WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU GO, AND WHO YOU KNOW: A STUDY OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS

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ABSTRACT

Community violence is a pervasive and damaging social phenomenon, occurring with alarming frequency in economically disadvantaged communities of color. The detrimental consequences of violence exposure in adolescents is well understood; however, comparatively little is known about the ways in which Black youth may be empowered to make productive changes in their communities in the face of that adversity. Specifically, there is a dearth of research on whether and how community violence impact gifted Black youth, who both have the cognitive and moral ability to deliberate these themes as well as the threat to personal identity that makes these events salient. The antecedents and consequences of community violence are situated within the contextual framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model, with a specific focus on the person-level factors of moral identity and purpose development in gifted youth. In the empirical study, the relationship between community violence, various psychosocial factors, and civic and community engagement was examined utilizing data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods. Results indicate that civic engagement by youth in their late teen years was

the best predictor of community engagement (both formal and informal) in young adulthood, while voting attitudes in young adulthood were not predicted by any model variables.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled "Who You Are, Where You Go, and Who You Know: A Study of Civic Participation of Youth in Chicago Neighborhoods," presented by Jessica Ross, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE RISK MITIGATION FOR BLACK GIFTED YOUTH USING ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Introduction

In an era strongly influenced by the ability of social media to transmit news instantaneously, the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Stephon Clark, Philando Castile (among others) and the associated societal unrest and civil discourse have garnered substantial public attention over the past few years. This increased awareness to institutional racism, police brutality, and notion of safety of Black individuals in U.S. society has prompted national conversation about what it means to be Black in America (Dennis, 2016). This conversation has progressed into social movement action: Black voters were directly responsible for groundbreaking electoral shifts in swing states in the 2020 presidential election (Ray, 2020). However, this empowered response was not without consequence, as restrictive voting bills are currently surging through the legislatures of 24 states and have been passed in Georgia, Iowa, Arkansas, and Utah (Brennan Center for Justice, 2021). These bills target absentee and early voting (Georgia and Iowa), voter eligibility and voter roll purges (Georgia, Iowa, Arkansas, and Utah), shorten voting hours on election day (Iowa), and prohibit the act of providing food or water to individuals waiting in line to vote (Georgia). While these bills limit equity of access to the electoral process for all voters, there is substantial fear that this will primarily impact voters of color, as Black mail-in votes from urban centers resulted in the eventual electoral outcome in Georgia (via Atlanta), Pennsylvania (via Philadelphia), and Michigan (via Detroit) (Ray, 2020).

While the participation of adults in social movement citizenship behaviors—and associated difficulties--is well documented (Hall, 2010; Livingston et al., 2017), the disenfranchisement of youth in U.S. society oftentimes precludes youth, who are among society's most vulnerable and perceptive members, from advocating for themselves in any socially meaningful way (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009). Youth are tremendously impacted in myriad ways by the actions of fellow community members, social institutions, and public policy but have even fewer opportunities than their adult counterparts to exert their own agency on the situations hitting them the hardest.

Though all youth are structurally prohibited (and socially dissuaded) from formal participation efforts in U.S. society, this is particularly problematic for gifted Black youth living in embattled, disadvantaged communities. Youth of color are disproportionately likely to experience discrimination at both interpersonal and structural levels, resulting in numerous negative mental health risks (Assari et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2011). This same social and institutional discrimination also contributes to a disproportionate risk of experiencing poverty, unemployment, and need for public assistance that predicts exposure to community violence (Lobo Antunes & Ahlin, 2015). Exposure to community violence begets additional mental and emotional health risk factors, which perpetuates the cycle. Gifted youth are not immune to the impacts of violence and discrimination— however, their cognitive and social predispositions as a result of their giftedness may render them more likely to perceive this cycle and to desire to engage their communities to dismantle it earlier than their peers (Terry et al., 2008).

The various antecedents and consequences of community violence exposure, and what impact that has for the development of gifted youth in particular, has not been

comprehensively evaluated in the literature up to this point. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provides a backdrop through which the individual, community, sociopolitical, and ideological factors that impact the etiology and outcomes of community violence can be understood. Bronfenbrenner's theory is popularly utilized to describe exposure to and repercussions of interpersonal and community violence (Jonson-Reid, 1998; Lobo Antunes & Ahlin, 2017; Salzinger et al., 2002). This review extends beyond those works to include a broader perspective on macro and chronosystem influences, as well as a focus on community engagement by gifted youth. It is important to note that this is not intended to be a test of Bronfenbrenner's theory; it is a review of the literature on community violence situated within Bronfenbrenner's contexts as they relate to adolescent and young adult development.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Also known as the Person-Process-Context-Time model, Bronfenbrenner's theory situates the understanding of the individual within various concentric systems within which the individual must interact and develop. Systems closer to the individual level were theorized to have a more direct influence on that individual, with more global influence exerted on the individual as the systems extended outward. This conceptualization has been heralded as remarkable in its contributions to psychology, but the application within research has oftentimes lacked the robustness intended by the theory. Unfortunately, the social complexity Bronfenbrenner asserted within the model is typically stripped in applied research, which often centers on the microsystem or mesosystem as the only socially dynamic systems. This appears to be true across various domains of psychological study—schools (Burns et al., 2015), community (Neal & Christens, 2014), and human development

(Tudge et al., 2009). Often, these more proximal systems are explained as existing within a more stagnant set of exo-, macro-, and chronosystem factors that are used to briefly explain away the essential contextual contributions of broader social systems, culture, and developmental changes over time. Rather, all systems, even those conceptually "furthest" from the individual, are marked by a set of complex social interactions that should be conceptualized as intersecting not only at the individual level but with every other level within the model (Neal & Neal, 2013).

The impact of community violence on adolescent and young adult development is a subject matter rife with opportunities to ameliorate this abandonment of Bronfenbrenner's broader systems and proximal processes in applied research. Beginning with the level of the person, individual factors to consider include the cognitive and socioemotional factors related to giftedness and gifted identity. The attributes of the individual influence not only how they respond to their environment, but how the environment responds to them—from social and academic affordances to their ability and willingness to cognitively engage with meaning-making processes about the world around them. At the directly interpersonal level of the microsystem, the families, peers, teachers, communities, and schools of youth can be considered the most influential aspects; their interactional patterns, the mesosystem. These microsystem agents, in myriad ways, contribute to the level of support a person can expect to receive; their combined efforts in the mesosystem reflect the contribution of a person's broader community. Political and social institutions at the interface of community violence are the focal point of exosystem-level conceptualizations—i.e., the attitudes of politicians, law enforcement, and other social structures dictate the responses to community violence that shape the communities that gifted Black youth exist within. Cultural norms surrounding

racism and violence within the national and local contexts are the most pertinent aspects of the macrosystem. And, rather than a stagnant view of the chronosystem as one's place and time in history, sociohistorical shifts—such as those that abate and abide discrimination, violence, and justice—comprise the conceptualization of the chronosystem.

Purpose

By considering all domains as socially active, interrelated constructs, a conceptual understanding of how all systems impact a given youth at any time can be developed. By taking the literature altogether, it is possible to derive a rich understanding of the complicated individual, interpersonal, and cultural factors influencing any one youth's meaning-making trajectory. The current state of the literature on community violence as it impacts urban youth in the United States is evaluated, situated within the domains of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model and the dynamic interplay of the systems. The occurrence and impact of violence exposure to youth at the person level, the microsystemic protective factors known to best serve youth, and the exosystem-level programmatic initiatives to re-establish agency for impacted youth are assessed. The review then transitions to an evaluation of the state of the literature on the more specific mental processes of meaning-making and purpose development as it relates to utilizing one's personal experience to drive them towards personally meaningful social change. Finally, the review ends with specific correlates of giftedness associated with risk resiliency and positive youth development. The goal of this review is to establish one (of potentially many) theoretical trajectories that connect personal trauma and tragedy to the establishment of personal self-efficacy and emotional, cognitive, and social well-being for Black youth in the urban context, who are disproportionately negatively impacted by violence both historically and at this time in U.S. social history.

Community Violence

Community violence, or "deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against a person or persons in the community," (Cooley-Quille et al., 1995, p. 1364) can cause a multitude of negative social, emotional, and physical impacts on individuals who witness or who are indirectly exposed to it. Though community violence holds the potential to invoke traumatic responses to all who experience it, adolescence is a particularly sensitive period due to the myriad social, biological, and cognitive transitions being experienced at this developmental stage. That is, adolescents are already enduring substantial hormonal and cognitive changes that impact the way they respond to emotional stimuli, and social transitions bring adolescents into communities and social groups at a frequency that makes them more likely to be exposed to community violence than younger children (Stein et al., 2003). Historically, Bronfenbrenner's model treated age as a chronosystem-level factor; it is addressed now as a person level factor in alignment with Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time model (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

Impact of Community Violence on the Person Level

Ramifications of community violence exposure are typically studied as they relate to externalizing (behavioral) and internalizing (emotional) mental health symptoms. Kohl and colleagues utilized this paradigm to assess the relationship between community violence exposure and internalizing (depressive, specifically) symptoms among African American 6th graders in Chicago (Kohl et al., 2015). Cross-sectionally, reports of emotional numbing and hyperarousal proved to be robust mediators of the relationship between community violence and depression. This relationship diminished in significance when considered in a longitudinal context; however, there was still support for a partially mediated model.

Kennedy and Ceballo (2016) extended upon this work by examining data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods Longitudinal Cohort study data pool, finding that the relationship between community violence exposure and symptomology, though often assessed in a linear function, best fit a quadratic function such that symptomology expression changes as a function of level of exposure to community violence. That is, for children who experienced the highest exposure to community violence, their symptomology profiles were remarkably devoid of internalizing or externalizing symptoms. Instead, these children experienced an emotional numbing labeled as normalization—these children were so over-exposed that exposure to violence no longer impacted them at any immediately recognizable level. At lower levels of violence exposure, the risk of developing symptoms or diagnoses of anxiety or depression increased. At the identification level, youth who appear unfazed by exposure to violent events are likely more at risk for stunted socioemotional development than those expressing clear symptomology.

Beyond externalizing and internalizing symptoms, exposure to community violence was also associated with posttraumatic stress symptoms with the potentiality to escalate to a diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in a sample of 43 Boston-area children born to mothers of low socioeconomic status (Suglia et al., 2010). Higher levels of reported posttraumatic stress symptoms in response to community violence experienced between ages 4 and 10 predicted elevated cortisol levels three years later. These results indicate that children impacted by community violence not only show physiological responses to stress similar to individuals with diagnosed Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, indicating a severe level of experienced distress, but that these physiological markers linger long after initial violence exposure.

The expression of behavioral symptoms as a response to community violence is impacted by a variety of social and personal factors. Stokes and Jackson (2014) found that exposure to community violence was related to the experience of internalizing behaviors, but was not significantly related to externalizing behaviors or adaptive behaviors in low-income adolescents. (This aligns with previous research indicating the relationship between violence exposure and internalizing symptoms in girls; this sample was predominantly female.) Emotional-social intelligence was a stronger predictor of adjustment than exposure to community violence—in particular, skills in emotion management and flexible problem solving decreased both externalizing and internalizing behaviors, while awareness of one's own feelings was related to a decrease in internalizing behaviors. Furthermore, stress management mediated the relationship between violence exposure and psychosocial adjustment issues such that youth who were better able to manage their emotions were also more likely to engage in adaptive behaviors.

Taken together, these studies of youth in high-conflict urban centers indicate that exposure to violent experiences contribute to a variety of individual symptoms impactful at the Person level. These symptoms (depression, PTSD, emotional numbing) are severe, but emotional-social intelligence can mitigate the worst of these outcomes for youth. Thus, it is not only important to consider how influential systems can contribute to the building of this emotional-social intelligence for youngsters, but also to consider how exemplars of this intelligence within these communities orient themselves around their understanding of community violence.

Impact of Community Violence on the Micro- and Mesosystem Levels

Schools are a major socialization influence in the lives of youth, considering that this is a context where they can be reasonably expected to spend a majority of their waking hours. Thus, it would make sense that schools may play a role in the expression or suppression of behavioral symptoms associated with community violence exposure. Ludwig and Warren (2009) assessed the relationships between violence exposure, psychosocial outcomes, and various scholastic factors in adolescence. As would be expected, the greater the exposure to community violence, the higher the levels of a variety of self-reported psychological maladjustment symptoms. Higher endorsement of symptoms was significantly related to feeling less hopeful. However, students with higher identification with school and who perceived more support from teachers reported higher levels of hope and lower levels of psychological symptoms in the face of community violence exposure than their peers who did not feel as engaged with school. These relationships can be further evaluated by gender—for the girls in this sample, engagement with school acts as a buffer against symptomology at lower levels of violence exposure, but this relationship disappears at higher levels of exposure. Additionally, girls with no engagement with school at all experience levels of psychological distress reminiscent of individuals with high community violence exposure. For high school girls, while engagement with school cannot protect them from symptomology at the very highest levels of trauma exposure, engagement matters at other personal levels.

The story is slightly different for high school boys, where identification with school buffers against the relationship between violence exposure and psychological symptoms. But identification with school (and perceived teacher support) decreases the risk of exposure to community violence to begin with. Though the mechanisms through which this relationship

works are unclear, it is possible that this connection with school keeps boys engaged in scholastic opportunities and activities that keep them ensconced in the safety of the school building instead of in the broader community where violence occurs. The bottom line for both girls and boys in this study is that the scholastic environment matters tremendously (though again, not completely) in the relationship between exposure to community violence and psychological maladjustment.

In a more recent examination of the impact of community violence on school-aged youth, Wray-Lake and Abrams (2020) engaged 87 youth of color in inner-city Rochester to examine what kinds of supports were most important in promoting positive psychosocial and civic engagement outcomes. For this sample, the function of schools in buffering against the impact of community violence is mixed. While some youth indicated that school achievement was important to their self-concept as a good community member and school involvement contributed to an overall profile of greater emotional empowerment, across the sample schools were infrequently referred to as a safe space. Youth reported that teachers were negative, aggressive, and intimidating and that teachers and administrators ignored or cut off youth when they attempted to engage in school-oriented civic action. These youth also indicated that parents and other supportive adults were important in buffering against the negative impact of community violence and promoting more civically-oriented behaviors; feeling heard by adults increased civic engagement and emerged as one of, if not the most important, drivers of civic engagement for urban youth of color (Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020, p. 105). Though these findings paint a more complicated picture of the role of schools in the relationship between community violence and civic engagement, it is important to note that this sample was primarily male, and that all youth were recruited from community

centers where youth spent a majority of their non-school hours. It may be, then, that youth in this sample were not only impacted by adversarial scholastic experiences but also more inclined to forego forging supportive adult relationships in this environment as these needs were easily met through their community center involvement.

