

Social Space: The Role of Community Centers  
in the Development of Citizenship Attitudes and Civic Behavior

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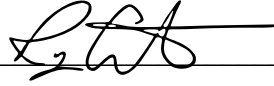
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to expand the concept of social capital by primarily looking at the role that community centers play in the development of citizenship attitudes as well as political and voluntary behavior. This study surveyed residents of Washington City, Utah, on their use of the local community center and their citizenship attitudes and political and volunteer activities within the community. Initially, this study analyzed demographic characteristics that influence community center attendance. Secondly, it explored the relationship between community center attendance and civic behavior and citizenship attitudes or domains, as Tracy Glover (2004) defined in his study *The Community Center and Social Construction of Citizenship*. Finally, the study analyzed whether participating in individual or group activities influenced civic attitudes and performance. Survey responses were analyzed using factor analysis as well as OLS and logit regression analysis. Through the use of statistical modeling a fourth citizenship domain titled “recognition” was identified as the only variable influenced by attendance at the community center. Although a negative relationship was identified between attendance and volunteering, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between group activities and volunteer behavior. Finally, there was no identified relationship between whether a citizen participated in activities at the community center as a group or individually and civic attitude or performance. This research did identify other relationships between community demographics citizenship attitudes and civic performance. Although the Glover research found three areas of citizenship domain, through factor analysis this study identified a fourth citizenship factor for future study.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the 1938 award-winning production of *Our Town*, Thornton Wilder explains the importance of relationships and how vital they are to understanding society. In the performance, the stage manager explains, “Babylon once had over two million people, and all we know about ‘em is the names of the kings and some copies of wheat contracts. Yet every night families sat down to supper, and the father came home from his work, and the smoke went up the chimney, same as here. And even in Greece and Rome, all we know about the *real* life of the people is what we piece together.” It is in this “piecing together” of “real” lives that we identify the significant relationships, the influences that impact individual behavior, and the bonds that make our society function. The effectiveness and vitality of a democratic society is and always will be proportionate to the strength of the communal relationships of its citizens.

Adam Kuper (2004) acknowledges that the objectives of social science is to find relationships and connections within the self-actualizing individuals and community. Recognizing the value of community relationships and the influence it has on individual behavior is known as social capital.

#### *Study Overview*

To identify the foundational elements of an active community and society, as envisioned by Plato, researchers have focused upon the essential elements of societal

growth (Bassett, 1928). Relationships are identified as the common thread that creates a healthy, involved, and progressive society. Although identified at the beginning of the 20th Century, little substantive work on the value of relationships and networks, and the theory of “social capital” began with Pierre Bourdieu. The term “capital” signifies the value of these social networks as a convertible asset, much like financial and human capital, that can be changed into other forms of capital (Paldam, 2000; Robinson et al., 2002)

These social network connections are recognized as not naturally given, institutionally given, or socially given but rather a product of an endless effort of institutions to provide an instrument of exchange, where individuals intentionally build network relationships that they would use later (Portes, 2000).

Robert Putnam (1993) recognized the connection between the strength of these networks and the impact it would have upon a growing civic life and community. Putnam’s work operationalized the term “social capital” to evaluate the existence or non-existence of community networks that add value or deduct from the social strength of a community. Putnam posits that healthy communities are resilient, engaged, and participatory within the social structure. He terms this engagement as “civicness.”

Sociologists research and test the theories of Bourdieu, Portes, and Putnam in identifying the elements of networks and the value derived from these associations. Among the many network values researched, community space and citizenship behavior are identified as being a part of the “big tent” concept of social capital (Williams & Durance, 2008).

Urban planners conceptualize these theories in designing structural elements and space within a community that encourages network development and strengthening of the “ties that bind” individuals together, thereby creating a stronger, more resilient, and participatory citizenry. The design of public space is a crucial element in the development of strong social ties (Putnam, 1993). Within the parlance of the day, this is called “placemaking.” Since the progressive era, community space has served as an important venue for the development of civic virtues. One significant commitment that urban cities have made is in the development of recreation and community centers. These facilities are designed in an attempt to create an active venue where individuals share environments that facilitate both the strengthening of existing networks as well as the expansion of new relational networks. However, how well do these expensive, often controversial facilities achieve the objective intended by the planners and social capitalists? And, how do they influence the social behavior of the community?

It has been theorized that the quality of one’s social capital will impact everything from social and physical health (Lieberman, 2019; Macenbach et al., 2016; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2017) to citizenship behavior (Glover, 2004; Kimura, 2018; Musso & Weare, 2017; Stoner et al., 2014). This study will expand upon research conducted at the social capital “intersection” of how placemaking influences citizenship attitude and behavior.

### *Statement of the Problem*

In 2001, Troy Glover from the University of Waterloo studied the value that community centers have on modifying or strengthening citizenship attitudes or attributes

from members of a community. Using the works of Bottomore (1992), Marshall (1992), Tocqueville (1835), Dagger (1997), and Etzioni (2000), Glover notes that “citizenship” represents more than just a general concept, but rather an intimate understanding of our ethical, educative, and integral relationship with others and our community. It is in these three attributes that Glover claims “citizenship weaves itself into the rich fabric of community.” From this literary foundation, Glover developed a qualitative study to determine the role a community center might play in developing these citizen characteristics. His methodological approach was to sample seven individuals who volunteered at a community center located in a city of approximately 120,000 residents. His research surveyed community center volunteers on their assessment in the areas of service delivery of the facility, active participation, awareness, obligation, responsibility, sense of belonging, building relationships, “paying it forward,” sense of ownership, and a sense of empowerment. The data generated from this study was used to determine if participation in the community center affects a citizen’s sense of their community. Glover’s research concluded that community centers, that are community-development driven, do serve as a venue for improved responsible, participatory, and communal attitudes and attributes on the part of individuals.

The Glover study identifies the weakness in the research, which will be further identified in this literature review, on how specific types of public space influence citizenship attitudes and perception; furthermore, much of the prevailing research in this area has been qualitative and not quantitative in nature.

Although the Glover study establishes a good research structure for the hypothesis “community centers increase responsible, communal, and participatory citizenship” it is limited to a small sample set and only with individuals associated with the organizational structure of the facility. Glover’s conclusion is challenged in that it establishes no statistical significance between community centers and citizenship development. This is generally seen to be the case in the existing research that exists. Furthermore, because this study failed to research patrons of the facility, it does not answer the question of whether participation improves citizenship on a community level.

#### *Purpose*

This research will expand the constructionist framework of Glover’s research by testing his theory from a quantitative aspect and determining whether there is a statistically viable connection between the use of a community center (public space) and a sense of community and civic behavior. Furthermore, this research will look at the relationship a community center has on the “civicness” of active versus non-active (latent) patrons of the facility.

#### *Research Questions*

To find out if participation in the public space of a community center influences citizen behavior, this study, in positivistic terms, posits and investigates the following research questions and hypotheses:

*Research Question 1.* What factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center?



*Hypothesis 1.* Renters have a greater likelihood of attending the community center than owners of homes.

*Hypothesis 2.* The shorter the time an individual resides within the community, the more likely they will attend the community center.

*Hypothesis 3.* Older citizens (60+) are more likely to attend the community center.

*Hypothesis 4.* The lower the income bracket, the more likely an individual will attend the community center.

*Research Question 2.* To what extent does participating in a community center improve a sense of community and civic behavior?

*Hypothesis 5.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "participatory" citizens.

*Hypothesis 6.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "responsible" citizens.

*Hypothesis 7.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "communal" citizens.

*Hypothesis 8.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "recognized" citizens.

*Hypothesis 9.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's "political" behavior in the community.

*Hypothesis 10.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's "volunteer" behavior in the community.

*Research Question 3.* To what extent does participating in group programs (active) versus non-group programs (latent) activities in a community center improve a sense of community and civic behavior?

*Hypothesis 11.* Participating in group activities, versus individual activities, at the community center improves an individual's sense of community and civic participation.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study intends to contribute to the overall knowledge base of how contrived social networking created through public space can develop, expand, and influence levels of behavior. Specifically, this study will re-evaluate the Glover study from a quantitative approach to determine if there is a significant relationship between community centers and improved citizenship. By expanding the research in this area, a more quantitative foundation is laid for future research. The discussion of community and the role citizens play in a healthy community is as old as Aristotle. In more modern times, authors and researchers, such as Coleman and Putnam have considered the decline of social capital to be at the heart of a weakening civil society. Although opinions on the role social capital plays in a functioning society vary, there is sufficient debate to agree that an understanding of the value of community networks and relationships can be significant to the creation of public policy and to the role of public administrators. This study will further that discussion and understanding, particularly among public administrators, with the hope of continuing to add refinement to the social capital concept.

## *Summary*

This study will focus on the value that public space plays upon components of social capital as it relates to improvements in civic perception and engagement. This research tests whether the independent variable (IV) of activity within a community-based reaction facility affects the dependent variable (DV) of increased sense of community and civic behavior. The Glover study will be used as the foundational basis for the research. If results are confirmed, this will provide evidence that there is a strong statistical relationship between an individual's involvement in community-based activities and an improvement in their civic sense and activity.

Chapter 2 will provide a literature review of all articles researched for this paper. This review includes a research perspective of citizenship, both from the standpoint of Glover, as well as competing definitions that provide further understanding of what good citizenship looks like and how it is measured. The chapter includes the foundational discussion of the value of social networks. And finally, it concludes with a review of the literature on public space and why it is viewed as a functional role of government.

Chapter 3, the methodology chapter presents an outline of the design of the evaluation instrument. This will include a restatement of the research questions, the type of research being conducted, why this methodological platform was selected, the sample and data surveyed, the methods of data collection, the data analysis process, the role of the researcher, and a summary.

Chapter 4 will present the findings and outcomes of the data gathered and analyzed. These findings will be explained with the specific purpose of looking for

statistically significant relationships between community center participation and the types of citizen behavior.

Finally, chapter 5 will provide discussion, recommendations, and summarize the results of the study in an attempt to rationalize the data from the findings. The question of how well the results match up with the predicting theory and hypotheses posited is discussed. This chapter will further critique the strengths and weaknesses of the study and identify areas for future study and research.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Overview*

The problem this research is intended to address is that many community centers may not fulfill their intended purposes and objectives. While researchers, such as Glover (2004), have theorized about the significance of community centers, there is a significant lack of research that provides quantitative evidence of the positive implications for communities associated with the development of community centers. Thus, the purpose of this research is to expand the constructionist framework of Glover's (2004) research by quantitatively assessing the researcher's theoretical basis and determining whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the presence of a community center and improved citizenship. Additionally, this research is also aimed at evaluating how a community center affects the "civicness" of active versus non-active patrons of the facility.

This chapter is a review of recent literature related to the research topic. First, the theoretical framework will be explained. Subsequently, Glover's (2004) elements of citizenship will be reviewed. Methods of building social capital within communities will then be discussed. Research that centers on community centers, including benefits and methods of evaluation, will subsequently be reviewed. A summary will conclude this chapter.

In order to locate relevant articles for this review, EbscoHost and Google Scholar databases were searched. The following keywords and phrases were used to find relevant research: *community centers, community center benefits, community center evaluation, building social capital, components of citizenship, types of citizenship, social constructionist framework, value of community centers, role of community centers, ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship, and educative citizenship*. To ensure the included articles are relevant to the current research problem, the vast majority were written within the past five years.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

Glover's (2004) study will serve as the qualitative foundation of this quantitative research, which will involve different research methods and larger sample size. Glover (2004) sought to examine the role of community centers from a social constructionist perspective. The author also sought to understand elements of active citizenship that were apparent at community centers. The author sorted existing elements of active citizenship that were apparent in existing conceptualizations of the term into three dimensions or domains: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship, and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship entails actively participating in citizenship that is intended to contribute to the public good. Integrative citizenship involves the less formally-sanctioned activities involved in everyday life that may contribute to their community. Lastly, educative citizenship describes the process of developing various morals and facets of the self through citizenship practices so that individuals better understand their overall role and place in their community. Data was collected from

seven adults who frequented a community center that served a largely “at-risk” community.

Upon analyzing the data for patterns and themes, Glover (2004) classified the discovered themes into three categories representing different attitudes of citizenship: the responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the communal citizen. These themes reflected the three common types of sentiment expressed when participants sought to characterize citizenship.

Figure 1

*Psychological Interplay of Attitudes and Citizenship Behavior*

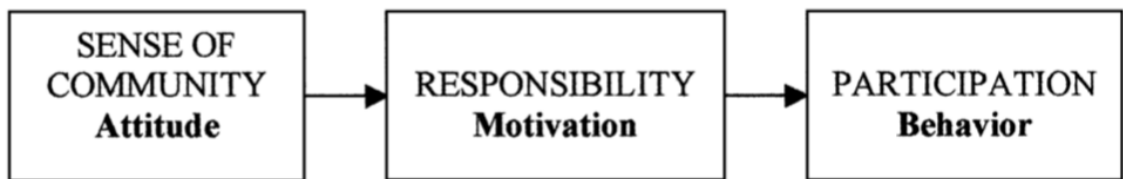
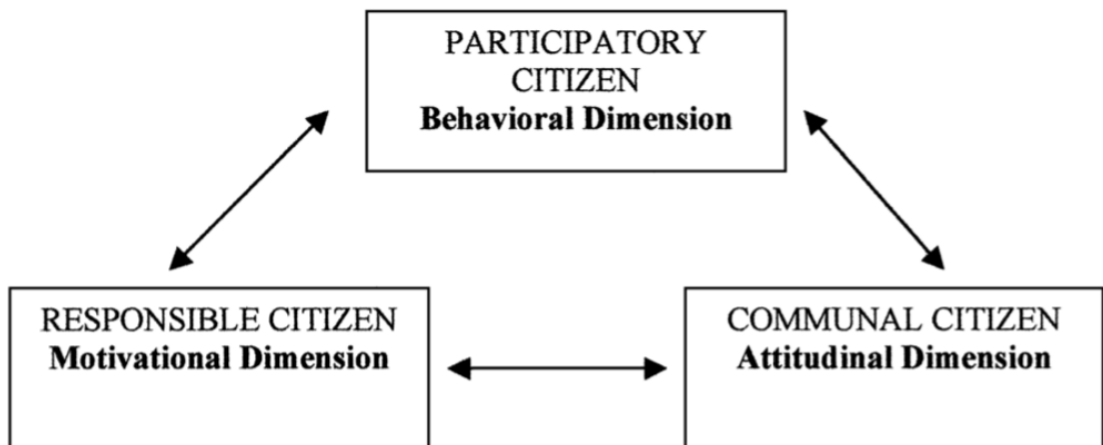


Figure 2

*Glover's Theoretical Roles of Citizenship*



Based on the findings, Glover (2004) reflected on the psychological relationships (Figure 1) and theoretical interplay (Figure 2) between the notions of communal, participatory, and responsible citizenship. Psychologically speaking, the author hypothesized that enhancing one's sense of community can result in seeking more responsibility at the community level, then resulting in active citizenship participation (Figure 1). However, the theoretical basis of Glover's (2004) research and some participants' responses also led the author to speculate as to whether the relationship between dimensions was non-linear; that is, someone might already be a participatory citizen when considering the behavioral dimension, but many not have a community-oriented mindset when considering the attitudinal dimension (Figure 2).

