CRITICAL SERVICE-LEARNING SUPPORTS SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ORIENTATIONS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Service-learning is a high-impact practice that increases students' engagement with class material and the community. However, a critical lens is needed to strengthen students' understanding of and commitment to social justice and the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds. This mixed method study examined the impact of a critical service-learning approach, which integrated critical curricula with 30 hours of service to community organizations, on undergraduate students' orientations towards social justice and civic engagement. Statistical analyses suggested significant differences in social dominance orientation and orientations to civic engagement across three psychology classes using critical service-learning, critical curriculum, and traditional (i.e., non-service-learning) approaches and significant differences over time in the critical service-learning class. The extent of these differences in outcomes varied between White students and students of color and between first-generation and non-first-generation students. Qualitative findings from critical service-learning students' class reflection assignments suggest that, by the end of the semester, students shifted from considering social justice as an abstract concept related to equality to identifying strategies and expressing willingness to engage in behaviors that lead to social change. This study highlights the potential for critical service-learning to enhance student learning and meet the community's needs with an awareness of power dynamics and the systemic nature of oppression.

Critical Service-Learning Supports Social Justice and Civic Engagement Orientations in College Students

Universities are tasked with developing students' commitment to social justice, ethical judgment, active citizenship, and respect for their and others' identities, cultures, and histories (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002). To meet these demands, scholars are currently exploring the effects of high-impact educational practices that promote student learning in the broader social context, including

service-learning. This study examines the impact of academic-based community service-learning (hereafter referred to as service-learning, or SL) on diverse college students' commitment to social justice and civic engagement.

SL enables students to expand their academic knowledge and apply theories and theoretical concepts to real-world situations (Butin, 2010; Mitchell, 2008; Tinkler et al., 2019) and facilitates several positive outcomes, including increased civic identity (García-Gutierrez et al., 2017; Mitchell, 2015), awareness of the world and personal values, and commitment to ethics and social responsibility (Bringle et al., 2016; Fleck et al., 2017; Henderson et al., 2021; Kretchmar, 2001; Smirles, 2011; Valdez & Lovell, 2021). However, the design and implementation of SL courses vary greatly, and not all SL courses produce the same outcomes. One possible major pitfall of SL is that, since the mainstream implementation of SL places emphasis on the service outcomes, the curriculum may omit critical reflection about how social identities (e.g., race and class) influence students' interactions with community partners (Hess et al., 2007; Moely et al., 2002). Furthermore, SL does not guarantee that students will question the macro-level influences—such as systemic racism and marginalization—that impact their community sites and create the need for their service (Asghar & Rowe, 2017; Mitchell, 2008; Tinkler et al., 2019). Zucchero and Gibson (2019), for example, found that students in a developmental psychology class that utilized SL did not significantly differ from students in a non-SL class on measures of empathic concern, perspective-taking, civic action and social justice attitudes, and perceptions of learning. These findings may be partially attributed to the curriculum's lack of explicit focus on social identity and power dynamics in the service relationship. In the absence of critical discourse and self-reflection, SL may reinforce students' perceptions that their community partners are deficient, unable to help themselves, and in need of being saved from their marginalization by service providers (Mitchell et al., 2012). Within such a power dynamic, the role of service is not to assist the community in long-term self-determination but to use the community's marginalized status to boost students' sense of agency and educational benefits. Thus, SL without a social justice perspective may lead to further marginalization and exploitation of community partners and a missed opportunity to create a transformative experience for both students and the community (Davis et al., 2017). For SL educators—and higher education overall—to live up to its democratic purpose of preparing students for socially responsible civic engagement, researchers must explore the relationship between SL and students' attitudes and beliefs about social justice, and educators must ground SL within social justice–oriented approaches, such as critical curriculum and pedagogy (Astin et al., 1999; Bringle & Duffy, 1998; Conway et al., 2009; Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

The current study examines a critical, social justice–oriented implementation of SL that disrupts these power dynamics of marginalization in both the practice of SL in communities and the SL scholarship at large. In addition to critiques of SL's impact on marginalized communities, the practice and theory of service-learning have been criticized for upholding a pedagogy of whiteness that positions White people as leaders and practitioners and communities of color as either peripheral contributors or underserved service recipients (Bocci, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012). The literature on SL has not focused on SL's impact on student-practitioners from marginalized communities or at minority-serving institutions, and SL has often been implemented by White faculty with White students at predominantly White institutions (Mitchell et al., 2012). Thus, it is crucial for scholars

and practitioners of SL to reckon with how SL, from its history and theoretical conceptualizations to its practice, has the potential to either perpetuate marginalization or center and empower minoritized communities. The current study, implemented by a faculty of color with primarily students of color at a minority-serving institution, aims to examine the impact of SL and critical curriculum on college students' civic engagement and social justice orientations in psychology courses.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Curriculum and Pedagogy

Drawing from the scholarship of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1968/2000) and scholars on social justice education (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), we define critical curriculum and pedagogy as an educational approach rooted in praxis, in which critical reflection about societal power dynamics mediates the continuous, cyclical relationship between the formation of theoretical knowledge and the actions that test this theoretical knowledge. Within this notion of praxis, students' experiential knowledge is a valued, core component of the learning process. The goal of critical curriculum and pedagogy is to empower students—and communities more broadly—to develop critical consciousness, or the ability to perceive and act to change the oppressive elements of social, political, and economic realities (Freire, 1965/2005; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). Along with critical consciousness, critical curriculum also aims to lessen students' social dominance orientation, which is defined as the degree to which a person prefers inequality and hierarchy among social groups (Pratto et al., 1994). While social dominance orientation and critical consciousness are related theoretically and practically—as Pratto et al.'s (1994) measure of social dominance orientation was used in the creation of the Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer et al., 2017)—social dominance orientation focuses on a person's inclinations towards hierarchy and egalitarianism, which may influence the reproduction of oppressive social power dynamics in SL (Brown, 2011; Prati et al., 2022; Stewart & Tran, 2018). Thus, examining students' social dominance orientation in SL research may be important for understanding the mechanisms through which students' inclinations towards hierarchy change and, subsequently, whether this change in worldview compels students to disrupt oppressive hierarchies and power dynamics.

Through critical curriculum, students gain confidence in activism; willingness to engage in civic life; and awareness about oppression, power, and privilege (Davis et al., 2017; García-Gutierrez et al., 2017; Krings et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2015). Educators have also successfully implemented critical curriculum into psychology classes with promising results, such as prejudice reduction, increased empathy, and increased comfort in discussing racism and social justice (Kernahan & Davis, 2010; Lundy, 2007; Yoder et al., 2016). Incorporating critical curriculum into psychology courses can promote students' active participation in their learning as well as critical and creative problem-solving about social justice issues in their communities (Cosgrove, 2004). Therefore, by combining critical curriculum and pedagogy with SL, students can engage more deeply in their learning, cultivate their awareness of marginalization in their communities, and gain valuable experiential practice in acting to change these oppressive realities.

