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FACTORS SHAPING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF RURAL

IRELAND AND PENNSYLVANIA

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by

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Abstract

This research identifies factors related to civic engagement in rural youth ages 10-18 years old in both Ireland and Pennsylvania. To understand civic engagement an understanding of the factors shaping youth civic engagement is necessary. Personal characteristics, obstacles, social support, social networks, and the role of community as factors either shaping or inhibiting civic engagement were explored with an emphasis on identifying obstacles to civic engagement. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. Surveys were administered to 210 adolescents (ages 10-18) in several schools in rural communities both in Ireland and Pennsylvania.

Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used to collect and to analyze the data. The qualitative data that was collected was used in support of the quantitative findings. Interviews with adults, in the local communities where testing occurred, were conducted to establish validity. Data was analyzed through frequencies, bivariate, and multivariate analysis. As a result, nine major factors to youth becoming civically engaged were defined in this research. Recommendations were made for policy and programming.

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Chapter I

Introduction

There is a pressing research and program need for understanding the obstacles that exist

to active youth civic engagement (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett,2012). Such engagement

directly contributes to both youth and community development (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, &

Barnett, 2009). Civic engagement refers to the ways in which citizens participate in local

community life, in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's

future (Adler & Goggin, 2005).

Civic engagement also presents direct implications for the social and psychological

development of youth themselves (Brady & Dolan, 2007). In this context, there is a need to

examine the role that civic engagement plays in the well-being of rural youth. In this rural

setting, the presence of obstacles and other conceptual factors to youth civic engagement can be

particularly dire. While community leaders and scholars are aware that obstacles hinder the civic

engagement of rural youth, scant systematic research exists in these areas (Wilkinson, 1991). It is

important to be able to identify such obstacles in order to overcome these barriers to civic

engagement. Obstacles need to be overcome to increase civic engagement in youth. Studies

show that youth who are civically engaged are more resilient, have increased social supports, and

exhibit higher levels of well-being (Brennan, Barnett, & McGrath, 2009). In general, youth who

are civically engaged become empowered to act (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

The need for the civic engagement of youth is particularly relevant in rural Ireland and

Pennsylvania. Both settings face a wide range of social, political, and structural problems as well

as the economic and outmigration challenges impacting local rural life. In this setting, a

concerted call for active citizenship has been made through government and nongovernment sources (Brennan & Isreal, 2008). By comparing youth in these diverse settings, a determination can be made if the civic engagement process and the barriers to such engagement can be generalized or if conditions are unique to each setting. By identifying barriers and other factors, methods to address these obstacles through program and policy development can be developed and implemented.

While a variety of definitions exist for conceptualizing civic engagement, the definition suggested by Adler & Goggin (2005) will be used throughout this study. The authors view civic engagement as the way citizens participate in their community to improve conditions for others or positively impact the future of the community.

In this setting, there is additional important to recognize not only how community shapes youth development, but also how the youth impact the community (Brennan, Barnett, & Lesmeister, 2008). Youth and communities have mutual benefits that result from the interactive effect of the social, human, and economic assets which are present (Brennan, Barnett, & McGrath 2009).

Despite the importance of these phenomena, several key concepts are seen as shaping the potential for engagement (Flora & Flora, 2003). How youth perceive their community has a substantial impact on their interactions with, and involvement in, the community. The more connected and attached youth are within their community, the more likely they are to become civically engaged (Flora & Flora, 2003). Similarly, the level of safety perceived by youth in their community shapes their level of involvement (Flora & Flora, 2003).

It is also the case that the degree to which youth are emotionally connected to their community effects engagement (Flora & Flora, 2003). Youth who experience a feeling of being emotionally attached to their community are more likely to become civically engaged (Flora & Flora, 2003). Social ties and peer relations have also been shown to impact engagement. For example, how friends and acquaintances perceive an organization or program of engagement has a great impact on engagement (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2012). Social supports have also been shown to play a role in engagement; a main motivator of youth engagement has been shown to be peer encouragement. In addition to the above conditions, youth civic engagement is also shaped by the capacity within the local community (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2012). The strength of the community and the cohesion present among its members is important because it shapes the environment where citizens, particularly youth, have an opportunity to contribute local life and related development efforts (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2012). Finally, personal characteristics are also a determining factor in youth civic engagement. Characteristics such as age, education, disability and socioeconomic status all present opportunities, or hindrances, to youth becoming civically engaged (McAdam & Paulsen, 1997).

The active engagement of youth is important at several levels. McGrath (2009) notes "participation in community activities and formal groups is associated with behavioral well-being among adolescents" (p.2). He also asserts that schools play an important role in facilitating youth becoming civically engaged. Similarly, McGrath (2009) and others (Dolan, 2006; Brennan, 2009) suggest that esteem support for a person which comes from others such as family, friends and colleagues, may bring a sense of belonging and inclusion, even in times of adversity or when a person is in temporary distress. Along with school, interaction with adults

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outside the family is an important component in building youth capacity. These adult interactions may be through clubs, religious programs, and sports teams. These interactions and social supports can both shape and hinder the potential for civic engagement. Such activities can provide a direct conduit for immersion in the community. Alternately, as social networks become more homogenous and dense, interaction and engagement may be stifled.

Similarly, Brennan, Barnett, and McGrath (2009) found that youth with strong friendship ties may not seek ties to the greater community. If youth are content with their strong friendship ties, civic engagement will be restricted because the youth's interest in building social networks will be limited. If the social needs of youth are being met within their immediate settings (peers, family, interest group), they may not have motivation to participate in the larger community. However, friends will become civically engaged if a member of the friend group becomes civically engaged. McGrath (2009) cites some important components to civic engagement are feelings of efficacy (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002), the need to be valued and taken seriously by others in the community (Barnett & Brennan 2006; Flanagan &Van Horn, 2001), increasing their own self-esteem, and having a responsibility towards society by performing a public duty (Independent Sector, 2001). In the context of the latter, Scales & Leffert (1999) found that recognition by the community contributes to feelings of being valued, leading to increased engagement.

Finally, the way in which civic engagement is conceptualized can present a barrier to identifying and reporting of youth civic engagement. For example, engagement at home as a care provider may be viewed significantly different than engagement in religious settings or other civic engagement activities in the wider community. In this context, finding adult mentors and adult volunteers for youth programming is another barrier in supporting youth engagement

(McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2009). Funding for programs may be another barrier to civic engagement for youth (Adler & Goggin, 2005). If programs are not sufficiently funded or maintained, there are fewer opportunities for youth to become civically engaged.

Project Description and Methodology

A comparative case study was used in this study. Through a mixed methods framework (qualitative and quantitative) the obstacles and process leading to youth engagement in County Galway, Ireland and rural Pennsylvania were compared. Building on survey and interview data collected from Irish youth in 2006 (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2006) the survey was a comparison was made between Irish and Pennsylvania youth in 2013.

The study will focus on five overarching research questions:

R1: What shapes civic engagement in youth?

R2: What roles do obstacles play in determining youth civic engagement?

R3: How do personal characteristics affect youth civic engagement?

R4: What role does the community play in youth civic engagement?

R5: Do similarities and differences exist between Pennsylvania and Irish youth becoming civically engaged in the community?

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

When looking at youth civic engagement, it is important to identify the obstacles and other factors that inhibit youth from becoming civically engaged. Recently, practitioners have studied the intersections between youth and community (Brady & Dolan, 2007). Now that the relationships between community and youth civic engagement are more clearly defined, it is important to explore the obstacles youth face or perceive in becoming civically engaged. A comparison can be made between youth in rural communities in Ireland and Pennsylvania to appropriately explore these relationships. Previous studies have compared rural communities in the United States and Ireland and found them to have similar characteristics when looking at community development issues and how they impact youth (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan,& Barnett, 2009).

While there are a variety of definitions for civic engagement in the literature, the definition by Adler and Goggin (2005) gives a concise yet broad based definition that is not limiting in its scope. In America youth traditionally have been encouraged to be civically engaged through local groups and associations, but also most directly in times of war or domestic crisis. Similar expectations exist throughout the world, where youth civic engagement has been seen as a cornerstone of civil society, providing a host of social, economic, and cultural impacts at the local community level.

Civic engagement provides a wide range of positive outcomes, ranging from the individual to societal levels. Traditionally, community is first fostered in the family unit and then

it is broadened as an understanding of community comes with experiences in the individual's wider society. Contact with society occurs first in the family and then, more comprehensively, in the community. In this setting, the origin of youth civic engagement begins and youth become engaged and active citizens. Through this process a host of personal development outcomes are achieved.

Community also is important because of its role in meeting the needs of local people; including the social needs for collective involvement and social definition of self, and also the meeting of wider generalized locality based needs (Wilkinson, 1979). One meets these needs primarily through interactions and involvements in the local society. As a result the local community is enhanced by local engagement of citizens. The quests for community are a central theme in human history past and present (Wilkinson, 1979.)

Civic engagement is in many ways a process of self-actualization for youth. Coser (1977), in *Masters of Sociological Thought* where he discusses George Herbert Mead's (1934) classic work, describes this self-awareness as arising as one person takes the perspectives of others, including the perspective of the community, to "delineate and characterize one's own social being" (p.335). Mead explained the development of self-awareness as the distinction between "I" and "me" which he felt both related to social experiences. Mead describes "I" as "the answer which the individual makes to the attitude which others take toward him when he assumes an attitude toward them" (p. 338). "I" is "never entirely calculable…always something different from what the situation itself calls for" (p.338). "Me" as described by Mead is "the person aware of himself as an object….his self-appraisal is the result of what he assumes to be the appraisal of others" (Coser, 1977). The implications of this self-actualization are enormous to personal development, but equally necessary to the integration of the individual into society.

This process helps to define the individual, but at the same time it defines a space for them within the wider society.

Operational Definitions
Rural
The Farmers Home Administration considers rural areas to be open country communities of up to 20,000 in nonmetropolitan areas, and towns of up to 10,000 with a rural character in metropolitan areas (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1980).

Youth
"Youth" is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group (UNESCO, 2013).

Civic Engagement
"Civic engagement refers to the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future." (Adler & Goggin, 2005: p.236)

Theoretical Approach: Interactional Theory

The interactional approach to community provides a useful theoretical framework for addressing youth and their participation or lack of social participation through community engagement. As Bridger, Brennan & Luloff (2009) state:

> Interactional approach, on the other hand, is tied to process. It focuses on local citizen interaction, mobilization, and residents working together as they address place relevant matter. How this process, fueled by interaction, transcends divisions, self-interests, and local divides is central to interactional theory (p.2).

Bridger et al. (2009) continue their analysis of the interactional approach by asserting that it is a "particularly useful conceptualization of community for understanding local social change" (p.2). The interactional approach is particularly useful when trying to identify obstacles to youth

civic engagement. If youth do not find ways to become involved in their community or to become civically engaged in some manner, the community suffers and community capacity is diminished. Interaction within the community increases awareness of the interests of youth as well as their established ties which help identify where bonds can be formed, while also becoming aware of obstacles or divides to be overcome which when strengthened increase cohesion (Wilkinson, 1991; Brennan, 2006).

It is important to be aware of all of these dynamics when addressing the factors and obstacles to youth becoming civically engaged within their community. This interactional approach is useful because it can be found naturally in everyday life where conflicting interests occur (Bridger, Brennan, & Luloff, 2007). The interactional approach has broad applications nationally and internationally and is adaptable to most social issues or problems (Bridger, Brennan, & Luloff, 2009). This approach is a useful tool for identifying common obstacles to youth becoming civically engaged.

Community Field

Bridger, Brennan, and Luloff (2009) state every community has groups which are organized around various interests and goals within the community. One of the common goals identified by Bridger et al. (2009) is economic growth and development. Social service was identified by Bridger et al. (2009) as another common social field. In the United States many rural communities have volunteer fire companies which have junior memberships. Health services are a third social field which is identified by Bridger (et al., 2009). Volunteering with blood drives, volunteering with therapeutic riding, and volunteering in local hospitals are some ways youth can be involved in this social field. A final common social field identified by Bridger

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et al. (2009) is parks and recreation. Many volunteer opportunities are available to individuals of all ages in this social field. Participating in sports as a participant or as a mentor/coach is a common way that youth could participate in this social field.

Youth need a place to congregate and a cause to focus their passions around. These places begin as being centered around a common interest field, but in a global society this "local" social group grows exponentially through technology and accessible transportation, leading to impacts locally and beyond. Through engagement these local groups quickly create bonds between other social fields, leading to enhanced local capacity.

The community field cuts across organized groups and across other fields of interaction in a local population (Bridger et al., 2009). It is an abstract concept that combines the locality – relevant aspects of the specialized interest fields, and integrates the other fields into a generalized whole (Bridger, Luloff, & Krannich, 2003). It does this by creating and maintaining linkages among fields that are otherwise directed toward more limited interests. As this community field arises out of the various special interest fields in a locality, it in turn influences those special interest fields and asserts the community interest in the various spheres of local social activity (Wilkinson, 1991).

Along with Wilkinson (1991), Bridger (2009) maintains that the main goal of the community field is finding points of intersection between and among other social fields. These intersections can construct bridges between ethnicities, races, classes, organized groups, other local entities, and more importantly in the case of youth, age ranges within the local society. Obstacles to youth becoming engaged emerge due to the lack of interactions between social fields.

Community Agency

Communities continually change and evolve in terms of the makeup of their population. Nonetheless the needs of the community remain and often continue to be met at some level. In other places, this ability to meet local needs is diminished, with local capacity being limited. The ability to change and reshape society at the local level is evidence of community agency (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Many researchers have noted that the existence of community agency directs attention to the fact local people through interacting often have power to transform and change society (Bridger, Brennan, & Luloff, 2009; Giddens, 1984; Gaventa, et al., 1995; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Sawson, 2001). According to Luloff and Swanson "Community agency reflects the creation of local relationships capable of increasing the adaptive capacity of people within a common territory (Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Sawson, 2001). Luloff and Bridger (2003) wrote:

> Community is not likely to emerge when residents struggle to meet basic needs. At the same time, however, the persistent linkage between community action and well- being suggests that efforts to foster the development of community at a local level must be a key component of rural development policy (Bridger & Luloff, 2003).

