STUDENTS' PRECOLLEGE PREPARATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN A DIVERSE DEMOCRACY

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This study focuses on how students' precollege experiences predisposed them to 3 democratic outcomes: (a) ability to see the world from someone else's perspective; (b) beliefs that conflict enhances democracy; and (c) views about the importance of engaging in social action activities. We analyzed data from 3 flagship universities as part of a nationally funded research project and found first-year females are more likely than males to report values and beliefs consistent with democratic outcomes. Participation in race/ethnic discussions, student clubs, and volunteer work, as well as studying with students of different groups and discussing controversial issues are significant predictors in each model. Results also indicate that students might be unprepared to negotiate conflict in a diverse democracy, suggesting that college engagement will play a key role in fostering the development of democratic citizenship. This study also provides new measures of democratic outcomes to assess the impact of diversity and service learning initiatives.

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KEY WORDS: diversity; college students; civic engagement; outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the emphasis on the role of higher education in promoting civic engagement, in a society where vast inequalities across communities are still evident, has steadily increased. In addition, although K–12 institutions have long explicitly stated their mission of providing civic education, only more recently have schools articulated their role in educating citizens for a multicultural society (Banks, 1997). At the same time, business leaders are emphasizing the need for employees who have competencies to effectively function in an increasingly diverse and global marketplace (Bikson and Law, 1994). In response, a

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163

growing number of higher education institutions are explicitly stating a renewed mission "to prepare students to participate in a diverse democracy" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995). In recognizing their mission, colleges and universities are actively pursuing and implementing policies and curricula to increase student awareness of the value of diversity (Henley and Arnold, 1990) and to produce student outcome goals that ensure meaningful participation in a diverse society. In order to achieve these goals, a clearer articulation of the democratic outcomes that colleges hope to achieve among diverse students is needed.

In an effort to better understand how universities are preparing students to participate successfully in an increasingly diverse society, a research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education was launched in 1999. In collaboration with representatives from participating campuses, researchers on the project are exploring how colleges build bridges across multiple social divisions in practice, provide important student learning opportunities in interaction with members of diverse communities, and demonstrate growth in their students' cognitive and social skills and democratic sensibilities. This study contributes to our understanding of how students' precollege experiences (individual, family, neighborhood, and high school characteristics and experiences) predispose them to certain educational outcomes (referred to as democratic outcomes), which are enhanced through formal and informal interactions with diverse peers during college. Information on first-year students' predispositions will guide college educators in understanding difficulties that arise when controversial issues are addressed in the classroom and assist in the design of program initiatives to enhance students' awareness of their role in a diverse democracy.

The present study sought to increase understanding in this area by means of a multi-institutional study of the influence of students' precollege experiences on three measures identified as democratic outcomes: ability to see the world from someone else's perspective, beliefs about whether conflict enhances democracy, and views of the importance of engaging in social action activities during college. The study's purpose was to determine how these three identified democratic outcomes were influenced by four sets of variables: (a) student demographic characteristics; (b) precollege environment; (c) precollege engagement in cocurricular and diversity experiences; and (d) interaction with peers.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For students to become leaders in an increasingly heterogeneous and complex society, they need to learn how to accept diversity, negotiate conflicts, and form coalitions with diverse individuals and groups. Learning outcomes that support and enable students to successfully participate in a diverse society can generally

be thought of as democratic outcomes. Several theoretical and empirically based premises inform this study and support our conceptualization of democratic outcomes. First is the idea that the concept of diversity in a democracy presents a dilemma that individuals and groups must reconcile (Guarasci, Cornwell, and Associates, 1997; Saxonhouse, 1992). Second, according to learning, cognitive, and social development theories, students learn and acquire skills and dispositions through interactions with others (Piaget, 1985; Selman, 1980). Third, a growing body of research indicates that interaction with diverse peers is an important factor in encouraging learning on a broad range of skills and dispositions that are necessary for living in a society that is becoming ever more complex and diverse (Astin, 1993; Gurin, 1999; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen, 1999).

Diversity and Democracy

Some contemporary thinkers contend that commonality diminishes existing differences and that diversity is a threat to community (Etzioni, 1993). Others call for a democracy that embraces difference and requires that commonality be constructed and negotiated (Guarasci et al., 1997). Civic education can promote political cohesion and nationalism (Wingo, 1997), or it can promote rational deliberation and teach differing ways of life (Guttman, 1987). Overall, these scholars address the interplay between community and difference and between the individual and society. These competing views have implications for the dynamics in campus contexts (in intentional practice and informal student interactions) that are inevitably reflected in students' thinking and development during college.

Linking Social, Cognitive, and Democratic Outcomes

Through engagement with diverse peers, students debate and actively confront multiple points of view while learning to manage strong emotions engendered by conflict. These cognitive and emotional processes promote the skills and thinking abilities needed to make a pluralistic democracy function effectively. Furthermore, scholars contend that students' cognitive and social development are intertwined, and as students approach college age, they are more likely to apply cognitive abilities and skills to interpersonal situations and social problem-solving skills (Chickering and Reisser, 1993; Muss, 1988). Piaget (1985), whose work serves as the foundation for many cognitive development researchers, believed that both cognitive and social development occur through social interaction, spurred by the disequilibrium that results when one tries to reconcile one's own embedded views with that of others. Intercultural perspective taking (Kappler, 1998; Ortiz, 2000; Steglitz, 1993), for instance, is a cognitive skill

facilitated by social interaction that enables the individual to recognize the existence and influence of different cultures. As one-sided and one-dimensional perceptions are challenged, they must be reexamined in view of ideas expressed by others. In reconciling the dissonance between one's own one-sided perspective and the point of view of others, the individual progresses to see several dimensions of an issue and learns to take another person's point of view.

