to go back to the same place, week after week, maybe see the same student that you’ve been tutoring, and see how they’ve improved,” she reflected. “Going back week after week makes you more inspired, and it makes you want to go back and continue to do these things and start to do other things maybe,” she said. She spoke in general terms about the cycle of motivation and inspiration. That is, dipping your toes in the water was, for Kallie, the first step in getting further into the water; it took commitment and consistency. For Kallie, it was a slow process of *becoming part of* the community, and not simply *one who serves* the community. Her hope for other students was for them to be open to the process like she was, to “expand the service that you’re doing.”

Entering into this culture meant being part of a community, according to Kallie’s experience. Students had the opportunity to impact each other significantly, both in the community while they engaged in acts of service and in their conversations surrounding the experiences: “I think the perceptions also change once [students] start having conversations with other students through reflections or just with other students who are involved with their program.” The reflection process, and the specific instances where reflection happened, was very important to her. Reflection opportunities provided the space to process,

analyze, and consider next steps. Similarly, Kallie's experience involved not only powerful service experiences in the community, but forming new bonds with like-minded students. She suggested that "making new friendships with fellow students on campus who are involved in the same types of things that they are" was how other students could "change their perceptions" about themselves, their role in the community, their commitment to the common good, and their responsibilities as students at a Jesuit university.

"Probing questions" and "asking why." Walking with other students was one way in which Kallie saw herself and her role as a leader. She saw herself now as a leader, having been led and mentored by other influential students. According to Kallie, students could be challenged to consider new perspectives when they were in a safe and respectful setting and after having had a direct encounter with a particularly poignant social justice issue. She talked about the need to ask "probing questions" in order to help move other students along the "active citizenship continuum." She said, "with the help of student leaders who ask those probing questions, that's when you get into more of the heart of the issues." Student leaders helped direct conversations and honed in on the most important questions—the "why" questions. She commented, "for most students, when questioned about their experiences, they can explore the larger issues and talk about the why's." I asked her to elaborate on the "why's," and she shared a few examples of leading questions: "Why does poverty exist? Why can some people afford to go to private school while others are in public schools? Why is there a difference between them?" She reflected

on the process of working as a peer educator: “Sometimes to get to those deeper issues, it takes some prodding, but [the students I’ve worked with] definitely have had good, often powerful, answers.” From Kallie’s view, once students were “prodded” and given the space to share and reflect on more systematic issues, they were able to engage in conversations about the bigger picture.

“A web process” of growth. Kallie was quick to qualify her thoughts on student development and growth, noting that it was not always easy to predict. She seemed to be aware of the limits of linear, developmental thinking and acknowledged that growth would always be nuanced and “messy.” She commented, “I think that idea of a linear learning process can be very narrowing, so I guess it should be more of a web process. People change in different ways.” She seemed to struggle a little with how to describe her thoughts, seemingly wanting to be inclusive of all types of journeys of discovery but wanting to articulate an endpoint. For her, the process from “point A” to “point B” was, in retrospect, a circuitous route. She wanted to resist traditional developmental models and ways of thinking. Still, she wanted to preserve the idea of “getting it” or “getting there.” She mused, “linear processes can be narrowing and there’s a danger with that. There need to be branches coming off it, but all leading toward the same end goal.” She did not specify what the “same end goal” might have been.

Seeking understanding; service as “foreign concept” to others.

Kallie reflected upon the way others perceived her and the work in which she was involved. She sometimes felt misunderstood, not interested in putting forth

the effort to explain why she was involved in community activities or social justice work. She talked about one experience when she studied in Scotland during her junior year. A large number of Loyola students—about 80 percent—participated in some sort of study abroad program during their undergraduate years (Loyola Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The experience was a significant part of the campus culture. Kallie's experience in Scotland caused her to situate her own perspective in relation to international students. She talked about the opportunities to engage in different types of challenging discussions: "When I was in Scotland I had a lot of conversations because I hung out with a different group of people than I would here at Loyola." She continued, alluding to Loyola's strong and pervasive campus culture, "At our Jesuit university, we're very service-minded and incorporate our faith in our lives... evidenced by Mary and [Saint] Ignatius of Loyola on the quad."

Kallie's juxtaposed her sense of self in relation to other students and their beliefs. She noted, "none of them had really done service in a way that was similar to something I might encounter with peers at Loyola." She seemed to struggle with how to describe the differences in perspective. She continued, "when I told them where I worked, it was a mouthful all the time. I told them I coordinated hunger-related community service programs in Baltimore. I felt it was such a foreign concept... I was a different person to them than I am back here." She continued, noting the almost two different vocabularies that she and her international peers used:

It was a foreign concept for them, they would never think that that was my job because they had never done it themselves. They would ask if I was safe when I was serving, or 'how does that work?' That kind of thing. I think they were curious more than anything else. And maybe like 'that's great that you're doing that, but as a person our age, it's kind of interesting that you are.' And a lot of times there it's called charity work. All of the thrift stores are called charity shops. So it's a different language thing.

“Bringing it back”: exploring the notion of justice. Kallie reflected on the role of advocacy based on one's direct experience. She admired the example of other students and mentors and their interest in “bringing back” what they had learned. She recounted a conversation she had with an older mentor about a social justice issue, something they expected not many would know or care about:

Julie and I had a conversation last night. We were talking about Chipotle and Qdoba, because there's recently been an agreement with farmers in Florida about buying local tomatoes... it's a five cent increase in price but Chipotle hasn't signed the agreement and Qdoba has signed it. Julie had an experience in Immokalee [a migrant farmworker community committee to ethical working conditions], and so she's advocating for that issue.

Kallie continued, “it’s taking your service and bringing it a step beyond... now she’s bringing it back and raising awareness about it and telling people why she would prefer to go one place over another, instead of just doing it herself.”

“People feel very strongly one way or the other”: **Speaking with passion and conviction.** When asked about the tone of conversations involving deeply-held beliefs, Kallie noted that they were civil. “Those conversations are always respectful but passionate... people feel very strongly one way or the other, depending on the person. But I think they’re usually always respectful.” That passion was sometimes rooted in individual students’ experiences, and sometimes, according to Kallie’s perspective, it was rooted in a student’s family background. She mused, noting that “there are a lot of fundamental values from your family, and you have religious beliefs that you’re going to hold on to and you’re going to be the most passionate about them because you’ve had them for the longest.” Those values might be outgrown, or they sometimes might limit perspectives. For Kallie, her direct experiences and civil conversations with peers and mentees helped her grow and evolve. She said, “I think people like to be right a lot of times, about what they believe in. They like to defend those beliefs in a passionate way. Family background, how they were raised, their environment—it all affects their passion. When you come to college, those things change.” Her final comment was uttered with a bit of relief and satisfaction, acknowledging that growth, in her view, was a very good thing.

Parental support and challenge. Kallie discussed the support of parents, and what that meant to her. She wrestled with the complications surrounding the

relationship, especially with her strong interest in community involvement and service. “I was thinking about going into the Peace Corps after graduation. And I was surprised at first how supportive my dad was, because I thought he would question what I would be doing with my life... thinking I should maybe get a job or go to grad school,” she said. She seemed grateful for his influence and support, but also guarded and cautious. She added again, “I was surprised at his support for my choice.” But recent safety concerns within the Peace Corps entered into the picture and made her father question his overall support. She recounted some parts of a recent conversation with her father, and her internal conflict was evident in her expression as she told the story:

Recently there’s been a lot in the news about the Peace Corps—female volunteers being sexually assaulted or even murdered in the past few years. I think that kind of scared him. He almost gave me an ultimatum saying, ‘Kallie, you’re not going to do this anymore, I don’t want you to be there, I don’t think it’s safe, I think they need to get their problems fixed before you even consider doing that.’

In the end, Kallie’s post-college plans seemed unresolved. She saw herself on a certain trajectory. But the strong feelings from her father had made her question her next steps. She seemed to want to be fully honest with him, asserting her independence and reassuring him, but she seemed unsure and hesitant. “It was really hard to be honest and to have that conversation... It’s not something we’ve talked fully about. I guess I’m putting that conversation off.”

Peter

“Positive peer pressure,” “Looking at multiple sources from different perspectives,”

Influenced by a “combination of books and people”

Introduction to the interview. Peter was headed into his junior year at the time of our conversation. I first met him when he began his first year on campus, as he was a participant in the SOS program. At first he appeared quiet, aloof, and pensive. But his dry wit quickly became apparent as he interacted with staff and fellow students. He seemed curious about my research when I first told him about it. When I approached him to ask him to participate in a formal interview, he seemed enthusiastic and inquisitive. When I interviewed him, he had worked as a student leader in the CCSJ office for almost three years, including one year as a paid student staff member. I did not directly supervise him but only worked with him indirectly.

Backstory. A political science major, Peter became involved in service activities from the moment he stepped onto campus. He was one of only a few students on campus from Maine—further from home than most of the student body—so that contributed to his uniqueness. He was a quiet individual who seemed to command a presence when he walked into the room. He came to be known for his extensive knowledge of public policy issues and his commitment to social justice concerns. Yet, when asked about his understanding, he often appeared shy and unassuming. But he was well-respected among his peers as a type of thought leader. In any conversation, he would bring a dry wit and a certain amount of political humor. He had a wry smile that people seemed to

appreciate. At the same time, he seemed to appreciate not being taken too seriously all the time. He graduated from a Jesuit high school and knew much of the lingo and traditions upon arriving at Loyola. He said that when he arrived on campus, he “tried different things and tried different service opportunities.” He wondered what motivated him to first try new things and explore: “I’d like to say it’s some kind of humanist philosophy idea that motivates me but, right now, I’m not completely sure.”

Most of Peter’s comments and reflections focused on differences among students and how he categorized other students. He shared his theory of how he grouped students together, always offering the disclaimer that he was not judging other students, simply putting them into categories in order to better understand. One of my initial questions dealt with how students like him—those who are heavily involved in community activities—were perceived. He commented, “I’ve been thinking about this because I feel like there are three different—and not that I’m trying to label people—motivations for doing service at the beginning [of a student’s career in college].”

“Positive peer pressure.” Peter continued to share his own categories, the groupings that helped him understand other students’ motivations. First, “someone like me who had a service experience that was really powerful... I went to the Dominican and that was really powerful for me, so that got me to want to do service.” His second category included people who have had immersive service experiences: “people [who] have done immersion trips, which serve as a powerful draw. And there are people committed to their faith and their churches.”

He placed the students who had participated in extensive immersion experiences—sometimes referred to as mission trips, alternative spring breaks, etc.—with students who were very connected to their home churches. For Peter, there was a link between short-term mission work and faith-based charity and service work. The two types of activities were linked, as many mission trips, according to Peter's experience, involved groups of youth participating in an organized church function.

Peter's third category of students involved students he might have called his peers—those within his own support network. "I guess the third one that I've witnessed is almost like 'positive peer pressure'... your friends are doing it, so you might as well do it." Peter's sense of peer pressure was couched in positive terms. In his view, peers influenced and encouraged one another to get involved in the community. Similar to Kallie's perspective, Peter noted that doing service meant forming bonds with others who had similar values. He continued, "It seems to be the thing that people do at Loyola, which I think is kind of what we're trying to develop at CCSJ, this culture of doing service here." After a brief pause after acknowledging the "culture of doing service," as if saying the words made it more real, he noted that the culture "has really caught on to a certain extent."

"Looking at multiple sources from different perspectives." Peter appreciated the diversity of perspectives that surrounded him, as these perspectives challenged his way of thinking and approaching the world. "Community also challenges your ideas a lot, everyone has different experiences, and everyone has their own backgrounds and environments where they came

from. It's good to have the challenge." For Peter, even similarities with other students were helpful, while not as directly challenging. He said, "even if it's students who have similar mindsets—it helps you define and clarify a lot of your ideas." Alternatively, students who might even have had a vastly different perspective than him helped him to understand his own values, opinions, and stances. Peter's views, sometimes undefined and unrefined at first, emerged in contrast and in juxtaposition to the divergent views of his peers.

He recounted a specific example of a recent conversation with peers who had differing views, and the overall flow and tone of the conversation. He spoke about a discussion regarding the history of El Salvador, its civil war and history of human rights abuses, and U.S. involvement in its economic and political affairs:

We were talking about our different perceptions about El Salvador based on where we learned about it. Where I had learned about it through individual research, others had learned about it through classes. Another person had learned about [the issues directly] in El Salvador from a professor who is a free market economist.

He seemed a bit overwhelmed at the wide variety of sources of information, all containing a particular angle. He mentioned how their discussion touched on the topic of the Central American Free Trade Agreement:

We actually had disagreements, just because of the different things we were taught about it. And then we got into the justice-related issues of what it does, and what it did, and the impacts that it has on Salvadorans

too. We were disagreeing on whether the trade agreement involved the United States, which I know it did, but others said it didn't.

The conversation remained civil and respectful, but Peter seemed somewhat frustrated by the fact that all had differing sources of information. He seemed convinced of his own understanding of the situation. He trailed off, "it was kind of sticky, because none of us had facts in front of us, so we just kind of dropped it."

Peter's experience discussing issues related to El Salvador, and the variety of perspectives he encountered, made him aware of the need to look at knowledge as always coming from an angle. Peter dove quickly into social justice conversation, reflecting on how information always came from a certain perspective, always perspectival. He reflected, "I guess it just shows how sources like the media, research sources, and personal testimony and opinions are all tainted, and that's why it's so important to see if there are any patterns." He referred again to his experience conversing about El Salvador with friends:

It's like the Salvadoran professor who was the free market economist—he went to Duke, he was U.S. trained but from El Salvador, so he was trained in the U.S. side of free trade, which is interesting. So, personally, I think... you have to look at multiple sources from different perspectives.

"A combination of books and people." The peer pressure of which Peter spoke was only one way, in his view, that students got involved in the community. Passive recruitment or encouragement only went so far. For Peter, the human connection was critically important in helping to direct a student's journey of involvement. "You get involved by talking with an individual in the city,

or with a community partner. Maybe even an alumni or something like that. Through relationships.” The importance of those relationships went even deeper for him. Relationships with people who have had vastly different experiences from him formed his unique outlook. These individuals served as authorities in his life. For Peter, forming bonds and engaging people in conversation “really gives me a direction of what to do and how to act.” Individuals who had been marginalized or had experienced homelessness, in particular, helped him shape his own ideas on “how to be.” He clarified, saying, “for example, people who are experiencing homelessness, often they have really good conversations with me, or I’ve had conversations with them about just what life is like on the streets, which I don’t have any clue what it’s like.” These persons gave him a different taste of reality.

Peter discussed the kind of authority that these individuals had in his life. After developing relationships with many people who were often deemed forgotten and were unnoticed, the relationships came to serve as a significant influence. He had a particular passion for homelessness and people who experienced it. He had learned about homelessness on a theoretical level, but also through direct contact. Both sources were authoritative in his life. He commented, “it’s a lot different to talk to a person who is currently experiencing homelessness as opposed to what’s in a book.” But, Peter did note the importance of “book” or intellectual authorities and not relying solely on experience. “You need to kind of mash those two together. I would say I figure [things] out... through a combination of books and direct experience of people.”

The Church as a “thinking structure.” Peter talked about the authoritative influences in his life, particularly with respect to his involvement in civic engagement activities. He was keen to point out that he “reads a lot of books.” He said, “I like reading the perspectives of different monumental people in our culture, like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dorothy Day. I’m heavily influenced by Catholic Social Teaching and all the Catholic writers. I draw a lot of my direction from that.” Peter seemed drawn to the intellectual traditions of the Roman Catholic tradition. He spoke broadly about the motivational influences in his own thinking, and what he generally appreciated. He continued, “I know that other people get direction from their faith... they get direction from the Bible and Catholicism. But I also get direction... I would say more of the philosophical and intellectual tradition of Catholic Social Teaching as opposed to the faith aspect.” Peter differentiated and clearly distinguished between the “faith aspect” and the “philosophical and intellectual tradition” within Catholicism. In his mind, and from his experience, he more closely identified with the Church as “a thinking structure” as opposed to a worshipping body.

His appreciation for the intellectual and tradition of critical thinking within Catholicism, then, made him appreciate the opportunities he had been provided in the context of a university. He reflected on the ways in which being a university student, and particularly a full-time student, had opened doors for him: “If I hadn’t have gone through it, it would have been most likely a much smaller and much more on the surface kind of level of involvement.” For Peter, the interest was there all along after being raised in a Catholic household and

attending a Jesuit high school, but the depth of the experience only went so far. He reflected further on the uniqueness of the Jesuit university context: “I would say it does foster a lot of supportive growth of my own philosophy and my own service experiences.” His own “philosophy” seemed to translate into his own value system, his critique of social and political systems, his overall worldview.

“I tend to like extremists.” Along those same lines, Peter seemed to appreciate individuals—both thinkers and activists—who pushed limits. Those who offered thoughtful and unabashed critiques, perhaps even those who appeared somewhat irreverent, appealed to him. Something about their particular style appealed to him. He said, “I tend to like extremists... I like looking at extremes in a situation because it’s interesting to see where the threshold of societal pressure can be.” In Peter’s view, the approach and actions of “extremists” caught his attention and, as he said, continually caught society’s attention. Social change was the result of pressure being applied to different social levers, and Peter saw that as interesting and noteworthy. There was a certain appeal to their idealism. “I guess I like them because they have a philosophy, they stick with it.”

There were examples within the Catholic tradition that stood out for him, individuals he had encountered through his civic engagement work. These people were living extremists, people who had not “sold out” but who had articulated their philosophy and who continued to “stick with it.” In his view, extremists did not compromise on their ideals. He shared an example of how most people lived their lives: “Everyone kind of has to settle with certain things

about how they live their lives... ‘yeah, I’d like to live in the most environmentally friendly way possible, but I drive a car.’” Extremists were much more committed to their ideals, however. They stand as examples of consistency and integrity. He explained further, “I’ve found that with people who have really devoted themselves to live their lives within the structure of what they believe, they don’t seem to go outside of that or settle too much or make excuses for what they’re doing. All their decisions are guided by what they believe.” He paused and said, “it’s really admirable.”

“Living what you believe.” Peter’s admiration for consistency and congruency were connected with how he saw his own developmental journey. He appreciated the nearly direct causal tie between vision, behavior, and action. He reflected on his own development and evolution as a critical thinker: “I went to a Montessori preschool, so maybe that affected my development.” That type of education got his journey started. He continued:

I think through middle school I fell into this rut of just going with the crowd, of trying to figure out a lot of stuff. But then in high school, I started to develop my own sense of belief, I guess. I started being exposed to different ideas... it was less being taught to and more being presented with ideas and then choosing which ones I liked.

Developing and relying on his own “sense of belief” had become a significant part of his self-understanding now. As such, he looked up to those individuals—particularly some local activists in Baltimore who ran a soup kitchen—as models of integrity and moral exemplars. He said he appreciated the work of individuals

“like Catholic Worker people, they’re living their lives and making their actions based on what they believe through their political and religious and cultural ideas. So their values are authoritative, as opposed to an individual or a group, because they’re almost anarchists.”

Peter maintained an appreciation for student movements of the past. They seemed to inform his own understanding of how he acted and what his role could be as a university student. “I really like looking at the 1960s...it was an example of mass arrests and civil disobedience types of things, which you don’t see as much anymore, so it’s interesting to look at where those boundaries are and how far you can push certain issues.” For him, the era of the 1960s stood out as a unique moment in history, when boundaries were routinely pushed and authoritative structures were regularly questioned. Interestingly, he did not see those types of activities and tactics being employed by today’s students.

Did Peter identify with the traditional understanding of “activist”? He clarified his understanding of himself, and how he fit into the broader tradition of activism. He reflected, “I guess I can identify on an intellectual level with [extremists and activists], but I don’t see myself or our culture as it is right now getting to that level of mass arrests. I mean, it could, but it would necessitate something big happening I guess.” That “something big” was left undefined for him. But in order to start a movement with historical proportions like the movements from the 1960s, Peter thought that our culture found itself in a different place. He moved toward thinking and acting locally. “It probably plays into the effectiveness of working at the local level, because you can see that

change happen.” Local efforts, in Peter’s view, allowed you to develop relationships and see change in action. And, for him, “there’s something about a university campus that just proliferates that.” Again, the context of the university was significant because it somehow created the space for activity to happen. He briefly mentioned the Ignatian Family Teach-In, the Jesuit-themed social justice gathering. Conferences like that, according to Peter, “channel that collective consciousness.”

Belle

Service as valuable exposure, “Don’t rely on a textbook version of life,”

“Student leaders make a difference”

Introducing the interview. Belle was a student on the move, both literally and figuratively. She was involved in many activities on campus, and she was often difficult to track down. She landed a job in the CCSJ office as a sophomore. Her first year on campus was filled with many different volunteer activities and activities with other campus offices like ALANA Student Services, Student Activities, and Student Media. She was my supervisee for one year before she participated in the interview. So, I knew her as both a student employee and heavily involved student. I had the opportunity to speak with her on two occasions. First, I interviewed her during the summer after her sophomore year and after completing a year coordinating volunteers for an afterschool program focused on adolescent youth. She confidently agreed to participate in the interview, almost before I had the chance to explain the research focus. Then, I spoke with her shortly after she graduated from the

university. At the time, she had interviewed for several junior news reporter positions at a variety of media outlets around the country.

Backstory. Belle was a first generation university student whose parents emigrated from Haiti when she was a child. Tall and thin, she always appeared well-dressed and professional. She moved quickly across campus, giving the impression that she was busy fulfilling her many commitments and responsibilities. The pace of her gait matched the pace of her talking; she spoke quickly and energetically. Unlike many other students, she only stopped in to the CCSJ to take care of business for her student staff position. She was not usually one to “hang out” and linger. One got the sense that her “to do” list was exceedingly long, but she somehow stayed on top of everything. She attended Catholic elementary school and high school before choosing to attend a Jesuit university. She was one of just a few students of color in her private high school. And, as a university student, she was one of a small minority of Haitian American students on campus. From the start of her time on campus, she immediately became engaged in campus life. She joined the Black Student Union and took on an officer position. She signed up for the campus television station as a student staff member, eventually creating her own weekly television show called “The Minority Report.” And, continuing with her interest in the service mission of the school, she became involved in a variety of volunteer activities.

“How things started”: **Service as valuable exposure.** For Belle, her involvement with service was largely externally imposed at first because of school climate and culture:

I first got involved because everyone else was doing it—I went to a Mercy [a Catholic school sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy order of nuns] high school—so service was definitely a huge component. It's expected of you. I just started because everyone was doing it. And eventually I saw the importance of it and how beneficial it can be to both the person serving and the one being served. From there, that's how things started.

Her perspective slowly shifted from service as an external mandate to something that was internal and self-motivating. She seemed to appreciate the fact that her “eyes were opened” to service which helped her begin to enjoy working in the community. No longer had it been something to check off her list of requirements. Belle appreciated the kind of exposure that service offered to her and her peers. Most of her experiences had involved working with local youth outreach and tutoring programs. She served as a student leader for several programs while she was in college. She noted, “in a lot of instances, and mostly in urban areas, the students were able to see different perspectives on things and have more interaction with their community and the people outside the community.”

She reflected on the culture of student involvement, a mixture of likeminded individuals who felt comfortable with one another:

Sometimes the atmosphere of students who are regularly involved can be like a circle or bubble because people want to be there and be part of the community. When you have people like that together all at once, and they're trying to achieve the same goals, it's a lot easier to be comfortable

with it and do more service and work toward to same goals. It's a lot easier to do service and understand the point of it and enjoy it.

For her, service became “a lot easier” when friends and supportive peers surrounded her. Belle’s understanding of what “trying to achieve the same goals” was not spelled out explicitly. But, she did allude to her interest in the broad goals of working for social justice, overcoming stereotypes, promoting equitable conditions and fighting against poverty.