Critical Service-Learning: A Synthesis of Service-Learning and Critical Curriculum

Critical service-learning (CSL) refers to the integration of critical curriculum into SL to promote students' critical and social justice–oriented engagement with their communities and academic learning (Butin, 2007; Castellanos & Cole, 2015). Both students and the community benefit from a shift from SL and traditional (i.e., solely lecture-based) pedagogy to CSL; community partners foster authentic relationships with students working to redistribute power to communities (Mitchell, 2015), and students envision themselves as "agents of change [who] use the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in communities" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 51).

CSL also has the potential to promote students' social justice–oriented civic engagement. Torres-Harding et al. (2012) posit that, according to Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, social justice–oriented behaviors can be predicted by attitudes towards social justice, subjective norms related to social justice, and perceived behavioral control over social justice (see Figure 1). Given the evidence suggesting that critical curriculum and SL can each alter students' social justice–related attitudes, perceived norms, and behavioral orientation, the framework proposed by Torres-Harding et al. has the potential to help us understand how social justice–related development may unfold for students participating in CSL and critical curriculum courses.

Current research, specifically in the teaching and learning of psychology, has yet to address students' experiences taking CSL courses, despite the field's practical orientations towards understanding human behavior and providing behavioral health services within complex social, cultural, and political contexts. Adopting a CSL approach may more strongly prepare psychology students to understand and serve diverse communities, engage in critical dialogues about issues that affect these communities, and advocate for these communities through community-informed and culturally competent research and clinical practice (Cosgrove, 2004).

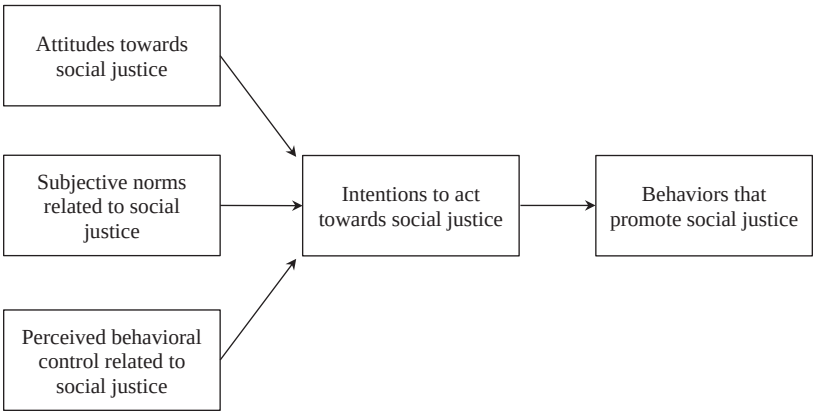

Figure 1 Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, as Applied by Torres-Harding et al. (2012)

The Current Study

This mixed method study examines CSL's and critical curriculum's potential impacts on students' development of civic engagement and social justice orientations in a diverse sample. We use survey measures to examine differences in students' civic engagement attitudes and behaviors and social dominance orientations across three psychology classes that varied in curricula: one CSL class, one class with critical curriculum but no SL, and one class without critical curriculum or SL, termed here as a traditional lecture course (Table 1). We also tested whether participation in a CSL or critical curriculum class would increase students' civic engagement orientations and decrease social dominance orientations over time. Our study addresses the following research questions:

- Are there differences in students' orientations to social dominance and civic engagement across three psychology courses that vary in curricula (CSL, critical curriculum, traditional courses with no CSL or critical curriculum)?
- Do students' orientations to social dominance and civic engagement change over time in CSL and critical curriculum classes?

We hypothesized that a CSL approach impacts students' orientations to social dominance and civic engagement uniquely relative to critical curriculum and traditional courses. That is, students who participate in CSL will develop increased orientations to civic engagement and decreased orientations to social dominance relative to students in the critical curriculum and traditional courses. Regarding changes over time, we hypothesized that students in the CSL and critical curriculum courses would report decreases in social dominance orientations over time, but only the CSL students would report increases in civic engagement orientations over time due to the course's utilization of SL and focus on civic engagement.

Table 1
Descriptions of Courses Included in the Quantitative Analysis

Course label	Course description and features	Semester	Data collected
Critical service-learning (CSL)	• Critical curriculum • SL requirement • Taught by the same instructor as the critical curriculum class	Spring 2018	• Pre-test • Post-test
Critical curriculum	• Critical curriculum • No SL requirement; lecture-based • Taught by the same instructor as the CSL class	Fall 2018	• Pre-test • Post-test
Traditional	• No explicit social justice–oriented content • No SL requirement; lecture-based	Spring 2018	• Post-test

As an exploratory research question, we were also interested in examining differences between participants based on race and student generation status, given that students of color and first-generation students are underrepresented in the literature on SL. We specifically ask, Do students of color and first-generation students differ from White students and non-first-generation students in their orientations to social dominance and civic engagement over time and in each class section?

To complement the quantitative data, we also sought to explore the impact of the CSL course in students' orientations to civic engagement and social justice at two points during the semester by analyzing students' written reflections. This analysis provides us with information about how students are making sense and meaning of their experience in the classroom and their SL sites, which we cannot deduce from the pre- and post-test quantitative analysis alone. Our thematic analysis of students' writing assignments was guided by Torres-Harding et al.'s (2012) application of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to social justice–related behaviors. Given the overarching goals of CSL to mobilize students towards social justice by changing assumptions, thoughts, and agency related to social change, Torres-Harding et al.'s articulation of the theory of planned behavior is one framework that can outline the process that students experience in CSL. The qualitative analysis sought to explore how students' social justice attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intentions to act differed at the beginning versus at the end of a CSL course. By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, this study aims to better understand both the process and the extent to which civic engagement and social justice orientations develop across the semester.

Researcher Positionality

In all research, but particularly in qualitative research grounded in a social justice framework, the social positions occupied by the researchers impact the participants and interpretations made in their analysis. These interpretations are especially guided by researchers' personal identities and their goals and intentions of conducting research with the given population (Mason-Bish, 2019; Shaw et al., 2020). Thus, the authors see their positionalities and their continuous reflection on their relationships with the research questions and participants as integral to this article and necessary to engage with as part of the research process. The first author, a second-generation Filipina American graduate student, engages in this research through a transformative worldview, and she seeks to challenge the status quo of psychology education and advocate for approaches that center the empowerment of marginalized groups. The second author's positionality as a second-generation Chicanx woman and first-generation scholar and her own critical, decolonization-oriented lens and activist scholarship may influence the way she understands and interprets data. Her research aims to explore the educational implications and developmental outcomes associated with structural inequalities, oppression, bias, and privilege. The second author was also a student in the CSL course. She credits her experience in the course for inspiring her interest in promoting learning through active participation in service experiences. The third author, a first-generation Mexican immigrant woman, approaches the research through a social justice transformative framework that allows for a structural understanding of individual development. Her program of research examines how cultural practices and values

guide development, particularly examining the role of children's daily activities in their cognitive and prosocial development, including civic engagement and culturally informed ways of organizing learning.

