

## ABSTRACT

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AN EXAMINATION OF UNDERGRADUATE  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION,  
POLITICAL BELIEFS AND PARTY  
AFFILIATION

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This is a descriptive study of students' political affiliation and ideology and their level of involvement in civic engagement activities. The study was created based on research on the rise in student volunteerism and the renewal of civic education in higher education with a backdrop of a politically liberal-leaning postsecondary faculty. The instrument is a locally developed survey which was distributed to a random sample of University of Maryland, College Park students, with 347 valid responses collected. Analyses utilized frequencies and percentages. The three null hypotheses were all partially rejected. This study is meant to be the beginning of a larger body of work examining any potential relationship between students' political affiliation and ideology and their levels of involvement in civic engagement activities.

**AN EXAMINATION OF UNDERGRADUATE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
PARTICIPATION, POLITICAL BELIEFS AND PARTY AFFILIATION**

By

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## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

### *Background of the Study*

John Dewey, an educational reformer in the early twentieth century, believed that in order for a democratic society to succeed, its citizens needed to willingly engage themselves in the public sector for the larger social good. He believed that the university was a primary vehicle for providing citizens with the education and tools for this engagement (Dewey, 1916). Historically, a crucial element of higher education has been educating citizens (Gibson, 2006; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005), and this was a central mission of many of the first colleges and universities in the United States (Stanton, 2006). Without an educated citizenry, it was feared that a productive and stable democracy would be difficult to sustain (Dewey). Traditionally, higher education valued its role as educator of citizens and espoused such values in mission statements (Astin, 1999). However, the emphasis on civic values in higher education began to wane with the rise of the research university and the scientific curriculum (Rice, 1996). Throughout the twentieth century, there have been four major attempts to renew civic education in higher education, with the most recent attempt still occurring (Stanton).

Despite the fact that colleges and universities continue to espouse education for citizenship as a mission, and in many cases are working to further this mission, it is not viewed in equal importance with the two other primary missions of universities, teaching and research (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999). The most recent attempt at a renewal of higher education's civic mission has been a movement from both within

and external to higher education (Astin, 1999; Gibson, 2006; Morse, 1989; Musil, 2003). This most recent call for renewal is in response to several factors, including high-profile business and political scandals and research that indicates that society's collective level of participation in public life is decreasing (Putnam, 2000).

Since this call for renewal began in the late 1980s, colleges have begun to rethink and reexamine their civic functions (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Ehrlich, 2000). From within the academy, a national organization, Campus Compact, has emerged as a clearinghouse for this new focus on civic education, and includes 1,000 college and university presidents in its membership. Campus Compact's mission is to "advance the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility" (Campus Compact, 2006, para. 3).

In addition to umbrella groups, individual colleges are also working to provide civic education through many different means, including service-learning opportunities, student group membership, holding political events on campus and linking more faculty research to community issues (Gibson, 2006). However, as Gibson discusses, especially at research institutions, these programs are "special" and often "isolated from the rest of the institution" and led by one or a few staff or faculty members (p. 6).

At the same time opportunities for engagement are surfacing on campuses, there appears to be a change in the ways students are choosing to be civically engaged. Sax (2004) suggests that there has been a decrease, from 57.8% to 32.9% (1996 - 2002), in the number of students who feel it is important to remain current

and informed about political affairs. However, there are also data that suggest that young people are interested in current political events. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) (2006) found that 72% of young people, defined as ages 15-25, follow what's going on in government and public affairs at least "some of the time" (p.8).

In addition to staying informed about the government and politics, students are choosing to participate in community service and service-learning at increasing rates. According to the 2002 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) College Freshman survey, 82.6% of college freshmen performed volunteer work during their last year of high school (Sax, 2004). This is an increase that has been growing since 1990 (Sax). In addition, CIRCLE (2006) reports that 36% of young people have volunteered in the past year.

CIRCLE's (2006) data indicate that 30% of young people have boycotted a product due to the values or working conditions of the company that produced it. CIRCLE also notes that 28% of young people have not engaged in any type of civic activity, and that 58% have only engaged in two activities classified as civic or political participation, out of the 19 CIRCLE has identified. It appears that while there is a sizable group of students who are engaging civically, there are also many young people who are currently disengaged.

One way that higher education has responded to this changing face of civic engagement is by offering many opportunities for students to participate in volunteer and service-learning experiences, one type of civic engagement. These experiences are being offered both in the curriculum and as co-curricular activities. Within the

curriculum, service-learning has emerged as a popular way to incorporate civic education in the classroom (Eyler & Giles, 1999). This seems natural as service-learning grew out of a desire to have more intentional outcomes of service experiences (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999). Service-learning experiences are also available for students in co-curricular activities, as well as many other forms of volunteerism. University of Maryland, College Park, as well as many other campuses, now has a staff dedicated to helping connect students to volunteer experiences. Students are volunteering on campus, in communities surrounding campuses, and even across the country and world with programs such as Alternative Spring Break (Community Service Learning, 2006).

However, these service opportunities do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of the university climate and culture that produce them, and the university climate/culture has been shown to be decisively liberal. There have been multiple studies conducted that show that liberal faculty members outnumber their conservative colleagues, both in self identification and party affiliation (Brookings, 2001; Rothman, Lichter, & Nevitt, 2005; Tobin & Weinberg, 2006). David Horowitz, director for the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, studies the political identification of speakers on campuses and funding to political organizations on campus, finding more speakers and more funding supporting liberal causes (Students for Academic Freedom, 2006). In fact, most civic engagement opportunities in the formal curriculum occur in the social sciences and humanities, where liberals comprise 75% and 81% of the faculty, respectively (Rothman, Litcher, & Nevitte, 2005). Additionally, there are scholars who argue that the student affairs profession,

that is typically responsible for co-curricular civic engagement experiences, is also decidedly liberal (Kors & Silvergate, 1998).

Students who entered college prior to Fall 2006 are increasingly identifying as “middle of the road” (50.8% according to 2002 CIRP data) (Sax, 2004) and do not mirror the political ideological views of their faculty. Students identifying as “liberal” or “far left” are currently 27.8%, compared to 36.6% in 1970 (Sax). Students identifying as “conservative” or “far right” have increased from 18.1% to 21.3% from 1970 to 2002 (Sax). Sax finds that students who identify as “middle of the road” are the least likely students to engage in discussions about politics. Sax suggests that it is this “politically moderate” student who is also the most “politically disengaged student” (p. 70).

However, in contrast to prior years, the entering first year class of fall 2006 is identifying less as “middle of the road” and more as “liberal” and “conservative” (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Korn, Santos, & Korn, 2006). Compared to 2005, 16,900 more students identified as either “liberal” or “conservative.” These data are somewhat supported by the results of the 2006 CIRCLE study, which shows that 47% of young people aged 15-25 identify with or lean Democrat and 28% identify with or lean Republican. In the study by CIRCLE (2006), 24% of young people are identifying as Independent. With this departure from the middle, the researchers found that students were also more likely than in years past to have frequently engaged in political discussions (Pryor et al).

Therefore, one may question if the types of civic engagement opportunities offered in higher education come with a political ideology attached, and then, if this

ideology is reflected in the students participating. Butin (2006) has already made the argument that service-learning is founded on and promotes liberal tenets and ideology. Additionally, given the rise in participation in volunteer and service activities by college students, do campus leaders know of all the types of volunteer activities students are involved in?

#### *Purpose of the Study*

Because the literature does not address this topic, this descriptive study attempted to understand the current participation of undergraduate students at the University of Maryland, College Park in civic engagement activities. This study examined the political affiliation and ideology of students who are civically engaged and not civically engaged. Of those students who are civically engaged, this study examined what types of activities students participate in and what their motivations for participation are.

#### *Research Questions*

This study sought to understand the following three questions:

1. What is the political affiliation and ideology of students who are either civically engaged or not civically engaged?
2. Of those students who self identify as civically engaged, what types of involvements do they have, and does this differ according to political affiliation and political ideology?
3. What motivates students to be civically engaged, and does this differ based on political affiliation and political ideology?

### *Definition of Terms*

For the purposes of this study, definitions of several key terms were necessary. The following terms needed to be defined: civic engagement, political affiliation, and political ideology. Although liberal and conservative are also widely used terms throughout this study, it was not critical to define liberal and conservative, as the focus of this study is on the relationship between how a student self-identifies and his or her level of civic engagement, not on how a student defines ideology or affiliation.

Throughout the scholarly literature, there are numerous definitions of civic engagement. Although multiple definitions will be addressed in the next chapter, for the purposes of this study, the definition of civic engagement is that of the Pew Charitable Trust (2004): “the will and capacity to solve public problems” (p. 4). This definition was chosen because of its broad scope and inclusiveness.

For the purpose of this study, political affiliation is defined as the identification a student indicates with a particular political party of the United States political system, such as Republican, Democrat, or Independent. Political ideology is defined as the identification a student indicates on a scale from very conservative to very liberal.

### *Professional Significance of the Study*

The results of this study are significant to the field of higher education and civic education for several reasons. First, there is minimal research on students' political affiliations and how this may relate to their collegiate experience. This research is timely as higher education is being challenged by groups like David

Horowitz's *Students for Academic Freedom* and state legislatures to ensure the equal treatment of all students regardless of political orientation (Students for Academic Freedom, 2006). Second, the results will shed light on the type of student who is civically engaged. This may encourage student affairs and other educators on the campus where this study is situated who implement civic engagement programs to evaluate their programs to ensure that political bias does not exist, or is not consciously or unconsciously communicated to students. Finally, these results will help administrators evaluate if they are achieving the civic portion of their mission statement, especially if their institution's mission statement advocates civic education for all students and not a specific population of students from a particular political ideology.

#### *Overview of Methodology*

A locally developed web-based survey was administered to a random sample of University of Maryland, College Park students in early April 2007. The study was non-parametric and entirely descriptive. The survey results were analyzed with descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages.

#### *Summary*

Civic education is historically one of the core missions of higher education. Although commitment to this mission waned throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of the research university, there has been a resurgence in the past two decades on providing students with civic education and engagement opportunities (Gibson, 2006). At the same time, there has been an increase in volunteerism among

United States college students (Sax, 2004). However, higher education has been shown to be predominately comprised of liberal faculty and programs. This implies that civic education and engagement opportunities may have a politically liberal bent. If this is the case, it may also affect which students are choosing to participate in these activities. This study descriptively examined the political affiliation and ideology of students who are civically engaged while in college and what motivates them to be engaged. It is intended that this study will be the beginning of a larger body of work and discussion that more closely examines this potential relationship. The next chapter will outline the literature related to the history of the mission of civic education in higher education, the renewal of civic education in the past two decades in higher education, and the multiple definitions of civic engagement today. It will also discuss research on political affiliations of both higher education faculty and students. Finally, it will present limited research that bridges civic engagement and students' politics or political ideology.

## CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

This literature review outlines research and theory related to higher education's role in civic education and the political climate on campuses today. First, literature pertaining to the definition and importance of civic engagement will be discussed. Next, the role of civic engagement as part of the mission of higher education, both historically and as part of a renewal in the past two decades, will be reviewed. Then, literature focused on the current civic engagement involvements of students will be presented. Following that, literature focused on political affiliation of students and faculty on college campuses will be discussed, including how college affects the political affiliation of students. Finally, literature that begins to tie civic engagement and political attitudes and affiliations together will be reviewed.

