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ANY MOVEMENT OF THE NEEDLE:

The Oaks Leadership Scholars Represent Themselves as Learners, Allies, Advocates, and Activists

Abstract

The Oaks Leadership Scholars engage in a year-long program grounded in transformative leadership and framed by Project Based Learning to develop identities as advocates and activists. Analysis of Scholars' reflections throughout the year indicate increased representation of their selves as advocates and activists over time and identifies significant events – such as a museum tour and engagement in their year-long project – in the program year. The findings of the study indicate that The Student Leader Activist Identity Continuum is an effective way to conceptualize the year and when paired with intentional teaching of transformative leadership, and can impact Scholars' concept of self in relation to justice and equity work. The findings of this study indicate areas for future study and could inform curriculum revisions.

Introduction

As the U.S. becomes increasingly diverse, it is incumbent upon leadership programs to intentionally incorporate opportunities to engage with issues of justice and equity. After all, justice and equity are inherent to the notion of leadership, as leaders work to create communities to be systems that work better for everyone in them. The Oaks Leadership Scholars is an extra-curricular program housed in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University. At the same time that students in our leadership classes – situated in a college of agriculture – were expressing a desire to discuss and engage on issues of inequality, agriculture and natural resources related companies were acknowledging their need to confront similar issues. Simultaneously, companies that hire our graduates were appearing on the Human Rights Campaign's Equality Index with 100% ratings. Conversations with these employers revealed an interest in graduates who could serve as leaders in solutions to transform communities and serve an increasingly diverse population. The Oaks Leadership Scholars was developed to match the wants of our students with the needs of potential employers and society for transformative leadership. The program, grounded in transformative leadership theory and using a project-based learning curriculum, engages undergraduate students in developing identities related to advocacy and activism.

Each spring, we solicit and receive nominations from faculty, staff, and students across the university and from industry partners for College of Agriculture students to apply and interview for positions in the coming academic year's cohort. Through the selection process, the panel of interviewers and reviewers are looking for evidence of a willingness to learn about issues of justice and equity and to develop as leaders. There is not a requirement for previous course work or for experience in justice and equity work. Selected

students attend cohort sessions twice monthly, read extensively, engage in other groups' events, participate in a field trip to the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, and conduct a year-long project that focuses on an area of their choosing and pushes them to engage in advocate or activist behaviors. Each student meets at least once a month with a faculty mentor to discuss readings and work on their project as well. Each cohort session is taught by a program faculty member or an expert in either the barrier to justice being discussed or justice and equity work. Sessions include being an ally, advocacy and risk, activism and risk, heterosexism, sexism, racism, ableism, faithism, classism, and intersectionality. At the end of the program's second academic year, it was imperative to discern if the opportunities provided to students were accomplishing the objectives of the program and how the project contributes to student learning. What follows is an assessment of the identity development of the Scholars through the analysis of their written reflections. It seeks to answer how students develop learner, ally, advocate, and activist identities and which experiences may influence that development.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In order to maintain commitments to values and outcomes that serve long-term societal interests, transformative leaders must examine their sense of self, re-think their assumptions, and be willing to explore new solutions and systems (Caldwell et al., 2012; Christensen & Raynor, 2003; Pava, 2003; Quinn, 1996). Transformative leaders critique inequitable practices, ask questions of justice and democracy, address issues of individual and public good and operate out of an overriding commitment to justice and equity (van Oord, 2013; Shields, 2010; Shields, 2016; Shields et al., 2018). When one is engaging in transformative leadership, one is working to enhance equity, justice, access, opportunity, democracy, and

civic life (Astin & Astin, 2000). Studies of transformative leadership are framed by desired outcomes, but the processes transformative leaders engage in and the identities they embody warrant exploration as well.

In order to articulate the behaviors and identities transformative leaders engage in, Bruce, McKee, Morgan-Fleming, and Warner (2019) proposed The Student Leader Activist Identity Continuum (SLAIC), a continuum of identities from learner to ally to advocate to activist (see Figure 1). Individuals move back and forth across the continuum, engaging in more or less public identities as they become aware of and passionate about different justice issues (Bruce et al., 2019). It was assumed that Scholars would enter the program as learners, open to new experiences but not yet ready to enact a more public identity, and engage in increasingly public identities throughout the year while maintaining learner behaviors and identities.