Quantitative Analysis

Two objectives guided the quantitative inquiry of this study. First, by analyzing survey data collected at the end of each class, we examined whether participants in different classes reported significantly different civic engagement and social dominance orientations by the end of each semester. Second, by analyzing survey data collected at the beginning and end of the CSL and critical curriculum classes, we explored whether students' orientations to civic engagement and social dominance significantly changed over time.

Methods

Participants

Participants included undergraduate students enrolled in three different psychology classes at a university in Southern California ($N = 125$). Participants self-identified as between 18 to 60 years of age ($M = 23.10$, $SD = 4.95$), primarily female ($n = 97$), first-generation students (i.e., neither parent received a bachelor's degree or higher; $n = 68$), and psychology majors ($n = 68$). Based on self-reported racial and ethnic background, most participants were students of color ($n = 93$; 40.87% Latinx, 25.81% Asian, 18.28% White, 9.3% White Hispanic, and less than 1% each of non-White Hispanic, Arab, Black, multiracial, and unknown race/ethnicity). The demographics of students in this study mirrored the university's student population.

Procedure

The university's institutional review board approved data collection procedures and instruments. Researchers collected data across two semesters. Participants in this study were enrolled in one of three different sections of an undergraduate developmental psychology course. The developmental psychology course may be taken for general education credit by non-psychology majors. For students majoring in psychology, the course is one of four classes that may be taken as an upper division requirement. Per university policy, all students were given about two weeks from the start of the semester to add or drop the course.

Course Structures

The first class, held during the spring 2018 semester, utilized a CSL framework, which combined a social justice–oriented curriculum and community service ($n = 25$). The instructor selected course materials related to developmental topics (i.e., identity development, self-concept), emphasizing cross-cultural perspectives and voices of marginalized

Table 2
Critical Curriculum in the CSL Class

Topics discussed	Assignments, readings, and media
Hereditary, prenatal development, and birth	• Video: "Life's Greatest Miracle" (Cort & Nykvist, 2001)
Infancy and toddlerhood	• Chapter 1, "Making Our Lives Count," in *Soul of a Citizen: Living With Conviction in Challenging Times* (Loeb, 2010) • Chapters 1 and 2 from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1968/2000)
Early childhood	• Chapter 6, "Living Like a Kite," in *Growing Up Muslim: Muslim College Students in America Tell Their Life Stories* (Quraishi, 2014) • Chapter 1, "Defining Racism," and Chapter 3, "The Early Years," in *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (Tatum, 1997) • Parental styles in second-generation effects of genocide stemming from the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia (Field et al., 2011) • Video: *Preschool in Three Cultures: A Video Companion* (Tobin, 2004)
Middle and late childhood	• "Noticing Learners' Strengths Through Cultural Research" (Rogoff et al., 2017) • Chapter 4, "Identity Development in Adolescence," and Chapter 8, "Critical Issues in Identity Development," in *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (Tatum, 1997) • Assignment: community asset map
Adolescence	• Chapter 60, "What Can We Do? Becoming Part of the Solution," in *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (Johnson, 2017)
Emerging and early adulthood	• "Understanding the Impact of Poverty on Critical Events in Emerging Adulthood" (Berzin & De Marco, 2010) • "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate for Latina/o Undergraduates" (Yosso et al., 2009) • "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (King, 1963/1986) • "Decolonizing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Framework for Organizing" (Garcia, 2017)
Middle and late adulthood	• "The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By" (McAdams, 2006) • Video: "In Their Own Words: Integrity and Despair" (Learning Seed, 2016b) • Video: "Death and Dying" (Learning Seed, 2016a)
Death and dying	• Video: *Life and Debt* (Black, 2001) • Assignment: service-learning project presentations, individual action paper

Notes. In addition to the above course features, students read a textbook chapter corresponding to the unit topic and wrote weekly reflections on their SL experience or the assigned course material.

groups. Critical curriculum features of the CSL class are outlined in Table 2. Class assignments also aimed to foster global and social justice learning by challenging students to examine their privilege and power and engage in critical self-reflection. Additionally, all students provided 30 supervised service hours at one of two community sites: a nursing home and after-school program for low-income children. The second class, held during the fall 2018 semester, integrated critical curriculum without the SL component (n = 48). The third author served as the instructor for the CSL and critical curriculum courses. The third class was taught in spring 2018 by a different professor using a traditional lecture-based approach that did not utilize SL or a direct emphasis on social justice (n = 52).

Participants completed paper-and-pencil self-administered questionnaires during class. Pre-test data were collected within the first five weeks of the semester from the CSL and critical curriculum classes, and post-test data were collected within the last four weeks of the semester from all three classes. (Only post-test data was collected from the

traditional class based on the agreement about data collection established between the researchers and the instructor of the class.) Undergraduate research assistants scored measures and inputted data into an Airtable spreadsheet.

Measures

The survey administered to students included the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDOS) and the Civic Engagement Scale (CES), each using Likert scales (1 to 5 or 1 to 7), and a demographic questionnaire.

Social Dominance Orientation Scale

The SDOS (Pratto et al., 1994) measures social dominance orientation, or the degree to which a person prefers inequality among social groups. This measure was included in the study due to the high relevance of preferences for social hierarchy and inequality in the power dynamics that can manifest in SL. The 16 items in the survey present statements relating to equality between social groups (e.g., "It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others"). Respondents rated on a Likert scale the degree of their positive or negative feelings towards each statement, with a 1 indicating that the participant feels very negatively about the statement and a 7 indicating that the participant feels very positively about the statement. Higher scores on the SDOS indicate a greater preference for inequality between groups, whereas lower scores indicate a greater preference for equality between groups (i.e., a proxy for greater critical reflection). Cronbach's alpha ranged from .80 to .89.