Student motivations and the value of choice. The initial impetus for getting involved in service activities—external versus internal motivation—was very important, in Belle’s view. She shared a bit about what she had observed her peers go through when getting involved in service:

When students begin to get involved, they either do it because an adult told them to do it, so they may be resentful, or just not totally into it. Or, because peers are doing it. I’ve seen where peers do it just to get it out of the way. But it depends on a student’s openness. For someone who is open, they go from ‘I have to do this’ to ‘actually, I kind of enjoy doing this.’ And for those individuals, they can grow into actually understanding what service is and enjoy it.

An important concern for Belle was whether “someone chooses a topic or issue” on their own without being forced or cajoled into caring about it. When one chose to explore service and social justice issues on their own, “they can have an experience that’s life changing, whether it’s positive or negative.” In her view, that experience went in one of two directions: “They might want to continue

so they can grow with it, or if the initial experience is negative, they can continue to question it. It definitely starts with the type of experiences people have the first few times.” Belle had confidence that all experiences could be learning experiences, whether initially “positive” or “negative.” She seemed to rely on and appreciate the support of a close community that helped guide students through all experiences, whether positive or negative.

Don’t rely on a “textbook version of life.” Belle had a clear opinion on the ways in which service and community involvement shaped her way of looking at the world. For her, the experiences she had were educational. She had a strong affinity for experiential learning, and almost an aversion to myopic “textbook learning.” She reflected on how she developed her viewpoints and perspectives: “There’s definitely a different viewpoint if you’re engaged in the local community—involved in service—versus just relying on a textbook version of life.” Engagement in the community gave real perspective, according to her. It became gray and no longer black and white. When discussing with peers about social justice topics, “we talk about something that happened in class, for example, and we completely disagree [with the topic or perspective] because of the experiences we’ve had in the community.” She seemed grateful for having had the exposure to so many people with a variety of different “real life” concerns. At the same time, she seemed surprised that some information she received could be so incorrect or without roots on the ground. She spoke generally about differences of opinion with others: “Conversations will revolve around what experiences we’ve had and the different opinions we have with other people.”

When engaging in discussions with other peers, Belle noted that they had a particular tone. In speaking with others about social justice topics, particularly topics with which students have had some direct contact, she noticed how students handle them. She commented, “the tone of conversations can be protective; they’re very personal because people are passionate, so you’re protective of that issue and want people to reverence it when they learn about or speak about it.” She wanted people to respect her perspective, her opinions, her viewpoints. In a sense, she seemed to want to protect the stories of people she had met in the community. She wanted to hold their stories carefully and honor those stories with a spirit of passion.

“Student leaders make a difference.” Belle seemed to appreciate being perceived as a leader in service, a role that other students, in her view, admired. The role modeling seemed to boost her own self-confidence. On a service immersion trip to New Orleans, she served as a leader and spoke about her interactions with other student participants. “It’s interesting to see how certain people admire those service leaders who are their peers. One person [on the trip] said he had heard my name around my campus, and he knew what I did. I guess it’s interesting to see how some people are affected by service and they respect the leadership role.” That respect for the leadership role, as she saw it, came from other students being strongly affected by service experiences. Other students paid attention to peer leaders, what those leaders stood for, and what they represented.

Belle became a leader in service after following the example of other student mentors:

Other students certainly influenced me. Student leaders make a difference. Two students really impacted me. I went with a group to do service, but then the leaders were very organized about what they were doing and you could clearly see *why they were doing what they were doing, and their passion for it*. So it left me thinking that I should be like them, that I should give it a try, because there are people who clearly understand this and enjoy it and have given me the opportunity to participate with them.

According to Belle, a clearly recognizable motivation in another person was attractive, as if student leaders wore their passion on their sleeves. The examples of the other students seemed, in a sense, to also give her permission to allow her interests and her own eventual passion to emerge. She finished her thought, saying that mentoring and the example set forth by other student leaders “changed my perspective.”

But what are important characteristics, or even virtues, of student leaders? For Belle, leaders were “organized, they convey passion and patience.” These were important qualities “because every student comes in at a different level. If I went into a service situation and I was bombarded with ways that I should be, I wouldn’t appreciate it.” She saw a leader as someone who patiently journeys alongside other like-minded students. She continued, seeming to reflect on her own leadership style, “it takes a lot of patience and dedication to be a student

leader in service.” Thinking about a peer-led tutoring program she managed at a local elementary school, she said, “seeing the students go weekly to their service site and seeing how dedicated they were to their students made me want to have that same quality and characteristic.” Perhaps most importantly, she saw student leaders as peer educators. “Eventually, their [the leaders whom she admired] emphasis on reflection rubbed off on me. At first, I was resistant against the whole reflection part of service. But eventually, I saw the benefits of reflection and it became easier to participate and reflect for myself.”

“The value of following your passion.” Belle found support in what she did from her family; in her view, they knew it was “part of who she is.” She noted, “people are generally proud of me and glad that [service] is a part of my life.” Still, other people close to her had questioned her choice of activities and lifestyle. “Others are intrigued about why I spend so much time doing service. Some family members have always wondered why I chose to place my time and effort into something that might not have the same kind of return or success rate as other activities.” She shrugged a bit as she talked about their reactions and opinions. She seemed to understand and somewhat appreciate their perspective on the “return” and “success rate” of being involved in service in the community, unsure of how to navigate received societal expectations. Still, she stood resilient and confident in the face of some doubts, even as faculty mentors suggested she focus on other things. “In general, faculty are supportive, but some are more passionate about different things and wonder why I don’t use my

talents for other things.” Belle seemed determined to follow her passion, a passion she’s developed through direct contact in the community.

She reflected further on her family’s perception of “service,” and how she thought they might have perceived her work narrowly. “For example, if I were more involved in politics, I think my family would be just as proud, they would feel like it might have a stronger impact on my career choices. If I was involved in student government, maybe my family could see something more concrete coming out of it for me.” Her family saw service as isolated acts of charity, whereas Belle understood it differently, more as a way of being in the world. “For some family members, there’s that disconnect between service always being a part of your life and service being a one-time thing.”

She acknowledged that her family had taken a journey with her. Initially, while they had wondered if she should have focused on a more traditional career path with more financial security, they understood that she was following her passion:

They are proud of me, at the end of the day. [My work] is something that’s helping my black community, and now that I want to take it to a professional level, as a servant leader, they appreciate that. And also how it fits with my Christian faith... helping your brother and sister, they can understand it from that perspective and appreciate it.

“Men and women for others.” Belle noted that, deep down, she still felt the mission-based call to be involved in service after graduating. She commented that it still drove her, “having gone to a Jesuit university, with the

focus on men and women for others being so clear, especially at Loyola where there's a huge push for doing service and it's a big part of the culture." But she had come to find her own internal motivation now. "I don't think my calling to service is as strongly tied to that mission as it was in high school. But it's still strong." For example, now that she was starting her career, she planned to focus on social justice issues and combine that interest with her journalism skills. She articulated a very clear focus:

I've wanted to focus on education and education reform and politics. For me, that's where I see myself covering stories and communities and issues that affect people severely and involve justice issues. Being able to tell people's stories is where I'm called... whether it's 6 year old's experience in a school or a mother's perspective on education.

During a recent follow-up conversation, now that Belle had begun a career in journalism, she considered some of her comments from our initial meeting. Her calling and path had come into even clearer focus:

I've always had a passion for storytelling, and now that I'm educated, and now that I've experienced what service can do for someone and for the community, I want to take that passion and give people a voice. It's something that a lot of service-oriented projects do—giving people a voice. I want to keep service intertwined in that career path.

As a university graduate, she now appreciated the "real world" experiences she took advantage of while she was in college. She recalled, "I took a course called Urban Justice Reporting. It's different to sit in a classroom

and read stats [about juvenile justice issues] as compared to sitting in an actual court room and seeing that play out.” She mentioned that she participated in a service-learning experience as part of the class, a way to deepen student learning and immerse them in the community. “Ya know, working with juvenile justice and at risk teens, and then interacting with the teens, it’s so different than just reading about the categories they are put in. It’s easy to get caught up in just the stats. But, talking with a 13 year old with an ankle bracelet on... it reforms your thinking.” She expressed appreciation for the hands-on learning in which she engaged, reminiscing about college and what she learned during her time there.

Passing the torch. As Belle continued in her field, she hoped to continue to influence and impact others, serving as a role model. She understood that she had experienced a growth process, a type of journey of discovery that was ongoing. But she had also tapped into a newfound passion:

I’m hoping to pass along some of the passion I have for doing service. I worked with a lot of first-year students [as a student leader]. They weren’t so used to the CCSJ kind of service, where you are reflecting all the time, and you’re within the community, and not just doing it twice a week... you have to be very committed for what you signed up for.

But, she said, she walked with them and helped them understand the importance of being a part of a supportive community when one was deeply involved. The action component was not the most important thing, but the preparation and reflection pieces as well. Now, she said:

I'm more patient about where people are along a spectrum. You have to respect where they are coming from and understand you are molding and shaping them; that is all part of being a role model. It's about finding a way to blend your passion with your skills, and merging the two. And allowing others to witness you doing that.

With this, she sounded confident and satisfied. She seemed to be walking away from her university experience having learned some important life lessons, and she appeared grateful for that learning.

What were her concerns as she left her leadership role into the hands of others? Belle worried about students walking away without reinforced stereotypes about communities, social issues, or groups of people. She said, "It's hard to make sure that the whole education process happens. You can't force service upon anyone. So you need to continue to work on students, making them always aware of what service should be like and look like, and reminding them that all communities are different." Her view of service had now become rooted in mutuality and reciprocity, equals coming together in a spirit of shared humanity. She closed our conversation, "I no longer see it as me having so much to offer someone, but it's us being together."

Mary

"Finding my niche," "I wanted a school with a Jesuit mindset," "Seeing the world through a different lens"

Introducing the interview. Appearing somewhat shy at first, Mary's dry sense of humor quickly emerged. During the time of her interview, she was just

finishing her junior year and transitioning to her last year on campus. She had been recruited as a student leader by another student who worked in the CCSJ office. While she did not appear to be a typical student leader at first—shy, reserved, and unsure about being in the spotlight—she reluctantly agreed to apply for a student leader position. The position involved working with volunteers interested in learning more about individuals who had intellectual disabilities. It was a position that needed a student with a very specific set of interests and skills. Mary was asked to consider applying. I met with her several times before she decided to apply; she seemed to want reassurance and lots of information up front. Once hired, she was one of the most dedicated and reliable student staff members who worked in the CCSJ office. She enthusiastically agreed to participate. I had the chance to speak with her a second time at the close of her year of full-time volunteer service in Boston. She had been working as a social worker, and she was now considering studying social work in graduate school. At the time, she had applied to several programs.

Backstory. An amateur basketball player, she was tall and athletic. She was often seen talking with other small groups of students both in the CCSJ office and on campus. She seemed to rely on a group of close-knit friends and stayed with that group, not venturing into new friendship territory often. Mary arrived at Loyola with limited service experience in high school. She was somewhat aware of the university's Jesuit tradition, but was essentially only looking for a smaller school where she could explore where she might fit best. The oldest of three children and hailing from Massachusetts, Mary was the first in

the family to set off to college away from home. Commenting on the feel of the campus when she visited for the first time, she said, "I really liked how involved people were with service at Loyola, and I wanted to see how I could find my little niche." She seemed to be seeking a strong community.

"Everyone was excited and passionate about doing service." She chose psychology as a major, but also had an interest in special education and working with individuals with learning disabilities and special needs. Regarding involvement in service, she said that she "didn't want to just do activities surrounding my major," but she wanted to branch out. When she first arrived on campus, one of the first events she attended was the Service Fair, a type of signature event and tradition marking the start of the school year. From her perspective, "it seemed like everyone was excited and passionate about service work and had a different cause they were promoting." She took it all in. She remembered the feeling of newness with the university environment, saying "a lot of information was being shared there, and that was so exciting for me."

In particular, one program stood out to her. She was immediately impressed with a student organization called Best Buddies, a group that paired university students together with individuals with intellectual disabilities. The student leader for the program was dynamic, energetic, and passionate about the issue. She noted, "I remember being really impressed with Nicole when she was running Best Buddies; she was definitely a role model for me in getting people excited about the program and working with that population of individuals." So Mary's interest in working with individuals with special needs was fueled further

by witnessing an engaged student who was living out her own passion for the cause. The example of that student leader as role model and mentor stood out as a key moment for Mary.

“I wanted a school with a Jesuit mindset.” Mary’s understanding of Jesuit values and educational mission was limited as an incoming student. She only knew that she wanted to go to a school with a focus on service: “I knew I wanted to go a school with that mindset.” She reflected on her experience in high school doing service work and compared it to her involvement in college: “I had done some service in high school, but I liked the whole well-rounded person idea that Loyola talks about, the *cura personalis*. I didn’t know a whole lot about the Jesuits going in, but I liked what I had heard.” On the whole, she had some sense of the university’s values and an appreciation of them, but she felt ambivalent about her own religious outlook and practice. She recalled, “I definitely felt called to serve, but not because of my religion.” She expressed a somewhat ambivalent attitude about religion that she felt as an incoming student. But she saw herself as open to growth. Thinking about Jesuit mission, her involvement in service activities, and her own spirituality/religion, she said, “I think more connections were made the more time I spent there with service, and all the Jesuit values became a little clearer.”

Her understanding of service also broadened as she became more immersed in her work. Entering into college, her perspective was limited and not very nuanced or sophisticated. She had not engaged in any substantive conversations about social justice and its connection to service and community

engagement. She reflected, “I hadn’t heard of concepts like advocacy or social justice.” As she became more involved, participated in student leader trainings, and heard other students talking about advocacy, justice, and activism, she recalled that “it was newer for me and unfamiliar.” But she was still curious and intrigued, interested in learning more. Most of the conversations in which she found herself at first focused on direct service. Direct service was “easier to talk about, at first.” But soon she became more comfortable asking and responding to “why” questions—looking at “the bigger picture... like, why are things the way they are?” While discussions about direct service were clearly easier for her at first, “talking about justice came later.” In particular, sharing her new experiences and evolving views with family was often challenging. She said, “I can easily talk about service with my family, but then when I say, ‘OK, let’s talk about the justice issues behind it,’ I think it becomes more of a challenging conversation.”

Being confident and “backing up where I’m coming from.” The community of likeminded students was a solid source of support for Mary; those students encouraged her and helped model how she could thoughtfully and tactfully discuss connections between service and justice. In her words, “the community of student leaders at Loyola really challenged me to grow and explore my interests, and it really kind of helped me want to learn more about the things I was passionate about.” That community pushed her to want to dig more deeply and explore the roots of the issues that spoke to her. It was also a source of accountability for her, because as she stepped into student leadership positions, she knew that she would need to be knowledgeable and confident. She

commented, “having conversations with other students and student leaders caused me to want to know more because I had to back up where I was coming from.” Peers pushed her to ask more questions, seek out information, and consider different angles on the issues she cared about, specifically individuals with disabilities.

The safety and peril of the bubble. As Mary moved along in her university career, she became increasingly aware that her supportive community of friends and mentors was limited in the perspective it offered her. She also knew that she would need to leave that community soon. Idealism and eagerness shifted to realism. As she described it, she felt like she was becoming a bit more cynical. She said, “I was aware of [being in a bubble/subculture], and I definitely became more aware my senior year.” From her perspective, when she first started getting involved, “she felt like taking in everything, I was so excited and passionate and optimistic.” Over time, “after being in that bubble, especially in CCSJ the past few years, I felt like I had a much more hardened view of things.” She described her community of friends: “we were the cynical ones of the crew, me and my friends.” She recognized that she “was still in the bubble, but was ready to break out of it too.” She continued, reflecting on the tension she experienced: “I was definitely aware of being in a bubble, but I still needed to be in it; it wasn’t until senior year that I needed to question it.” Somehow, she had a sense that her campus community’s perspective and reach—and her experience in CCSJ—was limited: “I could tell this wasn’t the real world... that x doesn’t

always add up to z all the time.” Still, this community and her place within it had significantly shaped her identity throughout her entire time in college.

The value of a distanced perspective. When we spoke again during a follow-up conversation, Mary was participating in a faith-based post-college volunteer program in Boston, Massachusetts. She was living in a community with other full-time volunteers, serving at a local community center as a case manager. She seemed to be enjoying the experience, and it continued to present new learnings and challenges each day. She was particularly aware of the differences between her most recent community in college and her current community of volunteers. She noted, “I’ve found that it was such a cool, strong group of people [my senior year in college], that I’ve been disappointed with the conversations with fellow volunteers in my program this year.” The contrast was particularly noticeable to her. She continued, “it’s been a very different experience for me” largely because of the variety of motivations of fellow volunteers and the lack of a shared mission.

Mary specifically mentioned social justice training activities that program leaders have offered in her current program: “We watched *Race: The Power of an Illusion* [a documentary on race as a social construct], and we did the privilege walk [an activity centered around unearned advantage based on social identities].” While she appreciated the effort made by the program leaders, in her view, it seemed somewhat basic in relation to her prior experiences at Loyola. She could not help but to compare. She said, “I felt like I’ve already done all these things, activities I’ve already led and done.” She seemed frustrated that

she had not been challenged enough to continue her growth and awareness of social justice issues. She continued, “I wanted to go beyond that.”

In thinking back to her community at Loyola, she recalled the feelings of comfort, support, and challenge that she experienced within it: “I feel like it was so easy to reference things and quote things and people just knew what I was talking about.” She now had to translate some of the language and concepts that seemed to serve as a basic common denominator in her community in college. “Now I have to backtrack a little, and say things like ‘when I was in college, we talked about this and used these terms and concepts’ or ‘let me explain this for you.’” In discussing her post-graduate experience, she seemed a bit frustrated. She noted that it had been challenging to recreate the experience of community. She said, “it’s hard to create that visual for people... it just takes work.” On the whole, she said, “I think I have to make more of an effort to get my thoughts out to people, and not just assuming they are speaking the same language.” While a bit resigned and frustrated, she appeared resolute to take up the challenge.

“Seeing the world through a different lens.” In thinking about how this played out concretely in her daily work now, Mary shared a story about how her social justice values clashed with expectations of executives at her organization. She recalled a recent poignant experience:

There was a big fundraiser and we got an email from the central office wanting to use our kids in a ‘thank you video’ for these very wealthy donors. They wanted us to have the kids say something like, ‘thank you,

because of you I'm going to be the first one that goes to college.' I was just outraged that they were objectifying the kids like that.

Her interpretation of the administration's motives and focus was that "it was all about the Catholic guilt side of things." She struggled with having a different view of her work and the clients with whom she worked. Exasperatedly, she commented, "it's a very different lens that they see the world through." Still, the experience had encouraged her to share her views and perspectives, sometimes feeling like she was taking a risk. "Now, I've had conversations about what we are doing, who are kids are, and where they come from, and the stereotypes that might not be true of our kids."

She closed on a positive note. Despite some of her frustrating experiences with having to translate her perspective for others and assimilate into a new culture, she remained hopeful. "I think it's definitely frustrating for me, it's really easy to feel defeated, to think that there's no way to change the system and things are going to be the way they are. But it's really important to stay positive about it. And it's so important to continue to have those hard conversations even if it's definitely easier to avoid them and pretend all is fine."

Jason

"Doing something that's bigger than yourself," "The human face of social justice,"

"To understand, you need direct experience"

Introducing the interview. I did not work directly with Jason but had only heard about him through colleagues at the time of our interview. He had been active in the CCSJ office during his first two years on campus. Our interview

took place during the summer after his sophomore year. Initially, he did not appear very enthusiastic about participating. He was usually busy with political activities on campus and could often be heard engaged in spirited political discussions. A sit-down interview was not the type of dialogue to which Jason was accustomed. So, he somewhat reluctantly agreed to join me for a conversation over coffee. At times, he seemed distracted or even disinterested in the conversation, as if the pace and style of an interview for a research study were too slow for him. In a sense, he approached the topics covered in such a cerebral way, that it was difficult to slow down and express his own personal perspective on them. The topics were simply a deep part of him and had been for some time. Gradually, he began to engage more fully in back and forth flow of the conversation.

Backstory. Jason was a student with a wry sense of humor. He often appeared disinterested and a bit aloof. Once other students got to know him, they began to understand that he had very strong values (frequently expressed in political terms) and was not shy about sharing them. Jason came from a family with a long history of involvement in political and social action. Growing up, his parents exposed him to a variety of activist causes and brought him and his two siblings to many rallies for numerous social causes. He entered Loyola as a graduate of a progressive Jesuit high school in Washington, DC. So, the language around Jesuit mission and culture was familiar to him as an incoming student. As the oldest of three children, his siblings looked up to him as an example, particularly with his involvement in Democratic party activities. He

quickly became involved with the College Democrats. Even before he stepped onto campus, he participated in the CCSJ-led pre-orientation experience—SOS—in Baltimore city focusing on hunger and homelessness. His first experience of life at Loyola involved a small community of likeminded students interested in learning about social justice issues and trying to make a difference on campus and in the local community.

Jesuit mission: “Doing something that’s bigger than yourself.”

Jason’s most significant activity as a student was his participation in a gathering of Jesuit university students at an event called the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice. An annual event, the rally was held in conjunction with a protest at the gates of Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia to protest and raise awareness about the history U.S. military involvement in Latin America, focusing specifically on the School of the Americas (recently renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). Organizers argued that the U.S. government has trained and continues to support Latin American military leaders who regularly commit human rights abuses using military power. Jesuit universities began supporting the event in the early 2000s, and educators saw it as an opportunity to educate students about their role in speaking up for justice and being a voice for the voiceless. As for his involvement as a participant and student leader, Jason noted, “I enjoyed trying to teach others, educate others about the importance of advocacy.” That year, the Teach-In had been moved to Washington, DC in order to enhance the educational opportunities around legislation and being an active citizen. As Jason explained, “we did advocacy

[and made visits to legislators] on a Monday on Capitol Hill for the issues of the School of the Americas, immigration and immigration reform, and the Dream Act.”

“The human face of social justice.” Jason’s experience at a Jesuit high school served as a significant influence on his outlook. He commented on his awareness of Jesuit mission and education: “When I was in high school, the very idea that they were giving us opportunities to do service and learn about social justice; it wasn’t theological exactly, more like, ‘this is a human person, a human face, and you should treat them as you want to be treated.’” For Jason, the educational focus was on direct contact with the poor and human dignity and equality. He understood it as a basic message to care for others: “it was very simple.” He also came to learn some key Jesuit values in high school as well. He said, “it was very good to have a lot of the Jesuit influence in there, ya know, for the ‘Greater Glory of God,’ what you’re doing needs to be for something bigger than yourself.” He referred to a common Jesuit slogan—*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (for the Greater Glory of God)—often abbreviated as A.M.D.G and heard frequently at Jesuit schools.

In Jason’s view, his family life, schooling, and interest in politics blended together well for him. He offered a chronology of his experiences, and his interpretation of how he had arrived at this point in his life. He seemed to understand that he had been socialized into a worldview. “My exposure to those who were underprivileged, or experiencing issues with the healthcare industry, or experiencing issues with whether they could stay in their home or not... my mother had a lot to do with that, and my local parish did too.” He recalled the

ways that seeds seemed to be planted from an early age. He said, “at a very young age, I was being brought around by my mother to different sites that she was working at, and it was just this exposure that stuck with me.” He carried the memories of those early days with him—the stories and faces he had heard and seen. He continued, “later on, when politics became an interest for me, I was able to take some of those early memories and form my ideology and viewpoints. As I have progressed in how I look at politics, I have begun to put more of a human face to different social justice issues.”

Jesuit influence: “To understand, you need direct experience.” The Jesuit influence in Jason’s life seemed to be pervasive and sustained. He recalled how he had been shaped by it from an early age: “Even in elementary school, I had a teacher who was educated at a Jesuit high school, and he really pushed the idea that everyone needed to contribute to society, small or big... he placed a real emphasis on civic engagement.” Jason seemed to have been made aware early in life about the meaning of “Jesuit,” or how it was often interpreted by educators. He continued, “when I got to high school, I went on a service few trips—one to Opopka, Florida—which is heavily populated with undocumented workers, new legal immigrants who are on the verge of poverty, and we worked in the fields with them.” That experience left an impression on him, especially with his understanding of the social issue of immigration. He continued, “I was able to understand more about the immigration issue, and the actual people behind it.” Through that experience, his views shifted on where one should focus their energy to promote change. He seemed to deeply treasure

the direct experience and exposure he had with individuals who are marginalized. In particular, he shared his thoughts on how that exposure informed his political work and interest in policy. He reflected, “I feel that a lot of people who share the same values as me have engaged in some type of service or social justice cause at some time in their life, and I do feel that exposure is very important to try to shape your argument... you need to be able to have that direct experience.” He tried to avoid labeling others or pitting himself against others with different political views, and only said, “I can’t speak for the other side.”

