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School engagement predicts academic achievement and attainment, yet remains under-theorized in the sociological literature. While psychologists describe three distinct yet mutually reinforcing categories of school engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement), sociologists have largely neglected to analyze cognitive engagement. Drawing on ethnographic observations and interviews with members of two debate teams in Chicago Public Schools, I demonstrate that behavioral engagement in the form of debate team participation helped foster debaters' cognitive and emotional engagement in school. Through the activity, debaters developed strong relationships with peers and their adult coaches, and strengthened their appreciation for challenging aspects of the learning process. Although many debaters felt that the learning environment of the debate context was more stimulating than the learning environments of their classes, they nevertheless applied the skills and attitudes they acquired in the activity to the "core" curriculum of the school. These factors help explain why debaters have been shown to outperform comparable peers in terms of academic achievement and attainment. These findings suggest that cognitive engagement is one mechanism driving the positive impact of certain extracurricular activities on students' school performance.

KEYWORDS: achievement; attainment; cognition; emotion; school engagement; sociology of education.

INTRODUCTION

School engagement is a predictor of academic achievement and attainment (Alexander et al. 1997; Archambault et al. 2009), and the social environments shaping students' opportunities to learn influence their levels of school engagement (Fredricks et al. 2004). Extracurricular activities expose students to learning opportunities different from their classroom learning environments, potentially shifting their levels of school engagement. Extracurricular participation is one type of "behavioral engagement," a form of school engagement (along with cognitive engagement and emotional engagement) that predicts academic outcomes (Archambault et al. 2009; Wang and Eccles 2012). The effects of extracurricular participation on students' academic achievement vary across activities (Fredricks and Eccles 2006), suggesting that there are certain features of extracurricular activities that drive whether and how those activities contribute to students' academic success.

A large body of literature has established a positive relationship between behavioral engagement and academic outcomes (e.g., Chase et al. 2014; Fredricks et al. 2004; Fredricks and Eccles 2006; Johnson et al. 2001; Li et al. 2010; Ream and Rumberger 2008; Silver 2020; Wang and Eccles 2012). However, little work has been done to detail the *mechanisms* linking behavioral engagement to improved academic

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performance. Additionally, while research has shown that behavioral engagement is a stronger predictor of academic success than emotional engagement (Wang and Eccles 2011), the ways that connections can form between behavioral engagement on the one hand and cognitive and emotional engagement on the other remain less clear. Although existing sociological literature has largely failed to disaggregate the three domains of school engagement identified by psychologists, two recent areas of attention in the sociology of education—"identity projects" (DeLuca et al. 2016) and "deep learning" (Mehta and Fine 2019)—highlight the need for a more nuanced perspective.

In this study, I draw on approximately 250 hours of observation and 14 interviews with debaters and coaches from two teams in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to show how debate team participation can strengthen peer relationships among students (emotional engagement), strengthen relationships between students and adult coaches (emotional engagement), and influence participants' beliefs about the "student" role (cognitive engagement). This study offers two main contributions to the literature. First, I introduce the concept of "cognitive engagement" to sociologists, describing how it relates to the forms of engagement (behavioral and emotional) that appear more frequently in the literature, and explaining its relationship to academic achievement. Second, I propose cognitive and emotional engagement as mechanisms that help drive debaters' academic gains relative to comparable peers. Prior studies have demonstrated that debate team participation is associated with positive outcomes for middle and high school students (Mezuk 2009; Mezuk et al. 2011; Shackelford 2019). However, explanations for these results have been under-theorized. In this study, I contend that cognitive and emotional engagement contribute to debaters' changing attitudes about, and performance in, their schools. Through a locally situated perspective on the bidirectional relationships between debaters (as individuals) and debate teams (as developmental contexts), I argue that debate supports positive youth development by building debaters' emotional and cognitive engagement in their schools.

BEHAVIORAL, COGNITIVE, AND EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL

Regardless of the ultimate aims of schooling, student engagement is necessary to achieve those ends. Fredricks et al. (2004) describe school engagement as a multifaceted concept made up of three components: behavioral, and emotional, and cognitive engagement. *Behavioral engagement* refers to students' conduct, including positive participation in activities during/after school and the absence of disruptive behaviors. *Emotional engagement* refers to students' affects, or feelings toward individuals (teachers, classmates), activities (classroom learning, after-school clubs), and school in general. *Cognitive engagement* refers to students' investment in learning opportunities, or their willingness to exert effort in order to learn and improve. These three domains separate the broad idea of "engagement" loosely into actions, feelings, and thoughts (respectively).[2] Each of these three domains of engagement is

[2] For the sake of clarity, I use the same terms as Fredricks et al. However, other authors use different terminology to refer to these concepts (e.g. "psychological engagement" for cognitive engagement, or "affective engagement" for emotional engagement).

malleable, and can be influenced by social and/or academic experiences, undertaken individually or in groups, in formally organized or informal in- and out-of-school settings.

Researchers have shown that behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement can influence one another. For example, Voelkl (1995) finds that student perceptions of school "warmth" (emotional engagement) influenced students' participation in the classroom (behavioral engagement), while Finn (1989) argues that students' participation within and beyond the classroom (behavioral engagement) improves their sense of identification with school (cognitive engagement). Similarly, Archambault et al. (2009) find that virtually all students with high cognitive engagement also demonstrate strong behavioral engagement via their avoidance of rule-breaking behaviors. In short, it is well established in the psychological literature that the three domains of school engagement are "mutually reinforcing and synergistic" (Appleton et al. 2008: 377). Their relationship to one another may be direct, or mediated through academic outcomes. For example, Travis and Leech note that:

> As students feel more secure in their belonging in school and form better relationships with peers and teachers, these become sources of support that promote feelings of belonging and academic success later. When students achieve success beyond what they thought possible, their beliefs about their potential may change, leading them to invest themselves more in school, further improving performance and reinforcing their belief in their potential for growth. (2014: 103)

In other words, emotional engagement can contribute to academic success, which in turn can play a role in strengthened cognitive engagement. Relationships between the other domains of engagement and academic success may be similarly indirect or direct.[3]

In this study, I demonstrate how one form of behavioral engagement—debate team participation—can foster increased emotional and cognitive engagement. These findings help to explain why the specific case of debate, and the more general concept of behavioral engagement, predict higher academic achievement (Mezuk et al. 2011; Shackelford 2019; Wang and Eccles 2011). I show that debate team participation, as one form of behavioral engagement, fosters both cognitive and emotional engagement in school, and that these factors play a role in debaters' school performance. The centrality of cognitive engagement in this relationship underscores the need for sociologists of education to more rigorously theorize "engagement."

