The Civic Leadership Institute:

A Service-Learning Program for Academically Gifted Youth

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Background

Conceptions of Service-Learning

In recent years, the concept of service-learning has been gaining much momentum and popularity, but the concept is certainly not new. Service-learning, or learning by doing, can find its roots in the philosophy of John Dewey. Dewey promoted a connection between daily life and learning (Kunin, 1997) and perceived communities as an integral part of educational experiences (Waterman, 1997). A tradition of volunteerism that was widespread in the United States in the 1960s also helped establish a foundation for service-learning (Hinck & Brandell, 1999). Today, service-learning is governed by the overarching assumption that academic achievement and social development are

The need for quality service-learning programs has increased according to greater interest in service-learning and civic engagement for academically gifted students. The Civic Leadership Institute (CLI), a 3-week residential program for gifted adolescents, is a service-learning program created to help academically talented students explore complex social issues that are faced by communities and society today. Class activities are comprised of rigorous academic coursework, community volunteer service, meetings with top community leaders, seminars on specific topics of interest, and rich residential and recreational experiences. This study examined how students perceive and evaluate their service-learning experiences with the CLI program using surveys from program evaluations and narrative comments from 230 gifted high school students who participated in CLI at two different sites in its first 2 years. Overall, the students indicated positive perceptions of the CLI program and were satisfied with its components, particularly the service projects and various field experiences. Overwhelmingly, they perceived that the coursework combined with hands-on experiences enhanced their awareness of civic issues, increased their motivation to engage in social issues in their communities, and allowed them to gain a new understanding and respect for diversity. Suggestions from students included more frequent field experiences, service projects tightly linked with academic content, and meetings with local community leaders. Because this study is the first evaluation of the CLI program, a longer term follow-up study with students who have participated in CLI and comparisons between students who have participated and students who have not participated in the program are needed to corroborate the positive perceptions found among this first cohort of student participants.

summary

enhanced by hands-on, community-based actions intended to benefit others (Conrad & Hedin, 1991).

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 defined service-learning as a method that: (a) provides students with opportunities to learn and develop through participation in service experiences organized by collaborating schools and communities; (b) meets actual community needs and allows students to apply newly-acquired skills and knowledge to real-life situations; (c) enhances learning by extending classroom learning into the community; and (d) fosters a sense of caring for other people (as cited in Waterman, 1997). Service-learning is similarly defined by the National Service-Learning Cooperative as "a teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service experience with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility" (Mintz & Liu, 1994, p. 12).

Service-learning is often mistakenly perceived as being identical to volunteer or community service because both involve service projects that impact the welfare of others. However, unlike general volunteerism or community service, service-learning is a method of teaching, not an end in itself, and thus, focuses on educating students, not simply on benefiting a client or community based on integration of thoughtfully organized community service with purposeful learning objectives (Blyth, Saito, & Berkas, 1997; Chapin, 1998; Goldsmith, 1996; Waterman, 1997). Different from traditional community service projects, such as visiting hospitals or nursing homes or cleaning up the local creek, service-learning activities also may stimulate social and political change (Chapin, 1998). Furco (1996) delineated the purpose and beneficiaries of service-learning as two distinctive features—service-learning aims to provide both service and learning, and benefits student participants and service recipients simultaneously. According to Kunin (1997), service-learning asks learners to become actively involved in the process of their own learning. Instead of simply following instructions from teachers in class, students are more engaged in both service projects and facilitated classroom reflection, which creates a more powerful and meaningful academic experience. Accordingly, two focal

aspects of service-learning are (a) the rigorous academic content integrated with a meaningful service component, and (b) students' taking an active role in connecting their service work to school curriculum.

Terry and Bohnenberger (2003) suggested types or classifications of service-learning according to the degree of student involvement and service to the community (see also Terry, 2000). The three types of service-learning they identified are community service, community exploration, and community action. They differ in how the school and community interact with one another. Community service has the lowest level of involvement in service-learning activities and is characterized by interactions that go mainly from school to community. This level heavily focuses on service with a lesser emphasis on learning. Examples of activities include tutoring young people and working in nursing homes or daycare centers.

Community exploration, the second degree of involvement, does not necessarily include direct service to the community, but puts more emphasis on learning than community service. Interactions between school and community are bilateral—students can participate in services for the community, or members of the community can get involved in schools. Examples of community exploration activities include internships, outdoor learning, and experiences offered by organizations such as Co-nect Schools, Expeditionary Learning, and Outward Bound.

Terry and Bohnenberger (2003) classified the highest level of service-learning as community action where schools and communities cooperate in a reciprocal way. Community action has a greater impact on the community and is more empowering for students than either community service or community exploration. Student involvement in civic reforms (e.g., legislative initiatives), in providing professional services to community organizations (e.g., grant writing), and in community beautification or environmental improvements are examples of community action.

Why Do Gifted Students Need Service-Learning?

Developing active civic engagement among gifted students is not only in the best interest of the students themselves, but also in the best interest of their larger communities and the world. Researchers and educators assert that academically talented youth are well-suited for service-learning activities due to their advanced level of social, emotional, moral, and ethical sensitivity or concern (Passow, 1989; Silverman, as cited in Lewis, 1996; Terry, 2000; Terry & Bohnenberger, 2003). Given that a higher level of moral judgment development is associated with rapid cognitive development, which involves the acquisition of advanced knowledge of moral standards and values of groups to which individuals belong (Kohlberg, 1969), it is not surprising that academically gifted youth tend to have a more highly developed sense of social justice, fairness, moral judgment, concern for others, and interest in global issues than their non-gifted counterparts (Gross, 1993; Lee & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006; Passow, 1988, 1989; Silverman, 1994). For example, Tan-Willman and Gutteridge (1981) found that high school students who attended an academically competitive school obtained 35% higher scores on the Defining Issues Test (DIT) than students in the norm. Lee and Olszewski-Kubilius also found that academically gifted high school students (primarily determined by above-level testing using the SAT or ACT) evidenced a higher level of moral judgment on the DIT-2 than their peers in the norming sample. Moreover, about two thirds of the gifted high school students were at or above the norming sample in moral judgment, which was actually comparable to the typical level of individuals with professional degrees. In Gross's case study of exceptionally gifted children (IQ over 160) in Australia, 4 of the 8 children (ages 10 to 13) exhibited far superior ability in moral reasoning, achieving scores that were above the mean of American high school and college students.