For Jason, service was a natural starting point for learning more about justice issues. From his perspective, students must ask the “why” questions, and not just focus on the “what” questions. But he acknowledged that it is a process of discovery within a supportive culture and environment. He said:

I think people are definitely more aware of social justice issues as a result of their service. But you need a lot of time. I’ve been interested in political action and the social justice aspect for a long time. I think it takes a few years for someone to really understand just the baseline of the issues.

At the time of our conversation, Jason had just recently served as a panelist at a political debate focusing on gun control. He noted the connections that students made between their community work and the policy questions. “At the debate, we had a couple people that stood up and asked questions, and they prefaced their questions with ‘I’ve worked at this service site, or I’ve done this service.’ And then they asked their question because it was so related to the issues we were talking about.” He seemed to appreciate how direct service could and

should inform political action. He continued, “it wasn’t just directly policy anymore, it was about people’s different personal stories, so that was important, and that definitely helped shape how I look at politics.” In his own life, he strove to live by a type of creed: “service definitely comes first, then politics follows.”

“Advocates are not activists.” In thinking about drawing attention to the issues he cared about, Jason qualified his understanding, avoiding the term “activism.” He said, “I don’t think that we’re being activists, these are just issues that we should all be worried about, so pushing them should just be... ‘Listen, I’m an informed person and I want to let you know what’s going on in the world.’” Even though he had a strong political persuasion, he emphasized the fact that all of us, as citizens and human beings, should care about the plight of others. For Jason, people should not be labeled as activists, but just understood as those individuals who were “simply looking out for all of us” and promoting social justice for all.

Church as institution versus church as teacher. Jason seemed comfortable with his view on the institutional Catholic Church, displaying a level of maturity about his perspective. In fact, he compared his experience with politics—and how he could make a difference through the political system—with his experience in the church. He measured his views with his ability to make an impact and affect change. He commented, “when I look at it, I see the political system where people can actually have an impact. But the church, there seems to be this very long, long process of people maybe impacting things, but there’s never any way for them to directly do something very soon.” He seemed a bit

frustrated and resigned to the fact that the church was a large, complicated institution. He used a common phrase to describe how he participated in the church. “I guess I consider myself a buffet Catholic—I pick and choose—but I do have arguments and reasons for what I choose and what I don’t.” He wanted to convey that his viewpoints were not random, but based on direct experience with people.

He continued sharing his thoughts on his experience with the Catholic Church. His earlier comments about the Jesuits and their focus on social action seemed to inform what he valued in the Catholic Church. In particular, he appreciated the history of Catholic social teachings. He said, “When it comes to the concerns of the poor, people that are experiencing homelessness, healthcare, I’m completely in [the church’s] camp.” He explained that his likeminded peers might have felt the same way, especially after having had direct contact with people who were marginalized. He saw the church’s work on behalf of those who suffered as admirable. He noted, “I think that, especially among our generation, there’s a lot of disconnect there when it comes to those who do a lot of service and a lot of social justice work... a disconnect with the Catholic hierarchy.” He was quick to point out that he distinguished between the church as an institution and the church as a teacher.

Jesuit mission: “Experience is the best teacher.” At the end of the day, Jason relied on his experience to help him make decisions about beliefs and actions. For him, that experience could not have been ignored. He commented, “It’s all been about direct experience for me.” He shared a story about how he

came to see the issue of birth control differently after developing relationships in the community. He said:

Even with the birth control issue, I guess I have qualms about that. Until I did work with my mom at pregnancy and HIV/AIDS centers, I saw just how much there was a problem with that issue. One of the pregnancy centers was forced to give birth control under some new state mandate. They decided to stick with the mandate. So my church, and a few others in the region, they decided to take away all financial support for that pregnancy aid center. That was hard for me to understand, since they were doing so much good work. They weren't offering abortions, they weren't pushing that issue, they were just trying to do preventative care and prenatal care.

His demeanor changed as he related the story. He repeated again, "that was difficult for me to understand."

After sharing that story, Jason went back to the feelings of support that he had felt on a Jesuit campus. He felt supported in his social justice and political work—and at the same time—seemed guarded and unwilling to completely align himself with a religious organization. He said, "I've felt comfortable here... I've had my clashes, but it's only been with the student body and never with any of the Jesuits on campus." He talked about a recent political rally he attended focused on the issue of gay marriage. He attended in order to support some of his friends who are passionate about the cause. The experience involved seeing a Jesuit in a new context. He said, "a few days ago, I went to hear some of the

testimony for a gay marriage bill in Annapolis [at the Maryland state house], and there was a Jesuit there who spoke for the pro-gay marriage Catholic community.” As he told the story, he appeared both relieved and a bit surprised that he was able to witness that. He continued, “that was nice to hear, and I definitely felt even more comfortable with the idea that I go to a Jesuit school when I heard someone like that talking.”

“On an equal plane with those who have authority.” In the end, Jason appreciated the fact that he could look back on his journey and see that he had grown and matured. With such a strong political identity, he framed his comments and self-understanding using political terms. He said, “all these experiences I’ve had, the civic engagement I’ve done on campus, I’m just becoming better at arguing positions.” He seemed to value that he could now be authentic because he had developed relationships in the community, wrestled with policy issues, and debated religious teachings. In a sense, he seemed to value his own intellectual honesty. And when, previously, parents and other authority figures served as the only authorities in his life, his experience and deep questioning now came to serve as authorities in and of themselves. He said, “I’ve definitely been able to be on their level. It wasn’t like a parent talking at me any longer. Now it’s more equal. I feel that I’m more on an equal plane with those who have authority. And as a third year college student now, I’m able to challenge professors on things.” Finally, he noted that he could also raise his own opinions and not always follow the crowd of other students in the service and justice office on campus. These were some of his only comments about how

he related to the community of likeminded students. He closed by saying, “I feel that at CCSJ, I can question some of what is said by other students in talking about overall issues.” Now, he seemed to feel confident in his voice.

Cynthia:

*“Looking at the big picture,” “Being present with others,” Aware of being at a
“place of such privilege,” “A high level of idealism”*

Introducing the interview. I met Cynthia as an incoming first-year student who was a participant in the SOS pre-orientation program. She was eager to get involved early on. I knew her sister who had served as a student leader in the CCSJ office for several programs, including an international immersion program to Tijuana, Mexico. At the time of the interview for this study, she was about to begin her senior year on campus. She was on campus for the summer working, so she was able to continue many of her regular activities through the CCSJ office and fit them into her work schedule. Also, at the time of the interview, she was beginning to discern her next steps after graduation. She was considering applying for a position through Teach for America and trying to decide the best fit for her time after college. When I approached her to participate in an interview, she enthusiastically agreed, almost anxious for another opportunity to reflect upon her journey thus far.

Backstory. Cynthia was a cheerful and exceedingly optimistic student. She was often at the center of many conversations in the CCSJ office—with both groups of close friends and associated peers. She made other students laugh with her self-effacing humor and charisma, and at the same time, students

listened to her and respected her. She was careful with her words—always respectful with the passion behind her strong beliefs. She was the middle child from a medium-sized family. Her family was from Tucson, Arizona, so Cynthia was a bit of a geographic minority on campus. At the same time, her views and experience with border concerns and immigration were well-informed. Her sister graduated from Loyola a few years before her, so she entered college with some family history already on campus. Her sister had been heavily involved in campus ministry and community service activities. Cynthia seemed to follow in her sister's footsteps naturally. At the same time, she was frequently compared to her sister, and there was often a subtle expectation that Cynthia would be as deeply involved as Katie.

“Looking at the big picture.” From the start when she arrived on campus, and continuing with the experiences she had in high school, Cynthia connected with local ESL programs in Baltimore city. At home, she had also been involved with an organization called No Mas Puertas, “where we put water in the desert” for newly arrived immigrants crossing the United States-Mexico border. All along, she felt supported by her family. She said, “I’m really lucky because my parents are really supportive. At times I can’t expect them to understand my experience, but even so, their hearts are in the right place.” Her parents influence seemed to shape her outlook from early on, laying the foundation of her involvement in the community. She also heard similar messages in school and from her church community. She recalled, “community

engagement was always an important thing with my parents or at school or church... it was a message we received often.”

Cynthia’s past experiences involved a combination of direct service and social action. Those experiences shaped how she engaged with peers and fellow student leaders in the “service and justice” office on campus. She talked about the types of conversations she consistently had with peers in the office: “With the people that work in CCSJ, there is a lot of talk about what actually happened during your service experience, but then also the larger picture and why a situation might be the way it is or things you could do about it.” Cynthia noted that her conversations with peers moved back and forth between the specific details to the larger context: “I think the conversations focus in on the direct service and then reflection and the long term changes we could be involved in.” She noted that she and her community of friends and peers had engaged in discussions about many topics related to service and social justice. All the topics were related to their direct experience in some way. She said, “we talked a lot about material poverty, we talked a lot about the role of religion and the Catholic Church. We also talked about women’s rights and the role of indigenous populations in the society. There have been some big topics.”

Conversations about social justice topics with peers were important for Cynthia. They shaped how she looked at issues, and how she approached conversations. Both style and content were important for her. She recalled the tone of conversations she had with peers: “The conversations are very respectful... but that doesn’t mean that people don’t have strong opinions.” She

noted that there was often dialogue and a give and take between sides. She said, “there’s a lot of debate and normally someone will argue the other side even if that’s not what they think, just for the argument’s sake.” But, according to Cynthia, there were some students who were more influential and more convincing than others. Like other students who were interviewed, Cynthia noted that when experience informs one’s opinions on social justice topics, then it is more authentic. She commented, “the most influential people in an argument are people who have personal experience, or it’s an issue that touches them really personally.” Cynthia noticed when people spoke from direct experience, and she noticed when people were articulate and thoughtful: “if you can express yourself and it’s something you’re very passionate about... people pick up on that.”

Being present with others. Her service experiences at Loyola did not only focus on issues facing the Hispanic population. She had also been involved in hunger and homelessness work. When we spoke, she had recently participated in a meal distribution program in downtown Baltimore. The program was completely student-led and allowed students to distribute sandwiches and hot cocoa to individuals experiencing homelessness and living on the streets. Cynthia emphasized that the experience was much more about being present and conversing with others; *the meal was just the means that brought the students together with these individuals*. She recalled how she felt during the experience, seeming a bit surprised at the connection she was able to make.

I spent my time mainly talking to one man who was very interested in just hearing about me, and I was asking him about his life, and

then there was another man who had overheard part of my conversation and heard that I was a Spanish major, and his parents are from Cuba so he wanted to talk to me about Spanish and Spanish music.

She seems grateful for the conversation, and the ability to talk across supposed differences and find commonalities. For Cynthia, the activity was less about serving others, and more about forming relationships.

“A place of such privilege.” She discussed how she processed her experiences with individuals who suffer. She valued the relationships she had formed in the community, but she struggled with how to allow those relationships to inform her daily actions. She talked about the difficulty of being regularly involved in service and investing energy in it, “especially when you come back to a place of such privilege.” She seemed to struggle with some of the unearned advantages from which she regularly benefited. For Cynthia, it was an ongoing challenge to live in two different worlds and bring those worlds together. At the time, she reflected on “how you carry people’s stories and know full well the pain and hardships that they’re going through” while she could not experience any of that personally. She seemed determined to figure out how to find meaning in her experiences, and use her situation in life to better others. As she described, she struggled with “how to live your life with that knowledge and how you can represent those people.” She finished her thought as if she was still searching for the right path: “those are questions without a real specific answer.”

Service as mutual relationship. Cynthia had experienced significant growth through her service work. Her ideas about service and helping had evolved over time. Whereas coming into college she viewed herself more as one sharing her skills and talents, she now saw her work as a mutual exchange between two individuals. She talked about one service experience, and said it was “like I was hanging out with people as opposed to doing specific tasks in the clinic... it was very different service.” In fact, for Cynthia, the very category of “service” did not seem to always fit the activity. She noted that her expectations had changed, and she saw those expectations changing for peers. She recalled how she had come to love the clients and staff of a local assistance center serving Hispanic residents. She said, “I think oftentimes people expect to be giving—and not necessarily receiving—anything through their service. When I first started doing service at Loyola, I did it just because my sister suggested it, but I didn’t expect to fall in love with the Esperanza Center and all the people there.” What was once just an extracurricular activity—a way to fill some of her free time and something she had always done—slowly became a passion. For Cynthia, it was about “a mutual relationship where you’ll be receiving a lot of things from the people you’ll be serving.”

“A high level of idealism.” The “culturally received” character of notions like helping, serving, advocacy, justice, and social change were now at the forefront of Cynthia’s awareness. She understood that there were certain societal perceptions of the work that she did. She said, “people do have some ideas already about people who are interested in social justice.” She seemed to

lament the preconceived labels placed on her and her peers, but could appreciate where those labels came from. She said, “people associate hippies with trying to create social change... so that’s not always a bad thing. We work with a high level of idealism, and I understand that.” Even so, she viewed herself as a questioner. Doing service and becoming more deeply engaged in social justice issues and developing relationships had forced her to ask deeper questions. A bit proudly, she stated, “I’m a ‘why’ question person... ‘why is this situation like this.’ I’m also a ‘how’ question person... ‘how can people be OK with this,’ or ‘how can some people not want to do something about this.’”

She continued reflecting on the types of people with whom she surrounded herself. The community of supportive individuals had provided balance and encouragement; it had also validated her own strong convictions. She said, “Once you start to get involved, you realize there is such a range of people who are passionate about service and social justice, you can’t make any assumptions.” She referred back to her earlier comment about “hippies,” and how that category did not capture the complexity of the work. She continued:

I think that also once you start doing service, and you realize how great the people are that you’re working with, and how similar they are to you, and at the same time recognizing the beauty in your differences, that’s when you realize the joy and goodness and love that I’m receiving in return from the people that I’m serving.

Others with whom she had served alongside were important role models, helping her keep a positive perspective focused on shared humanity and commonalities.

“It’s important to ask why something is the way it is.” That supportive community, in Cynthia’s view, needed to be molded. The community needed to be a community of questioning in a supportive environment. For Cynthia, the status quo of just accepting things as they are—whether social structures, systemic poverty, privilege, or even uncritically using categories like “less fortunate”—needed to be continually challenged. She said, “I think it’s really important to ask why something is the way it is, what people are doing about it, if there’s a law that is keeping the situation the same, how the people you’re serving feel about it.” For Cynthia, it was important to include the voices of those who suffer within systems. Those perspectives ground one’s work for justice, and allow one to dig more deeply with “why” questions. She said, “I think it’s important that people are prepared for going into a service experience and can have outlets for reflection upon it.” Since reflection was an important part of her own personal development, she saw it as equally important for others. She continued, “Whether students reflect by themselves or in a group, I think reflection is important for anyone’s perceptions to change.” When challenged to consider new perspectives, new directions might emerge. She commented, “when you think about it, you realize you may have been thinking something wrong.”

Cynthia's work in the community had exposed her to new realities. In a sense, she carried a spirit of hopefulness despite some of the suffering and struggles she had witnessed. She came to realize that "human beings are extraordinary," and they were resilient in the face of unimaginable challenges. She described some individuals experiencing homelessness that she knew, some local school children, and some recent immigrants from Central America. She commented, "When you get to know someone, you can see their strengths but you can also see what has challenged them and how they've survived that, which is truly amazing for a lot of people that I have met."

Lexa

"Broadening my idea of what it means to serve," "Moving from 'it's my responsibility to it's my career path,'" "Caring for the whole person"

Introducing the interview. I had the opportunity to speak with Lexa on two different occasions. Our first conversation took place at the beginning of her senior year on campus. She was excited and nervous about the start of her last year in college. I had supervised her the previous year when she worked as a coordinator for a tutoring program at a local Jesuit high school in Baltimore city. As her supervisor, I helped her manage her goals, focus on professional development and identity, and troubleshoot occasional challenges. She associated with a "regular" crowd of other students—many of them female—who had similar interests in youth outreach programs and social justice education. So that group seemed to provide a support structure for her, and the group was rooted in the CCSJ office informally. Our second conversation occurred as she

was finishing her first semester in a social work graduate program. She had decided to attend a large public university in New York City for graduate studies. She was adjusting to a new city, a new campus climate, and a new stage of her life.

Backstory. Lexa was a popular student in the CCSJ office. She had a close knit group of friends, but she interacted with many students in the office regularly. She was openly friendly and outgoing. Other students seemed to like her and congregated around her because of her social influence and likeability. She came from a family steeped in a tradition of serving the community, particularly marginalized people. Her father and sister worked as pediatric physicians, and her mother was a social worker. Her siblings also chose human service fields. From the moment she stepped onto campus, she was expected by her family to continue her involvement in the community. She mused, “If I was doing something different, there would be more questions, like ‘do you know what you’re doing?’ Then, I realized, personally, that this type of career is what I want to do.” She expected that she would be involved in community work and service issues. In thinking about her upbringing, she commented, “It felt like it was what I should do, my responsibility in order to live a good life... this is what you do.”

“Broadening my idea of what it means to serve.” Yet Lexa was not expecting a “new kind of service” that she experienced as an incoming student at Loyola:

Going into Loyola, I stayed in my comfort zone, mostly working with youth and adolescents. Then I was thrown for a loop in working with a new population—people who were hungry and homeless. I was adjusting to being in a Jesuit school and getting used to that culture, broadening my own idea of what it means to serve people, and thinking about and critiquing concepts like the ‘deserving and undeserving’ poor and thinking how those things would impact the type of work I’d end up doing.

Her initial experiences of “being in a Jesuit school and getting used to that culture” seemed to be a bit jarring. The kind of critical thinking that was simply expected in this new environment—and not just the “doing of service” —forced her to reexamine her thinking about what she was doing. No longer would the service she was doing be simply externally mandated, or even all about charity or helping. The ongoing reflection on her service was “broadening [her] own idea of what it means to serve people.”

“Moving from ‘it’s my responsibility to this is my career path.’” Her work in the community was largely direct service. She said, “I was involved in a lot of front line crisis type work, being involved with people and organizations working on addressing immediate needs... food and health care work.” Even so, she was continually exposed to questions about inequities, social injustices, and the justice mission of the university through student-led reflections and leadership development opportunities. She recalled how her motivations for being involved in this kind of work changed over time. Her awareness of the

change was limited while she was actually in the moment, but as she looked back, she noticed a shift. Her motivation changed when she “came to see that this can be something you do because it’s your passion, it’s who you are and the way you see yourself. For me, it moved from being a responsibility to being my career path.” For Lexa, the “way you see yourself” was significant, because it becomes an indelible part of your identity. In a sense, her view was that when a student’s self-perception shifts, then they have started down a road that cannot be easily changed.

“Sense of community is the number one influence.” Like other students, Lexa’s story involved the support of a community of likeminded peers. She said, “the sense of community I experienced at Loyola was the number one influence for me.” She recalled some of the questions that her service experiences raised for her. She struggled with questions of meaning and purpose, and the actual impact of her work. She was adamant that if she was “in another place without the supportive community of friends and trusted people, I know I wouldn’t have been able to nurture those aspects of my life as much.” Perhaps her experiences would have been emptier, or more episodic. But her supportive community clearly “nurtured” her and helped to shape her. She acknowledged that she was part of a small group of friends with similar interests and perspectives. For Lexa, it was the “subculture that I was a part of, and that has a lot to do with the culture of a small Jesuit university focused on service and justice.” In hindsight, she not only expected to have a variety of service experiences, but she expected that supportive community.

“I look to campus and community mentors for inspiration.” Lexa distinguished between a few different types of inspiration that she experienced as a student. One group of individuals whom she found inspiring was professional staff members at the university. She looked up to them and aspired to be more like them. She said, “in terms of real inspiration, I tended to look toward people who were leaders in the community and leaders and mentors from the university.” She even recalled a conversation with a professional staff member and said to her, “I want your job in ten years!” She remembered thinking hopefully, “it’s sort of feasible!” Another type of inspiration came from peers, especially those working on similar kinds of social issues. She noted, “when I was looking for support for things like ‘I feel this way and it really sucks... do you feel the same way?’ That kind of support and commonality was taken care of by my peers.” As difficult experiences with challenging emotions arose, peers helped her to process and understand and move forward.

“Sharing social justice crisis moments.” When I spoke with Lexa, she had just graduated from college and was beginning a social work graduate program in New York City. She wondered if she would be able to find the same kind of community that she experienced as an undergraduate. She expressed a sense of anxiety, but also some hopefulness that she would be able to create her own community. Finding community had “really been the biggest transition from undergrad—finding the same community.” She seemed to be looking for the same quality of community and relationships that supported her in college. She compared her experience in a new city and new context with her college

experience. She said, “I still have those ‘a ha’ moments from my interactions with leaders in the local community and with professors at Columbia, but I have just a different working relationship with fellow students.” She appeared to be actively seeking out similar kinds of peers, but seemed to understand that she will not be able to create the exact kind of community she enjoyed as an undergraduate. She talked about “social justice crisis moments” and how she did not tend to share intimate details about those moments with graduate school peers. For support in those moments, she still relied on her undergraduate community. She put those moments in perspective: “those moments of doubt were exactly why I had those friendships in college; that was the foundation for so many of my friendships and my experience of community.”

“Caring for the whole person.” In her post-undergraduate work and studies, she wanted to carry the Jesuit culture of service and justice with her. Even though she was not in a faith-based setting specifically, she had made an effort to translate that culture into a new setting. The culture—its lasting effects and the way it has shaped her worldview—now supported her, specifically in challenging situations. She commented, “I’m realizing that the idea of ‘caring for the whole person’—*cura personalis*—is something that should be in the forefront of my career.” She felt that this concept should direct her thinking and her actions, particularly in a demanding human services and social work career. Her internship in graduate school “was very overwhelming for a lot of the time.” She continued, “I remember thinking that *this is when you have to think about the whole person.*” That concept provided some context, support, and a sense of

relief as well. She continued, knowing that she was “not going to be able to fix these enormous deep-rooted issues of this person right now, but can care for so many other aspects of a person, and they are just as important as the other aspects.”

She knew that the encouragement to explore her spirituality while a student in college would be useful as she entered the professional world. Working in a nonprofit community center serving many people experiencing hunger and material poverty on a daily basis, she was getting tired and frustrated. That spirituality, rooted in her ongoing appreciation for “caring for the whole person”—including herself—provided some balance and peace. She admitted:

On some days, I leave work and I think ‘this is unfair, I hate this job,’ and I throw around accusatory statements like ‘I hate policymakers, I hate the people who started this, I hate bureaucrats’... and then I catch myself and realize I went on a rant, and I take a second, then say to myself, ‘it has to come back to a place where I can sit with this discomfort.’

Sitting with discomfort may have not been an option earlier in her life; now, she saw it as a natural option and a way to check herself and learn from all experiences. “Sitting with this discomfort” involved not letting the difficult, often negative emotions define her completely, but understanding where those emotions came from and how to let them inform her work. Toward the end of our conversation, Lexa seemed to appear comfortable with the fact that her learning experiences during her post-college life

would be different than those she had in college. Even though those experiences and her newfound community would be very different, she seemed to carry a certain resolve about it.