Like Glover's (2004) research, the underlying theoretical framework of this study is social capital theory and social constructionist theory. Social capital theory describes how an individual's social positionality provides various social benefits (Lin et al., 2001). Social capital can significantly affect an individual's outcomes in various social or interpersonal situations. This concept is referred to as a form of capital because, like wealth or other resources, social capital can determine how individuals are perceived and what opportunities are afforded to them. For example, if two individuals with near-identical professional qualifications are being considered for the same position, an individual who is already working for the company and has established a successful work history would likely get the position over a newcomer because they have developed their social capital within the company.



Social constructionist theory describes how understandings of the world are jointly constructed in order to form shared assumptions about the nature of reality (Gergen, 1985). Social constructionism challenges many conventional theories and understandings concerning the nature of reality. Rather than assuming different facets of society are accepted because they are “natural” or “inherent,” social constructionism focuses on how shared assumptions about reality develop based on understandings of the world that are jointly constructed. The roots of social constructionism are based in the debate between rationalist and empiricist schools of thought. The author concluded that social constructionist theory could serve as an approach for understanding how or why different scientific and psychological phenomena occur.

Focus group research conducted by Johnston et al. (2018) at a community center involved using a social constructivism and social capital theory framework to examine resilience-building among youth living in a marginalized community in Canada. Focus groups were conducted with male and female youth participants separately at a local community center. Participants were asked questions about their perceptions of growing up effectively, or resiliently, how they approach obstacles, and ways they try to stay healthy. Upon analyzing the data, the authors found that participants expressed both distinctive and conventional conceptualizations of resilience. More specifically, participants expressed the importance of logic-driven approaches and resilient character attributes, in addition to providing specific examples of resilient choices and pathways that occur within the context of disadvantaged communities. Johnston et al. (2018) demonstrated how a theoretical framework of social constructivism and social capital

theory can inform research concerning community-level effects and implications, as evidenced by data gathered at local community centers.

### *Elements of Citizenship*

Citizenship is conceptualized differently depending on theoretical perspective and context. From a perspective of legal and political theory, citizenship formally describes belonging to a nation-state. However, other theorists have conceptualized citizenship within the context of the American capitalist socioeconomic context. According to Marshall (1992), the negative implications related to class that citizens can experience within the context of American democracy are limited by the power that citizenship offers. Thus, Marshall's (1992) conceptualization was rooted in protection and expression of individual rights and freedoms.

Glover (2004) classified the elements included in existing conceptualizations of active citizenship into three dimensions. This section will include discussion of the ethical, integrative, and educative dimensions of citizenship. A summary will conclude this section.

### *Ethical*

Ethical citizenship entails actively participating in citizenship activities that are intended to contribute to the public good. Glover (2004) noted that this form of citizenship should not be automatically associated with an obligation to make numerous personal sacrifices; further, an increase in personal sacrifice does not equate to increased benefits for the greater good in many cases. Instead, the intent of ethical citizenship is to

get into the habit of occasionally balancing self-interest with concern for the needs of the community to facilitate civic virtue over time.

Kimura's (2018) recent research highlighted the ways that ethical citizenship may conceal neoliberalism when enacted to address systemic issues. The author explored how food banks and public cafeterias sought to address poverty and food insecurity in Japan with a conceptual framework that was rooted in the notion of ethical citizenship. While volunteer programs are a significant source of free or cheap meals for many, tension can arise due to differences between perceived community power and the sources of systemic food insecurity. In other words, the moral tenets which guide volunteer food distribution (such as reducing food waste) place the focus on how communities can effectively address food insecurity without emphasizing that the issue has largely resulted from inefficient or ineffective government resources and safety nets.

### *Integrative*

Integrative citizenship involves the less formally-sanctioned activities involved in everyday life that may contribute to a community. Rather than centering on activities and practices as educative and ethical citizenship do, integrative citizenship describes the process of fulfilling duties and responsibilities associated with the roles we inhabit throughout our lives. It is not the sum of what we do or accomplish, but rather how the ways we express parts of our identity contribute to the community.

Kingwell (2000) outlined six roles that individuals inhabit which help to summarize their integrative contributions: inquirers, moral agents, householders/consumers, workers/economic agents, cultural beings, and intimates.

Inquirers seek to understand the world and nature of living. Moral agents develop and protect their personal values. Workers/economic agents complete requested tasks and jobs. Householders/consumers buy and consume products that contribute to the economy. Cultural beings enjoy art, music, and other products of human creativity. Lastly, intimates connect emotionally with other beings. Based upon Kingwell's (2000) understanding of the roles members play within formal societies, community centers would function as a site for individuals to integrate the roles they fulfill with community needs and endeavors.

### *Educative*

Lastly, educative citizenship describes the process of developing various morals and facets of the self through citizenship practices so that individuals better understand their overall role and place in their community (Glover, 2004). Through educative citizenship, individuals can bridge a connection between their private goals and priorities and the greater good. At the same time, educative citizenship involves working past self-interest and individualism that would be of detriment to community goals and needs.

Stoner et al. (2014) studied the process of developing global and educative citizenship through study abroad programs offered at universities. Upon analyzing the results of experiential educational travel programs at U.S. universities using a Value-Belief-Norm framework, the authors found that educational travel can result in the "value-added" result of improving global and educative citizenship. The authors noted the importance of study abroad programs in relation to U.S. universities' commitment to producing graduates that present global and cultural competence within their respective

fields. However, it was noted that further research may be required to understand how educational travel can result in new meanings and perspectives concerning citizenship for higher education students (Stoner et al., 2014).

In summation of this section, ethical citizenship involves participating actively in citizenship activities aimed at contributing to the community. Integrative citizenship describes informal activities involved in everyday life that may improve a community. Lastly, educative citizenship describes how various morals and facets of the self are developed through citizenship practices, resulting in individuals having a better understanding of their roles within their community (Glover, 2004).

#### *Building Social Capital within Communities*

This section centers on research concerning how social capital is built within communities. A definition of social capital will be provided in accordance with social capital theory. Methods used to build social capital within communities will also be discussed. A summary will conclude this section.

There are many definitions and conceptualizations of social capital; though these definitions describe the same overall concept, there are differences in context and perspective. Some authors have referred to individuals' social networks in and of themselves as social capital. Others have noted that social capital is a resource that exists within social networks, but effort must be applied to extract and utilize it (Lin, 2017). For the purpose of this study, social capital can be understood as the social benefits associated with an individual's social positionality or social network (Lin et al., 2001).

Regardless of which definition is used, the importance of context becomes apparent when examining research concerning social capital interventions (Hurlbert, Beggs, & Haines, 2017; Rooks, Klyver, & Sserwanga, 2016; Shiell, Hawe, & Kavanagh, 2018). For example, if the goal is to improve the social capital of elderly individuals so that they are more empowered to take control of their health goals, a social capital intervention may be helpful; however, if the intervention does not factor in lack of transportation, education level, and other factors that affect the accessibility of health information, the social capital gained through intervention has limited utility.

Some academics have differentiated between bonding, linking, and bridging forms of social capital (Agger & Jensen, 2015). Bonding social capital involves emotional connections and bonds with those that are the most emotionally close. Linking social capital is, instead, shared between those in power and regular citizens. Lastly, bridging social capital involves loose connections and acquaintances across various social groups and demographics (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

The process of increasing one's social capital can differ depending on many personal and community-related factors (Hamdan et al., 2018; Mithen et al., 2015). Hamdan et al. (2018) recently examined social capital and quality of life among individuals living in communities of multi-story housing units. The authors administered 797 questionnaires to residents living in such housing units. Upon analyzing the results, the authors found that social capital is bonded along four dimensions. Further, there were many factors that affected individuals' ability to develop social capital, such as their neighborhood, degree of diversity present, and surrounding community infrastructure.

The authors concluded that within multi-story housing communities, social capital can facilitate improved quality of life and positive social values.

Building social capital within communities increases reciprocity, trust, and civic participation; by extension, social capital can then influence the individual social and health outcomes of community members (Lieberman, 2019; Mackenbach et al., 2016; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2017). The relationship between community social capital and public health was the focus of a literature review written by Lieberman (2018). A theoretical foundation of social capital theory was selected. According to the author, building social capital within communities increases reciprocity, trust, and civic participation; by extension, social capital can then influence the individual health outcomes of community members. This means of translating social capital into improved emotional, social, and physical health outcomes is particularly relevant to marginalized and segregated communities, as such communities can acquire resources that are otherwise unavailable locally through social networks. The author concluded by emphasizing the importance of improving local social infrastructures and community capacity, as well as including local governance when seeking to build social capital at the community level (Lieberman, 2018).

Similarly, Mackenbach et al. (2016) compared social capital scores at the community level with health metrics collected within a European neighborhood. Survey data from 5,900 respondents was utilized. Upon analyzing the social capital and health data using multiple regression techniques, the authors found that social cohesion and social network were significantly and positively associated with higher self-rated health

scores, consumption of more fruit, and lowered risk of obesity. However, because increased social capital often means easier access to tangible resources, social capital was also associated with less physical activity related to transportation and more sedentary behavior (Mackenbach et al., 2016). These findings, along with Lieberman's (2018) findings, highlight the significance of contextual factors at the community and individual level when considering how social capital affects individuals' daily lives.

Examining the context that surrounds social capital also requires understanding that individuals are somewhat limited in the degree to which social capital may be improved based on their personal context (Mithen et al., 2015). A recent study conducted by Mithen et al. (2015) highlighted the association between health and social capital, and how this association may facilitate improvement or be dually limiting depending on personal factors. Data from 15,028 individuals who responded to the General Social Survey was utilized. Sources of social capital were compared to health metrics and self-reported health ratings. Upon analyzing the data, the authors found that those with disabilities had fewer formal and informal support resources and lower self-rated health status; these effects were more significant in the case of mental impairment. The authors concluded that longitudinal examination of specific populations, such as individuals with disabilities, would be required to fully grasp and explain the association between health outcomes and accessible social capital (Mithen et al., 2015).

Local governments and organizations must carefully weigh costs, benefits, and methods of investing resources to increase community social capital (Eriksson & Emmelin, 2016; Mullenbach et al., 2017). Mullenbach et al. (2018) sought to evaluate



the benefits of parks and recreation renovations. The authors noted the challenging nature of measuring the impact of investments into existing parks and recreation fixtures. After analyzing the results of three renovation case studies, which indicated the significant benefits of renovation investments, the authors collected evaluation data from local stakeholders using a newly-developed survey instrument. Upon analyzing the results, the researchers found that after being renovated, the considered community sites were more appealing to wider resident demographics and maintained more effectively. Further, an open-ended response portion revealed five main themes: enhancing a sense of community, new neighborhood assets, new family destinations, fostering improved community health outcomes, and offering community benefits (Mullenbach et al., 2017).

Some researchers have indicated that social capital is not simply built, or improved, within communities, but rather is exchanged through interactions (Glover, 2011). A community garden served as a research site and social context for Glover's (2011) research concerning social capital development. Glover (2011) found that at the garden, social capital was routinely accessed, produced, and utilized within the social networks that formed among individuals who regularly frequented the garden. Further, the author noted that social capital can be a positive result and a personal cost, depending on an individuals' social positionality and existing social capital. Glover (2011) concluded by encouraging researchers to consider social capital as something that is exchanged and flows throughout interpersonal interactions, as opposed to being something that is only intentionally bestowed or taken away.

Recent research findings indicate that social capital may mediate how some citizens' experiences affect their sense of safety and security (Collins & Guidry, 2018). More specifically, Collins and Guidry (2018) recently found that civic engagement and social capital mediated the relationship between the sense of safety and inequality experienced within an individual's local community. Sense of safety in an individual's local community often depends on structural factors that must be changed or addressed at the community level. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the aforementioned factors within 26 metropolitan areas in the U.S. Upon analyzing the data, the researchers found that the relationship between sense of safety and inequality was fully mediated by social capital; individuals living in communities with pervasive inequality were more likely to report reduced levels of social capital and a lesser sense of safety. Further, those who reported lesser civic engagement were more likely to also report a lack of safety in their community.

Social capital is also associated with increased participation in community leadership and governance roles (Musso & Weare, 2017). Musso and Weare (2017) recently explored how network-based social capital affected elements of democracy present in Los Angeles. Their study was based on extant research findings concerning how social capital can affect civic engagement and interactions. A neighborhood governance network was surveyed using network measures. Upon analyzing the results, the authors found that bonding social capital promoted both local participation and local officials. Further, bridging social capital was significantly related to perceived advising success among local government officials. The authors concluded that participatory

reform tactics should include ample consideration of system goals in relation to individual system relationships (Musso & Weare, 2017).

Alternative methods of developing social capital are accessed through online social communities (Shen & Cage, 2015). Recent research by Shen and Cage (2015) was conducted to evaluate how offline meetups among members of online communities affect community participation and social capital. The authors noted that significantly less is known about how in-person meetups within online communities affect community outcomes than is known about meetups within communities and organizations that primarily interact in person. Longitudinal network data of online science-fiction fan communities was systematically assessed. Upon analyzing the data, the authors found while social capital could be developed through in-person meetups among online community members, doing so often resulted in “trading” one form of social capital for another. Offline meetups for members of online communities may improve personal connections through bonding social capital, but including in-person meetups limits bridging social capital for new or prospective members without physical access to in-person events (Shen & Cage, 2015).

In summation of this section, social capital can be described as the social benefits related to an individual’s social positionality or social network (Lin et al., 2001). Many variations of this definition exist, and some academics have differentiated between bonding, linking, and bridging forms of social capital (Agger & Jensen, 2015). Efforts to increase social capital at the individual or community level can have significantly different results depending on many personal and community-related factors (Hamdan et

al., 2018). Further, the full context surrounding social capital development can determine the outcome of social capital interventions and the process of building social capital at the community level (Hurlbert et al., 2017). Factors which can affect the outcome of efforts to increase social capital within communities include region or neighborhood, degree of diversity present, and surrounding community infrastructure; at the individual level, the process of increasing social capital can be significantly affected by factors such as disabilities, health challenges, education level, access to community resources, and socioeconomic status (Mithen et al., 2015). Social capital is associated with significant personal benefits, including higher self-rated health scores, lowered risk of obesity, empowerment, and increased participation in community leadership and governance roles (Musso & Weare, 2017). Further, social capital may mediate the sense of safety and security individuals feel within their community (Collins & Guidry, 2018).

### *Community Development*

This section includes a discussion of community development efforts. A current definition will be provided, as will international guidelines for community development best practices. A summary will conclude this section.

Today, community development is a term that encompasses many efforts and initiatives intended to improve communities (Seferiadis, Cummings, Maas, Bunders, & Zweekhorst, 2017). Green and Haines (2015, p. xiii) defined community development as “a planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life.” Community development requires resources, or capital, in one or more forms. Capital used during the community development process can be social,

environmental, cultural, physical, human, financial, and/or political (Green & Haines, 2015).

Community development is often initiated after social programs or other sources of information identify community needs or calls to action. Chavis and Wandersman (2002) asserted that a collective sense of community can serve as a catalyst for local action and significant community improvements. When members of a community feel connected to their community, they are more likely to take local action, such as taking part in a block association. This effect occurs due to a shift in perceptions regarding social relations, the environment, personal control, and empowerment when connections are made within a community (Chavis & Wandersman, 2002).

Social capital can be developed through community development projects, and also contributes to positive community development outcomes (Nguyen & Rieger, 2017). Recent research conducted by Nguyen and Rieger (2017) involved performing economic experiments as a means of measuring changes in behavior related to interpersonal trust, altruism, and caring about the community in Morocco. More specifically, the authors examined the impact of a pro-social community development program intended to encourage a sense of community and interpersonal relations. Upon using regression discontinuity methods to determine causal effects, the authors found that the program increased members' likelihood of contributing to the greater good within the local community. Despite these positive effects, altruism was not affected and interpersonal trust decreased. These findings highlight the complex nature of community development projects, as effects must be considered from a multitude of stakeholder perspectives to

ensure overall success. Even so, trade-offs may occur in order to ensure that development goals are achieved, resulting in increased social capital paired with changes to community attitudes, perceptions, and participation (Nguyen & Rieger, 2017).