Civic Engagement Scale

The CES (Doolittle & Faul, 2013) was included in this study to measure and distinguish between participants' attitudes and behaviors towards civic engagement. The CES has a total of eight questions and consists of two subscales. The attitude subscale consists of eight questions that measure a person's civic attitudes, which are defined in the instructions as "the personal beliefs and feelings that individuals have about their own involvement in their community and their perceived ability to make a difference in that community" (Doolittle & Faul, 2013, p. 2). Sample questions in this subscale include "I believe that I have a responsibility to help the poor and the hungry" and "I feel responsible for my community." Participants indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a Likert scale in which a 1 indicates that the participant disagrees and a 7 indicates that a participant agrees. The behavior subscale consists of six questions that measure behavioral civic engagement. Sample questions include "I participate in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility" and "I stay informed of events in my community." Participants indicate the level to which they participated in the action stated using a Likert scale, in which a 1 indicates that the participant never participated in the action and a 7 indicates that a participant always participated in the action. Higher scores indicate stronger attitudinal and behavioral orientations to civic engagement, whereas lower scores indicate weaker civic engagement orientations. The scale has an internal consistency score of a =.80–.91, in which the attitudes subscale had an alpha of .91 and the behaviors subscale had an alpha of .85. The scale also demonstrated acceptable construct, content, and factorial validity.

Demographic questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire consisted of fill-in-the-blank questions that ask students to self-report their age, major and minor courses of study, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and parents' highest levels of education. A binary variable for race was created based on students' self-reported demographics, which yielded two groups: students of color and White students. While we recognize that students' experiences may vary according to their specific race, ethnicity, or nationality, students of color were grouped based on a common history of marginalization in the United States in contrast with White Americans; additionally, disaggregating participants by specific racial, ethnic, and national identities yielded small subsample sizes not suitable for statistical analysis. A binary variable for first-generation college student status was also created, in which first-generation college students were defined as students whose parent(s) did not complete a bachelor's degree or higher, and non-first-generation students were defined as students with at least one parent who earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Participants' self-reported gender identification was not collapsed into a binary variable since no participants self-identified as transgender or non-binary.

Results

Data were screened for normality using IBM SPSS Explore. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were significant for all dependent variables, violating parametric assumptions and prompting the use of non-parametric tests. Therefore, we conducted non-parametric tests for each of the between-groups analyses on each measure at the end of the semester and within-groups analyses on each measure between the CSL and critical curriculum classes at pre- and post-test.

First, we conducted preliminary analyses with Kruskal-Wallis one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to test whether demographic groups within the same class sections significantly differed from one another (Table 3). In the critical curriculum class at pre-test, non-first-generation students had lower median SDOS scores compared with first-generation students, $p < .05$. No other significant differences in scores by race or generation status were found within the critical curriculum and CSL at pre-test. At post-test, White students in the CSL class had significantly lower median scores on the SDOS relative to students of color in the CSL class, $p = .03$. The opposite was found in the traditional class, in which students of color scored significantly lower on the SDOS relative to White students in the class, $p = .02$. Finally, in the critical curriculum class at post-test, first-generation students scored lower on civic engagement attitudes ($p < .05$) and behaviors ($p = .04$) relative to non-first-generation students.

Comparing Post-Test Scores Across All Groups

Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVAs were conducted to assess differences in median scores on each outcome variable between all three classes at the post-test. A summary of all statistically significant results of these and the subsequent analyses can be found in Table 4. Among White students, SDOS scores varied significantly between the three classes, $\chi^2(2) = 9.75$, $p < .01$. Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that, specifically, White students' median SDOS score was significantly lower in the CSL class ($M = 1.04$, $SD = .06$) compared with the traditional class

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Measures, by Class Enrollment, Race, and Generation Status

	SDOS		CES—Attitudes		CES—Behaviors	
	Pre-test *M (SD)*	Post-test *M (SD)*	Pre-test *M* (*SD)*	Post-test *M* (*SD)*	Pre-test *M* (*SD)*	Post-test *M* (*SD)*
CSL class						
Race						
Person of color	1.76 (.59)	1.48* (.53)	44.93 (11.28)	45.93 (11.15)	26.14 (8.97)	29.00 (9.16)
White	1.56 (.95)	1.04* (.06)	44.80 (13.66)	47.00 (10.03)	28.20 (6.18)	31.80 (10.09)
Generation status						
First-generation	1.71 (.73)	1.35 (.53)	46.58 (12.48)	45.00 (11.69)	24.83 (9.22)	27.92 (10.49)
Non-first-generation	1.71 (.62)	1.38 (.49)	42.00 (9.97)	48.29 (8.88)	29.86 (5.27)	32.86 (5.87)
Critical curriculum class						
Race						
Person of color	1.48 (.41)	1.29 (.35)	41.86 (14.05)	43.71 (10.19)	22.86 (8.19)	21.00 (7.30)
White	1.23 (.34)	1.39 (.59)	42.50 (8.89)	39.00 (13.29)	26.25 (8.46)	27.75 (6.45)
Generation status						
First-generation	1.46* (.38)	1.29 (.32)	40.11 (12.38)	39.56* (10.68)	23.11 (8.48)	21.33* (6.48)
Non-first-generation	1.09* (.40)	1.63 (.88)	51.00 (1.41)	53.00* (1.41)	28.50 (4.95)	33.00* (1.41)
Traditional class						
Race						
Person of color		1.52* (.50)		41.03 (7.16)		23.57 (8.09)
White		2.22* (1.27)		36.70 (9.80)		24.60 (8.13)
Generation status						
First-generation		1.48 (.54)		40.77 (8.05)		24.77 (9.02)
Non-first-generation	–	1.86 (.93)		39.39 (7.90)		22.87 (7.00)

* Significant differences refer to differences between demographic groups within the same class section, $p < .05$.

($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.27$; U = 0.00, Z = -3.08, $p < .01$), supporting our hypothesis that SDOS scores at post-test will be lower among students in the CSL class compared with the traditional class. No differences in median SDOS score across classes were found among students of color or among White students when comparing the CSL and critical curriculum classes. Additionally, no differences in median SDOS score based on student generation status were found.

Among non-first-generation college students, civic engagement attitudes varied significantly between classes, $\chi^2(2) = 10.76$, $p < .01$. Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that non-first-generation students in the traditional class ($M = 39.39$, $SD = 7.90$) had significantly lower median scores on the civic engagement attitudes subscale compared with the CSL class ($M = 48.29$, $SD = 8.88$; U = 38, Z = -2.61, $p < .01$) and the critical curriculum class

Table 4
Summary of Statistically Significant Quantitative Results

	Summary of results		
Comparison	Social dominance orientations	Civic engagement attitudes	Civic engagement behaviors
Post-test scores across all classes	Social dominance orientations at post-test were lower among White students in the CSL class compared with White students in the traditional class.	Civic engagement attitudes at post-test were lower among non-first-generation students in the traditional class compared with the CSL class.	Civic engagement behaviors at post-test were lower among non-first-generation students in the traditional class compared with non-first-generation students in the CSL class.
CSL class pre-test versus post-test	In the CSL class, social dominance orientations were lower at post-test compared with pre-test among students of color, White students, and non-first-generation students.	In the CSL class, civic engagement attitudes were higher at post-test compared with pre-test among non-first-generation students.	No significant differences were found.
Critical curriculum class pre-test versus post-test	In the critical curriculum class, social dominance orientations were lower at post-test compared with pre-test among students of color.	No significant differences were found.	No significant differences were found.

