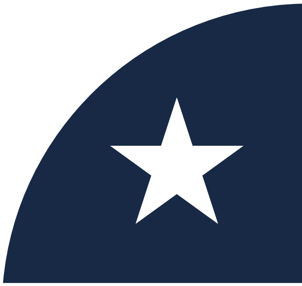

The Changing Lifeworld of Young People: Risk, Resume-Padding, and Civic Engagement

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Young people become engaged in civic life for many different reasons, and via multiple paths. Much research on the reasons for youth civic engagement has been cross-sectional, searching for antecedents to a range of "pro-civic" attitudes or behaviors. This research assumes a relatively stable lifeworld for young people. For example, it assumes that the meaning of volunteering or service is sufficiently similar across multiple contexts to remain a valid and stable indicator. By extension, it also assumes that the lifeworld of young people today is not undergoing a period of rapid, and perhaps even radical, change.

Our research began with the assumption that it is possible that a series of structural and environmental changes in the lives of young people had occurred in the past ten years or so that were sufficiently strong to have reconfigured the civic ecology, the overall environment in which young people are socialized into civic life. We had hoped to reconstruct this ecology on a community-wide scale. We intended to reconstruct the most significant networks and institutions that shaped the lives of young people as an environment in a single community, Madison, Wisconsin. We further hoped to purposively sample across these multiple networks, in order to demonstrate in some depth the quality of connection and disconnection of young people to these networks, and further, to gauge the meanings that young people themselves ascribed to these attachments.

We partly succeeded in this goal. Although we were not able to systematically reconstruct the civic ecology as we had hoped, we made some progress in this area that will be reported out separately. We constructed a systematically stratified purposive sampling frame (described below) that allowed us to identify and interview a very diverse group of almost 100 young people in many different contexts of their lives, ranging from the most formal institutions of school, across multiple semi-formal contexts of civic youth organizations, clubs, and volunteer settings, to informal contexts of association.

Our original hope was to probe these informal contexts more deeply. We hypothesized that young people's time was increasingly invested in informal contexts that were bridged by lifestyle identifications (e.g. cultural styles, including music, clothing, media contexts) and linked together via new forms of technology (the Internet, including email, chat, and cellphones). We did find data on these lifestyle choices, and limited support for this hypothesis which we will note briefly in this report, but on the whole we were not able to probe informal associations as much as we had hoped. We underestimated the difficulty of and amount of time it would take to spend with young people in informal contexts. (Hanging out is hard work!) Further, although many of our frontline researchers were UW-Madison seniors trained in youth ethnography, the cultural gap between them and high school seniors was larger than we had anticipated. In short, we saw our seniors as young, but the high schoolers saw them as almost a different generation. Partly because of this, it was harder than we had anticipated to pin young people down to specific times and places sufficient to engage in systematic observation of informal life.

Beyond this logistical problem, we decided to pursue informal avenues less vigorously for other reasons (although in an ideal world we would have done both). Despite our starting assumption that young people's lives were being reshaped by commercialized youth culture and new technologies, in the course of our research we came to see a different pattern of motives and meanings shaping young people's participation in civic, service, and volunteer activities. This pattern was still related to our expectation of a rapidly changing lifeworld, but differently than we had expected.

Originally we believed that changes in youth technology use and lifestyle would have an independent force, pushing change in generational attitudes. As we proceeded, this technology/lifestyle variable receded, although not completely. The generational shift that it represents is complex, representing a quasi-independent driving force that has the potential to shape a broader lifeworld shift, but at this point, we think there is a potential problem in ascribing too much of contemporary youth change to adoption of new technologies.

Essentially, we found that more traditional

sociological explanations remained more parsimonious than ones based on new technologies and lifestyles, or, more broadly, a shift to a "post-modern" lifestyle. Put simply, young people's civic activities and attitudes were greatly shaped by three broad processes.

First, family socialization was still a prime determinant of what kinds of activities young people would engage in and why they would do so. We understand family socialization in ways somewhat different than the youth civic and political socialization literature, as including those processes of class that Bourdieu includes within the framework of capital and the unwieldy term "habitus."

Second, the institutional setting of school remained a primary context that organized these activities and channeled them in a variety of directions, supplemented in important ways by after-school settings and clubs, service, and volunteer activities. The context of school is quite variable, ranging from the increasingly typical loosely structured "shopping mall" high school to the more traditional hierarchical one.

Finally, the future expectations of young people had a much stronger force in shaping what kinds of activities they engaged in and why than we had expected. Specifically, the role of college loomed larger in the lives of many of the young people and this was true across class and racial backgrounds. Many young people told us that one important reason for their civic engagement was the desire to build a resume for college admission, or in their own words, "resume-padding." And this was so whether they were oriented toward an Ivy League school, state university, or even the local technical college. There are a number of possible implications of this "resume-padding" finding. As we began to unpack it, we found that its sources are complex. From a single city qualitative case study we can only suggest some implications.

First, resume-padding is a symptom of the extraordinary pressure put on young people to achieve a college education, and the very explicit understanding that a college education is a means to a decent life in the middle-class. Schneider and Stevenson (1999) demonstrate that young people in the 90s were increasingly oriented toward college attendance as a function of career orientations. But this orientation did not necessarily include "aligned ambitions," meaning that the careers that young people chose did not necessary align with their choices of college or requirement. We discuss this finding below. But this increased pressure from a growing college orientation is well documented in longitudinal and cross-sectional research, and is supported by a wide range of contemporary journalism as well as being evident in popular culture.[1]

Second, resume-padding exists within the broader context of young people's lives. It does not mean the same thing for different groups of young people. While some act instrumentally in their pursuit of resume lines, most others are engaged for complex reasons with multiple motives. Resume-padding is one motive alongside others, including altruism, religious belief, and love of politics or volunteerism. It coexists with them. We are not claiming that instrumental orientations are a latent "real" cause of activity. However, for reasons we develop below, we do think that the increasing pressure to achieve is a driving structural context for many young people, and, as such is a powerful motive that can organize other motives.

Third, just as resume-padding exists in a complex of motives rather than as a single underlying cause, we do not have evidence to claim that it undermines the demonstrated effects of volunteerism, high school participation, or service learning on future adult civic participation. But one implication of our study is that the world in which these activities take place has changed such that the context and meaning of participation may have changed as well. When civic activity and volunteerism is more closely linked to personal and instrumental benefit, it is possible that the longer term effect of that activity may either decline or change its meaning and/or its form.