At the level of the person and their most proximal relationships, important considerations for violence mitigation begin to emerge. The experience of externalizing and internalizing symptoms in adolescents who are exposed to community violence is common, but emotional-social intelligence can buffer against the worst effects. Similarly, the impact of school engagement on risk mitigation also shows a gendered bent, with adolescent boys and girls benefitting from scholastic support differentially. Schools also reciprocally impact students and may exacerbate emotional distress when these environments are not supportive. Altogether, these findings indicate a need to examine risk associated with violence exposure with an eye towards individual factors—including gender, cognitive factors, and identification with school.

Community as an Exosystem Level Factor

While the risk of developing psychological symptomology in response to community violence exposure is great, and seemingly exponentially greater as amount of exposure increases, negative psychological adjustment is not a given, predetermined outcome. There are numerous examples of successful interventions for youth exposed to community violence trauma. Many of these programs are rooted in principles of civic engagement and social action. Programs established in urban, socioeconomically underprivileged areas are reviewed next.

Though adolescents do not function directly with or within their communities as an Exosystem factor, the give-and-take between communities and the structures and people more proximal to youth (schools, families) makes communities extremely influential to adolescent development. The behavioral norms, economic constraints or affordances, and opportunities for engagement of a community can promote or obstruct the proliferation of violence. Community intervention work that affords youth a voice and feelings of efficacy may have a bi-directional, multi-system positive influence: Greater affordances may decrease the opportunity for violence to occur in the first place, and youth who perceive their community as benefitting the structures they interact with may experience a buffer against symptomology that could provoke them towards violent behavior.

Civic and community engagement. Zeldin (2004) championed the cause for leading youth into civic participation. After reviewing years of empirical literature surrounding the role (or lack thereof) of adolescents in their communities, Zeldin posited that the lack of adolescents engaged in community work is not a result of lack of interest. Rather, it is adults, who are typically the gatekeepers to involvement, who do not perceive adolescents as stakeholders, much less viable contributors to society. Youth have a tremendous desire and need to give back to their communities, given the developmentally and socially proper opportunities to do so. It is the responsibility of adults within more proximal systems to adolescents to reach out to engage them, particularly those with the greatest risk of disenchantment in their communities (typically, those who have been victimized by their communities). By inviting youth to the table to contribute and work in ways that align with their personal interests and needs, we can create a society of adolescents who feel they have self-efficacy within their environments.

Unfortunately, community engagement comes with risks beyond adult passivity and dismissiveness for Black youth. The Black Lives Matter movement, for example, has provided a greater number of opportunities for adolescents to become involved in their communities to champion for causes they care about. However, this kind of involvement is met with institutional resistance, and the consequence of youth engagement in these domains can be as high as incarceration (Helgeson & Schneider, 2015). However, despite these social difficulties, civic engagement programs for youth of color are increasing in number, and accordingly these programs are being shared in the empirical literature.

Thomas and colleagues utilized participatory action research to build programming surrounding coping skills and civic engagement knowledge in African American high school students in a high risk, urban community (Thomas et al., 2012). Participants engaged with two different programs: One which centered on teaching adolescents personal and social coping skills, and one which focused on building leadership skills in the adolescents that would translate to self-efficacy in bringing positive changes to their social environments. Participants evaluated both programs. Largely, students did not perceive the coping skills training to be particularly helpful; they expressed that the magnitude of the violence they experienced was too great to be ameliorated by the coping strategies, such as deep breathing, that were introduced. However, the problem-solving strategy skill building that was presented in that program was perceived as very helpful (echoing the significance of flexible problem solving in emotional-social intelligence presented by Stokes and Jackson, [2014)]). Participants were much more receptive to the civic engagement programming, expressing excitement about the opportunity to engage with scholastic and community leaders to create change. Additionally, they cited the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of civic

engagement and about the resources already offered in their communities as beneficial. Though the reach of the programs was limited across the students, results gathered from these interventions indicated that students in high-risk victimization areas respond well to civic engagement education and skill-building, moreso than exposure to clinical anxiety reduction techniques. Importantly, this research did not directly examine the impact of community involvement on youth outcomes; positive outcomes were associated with the opportunity to learn about civic engagement from community leaders and the affordances of the community for future direct engagement in other systems. This provides evidence that civic engagement educational opportunities may be perceived as beneficial for other youth in similar social circumstances, and that schools may be an important gateway in safely exposing students to such opportunities.

Similarly, Richards and colleagues (2016) designed a civic engagement program for adolescents in an urban, socioeconomically disadvantaged community in Chicago. Participants were assigned either to the civic engagement curriculum or to a control condition that provided health education to the students. The civic engagement curriculum consisted of 15 weekly sessions that introduced students to the concepts of community, civic engagement, and community violence. Once these concepts were well understood, students were provided opportunities to engage with these concepts through analysis of documentary and other media. In the final component of the program, students were led to design a project that would allow them to engage with issues they identified as important to them. Results indicated that compared to the control group participants, participants in the civic engagement group experienced increased feelings of leadership self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and ability to cope at the completion of the program. Importantly, only

leadership self-efficacy increased across all contexts; satisfaction with life and coping increased only in situations where youth's perception of their communities included few neighborhood problems and high neighborhood social cohesion—exosystem-level factors out of the participants' direct control. Thus, while opportunities to engage meaningfully are important at levels more proximal to the adolescent, the benefits are mitigated by broader community considerations that act on the adolescent.

It is important to note that the research literature is not universally supportive of the positive relationship between community violence exposure and civic engagement. Chen, Propp, and Lee (2015) assessed the degree of the relationship between community violence exposure and civic engagement participation longitudinally and found that that exposure to community violence early in life decreases the likelihood of adolescents' involvement with community service when they become young adults. These results extend beyond the influence of demographic characteristics, family socioeconomic background, and parental relationships (though again, we find positive family relationships help, but do not completely buffer the impact of community violence). Because of the aggregate nature of this data, the cause of this relationship is unclear—impacted youth may grow up to be adults disenchanted with their communities, adults too hopeless to believe change can be elicited through service, adults fearful of their safety when engaging with the community, or any other number of potential causal explanations. However, while the relationship between violence exposure and civic engagement is not a naturally occurring one, the interventions described above give reason to believe that when provided education about and the opportunity to engage in their communities to effect change, adolescents will take to those opportunities with enthusiasm.

Importantly, many traditional civic engagement behaviors are not “naturally occurring” amongst youth, particularly youth of color, regardless of their awareness of or sensitivity to community violence (Levinson, 2007; Taft, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). However, recent research suggests that, much like community participation, voting is another civic engagement behavior in which the relationship between personal identity and participation is not as linear as it was once assumed to be. Diemer and Li (2011) assessed the relationship between individual identity, social support from important others, and intention to engage in a variety of civic engagement behaviors in a sample of 665 low-SES youth ages 15-25 (17.3% Black identifying) extracted from the broader Civic and Political Health Survey of 2006, a nationally representative survey of youth attitudes regarding government and sociopolitical issues. They found that for these youth, sociopolitical support from parents and peers facilitated self-efficacy to effect sociopolitical change, sociopolitical control, and self-reported social action participation. White youth in this sample were more likely to endorse higher levels of civic and political knowledge, as well as voting behavior. However, the youth of color in this sample were more likely to endorse higher levels of sociopolitical control (i.e., self-efficacy with regards to effecting social and political change) and more likely to indicate intent to participate in a protest, march, or demonstration. Findings also supported the idea that it is social action which is more likely to influence voting behavior (rather than the reverse relationship) and that this and sociopolitical control warrant continued exploration in the literature connecting the experiences of marginalized youth to future social and political engagement.

Building upon this work, Diemer and Rapa (2016) sampled 761 low-SES Black and Latino/a-identifying youth extracted from the broader Civic Education Study of 1999 to

assess the relationship between racial/ethnic identity and civic engagement behaviors. Their results indicated that, more than their Latino/a counterparts, Black youth are more heavily influenced by perceived inequality when it comes to motivation to engage in social activism and civic engagement, including voting behaviors.

Similarly, Hope and Jagers (2014) assessed the relationship between awareness and experience of discrimination and civic engagement in 634 Black youth (ages 15-25) derived from the Black Youth Project—Youth Culture Survey. Results indicated that adherence to beliefs in institutional discrimination without associated political cynicism (e.g., believing that the government is biased against them) was significantly related to civic engagement participation for Black youth. Like Diemer and Li (2011), results from this study indicate that Black youth with stronger beliefs in their capacity to effect change through political participation also reported higher levels of civic engagement. Notably, this study did not specifically assess voting behaviors; however, voting is oft-considered to be a classical extension of intentions to engage in civic engagement more broadly.

While the research literature on voting behaviors among Black youth and young adults has historically been mixed, more recent research indicates that Black young people are motivated to vote under particular circumstances (e.g., having self-efficacy regarding effecting social change, perceiving social inequality). These circumstances are likely to impact gifted Black youth in the urban core, who are able to cognitively orient themselves towards having such self-efficacy and who are, ostensibly, exposed to numerous examples of social inequality within their lived experiences.

Civic engagement behaviors and intentions also differ along gender lines, particularly for adolescents and young adults. In one study of over 1,500 high school students in

California Malin and colleagues (2015) found that the female students in their sample were more likely to be currently involved in some form of civic engagement activity and were also more likely to express intentions towards future civic engagement, compared to the male students in their sample. These differences were attributed to facets of moral identity: Female respondents tended to endorse helping motivations for their behavior, while male respondents tended to base their current behaviors and intentions on their own value orientation. These findings echo the work of Portney, Niemi, and Eichenberg (2009), who found that amongst the 2,000 18-24 year old high school and college students surveyed in the National Surveys of Political and Civic Engagement of Young People across 2006 and 2007, males tended to have a higher level of political knowledge (about representatives, the electoral process, etc.) while females in their sample were more likely to be actively involved in community and nonprofit organizations.

Though the intersection of gender and ethnic identity in civic engagement intentions is infrequently studied, the literature that does exist suggests that civic engagement outcomes can vary as a function of both facets of identity. Utilizing data from over 15,000 high school students taking part in the 1992 wave of the National Education Longitudinal Study, Dávila and Mora (2007) discovered that civic engagement behaviors varied as a function of both gender and ethnic identity. Specifically, female students tended to be more engaged in their schools and communities than males of their same ethnicity—this trend held across all four ethnic groups studied—and were more likely to endorse a preference for helping others in the community. Although male White and African American students were similarly likely to have participated in community service, African American males were slightly more likely to

have participated in student government. This pattern is different for female students, where African American students were less likely to participate in student government but more likely to endorse community service involvement than their White counterparts. Overall, this limited but telling body of literature points to a need to consider gender as another important identity factor which may influence the relationship between community violence and civic engagement outcomes.

Interplay between person-level, microsystem, and exosystem factors. To conclude this discussion of the repercussions of and interventions for community violence as it relates to young people, it is important to note that personal resiliency and meaning-making processes influence the degree to which youth will feel negatively impacted by exposure to community violence. To shed light on the ways in which children make sense of personal and community trauma, Fivush and colleagues conducted interviews with children living in a socioeconomically underprivileged neighborhood of inner-city Atlanta (Fivush et al., 2003). Children and their mothers were tasked with nominating noteworthy positive and negative life events that the children could speak to; all nominated events had been openly discussed in the family and many were social events that had been discussed in the public sphere (therefore, none of the events nominated consisted of abuse of a private nature). Children were very adept at recalling details related to both self- and mother-nominated events and both negative and positive experiences. Negative experiences, such as community violence, were met with better recall of internal language related to the events and more coherent narratives than positive events, which were met with better recall of objects, people, and descriptive detail. These findings contradict the conventional wisdom that chronic stress and trauma create scattered, disorganized mental detail. Rather, these results support the idea that

children are trying to make coherent some of the more incoherent events in their lives, approaching these narratives as problems that need solving, and solving problems requires a coherent narrative. This structure for meaning-making may be particularly conducive to a civic engagement orientation in the future.

Patton and colleagues conducted qualitative interviews with high-achieving African American males to assess meaning-making of community violence exposure in the context of older adolescence (Patton et al., 2016). Interviews with these highly achieving adolescents revealed consistent use of hardiness scripts in conceptualizing one's individual experience in the context of a more chaotic social environment. Important aspects of these hardiness scripts include positive self-identity (intelligence, good nature, ability) and a focus on the future (finishing high school, leaving the neighborhood, going to college, etc.). Future orientation provides motivation to keep oneself safe, provides a sense of purpose, and helps these youth remain aware of long-term consequences of their actions, provoking them to engage in behaviors with long-term rewards. The authors call for additional research to reveal more specific strategies being utilized by adolescents to maintain their hardiness scripts, particularly within the lives of high-achieving African American males. High academic achievement is correlated with numerous other social, cognitive, and emotional traits that may differentiate high-achieving or academically gifted youth from their contemporaries in terms of reconciling with the difficulties of violent communities and persevering regardless. These correlates are detailed below.

Summary. In bringing all of these correlates of community violence exposure together within an ecological framework, a dynamic system begins to emerge. At the individual level, youth represent their own personality traits and symptomology profiles. But

in the broader context of ecological systems, youth are situated in adolescence as both chronological age (person) and as a social construct (macrosystem). This social construct impacts where and with whom adolescents spend their time (schools, family, peers—the microsystem) and their role within society (beholden to adults as gatekeepers, with little personal agency; the exosystem). Exposure to community violence rests in the microsystem, but the *occurrence* of community violence represents social phenomena that encompass multiple ecological domains—born from institutional discrimination and legal and political practices spanning the chronosystem through the exosystem. Programming to address issues of community violence often encompass a mesosystem approach, bringing together individuals and agencies (local government, schools, teachers, parents) with a macrosystem focus (to address the underlying cultural programming, a la Black Lives Matter and other social uprising organizations). The way community violence propagates is a dynamic social process; reactions and responses are, accordingly, also complicated social processes worth considering in a broader situational context.

Additional research. Returning to the level of the Person, there are other potential correlates of the response to community violence that provoke further exploration. Emotional-social intelligence is a buffer against the development of severe symptomology as a response to violence exposure (Stokes & Jackson, 2014). It stands to reason, then, that youth who possess a high level of emotional-social intelligence will respond very differently to violence exposure than their peers who have lower levels of this intelligence, and differently still from youth who are taught emotional-social intelligence skills as a form of treatment *after* violence exposure. Extrapolating from this trait, a broader consideration of giftedness (a social and cognitive identity correlated with high emotional-social intelligence)

is warranted. Individuals with this trait function differently in their interactions with the different ecological systems, particularly as they relate to identity development within the context of community violence, as explored below.

Moral Identity Development and Purpose in Youth

The development of a moral identity and a set of purposeful life intentions is a natural, though not necessarily given, extension of positive youth development. Though conceptually similar, morality and purpose are distinctly separate constructs. Damon (1988) defined morality as a "consideration of and an obligation to act on the basis of others' needs," and later (Damon et al., 2003) defined purpose as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is meaningful to the self and leads to engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self." Thus, moral identity provides the mental landscape necessary to engage in purposeful, beyond-the-self oriented actions.