Tom

“Different than the typical student,” “A ministry of presence,” “Finding an issue that hits your heart,” “If I don’t participate, nothing will change”

Introducing the interview. I met Tom at the end of his sophomore year in college. He had applied for a student staff position in the CCSJ office, something that was outside of the norm from his typical group of friends. When he was offered a student staff position, some professional staff members worried about potential peer influences having a negative impact on his work performance. I did not advise or supervise him directly during the academic year, but I did supervise him during a short-term summer project. He was a hard worker and got along well with fellow students, despite having had very different life experiences. I had the opportunity to speak with Tom on two different occasions. The first conversation took place immediately after his junior year in college. He had recently completed an international service trip to El Salvador with some fellow students. He appeared quiet and shy during the interview, but very reflective, intentional, and careful with his words. He often appeared to be in two different worlds—the “typical” student world of carefree college life and the CCSJ student community. During our interview time, he would sit with each question for a while before responding, hoping to give the most thoughtful and authentic response. The second conversation took place after he had graduated

from college. He had just moved back to Baltimore after spending some time visiting family in New York. He had also recently just begun a part-time teaching position at a local private school.

Backstory. A native of Staten Island, New York, Tom arrived on campus with a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards school. He had been heavily involved in jujitsu while in high school. He found much of his community through that kind of support system and likeminded friends. He struggled with finding a purpose he could believe in when he arrived on campus. Slowly, and gradually breaking away from friends involved in a heavy partying lifestyle on campus, he became involved in service activities. Something compelled him to want to get involved in new kinds of activities on campus. He said, “I didn’t do community service at all in high school. Well I did, I was a volunteer firefighter. But that was different... it was cool, but it’s way different than any type of service at Loyola.” Right from the start, he distinguished himself as being a bit different than “typical” Loyola students.

“A ministry of presence.” When Tom and I first spoke, he had just returned from a two-week immersion trip to El Salvador. Sponsored by the university, the program involved learning more about the country and its history of human rights abuses, some of the social, political, and economic challenges, and direct involvement with marginalized groups of people. Our conversation almost immediately turned to talking about El Salvador. Tom clarified:

When people ask me what we did in El Salvador, I like to tell them that we didn’t do anything... because we didn’t. It wasn’t your

conventional immersion program. We didn't build houses, we didn't work at an orphanage or clinic or anything like that. We just went, and we heard people's stories, and we learned about the country. And we just got a feel for what was going on there. It's called ministry of presence. Salvadorans like to call it accompaniment."

Tom's emphasis on accompaniment and presence had become a type of focal point in his life, and his experience in El Salvador reinforced the importance of those kinds of values.

"Conversations about structural issues, ideals, justice." As Tom became more and more involved in service at Loyola, breaking away slowly from his initial friend group and forming a new community, he found himself engaging in different kinds of conversations. When he would get together with his new friends, mainly friendships formed through the community service office and with other student leaders, he found himself "discussing the atmosphere of community service at Loyola... and how being at Loyola affects the way you do service." He continued, saying conversations would focus on "just being at a university and living in kind of a privileged area and how that affects the way you do service." These conversations began to challenge the way he thought about "service" and "volunteerism" initially. He acknowledged his privilege from the start, and noted that students talked about it and grappled with the issue. He seemed to understand that "serving others" from a place of privilege can be fraught with complications; the need for self-awareness and honesty are critically important. He continued, "conversations with people who are more experienced

with service, who had done it longer and had been thinking about it for longer... were deeper.” He summarized, saying, “we had deeper conversations discussing structural issues, ideals, justice.”

Tom reflected on the impact the university culture had on him as a person and with his family relationships. He recalled a conversation with his family in New York as they sat around the dinner table. As they discussed current events involving race and class issues—something they had not regularly done as a family because of ideological differences—there seemed to be a different tone. “This is really cool, I can actually have a conversation about issues with my family,” Tom recalled thinking. Reflecting on the new experience of seeing his family discuss sensitive topics, he continued, “I think it’s good to talk to your family about experiences that you’ve had.” In particular for Tom, he enjoyed seeing his family grapple with topics that interested him: “It was really cool to see my sisters think about race issues that were going on in New York City, or other cultural stuff that was happening.” And, he appreciated the fact that his personal experiences helped broach the conversation:

Because of my experience at Loyola, I think, the tone of the conversation was respectful, and we were all searching for, ya know, like some kind of truth, searching for an answer, or at least more questions to be asked. No one was shutting down the conversation or trying to move it to something less controversial or more shallow. We were just all there together trying to work through it.

He seemed satisfied that, perhaps, his immediate family members were potentially entering into a new stage in their relationships.

Post-college: “Money does not drive me much.” When we first spoke, Tom was getting ready to start a year of volunteer service after graduation. He had planned to participate in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps as a full-time member, living in community with others and getting paid a small stipend for his work. The program emphasized the values of simple living, spirituality, community, and social justice. Tom talked about his family’s understanding of his choice to participate in a full-time volunteer program. He said, “My family doesn’t understand why I would go and live in relative poverty.” His family seemed to have a limited understanding of his efforts. “I think my sisters just think that I do what I do because I care about other people, so I haven’t really been able to communicate that to them yet,” he said. He mentioned that his family worried about his financial picture. But he offered a different perspective: “Money is not something that really drives me so much, and maybe it should more than it does.” He seemed to be somewhat uncertain of his choice, knowing that it was a very different type of choice and rather atypical. His attitude appeared to be a mixture of excitement and uncertainty—excitement about the newness of the experience and uncertainty because of inherent unknowns and the fact that he would be going “against the grain.”

“I don’t venture out of my supportive community often.” Tom’s family’s emerging understanding of who he was as a person, and what he valued, stood in contrast to his community of friends on campus. He appreciated that he

was able to find a supportive community, largely through the service programs in which he had been involved. He spoke of his community of friends, and said they:

can easily understand why I do what I do because they do what they do for similar reasons. And it's good because we can be there for each other and have those conversations and help each other reflect on our experiences. I think that in many ways, now that I think about it, I've been in that community a lot so I don't really venture out of that too often.

He acknowledged that his community of friends and family had been supportive but also somewhat limited, with clear boundaries. Those boundaries were helpful because they provided safety and support, but from Tom's perspective, they could also prevent someone from seeing other perspectives.

Tom appreciated the perceived impact he made on some of his peers, although he was somewhat hesitant to call himself a student leader. He did talk about a few close friends, who would—according to Tom—not typically be involved in service or community work. In thinking about his close friends (including two of his roommates), he said, “I guess I kind of communicated to them why I did what I did and why it was important to me. It became important for them too because they wanted to spend a year of their lives coordinating a community service project.” All three of them became heavily involved in the

campus' Habitat for Humanity chapter, all serving in official leadership positions throughout their time in college.

“Finding an issue that hits your heart.” In Tom's view, there was a palpable sense of passion that student leaders exhibited that, in turn, influenced other students. Influential students who served as leaders of other students:

found some issue that really hits their heart, and because of that they can speak passionately about it because it's so close to them.

They speak in a certain way that reflects that passion. And I think that passion and courage is really attractive; it's not something that you see all the time.

He appreciated and noticed passion because, in his experience, many students lacked it or lacked the courage to actually take a stand. And with passion comes the strength to ask important questions: “A lot of people who are involved in civic engagement activities are also asking questions about other things, about who they are, their spirituality, meaning and purpose, those kinds of things.”

“Delving deeper; showing courage.” He continued, noting how students who were authentically passionate about their social justice concerns had inspired him to strive for more. In particular, students who asked critical questions about social justice (and injustice), students who asked “why” questions, helped to strongly shape the culture for other students. He commented, “There's something really admirable about asking those questions and wrestling with those issues, and going against the grain and being counter-cultural.” He thought it was admirable when students showed that they “care

about something more than material things or acquiring money or finding pleasure in something... you're delving deeper." For Tom, that kind of attitude was "really courageous and it exhibits a lot of strength." Tom briefly mentioned the Jesuit term "magis," and said, "it's what comes to mind when I think about delving deeper... 'the more' that Jesuits talk about." The concept focused on striving for the more, the greater, the better—to not simply be satisfied with what appears on the surface. Tom's experience seemed to give life to the concept.

"A positive impact on my spiritual formation." Regarding other influences in his life, besides family and a supportive campus community of peers, Tom discussed spiritual influences. His experience on campus altered his perspective on how he saw religious authority and the culture of religion in general. He said, "I came to Loyola, and for the first time in my life, I encountered a [religious leader who] was like a real person that I could talk to, and that was pretty cool." The Jesuit priests on campus, in the classroom and in the campus chapel, left an impression on Tom. He commented, "I've gotten to know some of the Jesuits here at Loyola pretty well. So, they've definitely had a positive impact on my spiritual formation." He seemed to appreciate this newfound mixture of respect, curiosity, and admiration he had for Jesuits and their particular lifestyle within the Catholic Church. But, he was honest about where other students might stand if they felt disconnected or disaffected by organized religion: "I think that religious officials can have a large influence, and that's why some people choose not to go to mass and participate, because they

don't want to hear what they have to say." Ultimately, for Tom, it came down to authenticity with leaders and religious figures who were like "real people."

"If I don't participate, nothing will change." Tom's time on campus had been one where his questions—and the basic desire to ask questions—were valued and encouraged. This was largely shaped by his involvement in the service office. He commented, "I think throughout my time on campus, I've learned to ask and look at things in a different way and ask a lot of questions and consider a lot of things." This was the result of influential peers and mentors and a climate that was generally open and accepting. Not all students acted this way, however: "I think that oftentimes people don't ask questions or just accept things the way they are, and things continue to stay as they are... I think it's important to ask questions and speak out and be involved." The manner in which his questions were encouraged seemed to bolster his confidence. He said, "It makes me want to become more involved in things, and speak out about the things I care about because I know that if I don't participate, nothing will change." This encouragement in college contrasted with his experience in high school. Unable to put his finger on the moment when his perspective shifted, he closed his thought, and said "being at a Jesuit institution and being encouraged to ask questions... there must have been a tipping point for me somewhere."

The campus environment was a good fit for Tom, a combination of intellectual challenge and social concern. "I've had permission to ask questions about myself and what I think is right or good. And I wouldn't have been able to do that everywhere." He wondered about the particular type of culture that was

created on a Jesuit campus: “I think there’s something about this campus, or maybe Jesuit educational institutions, that make that happen.” Finally, he commented on the overall style of education he experienced: “I’ve been able to grow personally and spiritually. That’s so much more important... building character, and just being a different person than I was when I got here.”

Andrea

“College as a way to grow and break out,” “The importance of friends who get it,”

“I respect when others are socially aware,”

“I can identify with Jesuit spirituality versus Catholicism”

Introducing the interview. Andrea was gregarious and seemingly ever-present in the CCSJ office. When she entered a room, she commanded attention, mainly from a combination of her affable sense of humor and inquisitive intellect. I had the opportunity to supervise Andrea through her student staff position in the CCSJ office. I supervised her during her senior year as she oversaw a youth mentoring program. The program brought together Loyola student volunteers and local teens who had been involved, in one way or another, with the juvenile justice system. The program was intended to provide supportive services to the teens through the help of caseworkers and tapping into local resources like university student volunteers. When I interviewed Andrea, she had just finished her position for the year, and she was working in the CCSJ office for the summer to help coordinate training opportunities for student leaders. She had also recently returned from an immersion trip to El Salvador.

Backstory. Andrea was a student who hesitated initially to get involved in service activities. As a new first-year student on campus, she was unsure how to choose an extracurricular activity, which left her somewhat paralyzed at the beginning of her college career. She said, “I always wanted to be [involved] but was kind of overwhelmed by all the different options at Loyola and adjusting to college life in general.” She refrained from getting involved in too many activities at first, even though she was intrigued by the many options. As she entered her second year, she regretted her initial lack of involvement: “I was sort of disappointed in my lack of involvement from freshman year, so, sophomore year, I was über involved that year.” One early experience—an immersion program, a type of alternative break experience—seemed to launch her into a new world of activities. She recalled that the urban immersion experience was “extremely transformative” for her. According to Andrea, the program helped her to “learn about issues of hunger and homelessness in the Baltimore community. That experience just really sparked my interest in terms of being engaged in Baltimore.” For Andrea, Baltimore slowly became a newfound interest and second home.

“College as a way to grow and break out.” Becoming involved in community activities was a natural next step for Andrea. From her perspective, growth and challenge awaited her through a university education and, in particular, learning from experience. She noted, “I just saw college as a way to grow and break out, I really saw college as something on a pedestal... this chance to grow up and grow outward and learn.” After engaging in several

experiential learning opportunities, she became convinced that the style and approach worked well for her: “I really enjoy immersion learning and direct learning rather than just classroom learning.” Her understanding of “learning by doing” and learning from the community was connected with her understanding of Jesuit education. She said, “I think I drank the Jesuit kool-aid.” She continued, “We always talk about service and community and reaching out, and to me for a long time they were just words and ideals. Once I actually experienced them, I kept wanting to do more and more.” Something about her experiences in the community had a lasting impact on the way she saw her own education.

“You hear messages about it everywhere.” The messages about learning from the community were all over the place on campus, according to Andrea. But the messages seemed to be intentional and meaningful, rooted in the institution’s values. Andrea observed that “you hear messages about it everywhere, not just ‘oh, this is a good thing to do,’ but direct stories and stories of conversations and connections that others have had and you want to take part in that.” Those stories and real connections became something in which Andrea wanted to participate fully. She also was aware of her own approach and attitude of openness, suggesting that perhaps these messages would not resonate with all students automatically. Upon further reflection, she said that she was impacted by these messages because of “a combination of my willingness to put myself in new situations, really being eager to take the opportunity to experience new things, [and the intentional messaging around Jesuit values].”

“A slow progression of community engagement.” Andrea saw her involvement in civic engagement activities as being involved in and connected to part of a larger tradition. She recalled a conversation with a professional staff member and mentor and how it left an impression on her, especially on how she approached different opportunities. Her mentor explained that “it’s good to get involved slowly and it should be a progression.” Andrea said that she “held on to that message.” That message surfaced again later that summer for Andrea, after the academic year had ended, when she reflected on how her involvement seemed to progress in stages. She continued, “Over the summer, I had a huge discernment process... I recognized that [learning in the community] is a continuum and slow process, I think I did learn very gradually.” Her gradual progression of immersing herself in the community resulted in her participation in an international service immersion experience. She said, “so I ended up in El Salvador [on another immersion trip], and now I’m discerning about serving in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps [a post-college volunteer program].” She now viewed her efforts as steps along a type of developmental continuum, with each step enabling her to enhance her own level of awareness. She said, “I truly view my time at Loyola as baby steps into this larger progression. I guess in that way it is part of a cycle... it’s supposed to be that way.” She noted that she viewed her progression as intentional and educationally sound—“it was designed that way.”

“It’s really common to just talk about service.” Once Andrea had several significant service experiences in the community, she struggled with the limits of language in describing her work. She reflected, “I struggle in being able

to convey all that I want to convey; it's easy to take the safe route and say something has a 'service component' and then people will just say 'oh good for you!'" From Andrea's perspective, conveying the depth of her experience to others who did not have the same context was an ongoing challenge. Terms like "service" and "volunteerism" resonated with others, but mission-based language like "justice" and "being with others" was more difficult to employ. Andrea said, "I find that it's really common to just talk about service." Because she had powerful, memorable experiences, she hoped to find more spaces where she could express herself and broaden the concept of service. "I wish I made more opportunities to engage in detailed or difficult conversations about it; that could, in the end, be more fruitful. Or it could be an opportunity to explain myself, and explain the advocacy and justice pieces and not just the service piece," she commented. The "advocacy and justice pieces" were concepts that kept her motivated to continue her work in the community, to help her discern how she was making a long-term impact. Yet she seemed to be longing for a stronger connection, stronger communication about the transformative nature of her experiences in the community. "I do crave that conversation with individuals, definitely from home or in my family life who might know nothing about this new me." She acknowledged that the changes she experienced were now an important part of her identity.

From Andrea's perspective, many people did not seem to "get" what she did and why she did it. They seemed to understand that she was involved in community service activities, but beyond that, Andrea thought that they did not

comprehend her work. She shared about conversations she had with family and friends: “I’ve had difficult conversations with people in terms of them trying to ‘get’ it, or hoping they ask more about my experience.” She seemed to feel resigned to that fact that she could only share her experiences with a certain set of people, individuals with whom there was a common denominator. The conversations in which she engaged had a distinct tone and included only certain content: “In my experience, they’re almost always safe.” Those conversations with most family and friends were limited to basic details about her experience. As she recounted the experience of talking about her involvement in the program, she said she never shared “anything that went beyond ‘this is what I did this weekend, it was a great experience for me.’ And then we never talked about it again.” In a way, she seemed both content with that reality and challenged to help others understand why this work was important to her.

The importance of friends who “get it.” Andrea relied on a few close friends and confidantes to share more in-depth details about her experiences. She appreciated the intellectual and emotional connection she had with these likeminded friends: “I think we just have a mutual understanding... ‘we get it’ so it’s a safe space to talk about things; to compare [our] experiences a lot, too.” She noted that her friendships grew, matured, and evolved based on mutual experiences:

And as we’ve gotten older and become more aware, especially as each of us has done a semester in El Salvador, we’ll watch certain documentaries together now, or talk about things we hear in our

classes that might be related, things that are related to justice issues. [We have] random conversations like ‘this is what I just read,’ and we’ll exchange things like that.

Not only were informal conversations with confidantes important to Andrea, but structured reflection sessions through the service office were also helpful spaces. She said, “I think the amount of times I’ve been provided the opportunity to be in a formal reflection, they’ve also been hugely helpful experiences.” She became a regular participant in service and civic engagement programs through the university, and regularly attended preparation and reflection events associated with those programs. She seemed to appreciate their value alongside the direct experiences afforded by the programs.

“I respect when someone else is socially aware.” In terms of how Andrea viewed herself, she did not particularly view herself as a member of a larger social movement. Instead, she measured her involvement in terms of her level of awareness of social issues. She placed a high value on the social awareness of those around her—peers, mentors, and especially intellectual authorities and professors. She noted that she encountered individuals who either did not respect her own views and social awareness, or they themselves had not broadened their perspective outside of a small sphere. She reflected, “I think because I’m socially aware, I respect when someone else is socially aware, and I’ve had professors who are not that way.” She appreciated when people, especially authority figures and intellectual authorities, were “respectful toward my opinions and views as a student, [those] people who encourage my growth.”

She explained further, “I think it’s people who put forth a very well-informed view in their classes and engage the students in conversation.” For Andrea, those professors respected the values and perspectives of students, viewing them as citizens with equal dignity.

“My eyes were opened to the ‘two feet of service.’” That perspective on social awareness extended to how Andrea perceived her own civic engagement activities. When discussing activism and how university students have been involved historically as leaders, Andrea saw current student involvement on campus as similar but nuanced. She said, “to me, [activism is] going on, but there’s not a tangible protest to attend... it’s more knowledge exchange and debate over the internet. There’s no event to be a part of, or actual physical movement.” Andrea did participate in a form of protest activity while at Loyola, but she noted that it was a particular type of experience rooted in Jesuit educational mission. Like other students in this study, Andrea joined as a participant in the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice one year. Regarding her experience, she said, “that was one of my first encounters with the broader sphere of social justice issues and advocacy.” She appreciated the event and the exposure to new ideas—“all those conversations about so many different issues... war, foreign policy; it was a very transformative experience.” The trip seemed to help her understand—especially as a younger student somewhat new to campus—the importance of both direct service and long-term advocacy. She noted, “it opened my eyes to an entire world of service and justice... the two feet

of service.” The “two feet of service” stood as a hallmark of Jesuit education for her now.

“I can identify with Jesuit spirituality versus Catholicism.” At the close of our conversation, we touched on religion and spirituality. While Andrea did not consider herself to be traditionally religious, she did see value in public expressions of religion and faith-based communities. She spoke about her own perspective on religion, and said, “if I had to put it into words, I define myself as being spiritually-oriented, and wanting to figure out more about it.” She expressed concern and dismay about the divisive nature of religious institutions, however. She said, “I’m very turned off by ‘capital G’ god language, and male-dominated language.” She seemed visibly disturbed by the injustice of that reality. But, she clarified her own experience with Jesuit education and spirituality, seeming hopeful and somewhat at-home. She concluded, saying that she could identify with the tenets of “Jesuit spirituality—versus having an association with Catholicism—the values of discernment, community, reflection, striving to be better, seeing beauty in all things—all of those things—what they meant on an individual, personal basis and linking us all to one another.” Those values and teachings seemed important and very worthwhile to her, and they spoke to her own experience of the world through her community work. “I see those values and teachings as having value and authority because they’ve proven to be a great influence in my life.”

Briana

“Justice: finding the hole in the bridge,” “Privileged to go and do service,” “Church as positive moral framework”

Introducing the interview. Briana was finishing her senior year when she participated in this interview. I never supervised or worked directly with her, but I did interact with her when she worked in the CCSJ office during her junior and senior year. Similar to Jason, she came across as someone who was intensely passionate about social justice issues and activist causes. She was known to be very intelligent—well-informed, articulate, and a skilled debater. But, she was also viewed very much as an effective peer educator and mentor. Students admired her, but they were also sometimes intimidated by her seemingly “expert” status. I interviewed Briana at the close of her senior year. And, like Jason, she initially seemed a bit reluctant and rather disinterested in participating in the study. For her and her busy schedule, a sit-down interview might not have appeared to be the best use of her time. She was serious about her work and her community interests. But, once we started the conversation, she eased into the questions—taking them very seriously but fully engaging in the conversation.

Backstory. A first generation college student of Hispanic descent, she reflected on her family’s influence and the opportunity of going to college. Largely because of her upbringing, she was very engaged in community work in college. She frequently seemed to want to push the boundaries around definitions of service and justice, often questioning received assumptions. From

the start, Briana described some types of service as “safe.” Only after getting more involved, asking deeper questions, and becoming more aware did students begin to look at the bigger picture, according to Briana. She commented:

I think students start with service that’s safer... they start with things on campus... blood drives and trick-or-treating with kids. Things that are safer. And hopefully people take the next step and start to do service at a meal program in the city, or they’ll do an immersion trip. Those programs really push students outside of their comfort zone. Then students will start to get more and more involved. The goal, though, is that at some point, they start to ask ‘why?’ Okay, so it’s great that Catholic Charities runs Our Daily Bread [a local meal program in Baltimore], but why do we have to have it? Why are there situations where people don’t have enough food? Hopefully, people start to ask the ‘why’ questions.

Briana reflected on her understanding of how students develop, how their perspectives change over time. In her emphasis on wanting students to ask the “why” questions, and to dig more deeply into structural issues of injustice, she considered the role of the individual when doing service. From her perspective, and based on her experience, “there’s a struggle for students, where they might say, ‘well this is one individual,’ and they think of themselves very much as an individual, and so they try to look at people as individuals and as a [set of individual] choices... that they have a story.” Her hope was that students could hold both the stories of individuals and work for the broader social justice concerns.

“Justice: Finding the hole in the bridge.” Briana talked about the need to maintain a balance between, in her words, “justice” and “charity.” Working for justice equated to being a long-term advocate for human rights and fair treatment—a systems approach. Charity equated to “acts of mercy” and attending to the immediate needs of individuals—an individualized approach. She continued, “We talk about service versus helping, but it’s not just about going in and feeding the poor and doing acts of mercy.” For Briana, “It’s realizing that we have things to learn and people have things to teach, and we talk about charity and justice and how you need both of those things.” She called to mind an analogy that she learned through a mentor during a student leader training: “It’s like the example of finding someone drowning and you pull them out of the water, but if every day you find someone drowning you’re going to want find the hole in the bridge!”

“I have the privilege to go and do service.” The ability to learn in a comfortable, supportive environment about social issues complicated her view of her own privilege. She continued, “I have the privilege to go and do service. Even just having the time and the ability to go do it is a sign of privilege.” According to her, with that unearned advantage came a certain amount of responsibility. “I can use the privileges that I do have and the opportunities that I’ve been afforded to not just make myself better and lift myself up, but to look at the needs of my community at the same time.” Briana noted that even while some of her identities had minority status, she still maintained a certain level of privilege. She acknowledged the apparent contradiction. She reflected, “I have

just had exposure to so much here and I realize the amount of privilege that I have.” She and I talked at length about some of her own identities that have minority status: “That’s not something that I say very often because I’m a woman, a student of color, I’m gay.” For her, her privilege was rooted in the opportunities she had been afforded. In her view, service was a luxury reserved only for a few.