In this report, then, we first discuss the larger concept and context of the lifeworld of young people, introducing in broad strokes the elements that comprise it and their relationships. Second, we introduce the paired concepts of

risk and opportunity, and individualization and choice, showing how they increasingly form an environment for the lives of young people, in ways that do not cancel but reframe the three processes alluded to above: socialization, the institutional context of high school, and the increased imposition of future horizons on the present. Third, we show how these processes are manifest in the lives of the youth that we studied through a presentation of a typology of youth civic engagement.

THE CHANGING LIFEWORLD OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The concept of the lifeworld is a term of art drawn from phenomenological sociology and used as a master term by Jürgen Habermas (1981 (1987)). At its most basic, the lifeworld is the lived environment of everyday culture that surrounds us (including language), that provides the deep background against which we carve out our assumptions about reality, and through which we navigate the social world. By definition any lifeworld is intergenerational. There can be no "lifeworld of youth" distinctly cut off from their parents. Indeed, one of the important social functions of any lifeworld is the transmission of values from one generation to the next. However, because of this intergenerational quality, a lifeworld also contains the tensions inherit in this transmission. When the environment that one generation is inheriting is changing rapidly, then this process of socialization will involve tension and dissonance.

The dimensions of such a rapid change today are open to significant debate, but it seems clear enough that the fact of change is not. We cannot provide such a description, much less analyze it, here. But there is wide agreement on certain elements.

First, young people are being raised in an environment of significant civic decline that is structural. Robert Putnam (2000) and the small army that has examined his data plausibly assert that there has been a substantial decline in traditional indicators of civic and political engagement in the past thirty years or so. While there is dispute over the rate, extent, and causes of this decline, relatively few scholars working on civic engagement question the overall trend: traditional forms of civic association are in rapid decline and are being replaced by check-book organizations in the political realm (Skocpol 2003) and newer forms of loosely connected association in cultural and social life (Wuthnow 1998).

The causes of decline are more widely disputed, as are possible solutions. Putnam downplays changes in the family as an explanation, and relies mostly on the rise of television viewing in the 60s and after. We believe this explanation greatly underestimates the effects of changes in family life occasioned by the entry of a majority of women into the workforce which has ripple effects throughout civic and family life.

Regardless, a circularity in the argument concerning youth civic engagement has not been well-noted, yet it has consequences for our larger assessment of the present. Much of the youth civic engagement literature begins with the facts of declining youth involvement, and then searches for behavioral antecedents. But, as Putnam and others have demonstrated, many of these antecedents aren't properly behavioral at all, but structural and historical. Still, much of the research on youth civic engagement implicitly assumes that the world into which young people are being socialized is more or less continuous with the recent past. Implicitly, at least, broader civic values are assumed to exist among their parents; and whether or not these values are being passed on, whether or not young people are being socialized into civic life, it is assumed that they *could* be. This is a critical assumption. If core values and the form in which they are being passed on are essentially intact, then the problems of youth civic engagement are, more or less, strategic and tactical: finding the right programs, using the right messages, correctly measuring change. But if we are in a shift to some newer lifeworld formation, then these assumptions at least bear reexamination. We may be seeing forms of activity, volunteerism for example, that function as what Beck (2002) has called "zombie categories." They appear to be similar to those of the recent past, but in fact their meanings in the

present differ substantially from one or several generations ago.

We think this is the case. The lifeworld of young people today is shifting towards one of higher stress, greater uncertainty and risk (although coupled with opportunities for some), and looser connections among family, friends, and communities. Further, these shifts have ripple effects on the specific social structure of young people, in particular their high school environment and connections with peers. Finally these shifts are crucially mediated through what Bourdieu (1986) has described as a structure of social and cultural capital.

The argument for increased stress and risk is historical, comparing the period beginning in the 90s with the previous two decades. We draw from the arguments of political scientist Jacob Hacker, who documents a long term erosion of the stability of family income over this period linked to an increase of risk in the context of the restructuring and erosion of the welfare state. Hacker argues that despite a traditional understanding of welfare as being concerned with programs for "the poor," much of the welfare state underpins and supports the broad middle-class lifestyle that many Americans desire. He describes an accelerating process of "risk privatization" in which stable social policies concerning work and family cover increasingly fewer of the risks faced by citizens (Hacker 2004, p. 249).

Rising levels of inequality in earnings, a growing instability of income over time, increased part time and service employment, and greater structural unemployment have permanently altered the horizon of work. Family changes include rising rates of divorce and separation, declining fertility, and the increase in single parent families. Both work and family change are connected by "the dramatic movement of women into paid employment…[I]n the brave new world of work and family, even stable full-time employment of household heads is not a guarantee of economic security, and citizens are barraged by a host of risks emanating from families themselves." The growing instability of family income demonstrates dramatic income inequality across families: in the mid-90s, Hacker finds family income was roughly five times as unstable as in the early 1970s (p. 250).

We recognize that this erosion is historically relative. Certainly both stress and risk were higher for the generations that lived through the Depression and World War Two. But this is precisely the point. The "long civic generation" raised amidst great hardship came of age in the post-war era. Indeed, the civic golden age is itself roughly two decades long, corresponding with the height of U.S. prosperity. The period of the onset of increasing risk that Hacker finds corresponds closely with Putnam's civic decline.

Although the overall structure of income mobility continues to open new opportunities for millions in the U.S., Hacker demonstrates that the past several decades on the whole have been ones of increasing risk and instability for families below the very upper rungs of the income ladder. It would be shocking if this palpable increase in risk were *not* transferred into the experience of young people as a major horizon of their lifeworlds. Indeed, according to Hacker "Younger Americans are facing the greatest risk today…They didn't have the chance to take part in the strong post-World War II economy of their parents and grandparents, but they're continually told that they have to be on their own."[2] This raises the second dimension of rapid change, individualization and choice.

