What are the pathways to policy and governance?

Recently, the New 100 organization, "a startup think tank for and by a new generation of policy leaders" (Next 100, n.d.), published a report based on survey data that sought to investigate the attitudes of youth, Generation Z, and Millennials in particular, towards government and policy. Their findings present a picture of a distrustful populace. Among these young people, they feel disenfranchised by government, skeptical of government at all levels but especially the federal level, and unaware of how to engage in a policy career, as well as unwelcomed in that sector (Next 100, 2022). Among Black individuals and people earning less than $60,000, there was less trust in the government overall, and specifically in policy and governance being an effective path to creating change. This data portrays a dismal landscape in developing the policy and governance pathway of college students, but it should also prompt significant interest in clearly outlining the knowledge, skills, and attributes students need to engage in policy and governance, not only as a career focus but as a personal practice.

Context Setting

In addition to providing background on this pathway, it is also crucial to consider the factors contributing to this level of disengagement and disenfranchisement. Some of these issues include the rights of immigrants (Gonzalez, 2008) and voter suppression of African Americans (Combs, 2016). Yet, these are not recent challenges. This country's legacy is replete with a history of the disenfranchised fighting for representation, from the Boston tea party to women's suffrage to the civil rights movement. Fundamentally, "for the people by people" has come to represent the struggle of the marginalized to have a voice in policy and governance. A country founded to protect the rights of White, privileged men has repeatedly been called to live up to democratic ideals by being responsive to all its citizens. Now we see political and social

movements, often emerging on college campuses through activist pursuits, which challenge the dynamics of xenophobia, racism, and polarization and are calling for change. Ultimately, a consideration for "the work of establishing a civically engaged campus climate is not solely confined to providing civic learning and democratic engagement but calls upon campuses to actively advance equity, diversity, and inclusion" (Camacho, 2022, p. 161).

The problems that plague society are the same that afflict higher education and democracy. These are often referenced as a package of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The United States has been declared "post-racial", meaning the US no longer has a race problem, that most find racism unacceptable, and they do not see color (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). However, this colorblindness is simply "the refusal to acknowledge the causes and consequences of enduring racial stratification" (Murakawa, 2014, p. 7). It is vital to recognize social stratification and the systems in place to maintain the privilege of White men. These systems will seem invisible or nonexistent to those who benefit from them, but these systemic structures are tangible and specific for those who are excluded. The rhetoric of democratic engagement has frequently called for a narrow understanding of political action, but as Sturm and colleagues (2011) argue, change in both higher education and political engagement would benefit from integrating DEI and policy agendas.

Considering this context, I will review the literature on pathways engaging in policy and governance among college students. Framing the pathway to policy and governance through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) will guide what terminology is used and how it is defined. It will also steer the conversation about how students can prepare for the pathway to policy and governance engagement in terms of foundational knowledge, skills, and attributes needed. Focusing on social justice will allow opportunities for social impact and tensions to be

apparent and identified. Finally, a DEI perspective will permit a discussion about higher education's role and responsibility to democratic engagement to be holistic and generative.

Terminology

What do we mean by a pathway to policy and governance? Stanford's Haas Center pioneered the six Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement. One of these pathways, policy and governance, is described as "participating in political processes, policymaking, and public governance" (Stanford Haas Center, n.d.). Others (outlined in this publication) contribute equally to supporting a civic and public service engagement component among college students. However, it is important to make distinctions and delineate definitions of the terms being used in this chapter.

Civic engagement has been defined as "the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that prepare students to serve as productive citizens in the political and apolitical civic life of their communities" (O'Leary, 2015, p. 55). Therefore, civic engagement includes political engagement, but also comprises activities like volunteer work and service learning in a local community. While the body of literature advancing a critical approach to service-learning is nascent, traditional service learning has often been cited as apolitical (Mitchell, 2008; O'Leary, 2014). Given the differentiation in the literature between political and apolitical activity, it is important to recognize those differences here as well. Volunteerism and service learning generally contribute to an attitude of giving and philanthropy (Colby, 2008), which is central to many universities' civic mission but should not be conflated with engagement in policy and governance.