### *Civic Engagement*

*Definition.* One of the most difficult aspects about studying civic engagement is the ambiguity of the term and lack of consensus on what it means (B. Jacoby, personal communication, November 22, 2006). Even Campus Compact (2006), whose welcome message on their homepage says the organization is “dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education” (Campus Compact, paragraph 1) does not use the term civic engagement in its mission statement. Instead it uses “social and civic responsibility.” Campus Compact does define civic responsibility as “the commitment of a citizen to his or her community,” but no clear definition of civic engagement is offered (Campus Compact, paragraph 5). Rhoads (1998) uses the term citizenship education in his

study of student involvement in community service and discusses the important aspect as students showing “concern for the social good” (p. 277).

Two recent studies that used the term civic engagement in their titles fail to define the term within their text (Brisbin Jr. & Hunter, 2003; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005). Readers are left to discern their definitions of civic engagement by looking at variables examined within each study. Vogelgesang and Astin utilized the Higher Education Research Institute’s longitudinal study of civic engagement which included questions about participating in a community project or community service, influencing social values, helping other people, working to change laws and policies, and expressing opinions through media and political outlets. Brisbin and Hunter studied the relationship between universities and community organizations. They focused on students’ involvement in local government, local voluntary associations, and local non-profit organizations. By examining the focus and variables of these studies one can attempt to discern what the authors mean by civic engagement. Kirlin (2002), who studied adolescent civic socialization and wrote about civic skill building, also did not provide a concrete definition of civic engagement. However, when compiling several of her thoughts, it can be discerned that she thinks of civic engagement as active participation by adults in their communities, and that engagement involves more than knowledge, but active participation.

Other authors have attempted to define civic engagement and responsibility through lists of characteristics and skills (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Musil, 2003). Musil focused on six expressions of citizenship, including exclusionary, oblivious, naïve, charitable, reciprocal, and generative, while Colby et

al. focused on skill sets needed for citizenship, such as effective communication, skills for political participation and working effectively with others.

Although there are numerous definitions of civic engagement, there is not consensus among these definitions. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) defines civic engagement by listing 19 indicators of civic engagement (Around the Circle, 2006). These 19 indicators are subdivided into three categories: “civic indicators,” “electoral indicators,” and “indicators of political voice” (p. 3). The University of Maryland, College Park has created a Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership (CCEL), which defines civic engagement as follows:

Civic engagement is acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities. That includes a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good. Civic engagement encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence. Through civic engagement, individuals—as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world—are empowered as agents of positive social change for a more democratic world. Civic engagement involves one or more of the following:

1. Learning from others, self, and environment to develop informed perspectives on social issues;
2. Recognizing and appreciating human diversity and commonality;
3. Behaving, and working through controversy, with civility;
4. Participating actively in public life, public problem solving, and community service;

5. Assuming leadership and membership roles in organizations;
6. Developing empathy, ethics, values, and sense of social responsibility;
7. Promoting social justice locally and globally. (Community Service Learning, 2006, paragraph 2)

The lengthy CIRCLE and CCEL definitions illustrate how complex defining civic engagement can be.

An underlying theme of these varied definitions and word choices is an individual's active commitment to and involvement in the functioning and improvement of society. One more succinct definition is put forth by the Pew Charitable Trust (2004). It defines civic engagement as "the will and capacity to solve public problems" (p.4). This definition encompasses the many different aspects of the other definitions presented. It is broad in nature, which allows for use across many different arenas, such as social, political, and religious. Due to its broad and encompassing nature, this definition has been selected for this study. It is most appropriate because it allows for the consideration of students involved in many varied activities during college to be seen as civic engagement, including engagement in curricular and co-curricular service and service-learning and participation in religious, Greek organizations, and other various organizations that have a civic component to their group missions. Additionally, since there is no research exploring college students' understanding of civic engagement, it is important to use a broad definition.

### *Civic Education, Its Role and Its Effect*

*Historical context.* Although there is no consensus on a definition of civic engagement, civic engagement and education have historically been an integral part of higher education. Many of the earliest colleges and universities were founded with this notion of educating for the public good (Stanton, 2006). This belief continued to be prominent through the early part of the twentieth century. Dewey (1916), who was writing at that time, believed that a democracy is dependent on the involvement of educated members of society to contribute to the public good, and believed that it was the role of higher education to produce such citizens. He was not alone in his view, as the role of higher education in society and its responsibility to society, specifically in terms of service, was at the forefront of discussions at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This heightened discussion was partially in response to the Morrill and Hatch Acts, as well as in response to the changing technological landscape at the time (Plater, 1999). The Morrill Act of 1862 provided 30,000 acres to each state for the intentions of creating a higher education institution (Stanton, 2006). This was done in part to help educate a greater number of citizens, with the hope that they would, in turn, contribute to the overall well-being of society. It was also believed that the land grant institutions would stimulate community development (Stanton). The Hatch Act of 1887 created agricultural stations used to further the knowledge of soil and plant growth in conjunction with the land grant institutions, as the government understood that research was going to be the base of agricultural advancements (National Association for Scholars, 1995). Although legislation was being passed that affected

conversations about civic participation, the discussions at this time were focused mostly on philosophical ideals, largely around the ideas of productive community members and the importance of citizen participation in public life (Dewey).

This emphasis on civic education can be found in many college mission statements. Most mission statements consist of three main goals: teaching, research, and service (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Holland, 1999). More specifically, the development of leaders and promoting good citizenship are two of the most common values in mission statements (Astin, 1999). Gibson (2006) cites a forthcoming analysis by Furco that shows 95% of university mission statements “stipulated social responsibility, community engagement, and public service as their primary purpose” (p. 5). Although many universities focused on their teaching, research, and service missions in the beginning of their existences, with the rise of the research university in the early twentieth century, colleges suffered a fragmentation from the service component of their missions (Rice, 1996). This was due in part to the increased focus on creating professionals, and while universities continued to espouse civic values, the attention paid to actual civic education decreased (Stanton, 2006).

*Renewal of civic education.* Stanton (2006) describes four “waves” of attempted civic renewal throughout the twentieth century. The first occurred in the 1960s in tandem with the civic unrest in the United States. At that time a group of “service-learning pioneers” began to create experiences for students that combined service with learning about existing knowledge (p. 8). While this movement created some valuable programs and literature, it was a “bottom up” effort and did not have the power of sustainability (p. 8). A second wave began in the mid- 1980s in response

to a “national initiative to promote public service” and was championed by several university presidents (p. 9). During this phase there were calls for increased volunteerism for undergraduates and alumni, and for a return to the historical civic mission of higher education. In 1986, the creation of Campus Compact began a third wave and attempt at civic renewal. During this time research was published on the positive effects of service-learning and its popularity began to grow.

The first three phases Stanton (2006) describes all have to do with educating individual undergraduates. Little attention had been paid to how institutions as a whole actively fulfill their civic mission. Holland (1999) did a qualitative study of 23 case studies between 1994 and 1998 to determine if there was “an alignment of academic environment with mission at four-year institutions in which there was a stated commitment to community engagement as scholarly work and as a distinctive component of mission” (p. 50). She conducted document analysis, focus groups, site visits, and structured interviews for her research method. She found that, overall, there was less of an actual commitment to community engagement than what was stated in the mission. Bringle et al. (1999) agreed that the community engagement and service aspects of university mission statements take a back seat to the teaching and research missions of universities. Gibson (2006) notes that while research universities “continue to pay homage to their civic mission in their rhetoric and published materials,” actual programs on campuses can be isolated and are not well integrated into the campus life (p. 17).

Holland (1999) and Bringle et al’s (1999) findings are also supported by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education’s research on the incongruence in use of

resources by universities and their stated goals. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education surveyed administrators and faculty members on their top goals for higher education. The data showed that, while respondents felt their institution should rank the goal of preparation for citizenship 15 (out of 47), they felt their institutions actually ranked this 25<sup>th</sup> (Gross & Gambsch, 1974).

However, this may be changing as the fourth and final wave described by Stanton (2006), which has occurred over the past ten years, is shifting the focus of civic engagement from individual students to include institutions as entire bodies, including faculty and their research, graduate students, and institutional policies. While progress has been made, Stanton states that civic education is severely lacking at the graduate student level, and to a lesser degree within the faculty, especially at large research institutions (p. 11).

The renewal of civic education in higher education continues to be a frequently addressed scholarly topic (Butin, 2006; Campus Compact, 2004; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Rhoads, 2003). This renewal is attributed in part to the growing concern about the “unraveling of civic and civil society” (Musil, 2003, p. 4). Numerous scandals within the business and political arenas, such as the Enron scandal and multiple congressional lawsuits, have contributed to the public’s growing concern about the health of society. One of the contributing factors to this “unraveling” is the lack of educated and engaged citizens (Astin, 1999). There is also concern that as technology and the media’s presence increases in the lives of individuals, citizens increasingly see themselves as passive participants in society (Morse, 1989). Since higher education has been shown to affect civic engagement levels of its graduates

(Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2006; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005), colleges and universities are being asked to help ensure that the next generation of citizens are instilled with the values of a civic education.

In response, as mentioned in Stanton's (2006) third wave, organizations such as Campus Compact have formed and existing organizations are focusing their energies on civic engagement and civic education. The Association of American College and Universities' (AAC&U) *Greater Expectations* report and their newly established Center for Liberal Education and Civic Engagement both focus on redefining civic learning (Musil, 2003). AAC&U has also established the Liberal Education and Global Citizenship: The Art of Democracy project, which "is designed to work with colleges and universities to develop societal, civic, and global knowledge in their graduates by linking liberal education and democracy in the context of our interdependent but unequal world" (AAC&U, 2007). Additionally, AAC&U recently issued the College Learning for a New Century (2007) report that focuses on what college graduates should and need to be able to do in the ever increasingly complex, global world, of which a major learning outcome is increased social, personal, and civic responsibility. Higher education researchers are devoting time and resources to studying undergraduates and how they are affected by civic engagement (Astin & Sax, 1998; Blackhurst & Foster, 2003; Kirlin, 2002; Lopez, M.H., et al., 2006) and campuses are devoting more resources to programming that encourages civic participation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

*Civic skills.* One of the steps in this process of renewal and creating civic education programs has been to define what skills students need to be engaged

citizens. Civic skills are the skills that people need to be able to be productive citizens and community contributors. Several authors have defined what they understand to be civic skills, skills not always acquired from participating in civic activities. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady suggested three “participatory factors” for adult civic engagement. Their study of 15,000 adults found that these factors are “desire to get involved,” “ability to contribute something to the effort,” and “some connection to the networks of individuals who ask others to become involved” (as cited in Kirlin, 2002). Kirlin suggested that having civic skills is the underlying factor that leads adults to be civically engaged. Thus it is this skill building that is critical during the undergraduate years. Students need to understand the political system, as well as be compelled to bring about change. They also need skills in leadership, communication, judgment and deliberation, working toward compromise and consensus, and discerning a balance between the needs of individuals and the community (Boyer, 1998; Colby, 2002).

*Methods of undergraduate civic engagement that lead to civic skills.* There are multitudes of ways for undergraduates to gain these civic skills. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, when looking at participation of high school students as a civic engagement predictor, found that participation in any club contributes to a student’s skill building, be it student government or the chess club (as cited in Kirlin, 2002). Kirlin used data from five separate surveys, including Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, and found that students who were active as adolescents in activities and clubs are “two to four times more likely to be active in civic and political life than those who had not participated” (p. 572).

More directly related to college experiences, CIRCLE and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2005) released a report that discusses civic education and engagement in higher education. The report outlines longitudinal data that indicate that involvement in student government, service-learning, religious groups, and groups that explore diversity, in addition to other civic experiential learning activities all provide students with lasting positive civic engagement behaviors. In addition the report lists attendance at political speeches, semesters in Washington DC, classes on diversity, and living learning communities as other ways colleges can positively affect students' level of civic engagement.