Sociologists often refer to "school engagement" as an important factor in school success, but either use "engagement" as a monolithic concept (encompassing everything from attendance to feelings of connection to an interest in learning [e.g. Mehta and Fine 2019]), or refer only in passing to the multiple domains of engagement (e.g. Plank et al. 2008). When sociologists *have* taken up the issue of school engagement as a multifaceted concept, it is in the context of a dual (behavioral-emotional) framework. For example, Johnson et al. (2001) differentiate between school

[3] However, Archambault et al. (2009) also find that high levels of one aspect of engagement do not always predict high levels of other forms of engagement; for example, students who follow the rules (behavioral engagement) do not always have high academic motivation (cognitive engagement). In other words, there is heterogeneity in the effects of the various domains of engagement both on other forms of engagement and on academic achievement.

"attachment" and "engagement." They refer to "attachment" as "the extent to which students 'feel' that they are embedded in, and a part of, their school communities" (2001: 4), a concept analogous to emotional engagement. They refer to "engagement" as students' participation in the school, including attendance, homework completion, avoidance of disruption, and extracurricular participation—a concept analogous to behavioral engagement. Johnson et al. thus use a dual behavioral-emotional framework, as do Stearns et al. (2007) in their theorization of "academic" (being punctual, attending class) and "social" (extracurricular participation) engagement. More recently, Pyne also mirrors this two-pronged perspective, differentiating between the "behavioral components" and "emotional components" of school engagement (2019: 3). Missing, then, from all of these frameworks of engagement is cognitive engagement; indeed, Johnson et al.'s call for research that examines "the greater psychological investment of [more deeply] engaged students" speaks to the need for cognitive engagement to enter the sociological conversation (2001: 19).

It is important to emphasize that the contexts in which students may or may not be engaged are not equally structured to promote positive outcomes. Guided by relational developmental systems (RDS) meta-theory, positive youth development (PYD) models seek to understand whether (and how) youth thriving can be promoted by "aligning the strengths of young people with the resources for positive development found in their ecological settings" (Lerner et al. 2017: 7). One such model is the Five Cs Model of PYD, which defines "thriving" as the growth of competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring (Lerner et al. 2015). In this perspective, alignment between the youths' strengths (such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in school) and the resources available in particular developmental contexts (especially the "Big Three" of positive and sustained adult-youth relationships; skill-building activities; and youth leadership opportunities) are predicted to promote youth thriving (the 5Cs) (Lerner et al. 2017).

Adolescent development occurs both within and beyond the classroom, and certain extracurricular activities may be especially well-positioned—relative to other ways youth spend their out-of-school time—to promote positive development (Eccles & Gootman 2002; Nasir & Hand 2008). Yet their effects vary; for example, Bundick (2011) finds that PYD is positively associated with participation in student leadership and volunteering, and negatively associated with participation in the creative arts. These differences may stem in part from the extent to which a given activity offers the "Big Three." Furthermore, the PYD literature emphasizes that "engagement" concerns alignment between individuals (students) and contexts (such as schools and out-of-school activities). Such alignment is not equally likely across youth-context relationships in part because certain contexts are less likely to recognize and reward the engagement of youth from nondominant social classes (such as Black and Hispanic youth, youth from low-income families, and sexual minority youth) (Bettie 2003; Carter 2003; Lareau 2011; Morris 2007). Research has shown that youths' background characteristics do indeed predict their school engagement (Wang and Eccles 2012), reinforcing the idea that educational contexts differently promote students' engagement. In this study, I argue that these debate teams' provision of the "Big Three" helped develop low-income, majority-racial/ethnic-minority youths' strengths (viz., cognitive and emotional engagement in school). The findings

presented below highlight the dynamic nature of "alignment" between youths' strengths and the resources of their developmental contexts, and reflect the bidirectionality of influence between individuals and contexts (Lerner et al. 2017).

HIGH SCHOOL DEBATE

High school debate teams have been the topic of some scholarly analysis (i.e., Fine 2001; Gorski 2020; Mezuk 2009; Mezuk et al. 2011; Shackelford 2019) and journalistic investigation (Miller 2006) over the past two decades. In general, these accounts agree that debate team participation is associated with positive outcomes for youth, ranging from improved academic performance (Mezuk 2009; Mezuk et al. 2011; Shackelford 2019) to opportunities for positive identity formation (Fine 2001; Miller 2006; Mehta & Fine 2019) and developing new forms of cultural capital (Gorski 2020). On debate teams, students research topics assigned by national or local organizations; prepare speeches both supporting and challenging the assigned topic; and participate in competitions during which they compete against teams from other schools using a combination of their prepared speeches and extemporaneous commentary to respond to their opponents' positions. During after-school practices, they hang out in classrooms where they work on laptops to research and write arguments, rehearse and refine speeches, use speaking drills to build speed and clarity, discuss their own and others' "cases" (prewritten speeches), and devise strategies for responding to other teams' arguments.[4] Debate is a time-intensive extracurricular activity with a highly specialized set of skills and jargon, which may contribute to debaters' close relationships to one another (Miller 2006). The connections that debaters form and the identities that they develop help make the team a sort of "home space" (Fine 2001: 134), building participants' sense of belonging within the institution of the school.

The past three decades have seen a proliferation of debate teams in urban public schools as a result of the growth of Urban Debate Leagues, from the first in Atlanta founded in 1985 to over 22 leagues serving nearly 11,000 students across the country today (AUDL n.d.; NAUDL n.d.). However, still little is known about the qualitative experiences of urban debaters. Fine's (2001) work offers a rich analysis of the social world of high school debate teams, yet this work is limited to a suburban, middle-class, mostly white context that reflects the historical racial/ethnic and class patterns in the activity. The unique experiences of debaters from under-resourced urban public schools are significant because of the impact of social class on students' experiences in (and, more immediately, opportunities to participate in) extracurricular activities (Weininger et al. 2015). Additionally, because these youth often face challenging learning environments marked by limited resources, documenting avenues for promoting school engagement despite these obstacles is particularly important. While there is ample literature aimed at addressing the shortcomings of under-resourced urban public schools, understanding the characteristics of policies and programs that *are* effective is of equal urgency. Unlike how "many ethnographies of youth from disadvantaged origins portray lives awash in serious delinquency and

[4] For a more thorough description of common activities in debate teams, see Fine 2001.

crime" (DeLuca et al. 2016: 62), in this study I document a social space that becomes a source of stability, success, and belonging for its participants.