Personality traits, such as independence, responsibility, positive self-concept, and a high level of self-esteem, are documented as the major affective characteristics of gifted students (Ablard,

1997; Chan, 1988; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Janos, Fung, & Robinson, 1985; Katz, 1995; Olszewski-Kubilius, Kulieke, & Krasney, 1988; Sorenson & Francis, 1988). These attributes may make gifted students particularly well-suited to benefit from coursework and activities that involve service-learning and civic engagement (Lewis, 1996) because service-learning activities generally benefit students who are self-motivated, exhibit initiative, and actively engaged in the process of their learning (Kunin, 1997).

Another advantage of service-learning for gifted students is that it provides gifted students with curriculum and instruction that challenges them at a level beyond what they typically experience in school (Lewis, 1996; VanTassel-Baska, 1993). Particularly, through hands-on experiences with service-learning, gifted students may be able to develop advanced problem-solving abilities (Sorenson & Francis, 1988), critical thinking skills (Lewis, 1996), and leadership abilities (Lewis, 1996), and have opportunities to work with adult professionals or mentors (Sorenson & Francis, 1988).

Although very little empirical research exists that examines the impact of service-learning on gifted learners, there is some evidence indicating positive outcomes of participation in service-learning activities for gifted students. One example is Terry's (2000) focus-group interviews with 3 adolescents who had participated in service projects as part of their curriculum. The study showed that the students' service-learning experience enhanced their public speaking skills, use of mathematics, computer skills, photography, and writing skills. Their service projects included activities such as planning the restoration of a historic theater, raising money for an architect to design the renovation, and writing a state-approved solid waste management plan for their county. The students reported that after participation in those projects, they were better able to recognize real-life problems in their communities and had learned problem-solving skills, including the use of the political process, to help them resolve issues. Other reported benefits included greater self-confidence, self-efficacy, perseverance, and responsibility; enhanced skills related to teamwork and cooperation; new perspectives and

knowledge about effective interactions with other people; and better relationships with parents and coworkers.

Trebilcox (1997) disclosed positive changes after gifted middle school students who participated in various community service projects affiliated with the Speak Out for Stephanie (SOS) Foundation. The SOS Foundation was founded in the early 1990s by the parents of a college student who was brutally raped and murdered. The goals of the SOS foundation were to lobby for the passage of the Kansas Sexual Predator Law and provide a voice for victims. Students involved with the organization refinished furniture and decorated baskets to auction in a fundraiser, made a Stop the Hands of Violence clock, and composed lyrics and music for a song entitled *Sexual Predator*. Anecdotal data showed that these service projects enabled the gifted students to become more aware of personal safety, violence prevention, and their ability to impact legislation. The students also learned ways to care for others and how to plan and organize cooperative projects through their service.

Another anecdotal study (Willard, 1984) showed positive gains in academic and social skills for gifted elementary students following their experiences with service-learning. Willard, a teacher of gifted elementary school students, developed a social studies curriculum called the *Social Studies Model* for fifth-grade gifted students who were participating in a one-day-a-week pullout program. The model included various service-learning projects (e.g., running a weekly story hour; preparing science readers for primary-grade students in the school; and creating math, reading, and spelling games for children living at a local shelter for battered women) and integrated them into a curriculum that dealt with concepts of economics, urbanization, social organization, culture, and adaptation. Willard reported that through this social studies curriculum, her gifted students expanded their problem solving, critical thinking, creative reasoning, and research skills; built leadership skills; better understood the needs of other people; and learned the value of group cooperation. Also, she found these service-learning projects enabled the young students to learn the concept of *social* as an integral part of life inside and outside of school.

There are relatively few educational programs for gifted students that are explicitly designed to enhance skills in the areas of leadership, moral sensitivity, cooperation, and future orientation (Passow, 1988; also see Matthews, 2004, for literature review on leadership). Given the importance of those skills, Passow (1988) asserted that education for gifted students should incorporate a greater focus on the development of caring, concerned, compassionate, and committed individuals who are able to appreciate the value of their giftedness and learn to utilize it for both self-fulfillment and the welfare of society. He also suggested that schools integrate community resources into classroom learning for gifted students to enable them to become more sensitive to community and global issues such as poverty, famine, war, racial and cultural conflict, and the depletion of resources (Passow, 1988, 1989). Given the many benefits of service-learning for all students and the particularly strong match between the goals of service-learning and the characteristics of gifted students, high-quality service-learning programs for gifted learners are indispensable.

Purpose of the Study

The study presented is a descriptive study of a service-learning program, the Civic Leadership Institute (CLI), as it was implemented at two university sites during two consecutive summers. This paper consists of a detailed description of the program and of its components and activities, and analyzes students' perceptions of the program and of its primary benefits. The questions addressed in this paper are as follows:

1. What are the essential characteristics and components of the Civic Leadership Institute (CLI) program?
2. What are students' perceptions of the program? What aspects of the program do they find most valuable?
3. What benefits or effects do students perceive from the program?

Program Description

The Civic Leadership Institute

The Civic Leadership Institute is an initiative of the Center for Talent Development's Civic Education Project (CEP). CEP was founded in 1997 as a model service-learning initiative. All CEP programs combine traditional education with meaningful volunteer service to promote civic responsibility among academically gifted youth. Through school-year programs and summer courses, CEP offers junior high and high school students opportunities to learn and serve in communities across the country, developing the knowledge, experience, and leadership skills they need to make a positive impact on society.