Church backing for social justice: “A positive moral framework.”

Briana reflected on her complicated relationship with the church. In this context, “the church” almost always referred to the Roman Catholic church. Her reflections included a mixture of appreciation and displeasure, a complicated mix of emotions. She came from a Hispanic family with strong roots in Catholicism, and these roots often conflicted with her new affinity for activism and social justice work. She noted, “It’s interesting, I’m not really religious, so the church hasn’t been—for a long time—a source of right and wrong for me.” But, her experience on campus at a Jesuit school had forced her to look at things differently. She noted, “It has been interesting to be on this campus, where I’ve found church backing for the things that I’m passionate about and the things that I want to do and the life that I want to lead.” New images of a socially engaged church had emerged for her from her experiences.

She talked about her new awareness and appreciation of the church, and she acknowledged her complicated perspective. She noted, “Although so many times I see the church as so hierarchical, rigid and strict, but there are also times when it’s on the forefront of social justice movements and service and all the things that I want to do.” While at one time in her life she may have wanted to

abandon the church and her affiliation with it altogether, she now seemed to be in a different place. For Briana, her work with social justice causes found strong support and a solid foundation in the church's social teachings. She said, "It's been interesting to find backing for my interests within the church structure." There was a hint of reluctance but also relief in this newly emerging perspective on how she defines "church."

Briana's reflections, while initially appearing as an internal conflict because of her admixture of agreement and disagreement with the Catholic Church, emerged as a type of resignation and acceptance. The church as an institution had devalued her, but the church as a moral teacher and keeper of lasting values had shaped her. She commented, "the structure of the church doesn't value me and view me as equal." She was honest about her perceived place within the church based on her own identity. But, she continued, "that doesn't mean that just because the structure is slow to adapt to the realities of the world, that the values I was taught and the lessons that were imparted during my time in the church haven't stuck." Her process of maturation and perspective-taking seemed to have broadened her outlook. In a way, she arrived at the conclusion that a clean break from the church would be counterproductive. She seemed to have tentatively committed herself to finding the good—the social justice focus—in the larger church.

For Briana, the church's values and its "really positive moral framework" were what continued to give her energy and interest. She talked about the church at a "bare bones" level; she acknowledged again that the church seemed

to have strayed from its foundational values because of the “ways of the world.” The positive moral framework that she mentioned was what she “had to learn to work within.” For her to commit her life to social justice causes and advocacy, she said that she needed find ways to carefully and strategically work within the structure “in order to do the work that I want to do.” The church’s sense of mission and strong values seemed to give her social interests a deeper foundation and purpose. From her perspective, the church and its works were on the cutting edge: “there just aren’t that many secular organizations that are doing the work that I want to do.”

A Composite Sketch/Ethnographic Fictional Story of a CCSJ Student

Identifying emic and applying etic themes. The narratives shared by students followed their own trajectories, in many ways. While question prompts served to initiate conversation, the actual content of the conversations varied depending on how each student interpreted the questions. Several recurring themes emerged. The majority of these themes were emic, pulled directly from the student stories and voiced by the students themselves. Common terms and phrases began to appear, largely because of the students’ common experiences on campus. Once emic themes emerged from the student stories, each theme was converted to a broader one-word summary theme. Several etic themes occurred more frequently than others (see Table 1).

Table 1

One-Word Summaries and Number of Occurrences

One-Word Themes	Number of Occurrences
Perspective/Exposure	11
Insight	6
Church/Spirituality	5
Passion	5
Peers/Community	5
Reflection/Depth	4
Authenticity	4
Presence	3
Mentorship	3
Growth	3
Authority	2
Advocacy	2
Service	2
Questioning	1
Choice	1
Leadership	1
Individuality	1
Wholeness	1
Countercultural	1
Direction	1
Engagement/Action	1

At times it was challenging to encapsulate a particular section of a student's narrative into one theme. Often the concepts and experiences mentioned by the students overlapped. This overlap underscored the interlocking nature of the pillars of the study's conceptual framework—that the concepts of civic engagement, emerging adulthood, and transformative learning interrelated when viewed through the lens of Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice.

I found it interesting that many of the students talked about concepts in comparison with other concepts. They defined their experience by saying what the experience was, in fact, not. By negating a certain idea, they tried to describe their perspectives. For example, when students talked about Jesuit spirituality and mission, they often did so in comparison to their experience with organized religion through the Catholic Church. They often placed the two in juxtaposition. They were quick to point out that they frequently had a very different experience of “church” while in college as compared to the experiences of their parents or what they experienced during their earlier years. Thus, while Jesuit mission and spirituality would fit snugly under the umbrella heading of Catholicism or religion in most cases, these students seemed to set it apart from religion. They distinguished between individual experience and corporate structure, between spirit of the law and letter of the law, between spirituality and tradition.

Many of the students wanted to make sure that they broadened certain concepts. When speaking about service, for example, they spoke about it as a lifestyle and way of being. While they acknowledged that their service work entailed particular activities and programs, they often used those specifics to begin to describe their learning and shifted perspectives as a result of specific experiences. The concrete experiences—in combination and dialogue with the particular campus context and culture—served as a steppingstone to something greater. The concrete details often fell to the background as they began to publicly reflect on how those activities served a greater purpose. In effect, the

specifics served as collections of symbols that pointed to a larger, deeper reality for the students. They wanted to make certain that service was described as more than just a collection of activities and actions, but for them was a way of living out the mission of the university and appropriating it for themselves.

At times, an emic theme did not emerge right away. The students may have talked around a particular topic but did not necessarily hone in on a key phrase or message. Thus, there was sometimes the need to apply an etic theme based on the researcher's interpretation and in dialogue with the conceptual framework pillars. The etic themes were an attempt to capture the essence of the students' comments—as if to summarize what they might have said in a member checking session or recap of the interview.

Speaking of culture. Some students spoke directly about campus culture and how that impacted them. They were aware of the fact that they had experienced a unique flavor of the Jesuit mission of the university. Some spoke about culture in indirect terms, as if to say that was “just the way things were” and they accepted it as the norm. Others recognized that their experience was unique. My introduction of the concept of culture, or subculture, seemed to direct them to think more globally about their experience.

A recurring theme in both the student accounts and the built cultural environment was a preference for justice over charity. Students would consistently comment that they themselves see themselves “moving along” this continuum. They hoped that other students with whom they work would see the value of this approach and similarly “move along” the continuum. Professional

staff talk about “It’s not where you’ve come from, it’s where you’re going.” Thus, some of the emic themes emerged in relation to the students’ direct contact with mentors and following their example.

This sense of movement, and the value of it, is bolstered by references to the “magis” in Jesuit spirituality and pedagogy. “The more” is a striving for depth, fullness, and enhanced engagement with the world. Many students used the term “depth” in their reflections, often recognizing the value that influential students placed on that idea. They sought deeper conversations, stronger connections, more sustained immersion into a community, greater awareness about social issues and current issues. Geger (2012) noted that “the more” does not necessarily mean increasing quantity or frequency of action but, rather, it “captures a broader spirit, a restless drive to imagine whether there isn’t some even greater project” (p. 16).

This “greater project” seemed to be on the minds of many of the students within this subculture. While they may not have used this specific language, they did express a sort of striving, a kind of reaching. They wanted to step away from previous understandings of service and move to a place of commonality and connectedness with others. Many of their comments echoed Ellacuria’s (1982) words that spoke about the value and necessity of accompanying others: students must be continually challenged “to live in a social reality and for that social reality” (p. 12). These students clearly displayed that they were aware of that “social reality.” Most notably, many recognized that they needed to be “in” the social reality in order to be effectively “for” it. There was minimal detachment;

all had some direct contact with individuals across social differences and living in poverty.

Compiling prevalent themes. The collection of themes was compiled into a broad grouping. Both emic and etic themes were reduced to one-word summary categories in order to attempt to capture the students' sentiments. These one-word summaries were then grouped—or factor loaded—into even broader categories. Global themes like religion, passion, privilege, questioning, justice, and perspective (to name a few) emerged. The one-word themes were tallied and the top 10 categories were used to identify the most salient and recurring sentiments shared by the students. What then emerged was a type of composite sketch of a civically engaged student on campus.

As such, I attempted to construct a “prototypical” or “ideal” student in the sketch that follows. While essentially artificial, the sketch did, however, bring together the most common themes voiced by the collection of students in this study. While the individual narratives preserved the uniqueness of each student's story, the composite sketch served as an attempt to piece together the commonly shared elements of student experiences. In a sense, the sketch attempted to highlight the essence and ethos of the culture according to the most commonly expressed sentiments. The sketch streamlined the student experiences and pinpointed the most salient parts of the campus context in which they inhabit. The sketch was both a compilation of pieces of the student narratives and a new narrative altogether, a type of ethnographic or speculative fiction to help further describe the context.

Table 2

Emic and Etic Themes Reduced to One-Word Summary

Emic/Etic Headings	One-Word Summary
Being with people	Presence
Swept up in the culture	Mentorship
Reflection and thoughtful conversations	Reflection
Thinking about service in a new way	Perspective
Service as ministry of presence	Presence
Being at a deeper place	Reflection/Depth
Religion as passageway to service	Church/Religion
Changing your perceptions	Perspective
Probing questions/asking why	Questioning
A web process of growth	Growth
Seeking understanding	Insight
Service as foreign concept to others	Perspective
Bringing it back/sharing passion for justice	Passion
People feel very strongly one way or the other	Passion
Parental support and challenge	Authority
Positive peer pressure	Peers
Looking at multiple sources from diff perspectives	Perspective
Combination of books and people	Insight
Church as a thinking structure	Church/Religion
I tend to like extremists	Extremism/Advocacy
Living what you believe	Authenticity
Service as valuable exposure	Perspective
The value of choice	Choice
Don't rely on a textbook version of life	Exposure/Perspective
Student leaders make a difference	Leadership
The value of following your passion/Return rate on service	Passion/Authenticity
Men and women for others	Jesuit Mission

Table 2 (Continued)

Emic and Etic Themes Reduced to One-Word Summary

Emic/Etic Headings	One-Word Summary
Passing the torch	Mentorship
Finding my niche	Authenticity
Everyone was excited and passionate about doing service	Passion
I wanted a school with a Jesuit mindset	Jesuit Mission
Confidence and backing up where I'm coming from	Authenticity
Safety and peril of the bubble	Community
Value of a distanced perspective	Perspective
Seeing the world through a different lens	Perspective
Educating others about advocacy	Advocacy
Human face of social justice	Justice
Doing something that's bigger than yourself	Purpose
To understand, you need direct experience	Insight
Advocates are not activists	Extremism/Advocacy
Experience is the best teacher	Insight
Church as institution versus church as teacher	Church/Religion
I feel like I'm on an equal plane with those who have	Authority
Looking at the big picture	Perspective
Being present with others	Presence
A place of such privilege	Privilege
Service as mutual relationship	Mutuality/Relationship
A high level of idealism	Idealism/Hope
It's important to ask why something is the way it is	Insight
This is what it means to live a good life	Purpose
Broadening my idea of what it means to serve	Perspective
Moving from it's my responsibility to this is my career path	Direction
Sense of community is number one influence	Community
Sharing social justice crisis moments	Community

Table 2 (Continued)

Emic and Etic Themes Reduced to One-Word Summary

Emic/Etic Headings	One-Word
I look to campus and community mentors for inspiration	Mentorship
Caring for the whole person	Wholeness
Different than the typical student	Individual
A ministry of presence	Presence
Conversations about structural issues, ideals, justice	Reflection
Money does not drive me much	Countercultural
I don't venture out of my supportive community often	Community/Peers
Finding an issue that hits your heart	Passion
Delving deeper and showing courage	Depth
A positive impact on my spiritual formation	Spirituality
If I don't participate, nothing will change	Engagement/Action
College as a way to grown and break out	Growth
You hear messages about it everywhere	Exposure
A slow progression of community engagement	Growth
It's really common to just talk about service	Service
The importance of friends who get it	Insight/Getting It
My eyes were opened to the two feet of service	Perspective
I can identify with Jesuit spirituality versus Catholicism	Jesuit Mission
Justice: finding the hole in the bridge	Justice
Church backing for social justice: a positive moral	Church
I have the privilege to go and do service	Privilege

Composite Sketch

*Perspective, Insight, Passion, Peers, Community, Presence, Spirituality,
Advocacy, Justice, Privilege*

Sally was overwhelmed as she sat at the kitchen table. She slowly perused the literature that colleges had sent her over the past few months, head in her hands. The pile of brochures was daunting. How to decide? She's enjoyed her high school experiences, largely due to the fact that she was heavily involved in community work. On a weekly basis, she'd spend a few hours volunteering at the local senior center. She had also led several social justice campaigns in high school through her student government association, focusing on human trafficking. She worried that she would not find that kind of meaningful and fulfilling activity in college. It was important to her, and she seemed to try to read the brochures with that interest in mind.

As she picked through a few brochures, one in particular caught her eye. Unfamiliar Latin words and phrases like "magis" and "ad maiorem dei gloriam" seemed strange at first, but as she turned the pages on the brochure for the Jesuit university, she was intrigued and somewhat comforted. Was this what she had been looking for? There seemed to be a feeling of transcendence, of deeper meaning, conveyed by the brochure. Her interest was piqued. She'd heard of Jesuit schools, but she did not know very much about them. She was somewhat aware of the university's Jesuit tradition, but was essentially only looking for a smaller school where she could explore where she might fit best.

Her first visit to campus was for an admissions tour and interview. The campus quad was green and flowering, students seemed engaged, the energy was positive. For her interview, she talked about her service involvement in high school. After some deliberating, she decided to focus on the reasons why she became involved in community work. Her involvement with service was largely externally imposed in high school because of her Catholic school's climate and culture. The conversation with the admissions counselor felt natural. "I first got involved because everyone else was doing it so service was definitely a huge component," she told the counselor. "It's expected of you. I just started because everyone was doing it. Eventually I saw the importance of it and how beneficial it can be to both the person serving and the one being served. From there, that's how things started, I guess." She talked about how her perspective slowly shifted from service as an external mandate to something that was internal and self-motivating.

The conversation with the counselor began to deepen. "Was there a time when things seemed to click for you?," asked the counselor. Sally sat quietly for a moment, and then spoke about how she appreciated the fact that her "eyes were opened" to service and that she actually began to enjoy working in the community. No longer had it been something to check off her list of requirements. "I came to realize that it would be something important for me to do as a college student... it was part of me," Sally said. In hindsight, and as she pondered her experiences during the interview, Sally appreciated the kind of exposure that service offered to her and her peers. Most of her experiences involved working

with senior citizens and human rights campaigns. “In a lot of instances,” she mused, “my high school friends were able to see different perspectives on things and have more interaction with their community and the people outside the community.”

The start of Sally’s first year was beginning. Move-in to the campus residence halls was underway, and all the new students slowly settled into their new lives on campus. When Sally first arrived on campus, one of the first events she attended was the Service Fair, a type of signature event and tradition marking the start of the school year. It seemed like everyone was excited and passionate about service work and had a different cause they were promoting. The passion among the students was palpable. She was taking it all in. She remembered the feeling of newness. After the fair, she told her roommate all about it. “It was incredible... so much information was being shared there, that was so exciting for me!” she exclaimed as she perused the literature from the different nonprofits that had attended. From the beginning of her time at Loyola, she expected that she would be involved in community work and service issues. The day after the fair, she couldn’t help but visit the CCSJ office and talk about her experience. She sought out a student leader who was talking with a professional staff member in the office lobby. She asked some questions about what might be the best fit for her, how to travel to certain programs, if she’d fit in. Finally, she opened up a bit more and spoke about her upbringing—and the influence of her parents and church community. “Being involved in service, I don’t know... it just felt like it was what I should do, my responsibility in order to

live a good life... this is what you do," she shared. She left the office feeling like she'd found a type of second home.

Justice and advocacy. A few friends began talking about going on the first-year retreat through the campus ministry office. Intrigued, but unsure of the strength of her religious convictions, Sally decided to give it a try. As she sat with one of the campus ministers on the retreat, she talked about her background and how she chose Loyola. She shared that her understanding of Jesuit values and educational mission was limited as an incoming student. She only knew that she wanted to go to a school with a focus on service: "I knew I wanted to go a school with that mindset." She reflected on her experience in high school doing service work and compared it to her involvement in college: "I had done some service in high school, but I liked the whole well-rounded person idea that Loyola talks about, the *cura personalis*. I didn't know a whole lot about the Jesuits going in, but I liked what I had heard." She spoke about how she had some sense of the university's values and an appreciation of them, but she felt ambivalent about her own religious outlook and practice. She recalled, somewhat reluctantly but with sincerity, "I definitely felt called to serve, but not because of my religion." But she saw herself as open to growth. The conversation Jesuit mission, her involvement in service activities, and her own spirituality/religion, she said, "I think I am making more connections the more time I spend here though... the Jesuit values become a little clearer over time."

Sally's involvement in service work during her first year on campus led her to become curious about student leadership opportunities. She admired the

student leaders for their dedication and passion for their work. When applications became available for student staff positions in the service office, she took the plunge and decided to apply. Her excitement and enthusiasm couldn't be contained when she learned that she had been accepted for a position. After an intense selection process, Sally was grateful that she'd be able to soon share her experiences with other students as an official leader.

During student staff training in August, she heard all about the ways to recruit other student volunteers, how to lead reflection discussions, and how her work would fit into the larger Jesuit mission of the school. While the training focused on developing leadership skills, it also involved a fair amount of sharing about one's own personal story and journey. During one of the opening sessions of the training, she talked with her new co-workers about how her understanding of service broadened as she became more immersed in her work on campus and in the local community. "Entering into college, I felt like my perspective was limited," she told the other students. She shared that she hadn't engaged in any substantive conversations about social justice and its connection to service and community engagement. She continued, "I hadn't heard of concepts like advocacy or social justice, so when I came to Loyola, it was newer for me and unfamiliar."

The conversation with her new coworkers began to shift toward a discussion about Jesuits and their interest in social justice. As Sally became more involved at Loyola and heard other students talking about advocacy, justice, and activism, she became more and more intrigued. "But, of course," she

reflected, “direct, hands-on service is much easier to talk about at first.” James, a fellow student leader who was curious to hear more, asked, “What changed for you?” Sally sat quietly for a few seconds, and responded, “I’m not sure exactly, I just slowly became more comfortable asking and responding to ‘why’ questions—looking at the bigger picture... like, why are things the way they are?” She reiterated that discussions about direct service were clearly easier for her at first: “talking about justice came later.” In particular, sharing her new experiences and evolving views with family was often challenging. As the conversation wrapped up and people started to break for lunch, Sally and the others agreed that conversations with family members could be difficult. She said, “It’s hard when you’ve had these experiences, it can be tough to talk about them with others. I can easily talk about service with my family, but then when I say, ‘OK, let’s talk about the justice issues behind it,’ it becomes really difficult.”

Peers. Sally’s experiences in the service office and in the Baltimore community often overlapped with her discussions in the classroom. By the end of her sophomore year, she had decided to pursue a sociology degree. She began to develop an interest in community development theory and ideas about social capital. While she would typically rely on a few close friends and confidantes to share about the depth of her personal experiences, she also appreciated opportunities to make connections with professors and classmates with likeminded interests. She came to appreciate the intellectual connections she was making with people in her chosen field of study. Meeting with her advisor, a well-known sociologist on campus, she talked about why she enjoyed

her growing connections with intellectual peers and her involvement in CCSJ and how the two overlapped. “I think we just have a mutual understanding,” she explained to her advisor. “It feels like ‘we all get it,’ so it’s a safe space to talk about things; to compare [our] experiences a lot, too.”

Her strongest, most fulfilling friendships were with coworkers and friends in the CCSJ office. As a student staff member now, she had regular supervisory meetings with a professional staff member. The meetings would cover program logistics, planning for the upcoming year, and a regular “check in” about her personal and professional growth. During one meeting, she reflected with her supervisor on some of her closest friendships:

As we’ve gotten more involved and as we become more aware, we’ll watch certain documentaries together, or talk about things we hear in our classes that might be related, things that are related to justice issues. [We have] random conversations like ‘this is what I just read.’

In retrospect, many of informal conversations with confidantes had been very formative for Sally. At the same time, the structured reflection sessions that she coordinated as part of her position through the CCSJ office had also been helpful spaces. “I think the amount of times I’ve been provided the opportunity to be in a formal reflection, they’ve also been huge experiences,” she shared with her supervisor. She had even begun to attend events led by her peers in order to gain more experience and a new perspective. During the spring semester of her sophomore year, she decided to attend the “Women’s Meet and Eat” program,

an evening for women involving a shared meal, prayer, poetry, and conversation between Loyola students guests from local meal programs. After the experience, she spoke with her friends about how moving it had been. “It was an honor to hear those women’s stories of struggle, pain, and survival... it gave me a fresh perspective on my life. And even though we have had really different life experiences, I feel like we shared a common bond and we really connected.”

After the Meet and Eat event, Sally sat with friends in the CCSJ office. Some were drinking coffee, some were trying to study for an upcoming exam, some were just lounging. Their conversation flowed as they recounted the day’s activities, capped off by the communal dinner. Rebecca, one of Sally’s closest friends, sat quietly, and then sat up, and said, “Hey, I wonder if we would be able to find this same kind of community after we graduate. It worries me a little... but I feel like I know what I need and want now, having experienced this place.” All of the friends around the room nodded in agreement. “But,” Sally added, “it’s tough to think that I might not be able to preserve this same quality of community and relationships that really support me now... I mean, these friendships seem really unique.” The conversation grew quiet for a moment. Then, somewhat jokingly, Sally said, “what am I going to do when I have those ‘social justice crisis moments’ in the future? Getting through those moments of doubt is one of the main reasons you all are so important to me! That’s what keeps me going!”

Passion. When thinking about the tone of conversations involving deeply-held beliefs, Sally noted that they were civil. “Those conversations are always respectful but passionate... people feel very strongly one way or the other,

depending on the person. But I think they're usually always respectful." That passion was sometimes rooted in individual students' experiences, and sometimes, according to Sally's perspective, it was rooted in a student's family background. She mused, noting that "there are a lot of fundamental values from your family, and you have religious beliefs that you're going to hold on to and you're going to be the most passionate about them because you've had them for the longest." Those values might be outgrown, or they sometimes might limit perspectives. For Sally, her direct experiences and civil conversations with peers and mentees helped her grow and evolve. She said, "I think people like to be right a lot of times, about what they believe in. They like to defend those beliefs in a passionate way. Family background, how they were raised, their environment—it all affects their passion. When you come to college, those things change." She acknowledged that growth, in her view, was a very good thing. And much of her growth, and the growth she witnessed from her peers, was rooted in a strong experience of community.

Insight. That supportive community, in Sally's view, needed to be molded. The community needed to be a community of questioning in a supportive environment. For Sally, the status quo of just accepting things as they are—whether social structures, systemic poverty, privilege, or even uncritically using categories like "less fortunate"—needed to be continually challenged. She said, "I think it's really important to ask why something is the way it is, what people are doing about it, if there's a law that is keeping the situation the same, how the people you're serving feel about it." For Sally, it was important to include the

voices of those who suffered within systems. Those perspectives ground one's work for justice, and allowed one to dig more deeply with "why" questions. She said, "I think it's important that people are prepared for going into a service experience and can have outlets for reflection upon it." Since reflection had been an important part of her own personal development, she saw it as important for others. She continued, "Whether students reflect by themselves or in a group, I think reflection is important for anyone's perceptions to change." When challenged to consider new perspectives, new directions might emerge. She commented, "When you think about it, you realize you may have been thinking something wrong."

Sally's work in the community had exposed her to new realities. In a sense, she carried a spirit of hopefulness despite some of the suffering and struggles she had witnessed. She had come to realize that "human beings are extraordinary" and often resilient in the face of unimaginable challenges. She described some individuals experiencing homelessness that she had come to know, some local school children, and some recent immigrants from Central America. She commented, "When you get to know someone, you can see their strengths but you can also see what has challenged them and how they've survived that, which is truly amazing for a lot of people that I have met."