There are a multitude of reasons to promote such identity development in youth and beyond. From a social perspective, a citizenry who feels obligated to act with empathy and a drive to improve conditions for the good of the whole promotes a more prosocial environment than one that does not, and such social benefits ostensibly advantages everyone. Consequently, the psychological ramifications of morality and purpose are powerful: On a personal level, purpose development brooks positive identity development (Bronk, 2012), an increased sense of meaning (Moran, 2009), and more overall life satisfaction (Bronk & Finch, 2010) compared to those who do not endorse a sense of purpose. This may be particularly important for youth in violence-afflicted communities, who may be more likely to experience learned helplessness as a function of their experiences, and could benefit more from leveraging purpose into a protective future-oriented mindset (So et al., 2018).

The individual and social factors that instigate or preclude moral identity development are oft-studied, but the *process* of how nature and nurture come together to create the backdrop for development is rarely assessed. To ameliorate this concern, Bronk (2012) utilized a qualitative longitudinal interview process to assess how nine adolescent purpose "exemplars" came to adopt a purposeful life course. These exemplars were chosen due to their commitment to and active engagement in working toward long-term goals which were identified as both personally meaningful and identified by the researcher as having a positive impact on the broader world.

In the context of these longitudinal interviews, Bronk uncovered that purpose development ultimately occurs in a set of stages, progressing from more superficial levels of involvement towards increasingly more meaningful, enjoyable, and expansive levels of involvement in a cause. Notably, "triggering events," such as those that are emotionally impactful or perceived to be important to involvement tend to be most relevant in sustaining meaningful involvement.

It is estimated that only about 20% of youth achieve highly meaningful, purpose-driven activity (Bronk, 2012). Though this study did not have the explanatory power to describe why that number is not higher, Bronk's interviews point to the idea that context matters--not just as an impetus for action or involvement to begin with, but also that the support within a network helps commitments thrive. For the purposes of the current study, the context of direct and indirect community violence is worth considering inasfar as it may create a "triggering event" towards action, as well as the importance of sanctioned opportunities to engage in prosocial pursuits (e.g., in the school or community) as necessary to notice and support purpose-infused efforts.

It is important to note that Bronk's sample does not necessarily represent the lived experiences of youth growing up in violent, disadvantaged communities. The function of race and neighborhood in the development of moral identity and associated behaviors matters. Although racial minority adolescents may be more likely to have equally or more advanced moral development than their racial majority peers, the concentration of poverty in racial minority neighborhoods reduces adolescents' opportunities to serve their communities (Hart et al., 1998). Furthermore, other agents important for youth development—adults and schools—also have different affordances for youth in suburban versus urban areas. Adults in urban centers of the United States are less likely to vote and are more distrustful of others than adults in suburban communities, and urban schools provide fewer skills in academics and civics and fewer opportunities to join clubs or teams than suburban schools (Hart & Atkins, 2002). Taken together, the literature tells us that the cognition and emotional components of moral behavior are present in Black youth—but the barriers to engaging in prosocial behavior may be very difficult to overcome.

To assess the function of moral identity development and moral behaviors in urban youth of color, Hart and Fegley (1995) solicited nominations of moral exemplars from heads of churches, social agencies, schools, and youth groups in the extremely impoverished community of Camden, New Jersey. Exemplars and their matched counterparts (matched on demographic factors) were interviewed and the results from these two groups of adolescents were compared. Although there was no difference in moral judgement abilities across the two groups, there were other factors that separated non-exemplars from their peers. Moral exemplars in this disadvantaged community were more likely in their interviews to make references to moral personality traits and goals, perceive stability and continuity in their

personalities over time, orient themselves to their own ideals and their parents' values, and create a theory of self that appealed to personal beliefs and philosophies (Hart & Fegley, 1995). It is important to note that the activities of the exemplars in this sample were representative of the needs and involvement affordances of the communities in which they lived—exemplars worked in community gardens, neighborhood political organizations, civil rights groups, schools, nursing homes, and with the Special Olympics. Neighborhoods afflicted with community violence may or may not be able to, as a function of that violence, economic poverty, and other factors, provide opportunities for youth to engage meaningfully in their communities even if they have a moral inclination to do so.

Purpose and moral identity development occurs in stages and seems to be a cross-cultural process, when it occurs for those roughly one-fifth of youth. But there may be contexts and populations which are more rife with opportunities for such development. In a mixed-methods analysis of youth and young adults, Moran (2009) assessed both the commonality of purpose of young people across the developmental span, as well as specific traits most commonly occurring in those endorsing purposeful ideology. 40% of these youth reported having no meaningful way to contribute to anything beyond themselves. 10% endorsed a beyond-the-self orientation to their goal in life, but were not actively engaged in any activity towards that goal (moral identity without purposeful activity). 25% of these youth described having a purpose, meaning they endorsed both a moral orientation to their goal and were actively involved in action towards meeting that goal. Almost all reports of purposefulness were instigated by a critical event that provoked youth to get involved. Importantly, youth were endorsing purpose as early as the 6th grade, indicating that while youthfulness can hinder the purpose development process, this is not always the case.

However, the sample of non-purposeful youth tended to be younger and, similarly, were more likely to be pre-pubescent or actively in puberty, indicating a lower overall cognitive stage.

Overall, these results indicate that opportunity is a significant barrier towards purposeful engagement. Perceived opportunities to be engaged may not be the critical event required to engage purposefully, but they do sustain such efforts. Additionally, this study points towards assessing purpose and moral identity development in post-pubertal adolescents in higher cognitive stages. Furthermore, though we do not know what makes an event "critical" for involvement, it would be important to know if and at what levels experience of community violence might be a critical event for the purposes of purposeful engagement.

If cognitive status is an important consideration in the development of a purposeful identity, and emotional-social intelligence buffers against the worst symptomology associated with exposure to community violence, then it behooves researchers to consider the intersection of cognitive ability and emotional-social intelligence in youth in disadvantaged communities. Gifted youth exemplify one such demographic for whom these two traits interact. By definition, gifted youth must be extremely cognitively able; and, by many modern definitions the gifted must also be psychosocially adept as well (Subotnik et al., 2011). How giftedness interfaces with moral identity and purpose development is reviewed next, with an eye toward situating giftedness in the context of the lived experience of Black youth.

To assess the potential importance of high cognitive ability in purpose development, Bronk, Finch, and Talib (2010) utilized qualitative interviews with high ability youth to

determine the prevalence of purpose in high ability youth and the trajectory and types of purpose development they engage in. They found that 9% of high ability early adolescents and 34% of high ability late adolescents demonstrated purpose, which is a similar incidence rate when compared to a typical student sample (a sample from the Stanford Center on Adolescence study occurring across the United States). Overall, all youth are inspired by the same types of purpose, though "values, beliefs, and faith" and "service" orientations to purpose were more often cited by high ability adolescents than their typical counterparts. Ultimately, from this sample there was not much meaningful difference between high ability and typical youth in these constructs; however, a service-orientation to purpose dominating over a leisure-orientation in the high ability sample indicates the kind of perspective taking abilities, altruism, and upholding of social values that are interesting in the consideration of a moral identity development. Additionally, it is important to note that there's no consideration of environment (besides generally living in the Midwestern United States) or other similar factors here—so while youth may develop purpose along a similar trajectory regardless of cognitive ability level broadly, we do not know whether or how high ability youth may differ from typical peers in situations where there is an obvious environmental impetus towards purpose development, such as a critical social event.

Importantly, not all empirical work points to a lack of differences between high ability and typical youth in terms of what we would consider moral identity development. Hay, Gross, Hoekman, and Rogers (2007) compared gifted students with typical students in the same grades. In this sample, higher cognitive ability predicted internalized reasoning (conceptually, the highest level of prosocial reasoning) in a positive direction, approval reasoning (mid-level prosocial reasoning, conceptually opposite of internalized reasoning) in

a negative direction, and was not significant for stereotypic reasoning (second highest) or needs and hedonistic reasoning (lowest forms of prosocial reasoning). Interestingly, gifted youth exhibited higher affective empathy than typical peers (though there was no difference in terms of personal distress empathy). Taken together, we see in action the dual-trait nature of gifted identification—a more sophisticated cognitive reasoning ability (at some levels of reasoning) alongside more mature psychosocial functioning in social empathy. Though these differences are not absolute across all levels of reasoning or all types of empathy, the differences that do exist provide some context for the different ways gifted youth deliberate these issues compared to their same-aged peers. Although this is an Australian sample and care must be taken not to over-generalize to a United States sample, these findings provide support for the idea that empathy is heightened in gifted youth and that further study on how moral identity and purpose develop in a high ability or gifted population is warranted, given the slim and relatively undecided state of the research on this topic.

Beyond reconciling with a limited amount of empirical data with regards to the incidence and ramifications of purpose and moral identity development in a gifted sample, there are various attributes ascribed to gifted youth that would lend themselves well to such development. Michaelson (2001) created a review of the available literature surrounding gifted youth at that time and determined that moral identity development should come easier to gifted children than their non-gifted counterparts due to their increased empathy (reiterated in Hay et al., 2007, above). Essentially, gifted children are more aware of social and political issues than their peers and find themselves more emotionally troubled by them, due in part to this sensitivity towards the feelings of others. Increased self-awareness and perspective-

taking are also attributed to gifted children; this aligns well with Moran's (2009) findings that high-ability youth are more predisposed to personal reflection.

More recent empirical research reinforces the idea that it is other related dispositional traits, and not intelligence itself, that explains the differential moral identity development between gifted/high-ability and typical youth. Derryberry, Wilson, Snyder, Norman, and Barger (2005) compared gifted youth and college students in terms of their moral judgment capabilities. Compared to college students, gifted youth in this sample were more advanced moral decision makers despite the college students' advanced age and education. For college students, ACT scores predicted more of the variance in moral decision making, but attributional complexity (the desire to process complex personal and social behavioral information) predicted more of this variance for gifted youth. Derryberry and Barger (2008) found similar results. Within their sample, the gifted youth processed reasons for moral deceptions with greater depth and with more efficiency than the college students. However, this faster processing with greater depth is significant only with regard to issues pertaining to domains of personal interest and maintaining social norms, and not in postconventional items (pertaining to levels 5/6 of Kohlberg's [1976] stages of moral development theory), indicating that there is perhaps some limit to the efficiency gained simply by being gifted. Overall, these differences indicate that moral judgment and intellect are not the same thing—there is something above and beyond intellect that predisposes a gifted individual to deliberate issues with more advanced moral development.

Terry and colleagues (2008) summarized the qualities of the gifted that should be of interest to researchers in this domain and how practitioners can best utilize those qualities. Altogether, the authors posited that the definition of giftedness could be extended to include

optimism, courage, romance with a topic, sensitivity to human concerns, physical and mental energy, and a sense of destiny—and that prioritizing these attributes would encourage positive leadership amongst gifted youth. In tandem with this leadership should exist ample opportunities for gifted youth to examine their individual abilities and interests and to partner those with opportunities and resources for involvement—an argument that aligns particularly well with purpose development. In light of increased sensitivity to social concerns, gifted youth in particular need to be equipped with a way to address and ameliorate moral concerns that they feel are beyond their control. Service learning and other formalized involvement opportunities that align resources with supportive persons are one option, as is school-based civic engagement.

The interaction of context, support, giftedness, and morality necessitates a more complex model of functioning than a mere individual approach. Context refers in the most immediate sense to the microsystem—the community in which an instigating, or critical, event happens. But the meaning-making behind such an event (what makes an event critical) is defined by the broader social environment—what is impactful to the community and social structures relevant to an adolescent and what is defined as normative or requiring action in society.

Similarly, the concepts of giftedness and morality, both used as descriptors in the most individual sense, are as well-defined individually as they are socially. What makes a person gifted is the combination of interpersonal characteristics with the academic determination of IQ (or similar) by the juxtaposition of schools and testing or other gate-keepers in the mesosystem, as well as the acceptable cultural definitions of giftedness in the macrosystem. The definition of morality is an individual trait as much as it is a determination

of the broader cultural ideology of goodness in the macrosystem and the sociohistorical determination of values in the chronosystem. Thus, when considering how gifted Black youth interface with social concerns, the consideration of giftedness and morality (and by proxy, action)—must take place at both the individual level of perception and behavior as well as the particular social context that encapsulates their experiences—what is prosocial behavior, and how it should be engaged, is as much for agents of change to decide as it is for the established literature.

Resiliency and Positive Youth Development for Black Gifted Youth

While being identified as gifted brings multiple benefits, particularly in terms of academic opportunities, there are also multiple associated social and emotional risks. Ford (1994) enumerated difficulties common to gifted children—peer pressure, poor peer relationships, perfectionism, heightened emotional sensitivity, greater awareness of societal problems, excessive expectations from others, and confusion about what they can and cannot do. Gardynik and McDonald (2005) expanded upon this list to include asynchronous cognitive and physical development, unrealistic expectations and misconceptions pertaining to their abilities from powerful significant others such as parents and teachers, parental enmeshment, disparity between academic needs and what is provided, damaging stereotypes, and social and emotional difficulties. However, these risks are often exacerbated in gifted Black youth, who are already combating difficult social environments in the United States.

Ford (1994) identified disproportionate risk of poverty, other forms of institutional discrimination, racism, under-identification of gifted youth of color, and cultural obstacles as significant risk factors for gifted youth of color in their academic success. Gifted Black children in particular are at greater risk for experiencing negative peer pressure and isolation

once placed in gifted programming. Essentially, these youth are perceived as too academically "white" for their Black peers outside of gifted programming, and are too racially "Black" for their gifted and predominantly white peers within the program. Some youth are more resilient to these difficulties than others. Protective factors for resiliency for these youth include moral energy, temperament, motivation, positive self-concept, high self-esteem, strong sense of self-efficacy, assertiveness, inquisitiveness, cooperativeness, extroversion, self-control, interpersonal sensitivity, empathy, familial support, and positive peer relationships. Autonomy, competence, independence, and self-sufficiency are particularly important. Gardynik and McDonald (2005) also identified the ability to adopt a cognitive style where they change their behaviors to impact the environment as particularly helpful to gifted youth of color. However, despite the numerous markers of resiliency identified in the literature, the robustness of these protective factors is significantly weakened due to racism and institutional discrimination, as well as other factors identified above, that significantly challenge all individuals of color in the United States.