There is strong quantitative evidence that debate teams are effective at promoting academic achievement and attainment in urban public school districts. Using propensity score matching, Mezuk et al. (2011) found that debaters in Chicago Public Schools were more likely to graduate high school, earned higher ACT scores on all sections of the test, and had higher cumulative GPAs than their comparable nondebating peers. Upon high school entrance, debaters were more likely than non-debaters to be female and to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch; they also were more likely to take honors classes as freshmen, had lower eighth-grade absenteeism, and had higher eighth-grade test scores. Importantly, Mezuk and colleagues found significant gains for debaters versus nondebaters even when accounting for these differences in baseline characteristics.

Recent evidence also shows that debate team participation predicts improved test scores and higher attendance among elementary and middle school participants in Baltimore (Shackelford 2019), suggesting that debate may have payoffs for students across the educational trajectory. Yet these studies fail to explore how these advantages form; for example, Shackelford notes that his findings "do not illuminate specific mechanisms" and calls for further research addressing potential mechanisms (2019: 154).[5] In this study, I propose one possible mechanism producing debaters' academic successes: school engagement. In other words, I show that debaters in this study strengthened their cognitive and emotional engagement, which they applied to their classes. It is important to note that other benefits of debate, such as participants' acquisition of new forms of cultural capital, may also contribute to their academic success (Gorski 2020). Cognitive and emotional engagement are not necessarily working alone to boost academic outcomes. However, the results presented below highlight a significant finding—that the unique learning environments of extracurricular activities can nurture students' cognitive and emotional engagement, which students can draw upon in the classroom context. I suggest that extracurricular activities' differences in opportunities to build cognitive engagement (e.g., football players might interrogate the logic of their decisions less often than chess players) can help explain why certain activities promote academic achievement and positive youth development more than others (Broh 2002; Bundick 2011; Fredricks and Eccles 2006).

DATA AND METHODS

This study draws on ethnographic observations and interviews with two high school debate teams in Chicago Public Schools. During the 2017–2018 academic year, I conducted approximately 250 hours of observations with the debate teams at schools I call Stewart High School and Greenside High School. Stewart and Greenside are both neighborhood public schools that primarily serve students of color

[5] Further, Shackelford shows that debaters display gains in math scores, suggesting that "debaters may gain skills that aren't explicitly practiced in the activity indirectly through increases in school engagement outcomes," but does not explore them further (2019: 152).

who live in the low-income communities surrounding the schools. I worked with the Chicago Debate League (CDL) to identify these schools, seeking field sites that were fairly typical of schools across the league, in which the debate teams were not in their first year of existence (during which time many teams face significant disruption). I attended debate team practices 4 days per week (twice each at Stewart and Greenside), as well as weekend competitions once or twice per month depending on the competition schedule during the 2017-2018 debate season (October to April). In months 4 through 6 of fieldwork, I supplemented my observations with interviews with 12 debaters—six each from Stewart and Greenside—and their coaches, for a total of 14 interviews. These interviews were intended to offer greater detail about the themes that emerged from my observations, and were an effective way to clarify debaters' and coaches' ideas about the patterns that I had documented throughout the season.[6] While interviews included only a portion of each team, observations included nearly all of the debaters across the two schools.

Stewart High School is located on Chicago's West Side, and serves approximately 1,600 students. Its student body is roughly three-quarters Hispanic, with the remaining quarter of the study body mostly made up of Black and white students. Greenside High School is located on Chicago's South Side, and serves approximately 1,200 students. Greenside High School students are virtually all Black. According to Chicago Public Schools, both schools were ranked level 2 + during this study, the median of five quality rankings assigned by the district (CPS n.d.). The schools' status on a slew of metrics—such as percentage of low-income students, freshmen on-track rate, student attendance, 5-year graduation rates, and average SAT scores—was close to the district averages (CPS n.d.). I, therefore, take these schools to represent fairly typical neighborhood public schools in CPS. The debate teams at Stewart and Greenside generally reflected the racial and socioeconomic breakdowns of the larger student bodies in their respective schools. They also reflected the overall gender distribution of the Chicago Debate League (CDL), with more girls than boys (Mezuk et al. 2011). At both Stewart and Greenside, the coaches were white men in their first decade of teaching who taught core subject classes.

I took field notes using my laptop during my observations of the teams' practices and competitions, which mirrored the widespread laptop use in high school debate. Because debaters and coaches moved frequently during debate-related activities, whether to talk to different students/teammates or to shift to a new exercise, I was also able to vary my locations in order to capture a diversity of behaviors and interactions. I typically arrived at Stewart and Greenside a few minutes before debate practices formally began so that I could already be present in the room when practices started. When possible, I also tried to stay at practices as long as possible, leaving only when the coach emptied the room of students and locked the door

[6] I selected students for these supplemental interviews based on regular practice attendance and their after-school availability; I was not able to interview students who infrequently attended debate. While I did try to interview some less-frequently present debaters, these students did not schedule interviews, cancelled, or simply forgot. The interview sample did not result in a representative set of debaters, as each team had some members who participated only rarely; however, the interviews that I was able to conduct enabled clarification of some of the patterns that arose in my observations. While the absence of interviews with peripherally-involved debaters is not ideal, these debaters were present in the bulk of my data, which came from observations throughout the season.

behind him. These moments before and after the official start/end times of practice gave me the opportunity to observe how debaters interacted with each other and their coaches during times that were less governed by formalized objectives and norms.

After completing fieldwork and interviews, I analyzed interview transcripts, analytical memos, and field notes using NVivo. I read through these materials in full during an initial round of open coding. After identifying themes in my data, I used second- and third-order coding in order to focus my analysis. I also used the analytical memos I recorded during fieldwork to understand how my thinking about certain topics shifted over time. I produced preliminary write-ups of my data in months 2, 4, and 6 of fieldwork, which were helpful in identifying early themes in my data and in reorienting my observations to address issues that remained unclear. In order to protect participants' identities, they are identified using only a pseudonym, their school's pseudonym, and their grade level.

Dynamics in the Field

I introduced myself to the teams as a researcher interested in high school debate, but I also mentioned my own experience in debate as a high school student. I participated in a different form of debate than that practiced in the CDL, but am familiar with many of the conventions of the CDL format (policy debate). This insider/outsider status allowed me to occasionally use my knowledge to gain access to certain conversations, while at other times using (or feigning) ignorance in order to learn from the study participants. Debaters at Stewart and Greenside referred to me as "like a coach" or a "resource" because I occasionally offered feedback or advice. However, I attempted to keep my input generic and brief, pivoting as quickly as possible to ask students their own perceptions of their performance.