Ortiz (2000) contends that "the ability to take the perspective of another person is a cognitive skill that is interpersonal in that it enhances interactions, yet is also intrapersonal because it requires the development of empathy" (p. 69). In developing a multidimensional individual difference measure of empathy, Davis (1980) found the ability of individuals to adopt the perspective of others as a significant component of empathy. According to his research, increased perspective-taking ability was associated with greater feelings of empathic concern for others and feelings of personal unease in the face of others' negative experiences. Students who develop these cognitively complex skills demonstrate more sociocentric behaviors and develop in-depth and societal perspectives about situations and problems (Perry, 1970; Selman, 1980), including political awareness or concern for general social issues, rather than a concern with one's own world and immediate social group (Enright, Lapsley, and Shukla, 1979). As King and Shuford (1996) assert, a multicultural perspective (acquired through interaction and educational experiences) is a more cognitively complex perspective.

These perspectives regarding cognitive and social development open the door for examining important outcomes for participation in a pluralistic democracy. That is, students who have the ability to develop a societal perspective, exhibit empathy, and acquire a capacity to evaluate alternative perspectives on complex social problems are better prepared to take on social roles as decision makers and negotiators of different perspectives. Ideally, these students are better prepared for civic engagement and are more capable of participating in a democracy such as that envisioned by Guarasci et al. (1997), where democracy is constructed out of social differences. The current study begins to test this theoretical link between students' thinking, social development, and democratic outcomes at college entry. These predispositions influence students' willingness to engage in learning and commitments on campus that will lead to better preparation to participate in a diverse democracy.

Interacting with Diverse Peers

Students are likely to enter college from highly segregated high school environments across the nation (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, and Eitle, 1997) and,

therefore, are likely to encounter social differences for the first time in college. Evidence is beginning to converge on the role of diverse peers in creating a broad range of educational outcomes. Students who reported interactions with diverse peers showed a greater openness to diverse perspectives and a willingness to challenge their own beliefs after the first year of college (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terenzini, 1996). Researchers also discovered that students who interacted with diverse peers reported more frequent discussion of complex social issues, including the economy, peace, human rights equality, and justice (Springer, 1995). Several studies utilizing national longitudinal data indicate that student interaction with diverse peers is associated with increases in cultural knowledge and understanding, leadership abilities, and commitment to promoting racial understanding (Antonio, 1998; Hurtado, 2001; Milem, 1994). Hurtado's study, for instance, examined the effect of studying with a racially/ethnically diverse peer and found the strongest effects on civic outcomes, including acceptance of people with different beliefs and leadership ability. There were also strong relationships with learning and work-related outcomes such as critical thinking skills, the ability to work cooperatively, and interpersonal skills. These outcomes can be considered important values, skills, and knowledge necessary for living in a diverse democracy.

Preliminary evidence reveals that the most effective forms of informal interaction with diverse peers reflect engagement on a range of topics as well as participation in formal educational activities such as courses addressing social diversity, intergroup dialogues, or race awareness workshops designed to increase communication (Antonio, 1998; Chang, 1996; Gurin, Peng, Lopez, and Nagda, 1999; Springer, Palmer, Terenzini, Pascarella, and Nora, 1996). These findings are highly suggestive of the types of activities designed and facilitated by schools that high school students may engage in prior to college. Furthermore, these theories and research support the notion that encountering others who have diverse backgrounds and perspectives can lead to interactions that promote learning and development.

This study establishes a better baseline from which to measure more accurately the effects of college and specific diversity initiatives on students' ability to acquire desired democratic outcomes. Furthermore, it provides greater insights into the experiences and characteristics that are significant in influencing students' acquisition of skills and perspectives needed for success in a diverse democratic society. These insights and baseline information serve as important resources for the creation of more intentionally designed programs, policies, and curricula aimed at producing democratic outcomes in students. Figure 1 shows the conceptual map of the relationship between student background characteristics, environmental type, engagement, and interactions on the democratic outcomes used for this study.
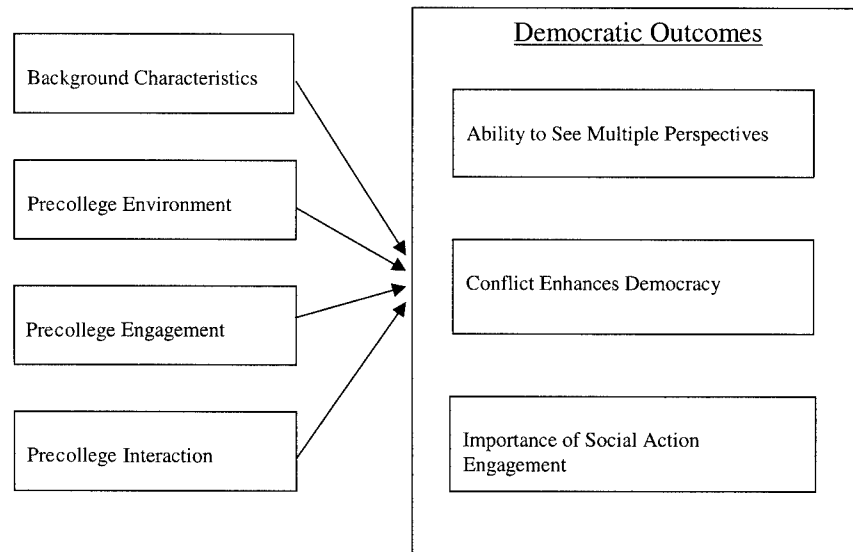
FIG. 1. Conceptual framework for students' precollege preparation for a diverse democracy.

