ON PURPOSE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PURPOSE AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION FOR FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

ON PURPOSE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PURPOSE AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION FOR FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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This study examined the relationship between purpose and first-year college students' participation in on-campus extracurricular activities. Specifically, the study focused on how purpose influences students' choice of activities and how students' participation in different types of activities develops their sense of purpose and identity.

Additionally, this project explored whether and how purpose and correlates such as identity development predict how students choose between activities with a civic engagement component and those that are individually or socially focused. Changes in purpose, identity exploration, and identity commitment as a result of participation in different activities were also assessed.

Data consisted of surveys and interviews. The surveys assessed purpose, hope, identity, positive relationships, initiative, and teamwork and social skills; the interviews focused on participants' experiences, and reasons for participating in their chosen activities. The results raise additional questions about the role of purpose and show some unanticipated differences between students who participate in different types of activities.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Dr. Carol L. Macnee. Thank you mom for giving me the time and space to find my own way, for your sacrifices, support, and for all of your love.

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PREFACE

Prior to embarking on doctoral study, I worked in a variety of out-of-school settings (e.g., as a YMCA program director, a camp director, and an adolescent employment youth advisor) with youth ranging across cultural, socioeconomic, and age demographics. Across these experiences I saw firsthand how out-of-school experiences influenced youth's learning, emotions, and success in other domains. In addition, these programs generally approached youth in a manner consistent with the more recent youth development paradigm that views youth not as problems or potential problems (i.e., a deficit model that equates successful youth to those who do not exhibit problems), but rather as members of a group that can and do have a positive impact on those around them. These firsthand experiences have led me to believe that older adolescents, just starting their first year of college and faced with so many new possibilities, are an important group to study. I can imagine numerous possible scenarios in which a first-year student would choose and then become involved in an activity, and over the course of their participation benefit from it personally (the positive outcomes mentioned previously), which would ultimately help them to have a positive impact on others both in the present and years down the road. My desire to explore these possibilities and to better understand the underlying mechanisms that shape experiences and outcomes for students in these types of programs provided much of the impetus for this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

"What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him." –Viktor E. Frankl (1959, p. 105)

"What is too often missing – not altogether absent but evident only in a minority of today's youth – is the kind of wholehearted dedication to an activity or interest that stems from a serious purpose, a purpose that can give meaning and direction to life." - William Damon (2008, p.7)

In any democracy, it is critical that adults become engaged members of society (Sherrod, 2005). Research suggests that youth are becoming less civically engaged than in previous generations (Ginwright & James, 2002; Mahoney, Eccles, Larson, & Lord, 2005; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). This decline in participation is concerning given that in long-term studies of Americans, youth who participate in extracurricular programs (e.g., both school-based and community-based programs) during high school remain more civically engaged than those youth who do not participate (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995; Youniss, McClellan, & Yates, 1997). Additionally, little is known about the relationship between high school extracurricular participation and purpose, and how purpose may shape or be shaped by collegiate extracurricular participation. This dissertation is a first step in exploring those possible connections.

Every fall hundreds of thousands young people across the United States attend orientation at their first four-year institution of higher education. At this orientation they will hear all about living on campus, course offerings, university email and computer rules, and how important it is to "get involved" in activities outside of classes. When the students finally arrive on campus to start the fall semester, many of them will go with their fellow first-year floor mates to some sort of extracurricular activity fair with up to several hundred different groups all trying to recruit

new like-minded members. With so many choices and the need to balance school, friends, and sometimes work, remarkably many of the students will still choose to participate in several different campus activities.

Keeping the scenario described in the previous paragraph in mind, several key questions emerge. What leads certain students to choose to participate in one specific activity over another? What do the students hope to get out of participating in one activity over another? What do students get out of participating in different types of extracurricular activities? What is the role of institutions of higher learning in promoting civic engagement? Do students have too many choices?

Research has linked adolescents' participation in out-of-school time (OST) high-school extracurricular activities with positive outcomes such as greater connection to school, increased academic achievement, fewer high-risk behaviors, (Eccles & Barber, 1999) and increased self-awareness and identity development (e.g., Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). What is missing from this literature, however, is a systematic account of why and how participating in these programs yields such positive results (e.g., Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999). Given Sherrod's (2005) claim that young adults becoming engaged citizens is crucial for our democracy, then beginning to understand the role institutions of higher education play in encouraging engagement is of paramount importance.

The goal of this exploratory and descriptive dissertation is to investigate how one construct, *purpose,* and several related correlates such as identity development and hope, may play a role both as a predictor of activity selection as well as an attained benefit as a result of activity participation. This dissertation uses Damon, Menon, and Bronk's (2003) definition of purpose as a relatively stable, accomplishable goal to make a difference in the world. By giving

specific attention to the role of purpose, identity, and hope as both predictors and outcomes associated with extracurricular participation, this dissertation will add to our understanding of the adolescent's transition into early adulthood (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005) while also building on Lerner, Almerigi, and Anderson's (2005) work introducing *contribution* – defined as civic engagement involving both an ideological and behavioral component – as the sixth "C" of positive youth development[1].

Overview of Relevant Literature

This dissertation draws on research literature in multiple related areas of study: purpose, civic engagement, adolescent development, positive youth development, and out-of-school time learning. Because this work draws on an array of literatures, the following overview will be broken down into subsections. A final subsection will make explicit the connections between the different bodies of literature and will establish the need for this work.

Purpose and Adolescent Development

This dissertation uses the definition of purpose proposed in Damon et al.'s (2003) review of empirical work on the development of adolescent purpose:

1. A goal of sorts, but it is more stable and far-reaching than low-level goals such as "to get to the movie on time" or "to find a parking place in town today."
2. A part of one's personal search for meaning, but it also has an external component, the desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters larger than the self.
3. Always directed at an accomplishment towards which one can make progress. (p. 121)

[1] The first five Cs; *competence*, *confidence*, *connection*, *character*, and *caring*, are necessary for the sixth, *contribution*.

In the same review, Damon et al. (2003) discuss the work of Erikson (1968) and other identity theorists who have identified adolescence as the period in life when individuals "begin to dedicate themselves to systems of belief that reflect compelling purposes" (p. 120). Damon et al. go on to point to a variety of literature that suggests that when individuals do not find something to dedicate their self to during this period that it becomes increasingly difficult later in life. Damon et al. also paraphrase Erickson's notion that purpose can be "an effective means of helping to resolve a young person's identity 'crisis'" (p. 123). Finally, Damon et al. cite empirical work showing that the absence of purpose is associated with a variety of negative outcomes (e.g., depression, deviant behavior, and lack of productivity), and they theorize that the presence of purpose may lead to more positive outcomes (e.g., pro-social behavior, achievement, and high self-esteem).

Damon et al.'s (2003) work relates to an established conception of adolescent development, which historically many people considered complete by the time an individual graduated from high school and moved on to college or the workforce. Recently, however, scholars have conceptualized and studied a period that has been termed *emerging early adulthood* during which many of the classic developmental challenges (e.g., identity development) continue (Arnett, 2000). Schwartz, Coté, and Arnett (2005), for instance, have explored how in western societies many young people (well into their 20's) are slow to embrace permanent identity decisions (career, marriage, etc.), concluding that for emerging adults "agency utilized is directly related to the coherence of the emerging adults' identity" (p.201). To put it another way, having and acting on purpose is related to healthy identity development.

Purpose, Identity, and Positive Youth Development

While Erickson (1968) is widely credited as the person who "laid the foundation for research regarding identity through the development of his age-linked, stage model of identity development" (Moran, 2003), many scholars have built upon and extended his work. Marcia (1964) is credited with operationalizing the ego identity construct as comprising exploration and commitment dimensions (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995). Given first-year college students' presumed flexible identity development status and the multiple opportunities to become active and engaged at a large four-year university with minimal support of proximal supportive families, it follows that there would be a relationship between activity participation, identity development, and establishing a purpose.

The idea that purpose and identity are both important and intertwined is echoed by Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, (2005), who state:

> An integrated moral and civic identity and a commitment to society beyond the limits of one's own existence enable thriving youth to be agents both in their own, healthy development and in the positive enhancement of other people and society. (p.172)

Data from the first wave of the 4-H youth development study found a relationship between purpose and developmental outcomes by illustrating a connection between low purpose and depression, and between high purpose and contribution (Lerner, Almerigi, & Anderson, 2005).

These findings fit well with the youth development literature and recent findings that identify six "Cs" of positive youth development. According to Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, (2005), the first five Cs—*competence*, *confidence*, *connection*, *character*, and *caring*—are necessary for the sixth: *contribution*. Lerner et al. conceptualize contribution as having both

behavioral and ideological components rooted in a developed identity that values contribution and leads to individuals who contribute to society and themselves.

Drawing on this work in its entirety, several questions begin to emerge that were addressed in this exploratory study. First, how developed is first-year college students' purpose, hope, and identity when they begin school, and how do those differences in development influence their choice of extracurricular activities? Second, how does participation in activities that would appear to be logical vehicles to support purpose(s) and civic engagement differ from participation in individually focused activities in strengthening or weakening purpose, hope, and identity development?

Purpose and Out-of-School Time Learning

Given the importance of developed and stable purpose(s) during adolescence and emerging adulthood, it is critical to consider when, where, and how to support its development. Research has shown that although schools, parents, and social networks all offer key opportunities for youth to develop, out-of-school time (OST) extracurricular activities offer another powerful option (NIOST, 2005). Numerous studies have associated organized high-school extracurricular participation with positive developmental outcomes such as a greater connection to school, increased academic performance, fewer risk behaviors, better impulse control, and increased self-esteem (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). Research has explored which activities are most likely to promote which outcomes (e.g., high-school band members were more likely to improve grades than athletes), but thus far this work has focused primarily on the difference in outcomes (at the secondary school level), and not on the underlying mechanisms or features specific to each activity (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Although no empirical work addressing the differences in

outcomes between college activities was found, based on Eccles and Barber's (1999) findings of significant variation between outcomes in high school (e.g., some athletes were more likely to experiment with substances than students who participated in other activities), differences between college extracurricular activity outcomes are likely as well. Returning to Schwartz et al's (2005) notion of emerging adulthood and the "increasingly prolonged" (p. 201) transition into adulthood, a reduced influence of parents, and the lack of established social networks, it is possible that college extracurricular activities (and the differences between types of activities) might exert an even greater impact on this group. Given that research has shown that individuals who graduate from college are more likely to be civically engaged than individuals with only a high-school diploma (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998), extracurricular activity participation could be one factor that promotes engagement.