The Stewart and Greenside teams were quick to accept my presence and make me feel less like a stranger than like another member of the group. At a tournament a few weeks into my fieldwork, I noted that I already felt like a part of the Stewart crew as students whispered to me about judges' controversial decisions, swapped tips about how to connect to the internet, and offered snacks between rounds. These almost conspiratorial moments made me feel that I was not seen as an authority figure to be avoided. Because I am a young, white woman, I appear similar to many of the teachers in these students' schools, but at both sites I was asked early in my fieldwork whether I was a new student. (This was particularly surprising at Greenside, where virtually all of the students are Black.) I took these interactions as signals that my efforts to differentiate myself from the teachers/coaches—by dressing casually, sitting in student desks, not reprimanding students, and generally keeping to myself—were relatively successful.

For all of my observations of debaters, they of course observed me in return. At one tournament, a student asked if we should bring our belongings (coats, backpacks, etc.) to a room where we were going to watch a debate round. I shrugged, and told her that I always brought all of my things with me. The student chuckled and remarked, "Yeah, I've noticed." Another time, a group of students were joking

around, doing nothing in particular, and I sat—as usual—a few desks away typing notes about their interactions. A student looked up, and noticing my note-taking, he laughed. "Karlyn, are you getting all of this?" he quipped, apparently amused that I found their absent-minded chit-chat worthy of record. As these moments made clear, my presence certainly influenced the nature of the behaviors and interactions I observed. However, because coaches, judges, or other adults were also present during the vast majority of my observations, I do not believe that my presence led to any systematic changes in debaters' behaviors in ways that affected the findings presented below.

FINDINGS

Debaters at Greenside and Stewart often viewed their membership on the debate team as a significant part of their identities, which connected them to their schools. Although many debaters expressed surprise or humor about the fact that they joined the team, framing their membership as a sort of happy accident, they came to build strong relationships and identify more deeply with the learning process; ultimately, in their perspectives, their thoughts about school in general were changed. Even though the formal curriculum of their schools remained under-stimulating (Mehta and Fine 2019), debate equipped students with perspectives and skills that helped them become more deeply engaged in their classes.

Emotional Engagement: Peer Relationships

Strong peer relationships are a core part of students' emotional engagement in school. Friendships help youth feel connected and positively attached to their school environments. Debaters felt that their experiences in the activity helped them to build stronger relationships with their peers on the team, and to navigate their relationships with peers not on the team. They reported feeling a sense of belonging, and often likened the team to a "family" or a "home." Sofia, a sophomore at Stewart, recalled in an interview how she felt upon her first encounter with the team:

> I showed up the first day and I liked the aroma, and like, the *feel* that debate gave me. It's like, a homey feeling – like, it's really weird because the debate family is like my family away from my family. So it's kind of an awkward thing where I'll be like, 'yeah, I have two families, actually.'

This metaphor of the debate team as "family" signifies the strength of Sofia's connection to the team. While many debaters used similar metaphors to express their ties, others who avoided such strong claims still expressed a deep connection to their team. Amanda, a sophomore at Greenside, viewed her ability to unwind after school with the debate team as an important way to cope with the bad days she had at school:

> My freshman year [in debate], I was able to meet people who I'm able to call my friends, and I'm able to have – maybe like, an outlet. Because, school isn't the best every single day, and sometimes you're gonna have bad days, but to go home — not, not to go *home*, but to go after school and to have the team – and you have all these people just smiling and laughing, telling you about their day. It's a break from what you've been through for the last eight hours. It's pretty cool to be a part of.

While Amanda clarified that she did not view debate as home, her statement indicates a certain sense of comparability between these spaces. For Sofia, Amanda, and their teammates, the debate team gave them a space to feel comfortable and emotionally connected to others in their schools. They thus formed a "sense of belonging" with the team that is characteristic of adolescents' meaningful "identity projects" (DeLuca et al. 2016).

Significantly, it was not only being around like-minded peers that enabled debaters to build strong relationships; rather, they valued the opportunity to interact with peers who might otherwise fall outside of their social circles. Ali, a freshman at Stewart, explained that being on the team helped her make friends she otherwise might not have:

> Debate kinda gives me a new setting as to where I can meet new people, and I've made friends through debate, like Sofia and Aleks – I never thought that I would have these friends, but I do!. . .And like, yeah, maybe not everybody in debate likes me, and maybe not all the teams like me, but we don't really care anymore. And it's like, at the end of the season we can all put our differences aside, and if you threw every single debater ever into a room, we could all – it would be the best party ever!

For Ali, the fact that she might not be universally liked was not a significant concern because she felt secure in the friendships that she did form; she was part of a "we" who could collectively not care about her detractors. Her enthusiasm about her relationships on the team stood in stark contrast to her general opinions of her non-debating peers, who were often met with an eye roll or a disparaging remark ("I hate high school") when they behaved rambunctiously such as by shouting, running, or fighting in the hallways.

Beyond becoming close with their peers in their schools, debate also represented a unique chance for students to interact with youth from other schools. To Ebony, a senior at Greenside, these opportunities carried particular significance due to the racial homogeneity of her school:

> My school isn't very diverse. So at the debate tournaments, I see people of all different races and ethnicities. So it's not just African Americans that I'm debating with. It's usually people that I really don't hang out with, like white people and Hispanics and Latinos. So the fact that it brings me out into a diverse field — everyone likes to debate, everyone has arguments. And I like that about debate.

Debate, like other extracurricular activities, thus represents a way for students to develop relationships with peers who they otherwise might be unlikely to encounter or become close to.

The peer relationships that students developed on their teams were an important part of their experiences in school. One basis on which these relationships formed was through students' collaborative skill-building efforts, highlighting the importance of the "skill-building activities" component of the "Big Three" of PYD (Lerner et al. 2017). For example, Ebony's teammate, Promise, felt that the relationship she developed with her partner via their improvement efforts directly contributed to their academic successes:

> My partner, she's strong where I'm weak, and vice versa. We help each other out, and I feel like when we practice together, or when we go into a tournament together, the way we go about an argument, we think about, 'oh, you should [speak first] because you're good at this.' Or, 'you

> should [speak second] because you're better at rebuttals' or something like that. And I felt like the whole aspect of like being able to, you know, strengthen each other's weaknesses also comes into play in like real life. Like when we study, it's like, 'oh I know you're not that good at this topic, so let's go over it later,' or something like that. Like, that helps.

Promise and Ebony thus used the interpersonal dynamic they honed in the debate setting to strengthen their studying skills when working within the formal curriculum of the school. For Michelle, a freshman at Stewart, the friendships students gained from debate were a significant perk, which worked in tandem with academic benefits to afford participants a sense of pride in the activity:

> We're all one, in a sense, and that's a really good thing... It can be a pride thing, and it gives kids something to look forward to, and something to be excited about and proud about. It gives them something to say that they've accomplished, and at the same time, it gives them something to say, 'I learned this today.' In debate, you can never say that you didn't learn anything, because you're constantly learning. And I think that debate is really awesome in that sense where it's helping you understand that you're learning, and not just making mistakes.