Information and communications technologies (ICTs), such as social media websites, have made the process of community development significantly easier (Matthews, 2016). Interested parties can use social media and digital communication to determine community needs, connect with individuals/groups with helpful resources, and fundraise, among other uses. Matthews (2015) studied the connection between community development, social capital, and social media by reflecting on a community development project that took place in Edinburgh, Scotland. The project was aimed at developing community empowerment through digital art and use of new technological resources. Upon analyzing the results of the project, Matthews (2015) found that the connection between providing technological resources and tools does not necessarily convert to increased active engagement and civic participation. Further, it was determined that affluent communities which already possess significant social capital are more likely to use technological developments for community development and activism, as affluent communities often already possess the basis of social connections and resources that facilitate community development.

Community development is a responsibility that falls into many hands (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016). Government entities are expected to address systemic issues when they arise; however, local organizations rooted in communities often address locally relevant problems when they remain unaddressed. Recent literature indicates that community

development is often the most successful when government entities work with locally-rooted organizations and combine resources.

Some researchers have criticized the lack of focus in academic discourse surrounding the efforts of smaller and relatively informal organizations that can be a source of significant community development (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016). Credit is most often given to government intervention and community development corporations, whose efforts are often more widely advertised. Other entities which contribute to community development include neighborhood associations, economic development groups, and faith-based organizations. By less formal means, other organizations including block clubs, neighborhood watches, and youth community service groups also contribute to community development (Green & Haines, 2015).

Researchers have also recently cautioned against over-emphasizing economic development as a community development priority (Peredo & Chrisman, 2017). Doing so often improves communities superficially, but may not address the reason why economic intervention was considered necessary in the first place. Rather, the goal for community development initiatives is to identify problems facing members of a community, understand the root cause of such problems, and then address those problems by working with community entities or providing resources that empower citizens.

Recently, the International Association for Community Development (IACD) produced a list of guiding principles for entities working with local communities during development efforts:

Community development is a set of practices and methods that focus on harnessing the innate abilities and potential that exist in all human communities to become active agents in their own development, and to organize themselves to address key issues and concerns that they share. Community development workers may be members of the community, paid workers, or volunteers. They work with and alongside people in the community to identify concerns and opportunities, and develop the confidence and energy to respond together. The building of community and social capital is both a core part of the process and an outcome, and in this way there is an extension of co-operative attitudes and practices that are built through community development that can increase community resilience over time (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016, p. 2).

These guidelines are aimed at ensuring best practices and outcomes for community development projects internationally (Ross, et al., 2018). It is essential for entities entering foreign communities abroad to respect community cultures and ways of life; it is equally important for corporations and entities seeking to assist communities in the U.S. to seek to understand residents and their needs without patronizing or deferring to community development options that will produce the most positive press and publicity (Ross et al., 2018).

To summarize this section, community development describes many efforts and initiatives with the goal of improving communities (Seferiadis, Cummings, Maas, Bunders, & Zweekhorst, 2017). Community development often occurs after social programs identify community needs; a collective sense of community can also spur local



action and significant community development. Increased social capital can result from community development projects while existing social capital contributes to positive community development outcomes (Nguyen & Rieger, 2017). ICTs have made the process of organizing and communicating throughout the community development process significantly easier; affluent communities are more likely to use technological developments for community development and activism (Matthews, 2015).

Community development is an effort that can involve many stakeholders and organizers (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016). Common sources of community development initiatives are local government, neighborhood associations, economic development groups, faith-based organizations, block clubs, neighborhood watches, and youth community service groups (Green & Haines, 2015). Organizations such as the IACD have developed guiding principles and best practices for entities working with local communities for community development purposes.

### *Community Centers*

The term *community center* has been used to describe establishments that vary significantly in their purpose, resources, and services (Sonnek et al., 2018; Vieira, et al., 2017). The most common purposes for community centers that have been discussed in the literature are recreation, fitness, socialization, health service provision, public information, and event venues. Some community centers are aimed at helping specific populations within the local community, such as children, at-risk teens, or the elderly (Crouter, Salas, & Wiecha, 2017). Regardless of the specific purpose, all community

centers are constructed with the goal of providing a service or benefit to the community where a need is apparent (Ashford et al., 2019).

This section will include a discussion of various types of community centers. Within subsections, the benefits for local residents will be explored and the implications of community centers will be evaluated. A summary will conclude this section.

Community centers may provide significant benefits to local residents outside of improving physical health, such as the development of social capital and access to emotional support (Colistra, Schmalz, & Glover, 2017; Ghodsbin, Ahmadi, Jahanbin, & Sharif, 2015). Colistra et al. (2017) recently studied the process and meaning of building relationships within the context of community centers. The authors noted that research on the implications of community centers has generally centered on how built environments affect health and well-being while ignoring many positive implications related to the social environment created at community centers. The authors examined the social relationships present within a county-owned community center located in the southeastern United States. A total of fourteen residents participated by taking part in both individual and group interviews conducted using a phenomenological approach. Upon analyzing the data, the authors found that the local community center provided significant benefits to the personal well-being of residents. The community center provided opportunities for developing social capital and bonding, as well as access to resources and emotional support they would not have had otherwise (Colistra et al., 2017).

In some cases, community centers serve as sites for targeted interventions aimed at producing specific benefits or improving specific outcomes among a particular population (Albright & Fair, 2018; Ashley, 2019; Condon, 2016; Wiles et al., 2018). One such example is a partnership between the Cambridge Community Center, Lesley University, and the HEART*play* program offered through Mount Auburn Hospital. The program was implemented at the community center; staff guided children between six and eight years old who had experienced significant adversity through dance and expressive movement, trauma best practices, and mental health counseling. The goal was to improve participants' coping skills, emotional literacy, self and others awareness, resiliency, and community pride. Though the program is ongoing and thus, outcomes have yet to be formally measured, participants preliminarily expressed enjoyment of the program (Wiles et al., 2018).

Another example of a community center that offers targeted services and benefits is the Welcome Home Community Center in the Southern U.S. (Kagaba & Gagne, 2017). Welcome Home is operated by an organization that relies solely on private donations to help immigrants and refugees who enter the country. Aside from offering direct aid in the form of housing, food, furniture, and other donations, Welcome Home hosts many community events aimed at incorporating immigrants and refugees into their new communities. Once settled the aid recipients are also coached and supported through their attainment of personal economic, cultural, and educational goals (Kagaba & Gagne, 2017).

Patronizing a community center may be considered preventative care among older adults due to significant effects related to social health and well-being (Ardila-Gomez et al., 2016; Hosokawa et al., 2019). A recent study conducted by Hosokawa et al. (2019) centered on how effectively community centers in Japan maintained older individuals' functional capacity and fostered their social participation. The authors distributed surveys to 108 local residents, of which 72 responded. Upon analyzing the results using regression analysis, the authors found that social participation and maintenance of living functions are significant benefits of regularly patronizing the community center. Intellectual activity and instrumental self-maintenance moderated effects related to living function maintenance (Hosokawa et al., 2019).

Community centers may serve as a site where older adults and seniors can develop citizen power and participate in their local community if they are given input during decision-making processes and/or the opportunity to apply for leadership opportunities (Gallant & Hutchinson, 2016). Gallant and Hutchinson (2016) examined how power is perceived among senior citizens who frequent their local community center. The authors noted the increasing importance of participation and citizen power among senior citizens, who have fewer opportunities to participate in activities that contribute to their sense of power as citizens as they age. The authors used participatory methods to examine the factors which contribute to or hinder citizen power and participation. Upon analyzing the data, the authors found that three themes related to power were present within the data: reluctance to claim power, powerlessness, and claiming power. Additionally, negative social constructs and ideas related to aging acted

as instruments of invisible power within the community center. The authors concluded by noting that meaningful community center membership should involve visible power for seniors, such as leadership opportunities.

Partnerships between community centers and other local agencies or assets, such as healthcare centers and schools, can result in more significant benefits for the community than when community needs are addressed by these entities individually (Coll-Planas et al., 2017). A pilot study was recently conducted by Coll-Planas et al. (2017) to test an intervention intended to build a resource network between local healthcare providers and community centers, as well as promoting social capital through the implementation of a group program. The study took part in both rural and urban regions of Spain; metrics were assessed at baseline, immediately following the intervention, and two years later. Upon analyzing data collected from 38 older adult participants, the researchers found that social support and participation significantly increased following the intervention, while loneliness decreased significantly. Two years after the conclusion of the study period, symptoms of depression had decreased and positive social effects persisted. Further, 39.5% continued to take part in the group program more than two years after the conclusion of the study. These findings highlight how the positive implications of community centers may be magnified by partnerships with other local organizations and resources.

While community centers have been shown to be associated with increased social capital and empowerment for patrons, there are limits to these effects if citizens are not equipped to lead important community projects (Baldwin, et al, 2016). Baldwin et al.

(2016) aimed to understand how community development may empower citizens. The researchers conducted a randomized evaluation of community development measures in Ghana to determine whether community development measures were empowering citizens to improve their state of socioeconomic well-being. Upon analyzing the results, the authors found that leadership training improved village leadership quality while also decreasing the effort and resources collectively expended towards projects other than the community-based development initiative that was studied. Further, the program encouraged increased leadership participation without increasing the degree of government investment in such communities.

Though community centers have seldom been discussed as sites for activism and political empowerment in recent years, some community centers served as sites for local movements in the 1960s aimed at improving community conditions and relations (Paulsen, 2018). Leaders of the Way Community Center in Minneapolis founded the center in 1966 with the intention of fostering collaboration among local creatives and activists, with a focus on empowering people of color. As with all community centers, the Way was established in response to community needs that became apparent. In the case of the Way, a riot that took place in Minneapolis in 1966 was the catalyst that led to the Way being established. The Way worked with local leaders, politicians, and small businesses to empower the local community and build social capital at the communal level; additionally, they sought to address issues reflected within the community that remained otherwise unaddressed by government intervention (Paulsen, 2015). While it is rare for community centers today to be as centrally grounded in grassroots activism as the

Way was, the nature of community and interracial relations at the time necessitated local solutions beyond those offered by politicians.

Assessing the implications of community center development can yield significantly different results depending on whether outcomes are assessed at the community or individual level (Peoples, 2016). Further, critics of traditional methods used to assess the implications of community centers and other community development projects have highlighted the importance of context and sustainability. While many community centers provide services and resources that can help local residents, empowering residents by helping them to develop social capital and skills that will serve them for years to come is more beneficial in the long-term (Kagaba & Gagne, 2017). Thus, if effects are only assessed at baseline and at the end of an intervention period, it remains unclear whether those benefits will continue to serve residents and if so, for how long.

A recent assessment conducted by Peoples (2016) was intended to determine whether community centers play a role in fostering positive outcomes for disenfranchised adolescents. After establishing that the factors that can affect youth development most significantly are family life and structure, institutions, socioeconomic status, and neighborhood, a comparative case study design was used. A total of eight neighborhoods, four with community centers and four without, were compared. Upon analyzing adolescent outcomes in the studied neighborhoods, the authors found that there were no significant effects at the neighborhood, or community, level. When evaluating the effects of community centers at an individual level, however, self-assessments

revealed they made a significant and positive difference in many young people's lives (Peoples, 2016).

A significant number of studies concerned with evaluating the impact of community center development have been undertaken using a community-based participatory research approach (Israel et al., 2019). Israel et al. (2019) outlined the core tenets and principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR). According to the authors, CBPR is a research approach which can be paired with many research designs and methods. Some central principles of a CBPR approach include understanding community as a level of identity, emphasizing local community resources and strengths, collaboration and equity, co-learning, balancing action with research, emphasizing local health issues and inequalities, free dissemination of findings to all involved partners, long-term commitment to sustainability, and addressing cultural humility and the influence of demographic variables such as race and class.

Though community centers are often developed based on research recommendations or community needs assessments (Berger, Coyle, Mutchler, & Velasco, 2019; Schifferdecker et al., 2016), few studies have provided quantitative evidence that established community centers fulfill their intended purposes. Berger et al. (2019) recently conducted an assessment of community needs in Weston, Massachusetts. The assessment was conducted by the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging at the University of Massachusetts. Data was collected from multiple sources, including informant interviews, focus groups, a resident survey, and case comparisons. Upon analyzing the data, the authors found that the number of older adults living in Weston



would likely increase substantially within the next two decades. Existing residents valued the safety and lifestyle they associated with living in Weston. Further, most respondents had not heard of or accessed services and programs offered by the Weston Council on Aging (COA). Further, residents between 55-69 years old preferred online information about COA happenings, while those older than 70 preferred the physical newsletter.

To summarize this section, community centers vary in their purpose, resources, and services offered (Sonnek et al., 2018; Vieira, da Costa et al., 2017). Community centers commonly provide recreation, fitness, socialization, health services, public information, and events that are relevant to the local community. Some community centers focus their programs and resources on specific populations when the need arises, such as children, at-risk teens, or the elderly (Crouter, Salas, & Wiecha, 2017).

Community centers offer significant benefits for members, including those related to physical and mental health, opportunities for developing social capital and bonding, personal empowerment, leadership opportunities, and access to resources and emotional support (Colistra et al., 2017). Community centers can be considered a source of preventative care among older members in particular due to significant effects related to social health and well-being; further, older adults and seniors can be empowered through participation in activities at community centers, particularly when given decision making input and leadership opportunities (Gallant & Hutchinson, 2015).

Some community centers serve as sites for targeted programs and interventions aimed at addressing needs specific to the community; the Cambridge Community Center

and the Welcome Home Community Center are two such centers. Community centers have also served as sites for local social or political movements aimed at improving community conditions and relations (Paulsen, 2015). Partnerships which connect community centers with other local organizations, such as healthcare centers and schools, can lead to more significant benefits at the community level than when community needs are addressed by lone community centers or organizations (Coll-Planas et al., 2015).

### *Gaps in Existing Literature*

Though many researchers have explored the benefits and implications of community centers, there remains a lack of quantitative evidence concerning how community centers affect citizenship. Needs assessments which are conducted prior to the establishment of a community center are far more common than studies that involve critically examining whether established community centers fulfill their purpose.

Further, existing evaluations of the impact of community centers evaluate outcomes that are often vague or unclear (Peoples, 2016). Self-reported health measures are often used when evaluating health outcomes from community center members, sometimes resulting in inconclusive findings. Many positive implications can remain undiscovered if researchers focus solely on one evaluative measure; for example, positive effects to general health and well-being may be unapparent if only a few physical health metrics are considered (Colistra et al., 2017).

Aside from Glover's (2004) research concerning how citizenship is socially constructed within community centers, there has remained a significant lack of research concerning the association between improving citizenship and community center

membership. Concepts related to citizenship, such as social capital and empowerment, have been researched within the context of community centers far more often without bridging the connection to citizenship behavior. The lack of consensus concerning how citizenship is defined, what active citizenship involves, and how to increase citizenship has likely contributed to this lack of exploration.

Through the present research, Glover's (2004) constructionist framework will guide a quantitative assessment to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the presence of a community center and improved citizenship. This research will address facets of Glover's (2004) research that may have served to limit the transferability of the findings; namely, a small sample informed the findings and no quantitative data informed determination of the significance of the association between citizenship and community center development.