Increasing the connection between families and schools was identified by Ford as one primary buffer to help gifted Black youth navigate the social, academic, and emotional challenges that face them. However, in qualitative interviews with parents of gifted Black youth, Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton, and Tavegia (2005) revealed that fostering such relationships is extremely difficult. The majority of parents in this study expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with educational interventions provided to their children, as well as the training and support for teachers of gifted Black students. They experienced a lack of awareness in their children's teachers towards their child’s individual student talents, the asynchronous development typical of gifted children, and the personality and cultural

considerations of gifted Black youth in particular. Many parents experienced overwhelming feelings of negativity about their own and their children's relationships with teachers, principals, school counselors, and other staff. These parents perceived their own educational attainment as helping them feel comfortable with the education system and that allowed them to access services for their gifted children—of this sample, half were or had worked in the school system and could navigate that well. Most parents indicated a strong sense of ownership in their child's needs and felt a responsibility to meet those needs in terms of talents. They perceived programming as non-culturally sensitive and felt their children's avenue to success was paved by their knowledge of the education system and not because the schools were good at reaching out to parents. As a result, they perceived that many students without such advantages or rigorous parental involvement would be academically neglected. Parents commonly reported that their children were socially isolated in both academic and community environments, and that they themselves had experienced anecdotal and systemic experiences of racism with educators and schools. Although these claims are from a small sample of the population of parents of gifted Black youth, their experiences mirror previous research findings related to the difficulties experienced by these youth and there is some logic in expecting these experiences to be common. These findings, then, point to an isolation and set of negative experiences at a scholastic level attributable to giftedness that may impact gifted youth in their perceptions of self-efficacy and drive to purposeful prosocial activities.

Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) conducted a similar descriptive study to ascertain the feelings of gifted Black youth in schools. One-fourth of the sample reported underachieving due to not giving their best effort in school; 69% do not do homework on

weekends; conversely, 21% and 8% respectively indicated that reading and writing were hobbies. 66% reported they knew someone who had been teased for good school performance and 42% had experienced that teasing themselves—this teasing occurs by classmates, students in other classes, older students, friends, family members, and younger students in decreasing frequency. Peer pressure was the most cited reason for school underperformance, and much of this peer pressure was centered on racially based stereotypes. For example, "acting white" is characterized by "speaking properly" in language, "acting good," "being perfect," "being smart," and being "arrogant" or "uppity." Conversely, "acting Black" is associated with typical anti-Black stereotypes, like disinterest in school, "ghetto" behavior, low intelligence, etc. Generally, it is preferable to "act white" than "act Black" within gifted programming, but the reinforcement of racial stereotypes within teasing is incredibly detrimental to a student's self-esteem.

Previous research indicates that school is, overall, an unpleasant place for gifted Black youth (or, at least, rife with opportunities to be personally damaging). This is unsettling, particularly because schools are a primary agent of socialization for youth given the amount of time spent in their halls each day, the proximity of other youth, and opportunities for engagement (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Additionally, given the prevailing social climate more broadly, there is reason to expect that these students are also exposed to similar stereotypes and discriminatory statements in their social lives outside of school as well.

The impact of violence exposure within a community extends far beyond the reach of an adolescent's school. However, schools are an important extension of the broader community that warrant specific exploration. Recall that for all students impacted by

community violence, identification with school and support from teachers is helpful in mitigating the damage from violence exposure (Ludwig & Warren, 2009). For gifted youth, who have an identity explicitly tied to academic potential, there is reason to assume that their scholastic experiences are not only different from their peers (as outlined above), but also that their scholastic experiences interface more directly with the community than their peers who do not have such an academically-salient identity. An adolescent may only consider himself a student if he is in school, but a gifted adolescent is gifted in school, at home, and in his community. To that end, a gifted adolescent's in-school experiences matter and, for reasons described above, may be an additional source of inspiration to act against injustice and community violence.

Summary

Empirical research surrounding risks and buffers frequently boils down such complex phenomena by labeling them primarily in terms of the individual experiencing them, or the microsystems in which the individual experiences them. Though the treatment of individual psychological factors and interpersonal or social environments (schools, families) as essential to the understanding of psychosocial development in adolescence is appropriate, this narrow approach limits understanding. An adolescent's development, and the contexts in which this development occurs, do not exist in a vacuum—poverty and racism are not something an adolescent "experiences" as an individual as much as it is a complicated social process that permeates every aspect of their existence in their macrosystem. Institutional discrimination is not just a sociocultural obstacle for an individual Black adolescent to overcome, it shapes the structures with which they interact across the micro- through exosystems—the kind of schools they attend; the stereotypes associated with their engagement in the social world; the

neighborhoods they live in; the interactions their families have with schools and other structures, and associated narratives; and, yes, ultimately, one's individual positive identity development. But by reducing identity development solely to the individual, we miss not only opportunities for intervention and action, but also reduce down the complex and dynamic social process of youth identity development.

Altogether, the state of the literature in these domains suggests room left to grow in the study of personal development in the context of a violent culture, and a need for considering this personal development as it is situated in the dynamic, intersecting domains of the personal, social, environmental, and cultural. The literature has established that community violence is pervasive, particularly in the most disadvantaged urban cultural centers of the United States. Exposure to such violence, particularly without early corrective intervention, can wreak havoc on the behavioral and emotional systems of developing youth—however, this destructive experience is not a universal nor necessarily individual phenomenon. Some youth exposed to traumatic events prove to be better able to adapt to their environment, whether by powers of organized professional intervention at the level of the exosystem, the influence of important others in their lives in the microsystem, and/or personal trait factors that encourage resiliency. The influence and interaction of parents, family, teachers, and schools are important but cannot explain the entire story, and personal trait factors are by their nature difficult to manipulate. However, personal involvement in the realms of civic and community engagement have preliminarily shown to be effective in increasing positive development and also caters to the developmental needs of adolescents to contribute meaningfully to something greater than themselves. This avenue may have the

most unanswered questions—and most room to expand our scientific knowledge—within the realm of community violence risk mitigation.

High academic achievement (and giftedness) offers a variety of risks and affordances in the lives of adolescents, particularly Black adolescents. However, some literature suggests that high achievement may make adolescents more robust to the detrimental impact of community violence; this is a line of inquiry worth pursuing. The mechanisms through which this robustness occurs is difficult to determine from the current state of the literature. However, one established correlate of giftedness that pertains to positive development is that of increased moral identity development, which precedes the kind of civic engagement orientation that has been established in the literature as beneficial for recovering from the effects of community violence exposure.

Thus, these bodies of literature present the potential workings of a model leading from despair to repair: Adolescents live in hurting communities, and ache to help fix them. Gifted adolescents may have the cognitive and trait affordances that make them more likely to serve as social action exemplars in their communities, whereby they lead their community by example, and spur social change that begins the healing process in their own communities. This review provides a preliminary understanding of the complex social phenomena that the current study aims to address, answering the question: Do gifted Black adolescents in an urban community disadvantaged by violence and discrimination reconcile with these difficulties in pursuit of positive, action-oriented development in their communities and in other civic engagement pursuits?

CHAPTER 2

WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU GO, AND WHO YOU KNOW: A STUDY OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS

Introduction

Recent civil discourse surrounding the deaths of unarmed Black individuals has garnered substantial public attention that has progressed into both social movement action and punitive reaction, as exemplified by voting behaviors and associated political reactions during the 2020 Presidential Election (Brennan Center for Justice, 2021; Roy, 2020). However, adolescents face substantial difficulties in social advocacy as they have few opportunities to exert personal agency (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009), despite the fact that they are often subjected to witnessing violence in their communities (Stein et al., 2003). Though all youth are structurally prohibited (and socially dissuaded) from formal participation efforts in U.S. society, this is particularly problematic for youth of color, who are disproportionately likely to experience discrimination at both interpersonal and structural levels (Assari et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2011). This same social and institutional discrimination also contributes to a disproportionate risk of experiencing poverty, unemployment, and need for public assistance that predicts exposure to community violence (Lobo Antunes & Ahlin, 2015).

Youth have a desire to be involved in and give back to their communities (Zeldin, 2004), and embattled communities could benefit from their contributions. However, the individual and social mechanisms through which involvement might best occur are unclear. Giftedness may be one individual factor that contributes to prosocial action in the face of community conflict. Gifted youth are not immune to the impacts of violence and discrimination— however, their cognitive and social predispositions as a result of their

giftedness may render them more likely to perceive this cycle and to desire to engage their communities to dismantle it earlier than their peers (Terry et al., 2008).

Through a more comprehensive understanding of the lived realities of gifted Black youth in violent communities, we hope to identify the factors relevant to the establishment of personal self-efficacy; prosocial action; and civic engagement in the urban context. The various antecedents and consequences of community violence exposure, and what impact that has for the development of gifted youth in particular, has not been comprehensively evaluated in the literature up to this point. In order to frame this study, the following sections examine the current state of the literature on community violence in urban communities as outlined by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, before transitioning to a review of meaning-making and purpose development processes in both adolescents broadly and in gifted youth more specifically.

Community Violence

Community violence, or "deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against a person or persons in the community," (Cooley-Quille et al., 1995, p. 1364) can cause a multitude of negative social, emotional, and physical impacts on individuals who witness or who are indirectly exposed to it. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems theory is popularly utilized to describe exposure to and repercussions of interpersonal and community violence (Jonson-Reid, 1998; Lobo Antunes & Ahlin, 2017; Salzinger et al., 2002), as numerous complicated individual and social processes can be theoretically accounted for within the ecological model. However, the social complexity Bronfenbrenner asserted within the model is typically stripped in applied research, which often centers on the microsystem or mesosystem as the only socially dynamic systems (Burns et al., 2015; Neal & Christens,

2014; Tudge et al., 2009). Often, these more proximal systems are explained as existing within a more stagnant set of exo-, macro-, and chronosystem factors that are used to briefly explain away the essential contextual contributions of broader social systems, culture, and developmental changes over time. Rather, all systems, even those conceptually “furthest” from the individual, are marked by a set of complex social interactions that should be conceptualized as intersecting not only at the individual level but with every other level within the model (Neal & Neal, 2013). By re-examining the experience of community violence by youth from this broader ecological framework, it is possible to create a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which community violence impacts youth of color.

Impact of community violence on the person, micro-, and mesosystem levels. Adolescence is a particularly sensitive period for community violence exposure: Youth are already enduring substantial hormonal and cognitive changes that impact the way they respond to emotional stimuli, and social transitions bring adolescents into communities and social groups at a frequency that makes them more likely to be exposed to community violence than younger children (Stein et al., 2003). In terms of individual symptomology, emotional numbing and hyperarousal mediate the relationship between community violence and depression for youth (Kennedy and Ceballo, 2016; Kohl et al., 2015). However, the expression of behavioral symptoms as a response to community violence is impacted by a variety of social and personal factors, including emotional-social intelligence—particularly skills in emotion management, flexible problem solving, awareness of one’s own feelings, and stress management (Stokes & Jackson, 2014), that promote positive development within the context of violence exposure.

Beyond individual factors, the role of supportive adults is also important in the conceptualization of risk factors associated with community violence exposure. While exposure to community violence increases the risk of internalizing and externalizing problems, youth who reported high parental and familial involvement and support reported fewer externalizing behavioral problems (Hardaway et al., 2016). Within schools, students with higher identification with school and who perceived more support from teachers reported higher levels of hope and lower levels of psychological symptoms than their peers who did not feel as engaged with school (Ludwig & Warren, 2009). For high school girls, school engagement matters such that engagement buffers against symptomology at lower levels of violence exposure, disappearing at higher levels of exposure. For high school boys, identification with school buffers against the relationship between violence exposure and psychological symptoms. Identification with school (and perceived teacher support) also decreases the risk of exposure to community violence to begin with for boys—perhaps because school keeps boys engaged in scholastic opportunities and activities that keep them ensconced in the safety of the school building instead of in the broader community where violence occurs.

Community centers are another community space which can serve as a protective environment against community violence. In a study of youth of color in the violent inner-city of Rochester, Lake and Abrams (2020) surveyed youth belonging to these community centers to assess what kinds of supports were most important in promoting positive psychosocial and civic engagement outcomes. Some youth indicated that school achievement was important to their self-concept as a good community member and school involvement contributed to an overall profile of greater emotional empowerment. The involvement of

parents and other supportive adults, particularly in situations where youth felt heard and their perspectives were valued, also buffered against the negative impacts of community violence and promoted more engagement in civically-oriented behaviors. However, schools were not always identified as safe or protective spaces, particularly in situations where teachers exemplified negative stereotypes of the students or community and when school personnel ignored youth when they attempted to provide feedback or civically engage in the school environment.

At the level of the person and their most proximal interpersonal and institutional relationships, important considerations for violence mitigation begin to emerge. The experience of externalizing and internalizing symptoms in adolescents who are exposed to community violence is common, but emotional-social intelligence can buffer against the worst effects. Additionally, support from adults—from schools, community spaces, or family--decreases the risk of negative behavioral outcomes, albeit with more mixed results within the scholastic environment. Altogether, these findings indicate a need to examine risk associated with violence exposure with an eye towards proximal factors—including gender, cognitive factors, and perception of support.

Community as an exosystem level factor. Though adolescents do not function directly with or within their communities as an exosystem factor, the give-and-take between communities and the structures and people more proximal to youth (schools, families) makes communities extremely influential to adolescent development. There are numerous examples of successful interventions for youth exposed to community violence trauma; programs established in urban, socioeconomically underprivileged areas are reviewed next.

Programmatic interventions with civic engagement components are related to beneficial outcomes for students in high-risk communities. Specific beneficial aspects of such programs include problem solving (echoing the significance of flexible problem solving in emotional-social intelligence presented by Stokes and Jackson, [2014]) and learning about civic engagement and community affordances for engagement from community leaders (Thomas et al., 2012), as well as increased feelings of leadership self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and ability to cope (Richards et al., 2016). Importantly, satisfaction with life and coping increased only in situations where youth's perception of their communities included few neighborhood problems and high neighborhood social cohesion; thus, though opportunities to engage meaningfully are important at proximal levels, the benefits are mitigated by broader community considerations that act on the adolescent.

It is important to note that the research literature is not universally supportive of the positive relationship between community violence exposure and civic engagement. For some young adults, exposure to community violence early in life decreased their likelihood of involvement with community service (Chen et al., 2015). The relationship between violence exposure and civic engagement may not be a naturally occurring one; however, when provided education about engagement in their communities to effect change, adolescents will take to those opportunities with enthusiasm.

Importantly, many traditional civic engagement behaviors are not "naturally occurring" amongst youth, particularly youth of color, regardless of their awareness of or sensitivity to community violence (Levinson, 2007; Taft, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). However, recent research suggests that, much like community participation, voting is another civic engagement behavior in which the relationship between personal identity and

participation is not as linear as it was once assumed to be. Although the research literature on voting behaviors among Black youth and young adults has historically been mixed, more recent research indicates that Black young people are motivated to vote under particular circumstances (e.g., having self-efficacy regarding effecting social change, perceiving social inequality) (Diemer & Li, 2011; Diemer & Rapa, 2016). These circumstances are likely to impact gifted Black youth in the urban core, who are able to cognitively orient themselves towards having such self-efficacy and who are, ostensibly, exposed to numerous examples of social inequality within their lived experiences.