METHODS

Data Source

The data for this study came from a survey that served as a primary component of a national research project titled *Preparing Students for a Diverse Democracy*. The survey focused on the precollege experiences and attitudes of incoming students that matriculated during the 2000–2001 academic year. The survey was designed to elicit responses from incoming freshman pertaining to constructs that measure cognitive, socio-cognitive, and civic outcomes. Three flagship universities, representing states in the Midwest, Northeast, and Mid-Atlantic, were chosen for this study based on the following criteria: (a) a strong commitment to diversity as evidenced by the university's mission statement and the presence of a number of diversity initiatives on campus; (b) a comparative student demographic makeup that consisted of a predominantly White student population; (c) recent success in diversifying their student body; and (d) engagement in significant community-building activities with a diverse student body.

Two of the campuses administered the survey to incoming first-year students during summer orientation sessions. Both schools offered multiple orientation sessions over the summer and allotted time for students to complete and return the surveys, yielding over 80% and 70% return rates respectively. The third

school could not arrange to have the survey administered during orientation and opted to mail surveys to entering students at the beginning of the fall semester. Approximately 5 weeks following the initial survey mailing, undergraduate residence hall assistants delivered a second wave of surveys to nonrespondents who lived in the residence halls. Additionally, since particular students of color are widely known to have lower response rates, telephone calls were made to African American and Latino students 10 weeks after the initial survey mailings, encouraging them to complete the survey. The final survey response rate for this campus was 42%. These extra efforts indicate the difficulties inherent in administering surveys to students attending large public universities.

Sample

Participants in the analytical sample included 8,051 entering first-year students. Female students represented 53.7% of the sample. The sample was predominantly White (70.8%); students of color represented 22.5% of the sample (Asian/Pacific = 11.3%; African American = 6.6%; Latino = 4.2%; and Native American = .4%). The mean SAT and ACT-converted composite score for respondents was 1,207, and the mean high school GPA was 3.62. The majority of the sample attended public high schools (85.1%) and lived in nonurban communities (87.5%), which included suburban, rural, and small town areas. Approximately 70% of the respondents reported that their racial composition of friends was mostly or nearly all White, with 11% reporting their friends were mostly or all people of color and 19% reporting half White and half people of color. Forty percent of the respondents estimated their family income in the upper-income bracket ($100,000 +), with 29.5% reporting upper-middle income ($60,000–$99,999), 26.0% middle income ($20,000–$59,999), and 4.7% reporting low income (0–$19,999). Nearly 83% of the students reported that their mothers attended college.

Measures

Table 1 depicts the variable names, variable types, and scales for each of the variables used in the analyses. Three dependent variables, each representing a scaled index of multiple items, were used in the analyses to measure three democratic outcomes: Ability to see multiple perspectives, Conflict enhances democracy, and Importance of social action engagement. The ability to see multiple perspectives is a measure replicated from the previous research conducted by Davis (1980) on empathy. The other measures were newly developed for monitoring democratic outcomes among students and tested for face validity to ensure students were accurately interpreting the various items.

Student background measures related to gender, race/ethnicity, and academic

TABLE 1. Summary of Variables and Indices in the Research Model

Variable Name	Variable Type	Scale Range
Dependent Democratic Outcomes		
Ability to see multiple perspectives	Scaled index, four items	1 = Strongly disagree to 4 = Strongly agree
Conflict enhances democracy	Scaled index, five items	1 = Strongly disagree to 4 = Strongly agree
Importance of social action engagement	Scaled index, seven items	1 = Not important to 4 = Essential
Student Background Characteristics		
Student's gender	Dichotomous	0 = Male, 1 = Female
Student's race/ethnicity	Dummy-coded	Native American, African American, Asian, and Latino students. The referent group consisted of White students.
Student's SAT score	Single-item, categorical	Combined math and verbal SAT score or converted ACT score (400–1600 scale)
Student's high school GPA	Single-item, categorical	1 = D, 2 = C, 3 = B, 4 = A
Student's mother's education	Dichotomous	0 = High school, 1 = College
Student's estimated family income	Dummy-coded	Low (0–$19,999), middle ($20,000–$59,999), upper-middle ($60,000–$99,999) income. The referent group had income of $100,000 +.
Precollege Environment		
High school type	Dichotomous	0 = Nonpublic, 1 = Public
Community type	Dichotomous	0 = Non-urban, 1 = Urban
Racial composition of friends	Single-item, categorical	1 = All People of Color to 5 = All White
Precollege Engagement		
Participated in race/ethnic discussions	Single-item, categorical	1 = Never to 5 = Daily
Participated in student clubs	Single-item, categorical	1 = Never to 5 = Daily
Participated in volunteer work	Single-item, categorical	1 = Never to 5 = Daily
Participated in varsity sports	Single-item, categorical	1 = Never to 5 = Daily
Studied with different race/ethnic group	Single-item, categorical	1 = Never to 5 = Daily
Ability to discuss controversial issues	Single-item, categorical	1 = Major weakness to 5 = Major strength
Attended a diversity program	Dichotomous	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Took a diversity course	Dichotomous	0 = No, 1 = Yes