As detailed in the SLAIC, the four identities along the continuum are learners, allies, advocates, and activists. Learners are self-aware and aware of others, willing to uncover "hidden" biases, able to engage in critical reflection, and are curious to examine their own thinking, control, and cultural domination (Brown, 2006; Dunn, 1987; Senge, 1990). Reading and listening to accounts and theories related to social justice and marginalization and their potential solutions are learner behaviors. As learners put this new information and skills into action, they engage in a more public identity: ally. Allies work toward the goal of ending oppression by personally supporting individuals experiencing oppression (Washington & Evans, 1991). As individuals engage in allyship, they begin to position themselves as agents for change (Trueba, 1999). Allies engage in public displays of support such as attending marches and rallies, wearing the t-shirt, accompanying friends to meetings and services, or providing personal support to a friend (Bruce et al., 2019).

Learner	Ally	Advocate	Activist
Open to new experiences; curious; willing to hear and learn	Supports a group's rights & equality; shows up for individuals and groups experiencing marginalization; recognizes own privilege	Aims to influence others & public policy or resource decisions	Campaigns to bring about political and social change; organizes others to generate change

Learner	Ally	Advocate	Activist
Listens, reads, observes, asks, believes; continues these behaviors throughout development of subsequent identities	Goes with an impacted person to an event or service; supports an individual or organization materially or emotionally; attends events, carries signs, wears the t-shirt	Engages in media campaigns; speaks or writes publicly, conducts research or polling and shares results, issues briefs; participates in phone banks/letter-writing/canvassing; donates or participates in fundraising	Lobbies; organizes fundraisers; organizes teams and events to address issues

Figure 1.The Student Leader Activist Identity Continuum

*Note: The continuum defines four identities students may embody in justice and equity work and indicates the ability to move between identities
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Advocates communicate calls to action, work to change policy, engage in fundraising, speak or write about causes, and speak on behalf of – or amplify the voices of – impacted people (Ganz, 2009; Bruce et al., 2019). Advocates must apply context and awareness of their position to know when to speak and when to remain silent (Shields et al., 2018). This is, necessarily, a more public identity than allyship. Activists organize others around calls to action and address injustice through organizing events such as phone banks, neighborhood canvasses, and letter-writing or social media campaigns (Ganz, 2009; Trueba, 1999; Bruce et al., 2019). The most public of the identities, activists develop teams and maintain networks to address issues and motivate others to engage in learner, ally, advocate, or activist identities.

Learners who are operating in a system with an agentive view - problem-oriented, focused, proactive, selective, constructional, and directional to an end – are developing the capacity for completing acts (Bruner, 1996). This capacity, and the implied knowledge and skill, are required for the development of self that incorporates engagement in desired identities (Bruner, 1996). Project Based Learning provides the opportunity for learners to develop agency and capacity through access to authentic or real-world problems, driving questions, independent work requiring the learners' initiative, and partnerships among faculty, the learners, and the people impacted by the issue (Adderly et al., 1975; Guile & Griffiths, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The faculty of The Oaks Leadership Scholars

intend to facilitate identities in line with issues of justice and equity through the use of Project Based Learning (Bruner, 1996; Heitman, 1996).

Students in The Oaks Leadership Scholars engaged in two cohort meetings and completed an assigned reading each month wherein they learned about transformative leadership, barriers to justice and equity, and engagement in transformative leadership from program faculty and guest speakers. Each Scholar participated in two external events focused on justice and equity each month and read assigned texts. Additionally, they met with a program mentor monthly to discuss external events, readings, and their individual projects. The Scholars designed their individual projects to align their interest in agriculture, a form of injustice or inequity they wanted to address, and engagement as an advocate or activist. The cohort meetings and readings served to develop the essential knowledge and skills to engage in their projects while the mentoring cements the learning and ensures that students are applying leadership theories and best practices appropriately (Dewey, 1938). This study sought to determine in what ways The Oaks Leadership Scholars program impacts identity development on the Student Leader Activist Identity Continuum (SLAIC) and which curricular pieces have influence.

Methods

We employed a narrative research approach to examine the life experiences of Scholars in their leadership program (Creswell, 2007). With IRB approval, we gathered the Scholars' life stories through the collection of written reflections (Creswell, 2007). Students completed reflections after each cohort session responding to the prompts:

    o What resonated with you this month?

    o What are the salient aspects of the reading/events/sessions?

    o What aspects of transformative leadership did you observe/read about?

    o How were transformative leadership

paradigms applied/enacted in the events you observed? (identification of events provides context)

    o How will you incorporate lessons learned from this month into your transformative leadership practice?

    o What is transformative leadership?