Community. As Sally moved along in her university career, she became increasingly aware that her supportive community of friends and mentors was limited in the perspective it offered her. She also knew that she would need to leave that community soon. Idealism and eagerness shifted to realism. As she

described it, she felt like she was becoming a bit more cynical. She said, “I was aware of [being in a bubble/subculture], and I definitely became more aware my senior year.” From her perspective, when she first started getting involved, she “felt like taking in everything, I was so excited and passionate and optimistic.” Over time, “after being in that bubble, especially in CCSJ the past few years, I felt like I had a much more hardened view of things.” She described her community of friends: “We were becoming a bit cynical, me and my friends.” She recognized that she “was still in the bubble, but was ready to break out of it too.” She continued, reflecting on the tension she experienced: “I was definitely aware of being in a bubble, but I still needed to be in it; it wasn’t until senior year that I needed to question it.” Somehow, she had a sense that her campus community’s perspective and reach—and her experience in CCSJ—was limited: “I could tell this wasn’t the real world... that x doesn’t always add up to z all the time.” Still, this community and her place within it had significantly shaped her identity throughout her entire time in college.

Presence. Not only did her perspective on service change from a requirement to a responsibility and opportunity, but the types of activities in which she was involved also shifted. She began to consider more involved, higher impact types of service activities. She continued, “So I did Spring Break Outreach [a week-long domestic alternative spring break experience]... and now I do all sorts of hunger and homelessness awareness activities and events in Baltimore.” She was particularly proud of her involvement with a local meal program that was fully staffed by student volunteers. The program was called

Care-A-Van and it had a long, respected history on campus as a way that engaged students have fought, in small ways, against hunger in Baltimore city. Sally continued, "I am a Care-A-Van volunteer now. Care-A-Van is a meal program, a unique meal program that we run downtown, and we provide not only food and drink and snacks and toiletries." She trailed off a little, seemingly wanting to describe the program in more detail, more depth. She continued, "We also [offer] conversation... sort of a ministry of presence to the people who may be experiencing homelessness or could use an extra meal or two."

Sally's involvement in the community now was more than simply doing service activities and then leaving the community to travel back to her life on campus. Now, she saw her involvement in the community through the lens of relationships, conversation, and presence with people who were often ignored on the streets. She saw herself as a member of the larger, local community. At first, she came across as a bit reserved, but she came alive when she talked about what she did then and what it meant to her. She talked about how her comfort level working directly with people experiencing homelessness had changed over time with more exposure: "When I first did Care-A-Van, I really didn't know what it was... I had never done it before. I was a little nervous. And when you're nervous, you don't really ask questions, you just sit in the background. But in the end, on the ride home, people start to ask questions when they may not have asked questions in the beginning." She now saw herself as much more engaged and invested. And, she now led others in the program, often serving as the reflection leader and initiating the questions for the group to process.

Privilege. Sally discussed how she processed her experiences with individuals who suffer. She valued the relationships she had formed in the community, but she struggled with how to allow those relationships to inform her daily actions. She noted that it can be difficult to be regularly involved in service and invest energy in it, “especially when you come back to a place of such privilege.” She seemed to struggle with some of the unearned advantages that from which she regularly benefited. For Sally, it was an ongoing challenge to live in two different worlds and bring those worlds together. At the time, she was reflecting on “how you live carrying people’s stories and knowing full well the pain and hardships that they’re going through while I cannot experience any of that.” She seemed determined to figure out how to find meaning in her experiences, and use her situation in life to better others. As she described, she struggled with “how to live your life with that knowledge and how you can represent those people.” She finished her thought as if she was still searching for the right path: “Those are questions without a real specific answer.”

Church, justice and spirituality. Sally reflected on her complicated relationship with the church. In this context, “the church” almost always referred to the Roman Catholic Church. Her reflections included a mixture of appreciation and displeasure, a complicated mix of emotions. She came from a family with strong roots in Catholicism, and these roots now often conflicted with her affinity for activism and social justice work. She said, “It’s interesting, I’m not really religious, so the church hasn’t been—for a long time—a source of right and wrong for me.” But, her experience on campus at a Jesuit school had forced her

to look at things differently. She noted, "It has been interesting to be on this campus, where I've found church backing for the things that I'm passionate about and the things that I want to do and the life that I want to lead." New images of a socially engaged church had emerged for her from her experiences.

She continued about her new awareness and appreciation of the church, and acknowledged her complicated perspective. She noted, "Although so many times I see the church as so hierarchical, rigid and strict, but there are also times when it's on the forefront of social justice movements and service and all the things that I want to do." While at one time in her life she may have wanted to abandon the church and her affiliation with it altogether, she now seemed to be in a different place. For Sally, her work with social justice causes found strong support and a solid foundation in the church's social teachings. She said, "It's been interesting to find backing for my interests within the church structure." There was a hint of reluctance but also relief in this newly emerging perspective on how she defined "church."

Sally's reflections, while initially appearing as an internal conflict because of her admixture of agreement and disagreement with the Catholic Church, emerged as a type of resignation and acceptance. The church as an institution had devalued her, but the church as a moral teacher and keeper of lasting values had shaped her. She commented, "The structure of the church doesn't value me and view me as equal." She was honest about her perceived place within the church based on her own identity. But, she continued, "That doesn't mean that just because the structure is slow to adapt to the realities of the world, that the

values I was taught and the lessons that were imparted during my time in the church haven't stuck." Her process of maturation and perspective-taking seemed to have broadened her outlook. In a way, she seemed to have arrived at the conclusion that a clean break from the church would have been counterproductive. She seemed to have tentatively committed herself to finding the good—the social justice focus—in the larger church.

For Sally, the church's values and its "really positive moral framework" were what continued to give her energy and interest. She talked about the church at a "bare bones" level, acknowledging again that it seemed to have strayed from its foundational values because of the "ways of the world." The positive "more" framework that she mentioned was what she "had to learn to work within." For her to commit her life to social justice causes and advocacy, she said that she needed to carefully and strategically work within the structure "in order to do the work that I want to do." The church's sense of mission and strong values seemed to give her social interests a deeper foundation and purpose. From her perspective, the church and its works were on the cutting edge: "There just aren't that many secular organizations that are doing the work that I want to do."

Sally noted the need to maintain a balance between, in her words, "justice" and "charity." Working for justice equated to being a long-term advocate for human rights and fair treatment—a systems approach. Charity equated to "acts of mercy" and attending to the immediate needs of individuals—an individualized approach. She continued, "We talk about service versus helping, but it's not just

about going in and feeding the poor and doing acts of mercy.” She continued, “It’s realizing that we have things to learn and people have things to teach, and we talk about charity and justice and how you need both of those things.” She called to mind an analogy that she’d learned through a mentor during a recent training: “It’s like the example of finding someone drowning and you pull them out of the water, but if every day you find someone drowning you’re going to want find the hole in the bridge!”

Composite Sketch Summary

Thus, the fictional student that was created for this study attempted to show how the corpus of student stories blended together. While the students in this study all had unique perspectives and experiences, they did have many common experiences that were articulated using common themes. This composite sketch of a fictional student brought together elements of many of the students’ stories. It created a type of framework within which to build, showing how a student might move from start to finish through this campus culture. It showed how the student navigated the environment and opportunities presented but also how the student brought her own perspectives and experiences into that environment. Ultimately, it provided a hypothetical example of how the culture shaped the student and how the student shaped the culture.

Summary

This chapter described an engaged campus and attempted to paint a picture of a way of life on this campus. A number of the university’s signature events and ways in which students interacted with the mission of the university

were discussed. The university and its overall characteristics were also reviewed. Following the description of the university and the way in which its culture was formed, student stories were shared. These stories all took a common form—introduction to the interview (a brief description of the student’s overall demeanor and presence and how they approached the interview scenario itself), backstory (a brief overview of how the student came to participate in the study), and the actual student story or interview related in narrative form. Finally, a composite sketch of an engaged student was shared as a way to describe what a prototypical student looked like. The most prevalent themes that emerged from the student stories were used to construct this composite sketch. These three components—description of campus and culture, student stories, and composite sketch—all formed a picture of a particular subculture on this campus. The following chapter will review how the data shared are either in line with or contrast with existent literature.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The student reflections all addressed, in some way, the variety of literature that was reviewed for this study. The student reflections also both supported and contradicted the pillars of the study's conceptual framework. Through their comments and reflections, all of the students—in some way—addressed civic engagement, transformative learning, emerging adulthood theory, and Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice. The emic and etic themes that described parts of the student narratives all fed up into larger umbrella themes. These themes are addressed next and placed in dialogue with the literature that was reviewed, as well as the pillars of the conceptual framework. When the emic and etic themes were analyzed, what emerged were 10 overarching umbrella themes (see Table 3). These overarching themes attempted to capture the major messages shared by the students. The emic and etic themes fall under the umbrella themes. This chapter closes with a summary discussion of the study's overall findings and recommendations for future research.

Table 3

One-Word Summaries Grouped into Umbrella Themes

One-Word Summaries Grouped into Umbrella Themes
Theme 1: Presence
Theme 2: Questioning and Insight
Theme 3: Peers, Community, Authority, and Mentorship
Theme 4: Church, Religion, Spirituality, and Jesuit Mission
Theme 5: Advocacy, Extremism, and Justice
Theme 6: Purpose, Authenticity, Engagement, and Action

Table 3 (Continued)

One-Word Summaries Grouped into Umbrella Themes

Theme 7: Perspective, Reflection, Depth, and Growth
Theme 8: Relationships, Mutuality, and Wholeness
Theme 9: Privilege
Theme 10: Passion, Direction, and Purpose

Theme 1: Presence

Service as ministry of presence. One of the initial themes to emerge in this study was the notion that service was more than simply helping other people. Service was viewed and discussed, by many students, as a type of presence toward others. It was seen as “being with” instead of just “acting for” others. This came to light as Hannah reflected on her experience in high school and contrasted it with her involvement in college. She said that now, as a student at Loyola, and through participating in CCSJ programs, her outlook was different. The meaning of her efforts had changed. She reflected on her experience working with senior citizens: “I never even thought of starting a program where maybe we could just stay and visit too. So we just dropped off soup. But, it never occurred to me that it might be a problem that these seniors were alone all day.” In college, she came to understand that presence and “being with people” was just as valuable. She noted the common humanity that she had come to recognize through her service experiences. “Seeing other students [stay and visit with people] was so helpful. I guess I realized that the relationships were more important than anything else.”

Hannah's reflections on the importance of being present to others were also shared by other students. Kallie spoke of a similar experience through her working serving food in downtown Baltimore to people who were hungry or experiencing homelessness. She said, in addition to providing food, "We also [offer] conversation... sort of a ministry of presence to the people who may be experiencing homelessness or could use an extra meal or two." Similarly, the language resonated with Andrea as well. But, she found it challenging to use that language to describe her efforts, and actually have other people understand her perspective. From Andrea's perspective, conveying the depth of her experience to others who did not have the same context was an ongoing challenge. Terms like "service" and "volunteerism" resonated with others, but mission-based language like "justice" and "being with others" was more difficult to employ.

These sentiments by the students find root in the Jesuit educational outlook that undergirds this study. As Jesuit educational leaders and scholars suggest, students must be encouraged and continually challenged "to live in a social reality and to live for that social reality" (Ellacuria, 1982, p. 12). Indeed, this social reality becomes understood—at least in part—by trying to come to understand another person's reality. That understanding can begin by an orientation of presence and "being with." This understanding of social realities is an important foundational characteristic of Jesuit education. And, to a certain extent, the students came to recognize its importance. According to Jesuit thinkers, this understanding of social realities and the lived experiences of those

who suffer differentiates Jesuit education from other approaches to education. In contrast to other types of universities and other educational approaches, Kolvenbach (2001) noted that Jesuit institutions have a very specific and unique mission: “Jesuit universities have stronger and different reasons than many other academic and research institutions for addressing the contemporary world as it unjustly exists and for helping to reshape it in the light of the Gospel” (p. 46). The students’ growing understanding and awareness of the value of being present to others supports the pedagogical roots of the institution in which they are enrolled.

My eyes were opened to the two feet of service. The theme of presence emerges further when looking at the students’ comments about the “two feet of service.” Several students spoke about how they appreciated learning about the value of not just providing direct service—“helping”—to others. But, they also came to understand the value of learning about how to advocate on behalf of others with little social power. They learned that learning about social justice issues and taking action was just as important as being present to others in service. For them, service was more than just an occasional good deed or activity. It was something that should be sustained and comprehensive, a use of one’s heart and mind.

There were a handful of experiences about which students spoke that helped them understand these “two feet of service.” Of particular note is the Ignatian Family Teach-In. Like several other students in this study, Andrea joined as a participant in the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice one year. She

said, “That was one of my first encounters with the broader sphere of social justice issues and advocacy.” She appreciated the event and the exposure to new ideas—“All those conversations about so many different issues... war, foreign policy; it was a very transformative experience.” The trip seemed to help her understand—especially as a younger student somewhat new to campus—the importance of both direct service and long-term advocacy. She noted, “It opened my eyes to an entire world of service and justice... the two feet of service.” The “two feet of service” stood as a hallmark of Jesuit education for her now.

The idea of helping students understand the broader context of their work has been touched upon indirectly in the literature. For example, Swaminathan’s (2007) work explored the role of community partners as “oblique transmitters” of values and professional perspectives (p. 141). This current study points to the significant role that mentors can play in co-educating students as they engage in work outside of the confines of campus. However, the students in this current study would likely point out that the lessons they learned from community mentors and leaders were not predominantly oblique. These lessons were often direct and filled with messages rooted in Jesuit terminology, like “a faith that does justice” and “men and women for and with others.” Thus, while community partners could, according to Swaminathan (2007), often convey their own lessons and messaging, the students in this current study took those direct lessons and allowed them to “open their eyes” quite completely. The students’ experiences speak to the powerful role that campus and community mentors can

play, particularly within the context of a campus culture that has strong foundational values.

Theme 2: Questioning and Insight

Probing questions/asking why. Students in this current study spoke about the strong push and desire to ask “why” questions. Their service work and efforts in the community were not limited to just one-time activities. Many of them—through influences from peers, participation in reflection activities, and the presentation of service as a whole on campus—expressed an interest in asking why certain conditions and social realities exist.

Their perspectives, however, seem to contrast with some of the scholarly literature on connections between service and activism. Particularly from the perspective of service-learning, some authors wrote about the potential dangers associated with immersing students in the community. Marginalized communities already face challenges, and dealing with students who may reinforce stereotypes could be one more challenge foisted upon these communities. However, these students seemed committed to exploring root causes and not being satisfied with viewing service as just one more activity. In their work focused on “reframing volunteerism as acts of dissent,” Bickford and Reynolds (2002) noted that “few students understand their service as a contribution to structural social change” (p. 238). The authors’ stance throughout their entire article was one of caution. They expressed a guarded optimism about the potential benefits of service-learning as institutionalized activism and subversive pedagogy.

However, students in this current study did in fact see their efforts as contributing to social change. They viewed their work along a continuum, with service being viewed as an entry point that allowed one to ask critical questions of social issues. In a sense, the students in this study viewed their community involvement as a means to create spaces to ask broader questions about social arrangements. While students did not employ the term “dissent” in their conversations for this study, they did allude to the fact that their efforts seemed outside the norm. They viewed themselves as different, but at the same time, felt supported in their work by the institution and its overarching values framework.

Seeking understanding. A recurring theme within this study was the notion that students often felt misunderstood. They felt different and sometimes felt that others viewed their efforts as foreign, strange, and outside the norm. Some were self-conscious about this fact and chose to not venture outside of their regular community. They stayed close to those with whom they felt a kinship and with those who had had similar experiences. They wanted to be understood, particularly because the experiences they had were transformative and life-altering. Kallie, in particular, reflected upon the way others perceived her and the work in which she was involved. She sometimes felt misunderstood, not interested in putting forth the effort to explain why she was involved in community activities or social justice work.

Similarly, Tim noted that he did not venture outside of his supportive community of likeminded friends too often. This community provided support and boundaries for him, and he felt understood and safe with this group of people.

These sentiments speak to some of the work done by Mezirow (2000) on transformative learning, where individuals—particularly young people—challenged their received worldviews. Quinnan (1997) suggested that transformative learning theory was “predicated on the idea that students are seriously challenged to assess their value system and worldview” (p. 42). With this challenge, though, came the need for community and likeminded individuals to support them.

It’s important to ask why something is the way it is. The concept of persistent and consistent, almost unceasing, questioning continually emerged in my conversations with students. The question—and the act of questioning among supportive peers—was held up as a type of sacred and necessary activity. The act of questioning, in a certain sense, seemed to partially shape the identity of the community of students. It was part and parcel of who they were as students and learners within this value-laden community. One student, Cynthia, commented on this culture of questioning during much of her interview. She spoke about the role of questioning that was embedded in a supportive community. That supportive community, in her view, needed to be molded. The community needed to be a community of questioning in a supportive environment. For Cynthia, the status quo of just accepting things as they are—whether social structures, systemic poverty, privilege, or even uncritically using categories like “less fortunate”—needed to be continually challenged. She said, “I think it’s really important to ask why something is the way it is, what people are doing about it, if there’s a law that is keeping the situation the same, how the people

you're serving feel about it.”

These comments speak to some of the challenge and caution set forth by scholars when students are engaged in the community. The culture of questioning and critical reflection as discussed by the students is supported by scholars who wrote about experiential education and community engagement. Bickford and Reynolds (2002), in particular, discussed some of the unintended consequences that could arise if students were not prepared well or encouraged to ask questions about their experiences. The authors noted the inherent risk in undertaking service-learning as a pedagogy, and commented that “despite well-designed projects and responsible guidance, students may remain convinced that misfortune can always be overcome by a bootstraps attitude” or that social problems are “inevitably the result of individual circumstances” (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002, p. 243). The students in the current study seemed to learn this lesson and recognize the need for constant questioning in order to be as informed as possible. Their perspectives support the argument by Bickford and Reynolds (2002) that ongoing critical questioning encouraged students to consider the context of social problems.

Theme 3: Peers, Community, Authority, and Mentorship

Swept up in the culture. Ropers-Huilman et al. (2003) and Ropers-Huilman et al. (2005) discussed the relationships between student activists, engaged students, and campus administrators. Throughout much of their study, the students displayed an antagonistic relationship with campus officials. Administrators were viewed as unhelpful and unnecessary. Yet, students saw

the administrators as remaining open to communication and conversation.

Students also commented on the roles that administrators assumed. Overall, the students expressed a strong desire for a “reconceptualization of those roles, one that allowed more opportunity for joint efforts to work toward positive social change” (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2003, p. 309). The clearly defined—and perhaps stereotypical—roles of students and institutional officials were viewed by many students as barriers.

In my conversations with students on my campus, however, this tense and adversarial relationship did not emerge as a common concern. Students in my study appreciated the role modeling offered by campus administrators and frequently viewed them as mentors and guides. The experiences of these students contrast with the experiences of students in the Ropers-Huilman et al. (2003) and Ropers-Huilman et al. (2005) studies. Perhaps it was the nature of the students’ efforts—protest and traditional activism and questioning of power structures—that pitted the students in the aforementioned study against campus officials. Students in my study, in contrast, certainly questioned power structures in their service and advocacy work, but approached campus officials as partners along a common journey.

One other key difference is how language was used by both sets of students. In the Ropers-Huilman et al. (2003) study, students viewed themselves as activists working toward a cause. Most of the student activists “used *system* often [and] they did not have a firm delineation of what was in and out of ‘the system’” (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2003, p. 300). This ambiguous depiction of “the

system” came through in student interviews. The majority of student activists discussed their antagonistic relationships with campus administrators, relationships involving very limited and untrustworthy communication. While some of the students described administrators as supportive, none of them described administrators as collaborative. One difference seems to lie in the lack of personal relationships nurtured between students and campus officials (at least from the perspective of the students interviewed for the study).

By way of contrast, students in my study sometimes shied away from the concept of “activist” and preferred “advocate.” They felt that activism, in general, was perceived as too divisive, pitting one side with power against a less powerful side. One student commented specifically: People should not be labeled as activists, but just understood as those individuals who are simply looking out for all of us and promoting social justice for all.” The preference for certain terminology and definitions speaks to the students’ sense that they are working on a common mission, that relationships are important and that those relationships are intimately bound up with the causes they promote.

I look to campus and community members for inspiration. Other students spoke of culture and being swept up in it. This culture seemed to be a shared culture on campus built around the institution’s Jesuit mission. Hannah spoke mainly of the importance of culture, and how she had come to appreciate it and value its role in shaping a community. In Hannah’s view, other students shaped the culture for her as well. They provided a clear example of progression, love for learning, intellectual and personal development, and broadened

perspectives and horizons. These students had somehow moved beyond just individual acts of service and had been awakened to the big picture. They had shed light on the meaning of service—that it was more than just actions, but from Hannah’s view, a “way of being.”

These reflections speak to some of the findings in the scholarly literature about how student engagement, advocacy and activism become embedded within an institution’s culture. In particular, Biddix et al. (2009) commented on how these efforts became institutionalized. The authors wrote about cultures of dissent and how those cultures could be supported and nourished within the confines of an institution. For these spaces to be created, institutions needed to acknowledge that “perceiving injustice and questioning authority are foundational values enabled in a democratic society” (Biddix et al., 2009, p. 143). Thus, for the authors, the starting point must have been focused on fundamental institutional values and student learning outcomes rooted in democratic processes. Hannah’s observation about the role modeling of other students supports the authors’ contention that other engaged students can support the work of institutionalization by living out the foundational values of the institution.

I feel like I’m on an equal plane with those who have authority.

Students spoke about how their experiences in the community and on campus enhanced their overall sense of feeling authentic. One student in particular seemed to value that he could now be authentic because he had developed relationships in the community. He had also seriously wrestled with social policy issues and debated religious teachings. In a sense, he seemed to value his own

intellectual honesty and engagement. And when, previously, parents and other authority figures served as the only intellectual authorities in his life, his experience and deep questioning now came to serve as authorities in and of themselves. He said:

I've definitely been able to be on their level. It wasn't like a parent talking at me any longer. Now it's more equal. I feel that I'm more on an equal plane with those who have authority. And as a third year college student now, I'm able to challenge professors on things.

In a sense, he could identify with mentors and official authority figures because of his accumulated experiences and intellectual engagement with a variety of topics. In the end, he reflected on how he could engage on an equal plane and feel confident in the authenticity of his experience.

Jason's experience is in line with the literature on tempered radical theory. Kezar (2010) made an important contribution to the literature by de-emphasizing the traditional notion of activism as divisive and characterizing it as a partnership between like-minded individuals within an institution. Kezar (2010) developed "tempered radical theory" as a conceptual frame, where student activists became both partners with and vehicles for faculty members interested in expressing broader social justice concerns (p. 452). Her work supports some of the sentiments shared by the students in the current study in that they could identify with mentors and those with more experience working on social justice causes. While the students in the current study did not mention specifically that they felt like they served as vehicles for their mentors to express their own views, they did

discuss the strong presence that these mentors had in their lives. Their mentors were viewed as being authentic and living out strongly held values. The students wanted to model their own lives on the example set by these professional staff members, both administrators and faculty alike.

Parental support and challenge. Some of the work by Arnett (2004) on emerging adulthood theory supports the perspectives of some students in this study as they commented on complicated relationships with parents. Arnett (2004) observed that the period of emerging adulthood is one in which individuals are “neither beholden to their parents nor committed to a web of adult roles.” Some of the students expressed concerns about wanting to follow their own newly unfolding paths—in order to be authentic and live out their values—but also wanting to maintain the support of parents. That is, being “beholden to their parents” was not something that was necessarily easy to manage.