In 2003, CEP launched the Civic Leadership Institute (CLI), the program model on which this paper is focused. CLI is a 3-week residential summer program for academically talented students completing grades 10 through 12. Sponsored by Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth, three program sites are offered each summer on major college campuses in Baltimore, Chicago, and San Francisco.

The most academically rigorous of all of CEP's programs, CLI is centered around an intensive service-learning course entitled Civic Engagement and Contemporary Social Issues. The program combines rigorous academic study, meaningful volunteer service, meetings with top community leaders, seminars on specific topics of interest, and rich residential and recreational experiences.

Pedagogy: The PARE Model

All CEP programs employ the PARE model of service-learning, a widely recognized practice in service-learning, originally developed by the University of Maryland (Commuter Affairs and Community Service, University of Maryland, 1999; Corporation for National and Community Service,

2002). Following the PARE model, each of CEP's service-learning programs includes all of the following components: (a) thoughtful *preparation* that ties each program activity to specific learning goals and provides a framework for students to consider before participating in each lesson or activity; (b) meaningful, hands-on *action* that engages students with the desired communities and/or issues; (c) critical *reflection*, facilitated by a trained, qualified educator, that helps students connect their hands-on field experiences with broader academic lessons and concepts; and (d) thorough *evaluation,* which allows students and community members to provide feedback and enables teachers to assess the effectiveness of each lesson. Effective implementation of each of these components is critical in creating quality service-learning projects, especially for students of high academic ability.

Eligible Students

CLI admits up to 100 academically talented high school students from across the nation who share a common interest in service and a desire to develop their leadership and citizenship skills. Mostly, students are rising high school juniors and seniors (on average, 50% juniors, 45% seniors, 5% rising sophomores and college freshmen). The program tends to attract more females than males (on average, 60% female and 40% male). Approximately 45% of students are from the East Coast, 30% are from the Midwest, 20% are from the West Coast, and 5% are from other regions of the country or are international students.

CLI students are diverse racially and socioeconomically. Approximately 45% of students are White, 25% are Asian American, 10% are Black, 10% are Latino, and 10% are multiracial or other. While program costs can be significant (tuition, room, and board typically amount to $2,500 to $3,000 per 3-week session), approximately 40% of students receive need-based financial aid, and as many as half of those students receive full scholarships for the program.

All applicants are required to demonstrate academic aptitude through strong verbal scores on the SAT and/or ACT taken in grade 7 or 8 or nationally normed standardized achievement tests. However, applicants who do not meet specific score criteria are often given the opportunity to demonstrate academic ability through grades and teacher recommendations. Because motivation is a primary indicator of success in the program, all applicants also are required to submit an application essay to demonstrate a sincere interest in learning about communities, social issues, and active citizenship.

Program Goals

The Civic Leadership Institute (CLI) is designed to help academically talented youth explore the complex social issues that face our communities and our society today and to introduce them to some of the most effective tools and strategies for community development and positive social change. CLI challenges bright students to find ways to use their skills and abilities in socially constructive ways.

Through academic study as well as firsthand experience in communities, students examine the root causes of and potential solutions to specific social problems, learn how to identify and mobilize community stakeholders and assets, gain exposure to theories of leadership and community development, analyze case studies on effective social change throughout history, and explore what it means to be a citizen and a leader in today's complex world. In addition to providing students with an academic foundation in community issues and civic responsibility, CLI aims to help students build concrete interpersonal and leadership skills, such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and creative problem solving. Finally, because the program is by nature very short term, one of its most important goals is to help students develop the motivation, empowerment, and sense of responsibility to become better informed and more engaged leaders and citizens in their own schools and communities.

Program Components

CLI's academic program consists of four primary components, namely coursework in Civic Engagement and Contemporary Social Issues, service projects and other field study experiences that are integrated into the curriculum, periodic Special Topic Seminars that allow students to examine specific social issues of their choosing, and Evening Colloquia, which feature workshops and presentations by top community and national leaders. These program components are virtually identical, regardless of the program site (Chicago, Baltimore, or San Francisco) or the sponsoring institution (Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development or Johns Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth), although specific activities such as field studies and speakers vary by location.

The course: Civic Engagement and Contemporary Social Issues. Although each program site can accommodate up to 100 students, within that larger community, students are split up into class sections of no more than 16. Each class section follows the same core curriculum, an introductory course entitled Civic Engagement and Contemporary Social Issues. Students are in class from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday with additional time for study and reflection in an evening session from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday.

The course is taught above grade level, covering a great deal of material, and challenging students to learn actively and put knowledge to use in creative ways. In the classroom, students are active participants. They read and write about current events and theories of community development from both conceptual and practical perspectives. Students engage in complex discussions and debates about what they are reading and what they are experiencing in the field. They also participate in interactive activities designed to explore leadership, teamwork, and group problem solving. Through independent and small-group projects, students have the opportunity to study social issues that impact their own

communities and to design effective asset-based approaches to tackling similar community problems themselves.

For instance, during a unit on urban poverty, students might begin by reading a firsthand perspective piece by Jonathan Kozol or Alex Kotlowitz about the lives of children in low-income communities, followed by a lecture and discussion on poverty and welfare in the United States. To further explore these topics, students might participate in an interactive small-group budgeting activity designed to illustrate the daily financial challenges and choices of a family living under the poverty line. Similarly, for a unit on leadership and social change, students might complete an evaluation of their individual leadership strengths and styles and participate in a team-building challenge where they work with their peers to solve a problem, putting their leadership skills to the test. Later, they might read excerpts from the writings of famous community leaders, such as Jane Addams, Saul Alinsky, and Martin Luther King, Jr., then be asked to compare and contrast the various approaches each one used, assessing the effectiveness of each method for making social change. All classroom activities are supplemented by and integrated with students' experiences in the community during the class field studies.

Field studies. Each class includes a significant field study component. Two to three days a week, classes travel to neighborhoods throughout the local community to engage in service-learning projects with community organizations and to visit with key community leaders at relevant institutions.