Like Michelle, Amanda felt that debate could afford participants a sense of belonging:

> Debate has made me feel more a part of school...Like, this is what [made me be] like, 'okay, I'm okay to be a [Tiger].' And then, any other time, I'm like, 'I really don't care. Like, I just go here.' And there's definitely a lot of laughter in there [the debate room], and a small team. Everybody knows each other. It's no type of, 'I don't really know you,' or you know — we all really *know* each other. We all laugh and we have so many inside jokes and we just plan on continuing that...You know, it makes me feel a part of [my] school. A part of something.

Amanda juxtaposes the sense of connection to her school that she feels when she is surrounded by her team with the flippant attitude she feels "any other time"; what happens after school is what makes her feel like she belongs in the school at all. Thus, debate team participation—a form of behavioral engagement in the school—helped connect students with their peers, deepening their emotional engagement in their schools, and consequently helping to establish the sense of community needed for deep learning (Mehta and Fine 2019).

Emotional Engagement: Relationships with Adults

In conjunction with the strong relationships they developed with one another, debaters formed strong relationships with their coaches. These relationships worked to enhance debaters' emotional engagement in school, and demonstrate how debate provides the "positive and sustained adult-youth relationships" that constitute one of the "Big Three" resources that can promote positive youth development (Lerner et al. 2017). Debaters got to know their coaches in deeply personal ways, demonstrating a level of familiarity that is often more typical in middle-class school settings (Calarco 2018; Lareau 2011). For example, debaters learned about their coaches' quirks, as Aleks and Sofia (sophomores from Stewart) illustrated while talking about their coach, Mr. Smith, during a tournament.

> Aleks glanced over his shoulder and remarked, "Oh, Smith's doing his nervous walk." Sofia agreed: "Yep, walking around the area, scoping out the people." Aleks turned and explained to me, "After breaks [when the teams advancing to elimination rounds are announced], he always

> puts in his headphones and walks around, like – he's so nervous for us." Sofia gushed, "It's so nice! He's so invested! For [the former captain] he actually like, got mad. Ten out of ten, [I] would have [him] as a coach again." Aleks and Sofia giggled.

In this scenario, Aleks and Sofia showed that they were familiar with Mr. Smith's behaviors and used them to interpret his feelings; they read his mannerisms as an investment in their own success. Contrast their belief in Mr. Smith's investment in them with Omari's (Greenside, freshman) attitudes about why he was struggling in his math class: "It's not the class, it's the teacher. Well, she's not the teacher. She's the giver. Khan Academy's the teacher." For Omari, his math teacher was so dramatically detached from his success in the class that he stripped her of the "teacher" title, demoting her to "giver" (of work). The sense of connection that debaters formed with their coaches were markedly different than the transactional relationships they had with many of their teachers.

As a result of their close relationships with their coaches, debaters felt empowered to demand specific learning activities that they felt would benefit them. For example, Sharlene—a freshman at Greenside—was walking with her team from one building to another during a tournament one morning. These few moments on foot struck her as an opportunity to make sure she and her partner Omari were prepared for their upcoming round, so she turned to her coach and asked "Do you want to test us on biopower?" More insistence than question, Sharlene felt empowered to make this demand on her coach's time. Her coach agreed, and began questioning them about the concept. Debaters' feelings of entitlement to their coaches' time stemmed in part from the coaches' behaviors. The coaches at both schools often asked for students' permission to carry out certain activities, soliciting their input about pedagogical strategies, timing, and assignments. For example, Mr. Smith at Stewart outlined his plan for practice one afternoon, then said "We may not stay 'til 5, if that's okay with you. Would that be alright with you guys?" (The students agreed to this modification to the standard routine.) Similarly, Mr. Moore at Greenside asked his students one afternoon to return "the memo you were supposed to make, with the suggestions you had for what you wanted to do during practice." These formal requests for input by coaches demonstrated to students that their input about learning activities was both valued and respected. Alongside these solicited opportunities for input, students provided unsolicited feedback to their coaches. They asked for specific instructional tools (i.e., "Can you write that on the board?"), clarifications ("Can you elaborate on that?"), and activities ("Can we do speaking drills?"). These requests for "tailoring," more typically seen among higher-income students (Lareau 2011), were common during practices and competitions alike. In other words, debaters learned to adopt behaviors aligned with middle-class expectations of the "student" role, equipping them with attitudes and skills that help students successfully engage within the dominant cultural context of public schools (Gorski 2020). Moreover, these instances allowed students to exercise leadership within the debate context, illustrating another of the "Big Three" contextual resources that can promote positive youth development (Lerner et al. 2017).

Students at both schools likened their relationships with their coaches to familial ties, comparing Mr. Smith at Stewart to a dad and Mr. Moore at Greenside to an older brother. These familial metaphors were not common among most students

and teachers in the schools I studied. The coaches accepted these roles with pride and a bit of amusement. For example, one student at Stewart informed Mr. Smith that he would call him "dad" when he substitute taught the student's first period class the following day. The student had, moments before this exchange, mentioned kissing a girl; Mr. Smith quipped, in mock-seriousness and affecting a deeper tone of voice, "well, as your father, I'm concerned about who you're kissing." The students and Mr. Smith laughed. At Greenside, Mr. Moore compared his relationships with debaters versus his nondebating students:

> I'm more open with debate students, 'cause like, some of these kids I've known — they're like a younger sibling or something, you know? I've known them for the entire time I've been [teaching] here. So yeah, I'm more casual, or open with my personal life with those students... At first, I don't really think about it. But then when students say it to you, and you kind of think back on it and you're like, 'yeah, I guess we do kind of have that relationship,' right? Like yes, I'm their teacher, and I'm their coach, but I'm — some of them, in some way, view me as like an older brother or something like that, you know?

These intimate relationships helped establish the debate team as a space for vulnerability, where participants could make mistakes, acknowledge them without fear of being reprimanded or mocked, and learn from them. For example, at the first practice after a tournament mid-season, Mr. Smith at Stewart led his team in recognizing areas for improvement. He said,

> I think we have a long way to go. I have a couple observations, but um – we'll talk about those in a minute. I was prepping for class on Sunday, right after the tournament, and I came across this quote from Malcom X, and it made me think about the debate team. So this is the question I'm gonna pose to you. He says, 'anytime you find someone more successful than you are, especially when you're both engaged in the same business' – in this case, debate – 'you know they're doing something you aren't.' So, what are other people doing better than what we're doing, and how can we get to that point where we can out-do them? What did you notice others doing that were especially good?