### *Summary*

In summation of this chapter, the purpose of this research is to expand the constructionist framework of Glover's (2004) research, determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the presence of a community center and improved citizenship, and evaluate how a community center affects the "civicness" of active versus non-active patrons of the facility. Glover (2004) explored the role of community centers from a social constructionist theoretical approach. Glover (2004) classified elements of active citizenship that were apparent in existing definitions into the dimensions of ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship, and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship describes active participation in activities aimed at contributing to the

public good. Integrative citizenship encompasses informal activities that occur in everyday life which may contribute to a community. Lastly, educative citizenship describes how morals and self-perceptions are developed through citizenship practices, resulting in a better understanding of an individual's sense of identity and place within their community (Glover, 2004).

The underlying theoretical framework of this study is social capital theory and social constructionist theory, as was the case for Glover's (2004) research. Social capital theory describes how an individual's positionality within social networks and systems provides various social benefits (Lin et al., 2001). Social constructionist theory describes how jointly constructed understandings inform widely-shared assumptions about the world (Gergen, 1985).

Social capital can describe social networks in and of themselves or may refer to a resource that is accessible within social networks (Lin, 2017). Social capital can provide individuals with the means to improve their quality of life or the opportunities afforded to them. Consideration of context is imperative when examining research concerning interventions aimed at increasing social capital at the community or individual level (Hurlbert et al., 2017). Factors which can significantly affect community development projects intended to increase the social capital of groups of people include region or neighborhood, degree of diversity present, and surrounding community infrastructure. When considering individual outcomes, the process of increasing social capital is more significantly affected by factors including disabilities, access to community resources, education level, health challenges, and socioeconomic status (Mithen et al., 2015).

Increased social capital is positively associated with improved self-rated health scores, lowered risk of obesity, empowerment, personal security, safety, and increased leadership and governance participation (Collins & Guidry, 2018; Musso & Weare, 2017).

Community development encompasses a multitude of efforts and initiatives aimed at improving local communities, as well as empowering residents to build assets and improve their quality of life. Some authors have critiqued the lack of research focused on the significant community development endeavors of small or informal groups that are locally-based, in addition to an over-emphasis on the efforts of community development corporations (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016). Organizations such as the International Association for Community Development (IACD) have recently outlined guidelines aimed at ensuring community development initiatives truly help those they are aimed at assisting and empowering. In line with the IACD's guidelines, corporations and entities offering community development resources in the U.S. and abroad should actively seek to understand the experiences and needs of local residents without patronizing or losing sight of overarching objectives (Ross et al., 2018).

Community centers differ significantly in terms of purpose, resources, and services offered (Sonnek et al., 2018). Community centers provide resources and services including recreation, fitness, socialization, health services, public information, and locally-relevant events. Frequenting a community center can result in significant benefits pertaining to physical and mental health, opportunities for developing social capital and bonding, personal empowerment, activism, progression of social movements, leadership opportunities, comprehensive preventative care, and access to emotional

support and counseling (Colistra et al., 2017). Some community centers develop programs or interventions upon assessing prominent unmet needs within the community. Some of the most significant benefits apparent at the community level as a result of community centers occur when centers partner with local businesses, charities, healthcare providers, schools, and other organizations, as doing so can result in innovative collaboration and increased resource availability (Coll-Planas et al., 2015).

In accordance with Glover's (2004) findings, in addition to the theoretical framework and findings from other extant literature, the following research questions will guide this study:

1. What factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center?
2. To what extent does participating in a community center improve a sense of community and civic behavior?
3. To what extent does participating in group programs (active) versus non-group programs (latent) activities in a community center improve a sense of community and civic behavior?

Chapter 3 will include details pertaining to the methodology proposed for this research. Details that will be provided include the research design, sampling strategy, and data analysis methods. A summary will conclude the chapter.

## **Chapter III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Overview*

The Glover study provides a qualitative analysis of the role that placemaking, specifically the use of local community centers, has on the expression of citizenship social capital. This research focuses on a quantitative analysis of the same construct. By using a quantitative study, the research will determine if the results achieved by the Glover study can be duplicated, the extent the community center and civic-mindedness and engagement are related, and where the research can be further explored (Stake, 1995).

There is considerable debate over the measuring of social capital. Social capital theory is all-encompassing and provides a “big-tent” of concepts and characteristics. Furthermore, the study of social capital often struggles with separating form, source, and consequences (Adam & Roncevic, 2003; Onyx & Bullen, 2001; Sobels et al., 2001). Because of the challenges of measuring social capital is difficult, it has been common among researchers to use proxy measures. According to Grootaret et al. (2002), social capital has constructs that are inherently abstract and require subjective interpretation in their translation into operational measures, that are invariably indirect surrogates of their associated constructs (Grootaret, 2002; Narayan & Cassidy, 2001). Fukuyama (2001, p. 12) states, “one of the greatest weaknesses of the social capital concept is the absence of

consensus on how to measure it.” This lack of definition requires that the measurement of each study include indicators that are guided by the scope of the concept and the breadth of the unit of observation used (Collier, 2002).

Despite all of these challenges, measuring social capital has intrinsic appeal (Inkeles & Leiderman, 2000). Grootaert and Van Bastalaer (2002) argue that it is not only possible but desirable to measure social capital and its impact. Social capital indicators can be expressed through attitudes and expectations; through reported, recorded, and observed actions and activities; and by comparing people’s interpretations of how things happened or are expected to happen (Cox & Caldwell, 2000). As closely as possible, measurement indicators should tie to the conceptual framework of the study. Cavaye (2004, as cited in Cordell & Romanow, 2006) provides some guidelines for the creation of measures that have consistent framework and strong characteristics. He recommends measurement guidelines with the following characteristics:

- Specifically targeted to the variable to be measured,
- Measurability - ease of measurement,
- Comprehensiveness - measures of a range of social characteristics,
- Reliability and rigor,
- Continuity in their ability to translate across situations and be consistent across local, state, or national frameworks.

The core components of social capital include networks, trust, and reciprocity. Previous research has often focused on finding proximal indicators that relate to these core concepts. Distal indicators are defined as outcomes that are not directly related to



these core components but may still have some validity. Although some may consider improved community mindfulness and engagement a distal indicator of social capital, this research, like the Glover study, proposes that improvements in civic perception and behavior by participants of a community center are foundationally due to proximal improvements of networks, trust, and reciprocity.

In meeting the guidelines outlined by Cavaye, this study will use proxy measurement indicators found in a widely used design structure known as the Sense of Community Index (SOCI). This index is based on a theory presented by McMillan and Chaves (1986) that a sense of community is a perception with an effective component. By using this measurement tool, the index will more closely meet both reliability and validity standards as well as adhere, as strictly as possible, to the Cavaye recommendations. This index meets these standards in the following ways:

- Targeted to the variable to be measured. The SOCI measures *perception* of community and the hypotheses in this research looks at *civic attitude* and *engagement*. The author posits that perception or attitude always proceeds engagement and, therefore, the SOCI can be a reliable instrument in testing these hypotheses.
- Measurability. The Sense of Community Index II was developed in 2005 based upon an earlier index. This measurement tool includes twenty-four questions that assess membership, influence, meeting needs and the shared emotional connection elements of a community.

- Comprehensiveness. The SOCI index measures the three ecological domains of social capital which include,
  - Individual - self, and importance
  - Microsystem - social relationships
  - Macrosystems - group organizations and purposes

These domains can be comparable to the three delimited behaviors of the Glover study, which includes an attitudinal sense of community (individual), a perception of responsibility within the community (microsystem), and behavioral motivation resulting in enhanced citizenship participation (macrosystem).

- Reliability and rigor. The SOCI index is based upon the recognized theory of McMillan and Chaves. It provides the basis for social capital work within different cultures in North and South America, Asia, the Middle East, as well as many contexts (urban, suburban, rural, tribal, etc).
- Continuity. The SOCI index can easily be reproducible across multiple groups and associations, providing a culturally unbiased proxy in determining levels of social capital.

The Sense of Community Index is a good measurement model for this research providing strong internal reliability and convergent validity.

#### *Philosophical Foundation*

The Glover study is grounded in a social constructionist framework, which describes how understandings of the world are jointly constructed in order to form shared assumptions about the nature of reality (Gergen, 1985). Creswell (2014, p. 37)) indicates

that “social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things”.. Because meanings are varied and multiple, they lend themselves to qualitative research, which is the foundation of the Glover study.

While the Glover qualitative research builds the theory, this research will continue the “exploratory sequence” by looking at his assumptions from a quantitative perspective. According to Creswell (2013) an epistemological gap created from a constructivist framework to a quantitative study can be bridged by applying quantitative methods to a specific case study, in this research, a specific community center (Creswell, 2013). The same qualitative domains of responsible, participatory, and communal behavior from the Glover study will be used in this research, thereby determining if there is statistical verification for the Glover research.

#### *SOCI Index & Glover Research Alignment*

As the Glover study is grounded in a social constructionist framework the alignment between his research and the information derived from the SOCI Index can be established. The SOCI Index is the most frequently used survey instrument for determining community perception (Chavis, et al., 2008). Perceptions are at the foundation of social constructionist theory. Schwandt (2001, p. 31) claims “social actors recognize, produce, and reproduce social actions and how they come to share an intersubjective understanding of specific life circumstances.” The Glover research was guided by three social constructionist assumptions. First, social actors construct their

interpretations, not in isolation of but rather against a milieu of shared understandings, social practices, and language. Second, social actors invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of their lived experiences. Third, social constructions, as negotiated understandings, can take a variety of forms (Glover, 2004).

#### *Glover Data Grouping*

The Glover (2004) study brought order to his qualitative research by categorizing the results into themes and patterns that correspond to his three ecological domains. This inductive, data-led grouping is explained as follows:

Having a say about service delivery, active participation, sense of ownership, and sense of empowerment were the themes I identified and grouped under the category “the participatory citizen.” Under the second category, “the responsible citizen,” I sorted the themes awareness, obligation, and responsibility. Finally, a sense of belonging, building relationships, “paying it forward.” and recognition of interdependence were grouped under the third category, “the communal citizen.” By developing these categories, which was my attempt to account for the data, I sought to explain the relationships among the categories and form working assertions to explain data. Here I attempt to provide my own interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants (p. 70).

#### *Sense of Community Grouping*

The Sense of Community Index (SOC) groups data responses in the following four ways:

Reinforcement of Needs - Needs are met, shared values, ability to meet others' needs, feel a part, ability to communicate with others, similarities.

Membership - Trust, recognition, familiarity, recognition of place, investment in the community, identity with the community.

Influence - Being a part, community influence on others, recognizing and recognition by others, ability to influence, problem-solving, the effectiveness of city leaders.

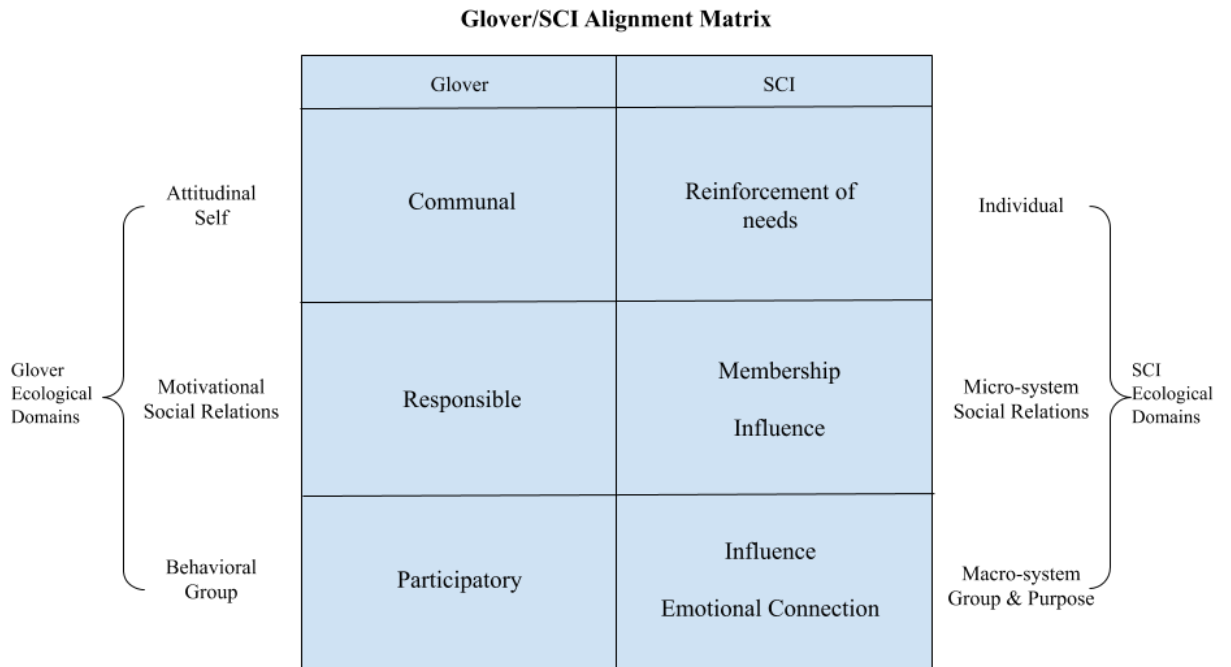
Shared Emotional Connections - Importance of citizenship, interaction with others, longevity, shared community events, the outlook of future, sense of community care.

#### *Data Alignment*

While the category titles of the two studies may differ there is similarity in the grouped themes of the collected data. Therefore, the ability to align the two models can be achieved. The author of this study posits that the SOCI Index can provide a proper instrumentation bridge between the qualitative structure of the Glover study and the data needed to answer the research question of this study. This is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

*Glover/SOCI Alignment Matrix*



This model identifies how the data results from the Glover study can be oriented with the SOCI questions while retaining the theoretical foundational structure of each element.

*Research Design*

Quantitative case study research serves as the methodology for this study. This study focuses on the value that public space plays upon components of social capital as it relates to improvements in an individual’s civic perception and engagement. This

research tests whether the independent variable (IV) of activity within a community-based reaction facility has any effect on the dependent variable (DV) of improved sense of community or citizenship behavior. Based on relevant research and previously noted theory, the author posits that there is a statistically significant correlation between active participation in a community center and a stronger attachment to the community, thereby resulting in improved citizenship attitude and behavior. To support this theory, the following hypotheses were developed:

*Research Question 1.* What factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center?

*Hypothesis 1.* Renters have a greater likelihood of attending the community center than owners of homes.

*Hypothesis 2.* The shorter the time an individual resides within the community, the more likely they will attend the community center.

*Hypothesis 3.* Older citizens (60+) are more likely to attend the community center.

*Hypothesis 4.* The lower the income bracket, the more likely an individual will attend the community center.

*Research Question 2.* To what extent does participating in a community center improve a sense of community and civic behavior?

*Hypothesis 5.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "participatory" citizens.

*Hypothesis 6.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "responsible" citizens.

*Hypothesis 7.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "communal" citizens.

*Hypothesis 8.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "recognized" citizens.

*Hypothesis 9.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's "political" behavior in the community.

*Hypothesis 10.* Participating in the community center increases a citizen's "volunteer" behavior in the community.

*Research Question 3.* To what extent does participating in group programs (active) versus non-group programs (latent) activities in a community center improve a sense of community and civic behavior?

*Hypothesis 11.* Participating in group activities, versus individual activities, at the community center improves an individual's sense of community and civic participation.

If the research concludes that participation or type and frequency of participation increases a citizen's overall sense of community and improves greater civic participation, then public officials may use this information to develop future strategies regarding the designing, building, and encouragement of the use of this specific type of public space.