To provide high-quality, meaningful service experiences, program administrators arrange for CLI students to work closely with reputable nonprofit organizations and community leaders who are experts on the issues the students are studying. These organizations are screened to ensure that they have experience working with youth volunteer groups and are able to partner with CLI teachers to not only maximize the value of the students' contributions to the organization, but also ensure that the projects appropriately complement the learning objectives of the CLI curriculum. In other words, while it is important that the

students' work provides a useful service to the partner organization, the projects also are selected and designed to be learning opportunities for the students.

Specific service projects vary from site to site and year to year, but each generally provides opportunities for students to contribute to the work of the organization, while interacting with clients, staff, and community members. For example, CLI participants may prepare and serve meals at a soup kitchen, read to children at a day care center, repair dilapidated, low-income senior housing, or lead violence prevention workshops for youth.

Although those experiences can be rich with learning opportunities by nature, instructional and administrative staff also make extra efforts to complement the service work with additional on-site learning opportunities. For example, if students are preparing and serving a meal at a soup kitchen, CLI staff will also arrange for students to spend some time eating and talking with clients of the organization after their service work is finished. Or, if students are participating in a more labor-intensive project (e.g., sorting donations at a homeless shelter or painting a library at a community center), staff will work with the organization to find ways to complement a hands-on project with more intellectually stimulating components (e.g., a tour of the organization's facilities, a meeting with clients, or a visit with the executive director). CEP consistently creates strategic partnerships with community organizations that are mutually beneficial so that the program is providing a needed service to the partner organization in return for a meaningful learning opportunity for student participants.

Although designing a good project with clearly articulated goals is important, it is the active involvement of a trained educator that helps ensure a quality learning experience. Creating opportunities for instructors to help students process their experiences and integrate the data from their fieldwork with the concepts and questions they are exploring in class is vital to a quality service-learning course. Although students can indeed learn the occasional serendipitous lesson through an informal commu-

nity service project (e.g., reading a textbook without a teacher's involvement), it is only through critical and thoughtful reflection facilitated by a trained educator that a strong, consistent learning experience is brought to life.

In addition to the direct service projects mentioned above, it is worth noting that the program also arranges for a variety of community experiences that may or may not have a service component. These might include a tour of the neighborhoods in which students will be working, a meeting with a community organization that employs an innovative method of social change but is not able to involve students in direct service work, or a stand-alone meeting with other community stakeholders, such as political or business leaders, members of the media, or local community activists. Finally, it also might be relevant for students to visit key civic institutions such as governmental offices, educational organizations, or significant cultural or historical sites.

Special topic seminars. The importance of social awareness and community action is further stressed through additional opportunities CLI provides to complement the program's core curriculum. Once each week, students are offered the opportunity to sign up for one 2-hour-long special topic seminar on an issue of their interest. Instructors and teaching assistants create a menu of different seminar topics each week, exploring current events or issues in the news, delving deeply into a specific social issue or method of social change, or offering an activity that supplements projects that students are already working on in class or in the community. Past topics have included introductory workshops on issues such as world poverty, public health, youth violence, criminal justice, and school reform. Each seminar gives students an opportunity to either learn about a new topic or to examine a particular issue of interest in a more in-depth manner.

Evening colloquia. Two or three times a week, during the evening study period, the entire campus comes together for an hour of campus-wide enrichment activities. These evening colloquia typically feature guest speakers from a variety of fields, including

political figures, business leaders, local activists, and other people who are influential in their communities and the world. Speakers are strategically selected to address topics that are relevant to the issues students are covering in class around the time of their visit. Speakers may give presentations, facilitate dialogues, and engage students in interactive activities designed to educate, challenge, and inspire in ways that relate back to broader program goals.

Recreational program activities. Finally, through a high-quality residential program, students have the opportunity to participate in a unique living and learning community with diverse, yet like-minded peers. Each Institute brings students and staff together to live on the campus of a prominent university in the heart of an urban area. Because all of the students at each site are participating in the same course and the course matter is largely about the application of ideas and lessons in a real-world environment, the lines between the classroom and the residential components of the program are intentionally blurred. CLI seeks to create a living-learning community, in which students' recreational activities may occasionally have some bearing on the topics they are exploring in class, and students and staff can engage in continued conversation about challenging topics even outside the classroom. The impact of the program is further magnified as students begin to apply classroom lessons to the real-world setting of their residential community.

Evaluation

Because evaluation is such an important component of quality service-learning, CLI consistently seeks feedback from students, staff, and community members to improve the quality of the program and to provide experiences that are both appropriate for students' needs and abilities and beneficial for partner organizations and communities. CLI employs several forms of evaluation. For instance, students evaluate their experiences with the program overall and with specific academic and residential program activities. Instructional staff evaluate the program directly,

but also assess its effectiveness by comparing student learning outcomes to the goals and objectives established for each lesson and activity. This information is invaluable ensuring that each project properly supports the program's mission. Finally, at the conclusion of each course, CLI instructors write detailed evaluations of their students, providing feedback on each individual student's progress and achievements in the course, and outlining areas for further growth. These evaluations are sent to students and their families after the program to assist them in their continued growth and learning.

Program Staff

One final strength of the program is the quality of its staff members, who are selected from a highly competitive pool of applicants. CLI instructors are master teachers with experience working with highly able young people and a background in service-learning. A significant percentage of CLI staff are high school social studies teachers, but the program also attracts university faculty and staff, middle school and junior high teachers, service-learning coordinators, graduate students, and others in related fields. Incoming staff train for 3 days to ensure that each has a thorough understanding of the program and its curriculum, and is effectively prepared for his or her position.

Each class of up to 16 students works with an instructor and teaching assistant. The instructors are responsible for implementing the program's curriculum, including the safe facilitation of each field study project. Instructional staff plan and implement classroom activities, ensure that curricular goals are met, provide support to individual students, and evaluate student work. Instructional staff also supervise students on service projects and facilitate reflection to connect those experiences to the course curriculum.