Personal resiliency and meaning-making processes influence the degree to which youth will feel negatively impacted by exposure to community violence. A study of high-achieving adolescents indicated that hardiness scripts, particularly positive self-identity and future orientation, contributed to meaning-making of violent experiences (Patton et al., 2016). Beyond hardiness scripts, high academic achievement is correlated with numerous other social, cognitive, and emotional traits that may differentiate academically gifted youth from their contemporaries in terms of reconciling with the difficulties of violent communities. These correlates are detailed below.

Moral Identity Development and Purpose in Youth

The development of a moral identity and a set of purposeful life intentions is a natural, though not necessarily given, extension of positive youth development. Estimates indicate that only about 20% of youth achieve the highest form of purpose (Bronk, 2012). Within a high-conflict urban community, youth moral exemplars of color made references to moral personality traits and goals, perceived stability and continuity in their personalities over time, an orientation to personal ideals and parental values, and a theory of self that

appealed to personal beliefs and philosophies (Hart & Fegley, 1995). Similarly, individual traits associated with purpose include personal drive, self-care, and personal reflection—as well as a critical event that provoked involvement and opportunities to sustain that involvement (Moran, 2009).

Perceived lack of opportunity is a significant barrier towards engagement with and sustainment of purposeful engagement (Zeldin, 2004). And though we do not know what makes an event "critical" for involvement, it would be important to know if and at what levels experience of community violence might be such a critical event, and what opportunities exposed youth perceive and engage with for purposeful engagement. Furthermore, if cognitive status is an important consideration in the development of a purposeful identity, and emotional-social intelligence buffers against the worst symptomology associated with exposure to community violence, then it behooves researchers to consider the intersection of cognitive ability and emotional-social intelligence in youngsters in disadvantaged communities. Gifted youth exemplify one such demographic for whom these two traits interact. By definition, gifted youth must be extremely cognitively able and, by many definitions, psychosocially adept as well (Subotnik et al., 2011).

In comparing gifted youth and their peers in purpose trajectory, gifted youth are more likely to endorse "values, beliefs, and faith" and "service" orientations to purpose (Bronk et al., 2010). In another sample, higher cognitive ability predicted internalized reasoning and higher affective empathy than typical peers (Hay et al., 2007). Taken together, in these results we see in action the dual-trait nature of gifted identification—a more sophisticated cognitive reasoning ability alongside more mature psychosocial functioning in social empathy. Though these differences are not absolute across all levels of reasoning or all types

of empathy, the differences that do exist provide some context for the different ways gifted youth deliberate these issues compared to their same-aged peers.

More recent empirical research reinforces the idea that it is other related dispositional traits, and not intelligence itself, that explains the differential moral identity development between gifted/high-ability and typical youth. When compared to college students, gifted youth process reasons for moral deceptions with greater depth and more efficiency (Derryberry & Barger, 2008) and are more advanced moral decision makers, despite the college students' advanced age and education (Derryberry et al., 2005). Other traits commonly ascribed to the gifted include courage, romance with a topic, sensitivity to human concerns, and physical and mental energy (Terry et al., 2008). In light of this increased sensitivity to social concerns and willingness and ability to engage deeply with a topic, gifted youth are likely to seek out a way to address and ameliorate moral concerns that concern them.

Resiliency and Positive Youth Development for Black Gifted Youth

While being identified as gifted brings multiple benefits, particularly in terms of academic opportunities, there are also multiple associated risks: Poor peer relationships, greater awareness of societal problems, asynchronous development, damaging stereotypes, and social and emotional difficulties (Ford, 1994; Gardynik & McDonald, 2005). For gifted Black children, the risks in and out of the classroom are even greater still—reconciling with cultural obstacles to success, negative peer pressure and isolation as a function of race, and under-identification (Ford, 1994; Ford et al., 2008). However, some youth are more resilient to these difficulties than others; in particular, the ability to adopt a cognitive style where youth change their behaviors to impact the environment is helpful to gifted youth of color

(Gardynik & McDonald, 2005). Despite the focus on resiliency of gifted youth within the literature, it is important to note that the robustness of these protective factors for Black youth is significantly weakened due to racism and institutional discrimination that significantly challenge all individuals of color in the United States (Ford, 1994).

The scholastic setting is rife with opportunities to be personally damaging to gifted Black youth. This is unsettling, particularly because schools are a primary agent of socialization for youth given the amount of time spent in their halls each day, the proximity of other youth, and opportunities for engagement (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The impact of violence exposure within a community extends far beyond the reach of an adolescent's school. However, schools are an important extension of the broader community. Recall that for all students impacted by community violence, engagement and identification with school is helpful in mitigating the damage from violence exposure (Ludwig & Warren, 2009). For gifted youth, who have an identity explicitly tied to academic potential, there is reason to assume that their scholastic experiences are not only different from their peers, but that their scholastic experiences interface more directly with the community than their peers'. An adolescent may only internalize the student identity while in school, but a gifted adolescent is gifted everywhere. Thus, a gifted adolescent's in-school experiences matter and may be a source of inspiration to act against injustice and community violence both within and outside of the school environment.

Summary

Empirical research surrounding risks and buffers frequently boils down complex phenomena by labeling them primarily in terms of the individual or their microsystems. Though individual psychological factors and social environments (schools, families) are

important to adolescent development, this narrow approach limits understanding. An adolescent's development, and the contexts in which this development occurs, do not exist in a vacuum—poverty and racism are not something an adolescent "experiences" as much as it is a complicated social process that permeates every aspect of their existence in their macrosystem. Institutional discrimination is not just a sociocultural obstacle for an individual Black adolescent to overcome, it shapes the structures with which they interact across systems—the kind of schools they attend; the stereotypes associated with their social engagement; the neighborhoods they live in; the interactions their families have with schools and other structures; and, yes, ultimately, one's individual positive identity development. But by reducing identity development solely to the individual, we miss not only opportunities for intervention and action, but also minimize the complex and dynamic social process of youth identity development.

Altogether, the state of the literature in these domains suggests a need for considering this personal development as it is situated in the intersecting domains of the personal, social, environmental, and cultural. The current study broadens the discussion of these factors within the lived experiences of gifted Black youth in a high-conflict community, in the hopes that taking a longitudinal approach to assessing how these factors contribute to prosocial and civically-oriented behaviors over time can inform current and future programs and policies.

Hypotheses

1. For all analyses, prior civic engagement behaviors (both in school and in the community) will increase the likelihood of later civic engagement outcomes.
    a. Attitudes about voting
    b. Community leadership engagement

c. Informal community participation involvement

2. The relationship between community violence exposure (through age 21) and attitudes about voting (at age 21) is moderated by experiences of discrimination, prior community engagement involvement, and prior scholastic civic engagement involvement.

3. The relationship between community violence exposure (through age 21) and community leadership engagement (at age 21) is moderated by experiences of discrimination, prior community engagement involvement, and prior scholastic civic engagement involvement.

4. The relationship between community violence exposure (through age 21) and informal community participation involvement (at age 21) is moderated by experiences of discrimination, prior community engagement involvement, and prior scholastic civic engagement involvement.

Hypothesized models are represented in Appendix A.

Method

Data for this study come from the Longitudinal Cohort Study of the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (Earls et al., 2005). Chicago is a particularly interesting case study for examining the relationship between community violence and development due to its long, notorious history of violent crimes. In 1992, two years before the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods began data collection, the homicide rate in the city of Chicago was 920 per one hundred thousand residents; 62 children were killed in gang-related violence the following year (Bentle et al.,

2020). 1992 marked the end of a "wave" of homicides occurring in Chicago which began in 1987 and impacted predominantly Black and impoverished neighborhoods (Vargas et al., 2020). Throughout these years, financial investment into the Chicago police department increased dramatically (simultaneously, non-punitive social programs to address crime lost funding), increasing the number of law enforcement officers and subsequently increasing arrests and other punitive measures (Vargas et al., 2020). Despite these efforts in increasing law enforcement presence in violent neighborhoods, homicides continued to rise throughout this period.

The reciprocal relationship between increased law enforcement funding and increases in homicide rates are not unique to this era of Chicago history; homicide waves in the 1920s, 1960s, and the most recent wave beginning in 2016 "consistently prioritized police heavy responses" (Vargas et al., 2020). Accordingly, these responses have produced increases in the number of law enforcement funding, law enforcement officers, and numbers and types of technologies used to monitor behavior in socioeconomically disadvantaged Black neighborhoods. Despite this well-documented relationship, police presence and punitive shifts in law enforcement policy have commonly been associated with decreased homicide rates in neighborhoods. As the homicide rate markedly diminished between 2004 and 2014, city officials were quick to praise improvements in utilization of statistics and data in fighting crime (Bentle et al., 2020). Despite these improvements, however, homicides once again sharply increased in 2016 and have remained persistently high. Conceptualizations of crime as the behavior of individual actors, which are the predominant driver of police-related policy, do not appear to be successful in mitigating homicides long-term despite their popularity. A systemic approach to understanding the relationship between individuals and

crime—or, lack thereof—is therefore warranted to assess whether and how there may be other mechanisms of social change which do not rely on an ever-increasing reliance on law enforcement in embattled communities.

Chicago is also a relevant case study in gifted education. In the 1980s, Chicago public schools served roughly 25,000 students across school-based, city, and regional centers (VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Notably, Chicago was known in this time period as one of the premier gifted programs in the country for meeting the needs of disadvantaged gifted students—a particularly noteworthy accomplishment given the homicide wave afflicting the urban core which began in 1987. The gifted program in Chicago public schools was one of the first large city systems to adopt the talent search concept (still in use today), and was also renowned for using multiple approaches in identifying gifted students—both traditional methods (ability, achievement, parent and teacher recommendations), and non-traditional approaches (off-level achievement testing, non-verbal tests) (VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Though Chicago lost some traction as an exemplar of gifted education into the 1990s (and lost state-level funding completely for a time beginning in 2003 [Gottlieb, 2019]), there is ample support for looking at the impact of gifted identification in school-aged youth in Chicago during this timeframe.

Sample

The Longitudinal Cohort Study of the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods is comprised of three waves of data (spanning seven age cohorts studied across seven years) from children, adolescents, young adults, and their primary caregivers. Respondents were selected through a three-stage sampling design. Eight hundred and forty-seven census tracts in Chicago were collapsed to form 343 neighborhood clusters on the basis

of geographic boundaries, contiguous census tracts, and homogeneity on key census indicators. These 343 neighborhood clusters were classified by socioeconomic status and racial-ethnic mix; from here, 80 neighborhoods were selected for study inclusion through stratified probability sampling. Within these 80 neighborhoods, block groups were randomly selected and all dwelling units within these block groups were contacted for study inclusion. Age cohorts consisted of the following ages: Birth (0), 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18; all children in the household within six months of these ages at Wave 1 were selected for study inclusion. Data collection was completed between 1994-1997 (Wave 1), 1997-1999 (Wave 2), and 2000-2001 (Wave 3). Approximately 40,000 dwelling units were identified for study inclusion; 80% of dwelling units responded to the initial in-person screening process. 8,347 children, youth, and adolescents were identified through the screening process; 6,228 completed Wave 1 interviews (for a response rate of 75%). Participants were paid between $5 and $20 for each interview measure they completed, dependent on age and wave of data collection (Tendulkar et al., 2012). A comprehensive, three-stage participant retention plan was utilized to decrease rates of attrition across all three waves (National Institute of Justice, 1997).

Analyses for this study will be conducted on Cohort 15, utilizing data from Waves 2 (1997-1999) and 3 (2000-2001). These participants, interviewed at approximately ages 15, 18, and 21, span the most optimal years for studying the transition between adolescence and young adulthood and how this developmental process may impact civic engagement behaviors. Though children younger than age 15 are certainly impacted by and think about community violence, examining this specific age cohort corresponds with the age in which developmental scholars (e.g., Piaget, Kohlberg) assume most youth are beginning to

approximate the kind of logic and moral decision-making processes that deliberation of community action likely requires (Schwartz, 2017). Additionally, youth in Cohort 15 would have been (on average) between 8 and 13 years old during the homicide wave of 1987 to 1992 and would have been in their early 20s at the beginning of the sudden decline in homicide rates. These youth are situated in a unique time in sociopolitical history wherein their exposure to and internalization of violent crimes was extremely high as children and adolescents, and crime rates dramatically decreased as they approached the full political and social agency of adulthood.

In Wave 1, 972 individuals were identified for study inclusion and 696 completed the interview (a response rate of 71.6%). In Waves 2 and 3, 694 and 691 of these participants completed interviews, respectively. From this sample, 123 respondents met inclusion criteria for the current study (on the basis of racial identity) and had responses for all measures of interest. (The original data collection incentivized participation by paying participants a small sum for each individual measure completed, likely contributing to the pattern of missing data on a measure-by-measure basis.)

Measures

Racial identification. Respondents' racial identification was ascertained both in demographic files in all three waves, as well as within a Personal Identity measure administered in Wave 3 (see additional details about this measure below). For the purposes of the current study, respondents' racial identification as outlined in the Personal Identity measure was utilized for study inclusion as items in the demographic surveys were answered by adult caregivers in earlier waves, and aligned more with Census categorization than a respondents' lived experience across all waves. For respondents who indicated that they

identify primarily with one racial group, those indicating that they identify as Black/African American were included in analyses. For respondents who indicated that they identify with more than one racial group, those respondents who indicated that they feel as if their Black/African American racial identity is predominant amongst their intersecting racial identities were included in analyses, in order to conduct analyses amongst respondents who were most likely to experience their Black or African American identity as salient to their daily lived experiences.

Giftedness. Giftedness was assessed by an item from a larger instrument about respondents' experiences in and around school that was administered in Wave 2. The question asked of respondents was "Thinking back to when you first started school, have you ever taken any of the following types of classes?" Respondents endorsing the answer "an advanced class, honors program, or program for gifted students" will be included in analyses.

Although study respondents' intellectual functioning was also assessed through the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Revised in Waves 1 and 2, academic courses were used as a proxy for giftedness for several reasons. This method avoids the potential introduction of racial bias alleged to be present in intelligence testing (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012). Broadening the eligibility to other merit-based courses (honors or advanced classes) allows for inclusion of respondents who may have been in school districts where gifted identification processes or gifted programming offerings were not in place. Teachers and school officials largely oppose the utilization of test scores as the sole indicator of giftedness, particularly in urban areas (Brown et al., 2005). Including all merit-based courses as indicators for study inclusion also preserves any non-testing based nominations from teachers towards these kinds of courses, though this presumption cannot be empirically validated.