Although the studies discussed above have shown that involvement in any club contributes to civic skill building, and CIRCLE discusses a multitude of ways to be civically engaged, much of the discussion surrounding civic engagement on college campuses focuses on activities of service and political activity. For the purposes of this study, student service and service-learning, and student political activity, including student activism were addressed.

Service performed by students includes volunteerism and service-learning programs. Students volunteer and perform service as part of student groups, church groups, Greek organizations, and can seek out opportunities individually. In addition to these volunteer opportunities, many campuses now offer service-learning experiences. This grew out of a desire to have more intentional outcomes of volunteer experiences (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999). Service-learning can be a credit bearing experience tied to an academic class, or a co-curricular opportunity offered by a university (Eyler & Giles, 2003). Typically, when involved in a service-learning

experience, students spend time reflecting on their experience of serving (both individually, often in journals, and in discussion groups) and also learn about societal systems that have created and continue to shape the population they are serving. Jones (2002) suggested that a distinguishing feature of service-learning, as opposed to community service, is “intentional analysis of the dynamics at work (for example, racism, oppression, privilege) in the many community service organizations with which students become engaged through these experiences” (p. 13).

Using CIRP data, Astin and Sax (1998) found that participation in service by undergraduates enhances students’ sense of civic responsibility. Data used for their study came from CIRP data collected between 1990 and 1994 and the 1995 College Student Survey, a follow up instrument sent to a sample of students from each of five years of CIRP data. They employed a multivariate analysis to determine results. During college, 70% of respondents performed service as part of an out-of-class college sponsored activity and 29% performed service as part of a class. Six months was the median for length of service. The most common reason for participating in service was “to help other people,” with 91% of students ranking this as “very important.” “To feel personal satisfaction,” “to improve my community,” and “to improve society as a whole” were the other top reasons for service with 67%, 63%, and 61% of students responding. They noted the importance that three of the top four reasons were related to service to others and civic responsibility (p. 254). All twelve of the longitudinal outcomes associated with civic responsibility were “favorably influenced” by service participation (p. 256). They highlighted that service participation as an undergraduate significantly increases students’ commitment to

“helping others, serving in their communities, promoting racial understanding, doing volunteer work, and working for non profit organizations” (p. 256). They also found that students who participate in service feel less like they have “little power to change society” compared to other respondents (p. 256). Also significant, Astin and Sax found that the type of sponsor of service, “independently through a non-collegiate group or organization, in connection with a collegiate organization (usually student affairs), [or] as part of a course,” did not significantly influence these outcomes (p. 256).

The Astin and Sax (1998) study contained a “good deal of measurement error” due to the small list of alternatives provided in the study (p. 262). There was also a low response rate to the follow up survey. However, by using a large data set, some biases from a low response rate were able to be accounted for. The biggest limitation, noted by Astin and Sax, is that service participation as a variable can be “confounded with college environmental variables” and is somewhat difficult to isolate (p. 252). Eyler and Giles (1999) also discuss service-learning as a type of “action research” that links education to citizenship in a process in which students are “acquiring skills and knowledge that equip them for later civic participation” (p.11).

Looking at the same question on a broader scope, Perry and Katula (2001) did a compilation research study focused on how service affects citizenship. They created search terms, created a database with relevant studies, cleaned the data and then identified reliable studies. Their final database utilized key word searches in nine academic databases. While hesitant to make generalizations, they put forth the following findings:

1. Service appears to influence favorable citizenship-related cognitive understanding.
2. Service and volunteering appear to influence later giving and volunteering.
3. The type of service that produces the most consistent positive results is service learning. (p. 360)

Perry and Katula also noted that there is little research that attempts to determine if all service promotes citizenship or if only certain types of service promote citizenship. In addition, they said that research about “political behavior has largely been neglected in studies of service” (p. 360).

In contrast to service, there has been little research on students’ political behaviors. In her study assessing student political attitudes and participation rates, Blackhurst (2002) used a Political Commitment Scale, adapted from Ossoff and Dalto, to measure how much students participated in activities that required “an investment of time, energy, and emotion in the political process” (p. 744). These eight items included:

Are you registered to vote?

Did you vote in the most recent presidential election?

Have you participated in a political protest in the past year?

Have you signed a petition in the last year?

Have you attended a political rally in the last year?

In the last year, I have been involved in working for a political campaign.

I spend time discussing politics with friends.

I have spent time writing and talking to my elected officials. (p.744) Blackhurst's findings indicated that what is most important to increasing student political involvement is making access to the political system as easy as possible for students. This includes voting, gaining information, and opportunities to become involved through volunteering and other participatory activities. Specifically, she found that students who voted had lower rates of political apathy and cynicism. This suggests that finding ways to encourage students to vote and become involved with the political system through campus involvements and opportunities is of the utmost importance for campus professionals.

Specific to service-learning opportunities, Eyler and Giles (1999) describe the outcomes as personal development, the ability to better understand and apply knowledge, an increase in critical thinking capacity, and possibly transformation of self. Each of these learning outcomes relates to an overall citizenship model that helps to understand citizenship outcomes of service-learning, which include a student's values, knowledge, skills, efficacy, and commitment as its elements (p. 157). These five elements of engaged citizenship, while developed through many different opportunities, are specifically stated goals for service-learning programs.

While many more students are performing community service on campus, there is a smaller group of students who consider themselves to be activists (Chamberlain, 2004). As part of the Political Research Associate, Chamberlain conducted a major qualitative study to assess the current climate and state of student activism on both ends of the political spectrum on college campuses. While United States higher education institutions traditionally have a history of being epicenters of

political activism, currently, while still present, activism levels are low among students. She defined activism as “non-institutionalized collective action to bring about change” (p. 11) and makes distinctions between “target” activism, working toward change on a student’s campus, and “arena for organizing” activism, which uses the campus as a forum for gaining support for larger societal issues (p. 10). Using this definition, she makes note that there is sometimes an overlap between service involvement, especially service-learning, and activism.

In her research of eight schools across the United States, almost all groups of activists belonged to recognized student groups on their campuses. These groups represented between 8% and 23% of all groups on campus (Chamberlain, 2004, p. 14), and progressive groups outnumbered conservative groups by a ratio of four to one (p. 2). While progressive groups tend to be organized around single issues, conservative groups tend to encompass a multitude of issues.

Chamberlain (2004) attributed the small number of groups and student activists to several different reasons. Her findings indicated an absence of political mentors on campus, especially throughout the faculty; a lack of and desire for political debate on campuses; and a growing number of students who are identifying as centrists. She suggested that the lack of debate on campus could have long lasting effects for society and the political leadership of the country if college educated citizens do not learn how to engage and debate with those who hold differing views. Those students who do belong to activist groups are more likely than other students to be politically active and working toward specific causes as adults. She also noted that

the centrist students are typically engaging in community service and service-learning work, and therefore are a huge untapped population of potential activists.

While not discussed as frequently as service or political involvement and activism, religious involvement has also been shown to be important in the development of civic skills and civic engagement. Kirlin (2002) found that participation in the life of a church is positively associated with civic engagement. Supporting her argument, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (as cited in Kirlin) also found that church participation equalizes civic participation levels across economic and education factors.

In addition to service, political, and religious involvement, Blackhurst and Foster (2003) suggested it may be students' attitudes that are among the most important predictors of civic engagement post-college. They conducted a study in 1996 and again in 2000 at three Midwestern institutions: a comprehensive public institution with an enrollment of 12,000, a four year private liberal arts college with an enrollment of 2,400, and a two year religiously affiliated liberal arts college with 400 students. Their instrument "assessed political attitudes and civic participation levels" (p. 157). There are three main findings that led the researchers to believe that political attitudes affect civic involvement: both students who did not vote and students who did not volunteer were significantly "more apathetic, more cynical, and less optimistic" than those who voted, and volunteered, respectively (p. 168). There was also a significant correlation between attitudes of students and "both their political commitment and service involvement" (p. 168).

It has been shown that there are many ways that students are gaining civic skills. But a crucial question to be answered is if these civic skills are translating into participation in civic life post-graduation. As stated above, Perry and Katula (2001) found that “service and volunteering influence later giving and volunteering” (p. 360). Sax (2004) conducted a study using CIRP data from the Freshman 1985 survey and follow up surveys in 1989 and 1994 to look at how college influences civic participation after graduation. Her sample included 12,376 students at 209 four year colleges and universities. She focused on three civic outcomes: commitment to social activism, sense of empowerment, and community involvement. The two largest influences of students’ post graduate commitment to social activism were found to be a “commitment to social activism among the student body at an institution” and not being an engineering major (p. 75). The second outcome, sense of empowerment, was found to only be influenced by students’ peer groups’ socioeconomic status. Similar to the first finding, commitment to community involvement was influenced by students’ peer groups’ sense of social activism. Three major additional findings from the study showed how college experiences influence civic participation after college. These are involvement with religious groups while in college, doing volunteer work during college, and “socializing with students from different racial and ethnic groups” (Sax, p. 77). Although Sax has shown the influence peers can have on each other, there was no research found that discusses how members of the faculty influence students’ levels of civic engagement.

Additionally, CIRCLE (2006) has data that indicated that institution type and student’s major have an effect on a student’s level of post collegiate civic

engagement. Students who attended private institutions were more engaged than their public school counter parts. Students who attended four year colleges or universities were more engaged than students who attended two year colleges. Additionally, students who graduated “with degrees in law, public administration, planning, or the humanities are more engaged than their peers in other fields” (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, p. 2).

A common thread throughout the studies in this section is that when a student is involved in activities that promote civic skills, there is some sort of positive relationship to his or her level of civic engagement. The next important issue to consider is which students are engaging in these activities that encourage and foster civic engagement. When the mission of universities is to teach civic responsibility to students, one can assume this means all students of the university, not only a certain sub-population.

#### *Political Landscape of Higher Education*

Opportunities for civic engagement occur in the unique cultures and climates of each individual campus. Because of this, it is important to examine how civic engagement activities may be affected by that climate--a climate that, in general, has been shown to be politically liberal.

*Faculty politics.* Faculties play a large role on campuses and their political beliefs have been well studied. Overall, faculty in the United States tend to be more liberal and are more frequently registered members of the Democratic Party (Brookings, 2001; Klein & Western 2004; Rothman, Lichter, & Nevitt, 2005; Tobin & Weinberg, 2006).

Rothman, Lichter, and Nevitt (2005) made the assumption that this lack of diversity in political ideology was due in part to the exclusion of faculty members with differing viewpoints from the majority in a department. They used data from the 1999 North American Academic Study Survey to test their hypothesis. They first found that there had been a shift to the left end of the political spectrum between 1984 and 1999 with 72% of professors identifying as “Left/liberal.” They contrasted this with the general American public identification using the 1999 Harris Poll where 18% of respondents identified as “Left/liberal.” In contrast, 15% of professors identified as “Right/conservative” while 37% of the American public surveyed in 1999 identified this way. Using the data, Rothman et al. asserted that college faculty members are on average four times as liberal as the American public. The study also found that when controlling for scholarly achievement, professors with a more conservative ideology were employed at less prestigious and selective universities. Political ideology was the second strongest predictor in “quality of institution affiliation” (first was academic achievement) accounting for more than one-fifth of the variation. These results suggest there may be a liberal hiring bias by the elite institutions in the country.

In addition to overall comparisons to the general public, Rothman et al., as well as Klein and Western (2004), the Brookings Institute (2001), and Cardiff and Klein (2006), also examined faculty political affiliation by discipline. The findings were consistent across the studies and noted economics, political science, history, and sociology as the most liberally populated disciplines. Cardiff and Klein used data

only from California schools, which may have some regional biases, but given their findings are consistent with prior studies, the data should still be considered valid.