Community agency can be particularly relevant when discussing youth civic engagement, in that as youth mature they can assume roles vacated by the youth who have already transitioned into adulthood. Agency also indicates a clearly defined role for youth in local decision making and capacity building. The obstacle in community agency is that all youth mature and the individual who acts as "leader" is constantly changing. If the "leaders" are constantly changing, it is more difficult to establish an ongoing tie to the community. It is therefore essential that youth be treated as equals and a place for them be established to ensure sustainable local development. Similarly, in some settings, youth may be excluded from the local decision

making process all together. If youth do not feel they have a legitimate role to fill or a voice that is heard within the organization, this may quickly diminish their willingness to become civically engaged.

Community Capacity

Community is best thought of in dynamic terms; it represents a complex social, economic, and psychological entity reflective of a place, its people and their myriad relationships (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1979; Christenson & Robison, 1989; Wilkinson, 1991; Bridger et al., 2003; Bridger et al., 2009). It is advantageous to keep these terms in mind when looking at the conditions youth in Ireland and Pennsylvania face when attempting to become civically engaged. These terms as they relate to community capacity are relevant to the understanding of the different forces at play that can encourage or create obstacles to youth becoming civically engaged. The inability for youth to engage would have dire consequences for the emergence of community and related capacity building.

Community capacity is the ability of local people to use available resources to provide betterment of the group at large (Brennan, 2006). "It is in many ways a social and psychological entity that represents not only a place, but also the people and their relationships within it" (Brennan, 2006, p. 5). Youth are an often overlooked resource in this process of community development. For example, in this age of rapidly advancing technology, it is often youth who possess the most skills and knowledge in the applications of technology. The technologically advanced youth are an often overlooked asset in their community and a lost opportunity for youth civic engagement. Youth that have always used technology can introduce new skills into

the community starting with family members and can become teachers to adult community members who wish to learn technology skills, and better local society.

Social Ties and Community Cohesion

A central outcome and predictor of community is the social ties and attachment to place that emerges among residents. "Community Cohesion or the extent to which community members share strong social and emotional bonds directly impacts numerous social conditions" (Brennan, 2006, p.9). Community cohesion frequently happens in times of strong conflict or during natural disasters (Gurr 1993, p. 234; Davis, et al., 1997, p. 148; Gurr and Moore 1997, p.1082), as such conditions rapidly highlight the importance of social connections. Such conditions transcend common divisions of race, gender, and socioeconomic status, showing immediate common, general needs within the community. However, collective capacity more often emerges slowly as citizens gradually interact and realize their ability to come together to address more general common needs. Regardless of its origins, community cohesion and interactive capacities are necessary for community action and increased engagement.

The ideas of community and the development of self-awareness are generally thought to begin in the family and then expand into a broader community definition. It would then stand to reason that community cohesion would also begin with the family. As youth get early cues from family and close ties, they model their emotional bonds and attachment to community (McGrath et al., 2012). If youth have an adult family member or mentor who models civic engagement roles, these youth would be more likely to find ways to become civically engaged themselves. An obstacle to youth civic engagement would be a lack of civically engaged adults in the family or lack of mentors in the community who are civically engaged (McGrath et al., 2012).

In understanding attachment and cohesion, it is important to understand the types of social ties that exist locally. Social ties may be thought of as subjective interest in the neighborhood, as factors influencing the availability of solidarity incentives of participation in collective action, or as factors reducing the cost of action by making communication easier (Oliver,1997). Weak ties are more transitory and among acquaintances while strong ties are continuing and among family and friends. However, both strong and weak ties are necessary for civic engagement.

Weak ties are just as important as strong ties when encouraging youth to become civically engaged. Individuals who have a personal contact within an organization are more likely to participate than those who do not (McGrath, et al., 2012). Wilkinson (1991) in *the Community in Rural America* explores the effects of strong and weak ties on the community citing various sources. Wilkinson acknowledges Granovetter's (1973) assertion that the shortage of weak ties in rural areas can retard the development of community. Similarly, Wilkinson includes Wellman and Leighton's (1979) use of work done by Webber (1964) in his essay on community arguing that "ramified networks can provide an escape from the bondage of the local territory" (p.21). In the past, the only escape from local territory was to be able to physically leave the local area and establish ties in other communities. With modern technology, the only requirement for establishing bonds outside the local community is a connection to the internet or to social media.

In addition, Wellman and Leighton (1979) wrote that ties outside the neighborhood can free people "their ties are not encapsulated in 'decoupled' little worlds." Too many strong horizontal ties and not enough vertical ties can inhibit growth of communities and individuals. In rural communities if the strength of horizontal ties fulfills the all the needs of its members, the

community members will be less likely to seek vertical ties. If the strong horizontal ties within a community perceive vertical ties as negative influences, members will be inhibited from establishing vertical ties. This research will look at if the community perception of vertical ties can be an obstacle to youth becoming civically engaged.

Such networks are central to many theoretical perspectives on community. For example, social capital as described by Putnam (1993) refers to "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital" (Putnam, 1993a, 35-36). Similarly, Flora and Flora (1999) state that communities can build sustainable social capital by building strong relationships and communication on a community wide basis and by encouraging community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability (Flora et al., 1999). Obviously, building sustainable social capital occurs over an extended period of time. Nonetheless, the social networks and ties are seen as central to building sustainable social capital and are seen by some as the currency for achieving youth civic engagement.

Similarly, Flora and Flora (2003) discuss four characteristics of networks that strengthen entrepreneurial social infrastructure and build bridging social capital. The first network is the horizontal dimension or lateral learning. This means that communities learn best from other communities or from members within the community. In a youth context, this may be a horizontal dimension of younger family members and peers. Flora and Flora (2003) further define the second network as including a vertical dimension. In their example of vertical dimension, local communities are linked to regional, state, and national organizations. In the youth model, the vertical dimension would include older family members, mentors, teachers and youth bosses (depending upon the age).

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The third strengthening characteristic according to Flora and Flora is that the networks are flexible. In both models, the definitions are the same. The authors state that if the network is flexible, participation should not be a lifetime commitment. However they are careful to note, that if the commitment has a finite life span commitment increases and burnout decreases. The final strengthening characteristic according is that the networks have permeable boundaries. In the community model this means that boundaries may expand with new partnerships and collaborative efforts while boundaries may in turn narrow when very local action is necessary. For youth, boundaries may expand with youth groups collaborating to decrease costs of a trip while boundaries may narrow to address an interest that is very specific to the individual. Flora and Flora also note that people are more likely to participate where they feel they can make a difference or where they have a real interest. This would be true of youth as well. All of the aspects of community cohesion, social ties and social capital allow for community capacity which is vital to the development of youth civic engagement.

Functionalist Theory

In addition the interactional and social capital theories, functionalist perspectives shed light on the civic engagement process. The universality of accountability addresses how humans internalize representations of significant others who watch over them when no one else is looking (Coser, 1977, p.562). Because youth are raised to be dependent upon authority figures, it then becomes difficult for them to challenge such structures and evolve into active citizens rather than dependent followers. Once youth are made to realize they have the ability to become the caregivers of society and can gain positive emotional returns from this new role, they will be more likely to grow and seize opportunities for significant engagement.

There can be internal competitions of motivation when seeking approval. The choice of cognitive mastery is one of the competing motivational factors. The benefits of achieving cognitive mastery must out way any negative that may be seen as being attached to individual intellectual mastery of a subject or concept. In the youth model, the benefits of gaining intellectual mastery must, in the mind of the youth, outweigh any negative peer pressure. Next, is minimizing mental efforts. By nature humans are cognitive misers and prefer to remain with what is known, comfortable, and respected by their peers. In doing this people can produce enough social engagement with minimal mental effort. If youth can feel fulfilled with a minimum effort, they must see rewards or have an incentive to exert more effort to become further engaged within their community or to establish vertical ties. Along with the idea of minimizing mental effort is the idea of maximizing the benefits of a task while minimizing the personal costs. This may take the form of collaboration with others or it may be the choice to perform away from the group to minimize negative peer pressure. The last inner conflict is asserting personal autonomy and integrity by reaffirming private convictions. In this scenario, an individual chooses a course of action based upon personal values and morals (integrity) and thereby reaffirms their personally held beliefs (Coser, 1977 & Parsons, 1951). Youth may first wish to establish vertical ties using technology where their efforts are often less scrutinized by their peers. There are also coping – strategy predictions such as every request is justified. Anybody can justify any of their own actions. Tetlock (2002) asserts that "Judgment and choice deviate from economic and scientific standards of rationality" (5-6). Environmental issues and politics are areas where some people make judgments and choices that are more emotionally based rather than based in economic or scientific standards of rationality.

Coser (1977) in *Masters of Sociological Thought* uses the quoted passage from

Shakespeare's play *As You Like It,*

> All the world's a stage
> And all the men and women merely players:
> They have their exits and their entrances;
> And one man in his time plays many parts.

This quote is widely used by sociologists as an analogy for the behavior of individuals

who live their lives "playing" roles to gain approval from their audiences. An example of these

theories being woven into the life of a youth community member may be a youth who volunteers

in a social service social field. The volunteer would receive approval from several audiences

including peers, family, and the members of the social service organization for which they

belong. In order for a youth volunteer to become strongly tied, they would need to receive

approval from an adult mentor within the social service organization where they volunteer. If the

emotional needs and support are not being met elsewhere in the family or community and are

being met in the volunteer organization, the members and mentors in the social organization may

become the surrogate family for the volunteer. However, if youth are having their needs met

within their family or within their strong ties, they are more likely not to become involved in

traditional civic engagement opportunities. Therefore, even when an opportunity for engagement

exists, the youth have to be willing to participate.

Social Support

Social support have been widely acknowledged as critical to youth development, and can

be accessed through formal and informal sources and can be seen as mechanisms for coping with

the stresses of everyday life (Cutrona & Cole, 2000; Ghate & Hazel, 2002; Heath, et al., 2010;

White, 2011; Sanderson, 2012; Dolan, 2006; McGrath, et al., 2012). Youth look to informal

sources first and turn to formal sources only after exhausting informal sources (McGrath et al.,

2012). Examples include, empathy which is currently not being frequently modeled to children.

Brady and Dolan (2009) find children who do not have empathy modeled may exhibit egoism.

Brady and Dolan also state that empathy leads to "generativity" or the need to pass on wisdom

and knowledge to future generations (2009). Children who lack empathy risk becoming adults

who act solely on selfish desires and will decrease community assets by depriving others of their

talents, knowledge and wisdom. Parents and others must be encouraged to model empathy to

encourage forming community ties which will lead to youth becoming civically engaged (Brady

& Dolan, 2009). Sources for role models, who may also model empathy, may be non-related

adults, peers or family. By looking at the perception of the availability of social support and

empathy in community, obstacles to youth civic engagement maybe discovered.

The four main types of social support have been identified by Cutrona (2000) and others

(Dolan, 2010) as concrete, emotional, advice and esteem. Concrete social support refers to a

specific act of assistance between people. An example may include helping an elderly relative

shop or to do yard work. It has been noted that too often this need for basic particular help has

been missed or underestimated by professionals (Weller, 2010; White, 2011; Sanderson, 2012;

McGrath et al., 2012).

Emotional support comprises acts of empathy, listening and generally "being there" for

someone when needed or in a time of trouble (Cutrona, 2000). Emotional support can be difficult

to assess the need and to gauge the appropriateness of the response since the need and the desired

response can vary greatly between individuals. Advice social support goes beyond the advice

itself to the reassurance that goes with it (Cotterell, 1966). Establishing ties that enable advice

support can be an obstacle in helping youth to become civically engaged. Esteem support centers on how one person rates and informs another of their personal worth. For families, this unconditional regard and commitment is the foundation stone of their personal social support system (Cutrona, 2000). Even though youth are maturing and, with the help of friends, transitioning into a wider network within community, family remains a strong yet sometimes unappreciated influence for adolescents. Family and friends can either be an asset or an obstacle when looking at youth civic engagement.

Social supports can also originate from parents, siblings, friends, and other adults. Brady and Dolan (2009) found that mentors are more aware of the lives of at risk youth and have more empathy for their plight. Brady et al. also supports research that finds organizations like Big Brother and Big Sister to be a valuable resource for youth in rural communities. Social support can originate from friends and family. McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, and Barnett (2012) found that family then peers comprise the largest group providing social support to youth. This support can have either a positive or a negative influence on youth. If the economic status of the family is low and youth are called upon to help with providing support so basic needs can be met, these youth will have less free time for becoming civically engaged outside of the family.

Personal Factors Shaping Youth Engagement

A wide range of demographics and sociocultural characteristics have been found to contribute to social participation. Oliver (1984) found that race played a factor in civic engagement, with African Americans typically participating more in community organizations than their Caucasian counterparts. Gender was also seen as an important factor. While both men and women participate, they do not participate in the same areas within the community (Oliver, 1984).

The importance of social capital and educational levels are important to make individuals aware of opportunities within the community (Oliver, 1984). Perceptions of social support are of equal, if not more important, than the actual support received (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Sarason et al., 1990; Cutrona, 2000; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007; WHO, 2010: White, 2011; Dolan & Brady, 2010). These findings illustrate those individuals who perceive that support exists (even if it does not) achieve at a higher level than individuals who actually have the support but do not have the perception that such support exists. If youth believe they have social support they will be able to become civically engaged. However, if the opportunities are provided but the perception is that they are not available or they have been viewed negatively by the community (strong horizontal ties) the youth will underachieve.