This chapter will describe the research site (case), study participants, data collection methods, analysis methods, research steps, and finally, limitations and delimitations.

### *Research Site*

The research site selected by the author is Washington City, Utah. This town located in southwestern Utah provides a variety of benefits as the location for this study.

Washington City is currently one of the fastest-growing communities in the state of Utah and belongs to the larger St. George, Utah metropolitan area. This area is recognized as one of the fastest-growing areas of the country (DeMille, 2018).

Washington City has grown at an average annual rate of 3-5% per year over the past twenty years. The city's current population is approximately 30,000 residents. By using a fast-growing community as a research site for this study, the survey sample will include individuals who have recently moved to the area and are in the process of establishing their relationship with the community and identifying their role in that environment. New residents of a community typically require some time to acclimate to their new surroundings and to feel a sense of "home" in their new residence. It is neither spontaneous nor without effort that new community residents take some time in getting to know what their new surroundings have to offer, their local neighborhood, and how to engage in the political and social structure (Cuba and Hummon, 1993). Selecting this site provides the researcher with the added-value of evaluating the impact that built-space has on the engagement of new residents more than a slow-growth, multigenerational site.

In 2008, Washington City built a 110,000 square foot community center. This facility includes a lap and leisure pool, splash pad, barbeque, and picnic area, three full-size gymnasiums, cardio/exercise area, weight facilities, classrooms, reception center, and indoor track. The facility hosts various fitness and educational programs, including yoga, spin, Zumba, swim classes, day-care, preschool, and community classes. The facility also oversees the extensive recreation program of the city, which includes youth and adult sports and training teams. A large number of services offered by this facility provides the researcher with the opportunity to determine the impact that different types of programs may have on the role of a citizen. The population of Washington City has grown 132% since the building of this facility.

The mission and operation of the Washington City Community Center embrace a “public service delivery” philosophy versus a “for-profit” approach, as identified by Richard (1998). Although it is both politically and economically necessary to institute some level of corporate modeling in facilities of this type, the public officials of Washington City have always encouraged a community-service philosophy to this facility. The mission of this center is to meet the needs of the underserved, promote community initiatives, and influence community performance, irrespective of its profitability (Gleason, 1999; Labonte, 1997). This philosophy was best expressed at the center groundbreaking when public officials exclaimed that this site would serve as the “living room to our community.”

Finally, Washington City is an area rich in natural beauty and outdoor recreation. Located near four major national parks and numerous outdoor sports and recreation

venues. Many residents who migrate to this area do so because of these opportunities and this beauty. The value that brings to this study is that the research sample will include a population that would naturally be drawn to many of the activities and offerings of a community center.

### *Population Sample*

Washington City actively engages in ongoing experience assessments of its citizens. In 2012, the city partnered with Qualtrics, an experience-management company, to establish a survey-methodology structure within the community. Since that time, the city has annually conducted numerous surveys to determine everything from the quality of life to the use of social media.

In 2018, Washington City solicited for and organized a representative sample of citizens who would serve as a community-based survey panel. This panel was created to improve the ease in extracting survey data, ensure that the population sample is demographically represented, and improve response rates to survey questionnaires. All households could choose to participate in the Washington City Survey Panel. Any household wishing to join the survey panel is required to fill out a demographic survey that provides information on household size, ethnicity, income, marital status, and other census-based information. This collective information is then compared with the most recent Census Report to determine the representative nature of the survey panel. Currently, there are 1,700 households (from approximately 10,700 households) that participate in the Washington City Survey Panel.

Due to the representative nature of the panel, the Washington City Survey Panel will be used as the sample for this study. This participant selection is “purposeful,” as defined by Maxwell (2012) who indicates that “a selection strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices.” (p. 88). By using this survey sample, the author can identify and stratify those citizens who participate in the community center, their level of participation in the community center, and assess their citizenship behaviors.

The Washington City Survey Panel provides a ready-made sample of citizens that are representative of the community as a whole, meet the sample criteria for participation, and are well-versed in active participation of this type of methodological approach.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

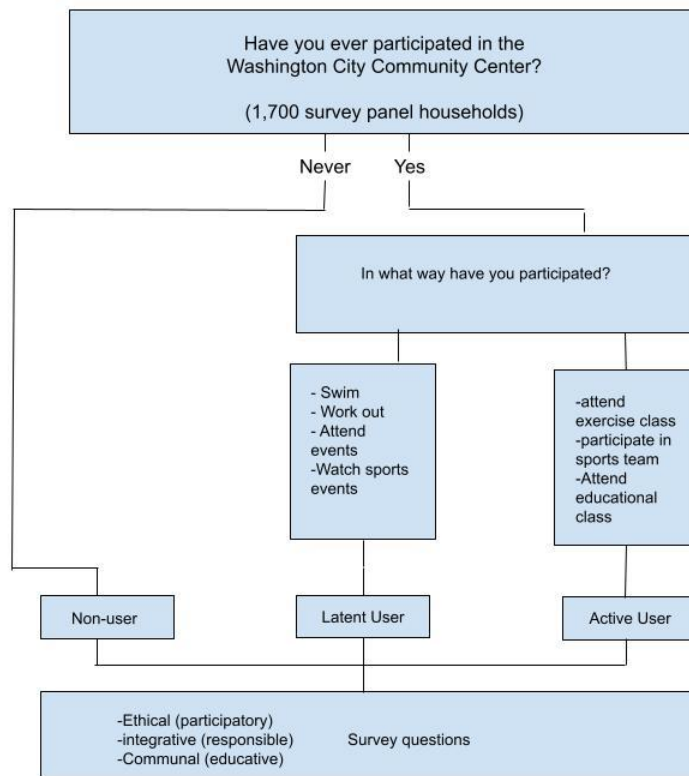
Data was collected from the population sample through the means of survey methodology. After approval from the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), the survey instrument was electronically administered to members of the survey panel. This was done to ensure ease of administration and quantification of results. Results from this survey allowed the author to identify any significant relationships between community center use and improved civic sense and participation by its members. Through the use of this panel and this research technique, the author was able to make appropriate inferences regarding behavior and participation in the community as a whole.

The data collection design utilized single-stage sampling procedures, as the author has access to a representative sample of the community through the panel. The collection

process included a clustering procedure to organize respondents into participants and nonparticipants of the community center. Further clustering occurred within the participant group regarding their levels of engagement, creating active versus latent sub-groups of community center users. This is more fully identified in Figure 4.

Figure 4

*Data Collection Design for Sampling*



Using Floyd and Fowler’s (2009) computational table on survey respondents, there would need to be five hundred and sixty-nine participants (569) respondents to ensure a 95% confidence rating and a margin of error of +/-4%. This survey produced 1,035 overall responses with 604 being considered valid for analysis.

The added-value provided by using a currently established survey panel was to allow additional cross-sectionalizing of the data with the participants' known demographic information. Although outside the scope of this study, further research may be conducted, looking at any relationships between gender, age, household size, or other potentially contributing demographic variables.

The question design for this survey instrument will include the established twenty-four questions from the Sense of Community (SOCI) Index, behavioral questions, and open-ended questions. Creswell (2014) describes three forms of validity to look for in the questions of a survey instrument. These include content validity (do the items measure the content they were intended to measure?), predictive or concurrent validity (do scores predict a criterion measure?); and, construct validity (do items measure hypothetical constructs or concepts?). Reliability is also an essential element of design construction. Reliability refers to the fact that there is consistency across constructs (Gall et al., 2006) (see Appendix A).

By using previously established questions from the SOCI, the author strengthens the validity and reliability challenges associated with the original design. Furthermore, the SOCI uses a psychological sense of community scale based upon the domains of individual, microsystem, and macrosystem. These domains are the foundational elements of their categorical inquiry with questions written to assess self and importance, social relationships, and group organizations and purpose. Alignment has been made between these questions and Glover's categories of communal (self and importance), motivational (social relationships), and participatory (group organizations and purpose).

In analyzing the third research question, “to what extent does participating in group programs (active) versus non-group programs (latent) activities in a community center improve a sense of community and participation?” it was necessary to develop a grading scale (Figure 5). The creation of the “Activity Type Response Scale” addressed the fact that survey respondents could participate in both solo and group activities while attending the community center. This scale provided positive points for each group activity a respondent participated in and a negative point for each individual activity. This then provided a composite score for each respondent. For example, if an individual participated in 3 group activities (+3) at the facility and 2 solo activities (-2), the composite score would be “1.”

Figure 5

*Activity Type Response Scale*



*Research Steps*

The research conducted for this study followed a protocol to ensure that yielded data is consistent with study goals.

1. The survey instrument is designed using questions from the SOCI and attached as Appendix A.
2. The survey was administered to participants of the Washington City Survey Panel

3. Respondents were clustered into groups of participants in the community center from nonparticipants.
4. Additional clustering occurred within the participant group, creating subgroups of those who actively participate (takes classes from the facility, participate in recreation teams) from those who only latently participate (workout, swim, watch events).
5. Appropriate statistical testing was applied to responses from clustered groups determining the relationships that may exist between community center participation and citizenship behavior.
6. Appropriate statistical testing was used to clustered subgroups determining the relationship between activity levels of community center participants and citizenship behavior.
7. Statistical analysis was documented to ensure verifiable research steps throughout the process.

### *Data Analysis*

Pyrczak (2016) argues that, on one level or another, all research involves using the empirical approach to acquire knowledge. As stated in the research hypotheses, this study posits that civic attitude and behavior are improved through associations and activity in the built-environment of a community center. The research model has identified the *whom, how, when, and under what circumstances* the hypotheses were applied. Once the treatments of the study (dependent and independent variables) were outlined, the designed survey model was conducted within the selected population. The



results were analyzed statistically to determine any correlation, or cause-and-effect, among the treatments; thereby substantiating the hypotheses or the null hypotheses.

Analysis for the first research question “what factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center?” involved establishing descriptive statistics about the population. This analysis considered key demographic features functioning as the independent variable and their influence on the dependent variable of attendance at the community center. These variables include homeownership status, length of residency in the community, age, income, and gender.

The analysis utilized the question “To what extent does participating in a community center improve a sense of community and civic behavior?” involved the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to determine the alignment of the SOCI questions and the Washington City Survey questions in relation to the three Glover domains of participatory, responsible, and communal. The results of this test further refined the survey questions and sense of community domains as well as identified an additional domain. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to ensure the validity of this new alignment. This process established the factors analyzed as part of this study. Identifying these factors was essential to understanding the domains suggested by Glover and allowed for more nuanced empirical analysis.

A Pearson R Factor was then conducted to determine the presence of relationships among the variables. Conducting Ordinal Logistic Regression and Ordinary Least Square Regression on these factors allowed for further analysis of the relationships in place between the demographics of the survey respondents and their citizenship behavior.

Once statistical relationships were identified, these results were compared and analyzed to determine their support of the stated hypotheses. Further discussion regarding the statistical process and outcomes are discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, all of the results of these tests will be provided in table format for ease in the evaluation of relationships. Confidence intervals and effect size will be discussed. A standard will be established for a “no effect” of the null hypotheses (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ,  $.01$ , etc.).

### *Bias*

An advantage of quantitative versus qualitative research is the more limited role the researcher plays in the data gathering process (Stake, 1995). This is a key difference between this research and the Glover study. This advantage, however, does not eliminate research bias. Survey methodology can be affected by *response bias*. This is defined as the effect of nonresponse in survey estimates (Fowler & Cosenza, 2009). One measure used to check for response bias is to examine returns on select items week by week to determine if average responses change. If selected responses change, a potential exists for response bias (Cresswell, 2013). This survey study was conducted over three weeks from approximately June 7, 2020, through June 28, 2020.

Even though a quantitative researcher plays a less interpretive role in the research study than in a qualitative study, personal bias can still be evident. In order to ensure strong validity and reliability - and to avoid biased research questions - the author strongly relied on an established survey instrument, known as the Sense of Community Index (SOC). This overall survey instrument structure was reviewed by methodologists

within the Qualtrics organization to identify any potential question bias and to elicit the best response rate.

The author also notes his professional role as the city manager of Washington City, the location where the community center is located. Although significant efforts are made to guarantee an unbiased research construct, it can be recognized that the author has a personal interest in the operations, management decisions, and community involvement of this particular site. The researcher's professional experience is the motivation for a study of this nature. The value this research can provide to current and future public officials cannot be underestimated. The results of this, and other work of its kind, can direct public decision-making in the type and location of building community facilities, how to use built-space to improve community feel and civic behavior, and in the identification of any unseen intrinsic value of local participation in community spaces. The author does not feel that his relationship with this community will impede in any way the administration or results of this study.

#### *Limitations and Delimitations*

There are limitations and delimitations to this study. This study was conducted using a single community center in one urban community. As Washington City, Utah has its own unique location and population, the characteristics associated with that may not be reflective of other communities; this should be recognized for future case studies. Every community will have an existing level of social capital as well as a unique set of social capital needs; therefore, care should be taken in applying these results to other contexts and locations.

The survey pool consisted of 1,700 households who participate in the Washington City Survey Panel. Although generally reflective of the census data for this community, no effort was made, in this research, to statistically adjust for any census identified, an under-represented portion of the community. Therefore, this study does not posit specific conclusions on any distinct demography of this or any other community.

There are delimitations-that is, how the study was narrowed in scope (Creswell, 2014). This study identifies specific key indicators or behaviors that constitute both a sense and performance of citizenship behavior. These indicators, although grounded in Glover's study (2004) and based upon questions from the SOCI, do not represent the complete range by which individuals can, and do, show their citizenship behavior. As best as possible and to operationalize the qualitative-based conclusion by Glover, this study chose indicators that would maintain survey validity while maintaining the integrity of the Glover study hypotheses. Future research could have different results based upon changes within these specific elements of this construct.

Finally, this research did not put to rest the ongoing discussion about the circular nature of social capital research. It is not intended, nor should it be assumed, that this study answers the "chicken or the egg" dilemma of whether the use of community space is the catalyst for improved behavior or whether existing good behavior encourages the use of community space. This study simply looks at any potential correlation within the variables outlined in this construct. Until such time that the contemporary literature can put to rest this reverberating argument, this study will stand on its own merits.

### *Summary*

Chapter 3 outlines the epistemological and theoretical grounding of this study, along with the challenges that are inherent in social capital research. The author identifies how this research will sequence and align through the gap created by the constructionist framework of the Glover study to a quantitative-based case study.

This chapter identifies and provides the rationale for the methodology and methods to be employed, including the intended sample group, construction of the design instrument, and the distribution. Specific data analysis tools are reviewed, which will identify potential relationships between levels of participation and acts of civicness. Through the application of these analytical design tools, the research will identify where correlation may exist between variables and where bias may be identified. Finally, the chapter concludes with additional clarity on the expectations of the design model and methods and its limitations.

Chapter 4 presents the results of this study. Chapter 4 also discusses the findings, highlights relationships, and draws conclusions based upon the study results and review of the literature in the field. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of this research, its limitations, and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### *Overview*

This chapter addresses the results of the findings of this research study. Through the use of inferential statistics, the results and observations made in this chapter provide for a formative understanding of the relationship that community centers have on citizens' sense of community and behavior. Furthermore, collecting and analyzing this data can provide *quantitative* undergirding to Glover's (2004, p. 80) *qualitative* conclusion that "community centers increase communal, responsible, and participatory citizenship." The following research questions informed this study: (a) What demographic factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center? (b) Does participating in the community center influence a sense of community and citizenship participation? (c) To what extent does participating in group programs (active) versus non-group programs (latent) activities in a community center improve a sense of community and participation?