TABLE 1. (*Continued*)

Variable Name	Variable Type	Scale Range
Precollege Interaction		
Interaction with different race/ ethnic group	Single-item, categorical	1 = None to 4 = Substantial interaction
Interaction with same race/ ethnic group	Single-item, categorical	1 = None to 4 = Substantial interaction

ability were derived from institutional data provided by the registrar from each of the three participating schools. Survey and institutional data from the three schools were then merged and combined into one dataset used for this study. Mean substitutions were used for a small percentage of cases (up to a maximum of 17% on the student income variable). To improve the accuracy of our socio-economic assessment, we also included a separate measure of mother's level of education, which added significantly to the explanation of variance in only one of our dependent measures (importance of social action engagement). Because academic measures were obtained from the registrar, we were required on only one of the campuses to replace high school GPA for missing cases. The means for high school GPA were replaced according to racial group and gender classifications. It should also be noted that most entering students had an A average in their admission to this campus, resulting in a small amount of variation across the sample. In preparing the data for analysis, both income and race/ethnicity (obtained from the registrar) were dummy-coded, and high-income and White students were used as referent groups respectively.

Precollege environments were measured by two dichotomous variables representing high school and community type and by a third single-item, categorical variable to measure the racial composition of participant's friends. Precollege engagement was measured by a series of variables representing involvement in high school activities and diversity programs. Interaction measures were recoded to capture the amount of student interaction between people representing the same and different racial/ethnic group. Descriptive statistics (Table 2) indicate that very few college entrants had the opportunity to take a diversity course or attend a diversity education program during high school, and were likely to learn about diversity from peers. Substantially fewer students interacted with someone from a different racial/ethnic compared with their same racial/ethnic group prior to attending college.

Analyses

Weighting techniques were used to correct for the low response rate at one of the colleges used in this study. This technique employs multiple regression

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics for Selected Variables in the Analyses ($n = 8{,}051$)

Variable Name	Mean	Standard Deviation
Participated in race/ethnic discussions[a]	3.01	.99
Participated in student clubs[a]	3.57	1.22
Participated in volunteer work[a]	2.89	1.02
Participated in sports[a]	3.13	1.82
Studied with different race/ethnic groups[a]	3.24	1.36
Ability to discuss controversial issues[a]	3.88	.89
Attended a diversity program[b]	.06	.24
Took a diversity course[b]	.08	.27
Interaction with different race/ethnic group[c]	2.47	.60
Interaction with same race/ethnic group[c]	3.90	.41

[a]Five-point scale: From Never = 1 to Daily = 5.
[b]Two-point scale: From No = 0 to Yes = 1.
[c]Four-point scale: From No interaction = 1 to Substantial Interaction = 4.

to adjust the returned-survey sample to the original sample population (Dey, 1997). First, institutional data representing gender, SAT, high school GPA, and race were merged with survey data by matching student identification numbers. Next, the response variable was regressed on the institutional data and the resultant beta coefficients were used to compute a response weight variable. In effect, this produces weights for every respondent case and more accurately represents the entering class based on race, gender, and ability (factors that play an important role in responses to surveys). The response weight variable was then adjusted to approximate the original survey sample size for the college (response variable/mean of response). As a result, these variables were more normally distributed and provided a more accurate representation of the actual student population at the institution with the lowest response rate.

Exploratory factor analyses were also conducted (Table 3), using principal axis factoring and orthogonal rotation methods, in order to reduce the number of measured variables for analyses. Factor loadings that contained a score of at least .43 or higher were retained in the development of subsequent summated rating scales. Internal validity was high for each of the three scales, with Cronbach's alpha reliabilities ranging between .65 and .83.

Multiple regression analyses were employed to identify the significant determinants of each of the dependent variables: Ability to see multiple perspectives, Conflict enhances democracy, and Importance of social action engagement. Independent variables that reflected student background characteristics, precollege environment, precollege engagement, and precollege interaction patterns were entered in a hierarchical method.