Brady and Dolan (2010) discusses youth civic engagement and the need to work harder to identify youth with single-parent family homes as being civically engaged as they offer help within the family unit. This help within the home is often overlooked by researchers. Youth that have a feeling of well-being are more resilient and are more likely to be civically engaged. Conversely, if youth do not have a feeling of well-being they will only seek help from vertical ties or formal agencies (Cassel, 1974; Weiss, 1974; Cobb, 1976; Sarason et al., 1990; Cotterell, 1996). The perception of well-being and the correlation with civic engagement is important when deifying obstacles to youth becoming involved in their community.

These and other personal characteristics are important, as "human capital and social capital are very much related. Having existing skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy can open doors to certain social networks"(Apaliyah, Martin, Gasteyer, Keating, & Pigg, 2012).

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Obstacles

In the face of substantial opportunities for civic engagement, significant obstacles also exist for youth engagement. Informal networks of support are central to providing the most immediate, accessible and common forms of support and have demonstrated consistent significance in promoting the well-being of adolescents (McGrath, et al., 2009). Oliver (1997) argues that larger contributions will come from people who value neighborhood collective goods more or who experience lower costs from their contributions. Therefore, if the costs are high and the rewards are low there will be low interest in volunteerism or participation. This is an obstacle to recruiting and retaining both adult and peer volunteers. Oliver continues by making the point that a person's interest should always have a positive effect on participating in collective action. However, she goes on to state that the effect of the interest on participation varies. Therefore, an obstacle to participation may be the level of interest that can be generated toward a given project.

The strength of weak ties is more important than the number of strong ties (Granovetter, 1973; Wilkinson, 1991). Hegar (1989) states some part of a child's powerlessness is unavoidable because they do not have the "experience, maturity, and resources" of other adults, and so many of their needs must be met by others. Along with Hegar, McGrath et al. (2009) discuss supporting elements necessary for adolescent well-being. They found that family and peers were the biggest support to youth, with family members being the most likely durable and dependable source of helpers. Friendship bonds were the next strongest providing a source of help and advice outside of the family. Peer bonds provided a source to discuss topics not comfortably discussed with family members. Caring adults and/or mentors, who work with youth in afterschool programs, groups and/or organizations, help the well-being of youth. Brady and Dolan (2007) found programs like Big Brother and Big Sister to be effective in providing support.

The most immediate context derives from informal social networks that typically comprise family, friends and peers. Beyond this, research indicates that the community is important to well-being by virtue of broadening adolescents' networks and providing opportunities for interaction with others, whether at the level of neighborhood or through organized groups and activities. Finally, the school is shown to be a main institution in adolescents' lives, and a key ingredient especially for emotional well-being and sense of inclusion.

The contexts for adolescents' sense of well- being are important considerations, when evaluating obstacles to youth becoming civically engaged. Youniss & Smollar (1985) found that friends became the link between their family and society in general as adolescents mature. It should be reiterated that both family and friends may be an asset but may also be an obstacle to youth becoming civically engaged. Friends become the emotional center of an adolescent's life as they mature and make connections beyond the immediate family. The frequency of interaction with friends outside of school impacts the adolescent's level of interest and level of involvement (Brennan, Barnett, & McGrath, 2009). In addition to friends, youth need to feel safe before they will become involved. Friendships among rural peer groups are smaller and more cohesive than urban groups, which mean issues of conflict and stress are seen to have greater importance (Elgar, Arlett, & Groves, 2003; McGrath et al., 2009 p.2).

Heinsohn and Lewis state that as youth enter into adolescence, they enter into a time in their lives where they are given new opportunities to explore personal interests (1995). Until the age of adolescence, they are limited to experiencing the interests of adult family members and /or friends (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995; Sarver, Johnson, & Verma, 2000). As youth become more comfortable in their community they will look for opportunities to explore other interests (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995). Identifying the age of adolescence as a pivotal point in targeting the

increasing participation of youth is supported by the data from a 4-H number retention study. This study found that between 12-13 years of age was the time when there was the largest increase in options for outside participation and the age with the largest decline in participation of previously attended activities. Lauver and Little (2005) identified techniques to enhance and encourage continued participation. They stressed the need to maintain a balance between learning and leisure. Lauver and Little defined leisure as hanging out and cautioned that learning must be fun and have realistic goals. They also found that participants with regular attendance were more engaged. More engaged individuals are more apt to fully participate.

In McClellend's motivational need theory he explains that at least one of three needs must be met to motivate an individual to participate (McClellend, 1978). There is the need to achieve. Achievers have their needs met by having a task challenge and being able to use their skills or to learn new skills to complete the challenge. Those with the need for affiliation need to establish a bond with a person or persons in the group in order to feel appreciated, accepted and to have companionship. An individual with the need for power will need to have leadership duties. These leaders must have proper encouragement to be positive leaders or, as McClellend cautions, those with the need to lead may become a negative power by becoming domineering or argumentative. The self- regulation characteristic increases in adolescence and can be linked to the choice to participate. If the needs of the adolescent are fulfilled, as identified in McClellend's theory, then the adolescent will participate (Keating, 2004). Lauver and Little (2005) address the needs which must be met to ensure retention of older participants by identifying similar needs as McClellend such as leadership, achieving (community service) and affiliation. But they also identify the need to have financial reimbursement and the need to have autonomy in making choices.

Youth also need the opportunity for involvement, acceptance, and must have venues for social participation. If any of these key elements are missing, participation will decrease. Along with Morrow (2000) others (Nairin, Panelli, & McCormack, 2003; Brennan et al., 2009) found that young people need to feel welcomed and included in local life by adults and peers. Therefore, it is beneficial to give youth input and give them a significant role when planning the development of their communities. Excluding youth or not having a welcoming inclusive community environment will be a significant obstacle to civic involvement.

Community field and community agency deal with the interaction of local people and their relationships in dealing with community challenges. Community power is different in that it incorporates the actions and interactions of the media and power brokers in the community. Community power "is tied to efforts aimed at coordinating and harnessing such collective capacity on a consistent and long-term basis" (Armstrong, 2006; Brennan, 2007; Wilkison, 1991; Varley & Curtin, 2006). Community power seeks to establish strong ties that lead to longevity and sustainability. This can be done by addressing stakeholders and community actors from various social fields and interest backgrounds to become involved in the issue and to present a local voice to the issue. It is preferable to have a local voice rather than having the media give their voice to the issue. Youth may or may not choose to become civically engaged partially dependent upon how an activity or cause is framed publicly.

Currently there exists a gap between community field and agency and community power:

> This gap in the interactional literature raises two challenges. First, we must develop a better theoretical and empirical understanding of how the exercise of power affects patterns of social interaction (both positively and negatively) and how these in turn affect the development of the community field. Second, we must use this knowledge to create practical development strategies specifically

incorporating power and the central role it plays shaping
community life (Brennan & Luloff, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework will demonstrate how the levels of interactions of
demographics, social support, obstacles, community capacity and levels of influence are inter-
related to the obstacles related to civic engagement. The model below identifies the correlation
of these factors.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model

| Social Support |

| Demographics |

| Social Networks |

| Community Capacity |

| Obstacles |

| Youth Civic Engagement |
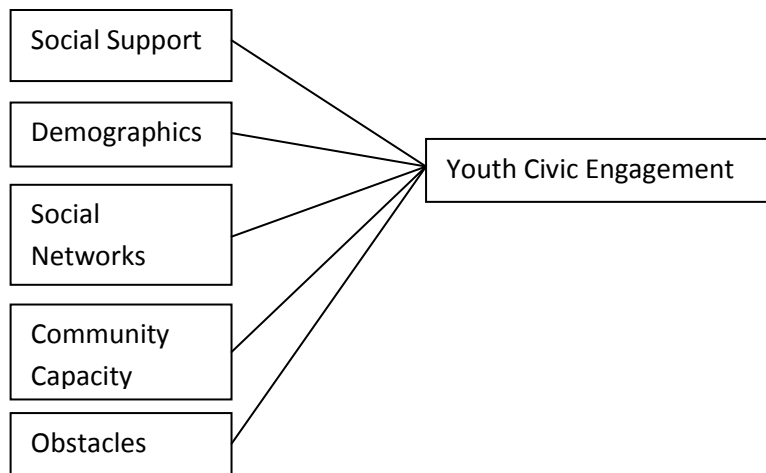
Conclusion

There is a need to understand the concepts of social ties, social support, community
capacity, community cohesion, well-being/ personal factors shaping youth engagement and
related theories. Understanding these concepts is essential to properly understand youth and
community development. The purpose of identifying the obstacles faced should be considered
when community members are planning programs. Youth who are engaged in their communities
are more resilient and are more likely to stay engaged over their life time. The review of

literature has presented various theories that show the importance of youth social activism. Identifying the obstacles that youth face in their community is important so that the obstacles can be addressed allowing youth to become civically engaged.

Chapter III

Methodology

Government leaders and community members need to be able to better identify and understand the factors shaping youth civic engagement in order to develop effective youth programming. This research identifies obstacles to civic engagement in youth ages 10-18 in rural communities in both Ireland and Pennsylvania. This was done by using a mixed methods approach, consisting of a survey to youth and interviews with key informants.

A Mixed Methods Approach

A study using mixed methods combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study or multiphase study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In this study a mixed method sequential timing approach was chosen (Creswell, 2011). First, the quantitative portion of the study was administered to students. Two hundred nine questionnaires were given in total from rural locations in Ireland and Pennsylvania to students between the ages of 10 and 18 years of age. Following the quantitative data collection, the qualitative portion of the study was completed with adults. Adults working with youth or professionals in youth development fields voluntarily consented to audio recorded interviews.

Case Studies: Ireland and Pennsylvania

Ireland and Pennsylvania were selected because they are geographically similar in size, have large rural populations with urban proximities, and faced similar economic struggles. In both areas the teen populations were of similar size and had limited opportunities to become

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civically engaged. Agriculture and industry provide the major sources of income in these two areas.

Site Selections

In order to identify obstacles to youth civic engagement, multiple research sites in Ireland and Pennsylvania were studied and youth in each location administered a common questionnaire instrument (Dolan, 2006). For the purpose of this study, we are defining youth as students between 10-18 years of age (UNESCO, 2013).

The sites for this study in Pennsylvania and Ireland were identified and selected based upon their rural location, proximity to urban areas, and with limited accessibility to civic engagement opportunities. The site that was chosen in Ireland was Tuam, County Galway, figure 3.1. Irish secondary schools are small local groupings with homogenous classes. Therefore, the questionnaire was conducted in three of the five schools in Tuam, County Galway to represent the county. County Galway has a size of 6,148 km_2 (2,373.8 sq. miles) and has a total population of 208,826. Tuam has a youth population between the ages of 10-18 of 639.

Figure 3.1: Locations in Ireland
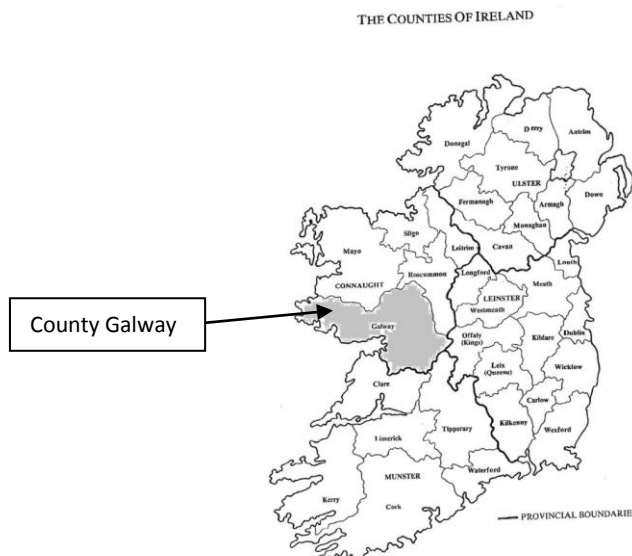
Two similar sites were identified in Pennsylvania, figure 3.2. Both sites were in mainly rural locations, with proximity to an urban area and which had an accessible suitable student body. A rural Charter School in Clinton County has a student population of 261 in grades K-12 (Sugar Valley Rural Charter School, 2012). Clinton County has a population of 39,517 (US State Census Bureau, 2011). Clinton County covers an area of 898 square miles. State College is the closest urban area 40 miles west. The town of Loganton, Clinton County, has an average youth population of 58 between the ages of 10 to 18 years old. In the school where the survey was administered there were 50 students in the same age range. Therefore, while the sample size excludes generalization to the population at large, generalizations are able to be made within the school population. Similarly, Williamsburg High School in Blair County has a student population of approximately 500 in grades K-12 (Williamsburg High School, 2012). Blair County has a population of 127,121 (US State Census Bureau, 2011). The area of Blair County is 527 square miles. Williamsburg High School is the only secondary school in this school district. The nearest urban area, Altoona, is eighteen miles away. The town of Williamsburg has an average youth population of 167 between the ages of 10 – 18 years old. The students surveyed in this location were limited to students in Agriculture Education classes who met the age guidelines.