*Student politics and ideology.* Although faculties have been shown to be liberal, it has been shown that college students' political beliefs do not mirror their faculty. As outlined in Chapter 1, in the years prior to fall 2006, students are increasingly identifying as "middle of the road" (50.8% according to 2002 CIRP data) (Sax, 2004). More than twenty-five percent (27.8%) of students identified as "liberal" or "far left," compared to 36.6% in 1970 (Sax). Approximately eighteen percent (18.1%) of students identified as "conservative" or "far right," compared to 21.3% in 1970 (Sax). The freshman class of 2006 has seen a rise in both "liberal" and "conservative" students, 28.4% and 23.9%, respectively, with 43.3% of students indicating "middle of the road" (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Korn, Santos, & Korn, 2006). CIRCLE (2006) found comparable data, finding 47% identify with or lean toward Democrat and 28% identify with or lean toward Republican. Their results vary slightly, and this may be due to the sample surveyed was from people aged 15 to 25 and included those who were not currently enrolled or graduated from an undergraduate institution.

Although a majority of students identify as middle of the road or conservative, there is research that shows that attending college has a liberalizing effect on students. The next two studies discuss this finding. Abramowitz (1983) looked at student political attitudes and how their attitudes became more similar or dissimilar to their parents during their college years. In a sample of 521 students at State University of New York at Stony Brook, Abramowitz found that students of Republican parents

were more likely to disassociate from their parents' beliefs than their counterparts from Democratic households. In the study, only 38% of students from Republican households remained Republican, with 16% changing to Democrat. The major change in party affiliation seemed to happen between the sophomore and junior year of college. There was also a higher rate of identifying as Democrat among students who lived on campus. Abramowitz suggested that these findings may suggest that a "pro-Democrat" campus may "provide a motivation for students from Republican families or families without a party preference to reexamine their party identification" (p. 360). However, Abramowitz noted that the undergraduate population at SUNY-Stony Brook is not typical of the overall population of college undergraduates in the United States, with a higher proportion of Roman Catholic and Jewish students. In addition, the study was conducted through a phone survey, and students may not have felt comfortable discussing their political beliefs in a non-anonymous setting, especially one known to be pro-Democrat. This study is also over 20 years old. It is important that new data be generated to account for changes in the political climate in America.

There are also data that suggest that institutional type may have an influence on the development of student political beliefs (Knoke & Issac, 1976). Data from a 1972 presidential election study from the Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, was used to look at the relationship between institutional type and political attitudes later in life. The researchers found a positive relationship between quality of higher education and "liberal response rates" on five of the six sociopolitical attitudes surveyed when controlling for age and region of birth. The authors noted the significance of this study because many United States political leaders are former

students of high quality institutions. This study is also outdated, and new research needs to be conducted to validate that these findings are still accurate.

Another important study analyzing the development of student political beliefs is a longitudinal study that followed a cohort of women from Bennington College, a liberal arts women's college in rural Vermont (Alwin, Cohen, & Newcomb, 1991). The majority of women at Bennington came from upper class, Northeast families that mostly identified politically as conservative. The study was completed in three parts. The first, which looked at students in the entering classes from 1935-1939, found that the women "demonstrated significant change in their sociopolitical orientations during the college years," a change toward Democratic New Deal politics (p. 3). Twenty-five years later it was found that these attitudes developed during college had remained "relatively stable" (p. 3). The final segment of the study, completed in 1984 showed that there continued to be a "gradual movement in the direction of greater liberalism" (p. 100). The first two iterations of the study did not have a benchmark group to compare the cohort to, but in the third, the researchers compared the women's results to the 1984 National Election Study results and found that the Bennington women were more likely to choose Democratic candidates than the overall population, than women aged 60 and over, and even more likely than women aged 60 and over who had not attended college. This landmark study, while limited to a small and specific population and outdated, does provide experimental data that show college may have some liberalizing effect on students.

### *Relationship between Civic Engagement and Politics*

One current form of civic education that is increasing in popularity on college campuses is service-learning (Butin, 2006). Butin wrote that one of the service-learning movement's claims is "to usher in a more democratic and socially just politics in higher education" (p. 478). While he did not argue that service-learning is not an effective tool to teach civic engagement, he did propose that service-learning has a "progressive and liberal agenda under the guise of a universalistic practice" (p. 483). He cited the *President's Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education* from Campus Compact and noted that the language can all seem to be neutral. However, he pointed out the "diversity" and "dignity" talked about in the statement is that of historically underrepresented and oppressed groups and not the politically conservative. He also pointed out that, while the goal of service-learning resonates strongly throughout its own community, it is not the same goal of the politically divided American populous.

In addition, Butin (2006) referenced Jones and her work on understanding student resistance to service-learning. Jones (2002) wrote on the challenges faced by both faculty and students in service-learning courses. She discussed resistance by students to critically analyzing the social systems and other dynamics at a place of service and in turn changing their worldview. Her most common example is students not critically engaging with their work at an AIDS community organization. She discussed students who make remarks that indicate they do not believe in gay rights or believe that having AIDS is someone's fault because he or she chose to be gay.

Butin (2006) noted that the resistance is not ever discussed as “liberals resisting a conservative agenda” (p. 485). He wrote that if service-learning were to be politically balanced, in terms that David Horowitz would approve, opportunities to work with a pro-life organization or to protesting with a group to keep the death penalty would also need to be incorporated.

It is clear from the research that there is a renewal of commitment to civic education and civic engagement on college campuses. However, as Butin (2006) showed, some of the programs have a liberal overtone to them. This may not be surprising since it has been shown that higher education faculties are decidedly liberal. However, since students do not mirror the political leanings of their faculties, one can ask if students feel comfortable participating in the activities that faculty and universities are providing for civic education and engagement opportunities.

#### *Summary of Literature Review*

This chapter has outlined prior research in the fields of civic engagement, its place in higher education, how higher education contributes to the civic engagement of undergraduates, and the political landscape of United States college campuses. It has also introduced an author (Butin, 2006) who is beginning to analyze any bridges between these two bodies of literature. However, with the proliferation of service performed by undergraduates, there is a need to understand where and how students are choosing to engage in service. Additionally, because of the liberal environment of higher education, it is important to examine if students participating in campus-sponsored civic engagement types of activities reflect this political ideology as well. This study will attempt to provide some basic data in hopes of examining these

questions. The next chapter will outline the methodology and introduce the survey instrument to be utilized in the study. It will address methodological processes, survey implementation, and proposed analyses of results.

## CHAPTER 3: Methodology

The following chapter will discuss the methodology for the study presented herein. It will identify hypotheses that were tested and identify the sample that was used. It will also present the research design, a description of the instrument used, and data collection and analysis methods.

### *Review of Research Questions and Hypotheses*

The purpose of this study was to better understand the dynamics between students' political affiliation and their involvement in civic engagement activities at the University of Maryland, College Park. For the purposes of this study, civic engagement is defined as "the will and capacity to solve public problems" (Pew, 2004, p. 4). The research questions tested were:

1. What is the political affiliation and ideology of students who are either civically engaged or not civically engaged?
2. Of those students who self-identify as civically engaged, what types of involvements do they have, and does this differ according to political affiliation and political ideology?
3. What motivates students to be civically engaged, and does this differ based on political affiliation and political ideology?

The first research question asks the political affiliation and ideology of students who are civically engaged and not civically engaged. There is no literature that specifically addresses this question. Given this, the null hypothesis for question one is:

*Null Hypothesis 1:* There are no differences in the political affiliations and ideologies of students who self identify as civically engaged or not civically engaged

The second research question focuses on the different types of civic engagement in which students participate. Specifically, it asks if type of involvement varies according to students' political affiliations and ideologies. There is no literature that specifically addresses this question. Given this, the null hypothesis for question two is:

*Null Hypothesis 2:* Of those students who identify as civically engaged, students of differing political affiliations and political ideologies will not differ in types of involvement.

The third research question addresses students' motivation for being civically engaged and whether this differs with students' political affiliations and ideologies. There was also no literature specifically addressing the relationship between political affiliation and motivation to be civically engaged, although motivation for community service has previously been addressed by CIRP studies (Astin & Sax, 1998). Thus, a null hypothesis was employed for research question three.

*Null Hypothesis 3:* There will be no differences in motivations for being civically engaged among students with different political affiliations and political ideologies.

#### *Description of Sample*

The sample for this study was selected from the entire population of undergraduate students at the University of Maryland, College Park. This site is a

good fit for the purposes of this study for several reasons. As a large institution, there are many diverse ways for students to be involved in activities that promote civic engagement. Specifically, the campus has a large Greek system with 53 active chapters, 13 chaplaincies serving students which provide religious opportunities, a Community Service Learning office which promotes on and off campus volunteer opportunities, an active student government, service-learning classes, as well as many other student groups which engage in some type of broadly defined civic activity. Through the Office of Community Service Learning and academic departments, there are service-learning opportunities for students.

The undergraduate population at the University of Maryland, College Park is 25,154. Maryland residents comprise 75.9% of the student body while 24.1% are non-residents of the state of Maryland. The racial/ethnic breakdown is: 56.1% White, 12.9% Black/African American, 14.1% Asian American, 5.7% Hispanic American, 0.4% American Indian, 2.0% foreign, and 8.5% unknown. Female students comprise 48.6% of the population and 51.4% of the students are male. Full-time students comprise 91.1% of the population and 8.1% have part-time status (University of Maryland, 2006).

A simple random sample was used. This method was selected based on the research questions asked, with the understanding that this study is interested in the varied experiences of all United States citizens who are undergraduate students within the university. The sample was limited to United States citizens, as it is only those students who are eligible to vote in United States elections and this eligibility is important to the political aspect of the study. This method was also selected for its

strength as a sampling strategy, giving each student in the population an equal chance of being selected. After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix A), a simple random sample was obtained from the University of Maryland, College Park Registrar, from the entire population of undergraduate students who are United States citizens. The University of Maryland, College Park Registrar provided email addresses of all students selected for the random sample.

The sample size for this study was 3,000. This number was determined with the following factors considered:

1. For an acceptable error rate of 5%, 384 valid responses were needed (Upcraft & Schuch, p. 89).
2. Response rates for online surveys at the University of Maryland vary between 20% and 60%, and students are more likely to answer surveys that they perceive to have a direct benefit to their life (S. LaVoy, personal communication, October 25, 2006). This survey will not be viewed by students in this manner. Therefore, the estimated response rate was approximately 20%.
3. It is extremely important to have a critical number of participants in each subgroup to be examined. Subgroups will be 6 political beliefs groups (from very conservative to very liberal), and voter registration groups (Republican, Democrat, Independent). Each subgroup needed to have a minimum of 30 valid responses (Upcraft & Schuch, p. 89), so a total of 270 respondents are necessary.

A response rate of 20% will yield 600 respondents, which will provide for an acceptable error rate. An unusually low response rate of 10% will yield 300 respondents. To ensure a large enough sample size, and because the selection of participants is relatively easy, 3,000 was chosen as a safe and appropriate number.

### *Research Design*

This study was non-experimental and descriptive. The design was chosen because it can highlight any noticeable descriptive qualities for students with varying political affiliations and ideologies who may or may not be civically engaged. This design is appropriate due to the lack of existing research on students' political identity and how it may relate to students' civic engagement. It is also appropriate because I am not attempting to determine any causal relationships between any of the variables studied.

### *Description of Instrument*

The instrument used for this study was a locally developed web-based survey (Appendix B). It consists of three sections: civic engagement, political affiliation, and demographics.