(M =53.00, SD = 1.41; U = .50, Z = -2.27, $p < .01$). There were no differences in civic engagement attitudes between the CSL and critical curriculum class or among first-generation college students across all classes. Additionally, civic engagement attitudes and behaviors among White students and among students of color did not vary significantly between classes.

Among non-first-generation college students, median scores on the civic engagement behaviors subscale differed significantly across classes, $\chi^2(2) = 7.79$, $p = .02$. Specifically, non-first-generation college students in the traditional class ($M = 22.87$, $SD = 7.00$) endorsed significantly lower civic engagement behaviors compared with the CSL class ($M = 32.86$, $SD = 5.87$; U = 42.50, Z = -2.34, $p = .02$). No other significant differences among non-first-generation college students were found between the traditional and critical curriculum classes or the CSL and critical curriculum classes. There were no significant differences between classes found among first-generation college students or based on race.

Comparing Pre- and Post-Test Scores in the CSL Class

Wilcoxon matched pairs tests were conducted to compare the within-subjects differences in each measure among the CSL class (Table 4). Results indicated that social dominance orientations were significantly lower at post-test compared with pre-test in the CSL class, specifically among students of color ($M_{\text{pre-test}} = 1.76$, $SD_{\text{pre-test}} = .59$; $M_{post\text{-}test} = 1.48$, $SD_{post\text{-}test} = .53$; Z = -2.52, $p = .01$), White students ($M_{\text{pre-test}} = 1.56$, $SD_{\text{pre-test}} = .95$; $M_{post\text{-}test} = 1.04$,

$SD_{post\text{-}test}$ = .06; Z = -2.03, p = .04), and non-first-generation students ($M_{pre\text{-}test}$ = 1.71, $SD_{pre\text{-}test}$ = .62; $M_{post\text{-}test}$ = 1.38, $SD_{post\text{-}test}$ = .49; Z = -2.38, p = .02). No differences in social dominance orientations were found among first-generation students in the CSL class.

Civic engagement attitudes were significantly higher at post-test ($M_{post\text{-}test}$ = 48.29, $SD_{post\text{-}test}$ = 8.88) compared with pre-test ($M_{pre\text{-}test}$ = 42.00, $SD_{pre\text{-}test}$ = 9.97) for non-first-generation students in the CSL class (Z = 2.37, p = .02). Notably, civic engagement attitudes among first-generation CSL students were slightly higher than non-first-generation CSL students at pre-test ($M_{pre\text{-}test}$ = 46.58, $SD_{pre\text{-}test}$ = 12.48), and this value was maintained in post-test ($M_{post\text{-}test}$ = 45.00, $SD_{post\text{-}test}$ = 11.69; Z = -0.26, p = .80). No additional significant differences in civic engagement attitudes and behaviors over time were found among students in the CSL class.

Comparing Pre- and Post-Test Scores in the Critical Curriculum Class

Wilcoxon matched pairs tests were conducted to compare the within-subjects differences in each measure among the critical curriculum class (Table 4). Social dominance orientations were significantly lower at post-test ($M_{post\text{-}test}$ = 1.29, $SD_{post\text{-}test}$ = .35) than pre-test ($M_{pre\text{-}test}$ = 1.48, $SD_{pre\text{-}test}$ = .41) among students of color in the critical curriculum class (Z = -2.949, p < .01). No differences in social dominance orientations were found among White students or based on generation status in the critical curriculum class. Additionally, no significant differences in civic engagement attitudes and behaviors over time were found among students in the critical curriculum class, regardless of race and generation status.

Qualitative Analysis

To complement the quantitative results that suggested changes in students' social dominance orientations over the course of the CSL class, the qualitative analysis explored differences in the social justice–related content of CSL students' first written assignment from the beginning of the semester to that of their final written paper for the semester. Given that the CSL was the only course to assign reflection assignments about students' experiences and thoughts of social justice, only the CSL class was included in this qualitative analysis.

Methods

Participants

The qualitative analysis focused on weekly reflections by 19 students in the CSL class who consented at post-test to have their reflection assignments and survey responses included in this study. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 34 years old (M = 23.58, SD = 3.76), and over half of students identified as female (n = 12, 63.2%),

students of color (n = 13, 68.4%), first-generation students (n = 11, 57.9%), and psychology majors (n = 13, 68.4%). Participants self-reported their racial and ethnic backgrounds as follows: Latinx (4), Asian (4), White Hispanic (4), White (2), Arab (2), Black (1), multiracial (1), and unstated (1).

Procedure

Students completed a total of 13 weekly essays in which they reflected on their SL and classroom experiences. For this analysis, we focused on only the first and last papers of the semester. The first reflection paper, completed during the third week of the semester, asked students to freely describe what social justice means to them on one page. The last paper was completed during the last week of the semester, and, as a part of this assignment, the instructor asked students to attend a campus community event that addressed various social justice issues. Students attended one social justice–related event of their choice and wrote a two-page paper applying course material to understand the social justice issue presented at the event they attended. The goal of the assignment was to help students apply what they had learned in class to a social justice issue of their choice and move students from abstract conceptualizations of social justice into participating in collective action towards social justice. Excerpts from this assignment that related to the research questions were selected by a research assistant for inclusion in the qualitative analysis. Although the prompts of both reflections differ in content, these two assignments were selected to compare students' explorations of their ideas about social justice with their reflections about social justice following their behavioral engagement in an event.

The qualitative thematic analysis was guided by Torres-Harding et al.'s (2012) application of the Theory of Planned Behavior, which proposes pathways through which attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control related to social justice can influence social justice behavioral intentions and, subsequently, social justice–related behaviors. The present study considers how students' writing about social justice reflects the predictors of social justice–oriented change outlined by Torres-Harding et al.

Coding and Analysis

The research team—consisting of one professor, one graduate student, and two undergraduate students—conducted three cycles of coding. For the first cycle of coding, participant responses on the two class assignments were separated into chunks as units of analysis. This approach is appropriate for the early coding phase to capture any nuances of the data (Saldaña, 2016). Each chunk was coded using holistic in vivo, descriptive, and process codes. Based on the codes produced in the first cycle of coding, the first author created a preliminary coding scheme, condensing the codes into conceptual categories based on Torres-Harding et al.'s (2012) facets of social justice orientations (i.e., attitudes towards social justice, subjective norms related to social justice, perceived behavioral control over social justice, social justice behavioral intentions, and social justice–oriented behaviors).

