Chapter 53
Civic Responsibility Development Among College Students:
How Is It Different by Student Race?

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ABSTRACT

Using a statewide college student dataset, this chapter examines how the patterns in and predictors of civic responsibility development differ by students' racial background. Findings reveal that the level of civic responsibility does vary by student race. Results showed that Asian American students reported the lowest self-assessment of civic responsibility both at the point of college entry and in their junior or senior years, whereas African American students indicated the highest levels of civic responsibility both points of time. Findings also identify unique predictors of civic responsibility development for each racial group.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has been and is often charged with developing good citizens and society's future leaders. Civic responsibility development has varied in its level of priority in the U.S. higher education, but it has always been part of the educational process (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Ehrlich, 2000; Jacoby, 2009; Lott, 2013; Pascarella, Ethington, & Smart, 1988; Sax, 2004). Reports from the Carnegie Foundation (Newman, 1985) and the Wingspread Group (1993) have stated that higher education

has a responsibility to educate students in citizenship and develop their abilities to positively influence society. Examples of higher education's renewed emphasis on citizenship development include Campus Compact, a consortium of institutions working to promote service in campus communities (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Butin, 2006; Jacoby, 2009), and the establishment of Social Change Model of leadership development, a model in which anyone can be a leader if he or she works to develop the skills to make a positive impact on society (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

The findings of numerous studies have also indicated that college attendance has a positive impact on students' civic responsibility development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As it is generally understood in the higher education literature, civic responsibility is the ability to understand and appreciate global society, racial and ethnic diversity, and one's personal role in contributing positively to global society (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Sax, 2004). Within the broader higher education literature, aspects of civic responsibility include, but are not limited to, civic engagement, voting in elections, participating in service learning, and attitudes and perspectives that value the contribution of others (Colby et al., 2003; Hurtado, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Sax, 1998, 2004; Smith, 2009).

As U.S. colleges and universities seek to develop their students to be good citizens for democratic society, there is a growing emphasis on the role higher education has in internationalization and developing global citizens so that society functions pluralistically (Antonio, 2001; Colby, et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000; Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012; Jacoby, 2009). Open access and affirmative action policies have provided under-represented minorities admittance to some institutions, but still much more needs to be done to ensure that potential students equal opportunity for admission to all types of institutions and the support to succeed to graduation (Smith, 2009). Further, Hurtado (2007) posited that diversity within the learning environment is necessary for deep learning and the development of critical thinking skills. Race is considered a conditional effect of the collegiate experience, in that it may vary or influence an experience and outcome (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Efforts to understand how diverse students experience and succeed in college has led researchers to examine how collegiate experiences vary by demographics, such as race and gender.

As there are recent growing interests in the issues of diversity and internationalization, higher education researchers and professionals have come to pay greater attention to the role played by higher education on students' civic responsibility development during college years (Antonio, 2001; Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000; Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012; Jacoby, 2009). Furthermore, college students are aware of the social injustices interwoven into American society. For example, numerous higher education institutions report that they have received demands from students asserting that their campuses need cultural awareness training to address the lack of understanding for people of color, sexuality minorities, and the poor (Jones, 2016). College administrators are also answering requests to remove statues of those who participated in social injustices, such as slave ownership, in previous decades (Galuska, 2016).

BACKGROUND

College Attendance and Civic Responsibility Development

Civic responsibility has always been part of the mission of higher education, although its importance in institutional missions and cultures has varied throughout history (Colby et al., 2003; Elrich, 2000; Jacoby,

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