TABLE 3. Factor Loadings and Reliabilities for Dependent Variables

Factor and Survey Items	Factor Loading	Internal Consistency (Alpha)
Ability to see multiple perspectives[a]		.65
There are two sides to every issue and I try to look at them both.	.708	
I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.	.676	
When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while.	.470	
I sometimes find it difficult to see the "other person's" point of view.[b]	−.444	
Conflict enhances democracy[a]		.73
Democracy thrives on differing views.	.692	
Conflicting perspectives is healthy in a democracy.	.644	
Conflict between groups can have positive consequences.	.599	
Building coalitions from varied interests is key to a working democracy.	.525	
Conflict is a normal part of life.	.430	
Importance of social action engagement[c]		.83
Speaking up against social injustice.	.691	
Volunteering with community groups or agencies.	.680	
Promoting racial tolerance and respect.	.661	
Working to end poverty.	.628	
Using career-related skills to work in low-income communities.	.605	
Contributing money to a charitable cause.	.586	
Creating awareness of how people affect the environment.	.550	

[a]Four-point scale: From Strongly disagree = 1 to Strongly agree = 4.
[b]This item was reversed for scaling of the index.
[c]Four-point scale: From Not important = 1 to Essential = 4.

Using this approach, the relative contribution of each of the four blocks of independent variables was examined. Background characteristics were entered first in order to control for variations in student backgrounds and to interpret the significance of those variables not yet entered into the regression model. Next, environmental characteristics related to the students' school, community, and friendship network were entered as these characteristics may influence opportunities for student engagement. The third block measured engagement in

precollege activities and programs related to both diversity and community service; this type of engagement is likely a precursor to interacting with diverse peers. The final block measured students' precollege interaction with racially and ethnically diverse and similar peers.

In order to test the reliability of the regression model, Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) and residual plots were examined in the analysis. In this way, assumptions related to heteroscedasticity and multicollinearity were all tested to ensure the validity and reliability of the model.

Limitations

The current study relies on students' self-reports of attitudes, beliefs, and experiences held prior to attending college. There are obvious disadvantages of using such data for this purpose, including the possibility that student perceptions may not always be a true reflection of behaviors and beliefs. Student self-reports, however, have been proposed as appropriate proxies in attempting to determine policy. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics contracted with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to review the research on a variety of possible indicators of college outcomes. One of their conclusions was that self-report data on academic development and experiences have moderate to high potential as both proxies for a national test and as possible indicators for decision-making in higher education (Ewell and Jones, 1993).

The educational research community currently lacks widely used measures of development for college students, especially civic engagement measures that are in a relatively nascent stage of development and use. Thus, decisions at the postsecondary level (both student and academic affairs) related to improving students' democratic sensibilities are based largely on assumptions as to what is best for college students rather than by testing any particular approach with the use of empirical data. The use of self-reported data, therefore, represents an improvement to assumptive-based decision making and may actually be the best data available. With respect to other measures in our study, we used institutional data where available that was obtained directly from the three colleges (including SAT and HSGPA), making some of the student background variables less vulnerable to self-report bias.

One of the institutions used in this study had a relatively low response rate, representing less than half of the total freshman class. Weighting techniques were used to address the low response rate and more accurately reflect on the entire freshman class. While weighting represents a statistical approximation, this technique is an empirically tested and proven method for adjusting low response rates. Additionally, this study examines only the relative comparison of different racial/ethnic groups, using White students as a referent group to

understand the relationship between race/ethnicity and the democratic outcomes. This was conducted to first identify group differences; the results will be used to guide future studies that compare separate models for each of the different racial/ethnic groups.

RESULTS

We conducted three hierarchical multiple regression equations (for each of the outcomes measures) to investigate the relationship between students' background characteristics, precollege environment, precollege engagement, and interaction with same and different racial groups.

The capacity to see multiple perspectives is designed to measure students' ability to see the world from someone else's perspective. Our first regression model (Table 4) explained 5% of the total variance in the multiple perspectives scale, $F (24, 8026) = 17.3$, $p < .001$, and each block entry produced a significant change in the model ($p < .001$). Females were more likely than males to report an ability to see the world from someone else's perspective. Although some initial racial/ethnic differences were identified, only African American students showed a significant difference from White students in the final model of multiple perspective taking ($p < .001$). It is interesting to note that this difference was negative and due primarily to a suppressor effect; this suggests that African American respondents are not significantly ($p < .001$) less likely to report an ability to see multiple perspectives until one controls for the level of precollege engagement in all groups. This implies that precollege engagement patterns are distinct among African Americans, as compared with other racial/ethnic groups, which ultimately affects this outcome. It remains an area for future study. A similar suppressor effect is evident with regard to student ability: Students' SAT scores were not significantly correlated with perspective taking until one controlled for precollege engagement. In the final step of the analysis, high scoring students were significantly ($p < .001$) less likely to see the world from someone else's perspective. This is based on the tendency for high ability students to have more precollege engagements, and by statistically removing these important differences in experience, the opposite effect can become evident. It also suggests that high test scores do not translate into more complex thinking needed for participation in a diverse democracy.

Precollege environmental contexts were not strong predictors of perspective taking among students; rather, it was the level of engagement within each of the environmental contexts that produces a more direct effect on this outcome measure. For example, it appears that having a more diverse friendship group prior to college predisposes students to see the world from someone else's perspective, but this effect disappears once we accounted for engagement in activities with diverse peers in the third block of the analysis.