Given the potential benefits of extracurricular college participation, it is important to consider which, why, and how many students participate. While numbers of participants vary from school to school, according to the "Future of the First Amendment" project at Ball State University, 73% of high-school students report participating in extracurricular activities during the school year, and 56% said that on average they spend between 1-15 hours per week engaged in extracurricular activities (J-Ideas.org, 2007). While collegiate participation numbers are not known, students who participated in activities in high school are likely to participate in college as well (Clydesdale, 2007).

Given such a likely high level of participation, the fact that emerging adults are increasingly less dependent on parents and teachers for direction, and the outcomes associated with OST extracurricular participation, it may be that these types of activities are ideal settings to support and encourage the development of purpose. Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss (2002)

make a similar case when they point out that, while schools play an important role, they cannot be expected to do everything, and OST programs (specifically community service activities) are likely important developmental contexts to encourage youth to become part of an active citizenry.

Purpose, Civic Engagement, Adolescent Development, Positive Youth Development, and Out-of-School Time Learning

Another scholar who has written extensively about the development of civic engagement (arguably the byproduct of purpose) in young people is Connie Flanagan who in 2003 stated, "Identity is focal during the adolescent and young adult years and the development of an ideology is part and parcel of this process" (p. 260). In another article, Flanagan and Faison (2001) explicitly point out that, "the civic identities, political views and values of young people are rooted in their social relations and in the opportunities they have for civic practice" (p.4). Finally, Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, and Inkelas (2007), summarize that there is research connecting participation in student organizations with development of civic engagement.

First-year college students are the focus of this dissertation because, having just exited high school, they present an opportunity to explore how and if purpose affects extracurricular activity choices at the university level. According to Flanagan (2008), the fact that students are in college increases the likelihood that they will be recruited to participate in a civic activity. That said, it is important to know whether previous civic engagement (and associated purpose) is a factor in determining if and to what extent students become engaged in university sponsored civic activities.

The Role of Four-Year Institutions in Developing Purpose and Fostering Civic Engagement

Generally speaking, students can and do graduate from colleges and universities without ever taking a class that specifically prepares them to find a purpose or become engaged. That said, The Institute for Higher Education Policy (1998) reported that college graduates are more likely to be civically engaged than their peers with only a high-school diploma. It follows that something about the college experience promotes civic engagement.

At present little is known about if, how, or why purpose influences college students' choice of activity or how their participation impacts their development of purpose. Although differences in campus cultures may make it impossible to generalize across schools[2], understanding on the individual level if, how, and why students become active is critical. With tuition continually increasing and financial support shrinking, understanding what it takes to get students involved in and committed to activities that foster the development of purpose will be important in creating and maintaining an engaged citizenry.

Statement of Purpose

This dissertation focuses on first-year college students, their extracurricular participation, and their developing sense of purpose. Part of Michigan State University's mission statement (where the study was conducted) reads,

> As a public, research-intensive, land-grant university funded in part by the State of Michigan, our mission is to advance knowledge and transform lives by: providing outstanding undergraduate, graduate, and professional education to promising, qualified

[2] For instance Penn State's IFC/Panhellenic Council's "Thon" involved over 700 dancers in front of a capacity filled arena who raised $9,563,016 in 2010 to combat childhood cancers, while there is nothing similar at MSU that is so successful or involves so many students supporting one cause.

students in order to prepare them to contribute fully to society as globally engaged citizen leaders. (MSU, 2009)

Accomplishing that mission (specifically helping students to "contribute fully to society as globally engaged citizen leaders") falls, in addition to academic course work, to over 550 registered student organizations. Specifically, this dissertation focused on students who chose to participate in a wide range of these activities to examine if and how purpose shapes and is shaped as a result of extracurricular participation during the first semester of college. The need for this type of work is echoed by Eccles and Gootman (cited in Fredricks & Eccles, 2006) who state, "qualitative and quantitative research that explores the contextual features of different activity contexts is critical for understanding which features of the experience matter and why some extracurricular contexts are related to more favorable patterns of development than others" (p. 143).

With so many activity choices, developing a better understanding of why some college students choose certain types of activities (e.g., civic engagement versus individually or socially focused), and how the different types of activities shape purpose and identity, is a crucial step in helping to guide and suggest activities for future students. Little is known about the relationship among activity choice, participation, and the development of stable purpose, hope, or identities. It may be that students who would benefit the most from participation in civic engagement activities are choosing individually or socially focused activities precisely because they are struggling with identity and purpose development. Conversely, it is also possible that students with a developed sense of purpose and identity may choose individually or socially focused activities because they feel they can pursue their purposes later or in other settings and they are comfortable with their identity. (This is in line with Clydesdale, 2007, who found that first-year

students frequently choose not to become politically or civically active and actually avoid situations that challenge their goals and beliefs.) This dissertation is a first step in furthering our understanding of these questions.

Research Questions

Specifically, this exploratory dissertation sought to address the following questions:

1. What are the initial differences in purpose, hope, and identity development between first-year college students who choose to participate in activities defined as having a civic engagement component as opposed to students who participated in individually or socially focused activities?
2. How are students' attained purpose, hope, and identity development altered as a result of their participation in civic engagement and individually focused activities?
3. In what ways do students describe their experiences in extracurricular activities and what do they hope to gain as a result of their participation?

The first two research questions reflect the need for empirical support of the hypothesized link between the development of adolescent purpose (e.g., Damon et al., 2003), service-oriented youth extracurricular programs, and positive youth outcomes such as increased identity development, stronger interpersonal relationships, and improved social skills. Specifically, Question 1 is intended to increase our understanding of purpose and identity development as independent variables that may influence activity selection.

Research Question 2 examines purpose, hope, and identity development as dependent variables that are hypothesized to be shaped through participation in either civic engagement oriented or individually or socially focused extracurricular activities. While it is also possible

that purpose may play a mediating role in relationship to other outcomes associated with extracurricular participation, an exploration of that possibility is not a focus of this study.

The third research question builds on the first two questions by using qualitative techniques to provide a window into the lived experiences of the participants, including their thoughts, emotions, and actions related to their activity selection and participation. Such information is useful for contextualizing the evidence for Questions 1 and 2, as well as suggesting potential directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

The data for this study were collected during the fall semester (2008) at Michigan State University. Participants were recruited by sending a bulk email from the University Registrar's office two times during the first three weeks of the fall semester to all of the approximately 7,000 first-year Michigan State University students. In all, 526 students completed at least some portion of the initial survey. Students were asked on the survey to list the names of the organizations they were involved in as well as to categorize all of the types of activities they were participating in. During analysis, participants were placed in seven groups based on their self-categorization of the types of activities in which they planned on participating: (a) civic engagement-only, (b) individual focused only, (c) socially focused only, (d) civic engagement and individually focused, (e) civic engagement and socially focused, (f) individually and socially focused, and (g) all three. I chose these types of categories because the primary focus of the study is on civic engagement activities and because no similar studies were located. Additionally, unlike studies of high-school extracurricular activities in which participants were grouped by social group participation (e.g., Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003, who grouped students by band, athlete, etc.), because there was such a wide range of activity choices and many participants were active in multiple groups, creating the seven groups made the data manageable while still allowing for multiple comparisons. The sample of participants in activities that do not have a civic engagement component, and therefore may not be as likely to promote or attract students with more developed purpose (i.e., yoga club, ceramics club, and various martial art groups) were included to allow for a greater range of comparisons.

Participants who participated only in the survey portion of the data collection were not compensated in any way.

For the follow-up survey, all 526 participants who completed at least some portion of the initial survey were contacted using the Survey Monkey email tool. Students were thanked for their initial participation and asked to complete the follow up survey. Students were contacted a total of five times during the $13^{th} - 16^{th}$ weeks of the semester (recruitment stopped and contact was completed with a thank-you email when participants completed the follow-up survey). In total 264 students completed at least some portion of the follow-up survey, with 171 (39% of initial total) completing the categorization questions that allowed them to be included in at least some portion of the final data analysis.

Because comparison between students participating in civic engagement activities and those who are not is a primary focus of this dissertation, it is important to define clearly how the activities were categorized. Initially, to be considered a civic engagement activity the group had to have a stated goal or mission to improve the lives of groups or individuals outside of its own membership. In addition to the stated mission to work for the betterment of others, a civic engagement group was not to have a stated organizational goal or aim to help its members better their own standing. Following data collection, however, it was determined that operationally employing this categorization technique was both cumbersome and inadequate. (Many organizations do not have accessible or easily interpreted mission statements.)

In the absence of the first grouping strategy, a second categorization strategy was adopted, which used individual self-reports to categorize participants. Both the initial and follow-up survey asked what types of activities students had participated in and listed 12 categories: music, athletics, religious groups, theater, academic club, service groups, political

groups, debate, student government, occupation related club, social club, and other. For categorization purposes the 12 activity types were grouped into 3 activity types. The *civic engagement* category consisted of service groups, political groups, religious groups, and student government. The *socially focused* category comprised students who participated in music, athletics, theater, debate, and social clubs. Finally, the *individually focused* category consisted of participants in academic clubs and occupation related clubs. The *other* group did not influence categorization.

As an example of this process, a student who reported participating in athletics and a political group would be categorized in the civic engagement and social activity group. SPSS was used to create seven groups based on the participants planned (Question 1) and actual (Question 2) participation. The total numbers of participants in each activity group are reported in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Planned Participation

Activity Group	Number of Participants
Civic engagement only	30
Socially focused only	70
Individually focused only	33
Civic engagement and socially focused	74
Civic engagement and individually focused	65
All three activity types	81
Socially focused and individually focused	41

Table 2. Actual Participation

Activity Group	Number of Participants
Civic engagement only	38
Socially focused only	43
Individually focused only	20
Civic engagement and socially focused	26
Civic engagement and individually focused	19
All three activity types	11
Socially focused and individually focused	14

A purposive subsample (e.g., high/low purpose and identity pretests) from the total pool of participants was selected to participate in the interview portion of the study (Question 3). I sent the selected participants an email offering a $15 gift card incentive if they would be willing to sit down for a 30-minute interview. Participants were selected two at a time and were again recruited by email. Sixteen students were recruited for interviews, with 10 agreeing to meet and participate. After one of the 10 participants failed to arrive at the scheduled interview time and location (and subsequently did not respond to follow up emails) a total of nine interviews were conducted during the middle portion of the fall semester (Weeks 4 – 12). The interviews were conducted in a range of campus locations including the College of Education, a dorm, and the International Center. All of the interviews were recorded with the participant's consent. Interviews generally lasted between 15 and 30 minutes (the shorter interviews with students who were not active in campus activities). Following each interview I transcribed the conversation, in several cases adding brief field notes and questions to consider in analysis.