Scholars submitted their reflections using an online course management system. The authors downloaded all student reflections submitted from the beginning of the 2018-2019 cohort – August – through the last April 2019 reflection, totaling 16 possible reflection submissions per Scholar.

Scholars were included in this study if they had submitted at least 10 of the 16 potential reflections (>60%). Each Scholar was assigned a pseudonym that had a similar popularity rank the year they were born to their given name, and the Baby Name Wizard website was used to identify the corresponding pseudonym (https://www.babynamewizard.com/ voyager). We removed names from the reflections and uploaded the reflections into QDA Miner Lite software for coding.

As we sought to examine each Scholar's representation of their identity on the identity framework for The Oaks Leadership Scholars program, we employed a provisional coding scheme in the first cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2009). We established the code list from the behaviors for each identity on the identity continuum of the framework (Bruce et al., 2019; Saldaña, 2009). There is some risk that provisional coding schemes can force the data to fit a framework; however, we addressed this by allowing the code list to evolve to incorporate salient aspects of the Scholars' reflections (Saldaña, 2009). We used elaborative coding in the second cycle, as the goal is to refine the theoretical constructs posited in the development of the identity framework (Bruce et al., 2019; Saldaña, 2009). This re-storying of the Scholars' reflections allowed for analysis that emphasizes sequence and thus allows the examination of growth over time (Creswell, 2007).

Segments coded "significant event" indicated an

event that the Scholar wrote about as impactful. As these events may serve as epiphanies on an individual's identity trajectory, these are included as well (Creswell, 2007). We examined the coded segments to develop a profile of each identity on the SLAIC (Bruce et al., 2019), possible changes over time, and events that correspond – in time – with identity representations.

Results

Analysis of the Scholars' reflections revealed changes in their representations of self across the academic year. Each identity is presented individually with representative reflection segments indicating movement within the continuum. Scholars indicated significant events throughout the year and those are indicated with their relevant identities. An event was considered significant to a Scholar if they elaborated on it in their reflection.

Learner Identity

The Scholars' initial reflections revealed the identities they inhabited as they entered the program. Hannah's recognition that the addition of an intersectional lens would help her ask "the important questions about what our society makes of citizens who live at the intersection of impoverished, black and rural in America," (August) revealed a learner identity. Hannah continued to engage as a learner throughout the Scholar year with statements like, "I have been sideswiped by the irony that some individuals who so vehemently care about the safety of women in bathrooms would not actually believe [women] if they were assaulted" (October), and, "I want to learn about the work that can be done to make the criminal justice system whole for the first time" (November).

Similarly, Sophia represented a learner identity in her reflection on her realization that the intersectional lens…:

> is being ignored. That can be seen in the attempts to open up federal lands to private interests such as the Bears Ears Monument. An intersectional lens could

> contribute by giving the First Nations people who have sacred ties to the land a seat at the table/more influence over what happens. (August)

Sophia voiced frustration in her work as a learner acknowledging:

> Respectability politics is a whole scam. Being educated, dressing a certain way, speaking a certain way, will not protect me from police brutality or being raped. It not working is the first part of the scam, the second part being that not doing those things does not justify oppression. (March)

Erin's statements such as, "This year as a [Scholar], I hope to become educated about how to balance optimism and being able to realistically address a problem" (September), and, "We are all here to learn…I do not feel that I have the experience with confronting these issues to be able to confidently address them. I know this will only improve with experience and practice" (September), indicated a learner identity as she expressed the need to learn more before she can engage with ally, advocate, or activist identities. Erin credited one early event, an October cohort session on sexism, as being significant in helping her understand how much there is to learn with, "I walked away from [The Scholars Program] meeting feeling small in the best way possible…I felt like I had been schooled in sexism by two well-educated young women" (October). Erin demonstrated a learner identity with, "I never realized how different it is for students with disabilities to find a community of other students with disabilities" (February). In her April reflections, Erin returned to writing about a learner identity as she examined finding a career that will allow her to make change. When Erin stated that she is "curious to do some searching about other similar organizations" (April) to an immigrant advocacy group she met with, she demonstrated a desire to continue as a learner.