The civic engagement section of the instrument included questions about specific civic engagement activities and motivations for civic engagement. It consisted of one question asking students if they believe they are civically engaged, one question to assess what types of activities students are involved in, and one question asking students to rank their motivations for being civically engaged. The different types of civic engagement activities were compiled based on reviewing prior

surveys and literature defining civic engagement (Around, 2006; Astin & Sax, 1998; Blackhurst, 2002; Community Service Learning, 2006; Kirlin, 2002). After reviewing the literature, I decided to focus on involvement questions that fall in the categories of service and political involvement. I chose these two categories for several reasons. First, as shown previously with the CIRP data, a large percentage of college students are involved in service. There is also more literature addressing college student service than any other facet of civic engagement. Second, because I am interested in political affiliation and ideology of students, focusing on political involvement seemed a natural choice. Although Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (as cited in Kirlin, 2002) did find that participation in any organized activity can build civic skills, attempting to analyze all types of involvements is beyond the scope of this study. Since the majority of the literature focuses on service and political involvement, this study focuses on the same.

The question assessing students' motivation used the same response choices that are provided on the CIRP Freshman Survey. Astin and Sax (1998), using the CIRP data from 1990-1994, found that the top four reasons for service among college students were: "to help other people," "to feel personal satisfaction," "to improve my community," and "to improve society as a whole." These four choices have been chosen for the instrument to be used in this survey, as they appear to be transferable motivations for civic engagement. This seems appropriate because many of the engagement opportunities for college students are in the form of service. In addition, two more choices were added for students to select, "to advance my political agenda," and "based in my religious beliefs."

The political affiliation section consisted of two questions. The first question was used to measure students' political beliefs. The question assessing students' political ideology was a Likert scaled question from "very conservative" to "very liberal" to assess a student's self reported political beliefs. The second question asked students to identify their United States political party affiliation and included five response choices: Democrat, Republican, Independent, Other, and not a registered member of a United States political party.

The instrument consisted of five demographic questions: gender, race, year in school, student status, and citizenship status. Demographic questions allowed calculations to be done to see if the obtained sample was representative of the overall population of University of Maryland, College Park undergraduate students.

#### *Validity*

Because this instrument is locally developed, validity is of the utmost importance. Validity checks were done by using face validity. Content validity was assured by having an expert in the field of civic engagement evaluate the instrument. Barbara Jacoby, Campus Compact Engaged Scholar for Professional Development and author of several service-learning texts, served in this capacity.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

The students selected for the sample received an email message (Appendix C) in mid-April 2007 asking them to click on a hyperlink and take part in this survey. This email included an offer to be entered in a random drawing for a \$25 gift certificate for either I-tunes or Target. Participants were then directed to a website

hosted by Survey Monkey to complete the instrument. After completing the survey students were able to enter their email address for entry into a random drawing for one of the gift cards. The email addresses were separated from student data as soon as the data were downloaded from Survey Monkey. After five days, a second email (Appendix D) was sent to the non-responders of the sample asking them again for their participation in the survey. A final reminder email (Appendix E) was sent to non-responders eight days after the initial contact, asking them again for their participation in the survey. The survey was active and in the field for a total of 14 days.

### *Data Analysis*

After the data were collected and cleaned, descriptive analyses were performed. Frequencies and percentages were used to show the demographic make up of the sample. A significance level of  $p < .05$  was used for all analyses.

For research question one, *What is the political affiliation and ideology of students who are either civically engaged or not civically engaged?* The following percentages were calculated:

- 1a. Of those students who self identify as civically engaged or not civically engaged, differences were examined in political affiliation.
- 1b. Of those students who self identify as civically engaged or not civically engaged, differences were examined in political ideology.

For research question two, *of those students who self-identify as civically engaged, what types of involvements do they have, and does this differ according to political affiliation and political ideology?* the following analyses were conducted:

1. A percentage breakdown was conducted for the various types of involvements civically engaged students have. This breakdown includes all possible choices from survey question three A and three B:

3A.

- I am registered to vote
- I voted in the last election on November 7, 2006
- I have discussed politics and current events with someone outside of class in the past week
- I have participated in a political or protest rally
- I have contacted an elected official
- I have volunteered my time to a political campaign
- I have participated in a community service or service-learning experience

3B.

- I sought out an opportunity on my own
- I participated with my fraternity or sorority
- I participated with my church or religious student group
- I participated as part of a secular (i.e. non-religious) student group
- I participated as part of a class
- I participated in my home community
- None of the Above. \_\_\_\_\_

Subsequently, the following percentages were calculated and chi-squares and cross tabulations were conducted:

- 2a. Political party affiliation of students who are registered to vote
- 2b. Political ideology of students who are registered to vote
- 2c. Political party affiliation of students who voted in the last election on November 7, 2006
- 2d. Political ideology of students who voted in the last election on November 7, 2006

- 2e. Political party affiliation of students who have discussed politics and current events outside of class in the past week
- 2f. Political ideology of students who have discussed politics and current events outside of class in the past week
- 2g. Political party affiliation of students who have attended or participated in a political or protest rally
- 2h. Political ideology of students who have attended or participated in a political or protest rally
- 2i. Political party affiliation of students who have contacted an elected official
- 2j. Political ideology of students who have contacted an elected official
- 2k. Political party affiliation of students who have volunteered time to a political campaign
- 2l. Political ideology of students who have volunteered time to a political campaign
- 2m. Political party affiliation of students who have participated in a service-learning experience.
- 2n. Political ideology of students who have participated in a service-learning experience.
- 2o. Political party affiliation of students who have participated in community service overall and as a part of the following types of groups: on my own, with my fraternity or sorority, with my church,

with a student group, in my home community, as part of a class while an undergraduate

2p. Political ideology of students who have participated in community service overall and as a part of the following types of groups: on my own, with my fraternity or sorority, with my church, with a student group, as part of a class while an undergraduate, in my home community

For research question three, *what motivates students to be civically engaged, and does this differ based on political affiliation and political ideology?* the following analyses were conducted:

1. A percentage breakdown for the various motivations for civic engagement civically engaged students have. This breakdown includes all possible choices from survey question two:
  - to help other people
  - to feel personal satisfaction
  - to improve my community
  - to improve society as a whole
  - to advance my political agenda
  - based in my faith or religious beliefs
  - other: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentages are displayed in a chart that shows each motivation for civic engagement and the number of students who chose each motivational factor. Subsequently, the following percentages were calculated and chi squares and cross tabulations were conducted:

3a. Political party affiliation of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to help other people”

3b. Political ideology of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to help other people”

3c. Political party affiliation of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to feel personal satisfaction”

3d. Political ideology of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to feel personal satisfaction”

3e. Political party affiliation of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to improve my community”

3f. Political ideology of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to improve my community”

3g. Political party affiliation of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to improve society as a whole”

3h. Political ideology of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to improve society as a whole”

3i. Political party affiliation of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to advance my political agenda”

3j. Political ideology of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “to advance my political agenda”

3k. Political party affiliation of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “based in my faith or religious beliefs”

3l. Political ideology of students whose motivation for civic engagement is “based in my faith or religious beliefs”

### *Summary of Methodology*

This chapter has outlined the methodology used in this descriptive study of students' political affiliation and their civic engagement. The instrument is a locally developed survey which was distributed to a random sample of University of Maryland, College Park students in April 2007. Analyses utilized frequencies and percentages. Content validity of the survey instrument was confirmed through face validity by an expert in the field. The next chapter will discuss the results of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: Results

The purpose of this descriptive study was to begin to understand the current civic engagement participation of undergraduate students at the University of Maryland, College Park by political party affiliation and political ideology. The study examined the political affiliation and ideology of students who were both civically engaged and not civically engaged. Of those students who were civically engaged, this study examined what types of activities students participated in and what their motivations for participation were. The study consisted of three null hypotheses which examined any differences among students being civically engaged, differences in engagement activities and motivations for students with differing political party affiliations and ideologies who are engaged.

### *Description of Demographics*

The locally developed survey was emailed to a sample of 3000 University of Maryland, College Park undergraduate United States citizens on Friday, April 6, 2007. Follow up emails were sent on Wednesday, April 11 and Saturday April 14, 2007. The web-based survey resulted in 347 valid responses. Of all respondents, 338 completed the demographics questions. Of all respondents completing demographic questions, 14.7% were freshman, 13.0% were sophomores, 22.5% were juniors, 41.1% were seniors, and 8.3% were in their fifth year or more. Students attending the university full time comprised 92% of the sample. Men comprised 41.1% of respondents, while women were 58.9% of the sample. No students in the sample identified as transgender. The racial and ethnic breakdown of the sample was as

follows: 8.9% Black or African American, 13.9% Asian or Pacific Islander, 5.3% Hispanic/Latino, 63.6% White, and 8.3% indicated other or not reported.

The demographics were somewhat representative of the undergraduate population of the University of Maryland, College Park. In terms of gender, females were overrepresented in the sample, with women comprising 58.9% of the sample but only 48.6% of the total population. Male students comprised 41.1% of the sample, but comprise 51.4% of the total population. In terms of race, White students were overrepresented in the sample at 63.6%, and African American students were underrepresented, comprising 13.9% of the sample. In the overall population White students comprise 56.1% of students and 14.1% of the students are African American. Asian or Pacific Islander students were well represented, comprising 13.9% of the sample and 14.1% of the total population, as were Hispanic/Latino students, being 5.3% of the sample and 5.7% of the total population. Unreported or other students comprised 8.3% of the sample and 8.5% of the total population.

Republican students comprised 17.3% of the sample and Democrat students comprised 51.6%. Students identifying as Independent comprised 13.0% of the sample as did those who listed “other.” Only 2.6% of the students selected “none” as their party affiliation. Ideologically, 2.6% of students identify as “very conservative,” 9.2% as “conservative,” and 11.8% as “slightly conservative.” Students identifying as “middle of the road” comprised 19% of the sample. “Slightly liberal” students comprised 15.9% of the sample with “liberal” and “very liberal” comprising 29.1% and 9.8%, respectively.

### *Testing of Hypotheses*

This study was comprised of three hypotheses based on three research questions. The following section will list results found for each analyses completed for testing of hypotheses.

*Hypothesis One.* The first hypothesis was that there would be no differences in the political affiliation and ideology of students who self identified as civically engaged or not civically engaged. Of the 347 students who answered this question 48.1% considered themselves to be civically engaged. There were significant differences found between students' political party affiliation and their self identification of being civically engaged at the .023 level (Table 1). Based on this finding, I reject the null hypothesis for political affiliation. No significant differences were found when analyzing students' identification as civically engaged and their political ideologies. Therefore, the null hypothesis for political ideology could not be rejected.

Table 1: *Chi Square analysis of Civic Engagement by Political Party Affiliation*

Party Affiliation	Engaged		Not Engaged	
	#	%	#	%
Republican	28	46.7	32	53.3
Democrat	92	51.4	87	48.6
Independent	25	55.6	20	44.4
Other	12	26.7	33	73.3
None	6	66.7	3	33.3

$$\chi^2 (4, N=338) = 10.089, p=.039$$

*Hypothesis Two.* The second hypothesis was of those students who identify as civically engaged, students of differing political affiliations and political ideologies will not differ in types of involvement. The frequencies of students' involvement in civic and service activities were based on 347 respondents. The three most common types of involvement were being registered to vote (85.3%), discussing politics and current events in the past week (71.8%), and participating in a community service or service-learning experience (66.9%). The most common type of service activity was one that students sought on their own (59.7%). Full frequency results for civic engagement activities are listed in Table 2, and frequency results for type of service participation are listed in Table 3.