Survey Data

Data collected to address Research Questions 1 and 2 included several quantitative measures to explore the relationship among activity participation, purpose, and associated positive outcomes. Purpose was assessed using a combination of two items used by Lerner et al. (2005) to assess contribution and three items used by Almerigi and colleagues to assess civic beliefs, attitudes, and engagement (unpublished) the combined five-item measure had a Cronbach's alpha of .629. Because the purpose measure had not been pretested for reliability, the six-item Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997), which seeks to "reflect relatively enduring goal directed thinking" (pp. 414) in children between the ages of 8-16, was also administered.

To assess the benefits resulting from participation in civic engagement activities, two different measures were employed. During the pretest phase, participants completed the Ego Identity Questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995) to assess identity commitment and exploration. The final component of the pretest survey (Appendix 1) asked several questions about previous (high-school) activity participation along with collecting basic demographic information (age, gender, etc.). During the posttest (Appendix 2) phase in addition to the purpose, hope, and ego identity measures used during the pretest, participants also completed four subsections (identity, initiative, positive relationships, team work, and social skills) of the Youth Experience Survey (Y.E.S.; Hansen & Larson, 2002). The YES is a self-report instrument that covers a range of developmental outcomes linked to the first five "C's" which have been associated with extracurricular activity participation.

All participants were recruited via email and the quantitative data was collected using the online survey tool Survey Monkey. Following each wave of data collection the survey results

were exported in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Finally, all descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was conducted using PASWstatistics17 (formerly SPSS).

Interview Data

For Research Question 3, semi-structured interviews were used. Because the third research question is exploratory in nature, and little was known about how individuals think about or experience purpose as it relates to their activity participation, beginning the interviews with a standardized set of questions was not appropriate (Creswell, 2007). A single interview question such as, "What activities are you currently involved with outside of class and why did you choose those activities?" was used with each participant. Prompts and reflective questioning followed the initial question about why the participants chose the activities they did, how the activities matched up with their expectations, goals, and previous experiences. Interviews also generally included questions related to previous activity participation (high school) and current (or planned) collegiate participation such as, "tell me about the activities you were involved in during high school and what other activities you might try out here?" Again, based on the participant's initial responses follow-up questions were asked to explore how the participant felt about their experiences as well as how they conceptualized their development (purpose, identity, etc.) as a result of participating in particular activities.

All of the participants who participated in the interview portion of the study were interviewed on campus and all interviews were audio recorded. Following each interview the recordings were transcribed and on several occasions preliminary field notes were added. After all nine interviews were completed, an inductive approach was used to analyze the data with the primary goal of identifying and describing repetitive themes. This analysis process included repeated listening to the audio recordings, highlighting and taking notes on transcripts, creating,

defining, and editing various themes as the process unfolded. In the end, three themes emerged that were addressed by a majority of the interview participants and that helped to describe students' thoughts about and reasons for participating in specific activities.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Reporting of results begins with descriptive statistics for survey data and correlations among the various measures, followed by analyses addressing Research Questions 1 and 2 by examining differences among the seven activity-based groups. As an alternative to this group-based analysis, I then report on differences between individuals scoring high and low on the various measures. Finally, I turn to the interview data to report on how participants described their experiences in extracurricular activities (Research Question 3).

Descriptive Statistics and Measure Correlations

Table 3 summarizes the N, mean, and standard deviation for the measures used in both the pre and post survey. Overall, there was little or no change across the semester in means and standard deviations in any of the measures.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

	Purpose 5 item pre	Purpose 5 item post	Total hope pre	Total hope post	ID explore pre	ID explore post	ID com pre	ID com post
N	418	244	404	241	323	218	335	220
Mean	10.00	10.28	25.51	24.99	41.36	41.42	42.50	43.11
Std. Dev.	2.58	2.56	4.66	4.53	6.67	7.08	7.57	7.35

Because the purpose measure was newly developed, I included the Children's Hope Scale in both the pre and post surveys as an additional measure of aspects of purpose: agency and pathways towards a goal. Given the similarities between the purpose measure and Hope Scale, I predicted that scores would be positively correlated. I also predicted that there would be negative correlations between identity commitment and exploration given that once an individual

commits to an identity they are less likely to explore alternatives. Table 4 summarizes the correlations between the measures. There were two moderate correlations. First was an unexpected negativecorrelation (-.53) between the Children's Hope scale and the purpose measure. Second, as predicted, there was a negative correlation(-.42) between the identity commitment and identity exploration scales. Additional discussion of these correlations is included in the next chapter.

Table 4. Measure Correlations

	ID Explore post	ID Com post	Purpose 5 item post	Total hope post
ID Explore post				
Pearson	1	-.424**	.219**	-.137*
Correlation		.000	.001	.045
Sig. (2-tailed)	218	203	213	215
N				
ID Com post				
Pearson	-.424**	1	.322**	-.305*
Correlation	.000		.000	.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	203	220	216	215
N				
Purpose 5 item post	.219**	.322**	1	-.533**
Pearson	.001	.000		.000
Correlation	213	216	244	234
Sig. (2-tailed)				
N				
Total hope post				
Pearson	-.137*	-.305**	-.533	1
Correlation	.045	.000	.000	
Sig. (2-tailed)	215	215	234	241
N				

****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

Initial Differences in Purpose, Hope, and Identity

Analysis of the survey data addressed the first research question: "What are the initial differences in purpose, hope, and identity development between first-year college students who

choose to participate in activities defined as having a civic engagement component as opposed to those participating in individually or socially focused activities?"

Purpose

To test for initial differences in purpose (using the combined five-item pretest purpose measure with a Cronbach's alpha of .629), students were categorized by their planned activity participation into seven groups: engagement, social, individual, engagement/social, engagement/individual, engagement/social/individual, and social/individual. An initial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed no significant difference between the engagement-only group and the other six groups. However, because during the SPSS MANOVA analysis, participants were automatically removed if they had even one missing response (even if it was not related to the group or scale) the overall sample size was significantly reduced. To include all of the participants with complete grouping and scale data, univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine differences between the engagement group (students planning on participating only in engagement activities) and each of the other six groups. Only two significant differences were found: Students in the engagement-only group had a higher purpose score (10.5) than students in the engagement/social group (9.44) $F(1, 97) = 3.95$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$.; students in the engagement-only group also had a significantly higher purpose score (10.5) than participants in engagement/social/individual activity group (9.14) $F(1, 105) = 5.62$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = 0.05$). There were no significant differences between the engagement-only group and the social, individual, or engagement/individual groups.

Hope

To test for initial differences in hope (using the six-item hope scale, Cronbach's alpha of .823) between students with different planned activity participation, univariate ANOVA was

used to examine differences between the engagement group and each of the other six groups. There were no significant differences between students planning to participate in engagement activities when compared to all of the six other groups.

Identity Exploration

To test for initial differences in identity exploration (using the 16-item identity scale, Cronbach's alpha of .683) between students with different planned activity participation univariate ANOVA was conducted along with descriptive statistics and Levene's test of equality of error variances. Students were again categorized by their planned activity participation into the previously listed seven groups. Participants who only *planned* to participate in engagement activities were compared based on the identity exploration subscale (Ballesteri, et al.,1995) to students in the remaining six groups. The social-activity-only group scored higher (44.52) than the engagement-only group (39.65) $F(1, 71) = 8.90$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = 0.11$). No significant ($p<.05$) differences were found between students planning to participate in engagement activities when compared to five of the other groups.

Identity Commitment

To test for initial differences in identity commitment (using the 16-item identity scale, Cronbach's alpha of .762) between students with different planned activity participation, univariate ANOVA was conducted along with descriptive statistics and Levene's test of equality of error variances. Students were again categorized by their planned activity participation into the seven groups previously discussed. Participants who only *planned* on participating in engagement activities were compared based on the identity commitment subscale (Ballesteri et al., 1995) to students in the remaining six groups. No significant ($p<.05$) differences were found

between students planning to participate in engagement activities when compared to all six of the other groups.

In sum, the univariate ANOVAs showed three significant differences between the engagement-only group and the other six groups. The first two differences were that the engagement-only group had significantly higher total purpose (10.5) than the engagement/social activity group (9.44) and the engagement/social/individually focused (9.14) groups. Additionally, the engagement-only group was significantly lower on the identity exploration measure (39.65) than the social only activity group (44.52). A discussion of all of the significant differences follows in the next chapter.

End of Semester Differences

The analysis of the data related to the second research question—"How is students' attained purpose, hope, and identity development altered as a result of their participation in civic engagement and individually focused activities?"—was conducted to look for change over time in purpose, hope, identity commitment, and identity exploration as a result of actual activity participation. Additionally, overall differences between the engagement-only (students who actually participated in the those groups) and other six activity groups (again grouped based on actual participation) were examined to look for differences in purpose, hope, identity commitment, and identity exploration. Finally, differences between the engagement-only and six other groups were examined using data from the four subsections (identity, initiative, positive relationships, and team work and social skills) of the Youth Experience Survey (Y.E.S.; Hansen & Larson, 2002).

Repeated Measures (Pre-Post)

Students who actually participated in engagement activities were compared to students from the remaining six groups using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance (RM-MANOVA) based on their pre and post scores for identity commitment (IC), identity exploration (IE), total hope (H), and total purpose (P). As with other analyses, the Bonferroni correction to control for type 1 error was employed. There were no significant differences from the beginning to the end of the semester for any of the groups. There were, however, several significant findings related to actual participation based on their post measures. Students who participated only in engagement activities did have a lower level (38.5) of identity exploration $F(6,96) = 2.26$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = 0.12$) than students in the social-activity-only (43.08) group (as was the case for Question 1 based on planned participation). Additionally, the engagement-only group $F(6, 96) = 2.34$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = 0.13$) had a higher total purpose score (10.0) than participants in the engagement/social/individual group (7.55).

No other significant differences were found between participants who participated in engagement activities when compared to participants in any of the other six activity group combinations. One other significant differences between groups were that participants the social-activity-only group $F(6, 96) = 2.34$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = 0.13$) also had a higher total purpose score (10.0) than participants in the engagement/social/individual group (7.55).

Single Measure (Post Test Y.E.S. Subscales)

Finally, participants who participated only in engagement activities were compared to participants in the other six activity groups, revealing no significant ($p < .05$) differences. However, participants in the social-activity-only group had a significantly $F(6, 115) = 2.14$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$) higher YESi (initiative) total (14.38) than participants in the engagement/social

activity group (10.35). Additionally, participants in the individual focused activity group had a significantly higher $F(6, 115) = 2.51$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = 0.12$) YESpr (positive relationships) (22.36) than participants in the engagement and social activity group (15.29).

