

Students' High School Organizational Leadership Opportunities and Their Influences on Academic Achievement and Civic Participation

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze high school leadership praxis for its inclusion of students in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making and the influences of these factors on student achievement and civic participation. Survey questionnaire data were provided by 215 full-time enrolled undergraduate students from a public Southeastern university. Using social design theory and distributed leadership theory as the theoretical foundation, principal component analysis, regression analysis, and a *t*-test were conducted to develop a valid and reliable survey instrument and analyze the data. The components of organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making found to influence student achievement and civic participation were: providing students with opportunities to consider, discuss, and engage in dialogue concerning different stakeholders' diverse views and values, and to have involvement in decision-making for the school; the school having an effective committee structure; school leaders facilitating effective communication; and stakeholders having an appropriate level of autonomy in decision-making.

Keywords: high school leadership, distributed leadership, school culture, student voice, civic education, organizational leadership dialogue, participatory decision-making

Educational research on school leadership contributes to improved practice and student achievement outcomes. Twenty-five percent of student learning can be attributed to school leadership variables, compared to 33% attributed to classroom factors (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 21). Distributed leadership researchers Spillane and Healey (2010, p. 254) argued that "more descriptive work is necessary to improve our understanding of how leadership is distributed in schools so that we can then explore how these arrangements influence school outcomes." Educational researchers and practitioners currently lack data to inform their practice regarding how high school students think they have been included in the organizational leadership dialogue, including participative decision-making, of their high schools. The dimensions of distributed leadership in different educational settings require further exploration to inform practice (Robinson, 2008). Researchers are beginning to explore the role of students in high school distributed leadership structures (Fusarelli, Kowalski, & Petersen, 2011; Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012) and the "operations and measures when taking

a distributed perspective in school leadership and management research” (Spillane & Healey, 2010, p. 253). Student voice in educational research and practice, particularly in the domain of organizational leadership dialogue and participative decision-making for high schools, essentially students having a say in school leadership, has been underutilized.

Robinson (2008) calls for more research examining leadership from the perspectives of those being led to determine the effects of leadership practices. This is the influential component of leadership, as distinguished from the distributed leadership tasks, in what Robinson (2008, p. 246) refers to as “distributed leadership as distributed influence processes.” In her call for research investigating this topic, she advises a focus on “followership rather than leadership and seek information about sources of influence” (Robinson, 2008, p. 248). As a result, by reviewing students’ perceptions of their high schools’ leadership practices, it is intended that this study will fill a research gap by ascertaining whether students who perceived opportunities to participate in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making in high school benefit them in college.

The research questions are:

1. Do undergraduate students perceive they had opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making?
2. What are the components that define organizational leadership dialogue and participative decision-making?
3. Are there significant relationships between individuals’ factor scores and student achievement?
4. Are there significant relationships between individuals’ factor scores and civic participation?
5. Are there significant differences in academic achievement and civic participation between students who perceive they had opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making compared to students who perceive they did not?

The theoretical foundation of this study is comprised of social design theory (Jun, 1986; Jun, 2006; Jun & Storm, 1990) and distributed leadership theory (Harris, 2008; Hulpia, Devos, & Keer, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Social design theory was developed by Jun (1986) and is used to study public administration through the lens of critical theory and constructivism paradigms. This theory relies on the assertion that solutions to public problems can be effectively developed through engaging stakeholders in a democratic process (Jun, 1986; Jun, 2006; Jun & Storm, 1990). Social design theory has yet to be applied to the field of educational leadership. The application of social design theory to the field of educational leadership praxis may create opportunities to incorporate student voice in school leadership and possibly improve student achievement outcomes. As applied to this study and informing the hypotheses, social design theory holds that one would expect the independent variables of students’ perceived opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making to influence the dependent variables of academic achievement and civic participation.

Distributed leadership is the other component of the theoretical foundation for this study. Distributed leadership approaches include a diverse array of stakeholders in the decision-making process of organization leadership and additionally allocate power and tasks to a variety of individuals in the organization (Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Research findings show that the characteristics of a distributed leadership model include: multiple player leadership philosophy, utilization of hidden leaders, expanded leadership roles, enhancement of human capacity, use of tools in decision-making, two-way communication, and an environment of trust (Engel-Silva, 2009, p. 288). Engel-Silva (2009) recommended future exploration of distributed leadership to

focus on other school stakeholders, such as students, and to research its effects on student achievement.