Table 2: *Frequency of Engagement in Civic Activities*

Activity	Total Engaged	Percent
Registered to Vote	296	85.3 %
Voted in November 2007 election	180	51.9%
Discussed politics and current events with someone outside of class in the past week	249	71.8%
Participated in a political or protest rally	82	23.6%
Contacted an elected official	96	27.7%
Volunteered time to a political campaign	38	11.0%
Community Service or service-learning	232	66.9%

Table 3: *Frequency of Community Service by type*

Activity	Total Engaged	Percent
Sought out an opportunity on own	140	59.7%
Participated with fraternity or sorority	52	15.0%
Participated with church or religious student group	80	23.0%
Participated as part of a secular (i.e. non-religious) student group	110	31.7%
Participated as part of a class	110	31.7%
Participated in my home community	99	28.5%
None of the Above	7	2.0%

When analyzing the frequencies by political party affiliation and political ideology, 6 of the 16 sub questions were found to be statistically significant at at least the  $p \leq .05$  level. Based on this data, the null hypothesis is partially rejected. There were significant differences found in the political party affiliations of students who are registered to vote (Table 4) but no significant differences between students who are registered to vote based on political ideology.

Table 4: *Chi Square analysis of Students Registered to Vote by Political Party Affiliation*

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Total Registered</b>	<b>Percent of Party Registered</b>	<b>Total Not Registered</b>	<b>Percent of Party Not Registered</b>
Republican	53	88.3%	7	11.7%
Democrat	164	91.6%	15	8.4%
Independent	40	88.9%	5	11.1%
Other	29	64.6%	16	35.6%
None	8	88.9%	1	11.1%

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 338) = 23.857, p = .000$$


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Both political party affiliation and political ideology had significant differences for students who voted in the November 7, 2006 election. These results are in Tables 5 and 6, respectively. The most dramatic difference by party affiliation was those students who identified as “other.” Only 22.2% of these students voted in the election, whereas all other groups at least double this percentage. When looking at political ideology, students who identified as “middle of the road” are the least likely to have voted, with only 34.8% voting on November 7, 2006.

Table 5: *Chi Square analysis of Students who voted in Nov. 2006 Election by Political Party Affiliation*

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Total who Voted</b>	<b>Percent of Party who Voted</b>	<b>Total who did not Vote</b>	<b>Percent of Party who did Not Vote</b>
Republican	35	58.3%	25	41.7%
Democrat	105	58.7%	74	41.3%
Independent	24	53.3%	21	46.7%
Other	10	22.2%	35	77.8%
None	4	44.4%	5	55.6%

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 338) = 20.334, p = .000$$


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Table 6: *Chi Square analysis of Students who voted in Nov. 2006 Election by Political Ideology*

<b>Political Ideology</b>	<b>Total who Voted</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology who Voted</b>	<b>Total who did not Vote</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology who did Not Vote</b>
Very Conservative	5	55.6%	4	44.4%
Conservative	14	43.8%	18	56.3%
Slightly Conservative	21	51.2%	20	48.8%
Middle of the Road	23	34.8%	43	65.2%
Slightly Liberal	35	63.6%	20	36.4%
Liberal	57	56.4%	44	43.6%
Very Liberal	23	67.6%	11	32.4%

$$\chi^2 (6, N = 338) = 15.782, p = .015$$


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While political party affiliation provided no significant differences in which students discussed politics and current events in the past week, political ideology was significant at the  $p = .021$  level (Table 7). Students identifying as “slightly liberal”

were the least likely to have discussed politics (61.8%), while those who are “very liberal” and “very conservative” were the most likely, 91.2% and 88.9% respectively.

*Table 7: Chi Square analysis of Students who Discussed Politics and Current Events Outside of Class in the Past Week by Political Ideology*

<b>Political Ideology</b>	<b>Total who Discussed</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology who Discussed</b>	<b>Total who did not Discuss</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology who did Not Discuss</b>
Very Conservative	8	88.9%	1	11.1%
Conservative	22	68.8%	10	31.3%
Slightly Conservative	34	82.9%	7	17.1%
Middle of the Road	43	65.2%	23	34.8%
Slightly Liberal	34	61.8%	21	38.2%
Liberal	75	74.3%	26	25.7%
Very Liberal	31	91.2%	3	8.8%

$$\chi^2 (6, N = 338) = 14.853, p = .021$$


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Both political party affiliation and political ideology were significantly different for those students who have participated in a political or protest rally (see Tables 8 and 9). Democrats more than doubled Republicans in their attendance at rallies, and the largest group of attendees were those with no party affiliation (44.4%). Those identifying as “very liberal” were most likely to have attended a rally with 44.1% attending, and those who were “conservative” were least likely with 6.3% attending.

Table 8: *Chi Square analysis of Students who Participated in a Political Protest or Rally by Political Party Affiliation*

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Total who Participated</b>	<b>Percent of Party who Participated</b>	<b>Total who did not Participate</b>	<b>Percent of Party who did Not Participate</b>
Republican	7	11.7%	53	88.3%
Democrat	51	28.5%	128	71.5%
Independent	12	26.7%	33	73.3%
Other	8	17.8%	37	82.2%
None	4	44.4%	5	55.6%

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 338) = 10.089, p = .039$$


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Table 9: *Chi Square analysis of Students who Participated in a Political Protest or Rally by Political Ideology*

<b>Political Ideology</b>	<b>Total who Participated</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology who Participated</b>	<b>Total who did not Participate</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology who did Not Participate</b>
Very Conservative	2	22.2%	7	77.8%
Conservative	2	6.3%	30	93.8%
Slightly Conservative	11	26.8%	30	73.2%
Middle of the Road	9	13.6%	57	86.4%
Slightly Liberal	10	18.2%	45	81.8%
Liberal	33	32.7%	68	67.3%
Very Liberal	15	44.1%	19	55.9%

$$\chi^2 (6, N = 338) = 22.163, p = .001$$


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There were no significant differences in political party affiliation or political ideology for students contacting an elected official, students volunteering their time

for a campaign, participating in a service learning experience, or participating in community service.

*Hypothesis Three.* The third hypothesis was that there will be no differences in motivations for being civically engaged among students with different political affiliations and political ideologies. The overall frequencies for the various motivations are listed in Table 10.

Table 10: *Frequency of Motivation for Civic Engagement*

Motivation	Total	Percent
To help other people	141	40.6%
To feel personal satisfaction	98	28.2%
To improve my community	121	34.9%
To improve society as a whole	120	34.6%
To advance my political agenda	20	5.8%
Based in my faith or religious beliefs	44	12.7%
Other	13	3.7%

No significant differences were found among political affiliation or ideology for four of the six motivations tested: “to help other people,” “to feel personal satisfaction,” and “to improve my community.” No analysis was run on the motivation “to advance my political agenda” because there were not enough cases within each cell.

Significant differences were found for both political affiliation and ideology when students’ motivation for being civically engaged was “to improve society as a whole”

and “based on my faith or religious beliefs.” Based on these last two findings, the null hypothesis is partially rejected.

Table 11 displays the results for differences in party affiliation and students whose motivation for being civically engaged is to “improve society as a whole.” More than 40% of students identifying as Democrat, Independent, or having no affiliation indicated their desire to “improve society as a whole” as a motivating factor, whereas approximately 20% of Republican and students choosing “other” as their party affiliation chose this response. Table 12 displays the results for differences in political ideology and students whose motivation for being civically engaged is to “improve society as a whole.” This reason was most frequently cited by very liberal students (61.8%), and least frequently cited by very conservative students (11.1%).

*Table 11: Chi Square analysis of Students Whose Motivation for Civic Engagement is to “Improve Society as a Whole” by Political Party*

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>	<b>Percent of Party whose motivation was to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was not to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>	<b>Percent of Party whose motivation was not to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>
Republican	12	20.0%	48	80.0%
Democrat	74	41.3%	105	58.7%
Independent	19	42.2%	26	57.8%
Other	10	22.2%	35	77.8%
None	4	44.4%	5	55.6%

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 338) = 13.668, p = .008$$


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Table 12: *Chi Square analysis of Students Whose Motivation for Civic Engagement is to “Improve Society as a Whole” by Political Ideology*

<b>Political Ideology</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology whose motivation was to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was not to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology whose motivation was not to “Improve Society as a Whole”</b>
Very Conservative	1	11.1%	8	88.9%
Conservative	5	15.6%	27	84.4%
Slightly Conservative	11	26.8%	30	73.2%
Middle of the Road	23	34.8%	43	65.2%
Slightly Liberal	13	23.6%	42	76.4%
Liberal	45	44.6%	56	55.4%
Very Liberal	21	61.8%	13	38.2%

$$\chi^2 (6, N = 338) = 26.544, p = .000$$


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Table 13 displays the results for differences in political party affiliation and students whose motivation for being civically engaged is “based in my faith or religious beliefs.” Students identifying as Republicans cite this reason more than double the amount that of students identifying as Democrats. Independent students also cite this reason more frequently than students affiliated with the Democratic party. Although the p value for this analysis is slightly higher than .05 ( $p = 0.052$ ), these results are included because this is a descriptive and exploratory study and is not testing for experimental purposes.

Table 13: *Chi Square analysis of Students Whose Motivation for Civic Engagement is “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs” by Political Party*

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs”</b>	<b>Percent of Party whose motivation “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs”</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was not “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs”</b>	<b>Percent of Party whose motivation was not ‘Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs’</b>
Republican	14	23.3%	46	76.7%
Democrat	20	11.2%	159	88.8%
Independent	7	15.6%	38	84.4%
Other	3	6.7%	42	93.3%
None	0	0.0%	9	100.0%

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 338) = 9.382, p = .052$$


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Table 14 displays the results for differences in political ideology and students whose motivation for being civically engaged is “based in my faith or religious beliefs.” Very conservative students cite this as a reason 33.3% of the time, with a decrease in response that mirrors the movement on the political ideology scale. Students identifying as “middle of the road” cite this motivation 12.1% of the time, and 5.9% of those identifying as very liberal cite this reason.

Table 14: *Chi Square analysis of Students Whose Motivation for Civic Engagement is “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs” by Political Ideology*

<b>Political Ideology</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs”</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology whose motivation was “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs”</b>	<b>Total whose motivation was not “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs”</b>	<b>Percent of Ideology whose motivation was not “Based in my Faith or Religious Beliefs”</b>
Very Conservative	3	33.3%	6	66.7%
Conservative	8	25.0%	24	75.0%
Slightly Conservative	10	24.4%	31	75.6%
Middle of the Road	8	12.1%	58	87.9%
Slightly Liberal	4	7.3%	51	92.7%
Liberal	9	8.9%	92	91.1%
Very Liberal	2	5.9%	32	94.1%

$$\chi^2 (6, N = 338) = 16.700, p = .010$$


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### *Summary of Results*

Results from the locally based web developed survey were based on the responses of 347 valid responses. Although not every analysis proved to be statistically significant, there were significant findings for each research question and null hypothesis, which resulted in partially rejecting all three null hypotheses.

## CHAPTER 5: Discussion

### *Summary of Study*

Based on the rise of civic engagement in higher education and growing attention to partisan politics on campus, this study sought to be an initial descriptive study examining any significant differences between the two. To this end, the study had three research questions:

1. What is the political affiliation and ideology of students who are either civically engaged or not civically engaged?
2. Of those students who self-identify as civically engaged, what types of involvements do they have, and does this differ according to political affiliation and political ideology?
3. What motivates students to be civically engaged, and does this differ based on political affiliation and political ideology?

To answer these questions, a locally developed survey was distributed to a random sample of 3,000 undergraduate United States citizens at the University of Maryland, College Park in early April 2007. There were 347 valid responses analyzed by frequency and chi square analysis. The next section summarizes the results of the study.