Hacker's argument concerns the increasing risk transferred to the middle- and lower-classes by the erosion of multiple aspects of the welfare state. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck (2002) claims that this risk horizon is coupled with an increase in what he calls "individualization," a social-psychological process distinct from the process of identity formation we call individuation. Broadly, the theory of individualization argues that under the pressure of risk, increased social differentiation, and cultural fragmentation, new burdens of choice to decide life courses are transferred to individuals. These decisions are increasingly made without the support of traditional categories of class or identity. More simply, while parents' occupation may still predict the broad income band that children will occupy in adulthood, it will not necessarily predict

educational achievement, occupation, or lifestyle. These categories are, more and more, the result of a series of choices individuals make (indeed must make) that do not necessarily flow in parallel.

We stress of course, that this is a paradox, hardly a one-sided constriction of opportunity. Indeed, opportunity and choice are closely linked. The only point we make here is that there is a "paradox of choice" (Schwartz 2004). Increased choice ripples throughout society, from health plans to telecommunications to toothpaste. But there is a fundamental distinction between those major life choices that involve consumption alone and those that affect the parameters for what sociologists have traditionally understood as an individual's "life- chances" (Dahrendorf 1959), the complex of objective possibilities for achievement which vary with an individual's position in the class structure. Among these major choices are residence, which in an income- and race-segregated housing market largely determines early schooling; work, which determines income and health care; and college, which, in turn sets the trajectory for both. This complex of life-chances in turn, shapes expectations. The risk/individualization argument suggests that the older complex of life-chances, characteristic of what Putnam has called the "long civic era" and the perceived trajectory that it implied, has become increasingly eroded. The new forms of risk and individualization frame both civic behavior and attitudes, forming a horizon of uncertainty that is palpable among almost all young people that we spoke with.

How does this risk horizon translate back into the lifeworld of young people? At the broadest level, it does so through the issue of college attendance, and the significance that it has for young people's own estimates of their future life chances. As noted, Schneider and Stevenson have found what they term an "ambitious generation" based on longitudinal analysis of data collected from the '50s to the '90s, culminating in the Alfred P. Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development which conducted interviews with 1,221 students in the 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades in twelve sites over five years from the early to mid-'90s (Schneider and Stevenson 1999). They found that 90% of high school students of all classes, with virtually no significant racial, ethnic, or gender differences, expected to attend college. Students clearly recognized that their future life chances rested on "college," whether defined as the local community college, the lesser state university, a public flagship, or the "best" private schools," much as an earlier generation depended on a high school diploma. Further, anxiety resulting from this recognition had suffused both the lives and future life-planning of all sectors of high-school-aged youth.

This anxiety related to generalized ambition fits well with our ethnographic finding concerning resume-padding, i.e. that young people of all classes are approaching service as (in part) an instrumental price to pay for college admission. Schneider and Stevenson argue further that while "ambition" has penetrated much further downward in the class structure, that there is still a gap in the "alignment" of ambition, between the types of careers that young people aspire to, and the kind of education that they imagine they will need to attain them. For example, young people may express the wish to become doctors or musicians, but have little idea of the real career and educational paths that might lead them there. This gap then leads to misaligned college and career expectations that can derail educational and vocational plans, and generate substantial anxiety about both.

We believe that we have found a second gap (paralleling the achievement gap) between the kind of college education young people aspire to and their real knowledge of both their chances for admission to a college of their choice and admission requirements. Specifically, there is a widespread belief among young people that service is necessary for any type of college admission, regardless of the institution. In fact, these service expectations only come into play in *genuinely* selective schools, those with an admissions rate of 50% or less, and even here the amount of service only becomes a major criterion in highly selective schools. Service criteria barely apply in many private schools and the state schools that most young people attend, and almost never to those at the lower end of the selectivity scale.

Nevertheless, a kind of "service inflation" has spread downward in the class structure, closely parallel to inflated ambition. Young people that we interviewed widely believe that significant service is a requirement for admissions to *all* types of schools, including technical colleges and state schools in which a moderate GPA virtually guarantees admission.

In no small part, we believe this service inflation and the accompanying pressure reflects a general awareness among most of the young people we interviewed that their life chances are directly tied to education. Almost all of the young people we interviewed expected (or at least hoped) to better their lives and linked these expectations to college education. And a majority linked their hopes for college admission to service.

THE SCHOOLS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

If service inflation is a result of increased awareness of the need for a college education and the belief that service is necessary for college admission, then how this service/volunteer imperative works in both the institutions of the school and through socialization at home suggests its real complexity. In a CIRCLE Working Paper to follow, we will develop these questions, and suggest an explanation for more of the interaction among the institutional framework of the high school, peer groups, service and volunteerism, and the motives of young people. Here we only briefly sketch that framework.

High school is the primary matrix organizing volunteerism and service, both directly through its clubs and extracurricular activities, and indirectly through its interaction with the organization of peer groups. A long sociological literature discusses the organization and social function of high schools. Coleman (1961) was the first to identify a separate youth culture in *The Adolescent Society*. In this classic survey of ten high schools in the United States, Coleman's found that youth were much more concerned with the opinions of and influenced by their peers than their families. He concluded that youth had a separate culture and this culture operated in contestation with the adult world.

But Coleman also found that one reason for the development of youth culture was a major shift in the function of high schools more generally from a college training ground for elites in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to the normal degree preparing students for work from the '20s to the '60s, to a holding pen for surplus labor, a function assumed in the '60s coinciding with the beginning of a post-industrial society.

Three forms of high school predominate in the 20th and early 21st centuries. The small rural and semi-rural school described by Hollingshead (1949) closely reflected the social hierarchy of the small community, with athletes and wealthier "popular" kids on top, a large group of middle and lower-middle class followers, and working and lower-class youth at the bottom. This hierarchical high school evolved with the development of larger urban high schools in the '20s and '30s, and the post-war suburban high school, although the suburban schools were more stratified by class and race. The '70s saw the emergence of a the "shopping mall" high school, mirroring a post-industrial, consumer culture in which hierarchy is more loosely defined and choice is the governing principle. Status relations in the "shopping mall" are more complex. There are more cliques, but the overall status hierarchy is much flatter (although it persists). The core status structure of the traditional schools had not disappeared. Rather it was more widely dispersed. On the one hand this provides more entry points into the school and its activities for students, and thus is a genuine step towards openness. On the other it creates a diffuseness of association that weakens school community (Milner 2004).