Literature Review

Elevating student voice and power in schools may possibly serve to initiate transformative change for diversity and social justice (Beaudoin, 2005; Robinson & Taylor, 2012; Thomson & Gunter, 2006). Robinson and Taylor (2007) identify four core values for initiating student voice work: communication as dialogue; participation and democratic inclusivity; the recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic; and the possibility for change and transformation. Beginning student voice work may be viewed as a process of making high schools more democratic in their functioning (Apple, 2011). Campbell (2009, p. 104) provides “a framework for school leaders seeking to promote, authorize and validate student voice.” This resource explains the research-based behaviors that school leaders can exhibit in order to promote student voice in their schools: “having a student-centered orientation, promoting student-led events, modeling a vision for student voice that is reflected in school improvement plans, and staff development facilitating shared decision-making” (Campbell, 2009, p. 104). Cheng (2012) also discusses the valuing of student voice, embracing a willingness to construct a new partnership with students, and ensuring consistent whole-institution commitment, as important to facilitating student voice work. These may inspire school level transformations that are important steps in changing school cultures and power relations toward Apple’s (2011) ideal of a democratic school. Power is not static, and changing power relations at the micro-level can impact institutional transformations (Robinson & Taylor, 2012; Foucault, 1980). Student voice practice has the potential to become a powerful way to challenge hierarchical power relations within schools, as Fielding’s (2001) vision of students as agents of change suggests.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative correlational questionnaire survey research design. Survey data were used to examine university students’ perceptions about their opportunities in high school to have participated in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making and their college academic achievement and civic participation. This fills a gap in the research by providing greater student voice in the body of research and provides a “youth-centered perspective” (Taft & Gordon, 2013, p. 88) on what school leadership practices influence young adults’ academic achievement and civic participation.

Data Collection Procedures

The desired sample size, as a correlational and descriptive study, is over 100 participants (Colton & Covert, 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). To focus the study on students who demonstrated academic achievement in attending a four-year university after high school, a purposive sample was selected of undergraduate participants at one public university in the United States. Granted access was gained through the institutional review board (IRB) process. Participants were sought via e-mail from a random list of 5,000 undergraduate students, ages 18 to 21, and enrolled as full-time students. A medium-sized public Southeastern university provided the setting for this study.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument (in Appendix A) contains 63 questions. The survey questions are developed and aligned to the literature as follows. The dependent and independent variables described refer to the response or criteria and explanatory or predictor variables, respectively, input as dependent and independent variables to run the necessary statistical procedures in SPSS. Colton and Covert's (2007) survey development advice was utilized. LimeSurvey was utilized as the survey administration platform, and IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 was used for statistical analysis. The internal consistency of the operationalized variables was computed with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which calculates the reliability of items (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). A Cronbach's alpha value of .70 or higher indicates internal consistency (Colton & Covert, 2007, p. 265) and this is reported for the operationalized variables.

Dependent variables. Students' academic achievement and civic participation comprised the dependent variables, described as follows.

Academic achievement. Academic achievement was operationalized with students' self-reported university GPA (Volwerk & Tindal, 2012) and college and future career confidence into a four-item scale established as a composite student achievement variable with a Cronbach's alpha value of .744. These items were presented as questions 43 through 46 of the survey instrument in Appendix A.

Civic participation. Civic participation was operationalized with a Likert-type scale aligned to Mathews' (1996) definition of *citizen* and items drawn from the commitment to civic participation scale provided by Kahne and Sporte (2008), previously developed by and based on Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) three conceptions of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented. Voting behavior was also measured for the extent to which participants were eligible to register and vote. A Cronbach's alpha value of .849 was calculated. These items are presented as questions 28 through 42 of the survey instrument in Appendix A.

Independent variables. Students' perceptions of their high schools' leadership practices comprised the independent variables, described as follows.

Students' perceptions of their high school's leadership practices. Students' perceptions of their high schools' leadership practices and their opportunities to have participated in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making are informed by social design theory (Jun, 1986; Jun, 2006; Jun & Storm, 1990), contained in questions 13 through 20 of the survey instrument presented in Appendix A, and distributed leadership theory (Harris, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2006), developed with the participative decision-making scale items from Hulpia, et al.'s (2009) "Distributed Leadership Inventory" contained in questions 21 through 27 of the survey instrument presented in Appendix A. In this study, the items comprising the social design and distributed leadership participative decision-making scales have a Cronbach's alpha value of .938 ($n = 135$).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to describe the sample's demographics, including gender, race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status. Descriptive statistical data are also analyzed for participants' responses to the variables tested. Mean, standard deviation, and frequencies are used to describe and illustrate the data sample properties, which inform external validity and generalizability. Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to identify the components of the independent variables in order to reduce the number of items into a smaller number of representative factors and to demonstrate a lack of multicollinearity (Beavers, Lounsbury, Richards, Huck, Skolits, & Esquivel, 2013). Simple linear regression analysis (Moore, Notz, & Fligner, 2013), multiple regression analysis (Moore, et al., 2013), and a *t*-test (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) were conducted on the factor scores of the independent variables to the dependent variables.