### *Discussion of Findings*

*Civic engagement frequencies.* It was interesting to note the discrepancy of students who saw themselves as not civically engaged, but in fact were participating in activities scholars call civic engagement. Of all respondents, 48.1 % considered

themselves to be civically engaged. However, 85.3% were registered to vote, 51.9 % voted in the last national election, 71.8% discussed politics or current events outside of class in the past week, and 66.9% were involved in community service or service-learning experiences since the beginning of their undergraduate careers. This indicates that students, in addition to scholars in the field of higher education (B. Jacoby, personal communication, November 22, 2006), may not be clear about the definition of civic engagement.

Of those who did consider themselves to be civically engaged, the most cited motivation for being civically engaged was “to help other people.” This is consistent with the findings of Astin and Sax (1998) and their analysis of the CIRP data from 1990-1995. “To improve my community” and “to improve society as a whole” were the next most frequent reasons at 34.9 % and 34.6%, respectively. “To advance my political agenda” was the most infrequent response at 5.8%. This may indicate that while more than half of students see themselves as engaged civically, they do not see a connection between being an engaged citizen and their political identity.

Consistent with the research (Astin & Sax, 1998, Around the Circle, 2006) participating in service was one of the most frequent civic activities in which students participate. This is not surprising given the multitude of service opportunities available to students on campuses and in the community (Sax, 2004). Also consistent with prior findings (Chamberlain, 2004), volunteering for a political campaign (11%) and participating in a political protest or rally (23.6%) had the lowest percentages. This could be related to the finding that “to advance my political agenda” received the lowest response. Perhaps students are not making the connection between their

political identities and civic involvement, and thus civic opportunities that are the most grounded in the political process have the least involvement.

*Political affiliation and ideology frequencies.* There was a large difference in the frequencies of students identifying as Republicans and Democrats, with three times as many students identifying as a Democrat. While there were no causal relationships identified in this study, one may make note of this finding in light of the discrepancies between Republican and Democratic faculty members and programming on campuses (Brookings, 2001; Klein & Western 2004; Rothman, Lichter, & Nevitt, 2005; Tobin & Weinberg, 2006). It is also important to note that 28.6% of students did not identify with either party, and instead are identifying as Independent, other, or have no affiliation. This is consistent with CIRCLE's (2006) most recent data that many students are not identifying with the two major United States political parties.

Also notable, given faculty politics, is that the largest respondent group of students chose liberal as their political ideology (29.1%). When collapsed into conservative and liberal categories (each including all respondents in all three categories), 54.8% of students identified on the liberal side of the spectrum and 23.6% on the conservative side. This again may be significant given the studies that college has a liberalizing effect on students, and 70.1% of respondents were juniors or above (Abramowitz, 1983; Knoke & Issac, 1976); however, this cannot be determined or hypothesized in this study because there was no knowledge of students' political orientations prior to college.

*Hypothesis One.* The first research question was: “what is the political affiliation and ideology of students who are either civically engaged or not civically engaged?” With this question, the null hypothesis was that there are no differences in the political orientation and ideology of students who self identify as civically engaged or not civically engaged. While no statistically significant differences were found based on political ideology, there were significant differences found by students’ political affiliation. The students who reported the most civic involvement were ones that had no party affiliation (66.7%) and those who reported the least were those who indicated “other” as their affiliation (26.7%). Independent students (55.6%) identified as civically engaged at higher rates than both Republican (46.7%) and Democrat students (51.4%). It is notable that 10% fewer Republican students self identified as engaged versus Democratic students, as this could be due to their feeling as if there are not opportunities on campus for them to be involved. However, given that there was no ideological significance this argument is not strong.

*Hypothesis Two.* The second research question asked: “of those students who self-identify as civically engaged, what types of involvements do they have, and does this differ according to political affiliation and political ideology?” With this question, the null hypothesis was that of those students who identity as civically engaged, students of differing political affiliations and political ideologies will not differ in types of involvement. Six of the 15 chi-square analyses were found to be statistically significant. While the analyses that had statistical significance cannot be used to draw any causal relationships or overwhelming generalizations, and due to the

small chi square cell sizes any conclusions are difficult to make, they should lead the field of higher education to consider some interesting points.

There were significant differences in who is registered to vote based on party affiliation, with the most discrepant and lowest number being only 64.6% of those who identify as “other” being registered. This is interesting because it may be the students who identify as “other” may have made intentional choices to not support one of the major parties, and thus possibly feel that their voting will not make a difference in an election. Because there was no significance based on ideology, this may be a likely reason.

Both political affiliation and ideology showed interesting patterns in relation to voting in the most recent national election. In the sample, fewer conservative students voted as compared to liberal students, but the percentage of Republican and Democratic students were only 0.4% different. This is noteworthy because it indicates that for a majority of students there appears to be a comparable level of involvement in the electoral process, which is one indicator of civic engagement (Blackhurst, 2002).

There were significant differences by political ideology in relation to which students discussed politics and current events in the past week. The highest percentages were from students who were “very conservative” or “very liberal,” 88.9% and 91.2%, respectively, which makes sense with Sax’s (2004) finding that those who identify as middle of the road are less likely to be engaged. Middle of the road students were the second lowest group with 65.2% discussing politics in the past

week, very similar to those who were “slightly liberal” (61.8%). There were not significant differences based on political party affiliation.

Students who attended or participated in a political protest or rally during their undergraduate tenure differed significantly based on both party affiliation and ideology. In the sample, Republican students were least likely to participate (11.7%), with Democratic students more than doubling this percentage (28.5%). Ideologically, the percentage of “very liberal” students participating was more than double than the “very conservative” students. As students with the most polar political beliefs may be more inclined to actively participate in rallies and protests, this finding is important. It is interesting for two reasons. The first is that it may indicate that there may be more opportunities on campus and organized by campus for Democratic students to participate in rallies and protests (Students for Academic Freedom, 2006). The second reason is that students’ collegiate involvement can predict post-collegiate civic engagement levels (Around the Circle, 2006; Sax, 2004) and a sizeable percentage of conservative students are not engaging in this way. One reason for this result may be because of the more historical role that protest has had in the Democratic party in the United States. Regardless of this fact, it is important for all students to understand how to participate in protests and rallies and communicate their thoughts and opinions on current issues in these venues. Campuses need to ensure that opportunities are present for students from conservative ideologies.

When looked at collectively, the significant results paint an interesting picture. In the sample, Republican and Democratic students are voting at near equal levels, and students at both ideological poles discuss politics at similar rates. The major

differences occurred between students who were more toward “middle of the road” and those at ideological poles. Both these findings suggest that it may be the strength of a student’s belief, not what the belief is, that affects one’s level of engagement. While this was not the case for students attending a rally, as mentioned above, the historical role of protest in the Democratic party (and lack thereof in the Republican party) may be a root cause of this.

There were no significant differences found for students who participated in community service and service learning activities. The finding of non-significance for participation in service-learning experiences is worthy of discussion due to the implications Butin (2006) has made in his critiques of college service-learning opportunities as liberal and Democratic experiences. Butin argued that conservative and Republican students do not have as favorable of experiences with service-learning activities, but the results from this study found no difference in the amount in which they are participating, which weakens his argument. However, this survey did not ask students about their specific classroom service experiences, and while participation levels may be the same, this study did not look at student satisfaction levels, and Butin’s assertions about student satisfaction may be correct.

Finding no significant differences for other service opportunities is less surprising, as the majority of students in the study, comparable to students in general (Sax, 2002), had participated in a community service activity. An initial argument may be that service may be seen as a less political activity than some of the other methods of engagement (such as participating in a rally or volunteering for a campaign) and therefore students’ political beliefs may have less of an effect on their

decision to perform community service. However, there were no significant differences found by party affiliation or ideology for students contacting an elected official or volunteering time to a political campaign either. These findings of no significant differences may be indicators that political bias may not be affecting students, or at least at the levels that some believe, on college campuses.

*Hypothesis Three.* The third research question was: “what motivates students to be civically engaged, and does this differ based on political affiliation and political ideology?” With this question the null hypothesis was that there will be no differences in motivations for being civically engaged among students with different political affiliations and political ideologies. Of the six motivational response choices, only two proved to be statistically significant, and these two had significant differences both among party affiliation and political ideology. There were significant differences found for students whose motivation is to “improve society as a whole” and “based in my faith or religious beliefs.” A total of 20.0% of Republican students chose “to improve society as a whole” as a motivation while 41.3% of Democrat students selected this. Similar to Democrat students, 42.1% of Independent students and 44.0% of students not identifying with a party selected this motivation. Students selecting “other” as their affiliation were more similar to Republican students, with 22.2% of these students choosing this answer. In terms of political ideology, “to improve my society” steadily increased as a motivating factor for civic engagement as ideologies moved from very conservative to very liberal. Whereas 11.1% of very conservative students selected this answer, 34.8% of middle of the road students choose this, and 61.8% of very liberal students selected this answer choice. These

findings are interesting but not necessarily surprising, as the Democratic Party and liberalism has historically been supportive of programs on a societal or systems level (Strong at Home, 2004), such as welfare, education reform, affirmative action, and the human rights campaign while the Republican party has historically had a platform that highlighted more individual issues (A Safer World, 2004).

In contrast to the motivation “to improve society as a whole,” students’ motivation that was “based in my faith or religious beliefs” was more frequently chosen by Republican and ideologically conservative students. In terms of party affiliation, Republican students chose this answer 23.3% of the time, while Democrats and Independents chose it 11.2% and 15.6% of the time, respectively. Ideologically, as one moves through the scale from very conservative to very liberal the motivation based in religious beliefs and faith significantly decreases. One-third of very conservative students selected this answer, while 12.1% of middle of the road students and 5.9% of very liberal students did, respectively. Kirlin (2002) cited religious involvement as an indicator of civic engagement among young adults, and it is significant to see that there is a portion of young adults who are less engaged in this way than others. It is interesting to compare that while liberal students are more motivated to be engaged to improve society, religious beliefs and faith are more influential for conservative students. This may again be due to the historic platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties, as the Democratic party places a larger emphasis on the separation of church and state than the Republican party, and the Republican party is comprised of a large group of Christian conservatives, one of the

most notable groups being the Moral Majority whose platform is to “promote faith and moral values” in politics and society (Moral Majority, 2007).

### *Implications for Theory and Practice*

These findings present several implications for both theory and practice. Enough significant findings were found for scholars to be more aware of the potential relationships that exist between civic participation and students’ political affiliations and ideologies. It is also noteworthy that there is no significant relationship between service and service-learning and political ideology and party affiliation, indicating that criticisms of liberal bias in community service or service-learning (see Butin, 2006) may be premature or unfounded, at least at the university where this study was conducted.

Practitioners should be aware that students from differing ideologies have significantly different motivations for participating in civic activities. Those who are responsible for creating opportunities can use this knowledge to target programs and services to appeal to all students. Practitioners should also survey their campuses and help students who are more conservative and Republican find ways to participate in political protests and rallies if they so desire. It may require education and encouragement of these students in how to civically participate in this way. Additionally, it may require student affairs practitioners to facilitate rallies and protests on viewpoints with which they may not themselves agree, given that student affairs is a traditionally liberal profession (Kors & Silvergate, 1998). Practitioners may also work to develop some intentional ways for students to discuss politics

outside of the classroom to reach middle of the road students who are less engaged than those on the ideological poles.

#### *Areas for Future Research*

This study's results bring up several areas for further research regarding potential relationships between students' civic engagement and political party affiliation and ideological identification. Most importantly, causal relationships should be explored where descriptive significance was found, and further analysis should be done to pinpoint specific areas of significant differences.