There is no systematic research on service by type of school. In our case study, although there were no strictly traditional hierarchical schools, the schools that were closer to this end of the scale were somewhat more likely to emphasize traditional volunteer activities, e.g. generalized service to community through nursing home visits, tutoring, etc. The "shopping mall" schools were more likely, as expected, to have a wide array of clubs and activities, but each activity had less of an impact on the student body as a whole. In the

shopping mall schools the functions of community were essentially distributed among peer groups, and clubs functioned as one more avenue of peer activity. These peer groups did aggregate into larger cliques, but in the largest schools, as in Milner's analysis, the clique hierarchy was much more diffuse. The single Catholic school had the most organized service program, which was required for graduation, but this program did not meet the highest standards for learning social justice and student reflection described by Youniss et al (Youniss, McLellan, and Yates 1999; Youniss and Yates 1997) for other Catholic service-learning programs.

In sum, the ways that schools sort students into different activities are strongly mediated by peer groups. This raises the obvious question of how peer groups are generated, how they function in the high school, and how they are interconnected to form larger cliques and even castes or status groups (Corsaro and Eder 1990; Milner 2004). Here we note only that while peer cultures express youth autonomy, setting norms of behavior, activity, and style that serve as barriers to membership and to control members, they are also highly constricted and limited by previous association, for example neighborhood residence and attendance in common elementary schools (Corsaro 1985). Peer groups are often treated in discussions of young people as if they are self-generated, emerging from youth association itself. But in fact, they are formed out of associations of like-minded children, who themselves inherit their social characteristics, including class, race, and place of residence from their parents. As Corsaro and Eder note, "children creatively appropriate information from the adult world to produce their own unique peer cultures" (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 200).

Peer cultures, then, are closely tied to the social and cultural capital of parents. There are several theories about why and how young people reproduce the social and cultural position of their parents. One is broadly linked to the ways that cultures are handed down from parents to children. In *Gifted Tongues*, for example, Fine (2001) argues that adolescents engage in both adult and childish activities simultaneously. He observes high school debaters and suggests that adolescence is a culture in and of itself in which students draw on cultural skills of both children and grownups. Other studies draw from the reproduction theory of Bourdieu. MacLeod (1995), for example, suggests that class positions shapes aspirations and constrains opportunities for youth who grow up in a low-income neighborhood and attend a low-status high school where teachers' and administrators' expectations are low. Eckert (1989) suggests that there are two broad class-based social hierarchies, "the jocks" and "the burnouts." Social position determines how and why students reproduce this pattern, with "jocks" having longer-term college and career goals and motivations, while "burnouts" rely on their close ties and families, which keep them separated from the "jock" achievement orientation.

Cultural arguments articulate the ways that the particular culture of high school shapes the lifeworlds of young people, but they have the advantage of explaining the culture of adolescence as a transitional period which constructs the "paradox of childishness and maturity" in which young people actively draw from "behaviors characteristic of both children and adults: from the 'toolkits' to which boys and girls have access in creating appropriate adolescent activities" (Fine 2001, p. 4). Taken together, the reproduction arguments explains how young people assume (more often than not) the structural positions of their parents, while cultural arguments address the specificity of adolescence as a transitional period, and youth culture as a synthesis of the tensions and contradictions that are generated through reproduction.

But neither individually nor together do reproductive or cultural arguments explain either the form or volume of civic activity. Reproduction theory begins to address why middle- and upper-middle class youth would engage in the type of school -and community-based activities that characterize contemporary high-school civic engagement. This assumption of proto-adult roles and competences is both a rehearsal for the transmission of class-specific social capital (e.g.

through exercising "leadership" skills that will, in fact be applied later in life) and a specific form of cultural capital (a "resume") in and of itself, which can be converted toward college admission. But it doesn't (wholly) explain how, why, and to what extent working class youth engage in these same activities, although certainly the theories can account for aspirations for upward mobility.

Lareau (2003) has developed a more theoretically and empirically nuanced version of Bourdieuian reproduction theory, more grounded in American experience. She argues that middle- and upper class families engage in process of "concerted cultivation" of their young, leading to both real competences in navigating the adult world described by Fine (e.g. abilities to reason through argument and debate, the nurturing of specific academic, artistic, and physical abilities) and a sense of entitlement to function in the adult world in this way. Working class children are left more to the devices of peers, neighborhood, and kin in a process she calls "the accomplishment of natural growth," meaning that children are more or less left alone to develop on their own. Lareau's account is also consistent with recent research by Hart (2005) which argues that "child-saturated" poor communities (with high ratios of children to adults) have more difficulty in passing civic skills from adults to children.

Lareau's modified reproduction arguments however do not account for either the strong forms of civic engagement that we found among many minority and working class young people (competences and concerns closer to the quasi-adult world of the middle- and upper-middle class adolescents) or for their own achievement orientations. But social and cultural capital theory does help to explain service inflation in general, and the specific forms that it takes across different types of young people that we have identified in our field work. All young people in the middle-classes and above who have college ambitions have both the means and the motive, as it were, to engage in service activities. They have both the specific competences and the motives of college admission, learned at home to become engaged, in part to build resumes. Most working class and minority young people also have college ambitions (Schneider and Stevenson) and some inherit motives and/or competences (from parents, ethnic, and religious association) to engage in the types of "aligned" activities to realize them. And, as we will see, an important subgroup manages to blend achievement and commitment to community.

HIGH SCHOOL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN MADISON

Our research was conducted in Madison, Wisconsin.[3] Madison is a post-industrial city of approximately 208,000 residents. It is the Wisconsin state capital and the main campus of the University of Wisconsin. The major industries in the city are medical research, health care and manufacturing, although a significant portion of the population is employed in government or through the university. In addition, high technology is growing rapidly in the area.

Madison's racial composition is relatively homogenous. Approximately 90% of the residents are white, 4% are African-American, 4% are Asian and the remainder Native American, Hispanic or of other races. Madison is also a relatively affluent town, with a median annual household income of just over $50,000. In addition, Madison residents are highly educated and the public schools are well regarded. Madison residents tend to be highly civically engaged (Markus 2002) and the city has a history of progressive politics and political activism.