Violence exposure. Respondents were interviewed about their exposure to violence utilizing the My Exposure to Violence (Subject and Young Adult) Instrument. This instrument inquired about respondents' exposure to violence in various locations and through a variety of means (being personally victimized, witnessing someone being victimized, or hearing about someone being victimized). Though the instrument was utilized in all three waves, the current study utilized responses from the instrument gathered in Wave 3 for two reasons: The Wave 3 instrument was much broader in scope, and inquired about violence exposure occurring in the entirety of the respondents' life (therefore including all available recollections of community violence for each respondent). For the purposes of this study, selected items from the instrument concerning personal accounts of community violence (threat to self, first-hand witnessing of threat to others, or acts of violence on close others) were utilized to create a composite community violence score such that higher scores indicate more experiences of violence. Notably, in both the original data collection and in the current study, these items were intended to assess for a breadth of lived experiences and therefore do not align with the tenets of Classical Test Theory. Consequently, traditional scale reliability or dimension reduction analyses would not be appropriate to apply to this composite and have been omitted from the analyses to follow.

Items were selected to only include items related to intra- and interpersonal experiences of community violence and excluded items pertaining to experiences of injury related to natural disasters and experiences of relational bullying of a non-discriminatory nature, as the etiology of and responses to these items are conceptually distinct from traditional community violence exposure. Example items include "Have you ever seen someone else get shot?" "In your whole life, have you ever been attacked with a weapon, like

a knife or bat?" "In your whole life, have you ever found out that someone you knew had been killed?"

Experiences of discrimination. Respondents were interviewed about a variety of aspects of personal identity in Wave 3, including their experiences of discrimination in different locations over the past year. For the purposes of this study, seven of the eight (see discussion of the eighth item below) items concerning experiences of discrimination were utilized to create a composite discrimination score such that higher scores indicate more experiences of discrimination. For reasons described above regarding the intended use of this composite, reliability analyses have been excluded from the analyses to follow. Example items include "In your own neighborhood," "When you were at work," and "When you met someone for the first time."

Law enforcement discrimination. One item from the discrimination items outlined above was retained as a separate variable in these analyses: Discrimination experienced "by the police." This item was retained separately as a function of the social power possessed by law enforcement. Though experiences of discrimination in community contexts often provoke emotional harm in individuals experiencing it, only law enforcement officials have the explicit social authority to maintain law—authority which often constitutes verbal assault, psychological intimidation, and use of force, particularly for Black individuals in U.S. society (Alang et al., 2017).

Community engagement. Community engagement was assessed as part of a larger instrument of items about respondents' experiences in and around school that was administered in Wave 2. The question asked of respondents was "In the last 12 months,

outside of school have you been involved in volunteer work?" Respondents answered yes or no to this item, which was utilized as a categorical moderator in the current study.

School civic engagement. School civic engagement was assessed as part of a larger instrument of items about respondents' experiences in and around school that was administered in Wave 2. The question asked of respondents was "In the last 12 months, at school have you been involved in student government or student council?" Respondents answered yes or no to this item, which was also utilized as a categorical moderator in the current study.

Informal community participation. Informal community participation was assessed as part of a larger instrument of items concerning community involvement administered in Wave 3. The question asked of respondents was "In the past year, have you gotten together informally with or worked with others in your community or neighborhood to try to deal with some community issues or problems?" Respondents answered yes or no to this item, which was utilized as a categorical outcome in the current study.

Community leadership. Community leadership was assessed as part of a larger instrument of items concerning community involvement administered in Wave 3. The question asked of respondents was "In the past year, have you served in a voluntary capacity on any local board, council, or organization that deals with community problems?" Respondents answered yes or no to this item, which was also utilized as a categorical outcome in the current study.

Voting attitudes. Voting attitudes were assessed as part of a larger instrument of items concerning community involvement administered in Wave 3. The question asked of respondents was "How important do you consider voting to be?" Available responses were

"Not very important," "Somewhat important," and "Very important." For the purposes of the current study, these responses were treated as a continuous variable.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Within this cohort, 123 individuals met criteria for sample inclusion (identified as Black/African American and had responses to all questionnaires of interest). Within the sample, there were no instances of any missing item-level data. Descriptive statistics for the sample across all model variables are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Frequencies of categorical variables (N = 123)

Measure	Yes	No
Youth Volunteerism	47	76
Youth Student Government	28	95
Giftedness	60	63
Gender (Male)	54	69
Police Discrimination	53	70
Community Leadership	14	109
Informal Community Engagement	19	104

Table 2[1]
Means and standard deviations for continuous variables

Measure	*M*	*SD*
Voting Importance	1.33	.57
Violence Exposure	10.07	3.77
Experiences of Discrimination	1.29	1.32

[1] Range, minimum, and maximum values cannot be reported as a function of data use restrictions.

A comparison of Mahalanobis Distances of the three quantitative variables (experiences of community violence, experiences of discrimination, and voting importance) to a chi-square distribution with 3 degrees of freedom indicated that there were no multivariate outliers present in the sample. The risk of multicollinearity between variables was assessed via variance inflation factors (VIF); all VIF statistics for the model predicting voting behaviors were less than 1.3, indicating no risk of multicollinearity.

Experiences of community violence exposure was roughly normally distributed; however, experiences of discrimination and voting importance were both skewed (such that the majority of respondents endorsed very few incidents of discrimination and a high importance in voting, respectively), likely as a function of restricted ranges in the available response set. Experiences of discrimination was only mildly skewed (skewness = .57, kurtosis = -.98), while importance of voting was highly skewed (skewness = 1.56, kurtosis = 1.48). Importance of voting was subsequently collapsed into a dummy variable and run in a logistic regression; however, model results did not vary greatly as a result of this dichotomization. In light of this, the originally proposed OLS regression model to predict this outcome has been retained in the analysis.

Chi-square, *t*-test, and Pearson correlation results. To explore bivariate relationships between model variables, cross-tabulations of all pairs of dichotomous variables (chi-square distribution), *t*-tests between all pairs of dichotomous and continuous variables, and Pearson correlations between all pairs of continuous variables were requested. Cross-tabulations indicated that relationships between model variables and prior civic engagement behaviors (participation in volunteer work and participation in student government) were dependent. Both of these variables were associated with community leadership behaviors and

student volunteerism was associated with informal community engagement—suggesting that engaging in one or both of these behaviors in school makes later engagement in community settings more likely to occur. Though giftedness was not originally included in the hypothesized models, the proportion of gifted individuals in the sample afforded an opportunity to explore potential relationships with outcomes of interest. Giftedness was associated with both volunteerism and student government participation, indicating that being identified as gifted makes participation in these pursuits more likely. The relationship between volunteerism and student government participation was also significant; individuals who participate in one are also more likely to participate in the other. There was also a significant association between gender and student government participation (being male increases the likelihood of engaging in student government) and gender and discrimination by law enforcement (being male increases the likelihood of experiencing police-based discrimination). Given these findings, gender and giftedness are included as controls when testing hypotheses. Results for all of the cross-tabulations between dichotomous model variables are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Relationships between dichotomous model variables using chi-square distribution (N = 123)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Informal Community Participation	--						
2. Community Leadership	*ns*	--					
3. Gender	*ns*	*ns*	--				
4. Giftedness	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	--			
5. Police Discrimination	*ns*	*ns*	10.26***	ns	--		
6. Youth Student Government	*ns*	10.62***	5.26*	16.15***	*ns*	--	

7. Youth Volunteerism	5.92*	15.10*	*ns*	11.35**	*ns*	7.78**	--

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Across the pairs of continuous and dichotomous variables, only experiences of discrimination (non-law enforcement) differed as a relationship of group membership. Specifically, there was a significant difference in experiences of discrimination between individuals who did or did not endorse participation in community leadership activities ($t[121] = -2.157$, $p = .033$) and who did or did not endorse experiencing discrimination by law enforcement ($t[121] = -3.211$, $p = .002$).

Pearson correlations between the three pairs of continuous variables were non-significant; these correlations are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Pearson correlation between pairs of continuous variables

Measure	Voting Importance	Violence Exposure	Experiences of Discrimination
Voting Importance	--		
Violence Exposure	.135	--	
Experiences of Discrimination	.081	.142	--

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Main Analysis

Hypotheses 1a and 2: Predicting voting attitudes via OLS regression. An ordinary least squares regression analysis was performed to predict the reported importance of voting as a function of gender, giftedness, violence exposure, experiences of discrimination, experiences of discrimination from law enforcement, and previous scholastic civic engagement activities (participation in student government, volunteer work). The overall regression model including all seven predictors was not statistically significant, $R = .19$, R^2

= .04, adjusted R^2 = -.02, $F(7, 115) = .62$, $p = .74$. An examination of *t* ratios for individual regression slopes revealed that none of the predictors were predictive of voting attitudes when controlling for the other variables in the model. Results for this standard multiple regression are summarized in Table 5. Importantly, performing this regression analysis with forward entry (threshold for inclusion at .10) also did not identify any of these predictors as significant. A review of main effects revealed no significant moderating relationships in this model.

Table 5
Hypotheses 1a and 2: Predicting voting importance via OLS regression

Variable	Estimate (B)	SE	*95% CI*		*p*
			LL	UL	
Constant	1.08	.17	.75	1.42	<.001
Gender	.03	.11	-.20	.25	.83
Violence	.02	.01	-.01	.05	.18
Discrimination	.01	.04	-.07	.09	.84
Giftedness	-.02	.12	-.25	.21	.88
Police Discrimination	.06	.11	-.16	.29	.59
Youth Student Government	-.13	.14	-.40	.14	.35
Youth Volunteerism	.09	.11	-.13	.32	.41

Hypotheses 1b and 3: Predicting community leadership engagement via logistic regression. A binary logistic regression analysis was performed to predict the likelihood of engaging in community leadership activities as a function of gender, giftedness, violence exposure, experiences of discrimination, experiences of discrimination from law enforcement, and previous scholastic civic engagement activities (participation in student government, volunteer work). A test of this full model, compared to the null model, was statistically significant, $X^2(7) = 22.93$, $p = .002$. The strength of association between model

variables and informal community engagement was moderately strong; Cox and Snell's R^2 = .17 and Nagelkerke's R^2 = .335.

Engagement in volunteerism (as an eighteen year old) was the only statistically significant variable in the equation predicting community leadership engagement outcomes: B = 2.31, Wald $X^2(1) = 7.67$, $p = .006$. Exp(B) = 10.11, indicating that the odds of later community leadership engagement tend to be higher for individuals who endorsed volunteer behavior at younger ages. Involvement in scholastic student government was statistically significant at the more liberal threshold of $p < .10$ (B = 1.31, Wald $X^2[1] = 3.20$, $p = .073$, Exp[B] = 3.70), providing some evidence that involvement in student government serves to increase the likelihood of engaging in later community leadership activities. Results for this logistic regression are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Hypotheses 1b and 3: Predicting involvement in in community leadership via logistic regression, standard entry

Variable	Estimate (B)	SE	Wald's X^2	*df*	*p*	Exp(B)
Constant	-4.43	1.33	11.08	1	<.001	.01
Gender	.09	.77	.01	1	.909	1.09
Police Discrimination	-.10	.78	.02	1	.897	.90
Giftedness	-.19	.74	.06	1	.800	.83
Youth Student Government	1.31	.73	3.20	1	.073	3.70
Youth Volunteerism	2.31	.84	7.67	1	.006	10.11
Discrimination	.42	.28	2.29	1	.130	1.52
Violence	-.01	.10	.003	1	.955	.10

In order to allow for a more exploratory probe into theorized model relationships a second logistic regression with forward stepwise variable entry (inclusion $p = .10$) was performed. This more liberal threshold also served to compensate, to a degree, for the limited cell sizes (less than five) across some combinations of dichotomous predictors (not reported here due to data use agreements) and to identify potential control variables warranting further testing for homogeneity of regression.

This new model enhanced some of the relationships between model variables and the outcome variable. In this model, three variables were retained: Involvement in student government, volunteer work as a student, and experiences of discrimination. The relationship between previous involvement in student government and community leadership became more significant (B = 1.25, Wald X^2[1]) = 3.65, $p = .056$, Exp[B] = 3.49) once other model variables were no longer being controlled for. The relationship between previous volunteer work with regards to later community leadership (B = 2.27, Wald X^2[1] = 7.74, $p = .005$) also strengthened in this new model (Exp[B] = 9.69). Experiences of discrimination emerged as a significant predictor in this new model, once other variables were no longer being controlled; B = .413, Wald $X^2(1) = 2.83$, $p = .093$, Exp(B) = 1.51, suggesting that at a more liberal threshold and in the absence of other controls an increase in experiences of discrimination increases the likelihood of engaging in community leadership positions. Results for this logistic regression are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7
Hypotheses 1b and 3: Predicting involvement in in community leadership via logistic regression, forward entry, inclusion = .10

Variable	Estimate (B)	SE	Wald's *X2*	*df*	*p*	Exp(B)
Constant	-4.55	.88	26.59	1	<.001	.01
Youth Student Government	1.25	.65	3.65	1	.056	3.49
Youth Volunteerism	2.27	.82	7.74	1	.005	9.69
Discrimination	.41	.25	2.83	1	.093	1.51

Hypotheses 1c and 4: Predicting informal community engagement via logistic regression. A binary logistic regression analysis was performed to predict the likelihood of engaging in informal community engagement activities as a function of gender, giftedness, violence exposure, experiences of discrimination, experiences of discrimination from law enforcement, and previous scholastic civic engagement activities (participation in student government, volunteer work). A test of this full model, compared to the null model, was statistically non-significant, $X^2(7) = 9.62$, $p = .211$. The strength of association between model variables and informal community engagement was relatively weak; Cox and Snell's $R^2 = .08$ and Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .13$.

Engagement in volunteerism while in school was the only statistically significant variable in the equation predicting informal community engagement outcomes: B = 1.25, Wald $X^2(1) = 4.85$, $p = .028$. Exp(B) = 3.48, indicating that the odds of later informal community engagement tend to be higher for individuals who endorsed volunteer behavior at younger ages. Experiences of community violence were statistically significant at a more liberal threshold (B = .13, Wald $X^2[1] = 2.78$, $p = .095$, Exp[B] = 1.14), providing some evidence that increases in community violence exposure serve to increase the likelihood of engaging in informal community engagement activities. A second logistic regression with

forward stepwise variable entry (inclusion $p = .10$) did not greatly enhance the relationships between the outcome variable for either volunteer work as a student (B = 1.25, Wald $X^2[1]$) = 5.64, $p = .018$. Exp(B) = 3.50) or exposure to community violence (B = .12, Wald $X^2[1]$) = 2.74, $p = .098$. Exp(B) = 1.13), suggesting that these relationships remain significant even after controlling for other model variables. Results for this logistic regression with standard entry are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Hypotheses 1c and 4: Predicting informal community engagement via logistic regression, standard entry

Variable	Estimate (B)	SE	Wald's *X2*	*df*	*p*	Exp(B)
Constant	-3.82	1.03	13.81	1	<.001	.02
Gender	-.22	.58	.14	1	.705	.80
Police Discrimination	.17	.60	.08	1	.782	1.18
Giftedness	.23	.57	.16	1	.690	1.26
Youth Student Government	-.43	.67	.41	1	.520	.65
Youth Volunteerism	1.25	.57	4.85	1	.028	3.48
Discrimination	.12	.21	.30	1	.582	1.13
Violence	.13	.08	2.78	1	.095	1.14

Post-hoc analyses and results from bivariate analyses. In predicting community leadership involvement from giftedness and experiences of discrimination, there was a significant interaction between the two variables (B = -1.30, Wald $X^2[1]$) = 4.65, $p = .031$,

Exp[B] = .272), suggesting that experiencing higher levels of discrimination increases the likelihood of engaging in community leadership activities for individuals who do not identify as gifted (Figure 1). There was also a significant interaction between giftedness and student government participation in predicting community leadership (B = -5.13, Wald X^2[1]) = 9.40, p = .002, Exp[B] = .006), suggesting a slight increase in the likelihood of engaging in community leadership as a function of having participated in student government, again only for individuals who do not identify as gifted (Figure 2). There was no evidence of any significant interaction effects in predicting informal community engagement.