Rachel acknowledged room for learning with, "Being a part of the GLBT community does not mean I know everything there is to know about the community, so

I will make an effort to educate myself about things I do not know or understand about GLBT issues" (September). Throughout the fall semester, Rachel acknowledged what she has learned and specified the need to learn more including:

> Taking the tour of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum made me see the connections between the legal system before and during the Civil Rights Movement and the legal system today. The government makes it easy for police to target black men and push it under the rug. What I still don't know is how to fix it. (December)

As she thought about racism and ethnocentrism, Rachel wrote:

> I remember being 1 of 1 students of color in some of my AP or honors classes because other POC's thought that taking higher level classes was a 'white' thing. They were a group of students that weren't even encouraged to take those sorts of classes. The only way to get in was to make the effort to be seen. (April)

She connected what she learned about the school-to-prison pipeline with her experiences in school:

> The last meeting made me think back on my middle and high school experience and how I saw examples of discrimination by teachers to a certain group of students without realizing the implicit biases. I remember students of color getting picked on by faculty and staff for the same things they let white students get away with. (April)

She explained what she saw in school to the concepts learned in the session with:

> I think that having the experience that I did growing up and going to school where I did helps me see the reality of how certain groups of people are treated in the classroom and how that affects where

they end up. (April)

Jacob's reflections, "I feel it is important to look at the world in an objective way that takes in everyone's opinion into account while using reason to analyze each viewpoint" (September), typified his representations of learner identity. Jacob continued to represent himself as a learner in his reflections on studying sexism such as, "Sexism isn't just an issue that effects [sic] women" (October). His understanding of sexism, from the significant experiences of reading Adichie's We Should All Be Feminists to attending a Georgia O'Keefe exhibit at the art museum led him to "[feel] a call to action when it came to be a feminist" (October).

Reading The New Jim Crow, meeting with a former commissioner and current member of the state parole board, and touring the International Civil Rights Center & Museum prompted Jacob to reflect, "As a white man from [outside the U.S.], it is important for me to learn what happened in this country as it hasn't fully healed – or even begun to heal in many cases" (December). After cohort sessions on racism, Jacob reflected, as a learner, on the role race plays in American society:

> As an immigrant I have felt like I was living outside the community of the U.S., even though I have lived here for most of my life (close to 15 years). The reason is like that of other immigrants that might feel such a way, and that is that this country subscribes to a love/hate relationship with immigrants, throughout history and still today. However, unlike those that are most effected by xenophobic speech and legislation, I am white and come from an ethnicity and heritage that is now celebrated, and sometimes replicated in the United States. (March)

Jacob reflected further that the most significant thing he learned from the speaker "was that the job of securing the rights of various individuals in this country is a long and hard task, sometimes even thankless" (March), an essential lesson to internalize

before engaging as an advocate or activist.

Jacob continued to represent himself as a learner as he acknowledged a new understanding that "systematic racism in this country has inflicted pain" (April), and that "the lack of diversity in the staff at schools is an issue that puts many students of color at risk of being ignored, and literally sentenced out of education, an issue rooted in centuries of mistreatment of people of color" (April).

Ally Identity

Hannah revealed an ally identity as she acknowledged how her personal behavior impacts those close to her with:

> My location allowed me to justify the oppression of others who were what I thought to be the antithesis of what should be accepted… These were the biases that supported my oppression of others. These were also the biases that supported my hesitation in supporting my brother when he came out, and in doubting my ability to be accepted and loved when I walked a similar path. (September)

Further, Hannah represented herself as an ally when she wrote about volunteering with the Sierra Club to distribute candidate slates during early voting, "I hope to inspire those who are coming to the polls with an awareness of their agency and I hope to encourage them to feel thoughtful and powerful as voters" (October). Hannah later confronted a struggle in her ally identity, writing, "This month, orienting myself as an ally, obligated to respect the privacy while expressing concern for a former coworker has resonated with me" (November). In February, Hannah decided to attend the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) March and Rally and debated going with friends or alone. She found that "ultimately, the solo experience was preferable, because I walked alongside individuals with whom I would not have otherwise conversed" (February), showing a willingness to serve as an ally to strangers.

Rachel wrote as an ally with, "We need to be aware of when we are practicing or encouraging machismo and what we can do to unlearn what we have been taught" (October). Rachel reengaged as an ally in spring semester with, "After our meeting and reading about ableism, I started to feel more conscious whenever I walked around campus…how I am privileged enough not to have to think about how some of the places I go regularly are inaccessible and how I can support others in gaining access" (February).