Although Madison is clearly anomalous, this was not a drawback for our study. We were seeking to find the broadest range of youth civic engagement possible. The city's high level of engagement should have (and we believe did) yield a greater range of activity than a comparable small-medium sized city. Further, our sample design oversampled those locations where we were likely to find lower-income and minority youth, and, indeed yielded a sufficient number of subjects.

All of our respondents were high school students, between the ages of 14 and 19. Our sampling strategy was to first, sample from different schools, representing diverse student populations. To supplement these school based-samples we also drew from neighborhood centers,

place-based sites that would tend to over-represent lower income and minority students. Second, we sampled activities. In other words, once a given high school was chosen, we sought students who participated in student government, the arts, volunteer activities, and so on. We did not sample all activities in a single school, which would have been ideal but impossible given our resources. Rather, we attempted to generate cases of all activities across the entire sample. Finally, within our sites we also sought diversity of "tribes," or subcultures, particularly those that did not already overlap with larger categories, and so were already included (race, ethnicity, and SES). We sought to identify those aspects of youth culture and identity that had been sifted through our broader sampling frames. Our sampling strategy, then, involved nesting. We chose schools and supplementary place-based sites that would give us the broadest range of young people. Within each site, we sampled activities, or types of engagement. And finally, within each site (but constrained by our activity sample) we sought to include the broadest range of cultural types.

Because the distribution of schools and their students depends (in part) on housing, and housing in America is segregated by class and race, our first approach to diversity was to make sure that we included schools from different parts of the city. Our two primary schools were Jefferson High (Jefferson) (n=17) a predominantly working- and lower-class, and racially mixed school, and Madison Rydell High (Rydell) (n=24). Jefferson is fairly representative of a racially-mixed urban high school on the lower end of the class scale, while Rydell is a more typical large, suburban middle-to-upper middle class school, predominantly, but not exclusively, white. Both are anomalous in some respects (as are all high schools). Jefferson has a somewhat higher percentage of parents who are or were associated with the University of Wisconsin than would normally be expected and has a more vocal activist group in the school. Rydell has been the recipient of a large Department of Education grant to experimentally divide the school into "communities," essentially four smaller units of approximately 500 students each, both to break down the large anonymous quality of the school and also, explicitly, to involve more students in its governance. The unique qualities of both high schools added to our sample. The Jefferson activists leavened what might have been an otherwise more quiescent school politically. And the Communities Project allowed us to observe experiments in governance introduced from above, to see how students themselves understood both the political motives of administrators and the effects of an attempt to reconstruct both the political and "class" structure of the school

Our other major sites were: Sacred Heart High School (Sacred Heart, n=8), a predominantly-middle- and upper-middle class Catholic school with strong service learning requirements; Springfield (n=8), a smaller, suburban high school; Little (n=7) an alternative public high school, with students who cannot or choose not to fit in to traditional high school life; and Ridgemont (n=6), a middle- and upper-middle class high school with the strongest overall academic orientation of our sample. In total, we interviewed 70 students in high schools. In addition we interviewed 29 students in a variety of other contexts including neighborhood centers, and anti-war demonstrations, as well as malls and other hangouts.

Recalling the major finding of *The Civic and Political Health of the Nation* (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, and Jenkins 2002) , that civic and volunteer engagement among youth was relatively robust while political involvement was not, the forms and meanings of broadly civic and volunteer engagement were at the center of our research. In short, while young people were volunteering at consistently high levels, consistent with the Keeter data, the interpretation that this was a relatively robust area of youth civic engagement that was less problematic than politics is questionable. Many of the young people we interviewed were, indeed, volunteering at high levels, but much of this volunteerism, with some significant exceptions that we will discuss, has been shaped by the perception that voluntary and civic activity is necessary to get into any college, and the better the college (or, more precisely, the higher the

perception of the college in the status system) the more volunteerism was necessary. We found that large numbers of middle- and upper-middle class youth were explicitly volunteering for the purpose of what they themselves called "resume-padding."

Alongside of the resume-padding, however, we did find significant other forms of activity, with different motivations that themselves varied by class and racial position, ideological disposition, and religious involvement. Here, sometimes, moral motives asserted themselves more clearly. Although, even among those young people who were engaged in civic and voluntary activity in order to help their communities, create better lives for younger children, or serve God, these motives were mixed with an awareness of the need to get into college, and the consequences of not doing so. A subset of our subjects simply did what they did without any consideration of the benefits, but this was a minority.

The types that we found were:

1. College bound youth, of the middle and upper-middle classes who produce the majority of service-based volunteerism. These are the young people most engaged in resume-padding for college, and often do so self-consciously, with awareness of their own motives and little or no sense that this instrumental orientation compromises their motives.
2. A subtype of the middle-class resume-padders are well-integrated college bound youth, often from civically- or politically-oriented middle- and upper-middle class families, who have articulated ideological or moral motivations for engaging in civic or political activity. These young people are also engaged in resume-padding, but their motives are mixed. They simply assume that these activities are what they should do, and need to do, but have other motivations.
3. A further subtype of resume-padders are those that we call civic youth, young people engaged in explicit and highly civic activities, for example membership on youth boards. From the outside, they would be identified as among the most highly civic young people in the community, and indeed in many respects they are. But as we will see, their motives are also complex, linked to both resume-padding and social position.
4. Religious young people varied in their motives, some engaging in civic activity out of an explicit sense of religious duty, either to God or to their church community. For others, although religious motives and institutions were a significant part of the background and language, civic and community activity seemed to be linked to resume-padding motives.
5. Working and lower-class young people, often minorities, whom we encountered in settings that were community based–clubs, and neighborhood after-school centers–had strong community orientations that seemed go beyond immediate self-interest to an expressed interest in "helping the community" and specifically, helping the younger children, their brothers and sisters, kin and neighborhood children, to build a better life. Service for these young people was more organic. Neither "helping others" as abstract altruism nor self-interest linked to achievement, there was an ethic of helping "ourselves" as part of a community.
6. A subset of our sample were politically engaged youth, with explicitly anti-establishment orientations, that sometimes were ideological, but often seem visceral, linked to an awareness of the unfairness of their life situation. Although the stereotype of radical youth may be those who are from more privileged, middle- and upper middle class backgrounds, many of those we found were from working and lower-middle class families.
7. Finally, there is a loose type that we would call cultural rebels, with a loose cultural anti-authoritarianism that expressed itself in cultural identification with movements like hip-hop, or certain variants. Both motives and forms of engagement are diffuse.

