

Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement as an Expectation

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Mandatory Civic Learning in Sociology

Institutions across the country have provided models for how to make civic learning and democratic engagement an expectation for all students who major in a given discipline. Sociology is a disciplinary area known for progressively promoting infused civic learning and its related outcomes. Students are expected to volunteer to improve moral, ethical, and civic responsibility. Studies report that students are more likely to participate in service when there is

a direct connection to civic learning early on. The goal of mandatory service is to increase student comprehension of their discipline's investigations, enhance voice and agency, and offer hands-on practice in collaboratively addressing public problems. The instructor who includes service in the curriculum influences student engagement and are the agents of social change. The instructor transforms the student experience by including civic learning and making courses more relatable.

FOUR TENETS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- IDEALIZED INFLUENCE** explains how a leader serves as an ideal role model by setting expectations they wish to see others adopt. The leader sets standards for others to achieve and models for them to exemplify. *Students set high expectations and lead by example.*
- INSPIRATIONAL MOTIVATION** is the ability to inspire others to motivate them. The leader helps to implement new practices and generate positive changes. *Students encourage others.*
- INDIVIDUALIZED CONSIDERATION** is genuine concern for concerns. The leader promotes trust and coaches for correct courses of action. *Students coach and encourage members of the community.*
- INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION** is promoting innovative decision-making. The leader challenges others to enhance performance, personal learning and growth. *Students use personal stories to empower their peers.*

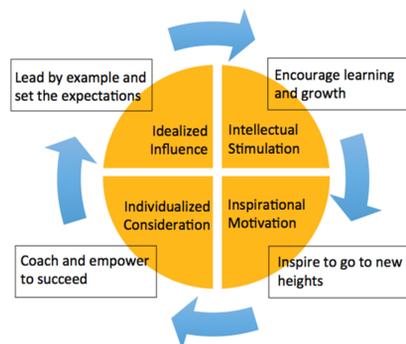


FIGURE 1: TRANSFORMATIONAL CRITERIA

Review of Literature

Higher levels of understanding often require active involvement in the application and use of the concepts. Service as part of course curricula has shown to be an effective way for students to understand subject matter in an everyday life context.³ Civic learning teaches students to apply analytical and comprehension skills to better understand course

material and the needs of their community.¹ When course material is relevant to real life, students find the learning process more appealing. By having a rewarding civic learning experience, the applied learning technique increases learner involvement in future community-focused projects.⁴ The connection between individual and community

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leaders serve as role models and exemplify moral behavior that transcends a positive ethical impact. Students who participate in service projects can become leaders. Student leaders can actively inspire those around them to achieve unexpected or remarkable results. These newly empowered leaders can mobilize, inspire, and motivate their peers. They can also lead by example in pursuit of positive change. Innovation can distinguish between a *leader* and a follower. Civic learning and hands-on engagement

offers a building block of innovative tools that can encourage students to be transformational leaders. As a mandatory expectation in sociology courses, civic learning becomes transformational when students embrace the four tenets of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.² Students who serve can develop a new community outlook, become more motivated to serve, and gain consideration for community members during their service.⁷

Survey Analysis and Results

Hypothesis 1: Single Sample t Test	Mean (SD)	P Value
Q5: I have a responsibility to serve my community.	3.406 (.5261)	.000
Q8: I probably won't volunteer or participate in the community after this course ends.	1.797 (.7597)	.000

Hypothesis 2: Single Sample t Test	Mean (SD)	P Value
Q14: The service I did through this course was not at all beneficial to the community.	1.492 (.7803)	.000
Q15: I would have learned more from this course if the time spent doing service in the community had been spent in the classroom.	1.790 (.7274)	.000

Hypothesis 3: Single Sample t Test	Mean (SD)	P Value
Q6: I learn course content best when connections to real-life situations are made.	3.609 (.6073)	.000
Q7: The idea of combining course work with service to the community should be practiced in more courses at this college.	3.238 (.7975)	.000

- H1: Most students enrolled in sociology courses strongly agreed or agreed that they had a responsibility to serve and would volunteer in the future.
- H2: Most students enrolled in sociology courses strongly agreed or agreed that the service project was beneficial and learned more as a result of the experience.
- H3: Most students enrolled in sociology courses strongly agreed or agreed that they learned best when connections were made to real-life situations and supported the inclusion of mandatory civic learning in sociology courses.