Outside of class, students are supervised by resident assistants, who organize recreational activities to fill students' afternoons and weekends in constructive and enriching ways. Because CLI is designed to be a model living and learning community,

instructional and residential staff members work together to ensure that academic and residential activities are complementary and contribute to the program's overarching mission to foster civic engagement and social responsibility.

Students' Ratings of the CLI Program

Subjects

High school students (N = 230) participated in this study. All of those students attended CLI in the summer of 2003 or 2004 at one of two sites: either the Center for Talent Development (CTD) at Northwestern University in Chicago (n = 84; $n2003$ = 41, $n2004$ = 43) or the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (n = 146; $n2003$ = 69, $n2004$ = 77). Regardless of the site or year, all CLI students participated in the same course, a service-learning course entitled Civic Engagement and Contemporary Social Issues, as described above.

The CLI Academic Student Program Evaluation Surveys

The CLI academic student program evaluation surveys developed by CLI staff were the primary sources of data used to evaluate students' experiences with CLI. The format of these surveys differed slightly in years 2003 and 2004, between CTD and CTY, and by program site (Chicago versus Baltimore). However, all of the surveys administered generally contained items designed to measure students' perceptions of CLI, focusing particularly on their academic experience with the program. In 2003, the CLI academic student program evaluation survey at both sites primarily measured students' perceptions of the quality of the academic program, focusing on the course material and instructional staff, and gauged students' impressions of each of the primary academic program components. However, the survey was dissimilar for CTD and CTY students in that the survey used for CTY students contained primarily forced-choice

items and focused intensively on the academic program, while the survey used for CTD students contained more open-ended items and focused more broadly on students' impressions of the program overall, including the residential aspects of the program. The CTY survey contained 28 items examining students' ratings of the course material (e.g., readings, written assignments, level of challenge, overall satisfaction), the instructor and teaching assistant (e.g., knowledge, organization, availability, feedback, fairness, overall effectiveness), and the academic program components (e.g., field experience, integrative seminar, evening colloquia, final project). All items used a five-point rating scale (1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent* or 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Five additional open-ended items asked for students' comments on their experience with the academic program and staff. The CTD survey consisted of 26 items examining students' ratings of the course material, instructor and teaching assistant, and academic program components, as well as the residential staff and residential program. All items used a five-point rating scale (1 = *disagree* to 5 = *agree*). Ten additional open-ended items requested students' comments on their experiences with the academic and residential programs and staff.

In 2004, the CLI academic student program evaluation survey was revised to collect more information about students' perceptions of specific academic activities, such as individual field study sites and speakers. Compared to the surveys used in 2003, the format of the 2004 surveys became more similar for students at the two sites (CTD and CTY). At CTD, there were 18 items on the survey, with 5 items requesting an overall rating of program components, 5 items on field experiences, and 8 items on evening colloquia, each using a five-point rating scale (1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*). Additionally, there were 12 open-ended items gathering students' comments on the academic and residential programs and staff. At CTY, there were 25 items on the survey, with 4 items on program components, 10 items on field experiences, and 11 items on evening colloquia, each using a five-point rating scale (1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*). Two open-ended items asked for comments about components of the program that were

particularly meaningful and suggestions about how to improve the program for the future. Again, the difference in the surveys between the two sites was primarily due to different field experiences, speakers, and other program events designed for participants in each local community (Chicago area for CTD versus Baltimore/Washington area for CTY).

Data Collection and Analysis

Surveys were given to students at each site on the last day of their 3-week session in the summers of 2003 and 2004. Students completed the surveys in class and returned them to their teaching assistants. Responses for forced-choice items (relating to academic program components only and excluding items about the staff and residential program components) were analyzed using SPSS 13.0. Descriptive statistics were computed for means and percentages.

Open-ended items for students' narrative descriptions about their experiences were analyzed using the constant comparative method of data analysis involving three coding procedures: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding is the initial coding process that scrutinizes original data (e.g., field notes, interviews, documents) to produce concepts fitting the qualitative data. In the process of open coding, data are categorized and conceptualized by being broken into discrete segments, compared for similarities and differences, and analyzed for phenomena (categories) reflected in the data. Axial coding is an essential aspect of open coding and aims to create relationships among categories and subcategories derived from the initial open coding. Through axial coding, connections are made between subcategories and their overarching categories, and the process of making comparisons among the raw data and analyzing for phenomena mirrored in the data becomes focused toward relating categories. Lastly, selective coding is the process of selecting a core category, the central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated. In selective cod-

ing, main categories become more systematically connected with each other and consequently linked to a core category.

Findings

Students' Ratings of the Program

Survey responses for 2004 showed that overwhelmingly students who participated in the CLI program either through CTD (M = 4.07) or CTY (M = 4.06) were satisfied with their academic experience in the program. At least 70% of the students from both sites reported that each component of the CLI program was either good or excellent for their academic enrichment. Specifically, students rated their field experiences (CTD = 4.35, CTY = 4.68) the highest compared to other program components, such as integrative seminars (CTD = 3.93, CTY = 4.01), evening colloquia (CTD = 4.05, CTY = 4.27), and final projects (CTD = 4.14, CTY = 3.91). The vast majority of CTD and CTY students also responded that they would recommend the CLI program to other students (CTD = 93.0%, CTY = 98.7%).

Results for 2003 reflected those for 2004. Generally, the CLI students at CTD and CTY were satisfied with their academic experience with the program (CTD = 4.12, CTY = 4.22) at a level comparable to that of 2004. Agreement rates on the extent to which each program component contributed to students' academic enrichment ranged from 78.0% to 92.5% at CTD and 54.5% to 89.3% at CTY. Similar to 2004 data, students gave the highest rating to their field experiences (CTD = 4.70, CTY = 4.39) compared to integrative seminars (CTD = 4.41, CTY = 3.52), evening colloquia (CTD = 4.22, CTY = 3.79), and final projects (CTD = 4.22, CTY = 3.38). The majority (80.9%) of the students reported that their interest in service-learning and civic issues increased after their participation in the program, and about two thirds (67.6%) of them acknowledged that the course was challenging for them. Most students again reported that they would recommend the program to a friend, and a majority

(85.4%) indicated an interest in participating in a second-level CLI course in the future.