Figure 1
Interaction plot for community leadership involvement as a function of discrimination experiences and giftedness

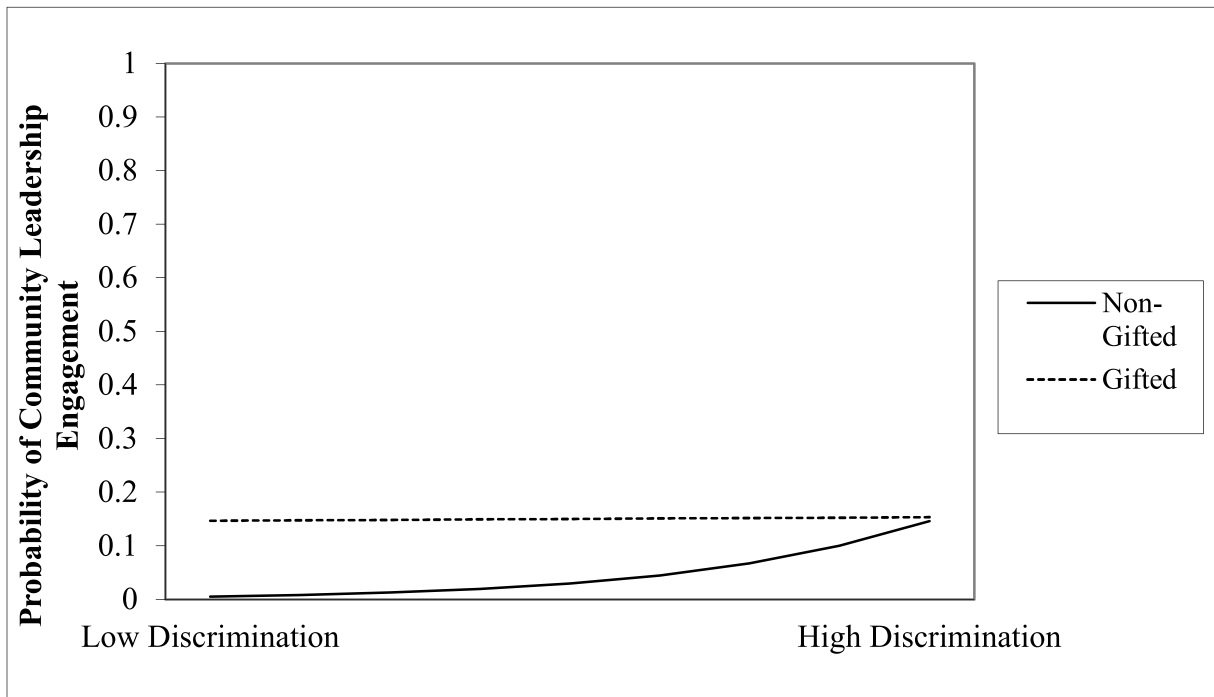
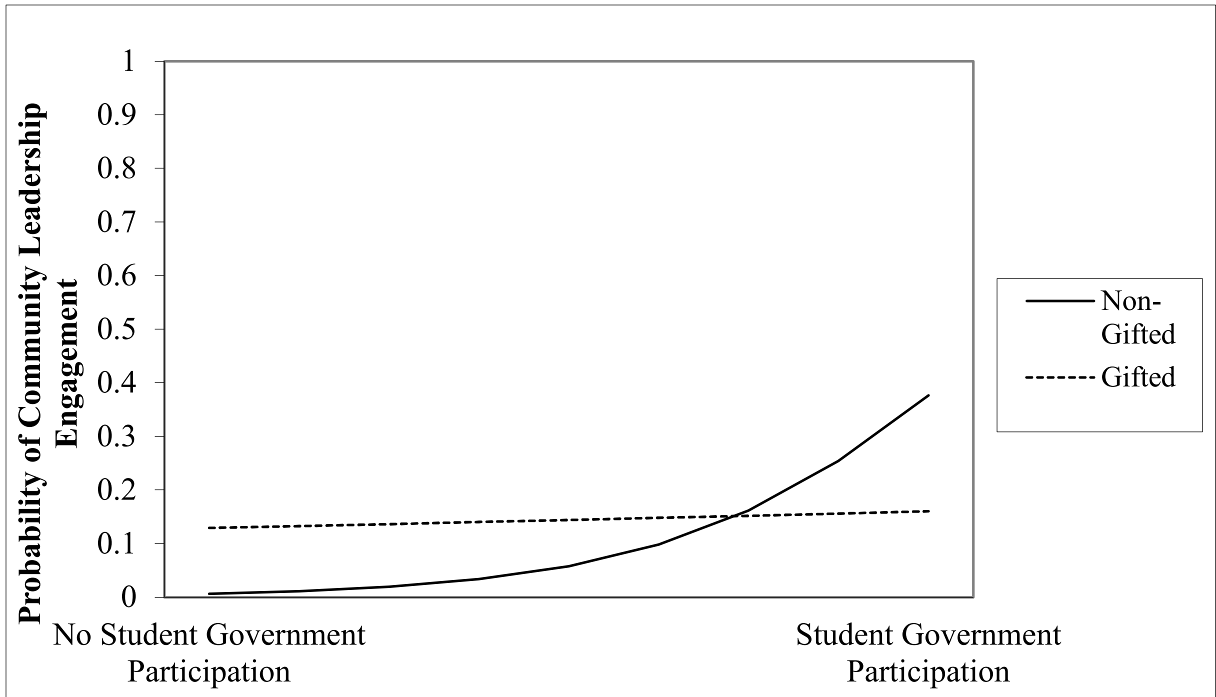


Figure 2
Interaction plot for community leadership involvement as a function of student government involvement and giftedness



Discussion

Summary of Results

Across analyses, it is evident that factors more proximal to the individual—at the levels of the person and the microsystem in particular—hold the most explanatory power in predicting both formal and informal civic engagement behaviors in early adulthood. Specifically, affordances in youths' communities and schools (and by extension the ability to engage meaningfully in prosocial community and scholastic pursuits), were far and away the most meaningful contributors to these outcomes. Additionally, gifted identification also impacted the relationship between model variables (at both the microsystem and exosystem levels) and formal civic engagement outcomes. Surprisingly, exosystem factors (discrimination, community violence exposure) were not particularly important contributors to most analyses, suggesting that it is who you are and where you go—and not who you

know—that matters most in predicting civic engagement behaviors, even in embattled communities.

Voting behaviors. The model predicting voting behaviors was the only hypothesized model which failed to produce a single significant predictor variable. Voting behaviors could not be predicted by gender, violence exposure, experiences of discrimination, giftedness, discrimination by police, or participation in student government or volunteerism as youth (Hypotheses 1a and 2). These predictors were not significant in tandem, nor were any of these predictors significant in isolation. Although the relationship between identity and voting behaviors is complicated (as described above), the failure to find any significant relationship in this model was surprising given the evidence to support that intentions to vote for Black youth are influenced by perceived inequality (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Ostensibly, perceived inequality could be related to several model variables (experiences of discrimination, discrimination by law enforcement) in this sample.

Though it is possible that none of these variables are truly predictive of voting behaviors, the measurement of voting behaviors is also worth examining. In this data collection, voting behaviors were measured on a three-item scale: "Not very important," "Somewhat important," and "Very important." It seems likely that these three response options do not encapsulate the full variability in beliefs about voting importance that could exist in the population. Such a restricted range of response options could underestimate the association between this outcome and any of the predictors in this model (Frey, 2018).

Additionally, the question presented to respondents was based on voting *attitudes*, and did not inquire about *intent* to vote or about the respondents' actual voter registration status (for which respondents would have been eligible in Waves 2 and 3). While attitudes

are one aspect of behavior, other indicators such as reported intention to vote (Ajzen et al., 1982), social motivation, and/or self-efficacy beliefs (Glasford, 2008) would likely be more robust indicators of true voting behavior.

An alternative (or additional) consideration involves the prevailing social norms about voting that were present at the time of the data collection. Participants were asked about voting intentions in Wave 3, occurring across years 2000 and 2001—just before, during, and just after the contentious 2000 election of George W. Bush. Only 55% of the eligible population voted in the 2000 Presidential election, following up a record low turnout (54%) in the 1996 Presidential election (Jamieson et al., 2002). Though Black individuals were partially responsible for the slight improvement in voter turnout in 2000, this was counterbalanced by the relatively low turnout by young adults in this election: Amongst voters ages 18 to 24, only 36% of registered voters cast a ballot in the 2000 election (Lopez et al., 2005). This low level of turnout in national elections is not surprising, given that youth from historically marginalized communities report feeling alienated from civic life and that their voices and views are underrepresented in the political process (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, n.d.). Integrated voter engagement programs, responsible for the registration of 4.5 million eligible voters in the latter half of the first decade of the millennium, did not begin in many metropolitan areas in earnest until the mid-2000s (Root & Kennedy, 2019). The apathy reflected by many young adults towards coming out to vote in national elections, in tandem with stagnant efforts to increase voter turnout among this group at this time, may have also affected the way this variable functioned in the analyses.

Another possible explanation for the unexpected pattern of results related to voting outcomes may be rooted in the way that youth are exposed to electoral processes. Research shows that discussing political issues with peers increases youth's intentions to vote as well as their actual participation in electoral processes, while exposure to politically-related news or discussing political issues with parents have much more limited impact (Šerek & Umemura, 2015). However, youth are not presented with many opportunities to engage in meaningful political conversations with peers in a structured environment. Additionally, civics education often teaches the facts of a country's political processes without giving voice to the actual *process* of voting and what it requires nor the barriers young people face when attempting to engage politically in society (Bessant, 2010). The relationship between voting attitudes, voting behaviors, and any of the variables in the hypothesized models may have been impacted by the discrepancy between aspirational ideas about the voting process and the actual reality of what voting entails.

Community leadership involvement. The model predicting involvement in community leadership as a function of gender, violence exposure, experiences of discrimination, giftedness, discrimination by police, and participation in student government and volunteerism as youth was significant (Hypotheses 1b and 3). However, this model was primarily driven by the predictive impact of youth volunteerism (and, at a more liberal threshold, participation in youth student government and experiences of discrimination).

In this and the other two models, experiences of discrimination and exposure to community violence were not as strong predictors of civic engagement outcomes as was expected, given the robust amount of literature supporting these linkages. In this data collection effort, respondents were asked about whether they had experienced a form of

discrimination or been exposed to violence in a particular situation and/or in a particular place. In the current study, endorsement of a greater variety of these instances was coded as a higher level of exposure to both discriminatory actions and violent events. However, this approach (and the instruments used in the original data collection) does not account for the *severity* of events experienced. It is probable that these measurements are not perfect indicators of a respondent's lived experiences. For example, a respondent who only witnessed violence in one locationwould code as having a lower amount of violence exposure as someone who had witnessed violence in a variety of settings, regardless of the severity of the violent events (e.g., witnessing a murder at one time would code as less exposure than witnessing violent threats in a number of situations) Notably, other indicators of violence exposure in the United States also utilize a similar quantifying approach to structural and interpersonal violence as used here (e.g., The National Index of Violence and Harm [NIVAH]; Brumbaugh-Smith et al., 2008). However, NIVAH utilizes a great many more number and variety of variables across their indicators, and applies different statistical adjustments (i.e., geometric mean) for their measurements.

From a theoretical perspective, an alternative explanation for the behavior of these variables in the analyses is that negative life events—even, and perhaps especially, at the level of severity that community violence and experiencing discrimination entail—are not enough to spur the civic engagement outcomes studied here. These experiences may need to be intentionally contextualized, either by an outside influence (schools, family, etc.) or by the individual (e.g., via giftedness [Bronk et al., 2010; Hay et al., 2007]) as a catalyst for engagement.

Informal community engagement. Similarly, the model predicting informal community engagement behaviors as a function of gender, violence exposure, experiences of discrimination, giftedness, discrimination by police, or participation in student government or volunteerism as youth was also non-significant (Hypotheses 1c and 4). However, this model did produce one significant predictor variable, participation in volunteer activities in youth. It is likely that some expected significant relationships did not emerge due to methodological considerations in the data collection (discussed above) and other sample factors (discussed below).

Post-hoc analyses. Post-hoc analyses revealed some interaction effects which were not originally hypothesized; namely, that giftedness is significantly related to community leadership behaviors as a function of an interaction with experiences of discrimination and in participation in student government in youth. Giftedness was also significantly related to participation in volunteerism in youth in chi square analyses. Similarly, gender emerged as significant only in a few cross-tabulations.

The behavior of giftedness and gender in these analyses is important to consider as these are the only two variables across the models which are inherently identity-related (as compared to what a respondent has passively experienced, or what a respondent has chosen behaviorally to do). Giftedness emerged as a significant interaction with student government participation, which is unsurprising given the known endorsement of school activities/clubs amongst this group of youth (Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2004). Similarly, gender only emerged as significant in chi-squared analyses with student government involvement and experiences of discrimination by law enforcement, with males in this study being more likely to experience both. The former point is not surprising, given the known difficulties

experienced by women in high school (Erdol, 2018) and college student government associations (Workman et al., 2020), as well as the lack of representation of women in local and national politics (Center for American Women in Politics, 2021).

These results provide support for the idea that giftedness is related to moral identity development and prosocial behavior. Across both interactions, the relationship between the predictor (experiences of discrimination or participation in student government, respectively) and community leadership engagement was constant for gifted individuals, while these experiences significantly mattered for future involvement for non-gifted individuals. Though an impactful instigating event has been noted as essential for the highest levels of moral identity (Bronk, 2012), it seems that for the gifted individuals in this sample, the emotional intelligence inherent in that facet of identity may be, in and of itself, the "instigating event" that prolonged prosocial, civic engagement involvement requires (Moran, 2009).