Civic engagement, like volunteerism, can contribute to the common good and expose students to different perspectives and lived experiences but often does not create systemic

change. In order to change policies and contribute to governance, political engagement is required. Colby (2008) defined political engagement as "community and civic involvement that has a systemic dimension and various forms of engagement with public policy issues, as well as electoral politics at all levels" (p. 4). Colby (2008) further pointed to the centrality of influencing systems and an interest in guiding collective principles and policies as part of political engagement. In light of this definition, I will use the terms political engagement, democratic engagement, and engaging policy and governance interchangeably.

Another demarcation needed in student participation in policy and governance is whether students are interested in personal political engagement or a policy and governance career. Every student can engage politically during college years and beyond, which is a central mission of many universities, but not everyone will want to pursue a career in policy and governance. The literature is unequivocal; students can and should consider political or democratic engagement a crucial component of their post-secondary education (Camacho, 2022). Further, this does not need to involve pursuing a career in policy and governance, but the preparation for both has many overlapping elements. Therefore, when referring to college student involvement in policy and governance, I will call it political or democratic engagement versus policy and governance career or profession. Given these differences, I will further address the various levels of engagement in the section below. First, I will outline the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for political engagement.

How can students prepare?

Fundamental to understanding how students can prepare for political engagement is how social identity influences what students know and value in terms of policy and governance. According to Morgan (2019), not only are the two, identity and politics, inseparable but they also

inform what information and skills students will be exposed to before college and how they cognitively understand that information. While Morgan acknowledges that a significant amount can be learned from their families and communities and through their elementary and secondary education, he also argues that their identity is not fully formed when they depart for college. Therefore, entry into post-secondary institutions is a crucial time to develop their political fluency, or "how students' self-assessments and enactment of their civic and political skills, resources, and intentions help them to find congruence in the political situations they navigate" (Morgan, 2019, p. 3). This fluency helps students navigate political engagement in a similar way language fluency can help one move through a country when you are fluent in the language of that country. If you find great discomfort in navigating a country because you lack the language skills, you may not want to stay. The same can be said about political engagement. The next sections will outline the foundational knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to engage politically in a way that centers the influence of identity.

Foundational Knowledge

Many scholars agree that foundational knowledge encompasses general policy, governance facts, and history (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Examples include knowledge of vital democracy texts and democratic movements, as well as "knowledge of the political systems that frame constitutional democracies and of political levers for influencing change" (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 4). In identifying the knowledge and information needed for civic and political engagement, key educators and policymakers also identify knowledge of multiple religious practices, diverse cultures and traditions, and the influence of social identities on political engagement.

Yet, the skills and values also identified by this crucible report do not acknowledge the tensions in achieving an equity-centered democracy. The skills and values listed recognize imprecise goals like collaboration and deliberation across difference, as well as respect and tolerance in general terms. Not only do these lack specificity in achieving these goals, they also do not address major challenges identified by research in attaining an equity-centered democracy. These include factors that influence pre-college political knowledge (Fitzgerald et al., 2021; McAvoy & McAvoy, 2021), the enormous breadth, depth, and inconsistency of civic and political history and facts (Loewen, 2007; Hannah-Jones, 2019), and more recently the disinformation and misinformation that shapes the beliefs and practices of many citizens (Bennet & Livingston, 2018; Freelon & Wells, 2020). This section will highlight the concerns around building foundational knowledge and how they contribute to the skills and attributes college students need to engage in policy and governance.

Civic Knowledge

Students arrive at college with varying degrees of civic and political education (this includes knowledge of political and legal systems), received both through educational systems and their socialization at home (McAvoy & McAvoy, 2021). Not only are students acquiring political information outside of school, but that information is creating a polarizing effect in the classroom (Rogers et al., 2017). According to McAvoy and McAvoy (2021), this could result in both students and teachers forgoing political discussions in the classroom in order to avoid conflict and discomfort. To further complicate the civic education landscape, research shows that schools across the country have disparate requirements for civic learning, and some have none at all (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020). Moreover, students with minoritized identities are more likely to attend those schools with few civic learning opportunities (Fitzgerald

et al., 2021). Not unlike other educational opportunities, more privileged students have access to civic education and service learning as well. This lack of opportunity means students show up to college with not only an academic achievement gap but a civic engagement gap as well.