In summary, there were no significant ($p<.05$) differences between the seven groups (grouped by actual participation) between the initial and follow up surveys. There were, however, several significant finding between the groups. First, students who participated in only engagement activities had a lower (38.5) identity exploration score than the social-activity-only group (43.08). Students in both the engagement activities only group (10.0) and the social-activity-only group (10.0) had a higher total purpose score than the students in the engagement/social/individual group (7.55). Finally, while there were no differences between the engagement-only group and the other six groups on the four YES sub-scales, the social only group had a higher initiative score (14.38) than the engagement/social activity group (10.35), and the individually focused group had higher positive relationship score (22.36) than the engagement/social activity group (10.35). These results will be discussed in the next chapter.

Upper and Lower Quartile By Person Analysis

In addition to looking for statistically significant differences between the engagement-only and other six groups, I also examined group participation by individuals who scored high and low on the various measures. Table 5 presents the total percentage of participation for the individuals in the upper and lower quartiles based on the posttest for purpose, hope, identity development, and identity commitment. Because some individuals participated in multiple activities the total percentage is greater than 100. (See Appendix x for a histogram showing group participation for the upper and lower quartiles on each measure.)

Table 5. Upper and Lower Quartile Analysis By Activity Type

Purpose		
	Top 25%	Bottom 25%
No Participation	44.8	23.9
Engagement	23.9	53.3
Social	25.4	42.5
Individual	19.4	27.2

Hope		
	Top 25%	Bottom 25%
No Participation	31.7	43.2
Engagement	47.6	31.2
Social	36.5	27.2
Individual	26.9	19.1

Identity Exploration		
	Top 25%	Bottom 25%
No Participation	40.4	24.1
Engagement	19.4	55.6
Social	38.6	29.7
Individual	24.6	24.1

Identity Commitment		
	Top 25%	Bottom 25%
No Participation	30.8	32.8
Engagement	41.5	39.1
Social	33.8	42.2
Individual	26.1	23.4

Four interesting trends emerged. Unexpectedly, participants in the lower quartile on the purpose measure were more likely to participate in both engagement and social activities than those who were in the upper quartile (23.9% vs. 53.3% in engagement and 25.4% and 42.5% in social). A second unexpected trend was that students in the lower quartile on the purpose measure were more likely to participate in activities than the high purpose individuals (23.9% not participating for the lower vs. 44.8% for the upper). A third trend that was evident is that participants who were in the upper quartile on the Hope scale were less likely to not participate in activities and more likely to choose engagement activities than the lower quartile (31.7% vs.

43.2% not participating and 47.6% vs. 31.2% in engagement activities). The forth and final trend that was evident was that individuals in the upper quartile on the identity exploration scale were more likely not to participate in any activities and less likely to choose engagement activities than participants in the lower quartile (40.4% vs. 24.1% not participating and 19.4% vs. 55.6% in engagement activities.

Participants' Descriptions of Their Experiences

To explore Research Question 3, focusing on how students describe their experiences in extracurricular activities and what they hope to gain as a result of their participation, I took an emergent and inductive analysis approach based on the tenants of phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). Given the large differences in participation, personalities, and motivations of individual students, rather than attempting to develop a complete grounded theory, I chose instead to look for common elements (themes) that emerged from my interviews with the nine participants. Three different themes emerged: (a) intent to participate (why individuals chose a certain activity), (b) commitment level to the activity and motivation to continue participating in activity, and (c) how the participants viewed their participation in the activity.

I first listened to each interview to get an overall sense of activity choices and rationale for participating and staying or leaving a given activity. Following this initial screening, I transcribed each interview (paraphrasing or removing some discussion not related to the questions). I then used the edited transcript to analyze the interviews. (On several occasions I returned to the actual recording to clarify if something paraphrased was related or to listen for tone/inflection.) I started the analysis by looking for evidence related to how participants chose the activities with which they were involved (or planned to be involved) and then moved on to conversation related to what they thought about the activity as a participant. During the analysis,

differences in the participants' responses led me to recognizing differences in intent, individual view of activities and reasons for continuing participation. Table 6 provides a brief background summary of the participants[3], Table 7 provides a summary of the participants and their individual categorization by theme, and Table 8 provides a summary of the activities, group goals, and individual motivation for choosing to try and remain (or leave) each activity. An analysis of these three emergent themes and the categories that emerged will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Table 6. Participants' Background

Participant	High-School Activities	College Activities
Becca	Student Council, Renaissance Club, School Board	Campaign for Change, Freshman Class Council
Sara	Cross country, lacrosse, horseback competitions	Holmes Excursion Learning Program (H.E.L.P), polo
Brad	Quizbowl, Science Olympiad, math team, Match Bowl, church volunteer	Quizbowl, Mock UN, History Association,
Steve	Varsity Club, football, basketball	IM football, human biology club
Annie	Student Government, dance, volunteered outside of school	Pre-med club, Pagan Club (briefly tried but left both)
Shelly	Book Club, ACTION, NHS	MRULE (multi-racial diversity club)
Barb	Cross country, theatre, Girl Scouts, band, choir, church group	Students for Peace and Justice, Wessley Foundation (campus ministry), Theatre
Julie	Swimming, basketball, water polo, NHS	Bio-systems Engineering Club, Society for Women Engineers (infrequent attendance for both)

[3] All names used are pseudonyms

Table 6. Participants' Background Contd.

Jon	Four Corners diversity program	Freshman Year Experience, Helping other People Everywhere), (Brody United in Leadership Development), crew

Table 7. Participants' Categorization Summary

Participant	Intent to participate	Commitment level	Participant's view
Becca	intentional	Committed	Aligned
Sara	intentional	Committed	Not aligned with group
Brad	intentional	Committed	Not aligned with group
Steve	intentional	Committed	Not aligned with group
Annie	disinterested	Not committed	N/A
Shelly	happenstance	Committed	Not aligned with group
Barb	intentional	Committed	Aligned
Julie	disinterested	Committed	N/A
Jon	happenstance	Committed	Not aligned with group

Table 8. Participants' Groups, Group Mission, and Rationale for Participation

Participant	Activities	Activities' mission	Participant's reason for joining	Participant's reasons for continuing
Becca	Freshmen Class Council (FCC), Obama Campaign for Change	FCC – "serves as the voice of the freshman class at MSU", Obama Campaign – to get Obama elected President	FCC – "To get freshmen involved; really help freshmen" Obama – "personal issues in election; believes in Obama"	FCC – surveying freshmen to see what they want, Obama-passionate about change/believes in Obama

Table 8. Participants' Groups, Group Mission, and Rationale for Participation Contd.

Sara	Holmes Excursions Learning Program (HELP), Polo	HELP – provides volunteer opportunities, Polo – opportunity to learn the game and to ride	HELP – likes to volunteer, Polo – likes horses, cheaper than equestrian	HELP – left after 6 weeks due to scheduling Polo – likes that it is new and she is making friends
Brad	Quizbowl, Mock U.N., History Association,	Quizbowl – academic competition, Mock U.N. – conducts conference for high-school delegates, History Association – foster interest/discuss history	All three – meeting people, academics a minor reason, wanted to get integrated	Quizbowl – laid back and really cool people Mock U.N. – left because too big and did not feel welcomed History – feels welcome, random fun activities like movies and grad panels
Steve	IM football, Pre-med club, Human bio club	IM sports – safe and supportive sports experience, Pre-med – provide undergraduates with guidance and support to become successful med school applicants, Human Bio – meetings about topics of interest to members	IM – likes sport and wanted to interact with "the guys", Pre-med – resume builder and to interact with people, Human Bio – Likes science and helping people	IM – season ended, Pre-med – interacting with people and knowing he's helping, Human bio – N/A (no reason given during interview)

Table 8. Participants' Groups, Group Mission, and Rationale for Participation Contd.

Annie	Pre-med club (several meetings), Pagan Club (one meeting)	Pre-med – provide undergraduates with guidance and support to become successful med school applicants, Pagan club – Green Spiral exists to provide a organization for Pagans at Michigan State University and in the surrounding communities.	Pre-med – "to meet people who want to go to the same place", Pagan – wanted to see what it was like	Left Pre-med because "she already volunteers", left Pagan club because "people thought she was weird"
Shelly	MRULE (Multiracial Unity Living experience)	MRULEW – offers students in Residence Halls and beyond opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding of what they can do to contribute to positive race relations in their lives and their communities.	Club leaders recruited at orientation, thought "it would be good to meet people".	Enjoying it, "really interesting to hear what other people think"

Table 8. Participants' Groups, Group Mission, and Rationale for Participation Contd.

Barb	Students for Peace and Justice, multi-cultural society, Wesley foundation, Justice theatre group, Allies caucus for LGBT social action	Students for Peace and Justice – activism for non-violence, Multicultural Society – understanding other cultures, Wesley Foundation – committed to finding new ways to discover the love of God in Jesus Christ in new and exciting ways, Allies – bringing LGBT and straight students together	Students for Peace and Justice – referred by advisor, "very much a peace and justice person", Multicultural Society – "obsessed with Arabic culture", Wesley Foundation – goes for Wednesday worship, Theatre – "just for her", enjoyment, LGBT caucus – build friends in complex	Students for Peace and Justice – ongoing projects and connection to major, Multicultural Society – continued interest in Arabic culture, Wesley Foundation – worship and service projects, Theatre – for enjoyment and socialization, LGBT (N/A) did not discuss
Julie	Bio-systems engineering club, Society for Women Engineers	Bio-systems engineering club – socialization and support of academic interest, Society for Women Engineers – educational service organization for students and engineers	Bio-systems engineering – chance to get to know people in small program, Society of Women Engineers – possible scholarships	Bio-systems – paid for membership, free pizza, sometimes interesting speakers, Society for Women Engineers – same reasons (paid, pizza, speakers)

Table 8. Participants' Groups, Group Mission, and Rationale for Participation Contd.

Jon	Crew, HOPE (Helping other people everywhere), Build (Brody United and Leadership Development), Advantage	Crew – push limits and compete for national championship, HOPE – as name implies, a service group, Build – help students develop leadership skills, Advantage – academic support and transition to college support	For all four – wanted to become more involved than in high school, Crew – flyer in area so went to informational meeting, HOPE – community service, Build – become a better leader and learn about "self", Advantage – help with academics	Crew – exercise and "really loves it", HOPE – didn't do much yet, Build – leadership and helping him become comfortable with public speaking, Advantage – N/A did not discuss

Reason to Participate

The first theme that emerged was the intentionality reported by the participants choosing whether and what activities in which to become involved. Of the nine participants interviewed, five clearly sought out the specific activities or groups with which they were involved. Two were not actively involved in many campus groups or organizations and their choices were based more on chance and apathy than specific goals or desires. Finally, two participants ended up in activities based almost entirely on happenstance after learning about a meeting or event from a flyer or reading sidewalk chalk. A discussion of these three groups of participants and the characteristics of the individuals in each group will be the focus of the remainder of this section.