Erin's one representation of an ally identity was with, "I really look forward to building a relationship with the students and faculty [at the African American Cultural Center]" (November). In November, Scholar reflections focused on properly supporting others as allies.

While some of the Scholars never wrote of themselves as allies, those who did often expressed ally identities at the same time as learner, advocate, or activist identities.

Advocate Identity

Rachel's reflections on her advocate identity were typified by her first reflection, "While working on my own internalized heterosexism, I will challenge the assumptions made by my friends and family growing up by correcting them on stereotypes they hold true" (August), and her statement in her next reflection:

> I will make sure the organizations in which I am a member or officer of on and off campus remain inclusive and a safe space for the LGBT community. On the macro-level, I will continue to advocate for the GLBT community and rights in health, employment, etc. (September)

Rachel also shared "the advocacy part of my project would put me, as well as others, at risk" (January), indicating that she continued to identify as an advocate even as she became aware that it presented risks. Rachel further presented a sophisticated view of herself as an advocate with:

Advocating for a certain group does not necessarily

mean I have to be the one in the spotlight. I should leverage my privilege to give the spotlight to those who need it. Being a true advocate means giving a voice to those who you are trying to advocate for, not speaking on their behalf. (January)

Hannah identified as an advocate when she engaged in the advocate behavior of conversation around an issue with, "I hope to implement reconstruction by continuing conversation, by asking questions in a way that does not belittle the other members of the conversation but empowers them to reflect and ask questions of themselves and of me as well" (September). Hannah represented herself as an advocate who was refining her project work with, "I do not want to convey that I have assumed the role as spokesperson in the agricultural community most affected by misogynistic language. I do not want my whiteness and my feminism to merge in front of the room" (January). With this statement, she demonstrated an awareness of when to speak and when to amplify other voices. Hannah was fairly consistent in representing herself as an advocate early and throughout her Scholar year.

Sophia identified as an advocate for much of the year as well and began with the belief that she "[has] a voice and can create change in my own community" (September), which she elaborated on by writing, "I plan to implement [advocacy] by interrupting the norm and not letting my silence be assumed as acceptance. I plan to try and start my own conversations" (September).

Erin wrote of herself as an advocate with:

> Silence is compliance and as Scholars, we must take an active role in addressing these issues and modeling what an active voice looks like…I can address heterosexism in my day-to-day life. This feels like a way to start and build my confidence so I can then move on to confronting these issues on a regular basis. (September)

Erin's next indication of an advocate identity came when she shared:

I think this is something I have been wary of when I think about engaging in advocacy work. I do not exactly know my limit of risk and I worry that it could define the 'effectiveness' of my advocacy. Ultimately, you need to do things that you are comfortable with and that does not diminish your advocacy work. (January)

It was clear that Jacob contemplated the risks of his advocate identity, but he gave no indication that his awareness would curtail his engagement as an advocate with:

> As someone who is putting himself out there in terms of online presence and is making his way in the realm of advocacy in public, it is important for me to realize the dangers, if any, of pursuing such things in the world of advocacy. (January)

Through his project, lobbying for support of the Endangered Species Act, Jacob's representation of his role as an advocate became more strategic with the recognition, "It will be silly to write to representatives in the state legislature as this is a federal policy" (January). Jacob credited a cohort session in January on advocacy behaviors and risks with allowing him to engage in an advocate identity as a conscious choice.

Activist Identity

Sophia's representations of herself as an activist appeared as she wrote, "Being informed about an issue is not being an activist. You have to do something and bring other people with you" (January). She elaborated on her activism explaining how to involve others with, "The buddy system is great for this work" (January)! Demonstrating an understanding that we should not prioritize highly public forms of activism over other methods, Sophia represented herself as an activist who believed, "Kitchen-table activism and the big marches and rallies are both needed to create change" (January). Finally, Sophia displayed patience as an activist recognizing, "Change doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and effort and a lot of people. Any movement of the needle in the right direction is

a good thing" (January).

Jacob represented himself as an activist after being exposed to a variety of activist strategies in a cohort session:

> I felt that the types of activism provided truly helped me in figuring out what and how I wanted to pursue the activism portion of my project…Overall, I decided to do postcards to NC representatives in Congress and those from other states – depending on who takes up my offer to write a postcard and have me send it, as it would establish some sort of result I can be proud of. (January)

In March, Erin presented her project for the first time and indicated that it was a significant event. While she admitted that presenting it to the student council for the first time was "a bit daunting" (March), the council members were "more receptive than what I was expecting" (March). This marked the first and only time Erin wrote about engaging as an activist, but she ended with, "All in all it was a good experience and I am glad the first one is over so I can begin to improve from here" (March).