Even when receiving the same civic education, students are likely to interpret the information in distinct ways based on their social identity (Epstein, 2000). Epstein (2000) attributes this dissonance to the discord in teaching about freedom and enslavement, for example, without connecting the two. In other words, there is no acknowledgment and discussion about the reality of how democracy mal/functioned for communities of color, and African Americans in particular. Epstein (2000) recommended that

> Discussions of the indivisible legacies of democracy and racial hierarchy might not simply enable young people to construct narratives in which the racialized extensions and exclusions of democracy marked all Americans' experiences and perspectives. It may also open up dialogues across racialized lines about the conditions and effects of democracy and racial hierarchy in contemporary society. (p. 206)

Policy and Governance Realities

The history and facts shared in many classrooms are not accidental but intentional. White US Americans fear a loss of power or as Baldwin (1962/1993) wrote, “the loss of their identity. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one’s sense of one’s own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundation” (p, 9). Historian Charles Dew (2016) described in his book, The Making of a Racist, these deep-seated beliefs about what he thought a White and a Black person’s role in society should be until he began a new education at his northern liberal arts college. He recalls reading

"Facts the historians leave out: A confederate primer" (Tilley, 1951/2014), which perpetuated the racial mindset and behaviors of the White south. Dew chronicled his southern education, which essentially created a racist outlook, where Black and White people were not the same and did not have the same rights and freedoms. Dew's account of his education is not dissimilar from the one Baldwin describes; the difference is that Baldwin cautions African Americans not to believe that they are inferior to Whites, and Dew warns Whites not to fall into racist ideology disguised as political discourse.

Laws, policies, and practices implemented upon this country's founding may have evolved to become more inclusive today but often still fall short. For example, the xenophobic and racialized fear of the "other" participating in elections, stemming from early laws to keep immigrants, formerly enslaved people, and Indigenous peoples from voting have allowed voter suppression to remain an integral part of this country's voting policies (Combs, 2016). This literature highlights what students are taught and how laws are enforced vary widely and often depend on a person's race and ethnicity. Combs (2016) contends that segregating races has been a central objective of this country, and absent the ability to physically segregate based on race, a modern approach is to create social boundaries. In other words, to "repel black and brown bodies and send them back to their place – a place always distinct from and most often subservient to whites" (p. 536). Therefore, policy and governance facts and the right to influence policy and government have been and continue to be contingent upon one's social identity. Awareness of these social boundaries can help future policymakers unite this country despite its history.

Facts and (Dis)information

By now, we have all heard of "fake news" or disinformation and the toll it has taken on political engagement. However, it is important to understand what disinformation means.

Disinformation has been defined as “all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit” (de Cock Buning, 2018). The harm is often intended for political opponents and personal profit by the perpetrator, their own, or their political agenda. While propaganda and manipulative media are not new to political campaigns, disinformation is unique in that it happens during a digital transformation. Digital disinformation is challenging because it both makes fact-finding easier, yet people are saturated with disinformation because it also makes re-distribution easier (Freelon & Wells, 2020).

Researchers agree that disinformation presents a genuine threat to political engagement. The threat to political engagement comes in the form of mistrust in the government and indifference about political engagement making a difference (Vincent & Gismondi, 2021). Additionally, disinformation creates “echo chambers of ideologically like-minded individuals, which circulate ideologically congruent information, regardless of veracity” (Vincent & Gismondi, 2021, p. 86). In other words, it creates polarization. However, this political polarization has increasingly become racialized (Enders & Scott, 2019). Specifically, there is an association between race and politics, which creates racial resentment around policies like welfare spending or electoral candidates. “Racialization, like polarization, is a state and a process” and, as such, could be resisted through similar means. Bringula and associates (2022) recommend several fact-checking resources for college students but also mention that “the most reliable source of information, i.e., the library, is the least utilized fact-checking resource” (p. 165). They also recommend specific skills, like self-awareness, which could help reduce susceptibility to disinformation and possibly racialization. Yet, disinformation persists, revealing that critical questioning, fact-finding, and self-awareness are not employed.

Foundational knowledge certainly includes facts and history about policy and governance, but students will arrive at college with predetermined ideologies and understandings influenced by their backgrounds, families, schools, and communities. This will impact the way they understand policy and governance facts and their ability to distinguish between facts and disinformation. In order to help students better understand facts and history so they can engage in policy and governance that specifically centers on equity, they will need the skills and attributes listed below. These skills and attributes will foster the political fluency students need to navigate their identity development, both in terms of their social and political identities.