**TABLE 4. Standardized Beta Coefficients for Blocked Entry Regression on
Ability to See Multiple Perspectives ($n = 8,051$)**

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Student Background Characteristics				
Student's gender (Female)	.110***	.110***	.095***	.095***
Native American student	−.018	−.018	−.021	−.025*
African American student	−.021	−.037**	−.047***	−.048***
Asian/Pacific American student	.029**	.013	.013	.015
Latino/a student	.020	.014	.005	.0001
Low income	−.012	−.013	−.006	−.004
Middle income	−.005	−.005	−.003	−.002
Upper-middle income	.005	−.006	.006	.007
Student's mother's education (College)	.015	.017	.008	.007
Student's SAT score	−.018	−.019	−.047***	−.051***
Student's HSGPA	.023	.022	.024	.026*
Precollege Environment				
High school type (Public)	*.004*	.002	.009	.007
Community type (Urban)	−.012	−.020	−.025*	−.028*
Racial composition of friends (White)	−.048***	−.052***	−.013	.012
Precollege Engagement				
Participated in race/ethnic discussions	*.108***	*.106***	.050***	.044***
Participated in student clubs	*.074***	*.073***	.035**	.037**
Participated in volunteer work	*.064***	*.063***	.021	.020
Participated in varsity sports	*−.022*	*−.020*	−.034**	−.036**
Studied with different race/ethnic group	*.092***	*.089***	.049***	.029*
Ability to discuss controversial issues	*.140***	*.139***	.111***	.108***
Attended a diversity program	*.044***	*.043***	.022	.021
Took a diversity class	*.035**	*.034**	.004	.003

TABLE 4. (*Continued*)

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Precollege Interaction				
Interaction with different				
race/ethnic group	*.102****	*.100****	*.066****	.066***
Interaction with same				
race/ethnic group	*−.005*	*−.0001*	*−.004*	−.005
R^2	.015	.017	.046	.049
Change in R^2	.015***	.002***	.029***	.003***
F	11.27***	10.06***	17.63***	17.35***

Note: Beta coefficients presented in italics represent the beta coefficient for each variable (not in the model) if it were to enter in the next step. Parentheses indicate referent group used for comparison.

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

After controlling for student characteristics, all of the precollege engagement variables were significant predictors of perspective taking in the first regression block, with the exception of participation in sports. Rather than fostering multiple perspectives, participation in team sports may actually stress common goals and perspectives. In the final block of the model, attending a diversity class or program is not a significant predictor; this is not surprising given the small percentage of students (6–8%) who stated they participated in school-facilitated diversity activities. It is also important to note that our analysis accounted for activities (which have positive effects in the final model) that actually occur within diversity courses and programs, and these activities were most significant in the model. For example, students who discussed racial/ethnic issues and indicated that they had some skill in discussing controversial issues are most likely to report multiple perspective-taking skills ($p < .001$). Finally, students' precollege interaction with different race/ethnic groups remained highly significant throughout the analysis ($p < .001$).

The second democratic outcome measure was developed to assess students' beliefs that conflict is a normal and healthy component of a working democracy. Our second regression model (Table 5) explained 10% of the total variance in the conflict enhances democracy scale, $F (24, 8026) = 38.08$, $p < .001$. The total variance explained by this model increased from 4% with only student background variables to 10% when school activities were added to the regression model. This suggests that students who participated in high school activities are better prepared to accept conflict as part of the democratic process. The results from this model imply that females and students with high SAT scores are more likely to agree with statements suggesting that conflict enhances democracy ($p < .001$). Asian American students, however, are less likely to agree with this

TABLE 5. Standardized Beta Coefficients for Blocked Entry Regression on Conflict Enhances Democracy ($n = 8,051$)

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Student Background Characteristics				
Student's gender (Female)	.046***	.046***	.039***	.037***
Native American student	−.021	−.021	−.024*	−.018
African American student	.034**	.028*	.014	.019
Asian/Pacific American student	−.070***	−.076***	−.063***	−.047***
Latino/a student	−.0001	−.002	−.012	−.005
Low income	−.006	−.006	.004	.005
Middle income	−.001	−.001	.002	.002
Upper-middle income	.006	.007	.006	.006
Student's mother's education (College)	.027*	.027*	.014	.013
Student's SAT score	.165***	.164***	.123***	.121***
Student's HSGPA	.019	.019	.027*	.027*
Precollege Environment				
High school type (Public)	*−.001*	−.002	.005	.003
Community type (Urban)	*−.002*	−.005	−.011	−.013
Racial composition of friends (White)	*−.016*	−.017	.027*	.041**
Precollege Engagement				
Participated in race/ethnic discussions	*.157***	.160***	.089***	.085***
Participated in student clubs	*.084***	.083***	.045***	.045***
Participated in volunteer work	*.032**	.031**	−.032**	−.032**
Participated in varsity sports	*−.005*	−.004	−.019	−.019
Studied with different race/ethnic group	*.088***	.094***	.039**	.028*
Ability to discuss controversial issues	*.227***	.227***	.193***	.192***
Attended a diversity program	*.046***	.045***	.015	.015
Took a diversity class	*.055***	.055***	.017	.017

TABLE 5. (*Continued*)

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Precollege Interaction				
Interaction with different				
race/ethnic group	*.081****	*.086****	*.036***	.036**
Interaction with same				
race/ethnic group	*.049****	*.048****	*.044****	.043***
R^2	.036	.037	.100	.102
Change in R^2	.036***	.001	.063***	.002***
F	27.61***	21.81***	40.39***	38.08***

Note. Beta coefficients presented in italics represent the beta coefficient for each variable (not in the model) if it were to enter in the next step. Parentheses indicate referent group used for comparison.

