



A Q-Analysis of Youth Understanding of Associations Between Character Strengths and Civic Involvement

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Background and Research Question

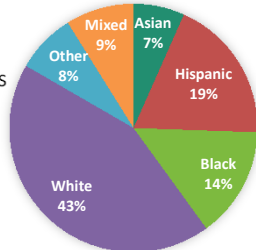
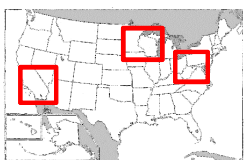
- Youth character has been linked to the development of civic values and behaviors (Zaff et al., 2010).
- Previous research has measured character broadly rather than considering specific character strengths (Lerner et al., 2005).
- Specific character strengths may be linked with different forms of civic participation.

Research Goal and Questions

- GOAL:** Explore youth's understanding of the links between character Strengths and civic activity.
- QUESTIONS:** Do youth view specific character strengths as important for civic involvement?
- Do youth apply distinct character strengths to different categories of civic behavior?

Method

- Sample: 90 youth in grades 4-12
 - 24 Elementary (grades 4-5)
 - 30 Middle School (grades 6-8)
 - 36 High School (grades 9-12)
 - $M_{age} = 13.00$, $SD = 2.68$, 9 - 18
- Three different Geographic Regions



- Youth sorted character strengths based on how well the strengths described individuals who engaged in four different civic activities.

- Volunteering
- Voting
- Protesting
- Environmental/conservation



Q-sort Methodology

- Youth sorted 12 character strengths

Leadership	Future-Mindedness	Responsibility	Joy	Creativity	Forgiving
Sense of Purpose	Generosity	Humility	Thriftiness	Gratitude	Amazed (Awe)

- Youth were instructed to "Think about someone who (e.g., volunteers)."
- Youth sorted the 12 character strength cards onto a sorting board based on how well each strength described someone who engaged in the activity.



- "Exactly like" 2 cards
- "Mostly like" 2 cards
- "Sort of like" 4 cards
- "A less like" 2 cards
- "Least like" 2 cards
- Interviewer then asked youth to explain why they placed one of their character strengths "exactly like" category.

Results

Civic Activity	Highest-rated character strengths	Example Youth Justification:
Volunteering	Generosity Responsibility	"they're giving up their time to help people around them that may need the help" -12 th grade student
Voting	Future-minded Responsibility	well they would like think who would be good at doing this in the future...would they be good at it or would they be bad at it -5 th grade student
Protesting	Leadership Sense of Purpose	"cause they're putting themselves first with it...they're organizing the group for them" -7 th grade student
Environmental/conservation	Future-Minded Responsibility	"because they're taking care of the environment and making it better for everyone in the community or in the world, I guess, so making the future better." -10 th grade student

Results

	Environmentalist	Protester	Volunteer	Voter	Significance Test
Future-minded	.79 ^a (1.20)	1.02 ^b (1.18)	.01 ^a (1.07)	1.52 ^c (.96)	F (4, 67) = 36.59***
Generosity	.69 ^a (1.08)	-.30 ^a (1.03)	1.38 ^c (.93)	-.08 ^a (1.08)	F (4, 67) = 32.22***
Leadership	.07 ^a (1.31)	1.15 ^b (1.18)	.60 ^b (1.32)	-.17 ^a (1.32)	F (4, 67) = 51.17***
Purpose	.43 ^b (1.08)	1.10 ^b (1.02)	.39 ^a (1.06)	.70 ^{ab} (1.11)	F (4, 67) = 8.87***
Responsible	.82 ^{bc} (1.05)	.31 ^a (1.03)	.68 ^{ab} (.99)	1.23 ^c (.93)	F (4, 67) = 23.89***
Thriftiness	-.19 ^a (1.36)	-.53 ^{ab} (1.13)	-1.03 ^a (1.02)	-.78 ^a (1.17)	F (4, 67) = 8.88***
Amazed	-.62 (1.13)	-.66 (.99)	-.89 (1.01)	-.61 (1.12)	F (4, 67) = 2.08
Creativity	.19 ^{ad} (1.25)	.25 ^{ade} (1.22)	-.52 ^{abc} (1.12)	-.62 ^{abc} (1.09)	F (4, 67) = 24.01***
Forgiving	-1.07 ^a (1.00)	-.78 (1.07)	-.77 (.96)	-.71 (.94)	F (4, 67) = 4.02**
Gratitude	.06 ^c (1.22)	-.55 ^{abde} (1.07)	.32 ^c (1.10)	.24 ^c (.87)	R (4, 67) = 9.15***
Humility	-.53 ^a (.96)	-.51 (1.04)	-.24 (1.35)	-.43 (1.10)	F (4, 67) = 3.70***
Joyful	-.63 ^a (1.11)	-.51 ^d (1.08)	.08 ^{abc} (1.12)	-.30 (1.01)	F (4, 67) = 6.42***

- Table displays means and standard deviations from ANOVAs which assessed youth's placement of each character strength across the four civic activities.
- Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another after Bonferroni Correction
- Highest means for each character strength highlighted in red.

Discussion and Implications

- Future-mindedness, Leadership, Responsibility** were rated as important for multiple forms of civic involvement:
- Youth differentiated among types of civic involvement
 - Potentially indicates the development of a nuanced understanding of different forms of civic engagement (Metzger & Ferris, 2013).
 - Future research should anticipate specificity between some character strength and individual skills and specific forms of civic involvement.

Contact Us

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