Intentional. The first and largest group of interviewed participants were intentional and goal oriented in choosing what groups to become involved in. For example, Becca had been

involved with school and local government during high school. When asked why she chose to get involved with the freshman class council and the Obama Campaign for Change she spoke about helping others, getting students involved, and the personal issues that the election had for her. Becca stated that she "thinks it is important for students to vote regardless of who they vote for" and that she had been canvassing for students to vote, not just for Obama, but to just vote. Becca credited her previous involvement in student government along with her personal stake in the election and desire to shape her community as the reasons that led her to seek out opportunities to become civically engaged.

Not all of the students categorized as highly intentional shared Becca's altruistic motives. Sara, who was also intentional, chose to become involved in two groups as well. In contrast to Becca, Sara selected activities because they either allowed her to socialize or to pursue individual interests. When asked why she chose to participate on the MSU polo team she referred to her past experience showing horses, her trainer's recommendation, and that it was new and more convenient than equestrian. When asked about her participation in Holmes Excursion Learning Program (HELP) and other volunteer engagement activities, she responded that her reasons for joining were that participating in the activities "makes her feel good and productive" and "it makes her get out of bed."

Brad was also highly intentional in his activity selection but differed from both Becca and Sara by choosing to participate in a broad spectrum of activities. When asked about whether he planned on becoming involved in extracurricular activities at MSU Brad did not hesitate to say "absolutely" because he wanted to meet "nerds" like himself. Brad chose to participate in several activities such as the quiz bowl simply to meet other students he perceived as similar. However, Brad also chose to sign up to volunteer with a tutoring program that serves

disadvantaged children because he said it was really fun to help and that the student (a first-grader) reminded him of himself at that age.

While it was expected that the largest number of students interviewed were intentional in their activity selection and that social, civic, and individual factors played a role, at times participants' reasons for choosing an activity did not align with what might be expected based on the type of activity selected. For example, Sara's decision to get involved in civic engagement activities because they "make her feel good and productive, and it makes her get out of bed" is not the same as having a desire to help out or make a difference in her community. Steve expressed another example of misalignment of group objectives and the assumed intent of participants. One of the activities that Steve was involved with was volunteering at the campus health service building to give food to "poor" people because "it will help my resume." Rather than choosing this activity to help others or to fight hunger, Steve chose the activity because it would benefit him in the long run and it afforded him the opportunity to socialize.

Disinterested. A second group of students who emerged were identified as being either apathetic or disinterested in extracurricular activity participation (at least at the on campus level). Of the nine students interviewed, only two fit this category. Annie stated that she attended several pre-med club meetings but that the group, "is a lot of it is volunteering which I still do" referring to what she does in her hometown (close to MSU so her participation continued even though she was in school). Julie, who on the surface appeared to have been intentional in choosing activities (e.g., stating that she chose one activity because there was a possibility to earn scholarships) ended up being included in this group despite her almost total disinterest in the goals of the organization and the limited amount of time she participated. During her interview, Julie reported that she mostly hangs out with high-school friends and will likely stay

with one of her groups because she already paid for her membership and that they receive free pizza at meetings.

Happenstance. The third group of students that emerged was labeled as unintentional but highly interested activity participants. The two members of this group both ended up participating in groups almost entirely by chance. Jon ended up involved with a number of civic engagement/service organizations all because of a flyer he saw and a required psychology experiment that had him in the area. His unplanned involvement with that group led him to seek out other related civic engagement organizations and ultimately led to a paid position working to better the freshman year experience. The second student in this group, Shelly, grew up near MSU and said that she had not really given any thought to whether she wanted to get involved in extracurricular activities at MSU. During her freshman academic orientation program, a representative from MRULE (a multiracial diversity club) was present. When Shelly started school in the fall she saw a flyer for MRULE and remembering her academic orientation program chose to attend. Shelly said that she chose to attend because she recognized that it "would be good to meet people" and as a result has made new friends and thought about a number of issues from new perspectives.

While the distinctions between members of the second and third groups from the first group may not be entirely clear (e.g., Shelly had some intent in deciding to attend because she wanted to meet people but did not consider attending until her orientation), the emergence of these categories was nonetheless unexpected. I assumed prior to beginning this study that most individuals choose to become active (or at least test out) some activities and that there is at minimum some degree of explicit intent. The fact that two of the nine participants interviewed

stumbled into their activities and another two were basically not actively participating in any sort of on campus organization challenges this assumption and will be a focus of later discussion.

Participation Commitment and Motivation to Continue

A second theme that emerged was that despite the varying degree of intentionality in choosing which (if any) activities to become involved in, eight of the nine students interviewed responded that they were committed to continuing their participation through the school year and beyond (see Table 4). While it is not surprising that the five students who sought out a certain activity reported that they were committed, it was somewhat surprising that students like Shelly and Jon who ended up in activities almost by accident reported being committed to continuing their participation. The only student who reported having tried participating and had stopped was Annie. As mentioned previously, Annie tried the pre-med club and stopped going after two meetings because she perceived the focus to be on volunteering, which she does on her own. Annie also said that she tried the Pagan club but stopped attending because she thought that the members of the club viewed her as weird and she only went to "check it out."

Participants' View of the Activity and Their Role in it

Perhaps the most unexpected of the three emergent themes was the discrepancy in the way some of the participants viewed the activities they chose and what I assumed would be their rationale for participation based on the type of activity selected. To put it simply, of the seven interviewed participants who were participating in activities categorized as "civic engagement" activities, five were participating for very personal or socially based reasons. Only two talked about helping or making a difference. Two additional interviewed participants interviewed were not participating in any sort of civic engagement activities. The following paragraphs serve as evidence to exemplify this theme.

Not Aligned. One illustration of the disconnect between participating in civic engagement activities and possessing a desire to make a difference can be seen in the interview with Steve. Steve was participating in IM sports, the human bio club, and the pre-med club. While the pre-med and human bio clubs would be classified as individually focused groups, several of the activities offered by the clubs afford participants the opportunity to become civically engaged. In Steve's case, he had spent time volunteering at the campus health services to "give food to poor people and also to talk to them if they need comfort." When asked why he chose to do this, he replied that his primary reason was to build his resume and to interact with people (individually and socially focused, respectively) and it was not until pressed in the interview that he any mentioned helping others (civic engagement).

Another illustration of this theme can be found in Jon's interview. Jon was involved with multiple service clubs and actually ended up finding employment with the Freshman Year Experience (FYE) program that focuses on improving the experiences and well being of first-year students. My assumptions were challenged when I asked Jon why he got involved and what kept him involved: At no point in his answer did he mention helping his fellow students or making a positive change. On the contrary, Jon talked about joining the group to become a better leader, learn about himself, and be prepared for leadership. Despite the fact that Jon never mentioned helping, when discussing the low turnout for one of the groups he was involved with (helping other people everywhere) he said that turnout was low because, "I guess maybe people don't want to help."

Aligned. Two of the nine interviewed students interviewed did mention altruistic motives for participating in civic engagement activities. Perhaps the best illustration of this minority was Barb, the daughter of a minister who is involved in a wide range of activities,

including multiple service groups. When asked about her reason for choosing those activities Barb described herself as a "service person" that has and always will seek out opportunities to make a difference. As I conceptualized and planned this study, I assumed that most, if not all, students who participated in civic engagement activities would be more like Barb when it came to making decisions about participation.

Not Applicable. Annie and Julie were not participating in any sort of civic engagement activity. Given that they were both not participating in any activities with a stated intent they were categorized as not applicable for this theme.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Overall there were several significant findings when comparing students who planned to participate only in civic engagement activities to their peers who participated or planned to participate in the other activity combinations. Students who planned on participating in only civic engagement activities had significantly higher total purpose (10.5) than the engagement/social activity group (9.44) and the engagement/social/individually focused (9.14) groups. Additionally, the engagement-only group was significantly lower on the identity exploration measure (39.65) than the social only activity group (44.52).

There were also several significant findings when comparing students who actually participated in engagement-only activities to their peers in the other six activity groups. Students who participated in only engagement activities had a lower (38.5) identity exploration score than the social-activity-only group (43.08). Students in both the engagement-activities-only group (10.0) and the social-activity-only group (10.0) had a higher total purpose score than the students in the engagement/social/individual group (7.55). Finally, while there were no differences between the engagement-only group and the other six groups on the four YES sub-scales, the social only group had a higher initiative score (14.38) than the engagement/social activity group (10.35), and the individually focused group had higher positive relationship score (22.36) than the engagement/social activity group (10.35).

Finally, differences in the participants' interview responses led me to recognizing differences in intent, individual view of activities, and reasons for continuing participation. The following discussion is broken into three subsections corresponding to the three research questions.

Descriptive Statistics and Measure Correlations

As was noted in the results section, there was no change in means and standard deviations for any of the four measures between the pre and post surveys. When looking at the correlation table there were multiple significant correlations between the measures.

One correlation that was completely unexpected based on the similarities between questions and measure goals was a sizable (-.533) correlation between the purpose measure and the Hope Scale. The Children's Hope Scale was included in the study because it was hypothesized that it would be a good proxy measure for purpose because it measures agency and pathways towards a goal. Given the definition of purpose includes having a stable goal it was theorized that the Hope Scale would measure at least one component of purpose. The sizable negative correlation raises serious questions about both measures and their use in measuring purpose for emerging adults (the Hope Scale is designed for children ages 8-16). There are two plausible reasons for the negative correlation. The first is that one (or both) measures have serious validity issues and they do not measure what they were intended to measure. A second plausible explanation is that the differences in the way emerging adults who have established abstract thinking skills and metacognitive abilities respond differently than 8 to 16 year-old children and therefore the Hope Scale is not appropriate for that age group. In either case, it is clear that the two instruments measure very different things.

The one other sizable correlation (-.424) was between the identity commitment and identity exploration measures. As was expected the two are negatively correlated because it follows that once an individual stops exploring they commit to an identity and once committed they are less likely to actively explore.

Initial Differences in Purpose, Hope, and Identity

The first question that this study posed was: "What are the initial differences in purpose, hope, and identity development between first-year college students who choose to participate in activities defined as having a civic engagement component as opposed to in individually or socially focused activities?" It was hypothesized that students who participated in activities that focused on civic engagement would have higher purpose and identity development scores (driven to make a difference and committed to their cause) even though no literature was located that explicitly predicted these differences.