Rachel indicated that her project was a significant event as well. In it, she wrote about developing educational materials and coalition building to support distributing the materials and providing short educational programs – activist behaviors (March).

Hannah demonstrated a readiness for her activist work to matter, writing:

> For a large part of last semester, the project was an exciting and intimidating notion. Now it is still both exciting and intimidating but also an incoming reality. I am humbled by the work to be done, optimistic about the direction I am in, and constantly coming across instances of misogyny which I am hoping to expose… The prevalence is reassuring in ways, that my planned panel discussion will strike painfully relevant chords in the audience. (January)

Hannah was concerned that her project wasn't "activist enough" (January), but one of the program faculty "reminded me that organizing a group of people around an issue is, in fact, activism. Somehow, I had overlooked that rather obvious fact" (January). While Hannah recognized that her project did engage her as an activist, she continued her reflection with, "I am currently brainstorming additional ways to amplify activism during the evening, such as what [my mentor] suggested with having postcards for people to fill out or resources to leave with" (January). Hannah contemplated additional ways to engage as an activist as well with, "Ultimately, I would like to find what else qualifies, for me, as physical prayer; I hope similar feelings will be found in writing postcards, facilitating and partaking in pertinent discussions, and other kitchen-table-like activism" (February).

As Hannah approached the panel discussion that served as the culminating event for her project, she positioned herself as capable of activism with:

> Mostly now, though, it has been learning about organizing and encouraging people to attend. This portion of activism which I have partially come to understand deserves more recognition, I think. Since October, I exchanged 149 emails about the panel, many of which are directed at proposed panelists, inviting NC State affiliates to attend, and asking for guidance. I have inadvertently delayed sleep for the last two weeks, imagining the directions the conversations might go and looking for confidence in my ceiling. I am nervous. But ready. (March)

Hannah left us in April with a conception of transformative leadership that emphasized the people she hopes to serve, writing, "In that practice are lessons that I hope to incorporate into my transformative leadership development. I want to center others with no strings attached, with no expectation of reciprocity." She represented herself

as an advocate and activist whose work is deeply rooted in her spirituality with, "I want my advocacy and activism to be an active practice of hoping, dedicating, honoring, and recognizing the privilege I had" (April).

Discussion

The Scholars in the program have each found ways to begin enacting the targeted (advocate and activist) identities that are the objectives of the program. Erin represented herself as a learner who has sampled ally and advocate behaviors. Jacob, finding program readings, art exhibits, the museum tour, and a cohort session on risk to be significant to his development, represented himself as "making his way in the realm of advocacy," and began to engage in activism. After the examples of bravery in activism Hannah witnessed at the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, she represented herself as an activist while worrying about not being "activist enough." Jacob and Hannah both represented themselves as enacting multiple identities in each reflection. Sophia and Rachel's representations of self did not change as much through their Scholar year. Each represented herself as an advocate early and throughout the experience, and Sophia did not identify any significant events while Rachel wrote of one – the museum tour.

Two cohort sessions intentionally and specifically addressed the personal risks that come with engagement in public identities working for justice and equity. Only Erin indicated that risk could inhibit the "effectiveness" of her advocacy work. While Sophia did not address it at all, Rachel and Jacob engaged in assessing the risks of their public identities ultimately determining that they would continue their advocacy and activism in spite of the potential risks. The Scholars wrote of being more confident in their ability to complete their projects after these sessions. Further, for many, it was the first time they considered the potential risks of these behaviors.

In addition to the increasingly public identities Scholars expressed, they also presented more nuanced representations of themselves within advocate and activist identities. Hannah's recognition of the privilege her whiteness gave her in her activist work and how it might position her to be "centered" in those spaces is a key example of a more nuanced view of activism – one that centers, rather than speaks over, the very people who may be most impacted. Rachel incorporated this refinement beautifully when she wrote, "I should leverage my privilege to give the spotlight to those who need it." In our first cohort session, Scholars often only listed marches and rallies as activist behaviors. Sophia's recognition that kitchen-table activism is just as important exemplified the more in-depth definition of activism she intends to embody.