Additionally, research that attempts to understand how students define civic engagement seems appropriate. Many students did not identify as civically engaged while their behaviors were classified as civic activities. If higher education and researchers can understand how students understand civic engagement, they will be able to be more intentional in their programs and services offered for students.

Further research should also include more choices for students' motivations for being civically engaged. Choices such as, "because it was required," "because my friends were doing it," or "to have a better resume" should be included and examined because of the rise in required service requirements for high school students. These choices should also be included because they are more self-interested reasons for civic engagement. Developmental literature would suggest that traditionally aged college students may not have the capacity to be as altruistic as the motivational options in this study suggest, and thus motivations should be examined through a developmental lens.

Finally, because this study was answered by predominantly juniors and seniors, and the majority of students identified as liberal, further studies that investigate if college has a liberalizing effect on students would be timely. This research would also contribute to the discussion surrounding political bias on campus.

### *Limitations*

This study is not without its limitations. The first is that the study utilized a locally developed instrument that cannot be normed against any large data sets. There could have been bias in the creation of the survey and the survey questions could have been misinterpreted by respondents. This requires special note due to the somewhat confusing, or unclear semantics used in the study. “Civic engagement,” political ideologies (“conservative,” “liberal,” etc), and “protest” are words that can be interpreted and defined many different ways. The semantics may have influenced who chose to participate in the survey, and how participants answered questions within the survey.

The construction of the survey introduced bias into the “My motivation for being civically engaged” question because of the skip pattern utilized. All students who selected they were not civically engaged skipped this question. This introduces bias into results of students’ motivations because more than half of survey respondents did not answer this question, respondents who may have been civically engaged, although they did not self define this way.

Additionally this survey had a total of 347 respondents, which gives it an error rate of 6%. This number of respondents was smaller than expected, with only 10% of the sample responding. This may have been influenced by the timing of distribution

over Passover and Easter weekends. Another reason the sample size may have been small is due to the nature of the topic. The use of the term civic engagement may have created a response bias, as students who don't identify with the term, or think the term is politically charged may have chosen not to participate. Additionally, of those who did respond, there was the potential want of responders to answer the questions in a socially desirable way (Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000). Therefore, there may be an overrepresentation of students who consider themselves civically engaged.

The small sample size of 347 is also a limitation because it created very small cell sizes for chi square analyses. With cell sizes so low, it is impossible to draw any conclusions from this study that could be deemed definitive, or use the data to change or create new programs on campus. However, the study does highlight many important questions and is a good starting point for future studies.

The sample obtained did not mirror the undergraduate population at the University of Maryland. Junior and senior students were overrepresented in the sample. Additionally, White students and female students were overrepresented in the sample, and African American students and male students were underrepresented.

The University of Maryland, College Park is a fairly urban campus and had this survey been distributed on multiple campuses, the political party and ideological breakdowns may have been very different due to the geographic location of additional schools. The University of Maryland, College Park is situated in Prince George's County, a county that is decidedly Democratic, and in the Washington D.C. area, also predominately Democratic. This may have influenced the high number of respondents who indicated their party affiliation as Democrat.

Additionally, the large number of chi-square analyses performed increases the chances of Type I error. However, due to the descriptive nature of this study, and the setting of value of significance at the  $p < .05$  value, this is an acceptable strategy.

The data were not analyzed by race or gender as part of this study. There were not enough respondents to do a breakout analysis along racial/ethnic lines. Results were not analyzed by gender due to the already heightened Type I error due to the number of chi-square analyses by political party affiliation and ideology. Further, the focus of this descriptive study was to begin to understand any differences in students' levels of civic engagement based on their political party affiliations and ideologies, and, while the results delineated by race and gender may be interesting, they are not directly related to the research questions of this study.

### *Summary*

This study was purely descriptive and examined any potential significant differences between undergraduates' level of civic engagement and their political party affiliations or political ideologies. It was based on literature reviewed on the topics of civic engagement in higher education and the political climates of university campuses. The study consisted of three research questions that focused on if students perceived themselves as civically engaged, students' type of civic involvements, and students' motivations for being civically involved.

A locally developed web-survey was distributed to 3,000 undergraduate students at the University of Maryland, College Park in April 2007. The study garnered at 10% response rate, with 347 respondents. The data were analyzed using

frequencies and chi-squares. Findings were sufficient to partially reject the null hypothesis for each research question. It is hoped that further research will be done in this vein to further examine any relationship and causality between these two topics.

## Appendix A

### *Institutional Review Board Approval*



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

2100 Blair Lee Building  
College Park, Maryland 20742-5121  
301.405.4212 TEL 301.314.1475 FAX  
irb@deans.umd.edu  
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

March 13, 2007

#### MEMORANDUM

*Application Approval Notification*

**To:** Dr. Karen Kurotsuchi Inkela  
Jennifer Edwards  
Department of Counseling and Personnel Services

**From:** Roslyn Edson, M.S., CIP *R.E.*  
IRB Manager  
University of Maryland, College Park

**Re:** IRB Application Number: 07-0129  
**Project Title:** "An Examination of Undergraduate Civic Engagement  
Participation, Political Beliefs, and Part Affiliation"

**Approval Date:** March 12, 2007

**Expiration Date:** March 12, 2008

**Type of Application:** Initial

**Type of Research:** Nonexempt

**Type of Review  
For Application:** Expedited

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The University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved your IRB application. The research was approved in accordance with 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, and the University's IRB policies and procedures. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

**Recruitment/Consent:** For research requiring written informed consent, the IRB-approved and stamped informed consent document is enclosed. The IRB approval expiration date has been stamped on the informed consent document. Please keep copies of the consent forms used for this research for three years after the completion of the research.

**Continuing Review:** If you intend to continue to collect data from human subjects or to analyze private, identifiable data collected from human subjects, after the expiration date for this approval (indicated above), you must submit a renewal application to the IRB Office at least 30 days before the approval expiration date.

**Modifications:** Any changes to the approved protocol must be approved by the IRB before the change is implemented, except when a change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. If you would like to modify the approved protocol, please submit an addendum request to the IRB Office. The instructions for submitting a request are posted on the IRB web site at: [http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/irb\\_Addendum%20Protocol.htm](http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/irb_Addendum%20Protocol.htm).

*(continued)*

**Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks:** You must promptly report any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others to the IRB Manager at 301-405-0678 or [redson@umresearch.umd.edu](mailto:redson@umresearch.umd.edu).

**Student Researchers:** Unless otherwise requested, this IRB approval document was sent to the Principal Investigator (PI). The PI should pass on the approval document or a copy to the student researchers. This IRB approval document may be a requirement for student researchers applying for graduation. The IRB may not be able to provide copies of the approval documents if several years have passed since the date of the original approval.

**Additional Information:** Please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 if you have any IRB-related questions or concerns.

## Appendix B

### *Survey Instrument*

This survey was administered as a web-based survey using the web hosting site Survey Monkey.com.

1. Do you consider yourself to be civically engaged?

- Yes
- No

[If No, skip to # 3]

2. My motivation for being civically engaged is (please select all that apply):

- to help other people
- to feel personal satisfaction
- to improve my community
- to improve society as a whole
- to advance my political agenda
- based in my faith or religious beliefs
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please select all of the following statements that describe you since beginning your undergraduate career:

- I am registered to vote
- I voted in the last election on November 7, 2006
- I have discussed politics and current events with someone outside of class in the past week
- I have participated in a political or protest rally
- I have contacted an elected official
- I have volunteered my time to a political campaign
- I have participated in a community service or service-learning experience

[If LAST ITEM unchecked, skip to #4]

3b. Please select the different ways you have performed community service (please select all that apply):

- I sought out an opportunity on my own
- I participated with my fraternity or sorority
- I participated with my church or religious student group
- I participated as part of a secular (i.e. non-religious) student group
- I participated as part of a class
- I participated in my home community
- None of the Above. \_\_\_\_\_

4. When thinking about your political beliefs, how would you describe yourself?

Very Conservative	Conservative	Slightly Conservative	Middle of the Road	Slightly Liberal	Liberal	Very Liberal
<input type="radio"/>						

5. If you affiliate with a United States political party, indicate which party below.

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- None

6. What is your year in school?

- Freshman/First Year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Fifth or more

7. Do you attend University of Maryland, College Park part time or full time?

- Part Time
- Full Time

8. What is your gender?

- female
- male
- transgender

9. Race/Ethnicity. Choose the one that best describes you.

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Black or African American
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino
- White
- Other or Not Reported: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to be entered in the random drawing for \$25 gift cards to iTunes or Target, please enter your email address in the box below. Please note that your email address will not be associated with your survey answers.

## Appendix C

### *Letters to Participants*

*This letter was emailed to all members of the randomly selected sample:*

Subject line: Chance to win gift cards for participation in survey for Maryland students

Body text:

You are invited to participate in a survey to support graduate research at the University of Maryland, College Park.

The following survey asks current University of Maryland, College Park students about their civic involvements and political affiliations. It consists of 10 questions and should take less than 3 minutes to complete. Everyone who completes the survey will be entered into a drawing to win one of four \$25 gift certificates to either Target or iTunes – your choice!

To complete the survey, please click on the following link: [insert hyperlink]

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix D

### *Follow Up Letter to Participants*

*This letter was emailed to all non-respondents of the randomly selected sample:*

Subject line: Reminder to complete UMD survey

Body text:

Last week you were emailed about an opportunity to participate in a survey to support graduate research at the University of Maryland, College Park.

There is still time to be entered in the drawing to win one of four \$25 gift certificates to either Target or iTunes – your choice! All you need to do is click on the following link and complete the survey about your civic involvements and political affiliations. The survey takes less than 3 minutes to complete.

To complete the survey, please click on the following link: [insert hyperlink]

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix E

### *Final Follow Up Letter to Participants*

*This letter was emailed to all non-respondents of the randomly selected sample:*

Subject line: Final Reminder to complete UMD survey

Body text:

Last week you were emailed about an opportunity to participate in a survey to support graduate research at the University of Maryland, College Park.

There is still time to be entered in the drawing to win one of four \$25 gift certificates to either Target or iTunes – your choice! All you need to do is click on the following link and complete the survey about your civic involvements and political affiliations. The survey takes less than 3 minutes to complete.

To complete the survey, please click on the following link: [insert hyperlink]

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix F

### *Consent Form*

#### **Project Title:**

AN EXAMINATION OF UNDERGRADUATE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
PARTICIPATION, POLITICAL BELIEFS AND PARTY AFFILIATION

#### **Why is this research being done?**

*This is a research project being conducted by Jennifer Edwards at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park. The purpose of this research project is to examine the political affiliations and civic engagement levels of undergraduate students.*

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

*The procedures involve completing a 10 question online survey. This survey should take less than three minutes to complete. After completing the survey you will be able to submit your email address for a random drawing for one of four \$25 gift certificates for either iTunes or Target.*

#### **What about confidentiality?**

*We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality your email address will be separated from your data immediately after downloading from the web host. Both the data sets and the separate file with your email will be kept in a password protected computer file. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.*

#### **What are the risks of this research?**

*There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.*

#### **Do I have to participate in this research? May I stop participating at any time?**

*Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.*

### **What if I have questions?**

*This research is being conducted by Jennifer Edwards under the supervision of Dr. Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas in the Counseling and Personnel Services Department at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Jennifer Edwards at: 301-314-5684, 3100 Hornbake Library, South Wing,, University of Maryland, College Park.*

*If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) [irb@deans.umd.edu](mailto:irb@deans.umd.edu); (telephone) 301-405-0678 This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*

### **Do you consent to participate in this survey?**

- Yes
- No

**[If No, Skip to text: “Thank you for your time.” ]**

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