As hypothesized, the students who reported that they were going to participate in civic engagement activities did have a significantly higher purpose score than did students planning to participate in social and individually focused groups. Unexpectedly, however, both of the groups that were significantly different than the civic engagement-only group included a civic engagement activity (engagement/social group (.05) and the engagement/social/individual activity group (.02)). Also, there were no significant differences in purpose between the students who were choosing to participate in only civic engagement activities when compared to students who were only interested in participating in social or individually focused groups. The only other significant finding when comparing the students who were only going to participate in civic engagement activities versus those in the remaining six groups was that the social-activity-only group measured significantly higher on the identity exploration scale (.004).

There are several possible explanations for the differences between the engagement-only group and the two other groups. The first possible explanation is that the students with a more developed sense of purpose were more attracted to service oriented groups and had less interest in pursuing other types of activities. This may be the most plausible explanation because a

student with a strong sense of purpose would theoretically be more likely to forgo participation in other activities to reserve their time and energies to serve others. This explanation is in line with Borden and Serido's (2009) process model of achieving civic engagement through program participation, which concludes with an expansion phase. Borden and Serido assert that individuals seek out greater connections to their community after they form strong relationships with other people with similar interests inside of a given program.

A second possible explanation for the differences between the groups is that the students who chose to participate in multiple types of activities were still developing their identities (including developing purpose) and were trying multiple activities to further their identity development. While previous work by identity researchers as far back as Erickson (1968) show that emerging adults try multiple activities and roles before beginning to settle on a more permanent view of who they are, this explanation seems less plausible given that there were no significant differences between the three groups on either the identity exploration or identity commitment scales.

The other significant difference, that students in the social-activity-only group were significantly higher in their identity exploration than those in the engagement-only group, was also unanticipated. On the surface, it is plausible that students who were interested only in social activities had a less developed identity (meaning that they did not have strong civic engagement or personal interests developed) and were participating in social activities in part to continue exploring their identity (which is in line with what Damon, 2003, and Erickson, 1968, discussed). While this may well be the case, it is does not explain why the students in the multiple activity type categories did not fit this profile.

The lack of significant differences between the students who planned to participate in multiple activities and those who planned to participate only in civic engagement activities raises a new question: Why was there a difference in identity exploration between the social-activity-only group (when compared to engagement only) and not differences between the blended (social and individually focused, social and engagement, social/individually/engagement) groups? Based on the work of the identity theorists cited in the previous paragraph (Damon, 2003, and Erickson, 1968) it would have been expected that while some students who were still exploring their identity would seek social activities, others might try on "multiple hats" and participate in a range of activities. The fact that this was not the case in this study could be the result of a methodological limitation such as the small sample size or instrumentation validity, or it could be that there is something else going on that can inform our understanding of how and why emerging adults choose extracurricular activities during their first semester of school.

Given all of the changes that first-year college students experience in distance from established support systems and networks of friends, increased responsibilities, and new freedoms, many students may not be prepared to seek activities that actively challenge their identity development. It is possible that the reason that the only significant difference between groups in relation to identity exploration was between the social only and engagement-only groups is because these groups represent two extremes. It may be the case that the majority of first semester students are not fully willing or able to invest the emotional, intellectual, or physical resources necessary to engage in (and possibly commit to) intense identity exploration which is in line with Clydesdale (2007), who found that students entering college were likely to avoid activities and relationships that challenged their current thinking.

A second possible explanation for the lack of significant differences between the groups in relation to identity exploration could be a matter of limited interest or lack of resources. During the interviews conducted for this study two students revealed that they just happened into their activities and two others were apathetic in regards to their choices and participation in general. It might be the case that with all of the "newness" of starting school that many students choose to invest their intellectual and physical (particularly time and money) resources in other areas, and therefore their initial thoughts about what activities to participate in were not reflective of what was really important to them. If this were the case then there would have been bias in the grouping process, which could potentially limit the significant results. If lack of resources is the explanation, then future work should examine how emerging adults who are just starting school make choices about where and how to expend their resources.

In summary, the data collected to answer the first research question support the hypothesis that students with a more developed sense of purpose are more likely to plan to participate in civic engagement activities (possibly at the expense of participating in other activities). There were also several instances where expected differences were not evident as well as several unanticipated findings. The fact that there were not differences between the civic engagement-only group and the social or individually focused only groups warrants further exploration. Additionally, the fact that the only significant difference on the identity exploration scale was between the social only group and the engagement-only group raised questions about whether the social only group was seeking social groups to continue exploring their identity or if students in the engagement-only group had more fully developed identities (given no other differences between groups on the exploration measure).

End of Semester Differences

The second question that this study posed was: "How is students' attained purpose, hope, and identity development altered as a result of their participation in civic engagement and individually focused activities?" The first result, that students in the engagement-only activity only group were significantly lower (.048) than the students in the social-activity-only group in their identity exploration scores provides additional support for the explanation that students in the civic engagement-only activities have firmly chosen to pursue their sense of purpose and have a more fixed identity than students who chose to only focus on social activities. This result again fits nicely with the identity research of Erickson (1968) and Arnett (2000) that have shown that identities become more stable in late adolescence and emerging adulthood. It was not expected, however, that there would be no significant differences in the identity (exploration or commitment) scores between any of the other activity groups. According to the work of Erickson and Arnett, significant differences would have been predicted between the engagement-only group and the individual only and individual/social activity group.

The second finding related to the second research question is that the students that participated exclusively in engagement activities or exclusively in social activities had significantly higher (.023 and .013 respectively) purpose scores than the students who participated in all three types of activities (engagement/social/individual). While the first part of the finding, that students who only participated in engagement activities have a more developed sense of purpose and therefore may be likely to focus their time and energy pursuing engagement opportunities fits nicely with both identity (Erickson, 1968) and civic engagement (Borden & Serido, 2009) literature, the fact that the social-activity-only group also had a higher total purpose raises several questions.

Initially, it seems contradictory to the explanations provided previously that students in the social-activity-only group would have a more developed sense of purpose than students who participate in all three types of activities. The possible explanation discussed previously that students who were only planning to participate in engagement activities had a higher total purpose score because they knew what they wanted to do and were willing to sacrifice other activity participation in order to meet their goals would not seem to apply to this group. It may be that members of this group are participating in engagement activities outside of school and only have time for social activities at school. While this might be the case, no data regarding out of school participation were collected and this could be an interesting question for future research.

As part of the effort to better explain how and why activities impact purpose and identity development students completed portions of the YES 2.0 to highlight specific yet related benefits of activity participation. Unfortunately, no significant differences were found on any of the YES 2.0 subscales between the groups discussed previously in this section. The significantly higher (.029) level of initiative between the social-activity-only group when compared to students in the engagement/social group and the significantly higher (.019) positive relationship scores of the individual focused activity group members when compared to the students in the engagement/social activity group were found but at this time those groups are not the focus of this research. That said, despite not being the primary focus of this work, exploring why the differences exist (perhaps social activities and their interpersonal nature provide more motivation, or the lack of common goals and limited interactions of individually focused groups reduces tension and leads to better feelings about relationships) could be very interesting questions to explore in future research or a separate research review.

Given the few statistically significant differences between the different activity groups, questions emerge regarding the role extracurricular participation and institutions of higher learning. Michigan State University's mission includes preparing students to "contribute fully to society as globally engaged citizen leaders." Given the tremendous number of choices, ever growing tuition coupled with shrinking financial resources, and all of the pressure of academics when and how is this mission met? Based on the Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood and the need for individuals between 18 and 25 need to continue exploring their identities, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy's (1998) findings that college graduates are more civically engaged than individuals with only a high-school diploma, it follows that something about the college experience does in fact promote engagement. Perhaps there are extracurricular activities that would foster that type of engagement and many students simply choose to or are not able participate due to limited resources or conflicts with other more pressing obligations. It is also possible that by offering so many activities to choose from that there is a "watering down" effect and many students end up participating in activities that do not foster engagement or personal growth. Regardless, the fact that so few differences were found between students who participated in engagement related activities and their peers suggests that MSU (and possibly other similar institutions) may be underutilizing a potential asset that could help them to fully meet their mission for a greater number of students.

Participants' Descriptions of Their Experiences

The last question that this study posed was: "In what ways do students' describe their experiences in extracurricular activities and what do they hope to gain as a result of their participation?" Three different themes emerged from the data collected related to the third research question: (a) intent to participate (why individuals chose particular activities), (b)

commitment level to the activity and motivation to continue participating in activity, and (c) how the participants viewed their participation in the activity. Possible implications of these themes, as their possible causes will be the focus of the remaining discussion.

Reason to Participate

The first theme was the difference in intentionality reported by the participants in choosing whether and what activities to become involved in. As previously reported, five of the nine interviewed participants clearly sought out the specific activities or groups with which they were involved; the other four were either not participating in any campus activities or they ended up participating in activities primarily by chance.

What is particularly salient here is that nearly half of the interviewed participants either were not involved in any of the over 550 campus organizations or they ended up in activities with little or no initial interest in the groups in which they were actively involved. At the beginning of the study, I expected that, given the pressure to become actively involved in campus extracurricular activities from resident assistants in dorms and the large number of activities and events scheduled to promote various campus groups (Sparticipation, advertising), most if not all students would choose to at least try a few activities. This expectation is also supported by the literature (e.g., Eccles, et al., 2003), which reports findings related to extracurricular participation being voluntary and common among successful adolescents (e.g., university freshman).

Of the four students who were not classified as intentional in seeking out and trying specific activities, two were not participating at all and two ended up in activities almost entirely by chance. The two students who were not participating cited conflicts with classes or a desire to socialize with friends in a more casual environment. While a desire to focus on academics or to

have time with friends is plausible, it may be that these students might have chosen to become involved later or that they might not ultimately be as successful as their counterparts who chose to participate in extracurricular activities.

The two students who were actively participating in groups that they seemingly stumbled into are examples that run counter to some of the fundamental assumptions made in designing this study. Previously cited research (e.g., Eccles et al., 2003) along with my personal experience led me to assume that students would at a minimum seek out groups based on established interests and likely gravitate towards activities that resembled groups with which they were involved during high school. The fact that the students tried something new is not surprising (given that many students are still very much in the identity exploration stage (Erickson, 1968), but the fact that sidewalk chalk advertising and proximity rather than interests drove activity choice for some was unexpected.

Participation Commitment and Motivation to Continue

The second emergent theme was that despite the varying degree of intentionality in choosing which (if any) activities to become involved in, eight of the nine students interviewed responded that they were committed to continuing their participation through the school year and beyond. As with the previous theme, it was not unexpected that the five students who sought out a certain activities remained committed to those activities. It was, however, not anticipated that the students who were less involved or intentional in their activity selection were so committed. Again, based on my personal experience and the identity theorists mentioned previously (i.e., Erickson, 1968, and Arnett, 2000), I hypothesized that students who stumbled into activities would be more likely to consider trying new activities and/or stopping their participation. It could be that the power of the

status quo is considerable for first-year students dealing with establishing themselves on campus, and that they do as Clydesdale (2007) reported and intentionally avoid settings that challenge their beliefs or expectations. It is also possible that the students who were not intentional in choosing which groups to become involved with (if any) made a choice that was a good fit with their current stage of identity development and the group they ended up in (or out of) was a good fit. Again, additional longitudinal data would have been helpful in determining where these students were in Borden and Serido's (2009) process model of achieving civic engagement through program participation.