Figure 3.2: Locations in Pennsylvania
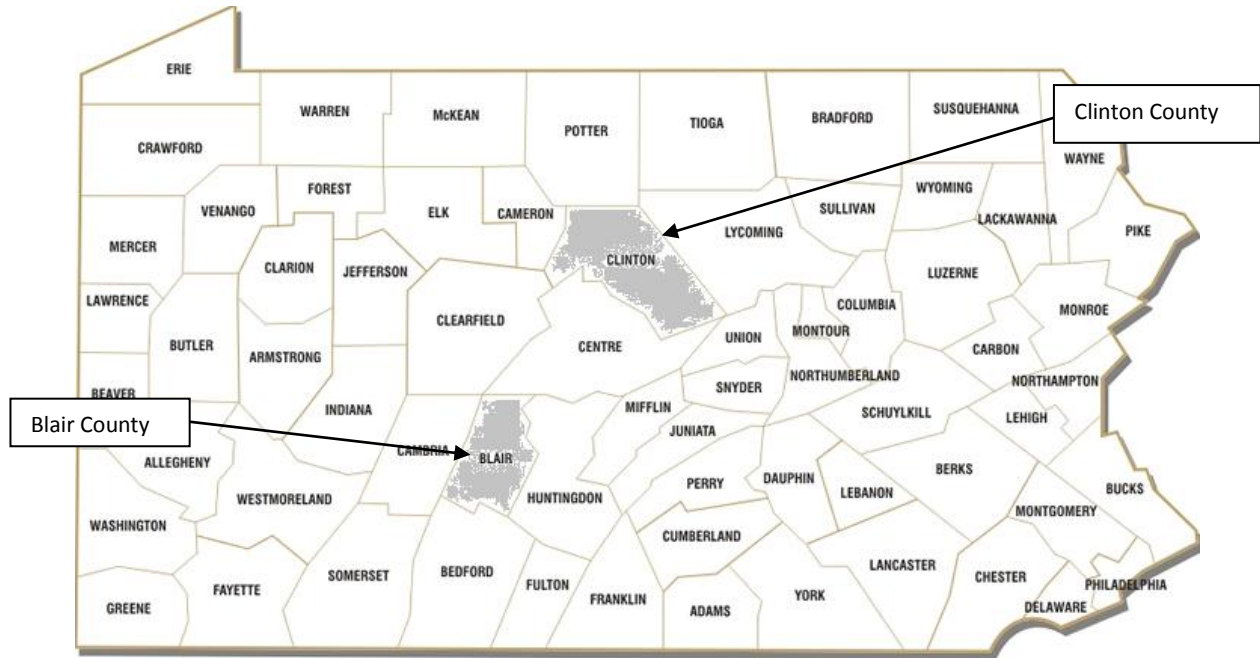
Qualitative Data Collection

In a mixed methods approach, the qualitative data was collected from interviews conducted with a range of adult experts to obtain information related to conditions facing youth as they attempt to become civically engaged. This data added the concerns and obstacles as seen by adult community members.

Between May –October, 2013, interviews with key informants were conducted. Key informants in both Pennsylvania and Ireland were interviewed using a common script (Appendix C). For the purpose of this study, adult community members are defined as community members over the age of 18. Interviews utilized a script developed to measure attitudes, awareness, and perceptions of youth civic engagement. Interview questions were also directed toward youth civic engagement and obstacles in their communities.

Participants for the interviews consisted of adult community members who were

identified based on their position in the community, through directories, and by convenience

sampling. Interviews were recorded after obtaining verbal consent and took on average 45-60

minutes to complete. Interviewees in Ireland consisted of community workers, teachers, school

employees, and principals. In Pennsylvania, adults who were interviewed were principals and

teachers. A total of eleven people were interviewed in Ireland and Pennsylvania. Interviews from

community members provided information that might not be obtained from the survey method of

data collection and helped to better frame the quantitative data collection efforts.

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data collection, through a survey instrument, took place at all sites between

May and October 2013. The main data was obtained from questionnaires given to students

ranging in ages from thirteen to seventeen years of age in both Pennsylvania and Ireland. A

modified total design method (TDM) was used in these surveys (Dillman, 2000). This method

stressed a precise methodology, including specialized design and layout.

Contacting school principals was the first step in the data collection process. Upon

principal/school agreement to be part of the study, an information sheet was then sent to pupils

and parents providing background information about the research, including their right to

nonparticipation. Parental/guardian consent was obtained for students. A week prior to the study

being conducted parent/guardian consent forms were sent home with students. Passive consent

was used in this study so that only nonparticipants would return consent forms.

In Ireland the data collection was given as a part of school assessment and evaluation

activities. This data collection method was considered to be the most time and cost effective

means of reaching this population. The understanding that absenteeism would be a factor was taken into account to determine response rates. To maximize the generalizability of the findings, a census of students in selected sites in Pennsylvania grades 8 and 12 and first and second year of secondary school in Ireland was conducted. These sample sizes and related response rates are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sample Sizes and Response Rates

Criteria	Tuam	Clinton	Blair
Sample Size	146	44	87
Completed Questionnaires	142	39	28
Absent	4	3	5
Refusals	0	2	0
Response Rate	97%	88%	78%

Surveys were completed and returned from 142 participants in the Irish study and 67 in the Pennsylvania study (total, 209 responses out of a possible 222 students) an overall response rate of 94% was reported. Responses were sufficient to statistically represent these populations at the .05 level (Isaac & Michael, 1997).

These response rates while sufficient at the school level were not large enough to generalize to the county levels. While we believe that the schools were reflective of other institutions in the counties, their selection was based on accessibility and a convenience sample.

The use of quantitative methods for inquiry was the best choice for the standardization of questions and for data collection among a large number of respondents in both Ireland and Pennsylvania (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). While this method limits the findings to the predetermined variables, steps were taken to ensure that the operationalization of concepts reflected the understanding and conditions in both locations. This instrument had been used in previous research and had had its content reviewed by expert panels in both nations to identify problematic and vague variable construction (McGrath et al., 2009; McGrath et al., 2012; Brennan et al., 2010; McGrath et al., 2007).

Questionnaire Design and Measures

Based on a previous study by McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, and Barnett (2006), and from a review of youth and community development literature, a questionnaire was developed that measured several conceptual areas thought to be important to youth civic engagement (See Appendix). The questionnaire, with permission from the creators, was identical to the survey used in previous research *Adolescent Well-being and Supporting Contexts: A Comparison of Adolescents in Ireland and Florida* (McGrath et al., 2009) and aided in operationalizing the concepts, variables, and measurements in this study. This also helped ensure the reliability and validity of the measures used.

A portion of this survey, the *Assessment intervention and self -appraisal tool for family support* (Dolan, 2006), included sections that gathered data on well-being, social supports, and community participation. For this study the questions were scaled by friends (questions 128-131)with a Cronbach's Alpha of .818, parents (questions 132-134 and 137) with a Cronbach's Alpha of .888, brother/sister (questions 135,136,138, 139) with a Cronbach's Alpha of .879, and

adults (questions 140-143) with a Cronbach's Alpha of .876. Each scale had four questions beset on the area of social support. The response options that were used for this section were no (1), sometimes (2) and yes (3).

Also included in this survey is the *Neighborhood Quality of Life* index which was created for the previous study done by McGrath et al. in 2006 and includes measures used by the World Health Organization Cross-National Study of Health Behaviors in School-Aged Children (McGrath et al., WHO, 2004). These twelve questions (4-15) are found in the section labeled *About Where You Live* and are measured on a Likert scale from 1) strongly disagree to 5) strongly agree, measures were separated into two categories for this study. Six questions focusing on *community* were used in a summative index with a Chronbach's Alpha of .522. The questions were as follows: If you had to move away from the community where you live for some reason, which of these statements sums up how you would feel about that (on a Likert scale of 1) I would be very happy to 5) I would be very sorry to leave); How strongly do you agree that you can influence decisions that affect your area (1)strongly disagree, 2) strongly agree); overall, how interested are you in knowing what goes on in this community (1) very disinterested, 5) to very interested); how would you describe your feelings toward your neighbors (1)very distant, 5) to very close); how important is it to you to have good friends (1) not important 5) to very important); how many "close friends" do you have (1)none, 5) more than three). The second part was addressed social networks, the Likert scale was used to measure, more than once a week (1) to never (6). The questions were as follows(1) more then once a week, 6) never): how often do you get together or meet with the following types of people, immediate family, extended family, acquaintances, neighbors, and school clubs/groups members. The last question in this area was scaled as a friend item (How important is it to you to

have good friends? 1) not important, 5) very important; How many "close friends" do you have? 1) none, 5) more than three; How often do you see your friends outside of school? 1) never, 8) every day; How often do you talk to friends on the phone or send them text or emails? 1) rarely or never, 5) every day; How do you spend time with friends outside of school: 1) never,4) nearly always, watch TV in each other's homes, go to a community youth center, go to the movies, meet at a restaurant or coffee shop, go shopping or to the mall, play a sport, play music, involved in a hobby outside our homes) with a Chronbach's Alpha of .701.

The section labeled *About Involvement with Clubs and Organizations* asks questions that measure community involvement and pertains to the dependent variable (55- 94). The dependent variable in this study consists of the community action opportunities available to members and the level of participation in community action by the individual. Dependent variable was measured on the participant's extent of involvement in each area. The questions used area as follows: Do you take part in any community or volunteer activities (0) no, 1) yes), If YES, approximately how many groups or organizations do you volunteer with (1) one, 5) five or more), In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in your community, Youth group (Scouts, church), Music group (choir, dance), Social group, Community group, Sports, Other groups. The scale of measure was a Likert scale not involved at all (1) to more than once a week (6), other questions were yes and no.

A series of items was used to measure obstacles to youth becoming civically engaged. The following statements were recorded on a scale including the responses Not a reason (1), A slight reason (2), and A strong reason (3). The statements used to define obstacles to youth civic engagement were as follows: Too much to do for school, Too much to do around the house, Too much to do around the farm, I have a part-time job, It costs too much money, They are not

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located near enough, There is no one to bring me, I don't like people who go there, I am not that interested in what's available, My parents' wouldn't approve of my involvement , I wouldn't be taken seriously by adults, I have not been asked to participate, I don't see an identified role for youth in organization, Organizations don't give young people a say in things, Friends wouldn't approve of my involvement, I would feel intimidated by others, I don't have transportation to meetings, I don't have time to commit, I am not sure of the real benefit of volunteering, and I wouldn't be recognized for my efforts.

Finally, Socio-demographic and control variables were also measured to provide a characterization of respondents. The questions in this part of the survey included the following: How old were you on your last birthday (years), Are you male or female (0) male, 1) female), How long have you lived here (years and months), How many times in the last 12 months did you go away on vacation with your family (number of times) , Do you live with both your parents (0)no,1) yes), if not who do you live with(1) I live with foster parents, 4) I live with on parent), Do you have internet in your home (0)no,1) yes), How many cars, trucks, or vans dose your family own (write in the number), and nation location (1) Pennsylvania 2) Ireland).

Reliability and Validity

Several independent variables were analyzed to determine factors shaping the civic engagement of youth. In many cases scales or indices were developed to make the data more manageable, but also to eliminate random error associated with reliability and validity (Carmine & Zeller, 1979). When scales were developed steps were taken to ensure reliability and effectiveness. A comparison of correlations and exploratory factors analysis was used to determine which items best fit these scales. Factor analysis ascertains the appropriateness of

items. This then makes a measure for one concept (Kim & Mueller, 1978).This helps with assuring construct and content validity when creating the scale of measures.

The validity of the items is used to represent the dependent and independent variables that are commented on. When addressing validly, these items appear throughout the concepts and attributes used to measure social supports, demographics, community involvement, and obstacles. These items have been used in previous studies to address similar main factors. In the case of this study all items and scales were found to represent the main key concepts and were shown to be statistically significantly throughout the data analysis.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

To explore the factors shaping civic engagement, qualitative and quantitative data were collected and an analysis of data was conducted. Specific conditions in each location were identified, controlled, explored, and interpreted. To interpret the data, several statistical analytic methods were used. Univariate and bivariate correlations were first used to determine the relationships between and among selected independent variables and community engagement (dependent variable) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996; Babbie, 1998). This early work facilitated the identification of control variables and non-significant items. A full presentation of all responses to all survey items is included in this analysis.

Frequency Analysis

The combined Irish and Pennsylvanian characteristics (individual and household) are shown in Table 4.1. The similarities that exist in the demographics between the participating populations in Pennsylvania and Ireland are shown.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents in Ireland and Pennsylvania

	Ireland (In percent)	Pennsylvania (In percent)
Total participants	n=142	n=67
Length of residence (years)		
11 or less	27.0	40.0
11.1-14	18.0	23.0
14.1-15.4	26.0	12.0
15.5 or more	26.0	24.0
Age		
14 or younger	49.0	59.0
15	42.0	9.0
16 or older	9.5	32.0
Gender		
Male	57.0	56.0

Female	43.0	44.0
Where do you live?		
Farm	17.0	9.2
Country	41.8	47.7
Small Town	38.3	38.5
City	2.8	4.6
Days vacationed		
0	32.6	33.0
1	26.7	27.0
2	17.8	22.0
3 or more	22.8	16.0
Cars do your family own?		
0	1.4	0
1	19.6	11.9
2	54.3	28.4
3 or more	24.5	60.0
Internet in your home?		
No	4.5	18.8
Yes	95.5	81.3
Live with both parents?		
No	21.7	37.1
Yes	78.3	62.9

Eight questions on the survey specifically targeted demographic identifying factors to youth civic engaged as identified in Table 4.1.

Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis was used to compare demographic variables to the conceptual areas and variables thought to shape youth civic engagement. Table 4.2 illustrates the significant differences found when the bivariate analysis was conducted. For each conceptual area the following major differences were noted.