Limitations

The conclusions drawn from this study should be considered in context of the sample being drawn from one university within one region of the country. Data were collected from only one source, students' self-reporting while in college, and not triangulated with other quantitative nor qualitative data. The correlations and significant relationships found in this study do not imply causation. This research does not prove that the high school variables with positive and statistically significant relationships with academic achievement and civic participation cause such results. It may be possible that other latent variables exist that influence both.

Results

Of the 5,000 randomly selected undergraduate students enrolled full-time at one medium-sized public Southeastern university invited to participate in the survey via their university e-mail addresses, 215 completed the first two questions (4% response rate). For the purposes of statistical analyses in which participants answered the vast majority of the survey questions, the sample size was 149 participants (3% complete response rate). Out of 149 responses, 113 participants identified as female (76%) and 33 as male (22%). The age mean was 19.56 years old. The ethnic composition of the sample was: 81 participants (55%) White, 49 participants (33%) Black or African American, six participants (4%) other ethnicity, five participants (3%) Hispanic or Latino, one participant (1%) American Indian or Alaska Native, two participants (1%) Asian, one participant (1%) Pacific Islander, and three participants (2%) no response. A reported 42% of participants were eligible for free or reduced price lunch while they were in high school, indicating low-income socioeconomic status. Participants reported English being their native language at a rate of 93% with 5% not English, and 92% reported the U.S. being their native country, while 5% reported being from another country. State representation included 130 (88%) of participants having attended high school in Georgia, 6 (4%) in Alabama, 2 (1%) in Florida, 1 (1%) in Idaho, 1 (1%) in Louisiana, 1 (1%) in New Jersey, 1 (1%) in New York, 1 (1%) in Pennsylvania, 1 (1%) in Texas, 1 (1%) in Wisconsin, and 1 (1%) outside of the U.S.

Research Question 1

Do undergraduate students perceive they had opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making? Participants ($n = 149$) who perceived that they had opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue ranged from 53% to 74%, depending on the scale item. The lowest reported item for this scale was 53% of participants perceiving that the voices of minority groups were integrated into community problem solving for their high schools. The highest reported item for the social design scale was 74% of participants perceiving that people worked together effectively at their high schools. Students who perceived that they had opportunities for high school participative decision-making ranged from 52% to 84%. Students perceived that they were included in the decision-making at their high schools at a rate of 52%; however, 84% did think that leadership at their high schools was delegated to staff for activities important to achieving school goals. Fifty-one percent of participants agreed that their high schools encouraged students' meaningful participation in school governance, while 49% did not, as presented in Table 1.

Research Question 2

What are the components that define organizational leadership dialogue and participative decision-making? Principal component analysis (PCA) revealed the components of the survey data, which comprised the fifteen total items from the social design and distributed leadership participative decision-making scales ($n = 139$). PCA was conducted in order to reduce the number of items into a smaller number of representative factors and to demonstrate a lack of multicollinearity (Beavers et al., 2013). A two component solution emerged containing items with factor loadings $> .7$ in the pattern matrix, as presented in the scree plot in Figure 1. Factor loadings $> .7$ indicate strong items in the pattern matrix, which can lead to stable solutions in sample sizes as low as 100 when a factor is comprised of three to four strong items (Beavers, et al., 2013). The two-dimension factor solution that emerged cumulatively explains 78.857% of the total variance in the variable. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .869, greater than the recommended value of .6, and the result from Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant, $p < .001$, further supporting the assumption of variables not being highly correlated. This suggests that the components of organizational leadership dialogue and participative decision-making may be related, as dialogue often leads to decision-making, but they are distinct enough to have their own separate influences on the dependent variables of academic achievement and civic participation.

Statistical criteria and interpretability were used to determine the number of components that were statistically then interpretably defensible (Pohlmann, 2004, p. 17). The items were classified into the groups based on the Kaiser criterion of eigenvalues > 1 (Beavers, et al., 2013). Item loadings were the correlations between the survey items and the components identified, with the strong cross-loadings $> .7$, reported in Table 2.

Items with salient loadings on the first component correspond to students having involvement in decision-making for the school, the school having an effective committee structure, school leaders facilitating effective communication, and stakeholders having an appropriate level of autonomy in decision-making. The other items with salient loadings on the second component correspond to people's diverse values being considered, including those who would be affected by the outcome of deliberation or problem solving, and discussed. As a result, the two components are named participative decision-making and organizational leadership dialogue. Principal component analysis was re-run with the elimination of the social design

scale items and distributed leadership participative decision-making scale items with factor loadings $< .7$, as they indicate only moderate to weak relationships with the components.