Field experiences. Most students from both sites in both years reported that the field experiences were one of the most valuable aspects of the program, as indicated above. Specifically, in 2004, all but one student at CTY (who responded satisfactory) and almost 90% of students at CTD rated their field experiences as either *good* or *excellent*. In particular, the 2004 data showed that students at CTD gave the highest ratings to their hands-on service projects, followed by meetings with local leaders in politics, media, and culture. Similarly, the students at CTY gave the highest ratings to their hands-on service projects, and more than 80% also reported a high degree of satisfaction with their field study day in Washington, DC. The results for 2003 mirrored those for 2004, with the vast majority of students at both sites (CTD = 92.5%, CTY = 89.3%) rating their field experiences as either *good* or *excellent*. See Table 1 for details.

Evening colloquia. Evening speakers were also a well-received component of the program in 2003 and 2004. About 77% (CTD) to 85% (CTY) of the students in 2004 reported that their evening activities in the program were either *good* or *excellent*. Compared to the percentages in 2003 (CTD = 78.0%, CTY= 66.7%), CTY students reported being more pleased with the evening speakers in 2004. In particular, the 2004 data showed that students at both sites gave the highest ratings to presentations on homelessness, politics, media, and social change. See Table 1 for detailed information about the survey data.

Narrative Descriptions About the Effects of the Program

Open-ended comments made by all students at both the CTD and CTY sites in 2003 and 2004 were combined, counted, and analyzed. Students' narrative comments on their experiences with the program were summarized into general categories of

Table 1

Program Evaluations: Means, Standard Deviation, and Satisfaction Rates

	CTD (2004) N = 43		CTY (2004) N = 77		CTD (2003) N = 41		CTY (2003) N = 69	
Overall Academic Experiences	4.07(.85)	—	4.06(.76)	—	4.12(.95)	—	4.22(.96)	83.9%
Integrative seminar	3.93(.86)	69.8%	4.01(.84)	76.7%	4.41(.95)	85.4%	3.52(1.20)	54.5%
Evening colloquia	4.05(.84)	76.8%	4.27(.71)	85.1%	4.22(.96)	78.0%	3.79(1.00)	66.7%
Asset based community development	4.05(.90)	72.1%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Faces of homelessness	4.42(.79)	86.0%	4.90(.38)	97.4%	—	—	—	—
"Skin Deep" documentary	3.70(.94)	55.9%	3.81(.38)	67.6%	—	—	—	—
Chicago urban league	3.79(.97)	55.8%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chicago Tribune & In these times	4.26(.95)	81.4%	—	—	—	—	—	—
"Promises to Keep" documentary	4.36(.76)	83.4%	4.11(.78)	80.0%	—	—	—	—
Streetwise	4.44(.83)	88.4%	—	—	—	—	—	—
"What now?" workshop	3.93(.95)	69.1%	4.24(.82)	84.0%	—	—	—	—
Downtown partnership of Baltimore	—	—	3.16(.90)	31.6%	—	—	—	—
U.S. Surgeon General	—	—	4.32(.92)	85.7%	—	—	—	—
American Press Institute	—	—	3.17(1.08)	81.9%	—	—	—	—
CarMax	—	—	4.21(.80)	39.0%	—	—	—	—
Arab Youth Day	—	—	4.60(.73)	92.2%	—	—	—	—
Champions of Hope	—	—	3.69(1.27)	57.2%	—	—	—	—

	CTD (2004) N = 43		CTY (2004) N = 77		CTD (2003) N = 41		CTY (2003) N = 69	
Final class projects	4.14(.80)	79.1%	3.91(.75)	72.7%	4.22(1.03)	85.0%	3.38(1.13)	56.0%
Overall Field Experiences	4.35(.81)	88.4%	4.68(.50)	98.7%	4.70(.85)	92.5%	4.39(.82)	89.3%
Service project (1)	4.40(.83)	83.3%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Service project (2)	4.50(.67)	90.5%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community meetings—Politics, Media, Culture	4.12(.86)	78.6%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community meetings—Advocacy, Organizing	3.90(1.08)	59.5%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Visit to senators' office	—	—	3.62(1.14)	57.8%	—	—	—	—
Capitol tour/Visit to senate gallery	—	—	3.64(.99)	61.4%	—	—	—	—
ACLU	—	—	4.42(.84)	89.5%	—	—	—	—
Crossfire	—	—	4.29(.92)	82.3%	—	—	—	—
CCNV/DC Central Kitchen	—	—	3.88(1.20)	62.6%	—	—	—	—
Holocaust Museum	—	—	4.61(.67)	90.4%	—	—	—	—
National Monuments	—	—	4.13(.84)	75.0%	—	—	—	—
Smithsonian Monuments	—	—	3.87(.83)	73.3%	—	—	—	—
Supreme Court	—	—	3.58(.97)	54.2%	—	—	—	—

Note. Missing responses indicate unavailable items in the survey.

skills and ideas they learned or gained through their participation in the program.

A total of 425 student comments were analyzed, and four main categories (civic awareness or interest, civic engagement, different perspectives about other people, and leadership) emerged from the data. In addition, several subcategories related to the main categories were created. For example, the 187 (44%) comments from the students that were categorized generally as civic awareness or interest were broken down into subcategories of awareness or interest in a comprehensive array of social issues including homelessness, poverty, and justice (174 comments) and increased interest in or understanding for local communities (13 comments). Responses from the students regarding greater awareness or interest in social issues or understanding of local communities include the following comments:

> This course opened my eyes to community service, civic responsibility, homelessness, and poverty, and showed me that one can make a difference if they go about it the right way.