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

belief than White or other students of color. This finding suggests that specific racial/ethnic groups might have very different views about whether a democracy can be constructed out of difference.

Holding student background variables constant, the first regression block for beliefs that conflict enhances democracy produced similar results as the previous model for multiple perspective taking. Precollege engagement variables were positive and highly significant ($p < .001$), with the exception of participation in sports. However, one important distinction is evident from results on the other outcomes: Frequency of interaction between students from the same *and* different racial/ethnic backgrounds are significant predictors of the view that conflict enhances a democracy. These effects remain strong and significant throughout the model.

The final model indicates that participation in race/ethnic discussions, student clubs, and the ability to discuss controversial issues are highly significant determinants of students' agreement that conflict enhances democracy ($p < .001$). While volunteer work remained significant in the final model, students who participate in volunteer work were less likely to endorse statements that conflict enhances democracy. This is a result of a suppressor effect (the effect changes from significant positive to negative), indicating that students who participate in volunteer work typically have higher levels of engagement with diversity. Controlling for this experience results in a negative effect of volunteer work. It may be that particular volunteers during high school have yet to understand the constructive side of conflict, seeking instead a more harmonious vision of a democracy.

The importance of social action engagement is intended to measure students' willingness to act and initiate change in society. The third regression model (Table 6) explained 17% of the total variance in the scale for the importance of

**TABLE 6. Standardized Beta Coefficients for Blocked Entry Regression on
Importance of Social Action Engagement ($n = 8,051$)**

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Student Background Characteristics				
Student's gender (Female)	.189***	.191***	.151***	.150***
Native American student	−.004	−.005	−.008	−.009
African American student	.068***	.023	.003	.003
Asian/Pacific American student	.029**	−.009	−.017	−.014
Latino/a student	.049***	.031**	.017	.014
Low income	.005	−.001	.008	.009
Middle income	.043***	.044***	.044***	.045***
Upper-middle income	.010	.015	.012	.012
Student's mother's education (College)	.055***	.058***	.042***	.041***
Student's SAT score	.037**	.036**	.004	.002
Student's HSGPA	.045***	.046***	.039**	.040***
Precollege Environment				
High school type (Public)	−.032**	−.032**	−.008	−.010
Community type (Urban)	.018	−.005	−.017	−.020
Racial composition of friends (White)	−.115***	−.116***	−.051***	−.040**
Precollege Engagement				
Participated in race/ethnic discussions	.251***	.241***	.145***	.141***
Participated in student clubs	.151***	.148***	.035**	.036**
Participated in volunteer work	.219***	.215***	.151***	.150***
Participated in varsity sports	−.035**	−.029**	−.056***	−.058***
Studied with different race/ethnic group	.162***	.141***	.045***	.031*
Ability to discuss controversial issues	.205***	.201***	.130***	.128***
Attended a diversity program	.089***	.085***	.034**	.034**
Took a diversity class	.116***	.111***	.052***	.052***

TABLE 6. (*Continued*)

Variable Name	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Precollege Interaction				
Interaction with different				
race/ethnic group	*.136****	*.162****	*.046****	.046***
Interaction with same				
race/ethnic group	*.025**	*.012*	*.002*	.002
R^2	.049	.060	.169	.171
Change in R^2	.049***	.011***	.109***	.002***
F	37.86***	36.62***	74.53***	69.05***

Note. Beta coefficients presented in italics represent the beta coefficient for each variable (not in the model) if it were to enter in the next step. Parentheses indicate referent group used for comparison.

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

social action engagement, F (24, 8026) = 69.05, $p < .001$; this represented the best predictive model of the three under investigation. The total variance explained by this model increased by 11% when precollege engagement variables were added to the regression model. This indicates that precollege opportunities for engagement are strongly related to students' developing values of becoming involved in social action activities.

Female students were more likely than males to place importance on social action engagement ($p < .001$). Additionally, students from middle-income families and students whose mothers attended college were significantly more likely to believe it is important to take particular social action to improve society ($p < .001$). These students may feel more secure in their socioeconomic position, which acts as a catalyst in promoting social justice. Students with higher GPAs were also more likely to value social action engagement ($p < .01$). Furthermore, precollege engagement activities remained highly significant throughout each block of the model, with only participation in sports producing a negative effect on the outcome measure. The significant time and weekend commitments that sports requires may prevent student athletes from placing a priority on social action activities, resulting in the negative effect. In contrast, both school-facilitated interactions with diversity and informal activities (particularly discussing racial issues, volunteer work, and ability to negotiate controversial issues) are associated with valuing the importance of social action. Students who interacted with different race/ethnic groups ($p < .001$), as opposed to those who interacted with the same race/ethnic group (no significant effect), were more likely to attach importance to participating in some type of social action. Furthermore, students who reported a predominantly White friendship group were less likely to place value on the importance of social action engagement.

DISCUSSION

Several patterns of effects were evident across all three democratic outcomes. First, entering college females are more likely than males to report values and beliefs consistent with democratic outcomes. It is not clear if this is a developmental difference or whether these gender patterns persist throughout college. Because leadership for the future is most likely to come from both genders, these differences are cause for concern. Men as well as women will need to develop the skills for negotiating social difference in the workplace and take responsibility for improving society.