The marker items, the items with the highest factor loading values, are: “Students had involvement in decision-making at my high school” (.863) for participative decision-making and “Overall, I felt there to be consideration of people’s diverse values at my high school” (1.027) for organizational leadership dialogue. One of the loadings was greater than one, because Promax is an oblique rotation method, and in that case the loadings in the pattern matrix are standardized regression coefficients, which can, occasionally, become greater than one or less than one. A high degree of multicollinearity, which may account for this result, was ruled out based on the result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity, which indicates acceptable levels of multicollinearity in the data. Because this item is not strongly related to the other component, the alternative explanation is that this item is extremely reliable, and, for these data, based on interpretability, this is the optimal solution.

The dimensions underlying high school organizational leadership dialogue were comprised of three factor items with Cronbach’s $\alpha = .870$ ($n = 145$). The dimensions underlying high school participative decision-making were comprised of four factor items with Cronbach’s $\alpha = .890$ ($n = 142$). These findings suggest that the essential aspects of participative decision-making are students having involvement in decision-making for the school, the school having an effective committee structure, school leaders facilitating effective communication, and stakeholders having an appropriate level of autonomy in decision-making and that the essential aspects of organizational leadership dialogue are people’s diverse values being considered, including those who would be affected by the outcome of deliberation or problem solving, and discussed.

Regression factor scores were then computed for each participant on organizational leadership dialogue and participative decision-making. The organizational leadership dialogue factor score mean was 0 with a range of 4.076, a minimum of -2.359, and a maximum of 1.716. The participative decision-making factor score mean was 0 with a range of 4.123, a minimum of -2.196, and a maximum of 1.928. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the two factors ($n = 139$) was .682 with a significance level of $< .001$. The calculation of factor scores enabled further exploration into the relationships between the components measuring the independent variables to the dependent variables of student achievement and civic participation with simple linear regression analysis, a t -test, and multiple regression analysis.

Research Question 3

Are there significant relationships between individuals’ factor scores and student achievement? Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2005) state that the Pearson r as a measure of relationships independent of sample size is a form of effect size wherein $r = .10$ has a small [weak] effect, $r = .30$ has a medium [moderate] effect, and $r = .50$ has a large [strong] effect. Simple linear regression analysis revealed that greater values of perceptions of opportunities to have participated in high school organizational leadership dialogue ($r = .25$) and decision-making ($r = .106$) had positive relationships with student achievement ($n = 134$). For organizational leadership dialogue, this was statistically significant ($p = .004$), while for participative decision-making, it was not ($p = .223$). The coefficient of determination $R^2 = .063$, indicating that 6.3% of the variation in college student achievement could be attributed to students’ perceived opportunities to have participated in high school organizational leadership dialogue.

Research Question 4

Are there significant relationships between individuals' factor scores and civic participation? Simple linear regression revealed that students who thought their high schools provided more student participation opportunities tended to participate civically more in college. The correlation coefficients were Pearson's $r > .1$. Pearson's $r = .361$ for organizational leadership dialogue ($p < .001$), $r = .033$ for participative decision-making ($p < .001$), and $r = .380$ and $R^2 = .145$ for the combined the factors ($p < .001$) as calculated by their sum and applied in regression analysis to the dependent variable of civic participation. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = .145$, indicating that 14.5% of the variation in students' civic participation ($n = 123$) could be attributed to students' perceived opportunities to have participated in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making.

Research Question 5

Are there significant differences in academic achievement and civic participation between students who perceive they had opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making compared to students who perceive they did not? An independent samples t -test was conducted to compare the means of students who had relatively low levels of opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making (combined factor scores for organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making < 0) to those who had relatively high levels (combined factor scores for organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making > 0) compared to the mean = 0, presented in Table 3. This study found that university students who had experienced greater opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making had an 8% greater mean civic participation score in college ($n = 123$) with effect size Cohen's $d = .595$, which is statistically significant ($p = .001$), and a 4% greater student achievement mean ($n = 134$), though not statistically significant ($p = .101$). Cohen's d effect size was the calculated "difference between treatment and control group means divided by the standard deviation" (Hedges, 2008, p. 167), though equal variance cannot always be expected from a t -test. Still, the effect size of Cohen's $d = .595$ can be interpreted as greater than average (Cohen, 1988).

Discussion

Most students in this study responded that they had some opportunities in high school to participate in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making, but there are some revealing gaps in their experiences. Between 16% and 48% of students did not perceive the various opportunities included in the social design and distributed leadership scales to have been present at their high schools. The highest rate of perceived non-opportunities was 48% of students not perceiving student participation in decision-making at their high schools. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that only 59% of U.S. high school students are in schools that regularly elicit and incorporate student feedback, below average in the developed world in a sample of 65 countries (OECD, 2013; Ripley, 2015). This provides evidence for the claim that students are not regularly included in the decision-making processes nor distributed leadership structures of many high schools.