This chapter provides an overview of the research findings of the quantitative analysis of a community survey conducted with Washington City, Utah residents in June 2020. This data specifically addresses the research questions with their accompanying hypotheses by evaluating the strength of the relationship between the level and type of engagement with the community center and an improved attitude of citizenship and civic

participation. This analysis was done using clustering techniques of a dataset from Washington City’s Sense of Community survey.

*Participants*

Participants in the survey included over 1,756 households located within Washington City, Utah. This survey set comprises the Washington City Survey Panel, a group of households who previously agreed to participate in public opinion surveys about the community. From the 1,756 households administered the survey, 1,035 responded. From these responses, 604 (or 58%) were used for this analysis. The remaining 431 were rejected due to incomplete data (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Response Rate of the Washington City Community Center Survey*

|  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Respondents attending the community center | 604   | 58.3%   | 431     | 41.6%   | 1035  | 100.0%  |

*Measures*

The Washington City Sense of Community survey (See Appendix C) consisted of 41 Likert-scale questions, with varying response scales. The survey also included four open-ended questions. The first part of the survey included questions generated from the Sense of Community Index (SOCI), which corresponded to Glover’s research questions relating to the participatory, responsible, and communal roles by which citizens demonstrate social capital. The second section of the survey assessed participation,

frequency, and type of involvement at the local community center. Section three addressed specific attitudes associated with a civically engaged citizen. The final section solicited open-ended responses regarding personal beliefs regarding citizenship behavior, the role of the community center, and community engagement.

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

The Sense of Community survey was administered to the Washington City Survey Panel, all of whom had previously provided demographic information. This information allowed identification of any significant statistical relationships between these key demographic characteristics and attendance at the community center, thereby answering the first research question, “what factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center?” An ordinal logistic (logit) regression model was used to analyze this data.

Part two of the Washington City Survey Sense of Community was to measure the second research question, “does participating in the community center influence a sense of community and citizenship participation?” Glover (2004) claims that participation in the community center does increase a sense of citizenship by their enhanced awareness of their role as participatory, responsible, and communal citizens. Like Glover’s study, this research uses attendance at the community center as the independent variable, while these identified sense of community attitudes serve as dependent variables. Data for this research question was analyzed using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression after having conducted an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on the quality of fit between the Sense of Community questions and Glover’s sense of community domains.



Beyond the sense of community questions, the Washington City Survey also provided data to evaluate any relationship between attending the community center and citizenship performance in the form of political and volunteer behavior.

Results from the Washington City Survey provided the ability to identify any statistically significant differences between those participating in group or team-type activities versus those who only participate in solo activities and how those affiliations may affect their sense of community. The research question “to what extent does participating in group programs (active) versus non-group programs (latent) activities in a community center improve a sense of community and participation?” provides potential insight into Coleman’s (1988) classifications of bonding and bridging social capital activities. The results of this research question can provide insight into whether bridging activities, as would be typical of group activities, result in a greater sense of community versus only those individuals who participate in solo (latent) community center activities (Agger & Jensen, 2015; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Brooks, 2019). Data for this research question was analyzed using OLS regression.

By applying the *Activity Type Response Score* as outlined in Chapter 3, the results indicated that there were no statistically significant relationships between a citizens’ demographic characteristics or their attitude of citizenship nor in their civic behavior and the type of activities they participated in at the community center.

## *Results*

### *Demographic Relationship and Community Center Attendance*

The first research question, “what factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center?” poses hypotheses that relate to the role that the community center may play in assimilating unique classes of individuals within the community. Based upon the research of Lin (Lin, et. al., 2001) and others, it is assumed that community centers can provide a needed service for those lacking adequate facilities for physical or group activity in a private setting (Hulbert et al., 2017; Rooks et al., 2016; Shiell et al., 2018).

The first hypothesis, “those who rent their homes in the community have a greater likelihood of attending the community center than those who own a home,” is based upon the assumption that the community center provides the needed space, which otherwise may be inadequate with rental units, for necessary gathering and interacting. The second hypothesis indicates that “the shorter the time an individual has resided in Washington City, the more likely that they will attend the community center,” is based upon the argument that community centers can provide new residents a ready-made social environment in which initial relationships and social connections may be built (Hamdan, 2018). Researchers such as Gallant and Hutchinson (2015) and Hosokawa et al. (2019) have advanced the theory that senior citizens are especially benefited from participation within a community center. This claim, accompanied with the understanding that senior citizens may have more available time for participation, would support hypothesis three that “older residents (60+ years of age) are more likely to attend the community center than the younger population.” Hypothesis four posits that due to the lack of alternative and affordable options of both recreational and social opportunities, “the lower the

income bracket, the more likely an individual will attend the community center.” This assumption is based upon People’s (2016) research regarding the role community centers can play on those who feel disenfranchised due to their lower socioeconomic status.

The demographic breakdown of respondents associated with these independent variables is outlined in Table 2. This table identifies that in the categories homeowner status and income, the responses were heavily skewed towards ownership and higher income, which could influence the results of this analysis. There is a good representation from both males and females as well as income categories. The average time of residency of respondents was just slightly over 5 years, which leans more heavily towards recent move-ins than more established citizens.

Table 2

*Percentage of residents responding to key demographic information*

|                                    |            |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Home Status</b>                 |            |
| <i>Own</i>                         | 91%        |
| <i>Rent</i>                        | 9%         |
| <b>Time in City (Mean)</b>         | 5.11 years |
| <b>Age</b>                         |            |
| <i>≥ 60 years of age</i>           | 53%        |
| <i>&lt; 60 years of age</i>        | 47%        |
| <b>Income</b>                      |            |
| <i>&lt; \$50,000 annual income</i> | 18%        |
| <i>≥ \$50,000 annual income</i>    | 82%        |
| <b>Gender</b>                      |            |

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| <i>Male</i>   | 59% |
| <i>Female</i> | 41% |

In analyzing the relationship between these key demographic features (independent variable) and use of the facility (dependent variable), this study utilized an ordinal logistic regression model coding daily use (3), monthly use (2), yearly use (1), and never (0). However, the results of this analysis provided no explanatory power and showed no statistically significant variables (Table 3). For this reason, a basic logit model was applied, with “1” as attending the community center and “0” indicating never attending the facility (see Table 3). Although this model could explain more of the variation (r-squared of .012 versus .003), the results found no relationship between renting versus owning a home, tenure as a resident, or economic status.

The only variable that indicated a slight relationship was in the age of those who attend the community center ( $p = .059$ ) (Table 4). The age variable is coded “1” for younger than 60, while “0” represents 60 and older. As the results of this variable were positive, it would not support the hypothesis that older citizens participate in the community center more frequently than younger residents. However, because it fell outside the p-value of .05, it would not be considered significant to draw any conclusions.

Table 3

*Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis of Community Center Attendance*

|                | Coefficient | Probability Value |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Home rental    | .133        | 0.638             |
| Tenure in city | .014        | 0.145             |
| Age            | .168        | 0.303             |
| Income         | -.106       | 0.662             |
| Gender         | .034        | 0.836             |
|                | r-squared   | .003              |

Table 4

*Logistic Regression Analysis of Community Center Attendance*

|                | Coefficient | Probability Value |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Home rental    | -.107       | 0.774             |
| Tenure in city | -.021       | 0.152             |
| Age            | .387        | 0.059             |
| Income         | -.271       | 0.332             |
|                | r-squared   | .012              |

The intent of this research question was to isolate community demographic features previously identified in the literature on social capital, which may influence participation in a community center. However, the results of this research indicate no

significant relationship between any of the proposed hypotheses of homeownership, time in the city, age, or income level and community center attendance. Therefore, this research fails to reject the null hypotheses.

#### *Community Center and Citizenship Attitude and Behavior*

This research uses the Glover study (2004) as a structural framework for evaluating the relationship between community center participation and a sense of community. Glover's study was singled out due to the similarity in using a community center as the independent variable, with citizenship attitude being influenced by the use, frequency, and type of activities they participated in at a community center.

#### *Statistical Modeling*

The Glover research construct included identifying three citizenship attitudes or domains that define how citizens perceive and perform their role and importance within a community. These attitudes are ethical citizenship (responsible), integrative citizenship (participatory), and educative citizenship (communal) (p. 65). Ethical citizenship entails actively participating in citizenship that contributes to the public good. Integrative citizenship involves the less formally sanctioned activities involved in everyday life that may contribute to their community. Finally, educative citizenship describes the process of developing various morals and facets of the self through citizenship practices so that individuals better understand their overall role and place in their community. Glover concluded that individuals who participate in a community center are more likely to have an improved sense of community attitude in all three citizenship roles.

An essential purpose of this research is to determine if the Glover conclusion can be statistically proven. The Glover study concluded that participation in a community center increased a sense of community in defined roles of responsible, participatory, and communal citizenship (p. 68). To operationalize these Glover definitions, this research uses a set of questions originating in the Sense of Community Index (SOCI).

The combining of the Glover definitions with the SOCI questions, in essence, creates new quantitative proxy indicators necessary for statistical analysis. Due to this new operational modeling, it was important to ensure research validity as much as possible. By analyzing the use of the SOCI as an operational measure of the attitude domain constructs proffered by Glover, we can determine the validity of this model as an appropriate indicator for both this study and future research. Validity is the extent to which a concept, conclusion, or measurement likely corresponds closely to the real world (Cresswell, 2014). In this case, does the use of the Sense of Community Index correspond accurately with Glover's definition of citizenship roles?

To determine fit between the questions and these domains, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted. CFA is a form of factor analysis that tests whether the construct measures are consistent with the understanding of the nature of that construct (or factor) (Prudon, 2015). In this case, the objective of the CFA was to test whether the SOCI questions fit the hypothesized measurement model of sense of community domains established by the Glover research. The confirmatory factor was initially mapped by aligning the Glover qualitative study questions to the SOCI (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Stratification of Sense of Community Index & Sense of Community Domains*

| Participatory  | Responsible   | Communal   |
|--|---|--|
| I get important needs of mine met because I am part of the community       | I can recognize most of the members of the community                              | I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community   |
| Community members and I value the same things                              | Most community members know me  | I have influence over what this community is like                  |
| This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met | The community has symbols and expressions of membership that people can recognize | If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved |
| Being a member of this community makes me feel good                        | Being part of this community is a part of my identity                             | This community has good leaders                                    |
| When I have a problem, I can talk about it with members of this community  | Fitting into this community is important to me                                    | It is very important to me to be a part of this community          |
| People in this community have similar needs, priorities, and goals         | The community can influence other communities                                     | I am with other community members a lot and enjoy being with them  |
| I can trust people in this community                                       | I care about what other community members think of me                             | I expect to be a part of this community for a long time            |
| Members of this community care about each other                            | Members of this community have shared important events                            |  |
| I feel hopeful about the future of this community                          |   |  |

Using this structure, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to determine the goodness of fit. The goodness of fit measure summarizes any discrepancy between observed values and the values expected under the model in question (Hooper et al., 2008; Kline, 2015). Due to the size of the survey group, the results of a Root Mean



Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Baseline Comparison test were used. The results of this RMSEA indicated a value of .10 and the Baseline Comparison Test showed a CFI of .80, indicating a moderate but more likely weak fit between the Glover domains and survey questions.

Since this test indicated a moderate to weak goodness of fit, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. This type of analysis is used to uncover the underlying structure of measured variables, identify any potential latent constructs and examine the internal reliability of a measure (Kim et al., 1978). The EFA eliminated three SOCI questions, realigned several questions with more appropriate role categories, and created a fourth category or role domain as depicted in Table 6. The fourth role is identified in this study as “recognition” and includes four survey questions: “I can recognize most members of the community;” “most community members know me”, “I have influence over what this community is like.” The results of this new alignment showed a strong correlation coefficient with nineteen of the questions showing rotated factor loadings of .5 or greater and fifteen of those with a factor loading greater than .6.

Table 6

*EFA Results of SOCI and Sense of Community Domains*

| Participatory  | Responsible   | Recognition   | Communal  |
|--|---|---|---|
| Fitting into this community is important to me (.797)            | I feel hopeful about the future of this community (.732)                  | Most community members know me (.918)                       | Community members and I value the same things (.755)                      |
| It is very important to me to be a part of this community (.741) | If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved (.661) | I can recognize most of the members of the community (.814) | People in this community have similar needs, priorities, and goals (.712) |

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| I care about what other community members think of me (.728) | This community has good leaders (.645)                         | I have influence over what this community is like (.596) | This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met (.637) |
| Being part of this community is a part of my identity (.660) | Members of this community have shared important events (.576)  |  | I get important needs of mine met because I am part of the community (.628)       |
| The community can influence other communities (.487)         | Members of this community care about each other (.508)         |  | I can trust people in this community (.610)                                       |
|  | I expect to be a part of this community for a long time (.453) |  | Being a member of this community makes me feel good (.603)                        |
|  |  |  | When I have a problem, I can talk about it with members of this community (.569)  |

Using confirmatory factor analysis on the results of this EFA produced acceptable construct validity for all four roles with an RMSEA of less than .08 and a Baseline fit higher than .9. These results indicate a reasonable model fit for the RMSEA score and an acceptable model fit for the CFI (Hooper et al., 2008; Kline, 2015).

Further validation of reliability was determined by using a Cronbach's Alpha test on each of these domains. Results are considered reliable with a score above .7 (Taber, 2018, pp. 1273-1296). The seven questions assessing communal citizenship show a score of .880. The six questions comprising responsible citizenship indicate a score of .854. In the category of participatory citizen, the five questions had a combined score of .842. In the new category of the recognition citizenship, the combined score of the three questions is .778. Each question was individually scored for reliability, with all questions remaining part of the category composite score. Individual questions that showed lower

reliable scores could be eliminated or modified in future research to refine the survey instrument more fully.

This statistical analysis provided a necessary step in refining the Glover definitions and aligning the sense of community domains with the SOCI questions. This refinement included identifying four, not three domains of active citizenship: communal, responsible, participatory, and what is being defined as “recognition.” This four-domain model was tested to confirm the reliability, fit, and structure of the dependent variables in assessing their relationship with the independent variable of community center attendance.

*Washington City Community Survey*

Using the four citizenship domains, the Washington City Survey attitude responses were analyzed using a Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient or Pearson’s r with each domain or attitude related to all of other domains or attitudes in every instance, as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7

*Correlation Analysis of the Four Citizenship Attitude Domains*

|               | Communal | Participatory | Recognition | Responsible |
|---------------|----------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Communal      | N/A      | .408**        | .425**      | .468**      |
| Participatory | .408**   | N/A           | .443**      | .381**      |
| Recognition   | .425**   | .443**        | N/A         | .314**      |
| Responsible   | .468**   | .381**        | .314**      | N/A         |

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Having created a testable framework for evaluating citizenship attitudes and the impact that community center attendance has on that framework, the following hypotheses were posited and the results of the data provided. In taking advantage of the available responses from the Washington City Survey, the analysis for each hypothesis will consider all of the measured variables and their influence on the social domains for each hypothesis.