can positively affect student attitudes and roles as citizens.⁵ The motivation and decision to volunteer is greatly influenced by altruism, solidarity, reciprocity, and values of social justice.³ Volunteering has a wide array of benefits including increased retention, enhanced knowledge of coursework, better grades, and increased time devoted to academic endeavors

Beneficial and Q15 *Prefer Classroom* were strongly correlated (0.589). *Service was beneficial and students were likely to believe they could learn more in class.* Participants agreed or strongly agreed that they learn course content best when connections are made to real-life situations. The mean was 3.609. Participants agreed or strongly agreed that service should be practiced in more courses. The mean

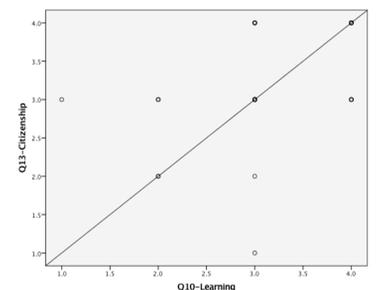
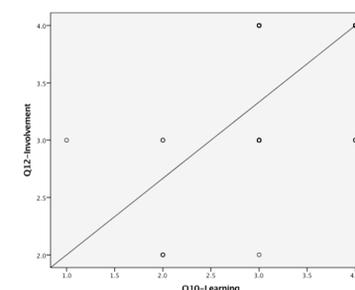
was 3.238. Hypothesis 4 was examined using a bivariate correlation. Q10 *Learning* and Q12 *Involvement* correlated positively (0.584). *Increased community involvement predicted better application of course content in everyday life.* Q10 *Learning* and Q13 *Citizenship* positively correlated (0.541). *Increased participation in service predicted an increase in students' understanding of their roles as citizens.*

Project Overview

Using findings from a survey conducted during a required service project in two sociology courses, this project describes the perceived responsibility of students to serve the community and volunteer in the future. This study explores the benefit of incorporating civic learning as a mandatory course requirement. This study examines (1) responsibility to serve and future volunteer efforts of students, (2) benefits of service and civic learning, and (3) inclusion of

more service projects at colleges and universities. This study surveys student perceptions of civic learning, their democratic engagement as a citizens, and the applicability of service to real-life situations. Using transformational leadership theory, this study also explains how civic learning empowers students to lead by example, encourage learning, inspire peers to set high expectations, and generate positive change in the community.

Hypothesis 4: Pearson Correlation & Scatter Plot	Pearson's r
Q10: The service aspect of this course helped me to see how the subject matter I learned can be used in everyday life.	0.584
Q12: The service aspect of this course showed me how I can become more involved in my community.	
Q10: The service aspect of this course helped me to see how the subject matter I learned can be used in everyday life.	0.541
Q13: As a result of my service learning experience, I have a better understanding of my role as a citizen.	



H4 PEARSON CORRELATION: When participants learn more about real-life situations through community involvement, the understanding of their roles as citizens is further developed.

HYPOTHESES - RESPONSIBILITY, BENEFITS, & LEARNING

- H1: Participants' perceptions of responsibility to serve will positively reflect their willingness to volunteer in the future.
- H2: Participants who believe community service projects are less beneficial than a classroom lecture during the learning process will also believe service projects are not beneficial to the community.
- H3: Participants who learn course content better when it is applied to real-life situations will value courses that include civic learning.
- H4: Participants who learn about real-life situations through community involvement will better understand their role as citizens.

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Survey Findings

There were 66 undergraduate student participants representing 24 majors at a liberal arts university. Single sample t tests and Pearson's correlation were used to examine hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Each p value was (.000). Most students agreed or strongly agreed about having a responsibility to serve but strongly disagreed or disagreed about not

volunteering again when the course ended. Q5 *Responsibility* and Q8 *Future Volunteerism* correlated moderately (-0.426). *Responsibility to serve positively predicted willingness to volunteer in the future.* Students strongly disagreed or disagreed that service was not at all beneficial to the community and strongly disagreed or disagreed about learning more in class without a service experience. Q14 *Not*