Table 4.2 Bivariate Analysis of Demographic Variables by All Conceptual Areas

	Length of residence in years	Age	Gender (0 =Male, Female=1)	Rural/Urban	How many times in the past year you went on vacation/holiday?	How many cars do your family own?	Do you have internet in your home?	Location	Do you live with both parents?
Obstacles									
School			**					**	
Around the house									
Farm				***					
Part-time job									
Costs too much									
Not located near enough									
No one to bring me						**			
I don't like the people									
Not interested								**	
Parents wouldn't approve		**				**			
Taken seriously by adults									
Not been asked to participate									
Identifiable youth role									
Recognized for my efforts									
Friends approval									
I don't have skills to offer									
Intimidated by others									
I don't have transportation									
I don't have time to commit		**							
Real benefit of volunteering									
Youth have no voice			**						
Social Support									
Friends				**	**				
Parents			*	***		*			*
Brother/Sisters				*					
Adults									
Community		**	**						
Social Networks									
Immediate family									
Extended family									
Acquaintances									
Neighbors									
School club members									
Friends Items		***							
Civic Engagement					**				

* Significant at .05 or less,** Significant at .03 or less, and *** Significant at .000

Obstacles

Age was significantly related to the obstacle "parents wouldn't approve of my involvement" (χ^2= 33.31; p=.031). This indicated that as age increases the perception of parent approval decreases. When analyzed by gender, the obstacle of "too much to do for school" was significant (χ^2= 6.17; p=.046).This indicated that both males and females perceived that requirements from school were an obstacle. Similarly, when analyzed by gender the obstacle "organizations don't give young people a say in things" was significant (χ^2= 6.79; p=.034).This indicated that both genders perceive this to be an obstacle; females were 10% more likely to perceive this as an obstacle than males.

When the demographic variable of "how many cars does your family own" was compared against obstacles, it was statistically related to "I have a part time job" (χ^2= 50.46; p=.001).This indicates that the more cars a family owned the less likely the respondent had a part time job. When the same demographic variable was compared against obstacles, it was also statistically related to "there is no one to bring me *"* (χ^2=43.23; p=.004) and "my parents wouldn't approve of my involvement" (χ^2= 36.7; p=.026).These both indicate the more cars a family owned the less likely the respondent was to become involved. This obstacle may be real or perceived, that no one will bring them or that the parents would not approve of their involvement. When the obstacles were compared by location (nation), it was statistically related to *"*too much to do for school" (χ^2=14.12; p=.001). This indicates that Irish youth feel school requirements are more of an obstacle than their Pennsylvania counterparts. Location when compared to "not interested in what is available" was significant (χ^2= 6.41; p= .041). Forty-five per cent of respondents in Pennsylvania perceived this not to be a reason while, 53% of Irish respondents perceived this not to be a reason. Location was also statistically related to "my

parents wouldn't approve of my involvement" ($\chi^2 = 6.71$; p=.035). This indicates that parental approval was not perceived to be an obstacle by respondents in both locations.

When the variable "too much to do on the farm" was compared with the Urban/Rural demographic variable, it was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 67.686$; p=.000). This indicates that rural youth have responsibilities at home greater than those experienced by youth in a more urban setting. When "too much to on the farm" was compared with the demographic of "How many cars the family owned", it also was statistically important ($\chi^2 = 44.83$; p=.003). This indicates the higher the number the vehicles a family owned the more likely the respondent would indicate there was too much to do on the farm. When "I don't have time to commit" was compared with the demographic of age, it was statistically important ($\chi^2 = 45.31$; p=.001). This data indicates that as the age of the respondent increases, the time respondents feel they have to commit to community activities decreases. In addition, when the demographic of Pennsylvania or Ireland was compared with "I am not interested in what is available", it was statistically important ($\chi^2 = 30.4$; p=.014). This indicates that respondents in both countries thought "I am not interested in what is available" was a barrier, with 55% of Pennsylvania youth responding it was an obstacle and 48% of the Irish youth responding that "I am not interested in what is available" was an obstacle.

Social Support

When the "Friends" variable was compared with "Rural/ Urban" the result was statistically significant (F=5.21; p=.002). This indicates that as youth move from more rural to more urban, civic engagement becomes more relevant. When the "Friends" item was run with the demographic of "How many times the family went on vacation in the past 12 months", the result was statistically relevant (F=2.65; p=.003). This indicates that the more the youth went on family vacations, the more important friends seem to be.

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When the "Parents" item was compared with the demographic Gender, the result was statistically relevant (F=4.52; p=.035). This indicates that males score higher than females, meaning that male respondents indicated an increased desire for parental approval as compared to their female peers. When the same item was compared with the demographic Rural/Urban, the result was statistically relevant (F=3.94; p=.009). The score increased as the participant moved to a more urban area. When the "Parents" item was compared with the demographic of "How many cars the family owned", the result was statistically significant (F=1.85; p=.049). The "Parent" score decreases as the number of cars increases. When the "Parents" item was crossed with the demographic of "How many vacations did you go on in the past 12 months", the result was statistically significant (F= 2.70; p=.013). This indicates that there is a correlation between a positive parental relationship and the time spent on vacation. When the "Parents" item was compared with the demographic of "Do you live with both parents", the result was statistically relevant (F=3.97; p=.048). This indicates that youth who do not live with both parents view parents as more important than youth who live with both parents.

Community

When the "Community" item was compared with the demographic of Age it was shown to be statistically significant, (F=10.24; p=.002). This indicates that as age increases community involvement decreases. When the "Community" item was crossed with the demographic Gender, the result was statistically significant (F= 2.01; p=.025). This indicates that females are more likely to participate.

Social Networks and Civic Engagement

The "Friends" item was statistically significant when compared with the demographic of Age (F= 3.41; p =.000). This indicates as youth become older the importance of friends increases.

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The item "Civic Engagement" was significant when compared with the demographic of "How many times you went on vacation in the past 12 months" (F=2.02; P=.024). This data indicates that youth who go on vacation more are more likely to be civically engaged.

Multivariate Analysis

The univariate and bivariate analysis set the stage for more advanced multivariate analysis. Multivariate analysis serves to explain relationships and in general terms predict events (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996; Neuman, 1997; Babbie, 1998). The power of statistical models can be increased by the use of multivariate models which include a wide range of variables and relationships. The effects of interrelated independent variables can be separated using this type of analysis (Blalock, 1979; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996; Babbie, 1998). This allows the researcher to assess the effects of independent variables on the dependent variables. This allows the researcher to control or adjust the statistical variables.

A series of multiple regression models were used in this study to assess the partial effect of each conceptual area on youth civic engagement. Using a series of six models, conceptual groupings or scales were introduced individually. The first model focused on socio-demographic variables, which were shown not to be significantly related to the dependent variable (Model 1 and Research Question 1). The first model also included data on nationality that was not statistically significant and tested the impact of nationality on obstacles and youth civic engagement (Research Question 5). The second model explored the role that obstacles play in youth civic engagement (Research Question 2). Social ties/network or social support was the third regression model. This model explored how personal characteristics affect youth civic engagement (Research Question 3). The fourth regression model tested the role that community plays in youth civic engagement (Research Question 4). The social networks model was the fifth

regression analysis which also tested Research Question 3. The final regression model simultaneously evaluated all the independent variables together. To achieve the most parsimonious model, a reduced model was developed (Final Reduced Model). Here non-significant variables were systematically deleted to provide the most concise model. The findings for each model are found on Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Comparison of Seven Multivariate Models on Youth Well-Being

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Overall Model	Reduced Overall Model
			Standardized Regression Coefficients				
Sociodemographic Variables							
Length of residence	0.150					0.151	
Age	-0.032					-0.024	
Gender (0 =Male, Female=1)	-0.023					0.096	
Rural/Urban	0.030					0.004	
Vacation/holiday	0.080					0.020	
How many cars	0.020					0.032	
Have internet in your home	-0.008					-0.084	
Location	-0.086					-0.086	
Live with both parents	0.081					0.068	
Obstacles							
School		0.184*				0.188*	0.152*
Too much at home		0.039				0.028	
Farm		-0.030				0.049	
Part-time job		0.216**				0.120	0.164*
Costs too much		-0.078				-0.033	
Not located near enough		-0.199*				-0.136	-0.190*
No one to bring me		-0.125				-0.174	
I don't like the people		-0.152				-0.047	
I am not interested		-0.079				-0.078	-0.146*
Parents wouldn't approve		-0.112				-0.191	-0.169*
Taken seriously by adults		0.051				-0.021	
Not been asked to participate		-0.061				0.027	
Identifiable youth role		0.199*				0.262*	0.177*
Recognized for my efforts		0.021				0.011	
Friends approval		0.025				-0.031	
Skills to offer		-0.049				-0.007	
Intimidated by others		-0.131				-0.146	-0.187*
Don't have transportation		0.086				0.189	
Don't have time to commit		-0.043				-0.091	
Real benefit of volunteering		0.025				-0.038	
Youth have no voice		-0.108				-0.139	
Social Support							
Friends			0.640			0.000	
Parents			0.010			0.042	
Brother/Sisters			0.025			-0.014	

Adults			0.193*			0.088	
Community				.380***		0.292**	0.31***
Social Networks							
Immediate family					0.02	0.014	
Extended family					-0.106	-0.038	
Acquaintances					-0.024	-0.064	
Neighbors					0.003	0.048	
School members					-0.015	0.109	
Friends Items					0.331***	0.268**	0.231**
R^2 Adjusted	**0.007**	**.221****	**.043***	**.141*****	**.103*****	**0.248*****	**0.309*****
Cases	190	192	197	168	159	159	159

* Significant at .05 or less,** Significant at .03 or less, and *** Significant at .000

When testing the first and the fifth hypothesis (Model 1), none of the socio-demographic independent variables were found to be statistically significant and related to civic engagement. This indicated that variables such as nationality, age, and gender had no significant effect on youth and civic engagement. Demographics are responsible for .7% of the variance (Adjusted R^2 = .007). When exploring obstacles in the second model, "having a part time job", "activities not being located near enough", "too much to do for school", and "not seeing an identifiable role for youth" were found to be significant barriers to youth civic engagement. These variables explained 22% of the variance in civic engagement (Adjusted R^2=.221). In this study the variance in Social Support was 4% (Adjusted R^2 =.043). The variance in Community was 14% (Adjusted R^2 = .141). The variance in Social Networks was 10% (Adjusted R^2 =.103). The explained variance in the Overall Model was 25% (Adjusted R^2 =.248) and explained variance in the Reduced Overall Model was 31% (Adjusted R^2 =.309).

Independent variables tested in Hypothesis 3 (Model 1) found to be statistically significant were the importance of adults and the importance of friends. This indicated that youth who feel valued by adults are likely to become involved or civically engaged. Similarly, youth will participate in activities that are deemed important to their peer group and are likely to become engaged. The Social Support concept (Adjusted R^2 = .043) was statistically significant.

The role of community (Hypotheses 4, Model 4) was found to be the most significant of all the concepts (Adjusted R^2 =.141). The community scale being the most statistically significant emphasizes the importance of community support to youth becoming civically engaged. Youth who feel as if they have a contributing role in their community are more likely to be engaged. Youth who feel there is no meaningful place for them in the community will not try to engage. Community is a valuable variable when looking at youth and their willingness to become engaged. The attitudes of community members toward youth, the financial support given toward activities geared toward youth, and the variety of opportunities available for youth all determine whether or not youth will become civically engaged.

All variables were then examined simultaneously, where four variables were found to be statistically significant. To produce an accurate yet concise model the reduced model was then developed. To create this best depiction of data, non-significant variables were systematically removed. In this reduced model, nine variables were found to be statistically significant to youth civic engagement (Reduced Overall Model). The first significant variable was "too much to do for school" which had a positive relationship. Respondents who answered positively to this variable were also more likely to be involved in their community. The next significant variable was "I have a part-time job" it also had a positive relationship and these respondents were also more involved in the community. The third variable was "They are not located near enough" which had a negative relationship. These respondents were less likely to be engaged in their community. It can be concluded that this variable is an obstacle to youth civic engagement. This was followed by "I am not interested in what's available" which also had a negative relationship. The lack of interest in the available opportunities is an obstacle to engagement. The fifth variable was "My parents wouldn't approve of my involvement" which had a negative relationship as

well. Parent approval or the perception of disapproval is an obstacle to youth civic engagement. The next variable "I don't see an identified role for youth in organizations" had a positive relationship. The absence of identifiable roles for youth in organizations may inhibit organized participation, but does not limit participation in non-organized activities. The seventh variable was "I would feel intimidated by others" had a negative relationship. Not feeling welcomed or the feeling of intimidation is an obstacle to youth civic engagement. This was followed by Community. Community had a positive relationship. Community here refers to the people in a location not the location itself. The positive community relationship here refers to both horizontal and vertical bonds. Friends Items were the ninth and final variable which also had a positive relationship. This indicate while friends are important for socialization needs, they can be an asset or an obstacle. These nine variables explained a large portion (31%) of the variance in civic engagement (Adjusted R^2=.309; p=.000).

SUMMARY

The theoretical framework and the main research questions offered were tested by the data analysis in this chapter. Through this analysis, important findings were noted. Table 4.3 indicates the overall regression model and the conceptual areas that were investigated through the data collection and analysis. The nine variable identifiers measured in the survey were statistically significant scoring .05 or less in the Chi-Square (Urdan, 2010) and are identified in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. According to the bivariate and multivariate analysis analyzed in this study.

The data and subsequent analysis indicated that community and social network were the most influential factors for youth facing obstacles to civic engagement. Social support and obstacles were also found to be important. These findings support previous research outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 5 will now explore the interpretation and application of these findings.

Chapter V

Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Findings and Recommendations

Contact with society occurs first in the family and then more comprehensively within the community. This is the setting where youth first become engaged and active citizens. Community also is important in meeting the needs of local people. Through the review of literature it was identified that community is where the social needs of an individual are met. In this study youth responses expressed the importance of community to improve the sense of well-being.

R1: What factors shape civic engagement in youth?

As a child begins to develop, family members have the initial impact on their involvement in community development. As the child matures other adult family members, friends, and teachers add to the sphere of community. These local influences help the child mature and define their "I" and "me" in the context of the community (Mead, 1934). However, community is less likely to develop if the adult members have to concentrate on meeting basic needs rather than building community. As the child matures to adolescence, the concepts of "I" and "me" mature into a concept of self-awareness. Adolescents begin to look beyond what has always been and look deeper into the community for opportunities to explore avenues that may be of interest to them personally. Prior to this, their participation was directed by adult family members or by peers.