#### *Attendance and Sense of Community Opinion*

The fifth hypothesis posits that “participating in the Community Center increases a citizen’s attitude of their role as ‘participatory’ citizens.” In this analysis, the adjusted R-squared factor indicates that the ten independent variables explain almost 27% of citizenship attitudes and participation variance. As indicated in Table 8, there was no statistically significant relationship ( $p < .05$ ) found between participating in the community center and an increase in the perception one has regarding their attitude of a “participatory” member of the community. There did, however, indicate a relationship between age and one’s attitude in this domain. In this analysis those individuals 60 years of age or greater were coded as “0” and those younger than 60 as “1”. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between individuals over the age of 60 and an attitude of participatory citizenship compared to the younger respondents ( $p = .014$ ). Additionally, there was significance between the participatory domain and individuals who had an attitude of recognition citizenship ( $p = .003$ ), and high significance with communal ( $p = .000$ ) and responsible citizenship ( $p = .000$ ).

Table 8

*OLS Regression Analysis of Citizenship Participatory Attitude*

| <b>Participatory</b>       | Coefficient        | Std. Error |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Attendance                 | .167               | .102       |
| Time in city               | .002               | .004       |
| Rent/own                   | .174               | .137       |
| Sex (Male = 1, Female = 0) | -.092              | .079       |
| Age (< 60 = 1, ≥ 60 = 0)   | -.197*             | .079       |
| Income                     | -.186              | .113       |
| Activities                 | .016               | .033       |
| Communal                   | .137**             | .045       |
| Recognition                | .255**             | .044       |
| Responsible                | .231**             | .043       |
| Constant                   | -.106              | .166       |
|                            | Adjusted r-squared | .267       |

\*p = &lt; .05.

\*\*p = &lt; .01

The sixth hypothesis claims that “participating in the community center increases a citizen’s attitude of their role as ‘responsible’ citizens.” In this analysis, the adjusted R-squared factor indicates that the nine independent variables explain almost 28% of the variance in citizenship attitudes and participation. However, no statistically significant relationship ( $p < .05$ ) was found between community center attendance and a greater

perception of one’s role as a responsible citizen (see Table 9). A relationship was detected between the type of activity (whether group or solo activities) and responsible citizen attitudes ( $p = .017$ ). Higher scores indicated group over individual activity preference while lower scores mean individual activities are preferred over group participation. And finally, the domains that showed high significance with a “responsible” citizen were participatory ( $p = .000$ ) and communal ( $p = .000$ ).

Table 9

*OLS Regression Analysis of Citizenship Responsible Attitude*

| <b>Responsible</b>         | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b>Std. Error</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Attendance                 | -.020              | .103              |
| Time in city               | -.002*             | .004              |
| Rent/own                   | -.300              | .138              |
| Sex (Male = 1, Female = 0) | .014               | .080              |
| Age (< 60 = 1, ≥ 60 = 0)   | .255               | .080              |
| Income                     | -.012              | .115              |
| Activities                 | -.079*             | .033              |
| Participatory              | .237**             | .044              |
| Communal                   | .331**             | .044              |
| Recognition                | .052               | .046              |
| Constant                   | .085               | .168              |
|                            | Adjusted r-squared | .281              |

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

The seventh hypothesis identifies whether “participating in the community center increases a citizen’s attitude of their role as a ‘communal’ citizen.” In this analysis, the adjusted r-squared factor indicates that the ten independent variables explain almost 32% of the variance in citizenship attitudes and participation. There was no statistically significant relationship between attending the community center and being a “communal” citizen ( $p = .986$ ) (see Table 10). With a negative coefficient, older age was shown to be highly significant on a communal attitude ( $p = .000$ ). Indicating that residents over 60 years of age had a greater sense of communal citizenship. Additionally, the domains of recognition ( $p = .003$ ), responsible ( $p = .000$ ), and participatory ( $p = .000$ ) highly influenced how communal a citizen felt.

Table 10

*OLS Regression Analysis of Citizenship Communal Attitude*

| <b>Communal</b>            | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b>Std. Error</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Attendance                 | .001               | .101              |
| Time in city               | .000               | .004              |
| Rent/own                   | .053               | .135              |
| Sex (Male = 1, Female = 0) | .035               | .078              |
| Age (< 60 = 1, ≥ 60 = 0)   | -.293**            | .078              |
| Income                     | .110               | .112              |
| Activities                 | -.012              | .032              |
| Recognition                | .286**             | .043              |
| Responsible                | .315**             | .042              |
| Participatory              | .134**             | .044              |

|          |                    |      |
|----------|--------------------|------|
| Constant | .040               | .164 |
|          | Adjusted r-squared | .323 |

\*p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

The eighth hypothesis claims that “participating in the community center increases a citizen’s attitude of their role as ‘recognized’ citizens.” A fourth attitude or domain was identified from the exploratory factor analysis performed on Glover’s sense of citizenship definitions, which is titled “recognition.” This analysis produced a very high r-squared value of 82% with the ordinary least squares indicating that the ten independent variables explain almost 82% of the variance in citizenship attitudes and participation (Table 11). One of the most important findings of this analysis is that this newly identified domain was the only community attitude to show a significantly positive relationship with attending the community center. The identification of this relationship adds to the value that EFA and CFA can play in the identification of these relationships. This newly identified variable also showed a significant relationship with being male (Male = 1, Female = 0, indicated by a positive coefficient; p = .040), and a highly significant positive relationship with individuals under the age of 60 (younger than 60 = 1, 60 or older = 0; p = .005). The domains of participatory (p = .000) and communal (p = .000) also indicated a high statistically significant positive relationship with the newly identified “recognition” domain.



Table 11

*OLS Regression Analysis of Citizenship Recognition Attitude*

| <b>Recognition</b>         | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b>Std. Error</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Attendance                 | .293**             | .101              |
| Time in city               | .008               | .004              |
| Rent/own                   | .059               | .136              |
| Sex (Male = 1, Female = 0) | .162*              | .079              |
| Age (< 60 = 1, ≥ 60 = 0)   | .222**             | .079              |
| Income                     | .005               | .113              |
| Activities                 | -.055              | .032              |
| Responsible                | .050               | .044              |
| Participatory              | .253**             | .043              |
| Communal                   | .290**             | .043              |
| Constant                   | -.579              | .163              |
|                            | Adjusted r-squared | .281              |

\*p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

*Attendance and Civic Performance*

Having analyzed what variables affect the newly refined citizenship domains, the research analyzes the influence those same variables have upon certain citizenship performances, namely political and volunteer activity. Beyond just a sense of one's role

in the community, the Washington City Survey posed questions to ascertain the specific activities that individuals had participated in the last two years. These activities were political and volunteer in nature.

The ninth hypothesis begins to look at how attendance at the community center influences civic participation by stating that “participating in the community center increases a citizen’s ‘political’ behavior in the community.” This test produced an r-squared indicating that twelve independent variables explain almost 28% of citizenship attitudes and participation variance. By applying the same regression analysis to this hypothesis as previous hypotheses, there was found to be no relationship between attending the community center and an individual’s political behavior or participation ( $p < .05$ ) (see Table 12). Demographic factors that positively influence political behavior include the greater the time as a resident ( $p = .020$ ), being male ( $p = .010$ ), and being over the age of 60 ( $p = .000$ ). In the sense of community domains, there was shown to be a positive and highly significant relationship between participatory ( $p = .000$ ) as well as recognition ( $p = .000$ ) and political behavior. However, if respondents felt communal ( $p = .002$ ) or responsible ( $p = .039$ ), there was a *negative* influence on their political behavior. Finally, while the model clearly shows a significant relationship between volunteering and political behavior ( $p = .000$ ), the more one volunteers, the less likely they are to participate in political behavior (as indicated by the negative coefficient).

Table 12

*OLS Regression Analysis of the Prediction of Political Behavior*

| <b>Political</b>           | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b>Std. Error</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Attendance                 | .131               | .105              |
| Time in city               | .010*              | .004              |
| Rent/own                   | .255               | .140              |
| Sex (Male = 1, Female = 0) | .209**             | .081              |
| Age (< 60 = 1, ≥ 60 = 0)   | -.443**            | .082              |
| Income                     | .042               | .116              |
| Activities                 | -.064              | .033              |
| Participatory              | .167**             | .046              |
| Communal                   | -.148**            | .046              |
| Recognition                | .241**             | .047              |
| Responsible                | -.094*             | .045              |
| Volunteer                  | -.169**            | .044              |
| Constant                   | -.335              | .169              |
|                            | Adjusted r-squared | .277              |

\*p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

And finally, the tenth hypothesis states that “participating in the community center increases a citizen’s ‘volunteer’ behavior in the community.” This analysis, which

produced an r-squared indicates that the eleven independent variables explain almost 21% of citizenship attitudes and participation variance. Furthermore, when one participates in the community center, the less active they are in volunteering within the community. Demographics that influence volunteer behavior include being male ( $p = .028$ ). In the behavioral roles, the more an individual felt participatory ( $p = .000$ ), and recognized ( $p = .000$ ), the *less* likely they were to participate in volunteer activities (see Table 13).

Table 13

*OLS Regression Analysis of the Prediction of Volunteer Behavior*

| <b>Volunteer</b>           | Coefficient        | Std. Error |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Attendance                 | -.211*             | .108       |
| Time in city               | -.004              | .004       |
| Rent/own                   | -.232              | .144       |
| Sex (Male = 1, Female = 0) | .184*              | .083       |
| Age (< 60 = 1, ≥ 60 = 0)   | .089               | .084       |
| Income                     | .231               | .120       |
| Activities                 | .073*              | .034       |
| Participatory              | -.178**            | .047       |
| Communal                   | -.034              | .048       |
| Recognition                | -.173**            | .047       |
| Responsible                | -.076              | .047       |
| Constant                   | .224               | .175       |
|                            | Adjusted r-squared | .215       |

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

### *Participation Activities and a Sense of Community*

The eleventh hypothesis, Participating in group activities, versus individual activities, at the community center improves an individual's sense of community and civic participation, is posed to potentially identify any relationships that may have relevance to bridging and bonding social capital concepts. For instance, the concept of bridging would be more associated with those who participate in group or team activities, and therefore, if group or team activities showed significant influence on citizens' sense of community, as compared to solo activities, then an assumption could be made that there is evidence that bridging capital has a greater influence on a sense of community. By applying the *Activity Type Response Score* the results indicated that there were no statistically significant relationships between a citizens' demographic characteristics or their attitude of citizenship or political behavior. However, a statistically significant relationship was shown between participating in *group* activities at the community center and volunteering within the community.

### *Citizen Response on Sense of Community*

#### *Community Center Attendees Perception of "Good Citizenship"*

An outcome that will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5 included receiving open-ended responses from citizens about what they perceive constitutes a "good citizen." These responses were grouped by those who attended the community center at least once a year or more frequently (n=343) from those who never attended the community center (n=129) to note any differences in their perception.

Using word-cloud technology, the top ten words identifying a “good citizen” (see Figure 6) by respondents who attend the community center at least once per year, or more frequently, included law, neighbor, community, obey, vote, respect, support, good, participate, and kind.

Figure 6

*Top Ten Words Describing “Good Citizen” by Participants*



The top ten words for those who never attended the community center on what identifies a “good citizen” (See Figure 7) included law, obey, neighbor, vote, community, respect, kind, good, follow, and respectful.

Figure 7

*Top Ten Words Describing “Good Citizen” by Non-Participants of the Community Center*



Although it is interesting to note the number of similar words used by participants and non-participants of the community center, there are some subtle differences between the groups. For those individuals who participate in the community center, the words “neighbor” and “community” appear more frequently in their responses, thereby possibly indicating a stronger sense of community. This sense of community may have also influenced the use of the word “obey.” For the non-participants, the word “obey” was the second most frequently used word, whereas, for participants, this word is used less than both “neighbor” and “community”. Additionally, the participants used both the words “support” and “participate,” while these words did not appear in the top ten words for the non-participants. The most closely associated word that non-participants used was “follow.” This word choice is significant in that support and participate are words that indicate more engaged citizens versus someone who simply follows. A final note of interest is the word “vote.” This word is the fourth and fifth most frequently used word by respondents, indicating little difference between those who participate and those who do not participate in the community on what constitutes a “good citizen.” Additionally, it

is the non-participant who used the word “vote” more frequently than the participant of the community center.

Additional results obtained from the open-ended questions that create discussion regarding influences on a citizen’s engagement with the community was in response to the question “in what ways do you participate in the community that makes you feel connected with others?” The top ten words used in these responses include the following: neighbor, church, community, event, attend, neighborhood, center, volunteer, meeting, and activity (see Figure 8). A further review of these words show a stronger association between the words church, attend, and meeting and a lesser connection between community, center and attend. It could therefore be suggested that church attendance provides a higher level of engagement for citizens taking the survey than the community center. The impact of this understanding will be further explored in the next chapter.

Figure 8

*Top Ten Words Describing How Citizens Connect with the Community*





### *Summary*

The results of this study indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between attending the community center and an individual's improved sense of community, as defined by the four citizenship domains, with the exception of the newly identified "recognition" domain. Additionally, the results showed no relationship between attendance and improved political behavior and a negative relationship with attendance and volunteer behavior. However, a number of social capital research insights were identified which will be more fully explained in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter V**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### *Overview*

This research intended to look at how community centers and one's participation in a community center affect attitudes of citizenship and civic performance. Like Lin's (2017) study, this research primarily looks at how effectively a community center can develop an individual's social status and network in order to develop social capital. Research has shown that social capital can be improved if placed within the appropriate social intervention (Hurlbert, Beggs, Haines, 2017; Rooks, Klyver, & Sserwanga, 2016; Shiell, Hawe, & Kavanagh, 2018). This research tests the validity of this claim. And in alignment with the Glover study (2001), Washington City intended that the community center provide a conscious social intervention on the part of the community where social exchanges can naturally occur between citizens. In many cases, the community center is the most active civic function within the community. Beyond the social capital benefits the community center can create, Paulson (2015) also indicates that these facilities may serve as centers of motivation for political activity and project-oriented service within the community.

Using social capital research as the theoretical foundation, this study answered two questions: What demographic characteristic(s) predict the likelihood of attending a

community center? And, does participating in a community center influence one's opinion of citizenship and positively impact civic engagement?

Troy D. Glover's research titled "The 'Community Center' and the Social Construction of Citizenship" (2004) was used to provide a framework and methodological structure to evaluate these facilities and their impact on social capital attributes. The Glover study concluded that participating in a community center improved participants' attitudes relating to three citizenship domains: participatory citizenship, responsible citizenship, and communal citizenship. This research intended to determine if his qualitative conclusions could be duplicated *quantitatively* with the same conclusion. Using questions from the Sense of Community Index (SOCI), a survey was administered to a representative sample of residents in Washington City, Utah, in June 2020.

#### *Analysis of Findings*

The summary of the findings for each research question with its related hypotheses are as follows (see Table 14).