These findings are consistent with the findings of Fusarelli et al. (2011) and Pedersen et al. (2012) that students may not be provided with structures, incentives, nor encouragement to participate in high school distributed leadership and that the exclusion of students from participative decision-making for their high schools may contribute to their further lack of engagement in school and community activities. In reviewing the survey data from 2,366 students in California who had taken an American Government class in their senior year, Kahne, Middaugh, and Crody (2005) found that students with intentions of attending four-year universities had significantly more access to civic learning opportunities than other students did. This may also reflect socioeconomic disparities influencing such intentions to attend four-year universities (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Differential access to civic learning opportunities has come to be known as the civic opportunity gap (Herczog, 2012; Kahne, & Middaugh, 2009). This suggests that variation in leadership approaches among and within high schools exists, which may influence student achievement and civic participation. Schools that regularly elicit and incorporate student feedback tend to be more equitable with higher levels of academic achievement (OECD, 2013; Ripley, 2015).

The second highest rate of perceived non-opportunities is 47% of students not perceiving the voices of minority groups having been integrated into community problem solving for their high schools. While this variable was excluded from the organizational leadership dialogue and participative decision-making scales in regression analysis due to PCA results, it should still be explored for the implications of equity and social justice. The lack of minority outreach and empowerment within school leadership practices may exclude certain groups of students from school, community, and civic participation and this could perpetuate existing inequalities. These include disparate rates of college graduation (Kim & Hargrove, 2013), voting (File & Crissey, 2012; File, 2013) and community involvement (Kahne, Middaugh, & Croddy, 2005). School discipline, as a feature of school leadership, disproportionately affects students of color, as African American students are three times more likely to be suspended than white students, and as many as 95% of suspensions are for nonviolent offenses, such as truancy and disrespect (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Morrison and Vaandering (2012, p. 141) assert that “traditional institutional practices can generate defiance, undermining an individual’s capacity and willingness to cooperate in core facets of social life, from family and school to work and governance.” Recent research suggests that zero-tolerance policies may cost more economically and socially in the long-term (González, 2012), and that other policies, including restorative justice and school wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) policies, would be more effective in achieving the policy goals of decreasing illegal and socially undesirable behaviors and promoting prosocial and academic behaviors (Chitiyo, May, & Chitiyo, 2012).

Schools as training grounds for citizens of a democracy need to provide equitable opportunities to students in classroom instruction, discussion of current events and controversial issues, service learning, extracurricular activities, school governance, simulations of democratic processes, and opportunities for students to participate in deliberation (Jamieson, Levine, McConnell, & Smith, 2011). Multiple opportunities to participate in such opportunities make a greater difference for student participation outcomes (Kahne, Middaugh, & Croddy, 2005). While disparities in opportunities can be attributed to socioeconomic structural inequalities (Darling-Hammond, 2010), there is still much to be understood at the school leadership level. The lack of consistent compliance with more equitable, research-based civic education and student empowerment practices within high schools may contribute to high schools

underpreparing students for citizenship (Fusarelli et al., 2011; Jamieson et al., 2011; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Herczog, 2012).

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be reached based on the findings of this study, considering the limitations of the study. High school organizational leadership dialogue can be defined as people's diverse values being considered, including those who would be affected by the outcome of deliberation or problem solving, and discussed. High school participative decision-making can be defined as students having involvement in decision-making for the school, the school having an effective committee structure, school leaders facilitating effective communication, and stakeholders having an appropriate level of autonomy in decision-making. Providing students with opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making may provide for lasting educational value, increasing their academic achievement and civic participation. It may be concluded that a majority of students have some opportunities to participate in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making for their high schools, but these opportunities vary and may not be amply available.

Reframing relationships within schools between students and adults by providing students with opportunities for organizational leadership dialogue and participative decision-making may support both neoliberal and transformative views of the education system by raising levels of achievement as well as the quality of relationships. Reculturing schools to be more inclusive of diverse voices, including student voices, show potential for establishing more relevant, supportive, and culturally responsive schools for youth (Friend & Caruthers, 2012). School-wide leadership practices may be facilitated with the enactment of research-based programs to increase student opportunities for participation in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making. Such programs may include: student advisory councils (Fusarelli, et al., 2011), focus groups (Fisher, Frey, & Pumpian, 2012), site teams (Watt, Huerta, & Cossio, 2004), leadership groups (Pautsch, 2010), Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) programs (Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza, & Matthews, 2013), Youth Civic Engagement (YCE) councils (Mirra, Morrell, Cain, Scorza, & Ford., 2013; Taft & Gordon, 2013), Positive Peer Culture (PPC) programs (Laursen, 2010), internship programs with local government and community-based organizations (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006), and other models to provide more of these types of opportunities. Further research pertaining to such programs and their implementation is recommended. High schools may also be advised to incorporate citizenship as a co-equal purpose of education, along with higher education and career, as part of their missions, create partnerships with colleges and universities to strengthen civic learning programs, and encourage student participation in in-school and out-of-school civic learning experiences (Jamieson et al., 2011).