> The most important ideas I learned in this course were a broadened understanding of social issues, community service, and interpersonal skills.

> Before this course, I knew that poverty, poor schools, and things like that were big issues, but I didn't know details or how prevalent they really were. Now that I have the knowledge, I can use other skills that I learned in class to raise awareness. Ignorance isn't an excuse any more.

> I think I've always known about the world problems that we discussed, but now I've seen them and I know that we have to fix them.

> I learned a lot about the community of Chicago and it made me really interested in my own community.

> I learned how I can contribute as either an outsider or an insider to any community, if I understand what is going on within it.

For the category of civic engagement, two subcategories emerged from 134 (31.5%) student comments. These relate to enhanced problem-solving abilities (85 comments) and a greater sense of responsibility, desire to help, and increased self-confidence to make a difference in real life (49 comments). Representative responses from the students regarding civic engagement include the following comments:

> The ability to think critically and to try to creatively find assets in the process of solving a problem was the most important skill I learned.

> The idea that I can make a difference and I should be involved in trying to make my community better was the most important thing I learned.

> The most important idea I learned in this course was that I have a duty to contribute to society in a way that is constructive for all people.

> This was definitely the most eye-opening and engaging experience I have ever had. Everything I learned from the group has really inspired me to do something to make change at home.

> I came away feeling satisfied that I can make changes in my own community.

> I gained a passion for acting to make a difference in the world.

The third major category of skills or ideas acquired from the CLI program focused on gaining different perspectives about

other people (88 comments, 20.7%). Two major related subcategories in the data were understanding the different viewpoints of others or forming new relationships with others (52 comments) and understanding of or respect for others, including new friends, teachers, local community leaders, or national leaders (36 comments). The following comments reflect this category:

> By far, the most important idea I learned in this course was that there are many different viewpoints. I feel as though this course exposed me to new and unique perspectives which I had not considered before.

> I gained a broader perspective on people and just life in general. I learned about my own preconceived notions, and why and how they were wrong.

> I have learned to be more open with other people's opinions and to understand that all people don't understand other people's struggles. People need to experience such struggle for themselves to really understand what others need.

> Going out into the community and interacting with the members of the community was amazing and surprising!

> I never realized what an impact talking to people in the community could have for me.

Another 10 comments (2.4%) from the students were categorized as focusing on leadership, either learning about leadership as a skill or about individual leaders. Representative student comments included, "This course teaches everything I wanted to learn about leadership," "I gained a sense of duty and responsibility to lead other people," and "I feel much more ready to take on a leadership role when I get home."

Besides the three major categories generated from the students' comments, six students stated that they became more hopeful for the future of society and the world after participation in the program, and that they rarely had the same experience in school. Other responses from students about what they learned include "importance of helping or serving others" (4 comments), "critical thinking" (4 comments), "learning how to write field notes" (3 comments), "asset-based community development" (3 comments), "stepping out of my comfort zone" (3 comments), and "become more patient and appreciative" (1 comment). See Table 2 for more information about the narrative data.

Additionally, students were asked for suggestions about how to improve CLI as an academic program. Major themes among the 121 comments made by the students were requests for more service projects and field experiences (68 comments, 56.2%); more free time and time to work on class assignments and homework, particularly during the evening after class (28 comments, 23.1%); and more seminars or presentations by local community leaders (25 comments, 20.7%).

Summary and Discussion

Overall, findings from the students' responses to the survey demonstrated students' positive experiences with the CLI program and the positive effects of the program on their knowledge and skills in areas relevant to civic engagement.

Overwhelmingly, students at both sites were particularly satisfied with their field experiences in the CLI course (about 90% or above gave a *good* or *excellent* rating for 2 consecutive years). Students gave particularly high ratings to service projects that enabled them to interact with local organizations and meet with community leaders. In narratives, a number of students indicated their enthusiasm for activities that combined class work with hands-on experiences, including service projects and speakers, and their desire for even more of those hands-on activities throughout the program. This echoes other findings

Table 2

Examples of Narrative Data

Subcategories	Three Major Categories and Student Comments
	Civic Awareness/Interests
• Greater awareness/ interest in social issues	"The best parts of the program would definitely include several of the long and involved class discussions as well as the field experiences. Both of these aspects combined provided a very well-rounded range of knowledge that helped shape my ideas and even changed the way I look at the world and myself."
and	"I was constantly challenged throughout this course to think deeply about social issues that matter. I feel everyone needs to be socially responsible, and this course really allowed people to open their eyes on important issues that many often choose to ignore."
• Increased inter- est in/ under- standing of local communities	"The combination of class work, field experiences, speakers, movies, and seminars gave a complete picture of social issues and ways we can help improve them."
	"I think that it really increased my knowledge about issues such as gentrification, poverty line, etc. that I would not have been taught in school. I become more socially conscious."
	"I gained a new perspective on homelessness and the world. Yes, I learned about the social issues that affect everyone and gained awareness for social problems."
	"One of the most important things I learned was about the importance of community."
	"This program made me really interested in my community."

Civic Engagement

• Enhanced problem-solving abilities	"I learned how to be a better problem solver and what I can do to take action rather than just learn about social issues."
and	"I am privileged to learn that I have the power to do things others cannot. Through my final project, I learned how to plan, act, and think in advance to fix problems in our society."
• Greater sense of responsibility, desire to help, and increased self-confidence	"This was definitely the most eye-opening and engaging experience I have ever had. Everything I learned from the group has really inspired me to do something to make change at home."
	"I learned that even though I may only be 17, there are still a variety of ways that I can contribute to my community. This was demonstrated through my final project."
	"The most important idea I learned in this course was that I have a duty to contribute to society in a way that is constructive for all people."
	"The CLI course empowered me to learn how to make a difference in real life."