Skills

The previous section outlined various considerations in determining the foundational knowledge needed to engage in policy and governance. These considerations shape the skills and attributes needed to engage in an equity-centered democracy. So, while research and reports on political engagement have acknowledged the need for collaboration and bridge-building or tolerance and equality, they do little to inform the path to these traits. The skills and attributes outlined below are not exhaustive but underscore specific approaches to reaching some aspects of these lofty goals. These have been selected from an overlap in literature ranging from political engagement to critical whiteness so that we may embrace the multicultural democracy we inhabit.

Critical consciousness

How do we keep from believing people of color are not what and whom our history books tell us they are? How do students question what Baldwin (1962/1993) described as "believing you really are what the white world" thinks you are (p. 4)? How do students question their implicit beliefs as Dew (2016) wondered regarding his defense of the racial segregation of

the south he had been brought up with, “Is this what I’ve been defending in class?” (p. 35). Tolerance, critical inquiry, and self-awareness or self-reflection have been touted as approaches that will lead to civic revitalization (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020; Educating for American Democracy, 2021; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012).

While these are aspects of political learning and action that are necessary for “active engagement in the midst of differing perspectives about how to address common problems that affect the well-being of the nation and the world” (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012), there is, as McAvoy and McAvoy (2021) indicated about classrooms, a tendency to avoid conflict and tension by eschewing more critical conversations. We see this as critical race theory (CRT) comes under attack across the country and across educational levels. However, at its core, these attacks are not about CRT “but rather about legislating the ban on teaching concepts, such as systemic racism, conscious or unconscious bias, and privilege” (Harrison, et al., 2021, p. 2). Furthermore, these concepts need to be exposed and reflected upon in what Freire (1974/2017) would call the development of a critical consciousness.

Freire (1974/2017) identified two kinds of consciousness, naïve transitivity, and critical transitive consciousness. Naïve transitivity is exemplified by “an over-simplification of problems” and “a lack of interest in investigation” (Freire, 1974/2017, p14). Critical transitive consciousness is, in turn, “characterized by depth in the interpretation of problems; by the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations” (Freire, 1974/2017, p. 15). Stanton-Salazar (2011) understood Freire’s concept of critical consciousness “as the ability to perceive and interrogate the social, political, and economic forms of oppression that shape one’s

life and to take collective action against such elements of society (or social structure" (pp. 1089-1090). Moreover, Bañales and colleagues (2020) found that for Latinx and Black youth a critical consciousness was essential for political engagement, specifically, "their critical reflection of structural inequality was positively linked with their likelihood to vote and sociopolitical action" (p. 182-185). Taking action is a crucial aspect of critical consciousness and leads to the next skill, which is critical hope. Without hope, people become stagnant.

Critical hope

Like the two kinds of consciousness identified by Freire, Duncan-Andrade (2009) identified two kinds of hope, false and critical hope. Freire (1997) also emphasized the need for hope and distinguished between the different types of hope. To be hopeless is to be immobilized, without hope, "we succumb to fatalism, and then it becomes impossible to muster the strength we absolutely need for a fierce struggle that will recreate the world" (Freire, 1997, p. 7). Yet, Freire cautioned "that just to hope is to hope in vain" (Freire, 1997, p. 8).

Duncan-Andrade further identified three kinds of false hope, hokey hope, mythical hope, and hope deferred. The first, hokey hope, "suggests if urban youth just work hard, pay attention, and play by the rules, then they will go to college and live out the 'American dream'" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 182). Mythical hope is analogous to thinking we are in a post-racial era as a society. In other words, we are free of racism and prejudice. Finally, hope deferred means delaying "either a collective utopia of a future reformed society or, more often, the individual student's future ascent to the middle class" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 184). In contrast, critical hope requires the resources to take control of your life, utilizing indignation as a strength rather than a flaw, and being in solidarity and validating other people's trauma and healing. Ultimately, it means setting high standards for inclusion in democracy, which includes

full participation in policy and governance across difference, by explicitly naming how people have been left out of democratic systems.

Critical Whiteness scholars have critiqued this reluctance to name or inclination to minimize racism (Cabrera et al., 2016). Specifically, one characteristic of critical Whiteness is "assumed racial comfort," which Cabrera and colleagues (2016) contend means "prioritizing racial comfort" and only "serves to reinscribe racial privilege" (p. 26-27). Likewise, Baldwin (1993/1962) conveys that "to accept one's past—one's history—is not the same as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressure of life like clay in a season of drought" (p. 81). Critical consciousness and hope are deeply entwined and interdependent in cultivating the political engagement of college students.