In this study, civic engagement was measured by five concepts with the variables placed into a scale to create the community concept, which became the most significant factor in civic engagement. In the reduced over all model (Adjusted R^2=0.309), there were three significant concepts and nine variables. Obstacles had seven significant variables. The variables too much to

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do for school, part time job, and I do not see an identifiable role for youth in organizations all

have a positive relationship to civic engagement in this study. Youth facing these obstacles have

more exposure to civic engagement and have seen the benefit from becoming civically engaged.

Four of the variables had a negative relationship to civic engagement. These four variables were

not located near enough, not interested in what's available, my parents would not approve of my

involvement, and I would feel intimidated by others. These four factors can be perceived or real

obstacles that could impact the choice to interact within their community. Any one factor alone

can be a substantial obstacle. When more than one factor is present, the obstacle becomes greater

and the likelihood of participation decreases.

Community has a positive relationship with civic engagement. Community was made up

of six variables. These variables looked at how connected youth felt to where they reside.

Participants from both areas noted that it was very important to have a connection with your

community. Friends are also a large part of the community concept; friends are a major influence

to participants' actions.

The final variable that was found to have a strong positive relationship is the Friends

Items. This item was a group of questions that asked how much time you spend with friends and

activities you do with friends. These questions were very important to youth becoming civically

engaged. Social Networks/friends can be an important positive or negative influence on youth

becoming civically engaged and need to be considered when developing programming for youth.

Community is the strongest predictor of civic engagement and without a sense of community

there will be no civic engagement. Challenges to developing programming and opportunities for

youth to become civically engaged are strongly related to the concepts and variables that have

been identified in the study. Friends were identified as being statistically important to youth civic

engagement. Friend approval of an activity will increase participation and disapproval will decrease participation. It is necessary to note that while the youth in both countries perceive certain obstacles do exist, that these obstacles may in fact be just perceptions.

One of the open ended answers in this portion of the survey indicated that youth wanted increased individual contact with adults. Pennsylvania students expressed concern about not having enough individual interaction with positive adult role models (teachers, mentors) and commented on feeling isolated and lonely. Pennsylvania youth included answers to open ended questions with responses such as "I would like for teachers to take more individual time." or " I don't know my father well and he doesn't want anything to do with me…." and "It's really lonely where I live and not a lot of kids to play with. Most of my friends live 45 minutes away." It has been noted in the literature when an individual has personal contact with someone in an organization, the result is an increase in the likelihood of their willingness to participate (McGrath et al., 2012). This personal contact may be an adult, peer, or friend. While strong bonds between family and friends remain important, the literature supports that many weak bonds formed while experiencing new activities may be equally important to community cohesion and civic engagement (Oliver, 1977).

A recommendation is made for continued research in the use of technology and particularly social media to encourage social networking. Research is recommended to identify programming that is beneficial and is an alternative to options that promote negative behaviors. Research should be done in creating online engagement opportunities that can be accomplished at the home location with a flexible time schedule. A caution should be made not to label programs as for only an identified group of participants.

R2: What roles do obstacles play in determining youth civic engagement?

Four concepts of statistical significance were identified during the analysis of the data from the survey on youth and civic engagement the concept of obstacles to civic engagement included four variables that were statistically significant Adjusted $R^2 = .221$ (22%) and were supported in the literature. Three of the four variables have a positive relationship (school, job, and identifiable role) to civic engagement. The positive relationship maybe related to the fact that these individuals are more concerned with the community where they reside. Not located near enough has a negative relationship to civic engagement. If opportunities are not easily accessible, youth will not participate.

In the reduced overall model, the seven variables with significance to obstacles were; too much to do for school, I have a part-time job, not located near enough, I am not that interested in what is available, my parents wouldn't approve of my involvement, I don't see an identified role for youth in organizations, and I would feel intimidated by others. A positive relationship was found with school, job, and identifiable youth role. These are the same three variables that were found in Model two (Table 4.3). The other four have a negative relationship that are parent's approval, intimidated, location, and not interested. These negative obstacles are major contributors to why youth will chose not to become engaged. Addressing the obstacles will increase involvement. In this study, statistical analysis identified community as having the strongest influence (Adjusted $R^2 = .043$) on youth and their becoming civically engaged. As the review of the literature indicated, these outcomes were predictable.

Strong obstacles to youth becoming civically engaged in both Pennsylvania and Ireland were the activity was not located in close proximity, the parents wouldn't approve, not interested

in what is available, and the individual felt intimidated by others. The literature indicated that friends could be either an obstacle or have a positive influence. The research indicated that a social network of friends was very important and influential. Mead indicated that self-awareness begins with the defining of "I" and "me". Later, self -actualization defines the individual but also defines a space for them within the wider society.

Having opportunities to be civically engaged that are in close proximity to where they live is important to youth. According to the data collected, youth do not participate if the activity is not located near enough. Having to travel some distance for an activity is difficult for youth too young to drive, who must then depend upon adults or public transportation to transport them to and from activities. This location issue may be reflected in participants reporting of the obstacle of parents not approving. The reported obstacles of having other obligations on their time such as school assignments and part-time jobs reflect the concern over the pressure to succeed academically and the need to produce income. Even when the obstacles mentioned have been overcome, the youth must still be willing to choose to participate.

Participants in this study perceived time and money to be obstacles to civic engagement. They responded that too much schoolwork and part-time jobs were obstacles. Location was another obstacle to participation. If an adolescent has a perception that schoolwork is too time consuming and that they must additionally have a part-time job, then there will be no time for civic engagement. However, if there were programs located either close to home or to school, there would be less time spent commuting and more time available for other activities. If the activity was close to school and the student required tutoring to decrease the school workload, they may be able to find tutoring opportunities at school and prior to the activity.

If there was programming, that was local and could provide some measure of income to the participant, this would negate the need for a part-time job. Secondary school athletes could be hired as umpires and referees for games of elementary level players or as coaching assistants. Talented musicians and artists could give lessons to children. At this age some youth may have more skills when dealing with technology and could tutor older adults in the use of technology. While the arts and sports seem to be common avenues for youth to participate, many participants in the survey indicated that there was not programming that interested them.

The interests of adolescents are not constant and continual updating of programs is needed to stay current with trends, interests and demands of youth. Giving youth the opportunity to express their ideas, interests and concerns is essential for continued success. As adolescents mature their priorities and interests evolve and change. Youth also need to see an identifiable role in order to participate. If youth do not feel welcomed or valued as a member of the group they will not engage. Any program needs to stress a welcoming membership which often is created by leadership who models welcoming behavior. There is no one program that can accommodate all the needs of every youth in the community. Just as there was no one variable that was particularly strong as compared to the rest, there is not a single program or solution. Current programs need to provide maturing youth with new opportunities, roles, and a way to generate income when possible. Programs that are flexible in nature, that is having a similar structure while being adaptable to the individual, can be successful.

One of the variables for obstacles to youth civic engagement was the feeling of being intimidated. As reported in the literature, informal methods of support were found to be central to accessible support and the feeling of well-being (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2008). Participants in the survey indicated that an obstacle to civic engagement was feeling intimidated.

If informal methods of support do not exist and the individual lacks a feeling of well-being, they

will not seek to participate even if an opportunity is available. The literature also states that

youth need opportunity, acceptance and venues (Brennan, Barnett, & McGrath, 2009: Morrow,

2000). The research revealed that if individuals were not interested in the selection of activities

available they would not participate. Participants in this study indicated that they were not

interested in what is available. Frequently, the available options are either sports activities or

music activities. This study indicates that a broader range of activities should be made available.

Respondents also indicated there was a lack of identifiable roles in organizations for youth in

their communities, which was another variable for obstacles to becoming civically engaged. As

stated in the literature, youth will not participate if they do not perceive a role or identify a sense

of well – being (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2012). Again the feeling of being

intimidated demonstrates the obstacle that lack of acceptance can create, whether it is real or it is

perceived. Acceptance or the lack of acceptance was also indicated in the response that a

significant number of students answered that they felt their parents would not approve.

Venue was another need that has to be met for youth to participate (Morrow, 2000). In

support of this, survey respondents indicated that an obstacle to becoming civically engaged was that

opportunities were not located near enough. Once again it was also important to have an opportunity

close in physical location, that is of interest to youth, and that has a position in the organization

where youth can identify a role and feel they will be given a voice. Any one of the variables within

the concept of obstacles has a negative impact on civic engagement, but do not individually present a

large threat to youth civic engagement. Obstacles may be real or may be perceived.

Several recommendations arose from the obstacle concept and its variables. One is that

the participants responded that their parents would not approve. A recommendation would be to

research the reasons as to why the students feel parents would not approve. Along with this study it would be a recommendation to research if this is an accurate observation or a misconception by the participant. Participants also responded that they felt intimidated. Research could be conducted to determine whether a perceived obstacle is more detrimental than an identified obstacle. Another recommendation would be to conduct further research into bullying behaviors and the lack of empathy among youth. Additionally, a recommendation for continued research into teaching and modeling empathy to adolescence and adults is suggested.

R3: How do personal characteristics affect youth civic engagement?

Personal characteristics may inhibit or promote youth civic engagement. In both Ireland and Pennsylvania demographic for this study were not seen as significant. These sections looked at gender, age, access to internet, cars owned, vacations, urban/rural, length of residency, and live with both parents and how these factors shape civic engagement. In this study, statistical analysis identified community as having the strongest influence (Adjusted R^2 = .007) on youth and their becoming civically engaged. For this study these findings show that it is more important for community interaction to increase civic engagement. Personal characteristics do not seem to stand in the way of youth becoming engaged.

R4: What role does the community play in youth civic engagement?

According to this research, community is the most important factor in youth becoming civically engaged. If youth do not feel accepted and valued as a contributing member, they will not seek to participate (Wilkinson, 1979). When this data was run in a regression of social support, adults were found to be significantly important. This was supported by the survey participants writing in response to open ended questions that they were seeking more time with teachers. This

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comment was issued even in small classroom settings. This research also supported the concept that if youth have a positive relationship with their neighbors they will be more likely to seek participation in local groups. As stated earlier, in addition to these strong horizontal neighbor bonds the activities must also be located close to home. Youth who have strong local ties will be interested in local issues. Research supports that knowledge of and interest in local issues increases the participation of youth. However in addition to these bonds, youth must see an identifiable role and feel that they will have a voice in local issues before they will participate. Also while strong friendship, neighbor, and family bonds are important for an individual to participate, Wilkinson (1991) noted that a shortage of weak ties can retard the development of rural communities.

The community concept was created by a scaling of community indicators. This scale was made of six questions that addressed integration with neighbors, friends, and how participants spent time with friends. If community does not exist, youth will not look to become engaged. Community with the sense of belonging was the strongest indicator of participation. Therefore, adults must be available to mentor youth whose adult family members are too consumed with providing basic needs to model community and to provide a sense of well-being. Weak ties are found to be as important as strong ties in building community. Weak vertical ties can be created by local programming in churches, schools, and community centers which complement the strong horizontal ties found in local communities.

In this study, statistical analysis identified community as having the strongest influence (adjusted R^2 = .141, p=.000) on youth and their becoming civically engaged. The community concept was derived from a scaling of variables about community where participants live, adding statistical strength to this concept.

A recommendation is made to conduct continued research that would provide local community leaders with statistics on the benefits of encouraging youth to become civically engaged. Another recommendation is made to conduct research as to the best methods for implementation of youth programs and for identifying what programs are most suitable to a particular community. Attention should be given to assure sufficient variety of activities to attract a wider range of participants and to offer both online activities and those that provide adult human contact (mentors, advisors). Another recommendation is that research should be initiated in Pennsylvania to evaluate the program in Ireland, Foroige, which to this point has been highly successful in increasing youth civic engagement and may be a model that is adaptable to the United States.

R5: Do similarities and differences exist between Pennsylvania and Irish youth becoming civic engaged in the community?

The data from Ireland and Pennsylvania showed that youth did not see an identified role for themselves in organizations. Also, youth in both countries expressed that they felt intimidated by others and these both were contributing obstacles to civic engagement. As the literature indicates and the research supported, youth need to be able to readily identify a role that they can fill in an organization. Overall for this study youth in both areas expressed the same concerns and interest. Additionally, youth who feel intimidated by the prospect of joining a group must see a reward (meeting of a need to participate) that outweighs the fear or intimidation. Identifying and recruiting effective volunteers is both important and difficult according to the literature. The research showed that adults were important when compared to other social supports but were less significant when analyzed in the full regression. For youth to feel empowered and welcomed, they need to have volunteers with the necessary skill sets to create an environment that is engaging while valuing the participant. According to this research,

participating youth indicated that they valued opportunities to become civically engaged and

realized the importance of civic engagement as evidenced by the comment on a survey from Irish

youth "I enjoy helping out in something that I am interested in" or "I can make new friends and

learn new skills." However, these same youth were not civically engaged. Schools have the

opportunity to present avenues where youth are welcomed and can become civically engaged.

Schools communicate with both parents and students which would ease the communicating of

opportunities for youth and encourage parental support. While at school, students could be given

the option to participate in a community service opportunity. While youth need to see a role that

they can fill and to feel there is a welcoming group to participate with, adults who were

interviewed seemed to focus more on financial concerns. Adults cited lack of financial resources

and lack of volunteers as the primary obstacles to youth becoming civically engaged.

Established programs need to provide additional opportunities for maturing membership to grow

as individuals in order to continue to participate.