A second significant pattern is that students' precollege engagement produces the largest change in the total variance explained in each of the three outcome models. That is, differences in commitment to democratic outcomes are less likely to be explained by demographic and environmental variables among entering students than precollege opportunities to engage with diverse peers. As a result, participating in race/ethnic discussions, student clubs, and volunteer work as well as studying with different groups and discussing controversial issues are significant predictors in all three models. It was surprising to find, however, that involvement in high school sports was not significantly related to democratic outcomes measured in this study and was in fact, negatively related to valuing social action. It may be that student athletes seek common goals and minimize risk involved in other activities that could jeopardize a unified front for the sports team. Most of the research has focused on achievement among student athletes with almost no attention to democratic outcomes. This area merits further study in the future.

Students' interactions with different race/ethnic groups are associated with democratic outcomes; this finding confirms related research using different student cohorts (Hurtado, 2001). Overall, students who enter college with substantial interactions with diverse peers (i.e., peers from racial/ethnic group different than their own) are more likely to see the world from someone else's perspective and value the importance of engaging in social action to create change in society. The one exception involves the belief that conflict enhances democracy. Students who had substantial interactions with peers, regardless of the peers' racial/ethnic identity, were more likely to agree that conflict enhances democracy. This also suggests that the more students interact with peers both within and outside of their own racial/ethnic group the more likely their own views will be challenged thereby broadening their understanding of a democratic society.

Although students' value of social action engagement is significantly associated with school-facilitated diversity activities (diversity classes and diversity programs), the effect of high school multicultural education appears to be indirect on multiple perspective taking and views of conflict in a democracy. This is primarily because it is the type of engagement (e.g., discussing racial issues,

interaction with diverse peers) that accounts for direct effects on the latter outcomes. Other studies also suggest that it is not simply taking such courses, but the nature of interaction in these courses that accounts for some of the most desirable civic outcomes (Gurin, 1999). Future research may directly test this hypothesis with the use of causal modeling.

Although the findings primarily confirm the theories of diversity and democracy, they also suggest that college students may be relatively unprepared for negotiating and participating in a democracy constructed out of social difference. The relatively low proportion of variance explained in the perspective taking and conflict enhances democracy measures may suggest that such outcomes are more difficult to acquire prior to college entry. Indeed, cognitive theorists suggest that many students may be dualistic thinkers on entry to college, and both of these outcomes require more complex views of the world. Students may not be as prepared to meet the challenging demands of college that result from the diversity inherent in many college environments, despite the subsequent benefits such diversity holds. Future work will explore the link between diversity experiences, democratic outcomes, and cognitive development among college students.

A second explanation for the low proportion of variance explained by the three models may be that measurement of democratic outcomes is still in an experimental phase. While the perspective-taking measure has been tested on other populations, all of these outcomes are the first measures of democratic skills and values to be tested on a large student sample. Whether we have yet to improve our measurement or whether our predictability increases as students experience more differing ways of life in college can be tested in the near future. These students will be surveyed again on these and other outcomes related to diversity experiences 2 years after college entry.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

A better understanding of students' perspective-taking skills, values to promote a better society, and beliefs about democracy may facilitate the type of college programs and curricula required to prepare students for participating in a diverse democracy and handling complex social problems. Virtually all forms of engagement with diverse peers (inside and outside of the classroom) may facilitate student commitment to taking responsibility for making the world a better place (e.g., diminishing inequality and working to end poverty). The acquisition of these democratic outcomes may be accelerated through cocurricular and curricular learning in college as students become exposed to differing ways of life, the histories of many peoples, and contact with diverse peers. Facilitating student exposure to diverse people and perspectives, therefore, is a key vehicle for enhancing student preparation for a diverse democracy. Yet, considerably

more thought must be given to help students learn how to negotiate social differences, with attention to intergroup relations. Several of the campuses in this study actually provide a full array of intergroup dialogue activities in courses, residence halls, and student programming. Current service learning models also serve as an example for the integration of perspectives, experience, and knowledge about diverse groups. Both service learning and facilitated intergroup activity are intended to help students see the world from someone else's perspective and provide intense exposure to diverse populations in college.

At some large public universities, however, much is left up to students' own preferences for engagement with diversity. Students often prefer the comfort of familiarity rather than risk what can be learned from the disequilibrium that results from encounters with others from substantially different social backgrounds. Practitioners must be attentive in promoting cognitive and affective student development if they hope to successfully prepare students for living in a diverse world.

From an institutional research perspective, the current study provides measures of democratic outcomes that can be used to assess the impact of diversity and service learning initiatives. Institutional researchers are working with faculty and campus practitioners to maximize the use of the data in campus planning and reports about the civic mission of their respective universities. The campuses in this study are preparing reports of the data collected at college entry to share with faculty groups, student service units, and academic programs. At the same time, they are sharing data with other collaborating campuses to help assess their relative progress toward diversity and learning goals. Campuses may use the data in the future to help monitor the impact of initiatives or intentionally design activities to achieve greater impact in their goals to prepare students for a diverse democracy.

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