Policymakers in the U.S. should address the policies that inhibit youth participation in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making in schools. In contrast, many European nations like Australia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have nationalized curricula with standards for children to express their views on their learning (Mitra, Serriere, & Kirshner, 2014). They adhere to Articles 12 through 15 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989). These rights support youth participation by including freedom of information, freedom of expression, and freedom to form collective organization. Youth participation and student voice in the complying countries have created education policies with

standards and accountability structures to guide these processes (Mitra, Serriere, & Kirshner, 2014). Federal, state, county, district, and local education authorities in the U.S. could initiate the development of standards of practice in schools that emphasize student participation in citizenship (Jamieson et al., 2011) and support these with funding streams for implementation (California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning, 2014). The public of public schools should be included to empower students to advocate for their education (Apple, 2011; Hoff, Yoder, & Hoff, 2006; Knaus, 2009). Moreover, problem identification, solution selection, and program implementation could be improved, theoretically, with the application of social design approaches to school leadership. More stakeholder input could increase environmental awareness and better shape school policy, leadership, and culture.

Similar future research is recommended in different geographic settings and with more proportional representation of different demographic populations to expand generalizability. It is suggested that social design theory (Jun, 1986; Jun, 2006; Jun & Storm, 1990) in addition to distributed leadership theory (Harris, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2006) be considered as a theoretical framework in future educational research and praxis. Qualitative studies should also be conducted to inform educators about students' perceptions about their access to high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making opportunities. Further research focusing on school leaders, including administrators and teachers, implementing models, programs, and practices intended to increase student opportunities to participate in organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making may increase understanding of effective methods of implementation. School leaders have much to learn from listening to and collaborating with students in action research school leadership and civic learning processes.

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Table 1***Descriptive Data for High School Social Design and Distributed Leadership***

Social Design Scale Item	<i>n</i>	%	
		Disagree or Strongly Disagree	% Agree or Strongly Agree
Overall, I felt there to be consideration of people's diverse values at my high school.	176	36	63
Overall, I felt there to be consideration of people's diverse values <i>who would be affected</i> by the outcome of deliberation or problem solving of my high school.	175	39	61
The ideas of different people were discussed at my high school.	176	31	69
Participation went beyond interest-group politics, meaning that people advocated not just for their group (teachers, students, etc.) but in the general interest of the entire high school's improvement.	176	43	57
People worked together effectively at my high school.	176	26	74
In making decisions for the high school, alternatives were critically examined in terms of their feasibility.	177	32	68
Policy design or decisions for the future of the school included input from different people in my high school's community.	176	40	60
The voices of minority groups were integrated into community problem solving for my high school.	176	47	53
Distributed Leadership Participative Decision-Making Scale Item	<i>n</i>	%	
		Disagree or Strongly Disagree	% Agree or Strongly Agree
Leadership at my high school was delegated to staff for activities important to achieving school goals.	160	16	84
Leadership at my high school was delegated to students for activities important to achieving school goals.	161	37	63
Leadership at my high school was delegated to several different staff members and students.	159	25	75
Students had involvement in decision-making at my high school.	160	48	52
There was an effective committee structure for decision-making at my high school.	158	46	54
Effective communication was facilitated at my high school.	157	40	60

Overall, there was an appropriate level of autonomy in decision-making at my high school, in other words, people had opportunities to make the appropriate choices for themselves on issues that affected them.