Intergroup dialogue

The notion of racial comfort complicates intergroup dialogue. Specifically, avoiding racial discomfort can result in two outcomes. First is a stunted racial development for White students. This means that White students do not develop a sense of their racial identity in relation to being nonracist (Cabrera et al., 2017). The second is exposing students with minoritized identities to distressing and toxic experiences through racist interactions or microaggressions (Cabrera et al., 2016). Further, a lack of intergroup dialogue allows the siloes that lead to polarization and racialized politics to persist. Freire (1970/2014) believed oppression could only be eradicated collectively. The oppressor cannot liberate themselves, and the oppressed cannot leave the oppressor behind. Yet, all too often, White people think of racism as a problem only people of color should contend with (Cabrera et al., 2017) or assert that there is no racism, which in turn implies there is racism without racists or people of color are creating the problems with

race (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). There is no escaping the tensions around race and racism that this country has been navigating since its inception.

Colleges and universities could play important roles in developing skills to engage in dialogue across difference. Furthermore, research supports that "intergroup dialogue represents an important approach for preparing students for multicultural democracy because it challenges students to grasp the significance of social identities and exercise critical imagination in understanding and taking action with others" (Lopez & Zúñiga, 2010, p. 35). Intergroup dialogue has demonstrable benefits, including bridge-building, empathy, and collaboration (Lopez & Zúñiga, 2010), all of which are skills and values listed by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic as crucial components to civic and political engagement. The goals of intergroup dialogue are to collectively engage in critical inquiry, "consciousness-raising in regard to social inequalities" (Zúñiga et al., 2012, p. 1), and, I would add, foster critical hope.

Attributes

The attributes listed below are once again not comprehensive, but they complement the skills listed above, are specific and intentional, and emphasize the particular goals of political engagement that center on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Fostering conscious raising, developing critical hope, and engaging in intergroup dialogue involve immense discomfort that many attempt to avoid. Developing the attributes below can help students engage in the skill development needed to bring full political engagement to all students. These attributes are empathy, humanization (love), and agency. Like critical hope requires us to wholly recognize inequities while maintaining optimism, the attributes below will provide a pragmatic approach to hopefulness.

Empathy

It is imperative to acknowledge that discomfort and, more specifically, shame, "anger, resentment, and fear - often follow discussions of racism and explorations of anti-racism" (Zembylas, 2012, p. 113). These emotions may even be necessary, as resisting them could indicate resistance to authentic self-reflection about race and racism. Many cultures acknowledge that harmony in the world comes through complementary but opposing principles and characteristics. Similarly, critique must be accompanied by its opposing skills and attributes, hope is certainly one of these, and empathy is another. Empathy is defined as a "willingness or tendency to put oneself in another person's place and to modify one's behavior as a result" (Hogan, 1969, p. 307).

However, why empathy is valued is less understood. Some arguments indicate that it is important to moral development (Hogan, 1969). Others cite reciprocal behavior as important to civil society (Calloway-Thomas et al., 2017). Calloway-Thomas and associates (2017) used the term specifically as "the ability 'imaginatively' to enter into and participate in the world of the cultural 'Other' cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally" (p. 33). Yet, empathy must not only include entering the world of those who suffer but also those who cause the suffering (Calloway-Thomas et al., 2017). Zembylas (2012) calls this strategic empathy, which is a way to help others navigate what Zembylas calls troubled knowledge. Troubled knowledge is the feeling of resentment, anger, and shame that come up when discussing race and racism. If we ask the oppressor to acknowledge the emotions that accompany oppression, we must in turn acknowledge their feelings of shame, anger, and resentment to bring about an anti-racist perspective.

In considering why dichotomy is important to many cultures, empathy brings to light a response through its multi-directional requirement. The Mayans have a greeting, In Lak'ech,

which means you are my other me, what I do to you, I do to myself. Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed this sentiment by writing, “we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea.” (King, Letter from Birmingham Jail, 1963). Baldwin (1993/1962) felt similarly and went a step further by articulating a need for care or love for one another to live peacefully and civically.