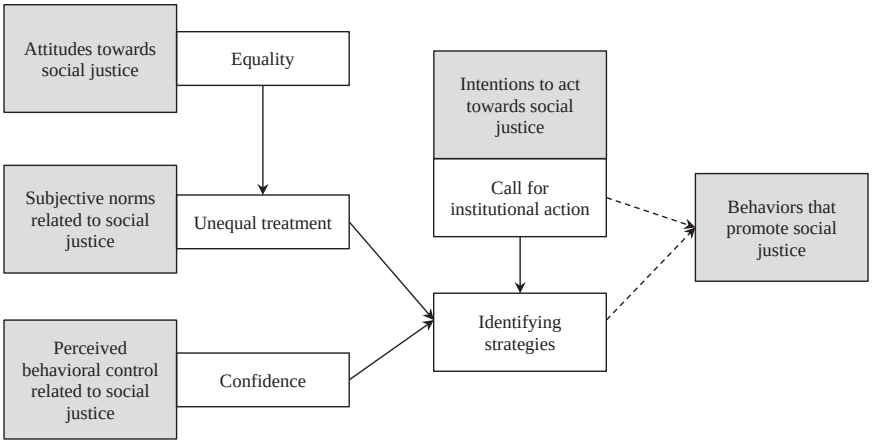

Figure 2 Summary of the Proposed Process of Social Justice and Civic Engagement Orientation Development in a CSL Course.

In the second cycle of coding, the researchers used the preliminary coding scheme to conduct sentence-by-sentence focused coding. Discrepancies among coders were resolved via group discussions to refine the content and selection criteria for possible codes. Based on this coding cycle, the researchers finalized the coding scheme and re-coded all responses sentence by sentence. In the last cycle of coding, the researchers created themes based on codes that were frequently present among participant responses and used causation coding to analyze the patterns in which codes appeared (Saldaña, 2016). Interrater reliability was calculated between the two raters' codes on half of the data, and the percent agreement was 91.55%. To further ensure the validity of the research results, the researchers conducted member-checking with five participants to review the themes found by the researchers and to invite participants' feedback on the accuracy and relevance of the researchers' interpretations of the data according to their experiences in the CSL class. Feedback from participants was incorporated into the framing of research results in the following section.

Results

The coding process resulted in four major themes constructed from 17 codes, including descriptive, dimensional, value, and process codes (coding materials are available upon request). The following themes reveal how students in the CSL class shifted their ideas regarding inequality and social justice towards engagement in actions that could help ameliorate those inequalities (Figure 2).

Shifting Attitudes and Norms Related to Social Justice (Equality and Unequal Treatment)

Regarding students' attitudes and subjective norms about social justice, students' responses shifted in focus over time from conceptual ideas and unrealistic hopes for equality to acknowledging the existing systems that

maintain inequality. Specifically, when initially asked what social justice meant to them, 12 out of 19 students' initial understandings of social justice were centered on conceptual definitions of equality. For instance, a first-generation Black and Mexican student stated that "treating everyone equally," regardless of their identities or appearance, is part of her definition of social justice. Among these 12 students, four made general statements about how some groups are treated unequally based on their identity. Among the seven participants who did not discuss equality in their initial assignments, most exhibited awareness about social injustice: five students posed a call to action (i.e., three to the general public, themselves, or social institutions) for social justice, three defined social justice in terms of equity rather than equality, and three discussed the realities of social injustice faced by minoritized groups.

At the end of the semester, additional students acknowledged the realities of unequal treatment experienced by marginalized groups in society due to factors such as race and class. Specifically, in the first assignment, seven participants referenced unequal treatment when describing their ideas related to social justice, and by the last assignment, 12 participants discussed unequal treatment. The first-generation Black and Mexican student mentioned previously, who initially defined social justice in terms of equal treatment, was one of the students who made this shift. In the last assignment, she discussed the disproportionate hardship that individuals in poverty may face compared with people of higher socioeconomic status. Additionally, a Filipino, first-generation student, whose initial response defined social justice as equality, wrote about racial bias in court rulings for domestic violence cases. He concluded, "I believe that [the rationale for a court ruling] is very flawed and had [the defendant] been a White woman defending herself against a Black perpetrator, the court rulings would have been different." Overall, these responses suggest a shift in students' reflections towards acknowledging the systemic marginalization and bias that threaten the possibility of social justice and equity-minded policies. Of the seven participants who did not discuss unequal treatment at either time point, six participants identified a social group (e.g., people living with addiction, low-income children) that experienced social injustice, but the participants did not discuss this marginalization in their response.

Perceived Behavioral Control Related to Social Justice

Overall, students' responses reflected higher perceived behavioral control in attaining social justice at the end of the semester compared with the beginning of the semester. Specifically, students developed higher levels of confidence in the possibility of attaining social justice. Of the 14 students who discussed their confidence in attaining a just society in either assignment, six who did not endorse a confidence level during the first assignment endorsed a high level of confidence during the last assignment, leading to 10 students who endorsed a high level of confidence at either time point. Additionally, out of three participants who cited low confidence in social justice during the first assignment, two endorsed a higher level of confidence during the second assignment. One of the participants who endorsed a low level of confidence at the beginning of the semester, a first-generation Mexican student, initially reported that "social justice to me is an idealistic concept because it is something people wish for but hard to make a reality." By the end of the course, this student shifted to a moderate level

of confidence, stating that "realistically, we cannot completely stop the stereotyping, but we can take steps to lessen it." The only participant (a first-generation White Hispanic student) who endorsed low levels of confidence at both time points wrote in their first assignment about how society is designed to benefit people with higher socioeconomic status relative to those with lower socioeconomic status; in their second assignment, they discussed the tremendous amount of effort needed to eliminate child obesity, without discussing hope or opportunities for intervention.

Intentions to Act Towards Social Justice

Calling for Institutional Action

Another theme that emerged was the attribution of responsibility for social justice: students in the second assignment expanded the attribution of responsibility to various sources, ranging from eliciting a call to action for the general public to strive for social justice (n = 13) to increased recognition of systemic issues and institutional responsibility to address unequal treatment and attain social justice (n = 12). At the beginning of the semester, four participants indicated that social and governmental institutions (e.g., the government, public programs and policies, schools, and community agencies) were agents in the social justice process. By the end of the semester, 12 participants referred to the importance of institutional involvement for minimizing unequal treatment and promoting equity. This contrasted participants' initial focus on individual responsibility or blame for social inequalities. Furthermore, most of the students who included institutions in the social justice process also identified a strategy through which these institutions could act. One of such calls for institutional action, cited by a White, non-first-generation student, included "focusing our efforts on increasing the wages of jobs that can be obtained by those with lower socioeconomic status and education levels, while working to lower the housing costs." Overall, students' responses revealed their understanding of how institutions and policymakers, not only individuals, needed to be held accountable for promoting social justice.