The tour of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum in December was identified by almost all of the Scholars as having an impact on how they viewed the work of justice and equity and their place within it. This required field trip for all of the Scholars in the program included a docent-led tour through exhibits about segregation, the civil rights movement in the U.S. and internationally, and the people who were driving change. Most importantly, the museum tour includes the lunch counter from early sit-ins and emphasizes the role young people played in the civil rights movement. During this trip, Scholars also met with a Commissioner of the [State] Parole Board and discussed the racial biases of the criminal justice system and their recent reading of The New Jim Crow. Several Scholars indicated that the session with the Commissioner and the reading were impactful.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The Scholars represented themselves as engaging in public identities as they progressed through the year. While their movement within the SLAIC was neither linear nor unidirectional, early reflections revealed more engagement as learners than as advocates or activists, and engagement as activists did not emerge until January – half-way through the academic year. However, Sophia's assertion that "any movement of

the needle… is a good thing," holds true here as well. The Scholars represented themselves as learners and advocates – and to a much lesser extent allies – throughout the year, even as activist representations appeared. This indicates that even as Scholars work to craft and disperse messages and organize others to do so, they are continuing to seek new information to refine their practice. This supports previous research indicating that identities are not fixed but amended, revised, and dropped as contexts and constraints change (Oyserman & James, 2011). However, it is important to note that students who entered the program with existing stronger public identities were less motivated to engage more publicly, found less significance in program events, or had less room for growth. It is possible that having previously engaged in public identities, these students found more value in learning the histories and theories that supported that action.

Further, there is clear indication that the identities within the SLAI Continuum are not mutually exclusive. These representations align with Oyserman and James (2011) assertion that the self is a set of multiple possible identities and is therefore dynamic. Often, Scholars represented themselves as learners, allies, advocates, and activists within the same reflection. It is also important to note that Scholars expressed a more nuanced view of identities as time went on. This is an unexpected finding and conclusion from this study. Future studies should include observations of the Scholars enacting their identities in order to see how the refined definitions impact behaviors.

Scholars' participation in identified significant events immediately pre-dated and then aligned with the emergence of advocate and activist identities in their reflections. Each of these experiences may have contributed to the construction of an identity that is congruent with the immediate context (Oyserman & James, 2011). This indicates that readings such as We Should All Be Feminists and The New Jim Crow, cohort sessions addressing racism, sexism, advocacy and risk, and activism and risk, optional activities like the Georgia O'Keefe exhibit at the art museum, the NAACP March and rally and the Women's March,

and the required trip to the International Civil Rights Center & Museum are connected to engaging in emerging identities as advocates and activists and may drive a need to learn more as well. As posited by Lave and Wenger (1991), individuals can become different people through seeing possibilities enabled by relationships. Thus, exposure to experts at events like those listed above and guest speakers can help Scholars see the potential for new identities in transformative leadership. Just-in-time instruction, a key element of Project Based Learning can serve this purpose if scheduled by anticipation of needs and allowed to emerge in the mentoring relationships. Planning for future years will consider whether these sessions should come earlier in the curriculum or if they are "just-in-time" as they are placed now.

This study supports the conclusion that the use of Project Based Learning with the partnering of transformational leadership content and The Student Leader Activist Identity Continuum is an effective way to conceptualize the journey Scholars undertake. Students entered the program representing themselves as learners, allies, and advocates, and at the close of the year, they had added representations as activists. Most of the Scholars indicated that their projects were significant events, and Scholars did not represent themselves as activists until they began direct work on their projects. The teaching of transformational leadership through Project Based Learning is an effective driver of increasingly public identities for student development of advocate and activist identities. The projects provided the Scholars with the opportunity to "make the culture of practice theirs" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95) which is an essential step in seeing oneself as a full practitioner. However, there were a few students for whom the project did not appear to serve as a significant event. This indicates that the type and scope of projects may differentiate experiences and identities. It is worth further exploration to determine if organizing letter-writing or public comment campaigns – the projects undertaken by Scholars who did not indicate they were significant events – can provoke identity shifts. The expectations for Scholars' projects and how they

are supported through the cohort sessions continue to be refined.

Future studies should examine enactment of these identities and engagement in transformative leadership beyond the time spent in intentional study to determine impacts on career and life-trajectories. Further, it is necessary to examine why students rarely represented themselves as allies in their reflections. Ally identities and behaviors were taught in a cohort session with the same structure as sessions on learner, advocate, and activist identities yet Scholars did not write about themselves as allies as frequently.

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