Debaters listed a slew of skills, and after each one, the coach nodded, often asking for examples or prodding students for more detail. Afterwards, he gestured to the ballots where judges had written feedback for debaters, and told students to "mark these up" (annotate them) to help them identify their own shortcomings. Through their emotional connections to their coaches, students became more comfortable with one of the difficult aspects of the learning process—the open admission of mistakes—signifying a deepening of their cognitive engagement.

These moments of vulnerability were intentional on the part of coaches. Mr. Moore at Greenside explained,

> I try to do more of like, emotional feedback, maybe. I'm not quite sure how that sounds, but clearly these kids get very frustrated sometimes, like Omari and Sharlene: they're new debaters, and they get like, fourth place at a tournament, and they're upset about it... But it's like, you know, I'm trying to make them realize it's still something to be positive about... I try to give them feedback in the sense that they're making progress, or overall what they're doing is positive, and I — I think they're getting something out of it.

Here, Mr. Moore recognizes that being "new debaters" means that Omari and Sharlene may not have the well-honed emotional skillset of more seasoned debaters, but explains how he works to help them develop positive perspectives. These efforts were recognized and valued by debaters. For example, Michelle (a Stewart fresh-

man) felt that "coaches telling me things like, 'just because you lost doesn't mean you didn't know what you're talking about,' or 'you need to take that and learn from your mistakes,' [that] will help [me] in college and all." Moreover, debaters felt that they could use their coaches as resources to help them overcome obstacles in school. For instance, when Sharlene at Greenside was telling me about her day one afternoon, she shared this: "I forgot to do my Spanish homework, so I went to Mr. Moore and had him open up the computer cart, and I did the homework there before class." She was not afraid of being reprimanded by Mr. Moore for this slip-up, and entrusted him to help her. In this instance, Sharlene leveraged the emotional connection she had with Mr. Moore to help her complete an aspect of the school's formal curriculum, demonstrating how emotional engagement can directly influence academic achievement.

Contexts like debate where youth have the potential to engage in deep learning must balance the need to be "simultaneously safe enough that people feel open to taking risks and expressing vulnerability, but exacting enough to create real standards and give, when necessary, critical feedback" (Mehta and Fine 2019: 302). In the debate context, strong student–coach relationships worked to enable the exchange of high-quality feedback. For Sofia, a Stewart sophomore, her coach's attention to her as an individual meant that the feedback he gave her was immensely more valuable than the feedback she received from other teachers. She explained,

> When you're in a classroom, there's like fifteen other people, or around thirty, whatever. They [the teachers] are just like, 'you guys need to speak up more.' That's 'you guys.' But like, when you're hearing from a judge, from a coach, it's more like *you*, you as a person. Like, they specifically point it out to you. And you don't get that a lot in a classroom, 'cause typically the CPS classroom, it's one teacher, 30 people [students]. It becomes annoying because you don't get either personal time with that teacher, or you don't know what you're struggling with, because it's a generalized thing. So then you feel like your*self* is generalized, you know? So you don't know exactly what to do in that instance.

While Sofia used student–teacher ratios to justify the difference in the quality of feedback she receives, this understanding could not account for the fact that the Stewart debate team had around fifteen members, but Mr. Smith was still able to provide each of them with feedback that was personalized and meaningful. While the student–teacher ratio was certainly lower on the debate team than in the 30-person class she mentioned, it remained unclear in this explanation how Mr. Smith could manage to give substantive feedback to all 15 debaters. Omari, at Greenside, initially offered the same explanation for differences in feedback between coaches and classroom teachers, but later identified a different cause of the distinction:

> [The coach] gives feedback, like he gives you pointers. But some feedback, it doesn't really help you understand, because a lot of teachers don't tell you personally what you did wrong, what you did right. They try to address that as a class, because the class size is too big for the person to [tell] like, each student, what they did wrong and what they did right. So the feedback in debate, it can be more personal, it can help you better than the feedback at school. Because not every teacher is able to connect to you.

Here, Omari identifies the crux of the issue: it is not only student–teacher ratios that determine whether or not feedback is useful, but also the *connections* between students and teachers. As these teams demonstrate, it is possible to form strong

connections between one teacher and larger groups of students, and these relationships mean that feedback can feel personalized even when it is delivered in a group setting (like a practice). These examples help demonstrate how emotional engagement can help to influence academic achievement via the exchange of high-quality feedback and trust among participants.

Cognitive Engagement: The Hard Work of Learning

Through their experiences in the activity, debaters deepened their cognitive engagement in school—their willingness to work hard toward the goal of learning. Debaters often made disparaging references to times their teachers expected mere compliance rather than critical thinking, for instance, when they were told to "just read." Unlike these classroom experiences, debate exposed them to interactive and challenging opportunities that led them to value the hard work of learning. For example, self-directed learning was a key feature of debate practices. At Greenside one afternoon, I observed the following:

> They all seem to be doing their own things a lot – using their phones, taking notes, chatting, playing with their clothes or hair. No one scolds them for any of this. A detached observer might think that they were unengaged or not learning, but every now and then they'll each hear something [about the debate topic] that they disagree with and bubble into a lively conversation all across the room. It's clear that even when they appear not to be listening, they are.

This unstructured work environment, something I observed time and time again during debate practices, allowed debaters to complete their work on their own terms. For example, a Greenside freshman, Sharlene, was researching independently one afternoon so that she could better respond to an argument she had recently heard. She told her coach what she was doing, and he nodded. After a moment of silence, she said to no one in particular: "I just—I gotta be prepared. I did *not* like when I was in the room [debating] and I didn't have anything to say against them."

Sharlene's motivation to complete work for her own benefit—rather than because she was instructed to—was common among debaters, according to Mr. Smith at Stewart:

> I think they [debaters] want to know things for the sake of knowledge. I think they see knowledge as something that they can *use*, as opposed to just something that they need, that they'll be tested on, or something that someone else expects them to do. They see knowledge as a tool for themselves. So I mean, I'm not saying there aren't other students who see it that way, but I think being involved in an academic project like debate kind of makes 'em see knowledge in a different way.

In his understanding, debate was significant in helping some students develop an appreciation of the "learning for understanding" that is characteristic of deep learning (Mehta and Fine 2019).

The cognitive engagement that students developed through debate helped them to become more ambitious in their schoolwork. In describing one student, Mr. Smith recalled that she initially did not want to take courses with a heavy workload because "she didn't want to do that extra work." However, at the time of my interview with Mr. Smith at the end of the season, the student had recently completed a major

project for a high-level course she had elected to take. Mr. Smith told me, "I do think that debate played a large role in motivating her to be a student who is more interested in knowledge for the sake of knowledge." In her interview, this student seemed to confirm Mr. Smith's assessment. She told me that she felt she had changed as a result of her experiences in debate. I asked her how she had changed, and she said: "Now it's like, I *like* getting to learn from things... I appreciate the experience, and I appreciate the knowledge, and the practice. I guess those parts are just a lot more fun to me now." For this debater, learning became associated with a set of activities she valued, rather than extra work to be avoided. Debate helped students to become "more willing to commit themselves to the hard work entailed in learning"—the heart of cognitive engagement (Furrer et al. 2014: 106).