Humanization (Love)

We often think of love as romantic; even then, cynicism about this emotion abounds. However, most people yearn for affection and validation (to be seen fully as who they are). Baldwin asked that his nephew “accept them [White people] and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it.” (Baldwin, 1993/1962, p. 8). Still, do we need love or humanization when challenging racism and oppression? Love and humanization are indispensable in engaging in policy and governance in a democracy that has tried to deny its multicultural reality and in overcoming that denial. bell hooks (2000) names the components of love as “care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication” (p. 5). Love is devoid of hurt and abuse. Love is an act that functions by letting go of power and control (hooks, 2000). Empathy, like love, requires humanizing others and engaging in trust and respect for each other (Callow-Thomas et al., 2017; Freire, 1979/2014). Talbert-Johnson (2004) described the need for “students of color [to] feel their full humanity” requires them to be “visible and cherished by their teachers” (p. 32) in arguing for structural changes needed to address inequities in urban

schools. This sentiment is no different in the structural changes needed to address inequities in political engagement.

Haslam and Loughnan (2014) contend that dehumanization is guided by hate or indifference and is often directed at those viewed as outsiders or othered. Moreover, dehumanization is linked to power and perceived threat. Meaning those who feel powerful and/or perceive others as a threat will dehumanize other people. The consequences of dehumanization are that those who are dehumanized are seen as "less worthy of help, forgiveness, or empathy" and have more aggression directed toward them (Haslam and Loughnan, 2014, p. 416). In practical terms, dehumanized people are denied pain medication, their civil rights, or even their life. Salazar's (2013) interpretation of Freire's humanization called for the full development of a person, "individual and collective endeavors towards critical consciousness, critical reflection, and action [to] transform structures," and the responsibility of educators to encourage humanization, as well as reminding us that those who negate others' humanity are also dehumanized (p.128). Freire (1985) declared that "to transform the world is to humanize it" (p. 70), but many have professed that it is love that transforms the world. Nevertheless, a love of humanity changes how we see others and allows us to be fully visible.

Agency

Often, we believe that student detachment from politics is related to apathy, but the Next 100 survey (2022) and a study by Curtis and associates (2019) tell a different story. They describe what was "initially thought to be political apathy" is actually "more so a form of political cynicism" (Curtis et al., 2019, p. 9). Much of this is attributed to polarization and, specifically, social media's role in this polarization. Consequently, an important attribute to develop among college students would be a belief that their actions can bring about change;

some may call this political efficacy or civic agency. There is ample research on political efficacy or recognizing that you can influence policy and governance (Finkel, 1985), but given the expansive nature of centering equity in political engagement, agency seemed a more appropriate term. Agency has been defined as "a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963).

Mitchell and colleagues (2019) identified intentionally raising political consciousness as an important first step in civic agency. They further argued that students be aware that voting and volunteering are not the only options for political engagement. Community engagement and social justice work that centers students' lived experiences should be directly connected to policy and governance by their institutions' staff. Furthermore, "these efforts offer students a more holistic view of social concerns and the different strategies needed to affect meaningful and sustainable change" (Mitchell et al., 2019, p. 593). This kind of education incorporates agency characteristics by underscoring students' past, contextualizing that past with future projects, and visualizing the changes their work can accomplish.

What are the opportunities for social impact?

There are many opportunities for engagement in policy and governance as a student and beyond. The levels of engagement depend on students' interests and the opportunities available. Voting is predominantly associated with political participation but is not the only path to participation. However, voting is a crucial aspect of democratic engagement and has fluctuated among 18-25 years olds, with a low of just above 30% in the late '90s and highs of just below

45% in the early 2000s and 1970s, while volunteerism grew steadily (Kiesa et al., 2007). Recently voting rates among college students have reached a record-breaking high at 66% in the 2020 presidential election, but there were still race-based participation gaps (Institute for Democracy and Higher Education, 2021). Overall, students may have felt more compelled to be involved in their local communities instead of formal politics, but there is a clear shift in voting among current college students. While polarization and disputed elections may have kept young people from voting in the past (Kiesa et al., 2007), it could be the reason for the higher voting rates now. Students do want to engage in politics, but as the Next 100 survey results demonstrate, they have felt frustrated by political systems ((Kiesa et al., 2007; Next 100, 2022). Furthermore, opportunities for political engagement on college campuses have been unequal (Kiesa et al., 2007). It is, therefore, imperative that all students have access to voting and other political engagement opportunities. A vital approach for achieving social impact in policy and governance is activism that works towards full participation in democratic systems. Therefore, volunteering as a poll worker or election observer would have deep impact.