Identifying Strategies to Resolve Inequality

Students' acknowledgment of unequal treatment, their new understanding of the systemic and institutional causes of injustice, and their increased confidence in attaining social justice were associated with the identification of concrete, tangible strategies to resolve unequal treatment and achieve social justice. This pattern emerged in 12 participants, who identified at least one strategy to work towards social justice. At the beginning of the semester, three participants mentioned one strategy for change along with having high confidence in the attainment of social justice or calling for institutional action; by the end of the semester, an additional nine participants were able to identify at least one strategy along with reporting the unequal treatment of marginalized groups, high confidence in social justice, or calls for institutional action. For instance, one Mexican, non-first-generation student reported low confidence in the attainment of social justice, an acknowledgment in the unequal treatment

of groups, and a call for institutional action at the beginning of the semester. By the end of the course, the student felt more confident in attaining social justice, continued to call for institutional action, and identified a strategy to challenge inequality. He stated that "by becoming knowledgeable about the [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy], people can gain awareness that DACA does not harm the United States in any way, shape, or form." Another student, who identified as a non-first-generation White Brazilian student, wrote her final paper on the potential positive and transformative impact of legislation that "encourage[s] collaborative programs between foster homes, schools and community colleges in order to prepare the youth when they leave."

Though behaviors that promote social justice were not assessed after the CSL course, participants' responses on the final assignment suggest that they reflected on or discovered that they could also be agents of change and that their actions matter and could make a difference. One participant, a non-first-generation Iranian student, used their final assignment as an opportunity to write to a senator about advocacy against gun violence. She stated, "As a psychology student, I have often learned about the importance of civic engagement, and I feel as though it is my duty to take a stance against gun violence in this country. Change would never take place if people fail to use their voice so I choose to use my voice in hopes that your administration shares my passion and beliefs in this matter." Additionally, a first-generation Vietnamese student felt motivated to "seek a solution for those who suffered from the model minority myth" and used her final assignment to create a plan for increasing civic engagement among Asian Americans, which she believed would "tremendously benefit the mental health of Asian American individuals."

Discussion

This study examined the potential benefit of integrating SL and critical curriculum in courses, guiding college students' orientations towards civic engagement and social justice. Our study finds that students in the CSL and critical curriculum classes had stronger orientations to civic engagement and lower orientations to social dominance than did students in the traditional class. Within-subjects analyses suggest that students in the CSL class developed a greater preference for social group equality over time; this decrease in social dominance orientation was significant for students of all races and non-first-generation students. Additionally, non-first-generation CSL students endorsed a higher attitudinal orientation to civic engagement over time. However, social dominance orientation only decreased over time for students of color in the critical curriculum class, and on average, civic engagement attitudes did not significantly change over time for critical curriculum students. Taken together, these findings suggest that SL pedagogy uniquely contributes to changes in relatively privileged (i.e., White, non-first-generation) students' social dominance orientation and attitudes towards civic engagement. These findings are also consistent with Mitchell's (2008) model of CSL, which emphasizes orientations to social change as a process within CSL. According to Mitchell's model, students' reflections in both classroom and community environments give rise to students' development of a social change orientation, efforts to redistribute power to the community, and authentic relationships with community partners. Thus, this study's results

add to the current evidence on the impact of and the need to pair SL with critical curriculum to achieve changes in individual attitudes such that individuals with lower social dominance orientation and higher levels of civic engagement will reject ideologies and policies that uphold social inequality, leading to meaningful social change.

In general, our quantitative findings suggested that White students and non-first-generation students in the CSL and critical curriculum classes at the end of the semester significantly differed in orientations from pre-test and from their counterparts in the traditional class. Specifically, between-groups analyses revealed that White students in the CSL class had significantly lower social dominance orientations than White students in the traditional class, and non-first-generation students in the CSL and critical curriculum class differed significantly from non-first-generation students in the traditional class on measures of civic engagement. In the CSL class, there were significant differences in social dominance and civic engagement orientations over time among non-first-generation students. The only significant change in outcomes among relatively marginalized students occurred for students of color in the CSL class. Previous studies on diversity courses similarly found that White students experienced more significant changes in social attitudes and critical consciousness compared with students of color, who might have already been exposed to issues of diversity and social injustices by the start of the course (Bowman, 2009; Cole et al., 2011; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Additionally, the descriptive statistics suggest that first-generation college students in the CSL class had low SDOS scores and high CES scores at pre-test, which may be related to their own experiences and awareness of marginalization.

On one hand, these results pose questions about the value of CSL for marginalized students (i.e., students of color and first-generation students) and about the extent to which SL is only a learning exercise for the relatively privileged. To examine this possibility, future studies can consider different outcome variables—such as resistance against racism, critical motivation, anti-neoliberal attitudes, or perceived agency—that may be more relevant to the cognitive and behavioral changes experienced by marginalized students in CSL classes. On the other hand, these quantitative findings shed light on the importance of using mixed methods to examine CSL. While the quantitative findings suggested more robust benefits for White students and non-first-generation students, the qualitative findings suggested that several students of color and first-generation students did reap benefits from the CSL class. The qualitative results suggest that CSL classes empower students of color and first-generation students to shift their perspectives to a systems-oriented analysis of the exclusionary institutions that are in place in their communities and creatively identify strategies to address inequities. Thus, the mixed method design of this study offered two important types of information: the pre- and post-test surveys allowed us to assess the numerical extent of outcomes among students, and the qualitative findings revealed how students process and make meaning of their critical consciousness development amid SL and critical curriculum. The qualitative findings, in particular, allow us to give voice to the participants and ground our results in their social justice–oriented and civic engagement experiences.

The qualitative analysis of students' reflections revealed how changes in students' attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control over social justice may lead to intentions and behaviors that promote social justice. For example, at the beginning of the semester, several students conceptualized social justice as an abstract concept and an unattainable goal that was simply synonymous with equality. At the end of the CSL course, many

students' perspectives shifted to acknowledge the realities of unequal treatment and the systemic barriers experienced by marginalized and oppressed groups. Students also shifted in their confidence in creating social change and their increased understanding of the role that institutions play in creating unjust living conditions. By the end of the course, students who acknowledged marginalization, had high levels of confidence in the social justice process, and recognized the importance of institutional change in the achievement of social justice were also able to identify specific and concrete strategies towards making social justice possible. This pattern, according to Torres-Harding et al. (2012), will lead to an increase in behaviors that contribute to the social justice process.