Debaters often became deeply engaged in their work, and many described their experiences as having a sense of "flow," or complete immersion in the tasks at hand (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). For Sasha at Greenside, it was her "debate brain... that's where my whole mind turns on." For her teammate Ebony, debate felt similar to the creative arts because in both activities people can "go inside their own zone and create." These moments of total immersion were often more rewarding than their typical schoolwork. For example, Rebecca at Stewart confessed to me: "I've noticed sometimes that I've done debate work rather than schoolwork because like, it's more interesting to me." However, she still felt that the skills she learned in debate had helped her become a better student, since she could bring her newfound love of learning to the classroom:

> To my friends, I'm this goofy person that's not really smart. I'm just like 'uhhhh.' But when I'm in my debate mindset, in my classroom mindset, I change. Completely different. And like, we're [debaters are] different because — I'm trying to be a debater, always. And they're [non-debaters are] just *them*, like they're just their own personality. And having debate, it's just a better experience, I think.

To Rebecca, being in her "debate mindset" meant stepping outside of the "goofy" persona her friends associated with her. Her explicit connection between "be[ing] a debater" and her "classroom mindset," both juxtaposed with "this goofy person that's not really smart," illustrates that her behavioral engagement in debate helped foster her cognitive engagement in the classroom. For Amanda at Greenside, the changes that came with being a debater meant a deeper connection to the things she was learning:

> I've grown to be more confident, and also like, to be more passionate about things. Because debate, it takes time, it takes time to understand what you're learning, and then you take time after school to practice and stuff like that. And it's making a change in my everyday life. Like I'm taking time to do things that I like, or taking time to really read and understand these things.

Like Rebecca, Amanda pointed to debate as a key site in which she learned to shift her orientation toward learning, such that now she is "taking time to really read and understand" materials. Thus, debate helped students find personal value in academic pursuits, rather than simply viewing them as a series of tasks to complete.

Coaches and debaters alike differentiated between the learning experiences students encountered in their classrooms and those in debate. For example, Mr. Moore

at Greenside believed that debate carried unique social currency in the school because it meant that participants were exposed to high-level learning opportunities that their peers lacked:

> There's a different type of bragging rights involved with debate. Like, if you're good at [sports], that's cool. That's good for you. But if you're good at debate, other kids, I feel like, view that — it gives a type of image, right? They think like, 'oh, this student is smart,' so it probably makes them [debaters] feel good about themselves too. Because, a lot of students are not happy with their school, or their teachers, and things like that. So I think, when they're getting something that is specifically like, intellectually rigorous, I think that is something that they get specifically to debate that they wouldn't get in like [soccer] or basketball or whatever.

Mr. Moore notes that many students at Greenside were not satisfied with the overall quality of their education, but that the more "intellectually rigorous" atmosphere debaters were exposed to give them a reason to "feel good about themselves"—a clear articulation of the relationship between deep-learning opportunities and positive identity formation. Debaters agreed that the learning opportunities they had in debate were unique compared to what they experienced in their classes. For example, Destiny, a senior at Greenside, explained that one of the most important differences between the knowledge she gained in debate and the knowledge she gained in school was how to apply that knowledge to a variety of contexts: "[In debate,] anything you're thinking about, you have to be able to apply it to another situation. You just can't think whatever you're taught. . .You can apply it to different situations." She contrasted the portability of the knowledge she gained in debate with the localized knowledge emphasized in her classes: "We were taught all these things at school, but we don't know how to apply it or we don't know when to apply it." Because of debate, she explained, she understood how knowledge could be portable, and worked to apply that idea to her classes, even if her teachers did not. Thus, even when confronted with the same set of learning opportunities as before she started debate, Destiny found new ways to connect with the formal curriculum of the school.

Differences between classroom learning and debate learning were highlighted in conversation one afternoon when Greenside debaters were discussing the concept of a marketplace of ideas. They played out a scene that began much like the cheesy fare of after-school specials, but ultimately turned into a biting critique of their school. One student, referring to the marketplace of ideas, exclaimed "that's what debate is!" The debaters chatted about the value of the ideas they were exposed to in debate, and two students high-fived; one remarked, "we're going somewhere!" (The implication that their classmates were not went unstated.) However, as the conversation continued, they all agreed that their school—and the district in general—did not teach students "how to think." There was no marketplace of ideas in their classrooms. As one later quipped while shuffling playing cards at a tournament, "*this* is what Greenside taught me." Their judgment of their (typical) classes matched many of the classrooms Mehta and Fine observed, which were "spaces to sit and passively listen" (2019: 4). Through debate, however, students learned about ideas that helped them engage more—even in these lackluster learning environments. Michelle, a Stewart freshman, gave one example of how knowledge she gained in debate helped her engage in class:

> [In] discussions, I speak because I know what I'm talking about. . .I'm getting to know the details that I never would have known without these things that I'm reading, without all these [debate] files. [Before,] I wouldn't know some of the statistics for some of these numbers, for some of these quotes and facts. And so now in discussions and in talking to other people, I'm educated about what I'm talking about, and that's a huge sense of pride for me.

In other words, even though her teachers were unlikely to have changed their curricular and pedagogical strategies to account for Michelle's new knowledge and skills, Michelle had adapted her own strategies in the classroom in order to get more out of the learning environment. Mr. Smith, at Stewart, felt that debate helped build certain skills that he didn't feel could come from "school as it is now." He explained,

> A research paper unit could give kids a lot of the same skills, but then again, there's always this idea that 'I need to finish this so I get a grade,' and that doesn't happen in debate. It's like, 'I'm doing this so I can win, so I can have a good time, and feel like I'm improving myself.' So that intrinsic motivation, I think that provides — I don't know if you could call it intrinsic, because you're still doing it to win, but it's a more authentic goal that you're aiming for.

Mr. Smith brings attention to an interesting tension: whether students' efforts can be considered intrinsic motivation if their ultimate goal is to win debates. However, even if their motivation is external, their cognitive engagement is likely deepened because of their self-endorsement of the extrinsic goal which they adopted of their own volition (Ryan and Deci 2000).

Ebony, at Greenside, gave one example of how debate helped her stay engaged in school via her deepened cognitive engagement:

> Debate is making me more conscious of the world. I'm reading this book called Native Son in English, and one of the quotes she [the teacher] asked us about today was being conscious, being conscious of the world – it forces you to be enraged. So like, you knowing the truth about the world, should you always be mad about it all the time?. . . You know, some people really want to be oblivious to the fact that they don't — they don't want to know. They want to remain ignorant. And, [in] debate? You can't do that. You can't remain ignorant.