164 45 55

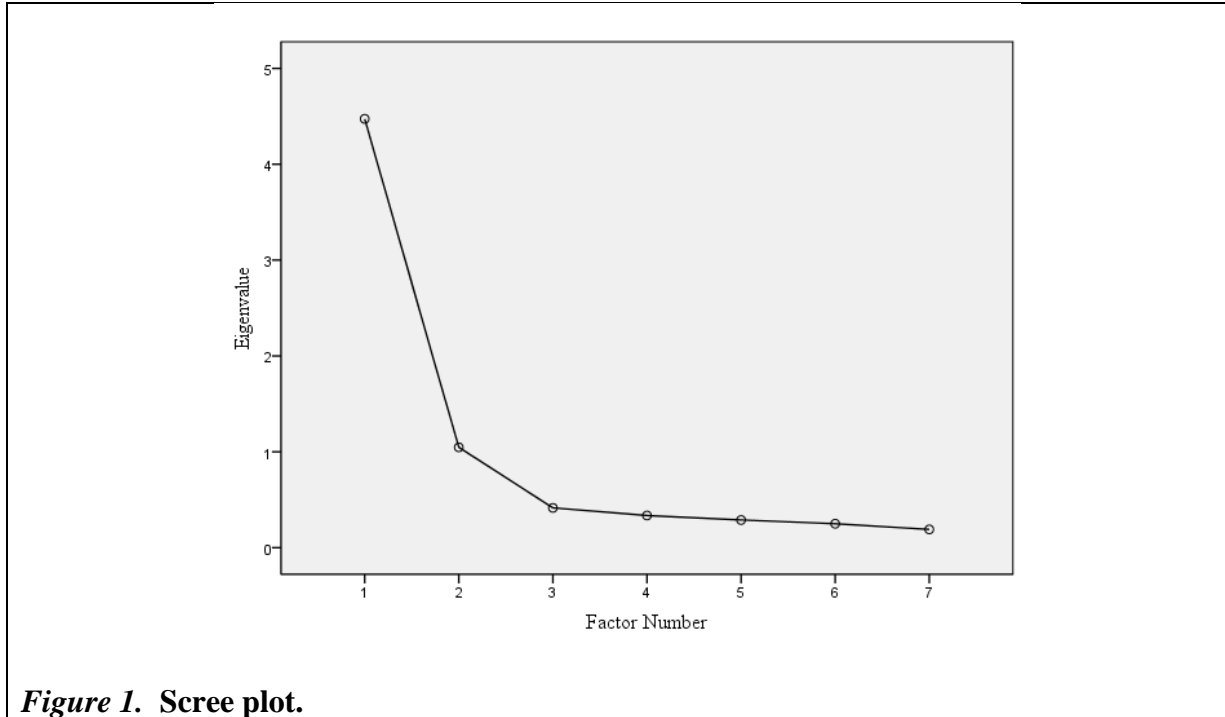


Figure 1. Scree plot.

Table 2

Item Loadings: 1. Participative Decision-Making & 2. Organizational Leadership Dialogue

Pattern Matrix

	Component	
	1	2
Overall, I felt there to be consideration of people’s diverse values at my high school.		1.027
Overall, I felt there to be consideration of people’s diverse values who would be affected by the outcome of deliberation or problem solving of my high school.		.772
The ideas of different people were discussed at my high school.		.655
Students had involvement in decision-making at my high school.	.863	
There was an effective committee structure for decision-making at my high school.	.856	

Effective communication was facilitated at my high school. **.812**

Overall, there was an appropriate level of autonomy in decision-making at my high school, in other words, people had opportunities to make the appropriate choices for themselves on issues that affected them. **.709**

Note: Factor loadings rounding to > .7 are in boldface. Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations. Component 1 refers to participative decision-making. Component 2 refers to organizational leadership dialogue.

Table 3

T-test: Organizational Leadership Dialogue & Participative Decision-Making and Achievement

		<u>Organizational Leadership Dialogue & Decision-Making</u>			
		<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>	<u>Std. Error Mean</u>
Student Achievement	low	64	13.1308	1.93321	.24165
	high	70	13.6706	1.85439	.22164
Civic Participation	low	55	31.0364	4.02291	.54245
	high	68	33.5735	4.49317	.54488

Note: Greater opportunities to participate in high school organizational leadership dialogue and decision-making indicate an 8% greater mean civic participation score in college ($n = 123$) with effect size Cohen's $d = .595$; statistically significant ($p = .001$), and a 4% greater student achievement mean ($n = 134$); not statistically significant ($p = .101$).

Appendix A

University Students’ Perceptions of High School Leadership Related to

Their Academic Achievement and Civic Participation Survey Instrument

Directions: The survey that follows will ask you questions about your background, past experiences during high school, as well as current experiences. Please complete each question in this survey. Reflecting on your past experiences when you were in high school, please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your ability for what best describes your perceptions of your past experiences by clicking on the option that applies to you for each question. If you attended more than one high school, please answer the questions for the high school that you attended for the longest period of time and answer all questions consistently referring to one high school.

		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1.	I received instruction in civics from my high school.				
2.	I received instruction in government from my high school.				
3.	I received instruction in history from my high school.				
4.	I received instruction in economics from my high school.				
5.	I received instruction in geography from my high school.				
6.	I received instruction in law from my high school.				
7.	I received instruction in democracy from my high school.				
8.	My high school incorporated discussion of current events into the classroom (for example, local, national, and international issues).				
9.	My high school had programs that provided students with the opportunity to apply what they learned through performing community service that was linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.				
10.	My high school offered opportunities for students to get involved in the school or community outside of the classroom.				
11.	My high school encouraged students’ meaningful participation in school governance.				