The following discussion will concentrate on middle-class students, high-achievers, and minority youth. A cross section of our interview subjects participate on one of three Dane County youth boards. The Dane County Adolescent Committee (hereafter Adolescent Committee) is made up of 12- 15 young people from high schools across the county. The students work on policy issues of their own choosing, most recently creating a uniform curfew time in the patchwork of Madison and its surrounding suburbs and semi-rural towns. The Adolescent Committee also sponsors a Youth Service Day. Youth Allocation Project (YAP) is also a board of 15 - 20 young people chosen form across the county. YAP receives $30,000 annually from the United Way and redistributes it in small grants to youth projects in Dane County. Finally the Dane County Children's Board is a formal governmental body comprised primarily of adults, with several youth representatives.

MIDDLE-CLASS STUDENTS

Chuck is a sophomore at Jefferson High School. He is on the Youth Allocation Project Board, and worked on the citywide Youth Service Day. He is an active athlete, competing in track, soccer, swimming, indoor soccer and basketball. He has had a major role in the school's dramatic production. He was on student council, but "just kinda of quit because they're not getting anything done, they just bicker the entire time." When he learned that the school business club was taking a trip to the Six Flags amusement park, he joined and then scalped his low-cost tickets, leading to an invitation to join the club for its varsity competition: "It looks good on college resumes or whatever, but I don't want to do it for a living. It's just kinda boring." When asked why he had gotten involved with Youth Allocation Project, he responded similarly:

> I have to do something in the community or something. I don't know. I think that you have to do something like service… It looked like they were having fun. And it seemed like a good thing to get involved in….when I apply for college or whatever. It's fun. It's a good excuse to postpone doing homework for another two hours.

Both of Chuck's parents work in the Madison public schools system. Despite having taken science courses at the University of Wisconsin, his college aspirations are rather vague: "Don't know where. Probably so far looking in-state…just 'cause don't know what…where I'll get to pay for it or whatever. Probably just a good liberal arts college or something inside the state so it would be affordable."

In contrast to his loosely motivated service work, Chuck is politically active. He has participated in school-based protests against the war in Iraq and the Students Against Violence club. Chuck is a relatively engaged young man, certainly the number and range of his activities, centrally in the middle class, uncertain about his future. This uncertainty is reflected in his lack of clarity about both college and career, and the sense that one has to do "something in the community" to get into college.

Justin, a student at the alternative high school, expresses this even more directly. Asked about his resume, he responded that he is doing "As much service learning as I can because they like that apparently." Asked where he got this impression he replies: "I don't know, it's just what a lot of my graduating friends have told me. The more service learning, the more community service you have, like the better you look and the more it'll count for your bad GPA or whatever."

Pat, a student at the larger Rydell High School when asked about his participation responds in nearly identical terms: "Yeah, um volunteering, I never really thought about that, but then it hit me, I'm gonna have to, to make my resume look better. Actually, next Monday, I have to wake up at four o'clock in the morning to make breakfast for a shelter." Asked how he got involved with the shelter he says: "My friend…asked me if I want to do it too, so I'm going to come with him, and then for National Honor Society, you have to have like seventy-five hours of volunteer work, and it'll help you a lot, and so you have to find seventy-five hours. It's like a different way of padding the

resume." Both service and academic achievement are means towards the end of college admission.

Erik, a student at a suburban high school, who also sits on the Adolescent Committee, was asked why he joined: "Honest truth, probably because I feel that it will look good on college resumes. That's probably the primary reason." Courtney, from Sacred Heart, when asked whether she felt pressure to resume-pad, answers: "I feel I did a good job, I think I could have done more, obviously. I'm still wait-listed at Madison, I'm hoping to get in in June, so who knows, maybe if I did three more clubs I would have gotten in. It's hard to know."

All of these students respond uniformly with instrumental attitudes towards civic and community work. There are other motives, as well: fun and desire to hang out with peers, some expression of altruism, but the instrumental dominates. This is consistent with our hypothesis that a general pressure to achieve, combined with a poorly aligned sense of the concrete goals to be achieved (other than college admission in general) tend to produce a more instrumental attitude toward service work. Community service, in this case, is neither coupled with strong ideological or altruistic motives characteristic of the high achievers on the one hand, nor with the community orientation of our lower-income, minority achievers, on the other.

HIGH-ACHIEVERS

In stark contrast to the middle-class students with vague ambitions, high achievers know exactly where they want to go and what they need to get there. Here too there is an emphasis on service activities, but the direct expression of instrumental motives doesn't appear. There are several possible explanations, which we explore after presenting the cases of Elizabeth and Beth.

Elizabeth, a senior at Sacred Heart, has applied to a special program at the University of Wisconsin for students hoping to be medical doctors, as well as major Ivy League Schools like Yale and Princeton, and schools only slightly below the Ivy tier. One hundred hours of service are required for graduation at Sacred Heart, ten in the freshman year and 30 hours each year after until graduation. By mid-way through her senior year, Elizabeth had already amassed nearly 275 hours. She volunteers for about five hours a week at a local hospital, work that is clearly linked to her career ambitions as a physician. Elizabeth also has mentored younger children in reading at a local Catholic grade school, an activity she organized with her friends. Elizabeth believes that her work now will carry forward after high school "depending on where I go…like in, for instance, Columbia and Georgetown have really good programs for like helping inner-city kids, um, and that kind of thing. So that would be really neat, to be a mentor." Her self-understanding of motive is explicitly non-instrumental, but linked to character:

> I'd say maybe sometimes people can get a little too caught up in what's going on in their own lives and just focus on that a lot but, especially people that come to Sacred Heart should realize that there's a lot of people out there who have a lot less and just the littlest thing can help someone a great deal…And if you start now, it's easier to keep doing it in college, and once you are exposed to it, you realize how beneficial your work can be for other people.