In her own view, Ebony's experiences in debate helped her form an understanding of "the truth about the world" that she felt some of her peers lacked. Some students described a similar sense of heightened awareness when describing their experiences with switch-side debating, or the practice of alternating sides of the assigned topic over the course of a competition. Aleks, a sophomore at Stewart, described how this had helped him value learning for its own sake:

> I think just it's building your, what's the word? It's more like — resilience, I guess? Determination, maybe? — to learn and be determined to keep up with what you're dealing with. It's almost like a block that you're building, like your foundation to being structured and understanding. I don't know what's the word, like understanding that it's okay to go against what you believe. Like it's okay if you disagree with some things just for the purpose of learning, if it's for educational purposes, and you get something out of it — not even just like a reward or something, like getting a sense of, 'hey, I learned something because like I took another stance' or like, 'hey, it opened my mind to something else.'

Thus, students' experiences in debate helped them to become familiar with and committed to the (often difficult) learning process, rather than being passive actors subjected to a series of tasks that merely require compliance. In other words, debate helped them develop cognitive engagement in their schools, which helps to illustrate why certain extracurricular activities are especially impactful in improving school

performance (Broh 2002; Fredricks and Eccles 2006). Overall, the emotional and cognitive engagement that debaters developed through their behavioral engagement in the activity equipped them with skills and attitudes that they and their coaches felt benefitted them in the core curriculum of the school.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Whether the purpose of schooling is to equip students with cognitive skills, or civic knowledge, or any other end, its efficacy is hampered if students are not engaged in the process. Fredricks et al. note that diverse efforts to improve schools—for instance, those aimed at improving the relevance and rigor of curricular practices, or creating more welcoming environments—all "explicitly or implicitly focus on engagement as a route to increased learning or decreased dropping out" (2004: 61). While promoting school engagement alone is not sufficient to ensure students' success, it remains a necessary aspect of any efforts to improve schooling. Beyond academic outcomes, engagement also constitutes a strength that youth bring to their developmental contexts which can promote positive development (Lerner et al. 2017).

In this study, I demonstrate how one form of behavioral engagement can help promote emotional and cognitive engagement. Specifically, I show how debate team participation among can foster stronger emotional engagement via deepened relationships with peers and coaches, and cognitive engagement via a greater appreciation for, and commitment to, the challenging learning process. Through their experiences on the debate team, students in this study became more deeply engaged in their schools. In their own understandings, debate was transformative for their feelings of belonging (emotional engagement) and attitudes toward learning (cognitive engagement). These findings help clarify the mechanisms underlying the demonstrated improvements in the academic performance of debaters versus their nondebating peers (Mezuk 2009; Mezuk et al. 2011; Shackelford 2019) by highlighting how debate can foster cognitive and emotional engagement—which past evidence suggests contributes to academic success (Chase et al. 2014; Fredricks and Eccles 2006; Johnson et al. 2001; Wang and Eccles 2012).

However, it is important to recall that the relationships between various forms of engagement, across different contexts and among diverse individuals, are heterogeneous (Archambault et al. 2009; Wang and Eccles 2012). In other words, researchers and practitioners should not expect to see payoffs in cognitive and emotional engagement from all extracurricular participation, nor are gains in any particular form(s) of engagement guaranteed to bolster students' academic achievement. Researchers should explore how the relationships between the three domains of school engagement (on one hand) and school success (on the other) differ across individual-context relationships. Additionally, in this study, I treat one form of behavioral engagement as a given (akin to an independent variable)—students' participation in debate—in order to examine its effects on cognitive and emotional engagement (akin to dependent variables). Future research should consider the reverse pathway to examine whether and how emotional and cognitive engagement

might influence behavioral engagement. For example, it may be the case that students' increased emotional engagement through sports teams contributes to increased behavioral engagement in the classroom via participation in discussions. In this study, I focus only on how debate team participation, as one case of behavioral engagement, deepens certain students' cognitive and emotional engagement in school.

It is also possible that students who are inclined to join debate teams would find ways to feel connected to their classes regardless of whether they had the opportunity to become debaters. However, the fact that so many of the students in this study explicitly differentiated between their experiences in debate and their experiences elsewhere in their schools—both in their classes and in other activities—signifies that they took unique meaning from debate. PYD posits that positive and sustained adult–youth relationships, skill-building activities, and youth leadership opportunities are contextual resources that can help promote positive development for youth (Lerner et al. 2017); I show that the debate teams I studied are contexts in which these features were present. The extent to which these features exist in classrooms and extracurricular activities varies widely, which may help explain why the effects of extracurricular participation on students' academic achievement also vary widely (Broh 2002; Bundick 2011; Fredricks and Eccles 2006). More generally, some of the features of debate discussed here—such as its switch-side structure (p. 29) or the exchange of intellectual feedback (p. 24-25)—are relatively unique to debate, while others—such as its "homey feeling" (p.15)—are not. Future work should systematically examine how the organizational and social structures of activities relate to school engagement. Such research can help inform efforts to develop learning environments that are well-positioned to nurture adolescents' connections to their schools.

While this study is undoubtedly limited by its small sample size and focus on a singular activity in one context, the broader point remains that sociologists must be attentive to all three domains of engagement, taking seriously cognitive engagement alongside behavioral and emotional engagement as predictors of academic achievement. Moreover, the nuances of individual-context relationships and the bidirectional influence that individuals and contexts exert on one another underscore the need for such narrowly situated perspectives. By drawing on the domains of engagement identified in the psychological literature, sociologists can improve the conceptual clarity of research about students' behaviors, feelings, and attitudes toward school—research which tends to be plagued by the interchangeable use of terms that differ in nuanced ways, such as "attraction to school," "attachment to school," and "engagement with school" (Hallinan 2008). In this study, I work to disaggregate the domains of engagement by demonstrating how one form of behavioral engagement (debate team participation) helps foster cognitive and emotional engagement. The consequences of sociologists' varied uses of the term 'engagement' (and related concepts) are not merely semantic; they call into question how schools can best support students' learning. As sociologists consider efforts to improve students' experiences of schooling, more attention should be paid to the interplay between behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

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The University of Chicago Institutional Review Board and the Chicago Public Schools Research Review Board reviewed and approved my research protocol. All human subjects gave informed consent/assent prior to participating in the study, and informed consent of parents/legal guardians was obtained for subjects under the age of 18. Adequate steps were taken to protect participants' confidentiality. The contents of this manuscript do not reflect the views or policies of Chicago Public Schools or Chicago Debates.

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