One student, Kallie, struggled with the new parameters in her relationship with her father. She wrestled with the complications surrounding the relationship, especially with her strong interest in community involvement and service. She saw herself on a certain trajectory. But the strong feelings from her father had made her question her next steps. She was unsure about whether he would support her life choices. She seemed to want to be fully honest with him, asserting her independence and reassuring him, but she seemed unsure and hesitant. “It was really hard to be honest and to have that conversation... It’s not something we’ve talked fully about. I guess I’m putting that conversation off.” She clearly avoided the conversation because she was uncertain about where it

might lead or how it might impact their relationship.

Further, Arnett's (2004) comments about emerging adults negotiating their commitments to "a web of adult roles" find expression in some of the current study's students' reflections on their career paths. Some of the students wrestled with the tug and pull between their own interests and the wishes of their family members. As Tim mentioned, he struggled with his family's ideas about what he would be doing "for the rest of his life." His family wanted to make sure he had financial security in whatever path he chose, but Tim was not specifically concerned with that at this point in his life. He was more concerned about staying true to his values. Tim talked about his family's understanding of his choice to participate in a full-time volunteer program. He said, "My family doesn't understand why I would go and live in relative poverty." His family seemed to have a limited understanding of his efforts. "I think my sisters just think that I do what I do because I care about other people, so I haven't really been able to communicate that to them yet," he said. He mentioned that his family worried about his financial picture. Here, Tim's experience speaks to Arnett's (2004) contention that emerging adults are not fully beholden to parents and family, but at the same time, those parents and family members still lurk in the background.

Belle spoke about similar concerns and experiences, and her comments ring true with some of the thinking surrounding emerging adulthood as well. Belle found support from her family; in her view, they knew her activities in the community were "part of who she is." She noted, "People are generally proud of me and glad that [service] is a part of my life." At the same time, other people

close to her had questioned her choice of activities and lifestyle. “Others are intrigued about why I spend so much time doing service. Some family members have always wondered why I chose to place my time and effort into something that might not have the same kind of return or success rate as other activities.” She seemed to understand and somewhat appreciate their perspective on the “return” and “success rate” of being involved in service in the community, unsure of how to navigate received societal expectations.

Safety and peril of the bubble. Biddix (2010) wrote about the formation of cultures of student activists, and how students came to learn the expectations of these small student groups on campus. He found that students could “quickly recognize the organizational culture and existent structures in a community to evaluate the potential to make contributions” (Biddix, 2010, p. 690). This quick learning was important for students to learn how to be effective in their efforts to promote change. While Biddix (2010) did not specifically mention that student activists form insular communities, his work did suggest that student activists and other engaged students form supportive communities among themselves. Further, those supportive communities contain certain unwritten rules that, once learned and understood, provide clarity, guidance, and a certain feeling of safety.

Similarly, some students in this current study spoke about how they learned to navigate cultural expectations. Some accepted them uncritically and without question, while others began to reject them or look at them using a critical eye. Mary, in particular, addressed this issue. From her perspective, when she first started getting involved on campus, “she felt like taking in

everything” and she “was so excited and passionate and optimistic.” Over time, “after being in that bubble, especially in CCSJ the past few years, I felt like I had a much more hardened view of things.” She described her community of friends: “We were the cynical ones of the crew, me and my friends.” She recognized that she “was still in the bubble, but was ready to break out of it too.” She continued, reflecting on the tension she experienced: “I was definitely aware of being in a bubble, but I still needed to be in it; it wasn’t until senior year that I needed to question it.”

Over time, Mary developed the sense that her campus community’s perspective and reach—and her experience in CCSJ—was limited: “I could tell this wasn’t the real world... that x doesn’t always add up to z all the time.” Still, this community and her place within it had significantly shaped her identity throughout her entire time in college. Her experience falls in line with Biddix’s (2010) work, specifically in her capacity to “recognize the existent structures in a community.” As she began to recognize those structures, Mary was able to move from accepting them as the norm to viewing them with a critical stance. She could distance herself from those existent structures and recognize that there were alternative ways of approaching situations. In a sense, she could both identify and de-identify with the culture, taking pieces of it as necessary. But, it took some time for Mary to learn that lesson. Additionally, Mary seemed to realize that she could contribute to the culture by asking questions of it. Her perspective shows a certain maturity level among the group of students in this study.

Theme 4: Church, Religion, Spirituality, and Jesuit Mission

I wanted a school with a Jesuit mindset. Coming to terms with the Jesuit mission of the school was touched upon by several students. In particular, they reflected on how they came to learn just what “Jesuit mission” meant. Some had significant experience with Jesuit education in primary and secondary school, and so they knew the language and jargon of Jesuit educational practice. Others had heard about Jesuit schools from family members, that they were “good schools” with strong reputations. Others knew that Jesuit institutions were known for their commitment to service and social justice; that focus was an initial attraction because they had positive experiences with these kinds of activities in high school.

Mary commented on her awareness of Jesuit education when she was a prospective and incoming student. She shared that her understanding of Jesuit values and educational mission was limited as an incoming student. She only knew that she wanted to go to a school with a focus on service: “I knew I wanted to go a school with that mindset.” Further, she hoped that her positive experiences with service while in high school would help her transition to a campus with likeminded values. She seemed to want to push herself to grow and learn and to expand her horizons. She said, “I had done some service in high school, but I liked the whole well-rounded person idea that Loyola talks about, the *cura personalis*. I didn’t know a whole lot about the Jesuits going in,

but I liked what I had heard.” Thus, there was an initial attraction, and that attraction had some connection to her high school experience.

Mary’s initial awareness of the concept of *cura personalis*, of being well-rounded, would be a foundational starting point—a touchstone—for her as she learned about connections between service and broader social justice concerns. Relative to the scholarly literature, Biddix et al.’s (2009) work on the learning outcomes connected with student advocacy and activism showed how a campus could support a wide range of student engagement on social issues. The authors asked questions about how civic engagement—specifically campus activism—encouraged campuses as institutions to reconsider and rethink learning outcomes for students related to engagement on social, economic, and political hot-button issues. As Mary notes, the well-rounded concept that is built into the Jesuit mission of the school—which naturally includes both service and social justice—gives students supports to continually ask questions about social injustice. It also permits them to enter the institution at a variety of developmental levels—that is, some will have significant community experience and some will have very little—and they will still find support and encouragement along the way. Biddix et al.’s (2009) use of the idea of campus activism’s “journey from detrimental to developmental” mantra is a useful lens through which we can look at Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice.

Theme 5: Advocacy, Extremism, and Justice

I tend to like extremists. The topic of activists as extremists was raised

in conversation during the course of this study. Several students grappled with the definition of activism and if the term felt like the best fit for describing their own work. They recognized that the term and concept carried certain connotations—some might even say “baggage”—with which the students were unsure about identifying. Chatterton’s (2006) work in particular spoke to this idea about activist identity and preconceived cultural and social identities. Chatterton (2006) wrote as a geographer interested in how activists create their own spaces. His writing and research centered around the “need to transcend activist spaces and identities” in order to focus more on long-term ends as opposed to short-term means (p. 260).

Peter took up the topic of activism and viewed it through the lens of extremism. Yet, he seemed comfortable with the idea that activists would, as Chatterton (2006) noted, inhabit their own “spaces.” These spaces were symbolic in that they challenged others and made them somewhat uncomfortable. Peter said, “I tend to like extremists... I like looking at extremes in a situation because it’s interesting to see where the threshold of societal pressure can be.” In Peter’s view, the approach and actions of “extremists” caught his attention and, as he said, continually catch society’s attention. There was a certain appeal to their idealism. “I guess I like them because they have a philosophy, they stick with it.” Thus, though Chatterton (2006) pushed his readers to consider seeing beyond defined boundaries, Peter appreciates what activists stand for and appreciates the particular identities they carry.

Peter continued to comment on activist identities, and his reflections were

both in support of and in contrast to Chatterton's (2006) work. Peter noted the particular attraction of extremists/activists for him: they seem to be much more committed to their ideals than on average. They stand as examples of consistency and integrity. He explained further, "I've found that with people who have really devoted themselves to live their lives within the structure of what they believe, they don't seem to go outside of that or settle too much or make excuses for what they're doing. All their decisions are guided by what they believe." He paused and said, "It's really admirable." Peter's negotiation with the interplay between activism and extremism shows the appeal of the concept, the appropriation of it based on his own experience, and the somewhat uneasy embrace of it. Peter's reflections bring Chatterton's (2006) call for "transcending activist identities and spaces" back down, for Peter appreciates the symbolism that these activists represent.

Justice: Finding the hole in the bridge. Several students grappled with the notion of making a long-term difference through their service work. They understood the need for service, but reflected on the fact that they were hoping for lasting structural change, ultimately. They spoke of striking a balance between direct service and long-term work for change, and how both are needed to inform each other. In particular, Briana discussed the need to maintain a balance between, in her words, "justice" and "charity." Working for justice equated to being a long-term advocate for human rights and fair treatment—a systems approach. Charity equated to "acts of mercy" and attending to the immediate needs of individuals—an individualized approach. She continued, "We

talk about service versus helping, but it's not just about going in and feeding the poor and doing acts of mercy." Briana seemed to want to hold both the "acts of mercy" and the long-term focus in a creative tension. For her, there was a real need for both to be given equal weight and importance.

Briana spoke in an analogy to convey this tension that she felt. For Briana, "It's realizing that we have things to learn and people have things to teach, and we talk about charity and justice and how you need both of those things." She called to mind an analogy that she learned through a mentor during a student leader training: "It's like the example of finding someone drowning and you pull them out of the water, but if every day you find someone drowning you're going to want find the hole in the bridge!" Her comments resonate with the work of Cuban and Anderson (2007) and their efforts to discuss the role of social justice education within service-learning. As they argued, more often than not, students (and faculty) resist the notion that they live within an oppressive system, let alone recognize that they themselves may gain unearned advantages and benefits from that system.

Cuban and Anderson's (2007) work highlights the need for all service and community engagement work to be rooted in a larger curricular enterprise. The authors attempted to challenge the practice of "involving students in public contexts but not challenging them with social issues" (p. 144). Briana indirectly makes this recommendation by suggesting that both acts of mercy and acts of charity are two sides of a mutually dependent coin. In her words, helping cannot happen without serving. For her, asking questions about the root of social issues

is just as important as having direct experience and direct contact with individuals experiencing that issue firsthand. Her comments support Cuban and Anderson's (2007) contention that social issues should always be at the heart of any work in the community, and that learning about those issues and reflecting on them critically should be a priority.

Theme 6: Purpose, Authenticity, Engagement, and Action

Doing something that's bigger than yourself. Some students reflected on how their work in the community expanded their overall life's purpose, or at least made them reflect on their personal mission. A few students commented that the act of teaching other students and serving as a peer mentor, or just walking alongside another student during their personal journey, was a meaningful experience. These mentoring, companionship, and community experiences motivated students, especially when they felt adrift at times. Belle, in particular, spoke about times when she felt frustrated or felt like her efforts were not making very much of a difference. During those times, she reminded herself that she needed to dig deeply, saying "What you're doing needs to be for something bigger than yourself." Further, Jason also noted that the act of teaching other students boosted his confidence and sense of purpose. Referring to his experience leading other students in a protest experience, he said, "I enjoyed trying to teach others and educate others about the importance of advocacy."

These student sentiments connect with the thinking around civic engagement as both an activity and a pedagogy, or way of educating students.

Harkening back to the original definition from this study's conceptual framework, civic engagement is defined as "acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities" (CCEL, 2010). Students came to appreciate this heightened responsibility to not only the local community—as evolving and emerging engaged citizens—but to their community of peers as well. Andrea commented on this idea of "doing something that's bigger than yourself," for a larger purpose and mission. Because she had powerful, memorable experiences, she hoped to find more spaces where she could express herself and broaden the concept of service. "I wish I made more opportunities to engage in detailed or difficult conversations about it; that could, in the end, be more fruitful. Or it could be an opportunity to explain myself, and explain the advocacy and justice pieces and not just the service piece," she commented. The "advocacy and justice pieces" were concepts that kept her motivated to find purpose and contribute to a larger whole. These parts of her experience also helped her to discern how she was making a long-term impact.

Living what you believe. Some of Peter's comments support the work of Rhoads (1997a), particularly vis-à-vis the identity development of activists. Writing about the phenomenon of identity activism, Rhoads (1997a) noted that these campus activists could offer an insightful perspective on the "fundamental institutional weaknesses" of a campus culture (p. 517). The lived experiences of students, if given real merit and voice, could offer new educational opportunities upon which institutions might capitalize. Students engaging as activists—whether they are focused on identity issues, social causes, or both—call into question

institutional practices and structures. From a collective group identity and the leverage that can come from that, individual students have the power to criticize and push for change.

In relation to this study, Peter's admiration for consistency and congruency among activists was connected with how he saw his own developmental journey. He appreciated the nearly direct causal tie between vision, behavior, and action. He reflected on his own development and evolution as a critical thinker: "I went to a Montessori preschool, so maybe that affected my development." That type of education got his journey started. He continued:

I think through middle school I fell into this rut of just going with the crowd, of trying to figure out a lot of stuff. But then in high school, I started to develop my own sense of belief, I guess. I started being exposed to different ideas... it was less being taught to and more being presented with ideas and then choosing which ones I liked.

Developing and relying on his own "sense of belief" had become a significant part of his self-understanding now.

Peter's admiration for committed activists points to their role as a form of cultural mentor for students in this study. Activists' convictions to their causes show a certain type of courage and authenticity. In turn, for Peter, these activists (or extremists, as he sometimes referred to them interchangeably) serve as guideposts for living what you believe and unapologetically putting one's values into action. Rhoads (1997b) noted that activists could expose fundamental institutional weaknesses. A supportive campus culture is required, then, to help

students address those weaknesses and live what they believe. Peter felt supported to live his values on campus. And, he spoke about his own process of developing a courageous outlook in order to live authentically. In the particular context of the campus in this study, Peter's desire to live authentically was supported, valued, and encouraged.

If I don't participate, nothing will change. A key theme that emerged from students in this study was the concept of personal agency. Some students noted that they came to realize, after learning about social issues from their work in the community, that social structures would not change unless they continued to be actively involved. In a sense, they came to realize that the simple act of serving was not sufficient enough; long term investment and involvement as well as looking at root causes was an absolute necessity. Many carried with them a strong sense of self, but reflected on how that sense of self developed over time and was supported by campus climate and culture.

These sentiments by the students fall in line with the work of Craig (1984) in his longitudinal study of student attitudes toward social change. In Craig's (1984) study, there was a strong correlation between one's sense of self and the power at one's disposal, and the variety of methods from which one could choose to move the levers of social and political change. Further, the author noted that the students in the study were "predisposed to participate" and "willing to consider a broad range of participatory styles as possible means for communicating" their social and political values (p. 489).

In particular, Tim had specific reflections as he came to understand his

own responsibility—and ability—to enact change. He commented, “I think throughout my time on campus, I’ve learned to ask and look at things in a different way and ask a lot of questions and consider a lot of things.” This was the result of influential peers and mentors and a climate that was generally open and accepting. However, from Tim’s perspective, not all students act this way: “I think that oftentimes people don’t ask questions or they just accept things the way they are, and things continue to stay as they are... I think it’s important to ask questions and speak out and be involved.” Tim valued the support he felt on campus and how that encouraged him to participate and engage.

The manner in which Tim’s questions were encouraged seemed to bolster his confidence. He said, “It makes me want to become more involved in things, and speak out about the things I care about because I know that if I don’t participate, nothing will change.” This encouragement in college contrasted with his experience in high school. Unable to put his finger on the moment when his perspective shifted, he said, “Being at a Jesuit institution and being encouraged to ask questions... there must have been a tipping point for me somewhere.” Perhaps Tim was “predisposed to participate,” as Craig (1984) noted (p. 489). Or, perhaps more likely, as Tim says, his interest and ability to affect change was a combination of his own budding interest and also being embedded in a particular type of community on campus.

Theme 7: Perspective, Reflection, Depth, and Growth

Thinking about service in a new way. Students in this studied grappled with culturally received notions of service and community involvement and tried

to push the boundaries of those definitions. Kallie commented on the influence of other students and peers in helping her reshape those definitions. The students who went before Kallie served as mentors for her, paving the way and setting an example as mentors. Her perspective on service as a requirement slowly started to evolve as she watched other students on campus get involved in the local community. She not only noticed the specific activities in which they were involved, but she also noticed the way they “thought about” service.

This “thinking about” service emerged as an interesting reflection by Kallie, largely because she was not only concerned with how other students acted; she was also impacted by their reflective modeling. Once Kallie started to get involved in weekly service activities, “that helped... for me to see the older students and how they responded to service and thought about it.” She noticed their presence and way of being in the community. Noticing their style encouraged her to think about her own presence differently: “I kind of started reflecting on it in different ways, and I think that’s when it started to change for me.”

Kallie’s reflections are in line with Arnett’s (2004) work on emerging adulthood and the reconsideration of handed-down concepts, attitudes, and beliefs. Arnett (2004) noted that students “consider it important... to reexamine the beliefs they have learned in their families and to form a set of beliefs that is the product of their own independent reflections” (p. 475). Kallie spoke several times about her family’s influence on her upbringing and her own interest in service activities. At the same time, she commented that she felt like she was

“coming into her own” and felt the pull to determine her own course and formulate her own worldview. These “independent reflections” as Arnett suggested were not, for many students in this study, always done independently, in fact. The students reflected both individually and within community, and so the set of beliefs seemed to be individually as well as corporately focused. Still, it is important to note the value of the supportive community to these students. That is to say, if the supportive and nurturing community had not existed, and the students had not felt its presence and effects, then they may not have felt as safe to confidently formulate their own set of beliefs.

Changing your perceptions. Prior service experience in high school is a common characteristic for all the students in this study. Most had completed required service hours in high school, and they entered Loyola with these experiences and understanding of service in hand. For many, it had piqued their interest in being involved in the community. Some had very positive experiences. Some just seemed generally open to the requirement placed upon them. When they entered the university environment, service was presented to them in very different ways. New messages such as “service like never before,” “a faith that does justice,” “the magis,” and “if you want peace, work for justice” were in the air. These messages seemed to be planted as seeds.

Many students spoke about how they were influenced by peers and professional staff mentors at Loyola. These relationships helped to reinforce some of the key messages heard around the campus. In discussions, informal gatherings, staff meetings, and supervisory meetings, cultural messages were

articulated, dissected, and appropriated. These interactions also allowed for a safe space for exploration of ideas. This supports Mezirow's thoughts on emerging adults, who "come to identify, assess, and possibly reformulate key assumptions on which [their] perspectives are constructed" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4). While students' views were shaped by their experiences in the community and within a supportive community, they also expressed an openness to learning from others. They were not locked into their own worldview. Mezirow suggested that a key dimension of transformative learning is when individuals are "open to others' points of view" and "more inclusive in their perceptions of the world" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4).

According to Kallie's experience, entering into this culture meant being part of a community. Students had the opportunity to impact each other significantly, both in the community while they engaged in acts of service and in their conversations surrounding the experiences: "I think the perceptions also change once [students] start having conversations with other students through reflections or just with other students who are involved with their program." The reflection process, and the specific instances where reflection happened, was very important to her. Reflection opportunities provided the space to process, analyze, and consider next steps. She suggested that "making new friendships with fellow students on campus who are involved in the same types of things that they are" was how other students could "change their perceptions" about themselves, their role in the community, their commitment to the common good, and their responsibilities as students at a Jesuit university.

Looking at multiple sources from different perspectives. The theme of navigating through perspectives that are different than one's own emerged several times in this study. Students noted that they routinely would need to negotiate differing perspectives, especially when their perspectives and unique experiences put them in a minority group on campus. Yet this process also felt comfortable for them because they found themselves with peers who had similar foundational values. In a sense, they could all largely agree on a common denominator set of principles rooted in the Jesuit mission of the school.

Again, Arnett (2000) had addressed this reality of negotiating diverse perspectives and worldviews in his treatment of emerging adulthood theory. He noted that as students gained “exposure to a variety of different worldviews, [they] often find themselves questioning the worldviews they brought in” (Arnett, 2000, p. 474). Supporting Arnett's (2000) thesis, several students seemed to appreciate the diversity of perspectives that surrounded them, as these perspectives challenged their way of thinking and approaching the world. They valued the community and the level of challenge and support it offered. Peter noted that “community also challenges your ideas a lot, everyone has different experiences, and everyone has their own backgrounds and environments where they came from.” He said, “It's good to have the challenge.”

For Peter, even similarities with other students could be helpful, while not as directly challenging. He said, “even if it's students who have similar mindsets—it helps you define and clarify a lot of your ideas.” Alternatively,

students who might even have a vastly different perspective than him helped him to understand his own values, opinions, and stances. His views—sometimes undefined and unrefined at first—emerged in contrast and in juxtaposition to the divergent views of his peers. This notion speaks to Arnett's (2000) idea that the exposure to new ideas, worldviews, and perspectives helps to shape a student's own perspective. There is a certain fluidity as students move through the experience of emerging adulthood. At the same time, in Peter's case, the comfort and support of the community and campus culture—the expectation that students would be encouraged to explore and try new ideas—undergirds his comments. He felt the support to consider new perspectives and allow his perspective to be challenged largely because of the safe environment in which he found himself.

Service as valuable exposure. The concept of exposure, or the opening of one's eyes as a result of being involved in service activities, emerged from some of the student comments. Several agreed that the social realities to which they were exposed were very important educational moments for them. While some had performed service as a mandated activity in high school, they appreciated the fact that it was not mandated while in college. The seeds had been planted while they were high school students; now, as college students, they recognized the lessons that could be learned from these experiences in the community. These comments by the students overlap with other themes that have emerged in the study, most notably the idea that service experiences lead to ongoing questioning and reflection. There is the connection here with

emerging adulthood theory again, whereby students gained “exposure to a variety of different worldviews [and] often find themselves questioning the worldviews they brought in” (Arnett, 2000, p. 474).

Kallie commented on what being exposed to new social realities, marginalized populations, and community dynamics meant to her. In fact, her typical reserved demeanor subsided and she came alive when talking about what her experiences meant to her. She spoke about how her comfort level working directly with people experiencing homelessness and hunger had changed over time with more exposure: “When I first did Care-A-Van, I was a little nervous. And when you’re nervous, you don’t really ask questions, you just sit in the background. But on the ride home, people started to ask questions when they may not have asked questions in the beginning.” She now saw herself as much more engaged and invested. The exposure to a new reality in her community, along with supportive peers, allowed her to ask deeper questions.

Belle also noted that exposure to issues in the community through service, and her “eyes were opened” over time. While initially a bit disconcerting and uncomfortable, the service experiences soon became enjoyable and meaningful. They became part of who she was and how she defined herself. No longer was service viewed as something to check off her list of requirements as an externally imposed mandate. Most of Belle’s experiences had involved working with local youth outreach and tutoring programs. She served as a student leader for several programs while she was in college. She noted, “In a lot of instances, and mostly in urban areas, the students were able to see different perspectives on

things and have more interaction with their community and the people outside the community.”

These student reflections also speak to the overarching mission of Jesuit education. While initial experiences may seem uncomfortable and may even bring some resistance, the end result of exposing students to the larger social context is an expanded perspective. The student comments directly support the educational mandate from Kolvenbach (2000), a well-respected Jesuit leader and visionary: “In the course of their formation, [students] must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively” (p. 8). From their comments, the students show that they are engaging in a “formation” process. While they are initially hesitant and not intrinsically motivated to engage in the community, they slowly move to a place where that involvement becomes very meaningful for them. But, as Kolvenbach’s (2000) statement suggests, the “course of their formation” connotes an ongoing—even lifelong—process of learning and reflecting and growing.

Value of a distanced perspective. One issue that emerged was the idea that students appreciated having some distance from their community. This distance allowed them to appreciate the value of their community experience and what it taught them. This was particularly true with the students who offered reflections after they had graduated. Several of them seemed to take their experience for granted while they were on campus—as if it was “business as usual”—only to desire that community feeling in their post-college experience.

This issue was addressed in the work of Cuban and Anderson (2007) as they wrote about cultural distance, perspective, and how students were already firmly rooted in a particular culture before engaging in civic engagement activities. The authors noted that “immersion in culture makes perspective difficult to achieve”; new perspectives through civic engagement experiences can provide a “jolt of unfamiliarity” for students (Cuban & Anderson, 2007, p. 236).