Difference Perspectives About Other People

• Greater understanding of different views	"CLI encourages me to accept people's differences and their different points of view on various social issues."
	"I definitely changed many of my own views based on the discussions I had with other students in the class."
and	"Possibly the most important thing I learned, however, was that every person has a story, which makes them human. You can't discount anyone as part of a problem; everyone deserves acknowledgement."
	"I learned the diversity of people's backgrounds through meeting different people in the program."
• Respect and understanding of other people	"The presence of other students who were interested in social issues and peer feedback were the most valuable aspects of the CLI program."
	"The program not only makes you think critically about the world around you but also inspires you to think about how you relate to everyone in the world."

Note. Missing responses indicate unavailable items in the survey.

about the importance of and need for stimulating intellectual curiosity, self-directed learning, and task commitment of gifted students through investigations of real life problems (Renzulli, 1976, 1977; Renzulli & Reis, 1997).

Students also were pleased overall with the evening colloquia speaker series, although there was some variance in their ratings of particular speakers and topics. It is not clear whether students' preferences reflected their interest in particular topics or a response to exceptional speakers.

The students' narratives not only manifested their positive perceptions of the CLI program, but also reflected the many positive ways in which the program had influenced them. About 76% of students from both sites stated that participation in service projects, visits to community sites, and meetings with local community leaders enhanced their awareness of social issues and increased their motivation to get involved with similar issues in their own communities. In fact, alumni of the program have reported an increase in civic engagement (e.g., volunteer participation, attention to current events) upon returning to their home communities. Over the years, CEP's quarterly newsletter has profiled dozens of former participants who have taken on prominent leadership roles in their schools or communities by starting service clubs, organizing service-learning projects for their peers, and campaigning for causes they support. These findings are consistent with the benefits of service-learning documented both in literature on service-learning for all students (e.g., Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Goldsmith, 1996; Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988; Newmann & Rutter, 1983; Waterman, 1997; Zeldin & Tarlov, 1997) and research on service-learning involving gifted students in particular (Terry, 2000; Trebilcox, 1997; Willard, 1984).

A considerable number of CLI participants expressed that they gained new respect and understanding for difference and diversity through the program. Many students also reported that they gained self-confidence, a sense of personal responsibility, and an increased desire to help others. In the broader literature, similar positive effects were found for gifted students involved

with service-learning (Terry, 2000; Trebilcox, 1997; Willard, 1984) as well as for heterogeneous groups of students (Conrad & Hedin, 1989; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Goldsmith, 1996; Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988; Hursh & Borzak, 1979; Osborne, Hammerich, & Hensley, 1998; Waterman, 1997; Zeldin & Tarlov, 1997).

Leadership was cited as a skill or idea that some students enhanced through their participation in CLI. Willard (1984) similarly reported that community service projects provided gifted elementary school-aged children with increased opportunities to form leadership skills. However, a relatively smaller portion (2.4%) of the CLI students indicated that they learned about leadership or leaders as a result of the program compared to the number who cited other themes as most impacting, such as social awareness and civic engagement. Though the concept of leadership is one aspect of civic engagement, the CLI program does not focus exclusively on enhancing students' leadership skills as a primary program goal. Rather, the CLI program is designed to allow students to explore opportunities to develop a comprehensive array of important civic attitudes and behaviors, including leadership. Some of these other civic attitudes and behaviors seem to have had a greater impact on students than the development of leadership skills alone.

As was discussed earlier in this paper, a major distinction between service-learning and general volunteerism or community service is that service-learning integrates purposefully organized community service into academic content with specific learning objectives (Blyth et al., 1997; Chapin, 1998; Goldsmith, 1996; Kunin, 1997; Waterman, 1997). Some of the CLI students in this study expressed a desire for their service projects to be even more closely linked with academic content. The integration of field work and class content is consistent with the goals of service-learning, to make learning more meaningful and motivating by placing it in the context of real and present problems (Renzulli, 1976, 1977; Renzulli & Reis, 1997). Educators and program administrators should be aware that hands-on experiences can stimulate advanced content acquisition only if the program or curriculum combines fieldwork with classroom learning

in significant ways, as CLI has been able to do, that are appropriate for the cognitive and affective needs of student participants.

According to William Butler Yeats, "Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire." This is certainly the case with gifted and talented youth. CLI is one program model that is creating more effective ways to inspire our nation's most promising young people to utilize their gifts and abilities as active and socially responsible citizens. However, this is certainly not the only avenue to develop civic engagement among gifted youth. Indeed, developing active citizenship is a lifelong pursuit that must be nurtured at home and at school, and also supported through a combination of extracurricular activities, volunteer service, religious activities, and/or traditional academic programs. Active civic engagement and democratic participation are not habits that occur spontaneously; these characteristics must be taught, nurtured, and practiced in order to flourish. It is our hope that the work of programs like CLI, combined with other initiatives throughout the broader service-learning movement, can help develop a world not only of more active, engaged citizens, but also of stronger and more just societies.

Limitations and Future Considerations

One of the limitations of this study was that the surveys for CTD and CTY students were not identical due to the different program activities that were organized for each group. Collating data from both sites was possible for only a few identical items relating to program components and activities in general; thus, we were unable to collect aggregate responses from both sites for all of the survey items.

This study did not include a comparison group (students who took non-CLI courses). Because the purpose of this study was to describe the CLI program and to assess students' experiences with the program at two different program sites shortly after initiating the program, we did not intend to explore long-term effects of the program by comparing CLI students with

non-CLI students. Although the qualitative data contributed to a more in-depth look at the students' perspectives on the program and its effects on their civic development, findings were completely based on ratings from the students who were interested in, and thus chose to participate in, the program. As this study was our first formal research with a focus on evaluating the CLI program, and as the findings were based on descriptive data collected over a 2-year period only, a longer term follow-up study with student participants would be needed to explore and document the long-term influences of the program. Also, comparisons to other formats for fostering leadership or civic engagement would elucidate the benefits or drawbacks of the model implemented in the CLI program, particularly its emphasis on fieldwork and authentic learning.

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