Participants' View of the Activity and Their Role in it

The least expected of the three themes was the discrepancy in the way some of the participants viewed the activities they chose and what might have been assumed would be their rationale for participation based on the type of activity selected. This theme raises important questions when interpreting the results of the study overall as well as possible future research questions.

One of the most basic premises of this study was that students were aware of and committed to the overall goals or benefits of participating in certain groups and, more importantly, that their reasons for participating would match the goals and aims of the group. What was so unexpected was that in several instances students reported reasons for participating in a given activity that were very different from the primary objective of the group. This is not to say that having multiple reasons for participating in a certain activity is not to be expected, but rather that not sharing any of the groups underlying mission (e.g., Steve and his involvement with health services and Jon with his leadership roles) was unanticipated. This theme raises important questions about the applicability of the findings and also has implications for future

research. Both the potential limitations and the implications for future research will be discussed in the next chapter.

Finally, if students are in fact not aware of, or do not subscribe to the underlying goals/missions of the groups with which they associate, additional questions about whether and how institutions of higher learning prepare emerging adults to become engaged citizens emerge. Although examples like the Thon[4] at Penn State show that it is possible to have large scale buy-in and participation in activities based on a charitable mission, there are still questions about motive and access that need to be explored. Undoubtedly, some of the participants/donors involved in successful activities such as Thon are there for some sort of personal gain (i.e., relationships, resume enhancement, etc.). At the same time, Thon's tremendous success and growth also would seem to serve as evidence of massive commitment to the group's mission and goals. How and why are so many students choosing to become involved in and passionate about activities like Thon at a school similar to MSU in size and mission (PSU is another Land Grant University), while nothing close exists at MSU? Given the relative geographic closeness, tuition, and typical student population it seems unlikely that there is something about students from Pennsylvania that makes them more prone to be able to choose to become active with extracurricular groups or to become civically engaged. That said, there must be something that limits students at some schools from participating in engagement activities or promotes their participation at others. Gaining a better understanding of these differences would be extremely valuable as institutions (and students) make choices about how to best spend their limited resources and ultimately fulfill their missions (or personal goals).

[4] Penn State's IFC/Panhellenic Council's "Thon" involved over 700 dancers in front of a capacity filled arena who raised $9,563,016 in 2010 to combat childhood cancers.

Limitations

Despite the best intentions, planning, and advice from more knowledgeable and experienced mentors, several issues arose that limit the generalizability of this study. This section will address four of the most significant limitations of the current study as well as suggest three ideas for future research to help overcome or address the limitations. The four primary limitations that this chapter will focus on are (a) limitations of the measures used, (b) sample attrition and timing of the data collection, (c) use of self-report for group categorization, and (d) researcher bias and inexperience.

Instrumentation

The first limitation of the current study lies in the choice of instruments. The primary purpose measure was constructed from a combination of 2-items used by Lerner et al. (2005) to assess contribution, 3-items used by Almerigi and colleagues to assess civic beliefs, attitudes, and engagement (unpublished) (Appendix 1). At the time the study was being planned there were not any publically available established measures of youth purpose that did not specifically focus on political or civic engagement activities. (Measures such as Flanagan, Stout, Syvertsen, 2007) were available but focused specifically on civic engagement activities.) Given that the measure was not pilot tested prior to the study combined with a Cronbach's alpha of .629 it may be that the new measure did not have sufficient reliability to accurately measure purpose.

Because the purpose measure had not been pretested and validated, the theoretically correlated Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) (Appendix 2) was used as a correlate measure. Although The Children's Hope Scale was designed to measure constructs that are theoretically related to the studies working definition of purpose (e.g., measures agency and pathways) it was designed and tested for use on children ages 8-16. It is possible that the

instrument did not accurately measure these two constructs for the study participants who ranged in age from 18-25. As was reported previously the correlational analysis found that the purpose measure was actually negatively correlated to the Hope Scale. This negative correlation calls in to question the validity of purpose measure.

Timing of Data Collection and Sample Attrition

The second limitation of the study is the timing of the data collection. Participants completed the quantitative measures during the first and final four weeks of the fall semester (T1, T2). Interviews were conducted between the fifth and twelfth weeks of the semester. These data collection points could limit the validity of the results for all three research questions. For Research Question 1, concerning initial differences in purpose, hope, and identity development between students who choose to participate in civic engagement activities and those who participated in individually or socially focused activities, the main issue with collecting the initial data during the first four weeks of the semester is related to the participants' focus during the beginning of their college careers. Because participants were recruited via email from the university registrar it is entirely possible that many perspective participants chose to ignore the request to participate once they realized that the email did not concern their enrollment status. A second set of perspective participants may not have checked (and therefore read) the emails until after the data collection window closed. The most likely limitation of this data collection strategy is that because students are in the process of adapting to a significant life change during the first month of their college career their answers to questions about their goals, purpose, and identity development may not be representative of their actual development or typical thinking. This limitation cannot be overstated because there may well be differences in purpose and

identity development (which is the focus of the first research question) that were not reflected in the data.

Possibly the most significant limitation of the study and a possible explanation for so few significant results is related to the timing of data collection for Research Question 2: How is students' attained purpose and identity development altered as a result of their participation in civic engagement and individually focused activities? This question addresses the development of purpose as it relates to activity selection. Given that participants were in any given activity for only one semester (and their participation was frequently confounded with participation in other activities), it is possible that the activity would (does) exert a significant impact over a greater period of time. It is also possible that the converse occurs and that the changes that emerged in the data would have diminished or even vanished as participants spent more time in a given activity.

Although this is a potentially significant limitation, in many ways it could not be avoided. Given the lack of existing research about the development of purpose as it relates to collegiate extracurricular activities and the limitations of the dissertation process, choosing a one-semester window was both practical logistically, and given that developmental changes frequently emerge quickly as a result of a new setting the choice was also logical theoretically. Based on the data collected for Research Question 2, a year-long data collection window might have been preferable.

Finally, the timing of data collection may also have had a limiting factor as it relates to the third research question: In what ways do students' experiences in extracurricular activities differ based on their initial sense of purpose and identity development and the type of activity selected? The primary issue as it relates to this question is that, especially for students who were

interviewed early in the semester, the participants may have spent little time in the chosen activities. Given that the question focused on the student's experience in their chosen activities and how this experience was both shaping and shaped by purpose, the limited experience could have provided an insufficient base to answer the questions that were asked.

One other limitation related to data collection timing is sample attrition. While attrition is a potential issue for all repeated measure studies, despite the relatively short amount of time between pre and post measures it was a problem in this study. One possible explanation for the high attrition is that the participants were recruited via an email from the University Registrar's Office, which can feel impersonal. Without a personal connection, some sort of academic, social, or financial incentive (there were no monies available to offer compensation) there was a lack of extrinsic motivation to return the follow-up survey (or to respond to interview requests). Fortunately, despite the high number of participants who did not participate in the follow up survey there were a sufficient number of participants to conduct the planned statistical analyses.

Categorization Strategy

A third likely limitation is the nature of the categorization strategy that labels participants as either participating or not in particular activities. Recent work by Bohnert, Fredricks, and Randall (2010) raised questions about out-of-school time studies that categorize participant in this manner. They suggest that researchers should assess breadth, intensity, duration, and engagement for individuals before coming to conclusions. Given that these data were not collected, it may be that differences exist that were not found or that some of the differences reported may only hold true for a subsample of the larger category.

A second possible limitation to the categorization strategy relates to the group dynamics in each different activity. Because the participants were all first semester students none of them

had any existing relationships with the campus organizations. It may have been the case that some participants wanted to become involved with an organization but after attending a meeting or event they did not feel welcomed given the social make up of the more established participants.

Use of Self-Report Categorization

Another potential limitation was the use of self-categorization for group assignment. This process was chosen because there are over 550 registered student organizations and many of them do not have a published goals or mission statements. It could be the case that a number of students chose to try activities based on an assumption that the group had a certain mission or goal, and later found out that they were incorrect. Also, with such a large number of groups, the limited published information about them, and the impossibility of visiting and observing them all, it was determined that self categorization was the best option available. Although necessary, every participant might have different conceptualizations of terms like *service* or *social* and therefore categorization was not standardized which can lead to both validity and reliability problems when comparing groups.

Researcher Inexperience and Bias

As is the case with sample attrition, interviewer bias and inexperience can always be considered a limitation in qualitative data collection and analyses. In this study, although I tried to maintain objectivity (or at the very least, be aware of my biases), it is not possible to remove the human element in a semi-structured interview format. In reviewing the recordings, it is clear that in certain instances the interviewers tone and choice of follow up questions were influenced by the interviewee's responses. As the interviews progressed there were fewer of these instances. While even the most experienced interviewers may never be able to completely

remove or acknowledge all of their biases, more experience would prove valuable in minimizing the effect.

In addition to the limitations regarding the interviews, assumptions were made in the design of the project that might have been inaccurate and therefore must be considered as well. In designing this study it was taken for granted that students who participate in civic engagement activities would have been at least somewhat invested in and therefore talked about helping (the groups primary mission, and a key to purpose and true civic engagement), and that other factors such as personal satisfaction (individual focus), resume building (individual focus), or social interactions (social focus) might also be considerations. The fact that several students only mentioned individual or social reasons for being involved in engagement activities was unexpected.

Borden and Serido's (2009) process model of achieving civic engagement through program participation may help explain this result. According to their research as well as the work of others (e.g., Hart, 1992; Watts & Flanagan, 2007), it might be that the participants were drawn to the activities because of caring adults (or older students) who allowed the individuals the opportunity to express themselves and try out different roles. It is also possible that some students chose activities because they were "legacies" whose parents or older siblings attended MSU. In either case, according to Borden and Serido's model it would be expected that the participants who remain in the civic engagement groups would begin to establish a relationship with the group and eventually become involved with the community.

A second possible explanation for this outcome might also be a result of the small number of participants interviewed or the questions that were asked. It might be that the majority of students are aware and committed to the underlying purposes and missions of the

groups with which they choose to become involved and the students interviewed in this study were "outliers." Regardless of the explanation it is important to keep this finding in mind when designing future studies on extracurricular participation where intent is inferred.