While individual agency development is essential to political engagement, "that in and of itself is insufficient to promote social change" (Cabrera, 2017, p. 404). Social change, like centering equity and inclusion in political engagement, requires intentional activism collaboration. Student activists opposed the separate but equal policy and were instrumental in the civil rights movement, establishing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Broadhurst and Velez, 2019). Student activism has more recently driven the movement for the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors), which failed, but students refused to give up, even in the face of potential deportation; many stated that they were undocumented and unafraid (Muñoz, 2018). Instead, students had an opportunity to apply for DACA (Deferred

Action for Childhood Arrivals), which does not provide a path to citizenship, but students have continued to protest and march to demand access to "full political rights" (Gonzales, 2018, p. 221). There are numerous examples of the impact activism has had and could have on policy and governance. Students should be encouraged to consider what kind of activism is important to them and how it can impact policy and governance. An example of this could be place-based involvement like in city councils, for example, housing redevelopment initiatives focused on building sustainable communities and local initiatives (e.g., changing food desert landscapes).

Noteworthy to this discussion about social impact are the tensions and influences on opportunities for engagement in policy and governance. As stated earlier, opportunities are unequally distributed, and the reasons are often tied to social identities. Economic inequity is often a central barrier to political engagement (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020). Many barriers to political engagement stem from socio-economic status, from being unable to take time off to vote or get involved in your local community to lacking access to transportation or child care for parents. College students who work and are parents will struggle with these concerns in ways many universities may not be prepared to accommodate. Getting involved in student government to initiate and support proposals that allow access to voting and volunteering for all students would also be impactful.

Additionally, in terms of providing students with access to information that raises their consciousness, many students may not have access to that coursework due to their academic major. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) students often lack the coursework to develop their political identity or a social justice outlook (Morgan et al., 2019). Given recent debates and disinformation around science and concern over policies tied to climate change, it is imperative that STEM education encourage political learning, development, and engagement

(Morgan et al., 2019). Other majors likely face similar risks that should also "strongly consider whether their current methods for preparing [students] are responsive to the sociopolitical climate" (Morgan et al., 2019, p. 10). Finally, engaging with critical organizations would develop critical consciousness and add to your skill set. Organizations like the Urban League, dedicated to achieving equity for Black families through housing accessibility and building sustainable communities, offer internships to undergraduate students. There are mental health and homeless organizations that are also focused and access and support through policy changes, among many others.

What is higher education's role and responsibility?

The purpose of higher education has often been cited to include contributions to knowledge, development of the country's workforce, and advancement of civic education and engagement (Camacho, 2022). While many institutions include a civic purpose in their mission statements, and data shows that college students vote at higher rates than people in the same age range who are not in college (Institute for Democracy and Higher Education, 2021), it has also been argued that colleges do not, in fact, engage students politically and the data is actually reflecting privilege (economic and social) rather than education influencing political learning and engagement (Colby, 2008). The fact is that higher education was founded to educate the young, white, and privileged men of this country (Harper et al., 2009), and as the demographics of these institutions continue to evolve, educating students for political engagement has become more complicated and all the more necessary.

As with many other aspects of our society, we must embrace a socially just and inclusive stance in advising students towards a pathway to policy and governance, regardless of whether the student will pursue a career in policy and governance or develop habits of political

engagement. Higher education has been considered a crucial element to both diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (Harper et al., 2009) and civic and political engagement (O'Leary, 2014), therefore the three entities are interconnected and should be addressed in integrated rather than separate ways (Hurtado, 2007).

Higher education institutions (HEI) have already begun to consider the importance of equity as more institute chief diversity officers (Leon, 2014). As the country experiences further democratic threats, it is clear that HEI's will need to consider their commitment to their civic mission to students and how DEI intersects both their civic and educational missions. Daniels (2021) examines "the role of universities in advancing the public good" (p. 9) and contends that "a democracy must find ways not only to channel the thrumming plurality of viewpoints, experiences, and dogmas in society, but also to fuse these perspectives into some approximation of a shared purpose, a public agenda, and governable republic" (p. 190). Ultimately, it is vital to a diverse democracy to define citizenship in inclusive and equitable terms (Hurtado, 2007).

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