The relationship between gender and law enforcement discrimination runs counter to other findings which suggest that law enforcement discrimination functions similarly by gender (e.g., Ritchie & Jones-Brown, 2017). However, discriminatory practices by law enforcement towards women tend to gravitate towards sexuality-oriented profiling (particularly of sex workers) and sexual misconduct. Such profiling may have been under-disclosed due to stigma, or may have been experienced less frequently in the years before the FOSTA (Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act) and SESTA (Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act) bills were passed by Congress in 2018. Furthermore, in this data set, sexual misconduct by any party towards the respondent would have more likely been accounted for in questions related to community violence.

Limitations

The current study benefitted from both the breadth and depth of data collected from such a large sample over an extended timeframe. These kinds of longitudinal data collections—particularly with such a robust participation rate and low rate of attrition—are rare and allow a unique glimpse into aspects of human behavior, particularly in such a sensitive period of developmental growth as adolescence and early adulthood. However, despite these strengths, the current study also suffers from limitations extending from some of these same identified strengths. The data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods is dated, with the most recent data collection occurring in 2001. Though the data are useful for making inferences about human behavior broadly, and specifically for this particular cohort of individuals, these data are less useful in making generalizable inferences to today's population of adolescents and young adults. In particular, today's cohort of young people influence—and are influenced by—internet communication, social media, and other advances which are likely to influence the ways in which they interact with their communities, a phenomenon which is not able to be considered in these data.

Furthermore, although the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods enjoyed a robust participation and retention rate, the method of data collection (several dozen interview protocols, each individually incentivized with a cash payment) contributed to an erratic response rate to several interview protocols of interest, leaving only a proportion of participants eligible for inclusion in this study on the basis of missing data. Given the pattern of missing data (data missing by measure and not by item), it seems likely that measures given earlier in the interview protocol were more likely to be completed than measures later in the protocol (which may have been impacted by fatigue, the

order of measures given, or other factors). This substantially reduced the available sample size, which subsequently reduced statistical power available for making more confident claims of relationships between variables.

It should also be noted that neither available measure of giftedness (IQ scores and participation in gifted programs/honors classes) in this study are necessarily ideal indicators of the latent construct of giftedness. Teacher nominations are the gold standard in moral development research, as teachers and other important adults are often in a better position to evaluate youth on several standards of gifted behavior beyond mere academic prowess (Bronk et al., 2013; Hart & Fegley, 1995, among others). Though the utilization of honors, gifted, and advanced classes in this study presumably draws on teacher nominations (for entrance into such coursework) to a degree, future research would benefit from assessing giftedness from a more comprehensive standpoint.

Assessing students beyond their academic course load may also offer additional benefits with regards to truly gauging the extent and benefits of engagement in extracurricular activities while in school. While the "overscheduling" phenomenon as it related to adolescent over-involvement in extracurriculars to the detriment of their academic functioning is now thought to be over-emphasized in popular culture (Fredricks, 2012), there could be very real impact on both breadth and depth of involvement across different *academic* statuses (gifted program, honors classes, and advanced classes) which could be impacting the degree to which students feel they have the time to commit meaningfully to some pursuits above and beyond their academic commitments.

Implications for Future Practice and Research

The most prevalent theme across the significant relationships observed from this data suggest that it is what youth *choose* to do, more than who they are or what happens to them, that influences the likelihood of lifelong (or, at least, young adult) engagement in prosocial and civically-minded pursuits. Schools are one such environment which may offer opportunities for this kind of engagement, given the amount of time students spend in school, as well as the positive impact of participation in student government activities on these kinds of outcomes. Extending beyond the traditional conceptualization of student government as the informal foray into civic engagement for youth, advocates for youth development may want to expand upon efforts to work with teachers and schools to connect curricula and projects to community issues students find important and meaningful (Ludwig & Warren, 2009).

However, schools are not the only—or even most significant—environment where youth are expending energy in pursuits that make future prosocial behavior more likely. Across two of the three hypothesized models in this study, youth volunteerism in the community was the strongest predictor of later civic engagement behaviors, even after controlling for other hypothesized relationships. Much has been written about the importance of targeted, specific intervention programs to ameliorate the negative impacts of community violence exposure in childhood and adolescence, particularly with regards to mental health symptomology (Hardaway et al., 2016; Kohl et al., 2015; Kennedy & Ceballo, 2016; Suglia et al., 2010) and socioemotional intelligence (Stokes & Jackson, 2014). However, results from the current study indicate that the act of dedicating time to a prosocial pursuit outside of oneself, regardless of the extent of interpersonal or institutional violence an individual has experienced, pays tremendous dividends in terms of future behavior. Youth advocates may

find that encouraging young people to get involved in some kind of volunteer effort may be just as—if not more—impactful for long-term civic engagement than the creation of specific kinds of academic projects or major curriculum shifts in the school setting. In any community where volunteer opportunities are available and safe to participate in, youth who are encouraged to and follow through with engaging can reap these benefits regardless of their individual school's capacity for making structural or educational shifts. This is particularly optimistic for students in urban areas, where school districts traditionally suffer from under-funding and associated difficulties with creating new programming (Jargowsky et al., 2016, p. 102); however, this also benefits students across scholastic contexts more generally. Though schools may be important incubators for civic identity exploration (e.g., Kirshner, 2009), schools also have unique constraints (in comparison to community spaces) that may impede this facet of identity development. The climate of a school, or even a classroom within a school, is context-dependent and not quickly amenable to change (Barber et al., 2021, p. 309). Schools and teachers are tasked with numerous, sometimes conflicting, goals: Increase student's civic knowledge, but do not discuss controversial issues (McAvoy & Hess, 2013), detract from the importance of standardized testing (Fitchett et al., 2014), or deviate from political neutrality (Journell, 2012). Schools bear the brunt of the difficulty of navigating these pressures (Barber et al., 2021, p. 300), leaving schools differentially suited to providing the kinds of environments necessary for the development of civic attitudes and behaviors. Situating this learning back into community spaces allows for a potentially more generalizable set of circumstances from which to study this phenomenon.

From an empirical perspective, other implications for future work extending from this current study concern methodological practices, particularly in large-scale quantitative data

collection concerning complex interpersonal experiences such as violence exposure and experiences of discrimination. Although qualitative procedures can allow for rich descriptions of amount, type, and severity of experiences, this method of data collection and interpretation is obviously untenable for large-scale data collection efforts. However, future research should examine ways in which an increased amount of depth can be adequately and psychometrically achieved from the quantitative instruments utilized to assess these experiences, so that future research can more confidently speak to these important nuances of highly impactful individual experiences.

APPENDIX

Moderated Regression Models

Figure A1: Proposed relationship between violence exposure, previous school civic engagement, previous community volunteerism, experience of discrimination, discrimination by law enforcement, and attitudes toward voting.

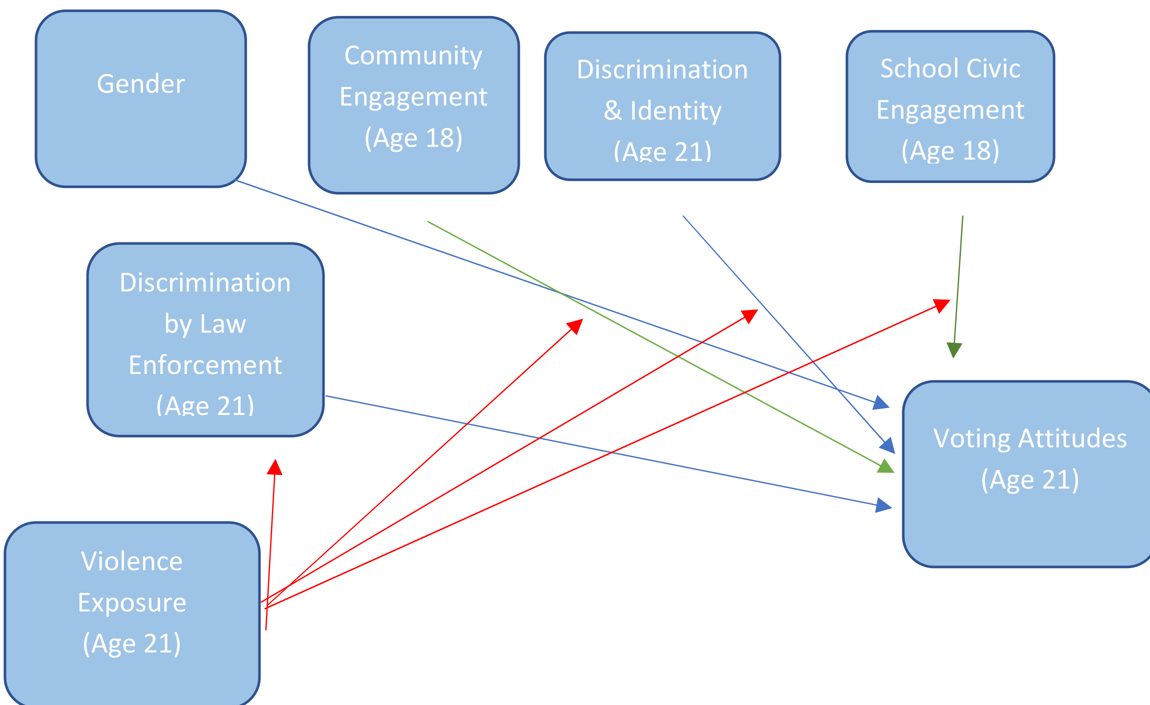


Figure A2: Proposed relationship between violence exposure, previous school civic engagement, previous community volunteerism, experience of discrimination, discrimination by law enforcement and community leadership involvement.

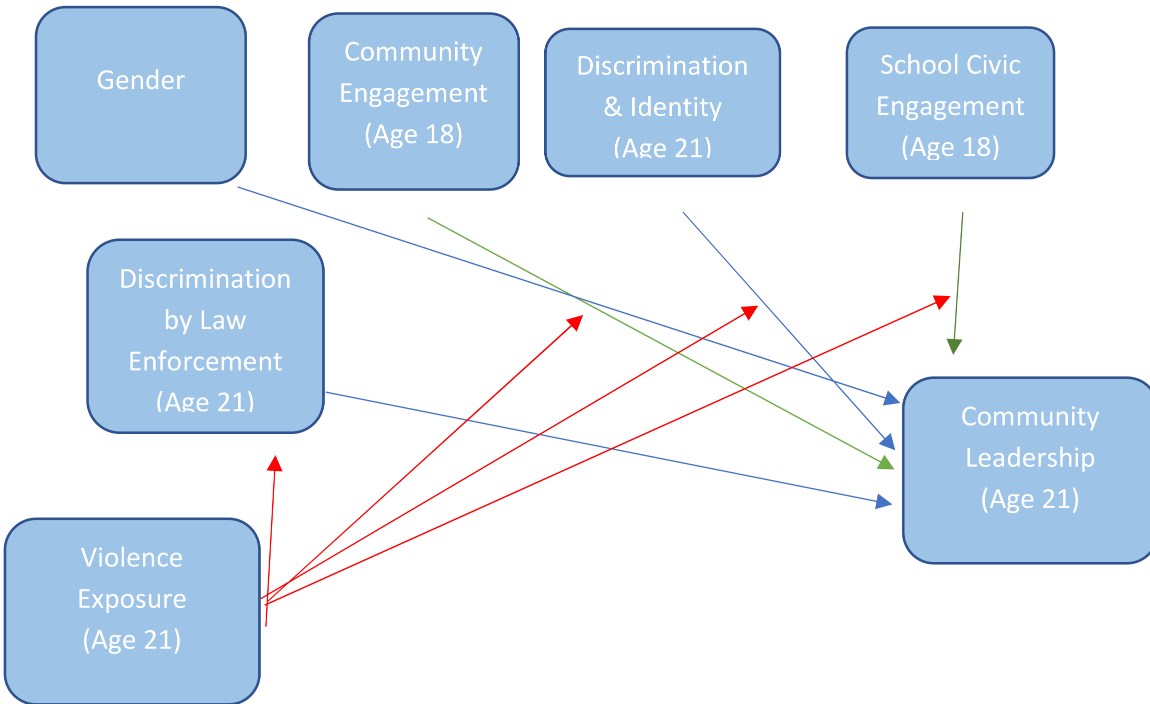
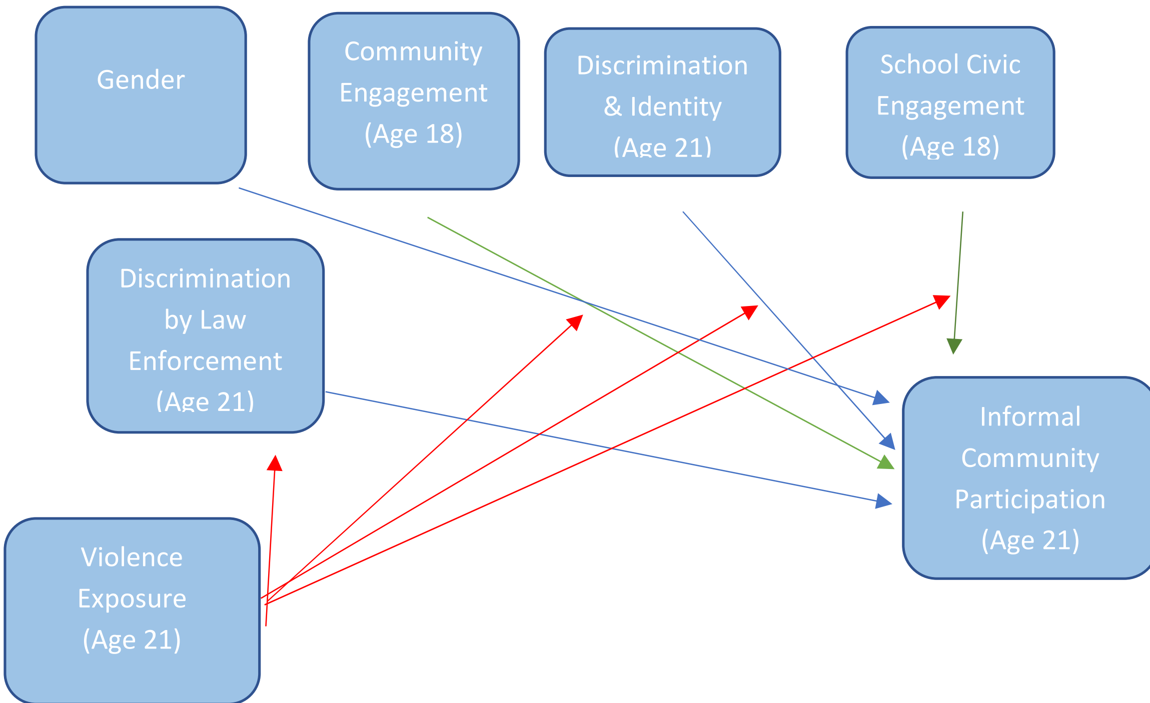


Figure A3: Proposed relationship between violence exposure, previous school civic engagement, previous community volunteerism, experience of discrimination, discrimination by law enforcement and community leadership involvement.



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VITA

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