Elizabeth is fairly typical of a high-achieving student with strong academic and career ambitions. She is engaged in a remarkable range of activities, spending many hours a week performing community service, in addition to a broad range of extra-curricular activities in and out of school. In Schneider and Stevenson's terms, her ambitions are "aligned." She has set her sights on an Ivy League or similar education, and a medical specialty, and is pursuing the paths necessary to achieve it. In the evaluation of her civic commitments, she represents what we would call a "civic paradox." Her service activities all involve well-intended charitable impulses. They do not challenge her worldview, or that of others, and don't involve fundamental questioning of her position in the world. They fit the profile of what Metz et al (2003) call "standard service," in contrast to "social cause service." At the same

time, there is an undercurrent of genuine altruism, as when she notes her own privilege and obligation to help the less fortunate.

A close but contrasting type is Beth, equally ambitious, but more formally oriented toward civic and public engagement. When we spoke, her ambitions to go to an elite college had already been met through admission to the Ivy League. Beth served on all three of the highly civic youth organizations discussed above. Her almost breathtaking range of volunteer and extracurricular activities offers a clear sense of the life of a very high-achieving student today.

Beth describes her motives: "When I got to high school I guess. I guess I'm very much of a joiner. I sort of join things I'm interested in unless I really have a reason not to." Beyond this, she expresses larger altruistic motives for her work: "I mean if I can, why not. If I can help, if I can like teach a senior who can't communicate by email to write to her grandchildren in Alaska. A 93-year-old woman emailing her children in Alaska. It really seems like a thing I should do. And, if I can help people I would like to be able to."

Beth did not formally address resume-padding at all. For her, her multiple activities were a natural outgrowth of her intrinsic desire to participate, her curiosity, and her desires to help people. She stands as an archetype of the highly civic, engaged young person, even in contrast to Elizabeth who, by most accounts, would be counted as strongly engaged in community. In these high-achievers, participation is a given of daily life. Because goals are set high, are difficult to attain, and the requirements of meeting them are known and internalized, this level of activity becomes part of the background of the lifeworld, the horizon of cultural expectations that frames the making of decisions. Explicit "resume-padding" would be unnecessary and even gauche. The impulse to service is refined through process of "concerted cultivation," in Lareau's term, into an internalized background assumption. This is the main characteristic that distinguishes the ultra-high achievers from other college-bound middle-class youth.

CIVICALLY ACTIVE MINORITY ACHIEVERS

Aie is a senior at Madison Jefferson High School. At the time of the interview, she had been accepted to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was eagerly anticipating starting college. Aie is very active in her community and spends a lot of time doing volunteer work through her local community center and the United Way. In addition, she is a high achiever who has excelled academically. She plans to study social work as an undergraduate and perhaps go on to obtain a Ph.D. Her social work ambitions are closely linked to her sense of obligation to her extended family and community.

Aie is of Hmong descent and her family immigrated to Madison when she was in 4th grade. For Aie, negotiating her ethnic identity and family culture with her American adolescence is a central concern. She experienced conflict in her own family over the time she spent away from home doing volunteer work. Because of this and her desire to focus more of her volunteerism on the Hmong community, she organized a club at school and a community conference to address issues of communication between youth and adults:

> Parents were something that I really wanted to focus on. That was part of the reason that I am doing this conference. Because a lot of youth feel that there is a big gap – generation gap. When I was in middle school I though there was a generation gap also, but now I know that it's just because of lack of communication.

Aie is also a genuine organizer. Her name frequently came up in interviews we conducted with other students from her school. She was a key contact for recruiting other youth into volunteer activity reasoning that, the more people involved, the greater the benefit for all parties:

> I also think that the more people that we have there, there's going to be more fun and more laughter and that's why I do a lot of things. It's for fun. And that's why I really encourage so many people to do it. Because I really think that everybody can make an

> impact on…even if it's just one person. Or just their family – it's still an impact.

Aie is quite competitive and achievement oriented. Indeed, she has chosen friends who are also achievement oriented and who push her academically. At the same time, however, she is careful not to set specific goals or concern herself with attaining set objectives. Instead, she expresses her goals in broadly moral terms: she wants to do things that are "right": "Basically. I don't really think I have things planned out that I want to achieve. I never….I didn't set goals when I was younger. I didn't want to be that doctor or that wonderful figure skater. I just always wanted to do something right in my life."

Aie's motives have become internalized, more than almost any other student in our sample:

> I just like volunteering and helping other people and, again making a difference…And the thing is, even though you don't think you're helping anyone, there's someone who's affected by it…[T]here's 24 hours in a day and if I didn't volunteer, I don't know how I would fill up those 24 hours. And all-in-all I just like volunteering in general.

Jackson is a senior at Jefferson High School. He is very self-assured, goal-oriented and is forthcoming with his plans and ambitions. When we spoke with Jackson, he had just decided to attend UW-Madison in the fall. He indicated some disappointment with this, but financial constraints prevented him from attending his first-choice school,. Jackson plans to major in business, make a lot of money as an entrepreneur and then start a foundation to give away his money.

Jackson is active in his school and his community. In addition to being involved in service work outside of school, Jackson initiated a service club at his high school. He started this organization because he was frustrated with the student government ("Congress") and he felt that there should be more opportunities for service for all of the students.

> We basically started that club because I used to be in Congress for a couple of years but I felt like Congress wasn't really meeting the needs of people, other people who weren't like friends the members of Congress. So I decided to start up an organization that would try to match community service opportunities with people who normally wouldn't be involved. So I got my friends together and we started it up and now it's pretty big it's got like 50 members and we're pretty successful so far.

As an African-American with achievement ambitions, Jackson finds he likes being involved in the community and making friends outside of school rather than fitting into a clique at school. He does not like high school and explains his commitment to the community as an outgrowth of that dissatisfaction:

> At Jefferson at least, being an African American where you're academically motivated, you're trying to 'be somebody' if you will, there's not a lot of other people like that at Jefferson. You know, 'cause I'm like one of the only Black guys in my classes and stuff. There are not that many people I can relate to on a 'true friendship' level and that's kind of been detrimental to my experience in high school so that's why I've been trying to be out more in the community because that helps the time go by faster. You then meet people outside of Jefferson, you know, if they're older or whatever, you know, they tend to be able to understand a little more and you just sort of develop a rapport with them.