Future Directions

It is important to reflect and think about what could have been done differently over the course of every research endeavor—to critically evaluate what was done, what the data suggest, and, most importantly, what next steps can and should be taken. There are three directions that future research should address to help increase our understanding purpose and first-year college extracurricular participation: (a) developing and validating a robust measure of emerging adult purpose for use in extracurricular programs, (b) expanding the longitudinal window of data collection, and (c) increasing the qualitative data component while limiting the number of groups that participants have to choose from. The remainder of this chapter will explore these three directions.

Developing and Validating a New Purpose Measure

Since this study was conceived and conducted, several additional studies and reviews of adolescent purpose have been published (e.g., Borden & Serido, 2009; Damon, 2008). None of the newer literature, however, focuses specifically on emerging adults in extracurricular settings. Taking the time to develop and test a measure similar to the Y.E.S. that targets purpose as it relates to extracurricular activity participation for late adolescents would allow for a more accurate picture of the role that purpose plays as a predictor and outcome of extracurricular participation. This process could be undertaken either by creating an instrument from existing validated measures and then testing and revising items after administering it to different groups, or by starting with focus groups and building a completely new measure based on participant

feedback. Ideally, some combination of both approaches might be the best hope to develop a measure that more completely assesses late adolescent purpose as it relates to extracurricular participation.

Longer Longitudinal Study

The second direction researchers should consider is expanding the longitudinal data collection window. As discussed in the limitations section, it is possible that differences were developing that were not reflected in the data or differences were magnified because they were just appearing. Additionally, collecting background and past participation data as students are just starting their college career could be misleading as the participants are in the midst of a major life transition.

Future studies could be designed that recruit participants during their senior year of high school. This would allow for information related to current purpose and activity participation to be collected at a minimum of three time points. In addition to starting data collection prior to participant's arrival on campus it would be desirable to extend the final data collection to the end of the first year. By extending the time between the pre and post measures the participants would have greater exposure to the activities and as a result the data should provide a more accurate picture of the impact of extracurricular participation.

Limiting the Number and Types of Groups

The final possible future direction is to consider studies that reduce the variety and improve the categorization of groups. Given that a primary goal of this line of inquiry is to understand if and how purpose predicts participation in certain types of activities and how specific activities impact the development of purpose it is crucial that group categorization be as accurate as possible. As previously discussed, the large number of programs that participants

had to choose from limited my ability to develop a standardized categorization procedure. Future studies could limit this issue by selecting a purposive sub-sample of organizations that fit a particular categorization and recruit members from these groups. This approach would also allow the researcher to try and focus on participants who were in activities that directly promote engagement, which ultimately could help to alleviate the "watering down" effect mentioned previously.[5]

It is important to note that while this approach would help to address the issue of categorization, it was the preferred strategy in this study and access, group size, and participant recruitment necessitated abandoning the approach in order to recruit an appropriate sample. In addition, this approach would be difficult to combine with the previous suggestion of beginning data collection during participants' senior year of high school. The only way to combine the two approaches would be to oversample students at large "feeder" high schools during their senior year and then target those students if/when they choose to participate in the target organizations.

Conclusion

To paraphrase the famous sociologist C.W. Mills, research is a challenging and arduous task, which should be conducted only if there is not an already accepted and accessible answer (Mills, 1959). In the case of this study it was also necessary not only for the researcher to complete the requirements for a degree but to begin to increase our understanding of purpose as it relates to extracurricular participation.

Given the present findings and the relative newness of the study of purpose during emerging adulthood, coupled with the role of extracurricular activities there are an infinite number of questions and issues that emerge. Exploring these questions will provide many

[5] In designing the present study this was considered but because of access limitations, potential bias, and possible validity threats it was decided not to adopt this approach.

scholars both job security and opportunities for creative study designs in the attempt to better understand the relationship between purpose, civic engagement, and extracurricular participation before and during emerging adulthood.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Understanding First Year College Student Extracurricular Participation

Email address: _____
(will be kept confidential and only used to communicate with you regarding this study)

Background information:

1) What was your High school GPA? _____

2) What is your current age?_____

3) What is your gender?_____

4) What is your current major?_____

5) Did you participate in extracurricular activities in high school?_____

6) If you answered yes to number 5 please circle all of the activity types that apply.

Music athletics religious groups theatre

academic club service groups political groups debate

student government occupation related club social club

other_____

7) Do you plan to participate in extracurricular activities at MSU?_____

8) If you answered yes to number 7 please circle all of the activity types that apply.

Music athletics religious groups theatre

academic club service groups political groups debate

student government occupation related club social club

other_____

Participant views:

Please read each of the following sentences carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are most of the time and rate each of the following statements from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree.

1) "I often think about doing things so that people in my future can have things better"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

2) "It is important to me to contribute to my community and society"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

3) "In achieving life goals I have made no progress whatsoever"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

4) "I feel like I have a purpose in my life"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

5) "In thinking about my life I wonder why I exist"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

Please read each of the following sentences carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are in most situations. Circle the answer that describes YOU the best. There are no right or wrong answers.

6) *I think I am doing pretty well.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

7) *I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

8) *I am doing just as well as other people my age.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

9) *When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

10) *I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

11) *Even when other want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

Please read each of the following sentences carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are most of the time and rate each of the following statements from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree.

12) I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

13) I don't expect to change my political principles and ideals.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

14) I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

15) There has never been a need to question my values.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

16) I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

17) My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

18) I will always vote for the same political party.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

19) I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

20) I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

21) I have considered different political views thoughtfully.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

22) I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

23) My values are likely to change in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

24) When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

25) I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

26) I have not felt the need to reflect upon the importance I place on my family.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

27) Regarding religion, my beliefs are likely to change in the near future.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

28) I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

29) I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the best one for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

30) I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

31) I have consistently re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

32) I think what I look for in a friend could change in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

33) I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

34) I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

35) I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

36) My ideas about men's and women's roles will never change.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

37) I have never questioned my political beliefs.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

38) I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

39) I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

40) I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

41) I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

42) The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

43) My beliefs about dating are firmly held.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

Appendix 2

Understanding First Year College Student Extracurricular Participation

1) Email address: _____
(will be kept confidential and only used to communicate with you regarding this study)

2) Have you participate in extracurricular activities at MSU?_____

3) If you answered yes to number 2 please circle all of the activity types that apply.

Music athletics religious groups theatre

academic club service groups political groups debate

student government occupation related club social club

other_____

4) If you will not be participating in any extracurricular activities please tell us why.

Academic commitments work financial reasons not interested

other_____

Participant views:

Please read each of the following sentences carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are most of the time and rate each of the following statements from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree.

1) "I often think about doing things so that people in my future can have things better"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

2) "It is important to me to contribute to my community and society"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

3) "In achieving life goals I have made no progress whatsoever"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

4) "I feel like I have a purpose in my life"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

5) "In thinking about my life I wonder why I exist"

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

Please read each of the following sentences carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are in most situations. Circle the answer that describes YOU the best. There are no right or wrong answers.

6) *I think I am doing pretty well.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

7) *I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

8) *I am doing just as well as other people my age.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

9) *When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

10) *I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

11) *Even when other want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.*

None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time

Please read each of the following sentences carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are most of the time and rate each of the following statements from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree.

12) I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

13) I don't expect to change my political principles and ideals.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

14) I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

15) There has never been a need to question my values.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

16) I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

17) My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

18) I will always vote for the same political party.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

19) I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

20) I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

21) I have considered different political views thoughtfully.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

22) I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

23) My values are likely to change in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

24) When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

25) I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

26) I have not felt the need to reflect upon the importance I place on my family.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

27) Regarding religion, my beliefs are likely to change in the near future.

1	2	3	4	5
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28) I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.

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29) I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the best one for me.

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30) I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.

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31) I have consistently re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.

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strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

32) I think what I look for in a friend could change in the future.

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strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

33) I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

34) I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

35) I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

36) My ideas about men's and women's roles will never change.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

37) I have never questioned my political beliefs.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

38) I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

39) I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

40) I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

41) I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

42) The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

43) My beliefs about dating are firmly held.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

End of Semester Reflection (Last set of Questions)

Instructions: Based on your current or recent involvement in the TARGET ACTIVITY, please rate whether you have had the following experiences.

1 = Yes,
2 = Quite a Bit
3 = A Little Bit
4 = Not at All

1. I consider the activity I am choosing to focus on to be an example of which type of activity (choose only one).

Music athletics religious groups theatre

academic club service groups political groups debate

student government occupation related club social club

other_____

2. I am rating whether or not I have had the following experiences in (choose one activity you have participated in this semester at MSU)
_____

3. Tried doing new things 1 2 3 4

4. Tried a new way of acting around people 1 2 3 4

5. I do things here I don't get to do anywhere else 1 2 3 4

6. Started thinking more about my future because of this activity 1 2 3 4

7. This activity got me thinking about who I am 1 2 3 4

8. This activity has been a positive turning point in my life 1 2 3 4

9. I set goals for myself in this activity 1 2 3 4

10. Learned to find ways to achieve my goals 1 2 3 4

11. Learned to consider possible obstacles when making plans 1 2 3 4

12. I put all my energy into this activity 1 2 3 4

13. Learned to push myself 1 2 3 4

14. Learned to focus my attention 1 2 3 4

15. Observed how others solved problems and learned from them 1 2 3 4

16. Learned about developing plans for solving a problem 1 2 3 4

17. Used my imagination to solve a problem 1 2 3 4

18. Learned about organizing time and not procrastinating (not putting things off) 1 2 3 4

19. Learned about setting priorities 1 2 3 4

20. Practiced self discipline 1 2 3 4

21. Made friends with someone of the opposite gender 1 2 3 4

22. Learned I had a lot in common with people from different backgrounds 1 2 3 4

23. Got to know someone from a different ethnic group 1 2 3 4

24. Mad friends with someone from a different social class (someone richer or poorer 1 2 3 4

25. Learned about helping others 1 2 3 4

26. I was able to change my school or community for the better 1 2 3 4

27. Learned to stand up for something that I believe was morally right 1 2 3 4

28. We discussed morals and values 1 2 3 4

29. Learned that working together require some compromising 1 2 3 4

30. Became better at sharing responsibility 1 2 3 4

31. Learned to be patient with other group members 1 2 3 4

32. Learned how my emotions and attitude affect others in the group 1 2 3 4

33. Learned that it is not necessary to like people in order to work with them
1 2 3 4

34. I became better at giving feedback 1 2 3 4

35. I became better at taking feedback 1 2 3 4

36. Learned about the challenges of being a leader 1 2 3 4

37. Others in this activity counted on me 1 2 3 4

38. Had an opportunity to be in charge of a group of peers 1 2 3 4

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