It should be noted that in rural Ireland it seemed common to have schools whose student

population was segregated by gender. However, participants in all female and all male schools

responded similarly to the survey. Data analysis showed that students in both countries felt the

need to have a part-time jobs and this was in conflict with having the time to be civically

engaged. In comparing answers to open ended questions, the Irish students expressed an

increased concern regarding mental health issues and the stress they perceived resulting from

their Junior Certification Exams and the Leaving Certification Exams when compared with their

Pennsylvania counterparts. Irish youth included answers to open ended questions with responses

such as "There needs to be more teen based activities and groups that deal with teen depression

and suicide as it is a growing issue in Ireland." and "Teenagers are pressured about more things

than school/friends. Teenagers suffer pressured feelings from family or going out also. In some areas there are no facilities what so ever for teenagers, just children or adults. More facilities need to be made for youth…" Both groups of students expressed concern that pressures of school and the pressure to succeed in addition to the time required to ensure that success was a major obstacle to civic engagement. In Pennsylvania, through interviews, an observation was made that opportunities for civic engagement need to begin earlier than high school, and needs to be more than a finite number of hours required at the high school level for graduation. A recommendation would be to study the implementation of civic engagement activities as an integrated part of the curriculum. Youth in both Ireland and Pennsylvania desire that the same needs be met as demonstrated by similar responses to survey questions. In answer to the question would you like to be more involved in community or volunteer activity? ; an Irish respondent answered "It's very self- fulfilling." while their Pennsylvania counterpart answered "It's fun to help."

A recommendation is to incorporate civic activities into school curriculum and giving additional credits for civic involvement. When including opportunities for civic engagement, care should be taken to provide opportunities that will nurture interest in continuing participation or provide an increased skill set rather than fulfilling a mandated requirement.

Conclusion

This study has continued to add to the knowledge of youth civic engagement and was based on a previous study that was conducted in 2006. The concepts, variables, and measures were used in three communities in two countries. By identifying common factors across communities, a better understanding of obstacles for youth becoming involved can be gained. This is a continual process. From this study, educators, programmers, and policy makers can

utilize research information for the betterment of their communities. These efforts would give youth a stronger voice in their communities.

When looking at youth participation, researchers must be aware that if the increased costs of participation exceed the rewards afforded by participation then participation is unlikely (Coser, 1977; Parson, 1951). That is to say, rewards must be perceived as greater than the personal effort it takes to participate. Therefore, for participation to occur not only must the activity be at a convenient location, with identifiable roles and must have significance, but it must be enjoyable. Respondents indicated that obstacles to engagement relevant to the concepts of personal costs versus rewards gained were that they had too much schoolwork and that part-time jobs were in conflict with participation. As Lauver and Little (2005) stated there needs to be a balance between learn and leisure. As academic pressures increase students feel there is no time for extra- curricular activity. Students also feel the need to have part-time jobs, which along with school responsibilities limits free time. In addition to a balance between learn and leisure the added dimension of earn, learn, and leisure was found to be significant.

Social networking is important to youth. Community cohesion must exist for there to be strong social ties. Strong social ties encourage social networking. Initially adult family members, religious leaders, and teachers are more important influences for youth (McGrath, et al., 2012). The importance of adults in the lives of youth was validated by this research. A recommendation is to provide youth with the opportunity within the community to gain personal and professional development.

However, after running the full regression, friends were statistically more significant in influencing one another. Interestingly, respondents indicated that friends were important for leisure

time activities and socialization, but not a strong influence for support or encouragement. Therefore, friends can be either a strong influence to increase participation or equally a substantial obstacle to participation. For youth to be engaged the benefit of intellectual mastery must outweigh any negative peer pressure (Coser, 1977; Parsons, 1951). Youth, like adults, are cognitive misers and gravitate to activities which require the least effort but have the most return of needs met/fun. Additionally, youth are characterized in the literature as emotional and not logical thinkers (Tetlock, 2002). This is important to keep in mind when developing programs and policy.

After conducting this research it can be determined, that with minimal additions to programs and policies youth civic engagement can be greatly increased. Increased funding is needed to promote the benefits of increased youth civic engagement and to determine the most effective programming components. Increased funding and research is needed to provide the optimal pairing of programming with a particular community.

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APPENDIX A
SAMPLE OF SURVEY QUESTIONS USED IN IRELAND

Youth, Community, and Support in Ireland

'Youth, Community, and Support in Ireland'

About where you live

The following questions ask you about where you live and your feelings about where

How long have you lived in your area?

_____ years_____months

Where did you live before?

☐ I have lived here all my life ☐ Another part of Co Galway

☐ Another part of this county ☐ Outside of Ireland

For each of these statements below, please indicate which best describes your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
People look after each other where I live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are good places to spend my free time (parks, shops)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most people here would take advantage of others if they could	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most people who live in my area trust one another	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Where I live is a friendly place	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generally, I feel safe in the area where I live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People say hello and often stop to talk to each other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Youth are very involved in the local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is always someone to talk to where I live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Girls in this area don't have the same opportunities as boys	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Youth always get the blame for any trouble here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small towns don't have the same problems as cities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you had to move away from the community where you live for some reason, which of these statements

sums up how you would feel about that?

I would be very sorry to leave				**I would be very happy to leave**
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How strongly do you agree that you can influence decisions that affect your area?

Strongly disagree   **Strongly agree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Overall, how interested are you in knowing what goes on in this community?

                                              Very Interested

Very Disinterested

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

How would you describe your feelings toward your neighbors? Would you say you are….:

Very Distant   **Somewhat distant**   **No feelings either way**   **Somewhat close**   **Very close**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

How often do you get together or meet with the following types of people?

	More than Once a week	**Once a Week**	**A Few Times a Month**	**Once a Month**	**A Few Times a Year**	**Never**
Immediate Family (parents, siblings)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extended Family (cousins, others)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Acquaintances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Neighbors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School clubs/groups members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

About what you like to do

These questions ask about what you like to do outside of school and who you like to spend
How important is it to you to have good friends?

                                            Very important

Not important

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

                                            ☐

How many 'close friends' do you have?

☐ None   ☐ One   ☐ Two   ☐ Three   ☐ More Than Three

How often do you see your friends outside of school?

Never	☐	About once a week	☐
3 or 4 times a year	☐	3 or 4 days a week	☐
About once a month	☐	5 or 6 days a week	☐
Several times a month, but not once a week	☐	Every day	☐

How often do you talk to your friends on the phone or send them texts or emails?

Rarely or never	☐	5 or 6 days a week	☐
1 or 2 days a week	☐	Every day	☐
3 or 4 days a week	☐		

When you meet your friends outside of school, how do you spend most of the time together?

Please tick the box that best describes how much you do the activities listed.

Activities ….	Never	Sometimes	Often but not always	Nearly always
Watch TV in each other's homes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Go to a leisure center, e.g. pool hall	☐	☐	☐	☐
Go to the movies	☐	☐	☐	☐
Meet at a restaurant or café	☐	☐	☐	☐
Go shopping	☐	☐	☐	☐
Play a sport	☐	☐	☐	☐
Play computer games	☐	☐	☐	☐
Play music (e.g. guitar, sing)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Involved in a hobby outside our homes. Please tell us what it is: _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

When you don't meet friends or feel you have none, who do you spend time with?

Please tick all that apply…

I spend it alone	☐
I spend it with my brother	☐
I spend it with my sister	☐
I spend it with my mother	☐
I spend it with my father	☐
Other, please state who _____	☐

Listed below are reasons for <u>NOT</u> getting involved in leisure activities. Please tick whether you think the reasons listed are 'a strong reason, 'a slight reason' or 'not really a reason' for you.

Is it because…	Not a reason	A slight reason	A strong reason
Too much to do for school			
Too much to do around the house	☐	☐	☐
Too much to do on the farm	☐	☐	☐
I have a part-time job	☐	☐	☐
It costs too much money that I don't have	☐	☐	☐
There is no one to bring me	☐	☐	☐
I don't like the people who go there	☐	☐	☐
They don't exist near enough to where I live	☐	☐	☐
My parents restrict me	☐	☐	☐
My friends wouldn't approve	☐	☐	☐
Other reason, please write here_____	☐	☐	☐

About your Involvement with Clubs and Organizations

These questions ask about your involvement with clubs and organizations and how

Do you take part in any community or volunteer activities?

☐ No   ☐ Yes ⬎

> **If YES, approximately how many groups or organizations do you volunteer with?**
>
> ☐   1
> ☐   2
> ☐   3
> ☐   4
> ☐ 5 or more

In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in your community?

<u>Not at all active</u>   <u>Very Active</u>

☐   ☐   ☐

For the following clubs or groups, can you tick the box for your level of involvement?

	More than Once a week	About once a week	Several times a month	About once a month	A few times a year	Not involved at all
Youth group (Scouts, church)	☐	☐				
Music group (choir, dance)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sports: What type _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other groups. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Listed below are reasons for <u>NOT</u> getting involved in clubs or organizations. Please tell us how strong of a reason they are in shaping your involvement.

	Not a reason	A slight reason	A strong reason
Too much to do for school			
Too much to do around the house	☐	☐	☐
Too much to do on the farm	☐	☐	☐
I have a part-time job	☐	☐	☐
It costs too much money	☐	☐	☐
They are not located near enough	☐	☐	☐
There is no one to bring me	☐	☐	☐
I don't like the people who go there	☐	☐	☐
I am not that interested in what's available	☐	☐	☐
My parents wouldn't approve of my involvement	☐	☐	☐
I wouldn't be taken seriously by adults	☐	☐	☐
I have not been asked to participate	☐	☐	☐
I don't see an identified role for youth in organizations	☐	☐	☐
Organizations don't give young people a say in things	☐	☐	☐
Friends wouldn't approve of my involvement	☐	☐	☐
I don't have skills to offer	☐	☐	☐
I would feel intimidated by others	☐	☐	☐
I don't have transportation to meetings	☐	☐	☐
I don't have time to commit	☐	☐	☐
I'm not sure of the real benefit of volunteering	☐	☐	☐
I wouldn't be recognized for my efforts	☐	☐	☐

IF YOU ARE INVOLVED in community/volunteer activities, please tick the boxes which best describe why you decided to participate.

Is it because…	Not a reason	A slight reason	A strong reason
	☐		☐
I am dissatisfied with the way things are	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy local politics	☐	☐	☐
I believe that others will eventually return the favor	☐	☐	☐
To make friends with others	☐	☐	☐
The community needs volunteers to reduce costs	☐	☐	☐
I feel I have a public duty as a citizen	☐	☐	☐
Other reasons _____	☐	☐	☐

Are you happy with how often you attend these clubs or organizations?

☐ No   ☐ Yes

Would you like to be more involved in community or volunteer activity?

☐ No   ☐ Yes

If Yes, Why? _____

About School

These questions ask you about what it's like for you in school. For each of these

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
I like being in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most of the students in my classes will help me out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other students accept me as I am	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The students in my class enjoy being together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel pressured by the schoolwork I have to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I sometimes feel bullied in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have good relationships with my teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The rules in this school are fair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel I am doing well in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School is an important place to meet friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is too much emphasis on tests at school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

About you

Are you Male or Female? ☐ Male ☐ Female

How old were you on your last birthday? _____

Where do you live?
- ☐ Farm
- ☐ Country
- ☐ Small Town
- ☐ City
- ☐ Large City

Please check for each item listed below which best describes how you generally feel….

	Never	**Sometimes**	**Most of the time**
I look forward to things as much as I used to	☐	☐	☐
I sleep very well	☐	☐	☐
I feel like crying	☐	☐	☐
I like going out	☐	☐	☐
I feel like leaving home	☐	☐	☐
I get stomach-aches/cramps	☐	☐	☐
I have lots of energy	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy my food	☐	☐	☐
I can stick up for myself	☐	☐	☐
I think life isn't worth living	☐	☐	☐
I am good at things I do	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy the things I do as much as I used to	☐	☐	☐
I like talking to my friends and family	☐	☐	☐
I have horrible dreams	☐	☐	☐
I feel very lonely	☐	☐	☐
I am easily cheered up	☐	☐	☐
I feel so sad I can hardly bear it	☐	☐	☐
I feel very bored	☐	☐	☐

Thinking about money and financial issues, how much do you think these cause 'concern' for your family:

Not a concern at all	A slight concern	A big concern	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

This section asks you a number of questions about how well you can rely on your friends, parents/guardian, brother(s)/sister(s) and other adult(s).

	No	Sometimes	Yes
Are there <u>friends</u> you can depend on to help you?	☐	☐	☐
Do your relationships with your <u>friends</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognized by your <u>friends</u>?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a <u>friend</u> you could trust to turn to for advice?	☐	☐	☐
Can you depend on your <u>parent(s)/guardian</u> to help you?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognized by your <u>parents</u>?	☐	☐	☐
Could you turn to your <u>parent(s)/guardian</u> for advice?	☐	☐	☐
Can you depend on your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)</u> to help you?	☐	☐	☐
Do your relationships with your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do your relationships with your <u>parent(s)/guardian</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)</u>?	☐	☐	☐
Could you turn to your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)</u> for advice?	☐	☐	☐
Can you depend on <u>other adult(s)</u> (e.g. sport coach, family friend) you know to help you, if you really need it?	☐	☐	☐
Does your relationships with this <u>adult</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognized by this <u>adult</u>?	☐	☐	☐
Could you turn to <u>another adult</u> for advice?	☐	☐	☐

Please check all of those who live with you.

☐ My mother	☐ One grandparent	☐ More than one grandparent
☐ My father	☐ My stepmother (or father's girlfriend)	☐ My brother(s)
☐ My guardian	☐ My stepfather (or mother's boyfriend	☐ My sisters(s)

Do you live with both parents?