Jackson is also a keen observer of the motivations for service among his high school peers. He hopes that, by getting others involved in service, they will gain the social and altruistic benefits that he has experienced:

> I think you have like several different categories of kids in terms of involvement. You have folks like Aie who just like going and helping anyone, right? Then you have people who are just doing it for college, you know? And there are a lot of those types

> of people. Then you have a lot of people who are like, "I don't want to do it because I am not getting paid and blah blah blah." But…if you get them out there to actually meet those people then they'll start to see the benefits of it and the rewards of the community. They'll start to develop relationships with other people. It's not just viewed as community service anymore. It's like you are making a friend or something. You are helping someone out.

Juan is a sophomore at Jefferson High School. His family is Latino and they moved to Madison when Juan was a high school freshman. Before his family moved to Wisconsin, Juan lived in Los Angeles with his mother and step-father and Central America with his father. Juan's family moved to Wisconsin in pursuit of better schools for the children and better job opportunities.

Juan is very active in the community and especially with volunteering and helping people. At school he is involved in drama and dance clubs. At the time of our interview, he was in his first year serving on the Youth Allocation Board (YAP) and putting in a lot of hours working with a health care club run through school. This work allowed him to volunteer at the hospital while he was being certified as a medical assistant. Furthermore, he was able to combine his altruistic helping goals with his interest in medicine as a long-term profession. Similarly, Juan works at a camp for kids with HIV and AIDS. He is hoping to attend school at UW and pursue a career as a physician or a nurse.

Juan admits that he was first motivated to get involved with community service as a form of resume-padding.

> Community service wise, I really just started, I've done community service before but I never really took the time to write it down and say 'I've done so many hours here'….But when I moved here, I didn't have any records of having done community service and you need some like for college. So, really the main reason I started doing community service was because I needed to go to college and I needed hours to go on my resume. But, I like doing community service. I spend a good deal of time out of my day doing community service. But I definitely didn't start because I thought 'oh joy, let's do community service!'

However, since Juan became so active in service, he began to enjoy it for its own sake. Indeed, he describes himself as passionate about his activities, "I'm passionate about just every single thing I get involved with. Whatever I do, when I'm in there, in that moment, that's what I'm passionate about.

Juan was one of the few YAP members who brought up social justice issues when the board debated the allocation of their funds. In fact, he was the only member who voted in favor of funding a skate park. He spoke to the board on this issue and framed his support in class terms: he saw the skate park as a great idea for kids from a lower socioeconomic background.

CONCLUSION

While the instrumental motive we have labeled resume-padding is differentially distributed across our three types, each group is shaped by its specific habitus impelling it toward college. Both the difference in capacities (the relative ability of each group, given its cultural capital, to achieve its goals) and the degree to which it is rooted in a given community shape the form that achievement orientations, and thus civic activities, take. High-achievers have internalized cultivation to the point that achievement is a normalized expectation. Those in the middle perceive their somewhat precarious position. Some college is in reach, but only if they do "enough" of the "right" activities. But the formula itself is never clear, hence investment in activity whose community meaning is not fully internalized. For minority achievers, the pathway upward is clearly through college, but in an ironic twist, because engagement is not seen as a birthright, rather as a privilege, it is seized upon, almost joyfully, as a path of autonomous self-development *within* the context of community-connection. Our data

also suggest some limits to the finding that civic engagement among young people is relatively robust. If the normative connections to community that may have characterized civic engagement in the past are, indeed, becoming hollowed out in a middle class under enormous pressure to retain its position, the transmission of social and civic capital across generations may be more precarious than survey data alone can indicate. Our finding of service inflation plausibly explains in part, the gap between political and civic activity described in the The Civic and Political Health of the Nation (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, and Jenkins 2002). Keeter and colleagues found that while civic volunteerism was robust among high school aged youth, political attention and activity significantly lagged behind. They concluded that, in part, this represented an orientation among young people toward apolitical, tangible, accomplishments that could be seen immediately, in contrast to the mediated, uncertain, and future results of politics. Our research supplements this finding, but also suggests a somewhat different interpretation. Keeter and colleagues concluded that rates of youth volunteerism were generally healthy, and that greater attention needed to be paid to political engagement. The latter finding is true, but our findings call into question some of the vibrancy apparent in the high rate of youth volunteerism. We have pointed toward a different conclusion: that high rates of participation in volunteerism are driven, in part, by instrumental concerns with achievement.

It can be legitimately debated whether this instrumentalism is negative, or whether, indeed, it could become a force for motivating youth toward politics. Mindich (2005) in his study of news use among young people found instrumental attitudes toward civic life that closely paralleled our findings. But he suggests that the mandatory and perceived coercive qualities of service be leveraged to require young people to read news and acquire civic and political knowledge as a requirement for high school graduation.

We are unsure about whether openly recognizing and embracing the forced qualities of service could or should be done. If we assume that engaging in civic or political behavior, regardless of motivation, creates habits that positively effect future behavior, then this strategy may be plausible. But if there is an increasing shift toward an instrumental orientation toward civic life, as our research suggests, there could be larger implications. Even if we make service learning and political knowledge mandatory, it will not change the overall context of increasing risk, or its expression as service inflation. These conditions challenge us to rethink what citizenship itself means for a generation for which achievement is the dominant value and investments in community and civic life one lifestyle choice among many.

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ENDNOTES

[1] For example, a new reality show in summer 2005 allows minority, immigrant, and working class young people to compete for college admission and a $240,000 scholarship (Steinberg 2005).

[2] Bellingham, Kari and Diane Gerrish, "Rising Social Security Risk Transferred to Young," Online Wisconsin, www.journalism.wisc.edu/j401/SocialSecurity/Web/financial.html.

[3] We have chosen not to follow a standard ethnographic convention of disguising the city of our field work for several reasons. First, it usually provides only the thinnest "cover" for researchers doing local ethnography. Were we, as researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to simply describe our fieldwork in a "medium-sized Midwestern community, home to a large state university" we doubt that anyone would be unable to identify our site, and so have abandoned the usual pretense that this is protection in itself. Second, as we note below, Madison presents specific limitations and strengths that we need to address. Finally, our subjects have been protected by changing their names, activities, and high schools to disguise their individual identities.

APPENDIX: STUDENT RESEARCHERS

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CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Although CIRCLE conducts and funds research, not practice, the projects that we support have practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. CIRCLE is also a clearinghouse for relevant information and scholarship. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is now also funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York. It is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy.

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