Mary spoke about this “jolt of unfamiliarity” in her transition from life in college to post-college life. She was particularly aware of the differences between her community of peers and mentors in college and her new community in a full-time volunteer program. She noted, “I’ve found that it was such a cool, strong group of people [my senior year in college], that I’ve been disappointed with the conversations with fellow volunteers in my program this year.” The contrast was particularly noticeable to her. She said, “It’s been a very different experience for me,” largely because of the variety of motivations of fellow volunteers and the lack of a shared mission. She seemed frustrated that she had not been challenged enough to continue her growth and awareness of social justice issues. Naturally, she compared her experience after college with the strong experience of community in which she was immersed on campus. Now, from a distanced perspective, she was able to view her community experience from a different vantage point and recognize how it shaped her.

Seeing the world through a different lens. This theme touches upon some of the hallmarks of transformative learning theory and emerging adulthood theory. Several of the students noted that their experiences with culture on

campus and in the community shaped the lens through which they see the world. Some even expressed frustration when their perspective that they formed on campus contrasted markedly with the perspectives outside of their community. Mary, in particular, had difficulty with how different her views were from coworkers and even supervisors in her position after college. She saw the work that she was doing as serving others, and that work was informed by the Jesuit values she had learned on campus. She struggled with having a different view of her work and the clients with whom she worked. At one point during her interview, she commented in an exasperated tone, "It's a very different lens that they see the world through." She had to develop the courage to share her opinions and perspective, and she sometimes felt like she was taking a risk. "Now, I've had conversations about what we are doing, who are kids are, and where they come from, and the stereotypes that might not be true of our kids."

Mary's experience of contrast speaks to some of the principles of transformative learning. Ultimately, transformative learning theory places the emphasis on the individual and how they make meaning from accumulated experiences. For students engaged in the community, new meanings emerge continually and knowledge is an ongoing construction. Received points of view and perspectives are routinely critiqued in order to make sense of the experience. Transformative learning theory asserts that "knowledge is not viewed as something 'out there' to be taken in by the learners" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 9). Instead, the theory claims that we "make sense of novel experiences" within communities of learners which can "contribute fundamentally to new ways of seeing and

understanding our experiences” (p. 9). In a sense, Mary’s new experience of community outside of college was now an opportunity for her to try “new ways of seeing.” It was a process of transition for her. But, as she noted, that process brought with it considerable frustration and anxiety. For her, things had been easier in her college community because everyone appeared to “speak the same language.” Now, as she made her way in a new community, she had to translate her perspective and come to terms with potentially significant differences in worldviews.

Broadening my idea of what it means to serve. Again, students continually spoke about the fact that concepts and definitions that they held when they entered college slowly shifted as they immersed themselves in the campus culture. Lexa commented on her experience in this regard, saying, “I was adjusting to being in a Jesuit school and getting used to that culture, broadening my own idea of what it means to serve people, and thinking about and critiquing concepts like the ‘deserving and undeserving’ poor and thinking how those things would impact the type of work I’d end up doing.” She spoke of the many shifts and transitions she experienced—new opportunities in the community, new concepts, new campus with its attendant customs and rituals. She entered the university with a particular idea of service. In some instances, this shift can present real challenges to students. Himley (2004) commented that, particularly in the context of service-learning, “many conflicting meanings of service circulating in culture account for many of the things that can go wrong for students and for teachers” (p. 417). However, Lexa seemed to be aware of the

fact that her shifting definition of service was part of a process of growth.

This growth experience, again, was discussed in the literature about emerging adulthood theory. Emerging adulthood involves a distancing and re-appropriating of commonly held beliefs and concepts. Arnett (2004) suggested that students “consider it important... to reexamine the beliefs they have learned in their families and to form a set of beliefs that is the product of their own independent reflections” (p. 475). Now that she had a distanced perspective—as further removed from the campus context—she was able to trace her own path a bit more lucidly than when she was in the midst of it. She was aware of the fact that she only dipped her toes in the water slightly at first, but did not challenge herself too much. She said, “Going into Loyola, I stayed in my comfort zone, mostly working with youth and adolescents.” Once she felt more comfortable, she tried new experiences in the community and worked with people who were experiencing homelessness. This experience with a new population and new social issue pushed her to rethink some of her beliefs.

Being at a deeper place. The idea of thinking of service “at a deeper level,” or addressing issues at more than a surface level, arose a few times in my conversations with students. This concept of depth was not necessarily contrasted with shallowness per se. Rather, students used the concept to convey the idea that the community issues were often complex. Meaning could be made by sitting with and reflecting on one’s experience in a community of supportive peers. Interactions in the community should not be taken lightly or go unexamined. Instead, they should be seriously considered. Kallie, in particular,

used this terminology when discussing other students and their involvement in service. She noted that most students get involved in service and “don’t necessarily think on a deeper level about how it’s going to affect them and the larger community.” She used adjectives like “deeper” to describe what she hoped most students would move toward, where they would end up and what they would grow into.

The language used by Kallie and others falls in line with some of the thinking around Jesuit education. The Jesuit approach to education focuses on moving students from simplicity to complexity in order to see multiple perspectives. In Jesuit education, students should consider a variety of perspectives and be able to make judgments based on their experience in the community and through intellectual engagement. Attention is paid to learning with both the head and the heart. Learning becomes cyclical, so that experiences inform reflection, which compel students to seek out deeper experiences, and the cycle continues. These experiences then lead to further concrete action: “meanings, attitudes, values which have been interiorized, made part of the person, impel the student to act, to do something consistent with the new conviction” (JSEA, 1993, p. 19). This line of thinking connects with the idea of “going deeper,” of sitting with an issue and interiorizing it to help form a student’s convictions.

College as a way to grow and break out. One theme to emerge was the idea that the experience of being a university student would offer many new opportunities for significant personal growth. Andrea commented on this idea

specifically, noting that she “saw college as a way to grow and break out.” Her perspective on being a university student was that it was a “chance to grow up and grow outward and learn.” For her, a university education was supposed to be eye-opening and shift one’s thinking significantly. Her understanding of “learning by doing” and learning from the community was connected with her understanding of Jesuit education. She said, “We talk about service and community and reaching out, and to me—for a long time—they were just words and ideals. Once I actually experienced them, I kept wanting to do more and more.” The connections among intellectual growth, learning through experience, and the expectations around what a university education should provide were all strong for Andrea.

This connects with the literature on Jesuit educational pedagogy and its emphasis on putting students in potentially uncomfortable learning situations in order for growth to take place. New experiences combined with critical reflection should ideally lead to new perspectives and new convictions. These experiences then lead to further concrete action: “meanings, attitudes, values...impel the student to act, to do something consistent with the new conviction” (JSEA, 1993, p. 19). As such, students in this study looked forward to the university experience for new experiences and some walked away with new “meanings, attitudes, and values” as well. Not only were the new experiences seen as valuable growth opportunities, but the immersion into a new way of thinking and being was also transformative for students.

This theme also aligns with the principles behind transformative learning

theory. With its focus on perspective transformation and personal growth, transformative learning suggests that frequent new experiences enable a person to consider new approaches to the world. These new experiences allow one, as Andrea noted, to “grow and break out” of previously held perspectives that may have been limited in scope. Further, transformative learning theory, grounded in a constructivist paradigm, asserts that “knowledge is not viewed as something ‘out there’ to be taken in by the learners.” Instead, knowledge is created and growth happens through reflection upon one’s direct experience. “Breaking out” of previously held beliefs—whether they were limited in scope, immature or not fully formed, or simply false—involves dialogue between the students’ direct experiences and new information. This growth is seen as a “growing up” and “growing outward,” a movement from focusing inward to focusing on a broader, more global perspective.

A slow progression of community engagement. Students recognized that their involvement in service and justice issues was a progressive kind of involvement. Many had significant experiences in high school, so there was a certain kind of foundation for them entering college. Now, as they felt their way through their college experience, and heard different messages about service on campus, they moved slowly as they started to get involved. Andrea spoke of this “slow progression of community engagement.” She quoted her mentor who had explained to her that “it’s good to get involved slowly and it should be a progression.” Andrea “held on to that message.” That message surfaced again later that summer for Andrea, after the academic year had ended, when she

reflected on how her involvement seemed to progress in stages. She continued, “Over the summer, I had a huge discernment process... I recognized that [learning in the community] is a continuum and slow process, I think I did learn very gradually.” She viewed her efforts as steps along a type of developmental continuum, with each step enabling her to enhance her own level of awareness. She said, “I truly view my time on campus as baby steps into this larger progression. I guess in that way it is part of a cycle... it’s supposed to be that way.” She noted that she viewed her progression as intentional and educationally sound—“it was designed that way.”

Andrea’s comments contrast with the work of Morton (1995). The author’s work challenges the traditional conceptual model of the continuum as the best way to understand the impacts of service and community engagement on students (Morton, 1995). In his interviews with students who were consistently involved in the community, Morton (1995) noted that most students do not neatly move along a developmental continuum from charity to a more complicated understanding of justice. Morton (1995) noted that “assumptions about progress are a powerful element in how many practitioners view, structure, and assess” student involvement in community service activities” (p. 20). However, Andrea’s experience says otherwise. Perhaps it was because she looked up to mentors who encouraged her to view her involvement in linear terms. Or, perhaps it was when she viewed her efforts retrospectively and from a distanced perspective that she was able to notice a linear progression. This suggests that the ways in which students tell the story of their past experiences may be different than the

“ups and downs” they experience throughout the process. In the moment, perhaps Andrea would agree with the notion that students experience growth as they accumulate experiences, and once they reflect on those experiences and shape them into a narrative, they view it as incremental steps along a journey.

Theme 8: Relationships, Mutuality, and Wholeness

Reflection and thoughtful conversations. An interesting theme that emerged from the student narratives was the idea of finding support to engage in regular reflection with their peers. The term “reflection” seemed to have priority status in the CCSJ office, as it was described as the way to bring diverse experiences together. Reflection could help build bridges, form community, and solidify learning so additional questions could be asked. Most of the students were extensively trained in how to facilitate a reflection experience for fellow students, including understanding the experiential learning theory that undergirded the reflection process. The students were steeped in this model and way of thinking. That is, service could not happen without proper preparation and thoughtfully prepared reflection activities. It was during these reflection events that students could agree with each other, offer different and diverse viewpoints, and disagree civilly and respectfully. This speaks to Hamrick’s (1998) work on learning outcomes connected with advocacy and activism. Hamrick (1998) approached the institution as a hands-on laboratory for exercising a “necessary set of citizenship dispositions and skills” (p. 457). Many students noted that they had the opportunity to routinely practice these citizenship skills of engaging in dialogue and asking questions of each other.

Further, these experiences created a space for students where, ultimately, “preserving and legitimating the expression of a broad range of perspectives and judgments” was upheld as a matter of practice (Hamrick, 1998, p. 458).

One student in particular, Hannah, spoke extensively about the role of reflection throughout her experience on campus, and how valuable it had become for her. She noted that taking time to make meaningful connections seemed more important to her than ever, especially as she navigated her world after college. She commented, “Reflection is important, and being in a culture that encourages discussion and one that is full of people interested in thoughtful conversations and digging deeply is so important to me.” For Hannah, the reflection process—not simply in isolation, but as a member of a supportive community—grounded her. It also minimized “burnout” and feelings of despair when working in challenging social contexts. She continued, “[reflection] allows for your service to become something else completely, and you can go to a different level and let it impact you personally as opposed to it just being a thing that you do, another activity.” For Hannah, reflection—as a critically important tool—allowed a person to see service as a way of being in the world.

Hannah’s understanding of reflection was also bound up in some of the principles of the Jesuit approach to education. Hannah’s sentiment that reflection can allow a student to “go to a different level” speaks to the idea that the experience or content of an experience alone are only part of a process. The reflective part of the process is just as, if not more, important as the direct experience itself. As Jesuit educational scholars note, a learner in a Jesuit

context is “is expected to move beyond rote knowledge to the development of the more complex learning skills of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (JSEA, 1993, p. 11). What is key here is the fact that learning experiences focus on both product (what the students learn concretely) and process (how the students get there). The language of student learning experiences and the process of learning is significantly important. Hannah’s experience and her reflection upon that experience support the primacy of this process of learning.

Theme 9: Privilege

A place of such privilege. Some students struggled with the reality of their own privilege, or unearned advantages. They wondered how they could legitimately and authentically serve others when they felt like their starting point was so different. They recognized that because of their social positionalities and identity statuses—whether along the lines of race, gender, economic status, or ability, to name a few—the playing field was not level. Thus, the notion and act of “serving” was an easier activity for them because they had the resources to be able to engage in such an activity. Their work in the community was a constant reminder of the built-in inequities in society. And, they acknowledged that they benefited from these advantages tied to their social identities.

Cynthia, in particular, spoke about this struggle with her own identity and the advantages that were built into it. She was open and honest but unsure about how to change the situation. She talked about the difficulty of being regularly involved in service and investing energy in it, “especially when you

come back to a place of such privilege.” For Cynthia, it was an ongoing challenge to live in two different worlds and bring those worlds together. At the time, she reflected on “how you carry people’s stories and know full well the pain and hardships that they’re going through” while she could not experience any of that personally. As she described, she struggled with “how to live your life with that knowledge and how you can represent those people.”

This notion of living in “two different worlds,” as Cynthia stated, is partially addressed in the literature. Howard (2011) veered away from somewhat traditional research questions involving “privilege as a commodity” (McIntosh, 1998) and tried to understand the idea through the lens of “privilege as identity” (Howard, 2011, p. 4). He sought a “comprehensive framework for understanding the pervasive nature of privilege as it is woven into the fabric of people’s lived experience” (Howard, 2011, p. 4). The idea that privilege is not only something to be employed to achieve social good (or individual good, in some cases) but also a defining characteristic of one’s identity is salient here. Cynthia’s experience speaks to this “pervasive nature of privilege.” That is, in many ways, the concept defines much of her identity; her experiences on campus and in the community brought that to light for her.

I have the privilege to go and do service. This concept of privilege is further explored by other students who recognized that service itself is a type of luxury. Their ability to set aside time, structure their schedules, and build community work into their daily lives was seen as an unearned advantage that many others do not have. Thus, they recognized that it was, in part, actually their

unearned advantages that allowed them to routinely live out the Jesuit mission of the institution. This also connects with the concern in some of the literature that institutions that promote this kind of work should be cautious about reinforcing stereotypes. Cuban and Anderson (2007), as well as Bickford and Reynolds (2002), all commented on the potential dangers of not doing this kind of work thoughtfully and carefully, noting that issues of oppression and social positionality must always be raised with students.

Briana wrestled with this idea that her environment afforded her the opportunity to be involved in service in the community. Even while she recognized that she maintained a minority status along some identity lines, she still acknowledged that she benefited from unearned advantages. The ability to learn in a comfortable, supportive environment about social issues complicated her view of her own privilege. She said, "I have the privilege to go and do service. Even just having the time and the ability to go do it is a sign of privilege." According to her, with that unearned advantage came a certain amount of responsibility. "I can use the privileges that I do have and the opportunities that I've been afforded to not just make myself better and lift myself up, but to look at the needs of my community at the same time." She recognized that her privilege was both unearned but also an asset; hence, she too maintained conflicted feelings about her advantages.

Briana's reflections and her somewhat conflicted feelings about her service work connect with some of the scholarly literature. Specifically, Morton and Saltmarsh's (1997) work on the origins of the concept of "service" in our

culture is relevant to Briana's sentiments. The authors noted that service as a whole has been "defined by an educated, middle-class seeking ways to live lives of integrity" (Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997, p. 147). Briana seems to grapple with this very definition and acknowledges that there may be an unequal starting point, even for her as a minority. Morton's (1995) additional work on the various paradigms of service within our culture also speaks to some of Briana's reflections. Through his discussion of the roots of notions of service in our culture, Morton (1995) suggested that these paradigms "move away from the idea of a linear progress and suggest the theoretical possibility that people adopt distinctive ways of doing service" (p. 23). He contends that students come to community service "with a primary orientation, and [they] work out of this orientation" (Morton, 1995, p. 28). Thus, while Briana recognizes that her primary orientation toward service may stem from an initial advantaged starting point, she also recognizes the responsibility that comes from that starting point. She strives to live a life of integrity and seems to adopt a "distinctive way of doing service."

Theme 10: Passion, Direction, and Purpose

Moving from it's my responsibility to it's my career path. One emerging theme throughout this work was the idea that service was more than just an activity. Some students noted that service and justice work had turned into a type of lifestyle for them. Their involvement had inspired them to consider how they would incorporate this work into their lives as fully as possible. Lexa commented on this and reflected on how her sense of self had evolved. During

her time on campus, she said she was continually exposed to questions about inequities, social injustices, and the justice mission of the university through student-led reflections and leadership development opportunities. She recalled how her motivations for being involved in this kind of work changed over time. Her motivation changed when she “came to see that this can be something you do because it’s your passion, it’s who you are and the way you see yourself.” For Lexa, it “moved from being a responsibility to being [her] career path.” And, the “way you see yourself” was significant, because it becomes an indelible part of your identity.

This theme is addressed in some of the literature, particularly by Harre (2007), who writes about activist identity projects. Her work shows that those involved in sustained activism and advocacy work will take on that work as part of their identity. Harre (2007) noted that the hope for many who are involved in this work is that isolated experience leads to a “corresponding identity” with expanded participation and deeper commitment (p. 720). Herein lies the idea of a sustained sense of civic engagement, where individual activities over a long period of time and within the context of a supportive community evolve into a lifestyle.

The theme of lifestyle change also emerged from the literature on Jesuit educational pedagogy and practice. In particular, this work speaks to Lexa’s reflection on “the way you see yourself.” For her, the immersive experiences she had over time affected her self-identity and this connects with Jesuit terminology around student formation. The literature surrounding Jesuit education suggested

that the “formation of students” involves creating a culture of “well-formed and well-informed solidarity” (Moore, 2007, p. 463). Taking a stand on social issues, asking critical questions in light of religious and moral values, and acting upon one’s conscience became woven into the student learning and identity development process. This development had a specific focus, though, on those who were marginalized. Kolvenbach (2001) noted that “students need close involvement with the poor and the marginal now in order to learn about reality and become adults of solidarity in the future” (p. 145). Experiences as students help shape future adults—like Lexa—who will, ideally, live out their values with an informed social conscience.

Doing something that’s bigger than yourself. A final key theme that emerged was the notion of thinking and acting beyond the confines of one’s own individual needs and remembering that we are members of a broader community. This theme is concurrent with the definition of civic engagement as “acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities” (CCEL, 2010). Further, the sentiment supports the social reality about which Jesuit education theories mention frequently. Jason commented on his awareness of Jesuit mission and education for a significant part of our conversation, saying, “when I was in high school, the very idea that they were giving us... was that ‘this is a human person, a human face, and you should treat them as you want to be treated.’” For Jason, the educational focus was on direct contact with the poor and human dignity and equality. He understood it as a basic message to care for others. “It was very simple,” he noted. He also came to learn some key Jesuit

values in high school as well. He said, “It was very good to have a lot of the Jesuit influence in there, ya know, for the ‘Greater Glory of God,’ what you’re doing needs to be for something bigger than yourself.”

Jason’s comments strongly support the key tenets of Jesuit educational theory and practice, wherein education should always be education for something greater and more purposeful. This connects here with the Jesuit slogan of *magis*, suggesting that individuals and institutions should always strive for “the more” (Geger, 2012, p. 16). Lowney (2003) noted that this “simple motto captures a broader spirit, a restless drive to imagine whether there isn’t some even greater project” upon which Jesuit universities should be focusing their energies (p. 46). “The more” suggests that Jesuit educational enterprises should continually undertake an “examination of the societal implications” of their work in order to remain relevant, rooted in their value-based mission, and ultimately transformative (Rhodes, 1989, p. 11). Finally, this theme is supported by Ellacuria’s (1982) comment that students must be encouraged and continually challenged “to live in a social reality and to live for that social reality” (p. 12).

Implications for Future Research

This study raised a number of questions for me that could be explored in the future. These questions emerged both during the student interviews as well as during the analysis of the data. First, it would be interesting to look at how the experiences of the students involved in this study compare and contrast with students from other types of universities. The students in this study all had a unique take on the mission of Jesuit education. The context of the Jesuit

university arose repeatedly in students' relating of their experiences. Many seemed to be somewhat aware of the Jesuit mission of the university before enrolling. It became clearer to them, and the meaning broadened and deepened, once they began to accumulate experiences on campus. The stories they shared speak to this deepening of understanding. Others took time to learn about the Jesuit approach to education. But, all of them noted that Jesuit education and its focus on service and social justice had formed them. Many of them took for granted the campus climate and the community that it helped to form. Further, many also took for granted that they were part of a unique subculture on campus.

Future research could consider the ways in which a Jesuit approach to education, and specifically its focus on civic engagement, differs from other approaches. Specifically, questions such as how do students at a Jesuit school come to understand Catholicism? Does their understanding differ from students at other religiously affiliated or Catholic schools? How do they understand religion altogether, particularly if those students are heavily involved in service and social justice activities? Students in this study seemed to develop their own understanding of Catholicism, and some even subtly differentiated between the terms "Jesuit" and "Catholic." How do students at other kinds of institutions describe their own experiences with religion and spirituality, and how do those experiences compare with students at Jesuit schools? These students in this study described a kind of "invitation Catholicism," whereby they seemed to be gently invited to consider this particular approach to the world. This differs from a

“command Catholicism” approach where one is expected to support a set of proscribed beliefs and values. Students in this study described the environment, climate, and activities in which they were involved often before describing their religious beliefs. Thus, I suspect that future research will find differences in how students approach religious belief and practice.

Other research questions to consider revolve around the understanding of Jesuit mission. The structure of this study included only a small subset of the student population on campus. These students were heavily involved and rather familiar with the service and justice mission of the university. Most students agreed that the Jesuit university campus creates a unique environment through which they have grown and become active. The context of the campus was inextricably linked with who the students have become and how they describe themselves. Further, they were able to very clearly articulate their own values and how they grew from their service experiences. Hearing the voices and perspectives of other students who represent the majority of the student population would add to the overall picture that this study attempts to create. How do other, more mainstream and/or less involved students understand the Jesuit mission of the institution? This would be an interesting follow-up question to explore in light of some of the findings in this study.

Finally, another methodology to employ in the future would be a longitudinal study of students’ long term civic involvement. Once students have this transformative experience on a Jesuit campus, how do they take these experiences into their personal and professional lives down the road? Do alumni

either enhance their understanding of and commitment to Jesuit ideals by becoming more deeply involved in the community? Or, do the values they strongly express while in college become attenuated by the practicalities of professional and family life? And, what factors help alumni to continue their ongoing development? Conversely, what conditions hinder that development and long-term commitment to Jesuit values? These questions could be explored using both quantitative and qualitative measures. The research could provide some useful information on the overall long-term effectiveness of Jesuit education (or values-based education as a whole). Further, connections could be explored regarding commitment to the institution's mission, alumni loyalty, and philanthropic contributions. Such a study could help institutions craft development plans in order to promote sustainability.

Summary

In conclusion, my experience working within this campus community and listening to the stories of these students has impacted me greatly. And, the students—through their stories and dialogue with campus mission—reveal the depth of the experience both on campus and in the community. They reveal the transformative power of a campus mission. Ultimately, unique cultures of students centered around the mission of the university can be created and sustained. These cultures pull elements of commonly understood ideas within the mainstream culture—like advocacy, activism, service, and justice—and formulate them into a specific narrative related to the mission of the institution. In a way, they become customized based on the experiences and perspectives of

the students. And, these cultures can be very supportive and sustaining for students. They provide comfort and challenge at the same time. They offer a place within which students can explore new ideas and try on new social identities. They allow for exploration within the confines of a set of proscribed values. And, they create a type of second home for students—a touchstone upon which they can create new experiences of community. On this campus in particular, this culture centered around the Jesuit mission of the school and rooted in civic engagement was strong and transformative for many students.

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