12.	My high school encouraged students to participate in simulations of democratic processes.				
13.	Overall, I felt there to be consideration of people's diverse values at my high school.				
14.	Overall, I felt there to be consideration of people's diverse values <i>who would be affected</i> by the outcome of deliberation or problem solving of my high school.				
15.	The ideas of different people were discussed at my high school.				
16.	Participation went beyond interest-group politics, meaning that people advocated not just for their group (teachers, students, etc.) but in the general interest of the entire high school's improvement.				
17.	People worked together effectively at my high school.				
18.	In making decisions for the high school, alternatives were critically examined in terms of their feasibility.				
19.	Policy design or decisions for the future of the school included input from different people in my high school's community.				
20.	The voices of minority groups were integrated into community problem solving for my high school.				
21.	Leadership at my high school was delegated to staff for activities important to achieving school goals.				
22.	Leadership at my high school was delegated to students for activities important to achieving school goals.				
23.	Leadership at my high school was delegated to several different staff members and students.				
24.	Students had involvement in decision-making at my high school.				
25.	There was an effective committee structure for decision-making at my high school.				
26.	Effective communication was facilitated at my high school.				
27.	Overall, there was an appropriate level of autonomy in decision-making at my high school, in other words, people had				

	opportunities to make the appropriate choices for themselves on issues that affected them.				
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Directions: Now reflecting on your *current* attitudes and behaviors, please answer all of the following questions honestly and to the best of your ability for what best describes your perceptions of your experiences and attitudes at the present time in your life by clicking on the option that applies to you for each question.

28.	I consider myself to be active in my community.				
29.	I consider myself to be able to make decisions with a diversity of people.				
30.	I consider myself to be able to make decisions with a diversity of perspectives.				
31.	I have the ability to “stand in another person’s shoes,” so to speak.				
32.	I have the ability to make decisions with others.				
		no	yes		
33.	I am eligible to register to vote.				
34.	I am registered to vote.				
35.	I was eligible to vote in the presidential election of 2012.				
36.	I voted in the presidential election of 2012.				
37.	I plan to vote in the next election.				
		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
38.	Being actively involved in community issues is my responsibility.				
39.	In the next three years, I expect to work on at least one community project that involves a government agency.				
40.	I have good ideas for programs or projects to help solve problems in my community.				
41.	In the next three years I expect to be involved in improving my community.				
42.	Being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody.				

Directions: Please answer all of the following questions honestly and to the best of your ability for what best describes you by clicking on the option or typing in the information requested. If you cannot remember the exact numbers, please estimate to the best of your ability.

43.	I feel successful as a college student.				
44.	I am confident that I will graduate with a bachelor’s degree.				

45.	I am confident that I will be successful in my future career.				
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46. What is your current university GPA?

- Type in GPA

47. Please indicate all of the extracurricular activities that you participated in during high school.

Check all that apply.

- Sports
- Clubs
- Community service
- Student government
- The arts
- Religious activities
- Other

48. What was your unweighted high school GPA (grade point average)?

- Type in GPA

49. What was your composite (total) ACT score in high school? If you did not take the ACT, you may leave your answer blank.

- Type in score

50. What was your composite (total) SAT score in high school? If you did not take the ACT, you may leave your answer blank.

- Type in score

51. What is your age? (In years).

- Type in age

52. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

53. Is English your first language?

- Yes
- No

54. Is the United States your native country?

- Yes
- No

55. What ethnicity best describes you? Check all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Filipino
- Hispanic or Latino
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Other ethnicity

56. During high school, were you eligible for any of the following?

- Free lunch
- Reduced price lunch
- Neither

57. What is the highest level of education that your mother or female-identified parent/guardian completed?

- No schooling completed
- Nursery school to 8th grade
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, no degree
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- Associate’s degree
- Bachelor’s degree
- Master’s degree
- Professional degree (such as law)
- Doctorate degree

58. What is the highest level of education that your father or male-identified parent/guardian completed?

- No schooling completed
- Nursery school to 8th grade
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, no degree
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- Associate’s degree
- Bachelor’s degree
- Master’s degree
- Professional degree (such as law)
- Doctorate degree

		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
59.	Growing up, my parents/guardians discussed civic issues, such as the government, community, or politics.				

60. What type of high school did you attend (for the longest period of time if you attended more than one high school)?

- Public
- Private
- Charter
- Homeschooled

61. In which of the following states was your high school located (for the longest period of time if you attended more than one high school)?

- _____ (50 states option)
- Outside of the 50 United States

62. What type of setting was your high school in (for the longest period of time if you attended more than one high school)?

- Urban area (big city)
- Suburban area (medium to small sized city outside of a larger city)
- Rural area (farming community or small town far from city)

63. How would you describe the socioeconomic status of the majority of students at your high school (for the longest period of time if you attended more than one high school)?

- High poverty (low income)
- Working class
- Middle class
- Upper-middle class
- Affluent (high income)