Notably, students' course reflections often did not explicitly discuss their SL experiences. Although SL experiences were not a dominant theme in the qualitative data, we do not conclude that SL was irrelevant to students' overall development. One practical explanation for this pattern in the data is that the first reflection assignment was completed during the third week of the semester, which was before students chose an SL site. Additionally, the instructions for the last reflection assignment did not explicitly require students to integrate their thoughts about SL in their papers, since students' SL activities may have differed from the focus of the social justice–related event they attended for that assignment. The study's quantitative results suggest that students in the CSL class became less oriented to social dominance and had increased civic engagement attitudes and behaviors at post-test, whereas students in the critical curriculum class did not exhibit changes in civic engagement orientations. This finding offers general support for our hypothesis that the SL component of the CSL class uniquely contributes to students' development. Additionally, though behaviors after the course are not explicitly measured, the qualitative data suggest that the CSL course contributed to students' confidence that social change was possible and their beliefs that they could also be agents of social change by engaging in activities that would ameliorate current social issues.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study's findings fit with the literature positing that social justice–oriented learning and civic engagement orientations are related (Krings et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2015). Future research on CSL can examine its relationship with other variables related to social justice orientations, such as colorblind racial attitudes, implicit bias, or critical consciousness. Such research could broaden the evidence for CSL as an educational approach that supports students' academic, personal, and civic development. Particularly, additional studies examining the aforementioned variables can evaluate the potential of CSL as an anti-racist, anti-bias educational intervention to enhance students' critical consciousness and ethical community engagement.

Although the quantitative analysis considers multiple classes, certain characteristics of the course may have limited findings in the study. First, the same professor taught the CSL and critical curriculum classes analyzed. It is possible that other factors may also influence student development in the course, such as relatability, overall likability, perceived trustworthiness, and the teaching skills of the instructor. For instance, it is possible that students provided vague descriptions of social justice in their first assignment relative to their last assignment because the instructor had not yet earned their trust. To minimize the variance contributed by instructor characteristics, future studies can examine instructors with similar levels of teaching skill and style and control for

instructor-level variables across comparisons. Second, it is possible that self-selection bias impacted the types of students in the sample. The developmental psychology course included in the research was one of four elective courses students can choose from to meet graduation requirements; additionally, students had the option of dropping the course for up to two weeks after instruction began, which may have filtered out students who were uninterested in civic engagement. While students' enrollment patterns cannot be fully manipulated in a research study, future research should note any pre-test differences between students in CSL and non-CSL classes. Alternatively, future research can compare a CSL course with an equivalent SL course taught without critical curriculum to nuance researchers' understanding of the impact of CSL on students. Future research could also benefit from examining the effects of CSL in the context of different types of psychology courses (i.e., social, statistics, educational or clinical) and in the context of different academic fields.

Another limitation of this research is that only the first and last class assignments were analyzed. Although the class as a whole was grounded in critical curriculum, the two assignments had different prompts, which may have led students to reflect on and write about social justice and civic engagement differently. While outside the scope of the current study, this issue can be alleviated in future research by triangulating in additional data sources (e.g., other class reflection assignments). These additional data sources would provide researchers with a more complete picture of the development of social justice orientations. Analyses of other course assignments can also reveal which specific class lessons are most impactful for the development of civic engagement orientations, which types of SL experiences impacted the development of social justice orientations, and which aspects of the course were most beneficial overall according to students.

Lastly, this study had incomplete data collection, which limited the statistical analyses conducted. Specifically, data were not collected from all participants at both time points due to limited access to survey students in the traditional class at pre-test and a shortage of physical copies of surveys for critical curriculum students at post-test. This resulted in a relatively small sample size, which limited the types of statistical analyses possible. Future research using complete data collection designs, in which pre- and post-test data are obtained from all participants, can validate and extend this study's findings. Additionally, although separate statistical analyses were conducted based on race and college generation status to identify group-level differences, a larger sample would have enabled the researchers to examine quantitative differences at the intersections of these identities. Future studies applying an intersectional framework could utilize other methodological and statistical designs that account for the cumulative influence of racism, sexism, and classism on civic engagement and social justice orientations.

Recommendations for Educators and Community Partners

There are many ways that CSL can be successfully and ethically implemented in higher education. The results of this study suggest that instructors must scaffold students' social justice and civic engagement orientations—and the connections students make between the two. At the beginning of the course, CSL instructors can focus class material on challenging students' ideas about equality and the goal of service. That is, before engaging with their SL sites, students must begin reflecting on their personal views on egalitarianism and social dominance, thus

reframing the SL experience as a form of redistributing power and resources to—and not "saving"—minoritized communities. This can be facilitated by class material and discussions about the realities of unequal treatment of minoritized groups, as displayed in research, in the media, and by community members at students' SL sites. Instructors can also scaffold students' reflection about social inequities through writing assignments that ask students to define social justice and to reflect on injustices and social power imbalances they see in their community and the lessons they learned about social power and marginalization from their SL site. Encouraging students' engagement with the implications of power and justice may be especially important for White or non-first-generation students, whose process of critical reflection may take a different form (i.e., that of an outsider looking in) compared with students from minoritized backgrounds (Karras et al., 2021; Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018).

Instructors and community partners can orient students towards calls for institutional action by contextualizing students' observations at the SL site in the broader sociopolitical context. To do so, instructors and community partners can educate students on laws, policies, and institutional practices that oppress communities and create the need for civic engagement in marginalized communities. Additionally, instructors can assign community asset mapping activities in which students, in collaboration with people at their SL sites, research the different community, educational, wellness, governmental, cultural, and social organizations and institutions in the surrounding area (García, 2020). By identifying social institutions and the sociopolitical context that impacts students and their communities, students can narrow down the possible stakeholders and strategies needed to address pressing social issues at their SL site and in the broader community.

Lastly, critical curriculum and SL activities should aim to boost participants' confidence in meaningful social change by offering examples of changes achieved by civic engagement and framing the SL experience as a form of meaningful civic engagement. The results of this study suggest that as students gain confidence in their ability to effect change, they can more easily identify tangible, actionable strategies to work towards social justice.

Conclusion

Cumulatively, these findings show that the combination of critical curriculum and SL (i.e., CSL) is a promising approach to support college students' understandings of and orientations towards social justice and civic engagement. Furthermore, the quantitative results also support the potential of critical curriculum to increase college students' orientation towards social justice in cases where implementing SL is not possible. In sum, CSL can enhance students' civic identities, empowering them to be agents of social change while also meeting the community's needs in an ethical, transformative, and socially responsible manner.

Author Note

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