☐　No　　　　　☐　Yes

↓

If NO, is it because of any of the following:

☐　　　I live with foster parents
☐　I live in temporary accommodation
☐　　　I live in residential care
☐　　　I live with one parent

How many brothers do you have? _____　　**How many sisters do you have?** _____

How many times in the last 12 months did you go away on vacation with your family?　_____ times

The next question is about your parent(s) jobs

MOTHER	**FATHER**
Does your mother have a job?	**Does your father have a job?**
☐　No　　　　☐　Yes	☐　No　　　　☐　Yes
If yes, write down what her job is	If yes, write down what his job is
_____	_____
Do any of the following apply to you?	**Do any of the following apply to you?**
☐　　My mother is no longer alive	☐　　My father is no longer alive
☐　　She is sick, retired or a student	☐　　He is sick, retired or a student
☐　　She works full-time in the home	☐　　He works full-time in the home
☐　　She takes care of others	☐　　He takes care of others
☐　　Don't know	☐　　Don't know

Do you have your own bedroom?　　☐　No　　　　☐　Yes

How many computers does your family own? _____ computers

Do you have internet in your home?　　☐　No　　　　☐　Yes

How many cars, vans or trucks do your family own? _____ cars, vans, or trucks

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background?
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other _____

In the space provided below, please feel free to offer any information that you feel would help us better understand the issues, needs, and concerns you face.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thanks so very much for your time and opinions!

Your responses will help to better understand your needs and the support

that is available to meet these.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE OF SURVEY QUESTIONS USED IN PENNSYLVANIA

Youth, Community, and Support in Pennsylvania

'Youth, Community, and Support in Pennsylvania'

About where you live

The following questions ask you about where you live and your feelings about where

How long have you lived in your area?

_____ years_____ months

Where did you live before?

- ☐ I have lived here all my life
- ☐ Another part of this county
- ☐ Another part of Pennsylvania
- ☐ Outside of Pennsylvania

For each of these statements below, please indicate which best describes your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
People look after each other where I live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are good places to spend my free time (parks, shops)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most people here would take advantage of others if they could	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most people who live in my area trust one another	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Where I live is a friendly place	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generally, I feel safe in the area where I live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People say hello and often stop to talk to each other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Youth are very involved in the local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is always someone to talk to where I live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Girls in this area don't have the same opportunities as boys	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Youth always get the blame for any trouble here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small towns don't have the same problems as cities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you had to move away from the community where you live for some reason, which of these statements

sums up how you would feel about that?

I would be very sorry to leave				**I would be very happy to leave**
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How strongly do you agree that you can influence decisions that affect your area?

Strongly disagree   **Strongly agree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Overall, how interested are you in knowing what goes on in this community?

Very Disinterested   **Very Interested**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

How would you describe your feelings toward your neighbors? Would you say you are….:

Very Distant   **Somewhat distant**   **No feelings either way**   **Somewhat close**   **Very close**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

How often do you get together or meet with the following types of people?

	More than Once a week	**Once a Week**	**A Few Times a Month**	**Once a Month**	**A Few Times a Year**	**Never**
Immediate Family (parents, siblings)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extended Family (cousins, others)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Acquaintances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Neighbors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School clubs/groups members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

About what you like to do

These questions ask about what you like to do outside of school and who you like to spend

How important is it to you to have good friends?

Not important   **Very important**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

How many 'close friends' do you have?

☐ None   ☐ One   ☐ Two   ☐ Three   ☐ More Than Three

How often do you see your friends outside of school?

Never	☐	About once a week	☐
3 or 4 times a year	☐	3 or 4 days a week	☐
About once a month	☐	5 or 6 days a week	☐
Several times a month, but not once a week	☐	Every day	☐

How often do you talk to your friends on the phone or send them texts or emails?

Rarely or never	☐	5 or 6 days a week	☐
1 or 2 days a week	☐	Every day	☐
3 or 4 days a week	☐		

When you meet your friends outside of school, how do you spend most of the time together?

Please check the box that best describes how much you do the activities listed.

Activities ….	Never	Sometimes	Often but not always	Nearly always
Watch TV in each other's homes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Go to a community youth center	☐	☐	☐	☐
Go to the movies	☐	☐	☐	☐
Meet at a restaurant or coffee shop	☐	☐	☐	☐
Go shopping or to the mall	☐	☐	☐	☐
Play a sport	☐	☐	☐	☐
Play computer games	☐	☐	☐	☐
Play music (e.g. guitar, sing)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Involved in a hobby outside our homes. Please tell us what it is: _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

When you don't meet friends or feel you have none, who do you spend time with?

Please check all that apply…

I spend it alone	☐
I spend it with my brother	☐
I spend it with my sister	☐
I spend it with my mother	☐
I spend it with my father	☐
Other, please state who _____	☐

Listed below are reasons for <u>NOT</u> getting involved in leisure activities. Please check whether you think the reasons listed are 'a strong reason, 'a slight reason' or 'not really a reason' for you.

Is it because…	Not a reason	A slight reason	A strong reason
Too much to do for school			
Too much to do around the house	☐	☐	☐
Too much to do on the farm	☐	☐	☐
I have a part-time job	☐	☐	☐
It costs too much money that I don't have	☐	☐	☐
There is no one to bring me	☐	☐	☐
I don't like the people who go there	☐	☐	☐
They don't exist near enough to where I live	☐	☐	☐
My parents restrict me	☐	☐	☐
My friends wouldn't approve	☐	☐	☐
Other reason, please write here_____	☐	☐	☐

About your Involvement with Clubs and Organizations

These questions ask about your involvement with clubs and organizations and how

Do you take part in any community or volunteer activities?

☐   No   ☐   Yes

If YES, approximately how many groups or organizations do you volunteer with?

☐   1
☐   2
☐   3
☐   4
☐   5 or more

In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in your community?
<u>Not at all active</u>   <u>Very Active</u>

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

For the following clubs or groups, can you check the box for your level of involvement?

	More than Once a week	About once a week	Several times a month	About once a month	A few times a year	Not involved at all
Youth group (Scouts, church)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Music group (choir, dance)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sports: What type _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other groups. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Listed below are reasons for <u>NOT</u> getting involved in clubs or organizations. Please tell us how strong of a reason they are in shaping your involvement.

	Not a reason	A slight reason	A strong reason
Too much to do for school			
Too much to do around the house	☐	☐	☐
Too much to do on the farm	☐	☐	☐
I have a part-time job	☐	☐	☐
It costs too much money	☐	☐	☐
They are not located near enough	☐	☐	☐
There is no one to bring me	☐	☐	☐
I don't like the people who go there	☐	☐	☐
I am not that interested in what's available	☐	☐	☐
My parents wouldn't approve of my involvement	☐	☐	☐
I wouldn't be taken seriously by adults	☐	☐	☐
I have not been asked to participate	☐	☐	☐
I don't see an identified role for youth in organizations	☐	☐	☐
Organizations don't give young people a say in things	☐	☐	☐
Friends wouldn't approve of my involvement	☐	☐	☐
I don't have skills to offer	☐	☐	☐
I would feel intimidated by others	☐	☐	☐
I don't have transportation to meetings	☐	☐	☐
I don't have time to commit	☐	☐	☐
I'm not sure of the real benefit of volunteering	☐	☐	☐
I wouldn't be recognized for my efforts	☐	☐	☐

IF YOU ARE INVOLVED in community/volunteer activities, please check the boxes which best describe why you decided to participate.

Is it because…	Not a reason	A slight reason	A strong reason
	☐		☐
I am dissatisfied with the way things are	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy local politics	☐	☐	☐
I believe that others will eventually return the favor	☐	☐	☐
To make friends with others	☐	☐	☐
The community needs volunteers to reduce costs	☐	☐	☐
I feel I have a public duty as a citizen	☐	☐	☐
Other reasons _____	☐	☐	☐

Are you happy with how often you attend these clubs or organisations?

☐ No   ☐ Yes

Would you like to be more involved in community or volunteer activity?

☐ No   ☐ Yes

If Yes, Why? _____

About School

These questions ask you about what it's like for you in school. For each of these

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
I like being in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most of the students in my classes will help me out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other students accept me as I am	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The students in my class enjoy being together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel pressured by the schoolwork I have to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I sometimes feel bullied in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have good relationships with my teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The rules in this school are fair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel I am doing well in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School is an important place to meet friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is too much emphasis on tests at school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

About you

Are you Male or Female?   ☐   Male   ☐   Female

How old were you on your last birthday? _____

Where do you live?
☐   Farm
☐   Country
☐   Small Town
☐   City
☐   Large City

Please check for each item listed below which best describes how you generally feel….

	Never	**Sometimes**	**Most of the time**
I look forward to things as much as I used to	☐	☐	☐
I sleep very well	☐	☐	☐
I feel like crying	☐	☐	☐
I like going out	☐	☐	☐
I feel like leaving home	☐	☐	☐
I get stomach-aches/cramps	☐	☐	☐
I have lots of energy	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy my food	☐	☐	☐
I can stick up for myself	☐	☐	☐
I think life isn't worth living	☐	☐	☐
I am good at things I do	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy the things I do as much as I used to	☐	☐	☐
I like talking to my friends and family	☐	☐	☐
I have horrible dreams	☐	☐	☐
I feel very lonely	☐	☐	☐
I am easily cheered up	☐	☐	☐
I feel so sad I can hardly bear it	☐	☐	☐
I feel very bored	☐	☐	☐

Thinking about money and financial issues, how much do you think these cause 'concern' for your family:

Not a concern at all	A slight concern	A big concern	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

This section asks you a number of questions about how well you can rely on your friends, parents/ guardian, brother(s)/sister(s) and other adult(s).

	No	Sometimes	Yes
Are there <u>friends</u> you can depend on to help you?	☐	☐	☐
Do your relationships with your <u>friends</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognized by your <u>friends</u>?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a <u>friend</u> you could trust to turn to for advice?	☐	☐	☐
Can you depend on your <u>parent(s)/guardian</u> to help you?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognized by your <u>parents</u>?	☐	☐	☐
Could you turn to your <u>parent(s)/guardian</u> for advice?	☐	☐	☐
Can you depend on your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)</u> to help you?	☐	☐	☐
Do your relationships with your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do your relationships with your <u>parent(s)/guardian</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)?</u>	☐	☐	☐
Could you turn to your <u>brother(s)/sister(s)</u> for advice?	☐	☐	☐
Can you depend on <u>other adult(s)</u> (e.g. sport coach, family friend) you know to help you, if you really need it?	☐	☐	☐
Does your relationships with this <u>adult</u> provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognized by this <u>adult</u>?	☐	☐	☐
Could you turn to <u>another adult</u> for advice?	☐	☐	☐

Please check all of those who live with you.

☐ My mother	☐ One grandparent	☐ More than one grandparent
☐ My father	☐ My stepmother (or father's girlfriend)	☐ My brother(s)
☐ My guardian	☐ My stepfather (or mother's boyfriend	☐ My sisters(s)

Do you live with both parents?

☐   No   ☐   Yes

If NO, is it because of any of the following:

☐   I live with foster parents
☐   I live in temporary accommodation
☐   I live in residential care
☐   I live with one parent

How many brothers do you have? _____   **How many sisters do you have? _____**

How many times in the last 12 months did you go away on vacation with your family? _____ times

The next question is about your parent(s) jobs

MOTHER	**FATHER**
Does your mother have a job?	**Does your father have a job?**
☐ No ☐ Yes	☐ No ☐ Yes
If yes, write down what her job is	If yes, write down what his job is
_____	_____
Do any of the following apply to you?	**Do any of the following apply to you?**
☐ My mother is no longer alive	☐ My father is no longer alive
☐ She is sick, retired or a student	☐ He is sick, retired or a student
☐ She works full-time in the home	☐ He works full-time in the home
☐ She takes care of others	☐ He takes care of others
☐ Don't know	☐ Don't know

Do you have your own bedroom?   ☐   No   ☐   Yes

How many computers does your family own? _____ computers

Do you have internet in your home?   ☐   No   ☐   Yes

How many cars, vans or trucks do your family own?_____cars, vans, or trucks

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background?
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other _____

In the space provided below, please feel free to offer any information that you feel would help us better understand the issues, needs, and concerns you face.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thanks so very much for your time and opinions!
Your responses will help to better understand your needs and the support
that is available to meet these.

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USED

Community:

Date:

Time:

Place:

Phone:

Name:

Title:

Length of time held this position:

1. In the last decade, have there been any important actions in this community regarding youth civic engagement by community representatives, local groups, or citizens involving community development?

Can you describe these (what happened, who was involved, how did it start, what were the

barriers, what was the outcome, etc.)

2. How important do you feel that the participation of local individuals is to these youth development efforts?

3. In the last decade, have there been any important actions in this community by community representatives, local groups or citizens to increase jobs and income?

    Can you describe these (what happened, who was involved, how did it start, what were the barriers, what was the outcome, etc.)

4. Are there any other major issues or actions regarding youth in the local area that you have not yet mentioned?

    Can you describe these (what happened, who was involved, how did it start, what were the barriers, what was the outcome, etc.)

The Community:

5. Would you say the residents of this community are actively concerned about efforts to improve local quality of life and well being?

6. What kind of community youth groups and youth organizations are here?
    {get names of organizations and leaders}

7. What is likely to happen to local quality of life in the community during the next five years?
    What factors will most shape the course of the community's quality of life during this period?(barriers?)

8. Finally, of all the development efforts we have talked about, in what areas have local residents been the most important in sponsoring change?

Local Economy:

9. How would you describe the local economy of this area?
    (unemployment, growth opportunities, attitudes, workforce participation, etc.)

10. What role has local/county government played in youth development?
    What is your opinion of it?

11. What role has the national government played in youth development?
    What is your opinion of it?

Other Comments:

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the community?

Recommendations:

13. Can you think of anyone else that you think I should talk to about the community or the issues we have discussed?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE.

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?

Can I contact you again if I have any more questions?