Table 14

*Summary of Research Findings*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Research Question #1</b></p> <p><b>What factors predict the likelihood of attendance at the community center?</b></p>                               | <p><b>Results of Analysis and Evaluation of Hypotheses</b></p>                                     |
| <p><b>Hypotheses</b></p>  | <p><b>Results of Analysis</b></p>  |
| <p>1-Renters of homes have a greater likelihood of attending the community center than owners of homes</p>  | <p>No statistically significant relationship (<math>p &gt; .05</math>). Reject the hypothesis.</p> |
| <p>2-The shorter the time an individual resides within the community the more likely they will attend the community center</p>                            | <p>No statistically significant relationship (<math>p &gt; .05</math>). Reject the hypothesis.</p> |
| <p>3-Older citizens (60+) are more likely to attend the community center.</p>   | <p>No statistically significant relationship (<math>p &gt; .05</math>). Reject the hypothesis.</p> |
| <p>4-The lower the income bracket the more likely an individual will attend the community center</p>  | <p>No statistically significant relationship (<math>p &gt; .05</math>). Reject the hypothesis.</p> |
|   |  |
| <p><b>Research Question #2</b></p> <p><b>Does participating in the community center influence a sense of community and citizenship participation?</b></p> | <p><b>Results of Analysis and Evaluation of Hypotheses</b></p>                                     |
| <p><b>Hypotheses</b></p>  | <p><b>Results of Analysis</b></p>  |
| <p>5-Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "participatory" citizens</p>                                   | <p>No statistically significant relationship (<math>p &gt; .05</math>). Reject the hypothesis.</p> |
| <p>6-Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "responsible" citizens</p>                                     | <p>No statistically significant relationship (<math>p &gt; .05</math>). Reject the hypothesis.</p> |
| <p>7-Participating in the community center</p>  | <p>No statistically significant relationship (<math>p &gt; .05</math>). Reject the hypothesis.</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "communal" citizens  | .05). Reject the hypothesis.   |
| 8-Participating in the community center increases a citizen's attitude of their role as "recognized" citizens  | Statistically significant relationship ( $p < .05$ ). Find support for this hypothesis.  |
| 9-Participating in the community center increases a citizen's "political" behavior in the community.   | No statistically significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ). Reject the hypothesis.  |
| 10-Participating in the community center increases a citizen's "volunteer" behavior in the community.  | Statistically significant relationship ( $p < .05$ ) but inverse to hypothesis. The findings indicate that increased participation in the community center <i>decreases</i> a citizen's "volunteer" behavior in the community. Reject the hypothesis.  |
|  |  |
| <b>Research Question #3</b><br><br><b>Does participating in group programs (active) versus non-group (latent) activities in the community center improve a sense of community and civic participation?</b> | <b>Results of Analysis and Evaluation of Hypotheses</b>  |
| <b>Hypotheses</b>  | <b>Results of Analysis</b>   |
| 11-Participating in group activities, versus individual activities, at the community center, improves an individual's sense of community and civic participation   | Individuals who participated in individual activities versus group activities were more likely to use the community center. There was no statistically significant relationship between these types of activities and a sense of community or political participation; however, individuals who participated in group activities did show a statistically significant positive relationship with volunteering in the community. Mixed support for the hypothesis |

Initially, this study evaluated Washington City residents to identify any demographic characteristics influencing community center participation. In this initial analysis, the research looked for any demographic elements which could predict use of the community center prior to exploring the impact the facility might have on citizenship attitudes and civic engagement.

The proposed hypotheses posited that renting a home, time as a resident, age, or income bracket would influence community center attendance. The specific demographic characteristics of these hypotheses were based upon existing social capital literature noting homeownership, time in the community, age, and income as being influenced by social networks.

Although the results of this study do not contradict the fact that networks are essential to each of these demographic elements, it simply finds no relationship between these specific characteristics and increased use of the community center.

Although there was no statistical relationship found between the demographic features and community center attendance, there appears to be a potential external factor influencing these findings. Pamela Paxton's research (1999) claims that third-party institutions may influence some aspects of social capital. In this case, the predominant religion may have influenced the data results. This variable will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

#### *Glover's Model and Proxy Indicators*

The second research question, with its accompanying hypotheses, is intended to test the replicability of the results of the Glover study. By operationalizing Glover's

theoretical and definitional framework, this research looked to statistically demonstrate his conclusions that a citizen's community attitude is improved by attending a community center in the domains of responsible, communal, and participatory citizenship.

The empirical operationalization of a qualitative study on social capital again dredges up the debate on its measurability. Although the debate about the suitability of the social capital theory will continue, this study simply looks at the definitions, proxies, and ultimate conclusion of the Glover study to be a valid measurement tool and replicable. The definitional components of social capital are important; otherwise, comparative analysis between studies would yield no definitive conclusions about social capital's role in society. One effort in finding common ground on definitional components is what Collier (2002) and other researchers emphasized as the need for "proxy indicators." Proxy indicators represent an identifiable, indirect surrogate to help explain the associated social capital construct (Callahan, 1996; Grootaert et al., 2002). The correctly chosen social indicator or proxy should represent the scope and breadth of the construct and unit of observation being used.

Troy Glover's study (2004) posited that three social proxies or domains could identify social capital within citizens of a community. These proxies provided definitions that could then be used to test against an independent influence or variable. In this case, the measurement proxies were members of the community having a greater sense of understanding of their role as responsible, communal, and participatory citizens. Using these defined variables, Glover looked at the influence that participation in a community center has on citizens within these areas or domains.

This study accepted the Glover research construct. In order to operationalize the assessment of the proxies indicators, the Sense of Community Index was used. (SOCI). Using the SOCI, this research attempted to avoid or acknowledge the concern noted by Daniere et al. (2002) that social capital is subject to criticism because of a lack of clear definitional terms by researchers, making it difficult to provide quantitative analysis. Durlauf (2002) agreed that causal definitions of social capital are necessary for successful empirical analysis.

The quantitative benefits of this study allowed for the statistical testing on the validity of Glover's proxies and their alignment with the SOCI. This was done using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The RMSEA and Baseline Comparison test results showed a weak link ( $< .8$ ) between these proxies and the survey questions. Due to this result, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to uncover any underlying structure or latent constructs and their reliability.

The result of the EFA, as well as a subsequent Confirmatory Analysis test, identified a more refined statistical construct by realigning the SOCI questions and introducing a fourth sense of community proxy. While not the end objective of the research, this additional effort, and finding emphasizes the value that empirical testing can provide in the development of measurement constructs that questions its own subjectivity and self-fulfilling characteristics (Fukuyama, 2001). This refined proxy model also calls into question the tautology of Glover's measurement operationalization as being distinct from the predicted effects.



The significance of this portion of the research is showing the value that statistical analysis can have on improving the validity and reliability of social capital measurement tools. An oft-cited criticism of the study of social capital (and potentially of the Glover work) is that there is less importance in ensuring the reliability and validity of the measurement path than confirming the results. By focusing on this quantitative path of measurement, the focus is placed upon the tool as much as the outcome, thereby allowing future research to challenge, duplicate, and refine the theory.

#### *Washington City Results*

Once the refined proxy model was established, this study proceeded in determining the influence that community center attendance had on the four domains of citizenship attitude, titled responsible, communal, participatory, and recognized. By applying the refined proxy model to the results of the Washington City Survey, the evidence revealed that attending the community center did not influence a citizen's opinion of being a responsible, communal, or participatory citizen. Therefore, this research cannot reject the null hypothesis associated with each of those questions nor support the conclusion produced by the Glover study.

However, a significant finding of this study was the identification of a fourth citizenship attribute or proxy, that of the "recognized" citizen. Through the EFA analysis, three survey questions were identified as part of this domain. These questions include "most community members know me," "I can recognize most of the members of the community," and "I have influence over what this community is like." Except for the final question, it is easy to see how attending a public, well-visited community center fits

the “recognized” domain. These are the only two questions within the survey relating to recognition, and it would seem fitting that a community center would provide the appropriate public venue in which the “recognized” behavioral role would be most manifest.

The application of factor analysis at the beginning stages of the quantitative process developed this fourth domain and realigned several of the other survey questions, from their original classifications, into more appropriate domain categories. By delineating these sense of community opinions more precisely, this research provides a clearer picture of what can be attributed to which citizenship proxy; thereby, allowing more empirically-based modeling to occur in future research.

Although the results of this study do not support the conclusion of the Glover research, it should be recognized that this could be due to methodological differences. First, this research relied heavily upon statistical analysis, where the Glover study was qualitative. Second, this study used a total survey sample of 604 responses, where the Glover study interviewed seven pre-qualified community members. And finally, and as has been noted previously, by using the SOCI as a more valid and reliable measurement tool, there is the risk of asking different questions between the Glover study and the Washington City Survey. As subtle as they may be, these potential differences could be responsible for providing different conclusions between the two studies.

#### *Other factors*

Beyond the stated hypotheses, this research took advantage of the additional rich survey data to analyze other demographic factors and their relationship with a sense of

community. For example, the research sought to identify any relationships between time as a resident, ownership of property, gender, age, and type of participation in the community center, and their influence on the four attitudes of community domains. Additionally, each of the four domains were compared to the others to identify any interplay of relationship and influence.

In the demographic analysis, the only consistent variable influencing the sense of community domains was a citizen's age. Age indicated a relationship with three of the four domains. Citizens within the community over the age of sixty had a stronger opinion about their role as participatory ( $p = <.014$ ) and communal citizens ( $p = <.000$ ). These citizens positively identified with questions such as "fitting into this community is important to me," "It is important to me to be a part of this community," "Being part of this community is a part of my identity," "people in the community have similar needs, priorities, and goals" and "this community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met," to name a few.

No relationship was found between age and being a "responsible" citizen. The citizens showed no preference to questions such as "I feel hopeful about the future of this community," "If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved," "This community has good leaders," and others.

A citizen's age was also a determining factor in the fourth domain of being "recognition" ( $p = <.005$ ). Still, unlike the other behaviors, those *under* the age of sixty responded more favorably to questions such as "most community members know me," "I

can recognize most of the members of the community,” and “I have influence over what this community is like.”

The relationship between age and one’s sense of community is supported within the existing literature. The work of McDonald and Mair (2010) and Kalmijn (2003) posit that social capital accumulates and declines throughout one’s life but eventually levels off among older residents. They continue by arguing that occupational networks increase social capital while at the same time decreasing daily sociability. Their research provides a possible insight into why older individuals have a stronger sense of community; still, they do not connect this sense of community to participate in any public facility. Instead, McDonald and Mair explain why age influences an individual’s sense of community which has bearing on this study. A sense of community, they explain, could be due to age and levels of volunteerism. These researchers note.

...social interaction generally declines, but work contact and voluntary organization membership tend to increase across the life course. This may seem counterintuitive at first glance. However, engaging in social interaction is quite different from knowing people and being affiliated with groups. The results...suggest that while social networks and organizational affiliation tend to expand across the life course, people tend to interact with other individuals less frequently as they age (2010, p. 352).

The authors indicate that there is usually an uptick in volunteerism and voluntary membership among the 56-65 age group (2010, p. 351). Based upon this research,

volunteerism or participation with a voluntary organization could, at a minimum, provide an alternative social network to that of a community center, thereby providing an alternative variable on a sense of community for older residents. This concept has an impact upon this study and will be discussed in more detail.

Looking through the lens of McDonald and Maier as to why younger individuals show a stronger relationship with the “recognized” domain becomes more explainable when combined with the other two variables showing a positive relationship with this category of citizenship opinion. The two other positive variables are being male and attending the community center. It could be suggested that since the community center is a very public place, where individuals are involved in physical and health improvements, all of which improve body image, this might be an environment that would attract a younger age group looking to be recognized by their peers and others within the community.

#### *Political and Volunteer Activity*

Beyond these four sense of community domains, this study hypothesized that attendance at the community center would positively influence political behavior and volunteer behavior. Questions asked of citizens regarding their political behavior included attendance at a public meeting, voting in the local election, or contacting a local public official. Respondents indicated whether they participated in these activities often, rarely, or never. In assessing volunteer behavior, citizens were asked how often they had given or received a ride from a neighbor, lent or borrowed something from a neighbor, volunteered, or attended a neighborhood association meeting as a way to determine

volunteer participation. From these responses, an ordinary least square regression was conducted to determine if community center attendance influenced these participatory behaviors.

Based upon the results of this research, it appeared that attendance had no influence on either political or volunteer activity within the community. This finding, similar to the lack of association among the citizenship attitude variables, will not allow us to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis that “does participating in the community center influence a sense of community and citizenship participation?” cannot be affirmed.

From this research, however, other factors were found to contribute to political behavior. Time as a resident, being male, and age positively influence the political activity of residents. Additionally, while a sense of being participatory, communal, responsible, and recognized indicated statistical significance to engaging in political activity, the more an individual was “communal” and “responsible” the less likely they are to engage in political behavior.

The findings associated with volunteering, however, deserve further review. First, the data revealed that the more an individual participates in the community center, as well as having an opinion on being a participatory and recognized citizen, the *less* likely they are to volunteer. Alternatively, hypothesis 11 did indicate a statistically significant relationship between participating in group activities and volunteer activities. Combining these seemingly counterintuitive results with the fact that this study could not confirm or replicate most of the Glover findings encourages future research to look inductively at the

validity of the methodology and other possible unaccounted variables influencing this study. This more nuanced look at other influencing factors potentially identified a previously unaccounted variable that could significantly influence the relationships observed.

#### *Alternate Variable(s)*

This study *deductively* approaches social capital, arguing that public space positively influences a sense of community. This research, guided by the Glover (2004) theoretical framework, assessed the influence community center attendance and other factors might have on a citizen's sense of community.

However, during the course of analysis, it became necessary for the research to pull the observational lens back out and *inductively* look for explanations to the resulting data. In some cases, differences in methodological approaches may explain the differences between anticipated findings from actual findings. However, in other cases, the explanation may simply be that the proposed hypotheses are incorrect and that relationships either don't exist or are overstated. Additionally, the lack of support for most hypotheses in this study might suggest a missing influencing variable. Considering the locality of this research, it is important to examine the potential role of the predominant religion in the area.

This study is limited to one community with a population of approximately 30,000. Religiously, the makeup of this community is highly homogenous. It is estimated that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints comprise some 70% of city residents ("Washington County, Utah religion," n.d.). Prompted by

responses received through the Washington City Survey, a more detailed examination of this religious organization and its influence upon the community's social capital may provide greater insight into the results of this research.

Like most of the state of Utah, Washington City is a highly religious community, predominantly identified with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). Utah was founded by Mormon Pioneers, who had fled the boundaries of the United States seeking religious freedom. Washington City was established in 1857 by LDS Pioneers, who homesteaded the area to develop a sustainable cotton crop. This community remained religiously homogeneous throughout its history until the late 1970s, as a large influx of new residents brought more diversity to the area.

Two meaningful characteristics of this church could provide some understanding of its influence within the community. First, like many churches, membership in this church means something. Members look at other members as "brothers" and "sisters" and congregations as "families." The LDS church is known for providing its members with goods and commodities, social support services, and other assistance as the needs arise. There is clearly the teaching, within the church, of looking after one another.

Second, the LDS church is an actively engaging organization with its members. Although it functions with volunteer leadership and administration, it is not uncommon for every member of the local congregations to have significant responsibility within the organization. These responsibilities can include teaching youth, children, adults, and providing leadership on all levels from congregations of 300 upwards to 5,000 members. In many cases, these assignments can require 20-40 hours of weekly service by an



individual. There is an expectation in the organization that when one is asked to volunteer for church assignments, they accept them willingly and with an active level of engagement. This function of the LDS church provides no monetary compensation and relies upon its members' "volunteer" services.

The role religion plays in social capital theory has been recognized for some time. Putnam (2002) considers faith communities the single most important repository of social capital in America. Religious communities foster togetherness and enduring connections. Active congregations build interpersonal trust and strong feelings of mutuality (Park & Sharma, 2016). In his seminal work *Religion as Social Capital* (2003), Smidt and Smidt found five identified ways religious social capital may be distinguished from other forms of social capital.

In summary, the five positive ways include quantity, durability, range, capacity to nourish social capital, and capacity-building ability, all of which promote the positive role that religion can play in developing social capital within a community. Other authors, however, have considered the "limits of religious social capital" in transferring religiosity capital to community capital. For example, Ignatius Swart (2017) recognizes that the success or failure of the transfer of religious capital to community capital often can be found in the presence or absence of religious rituals and practices that emphasize bridging norms and customs.

Although no demographic question was asked regarding religious affiliation, it can be inferred from population demographics that upwards of 70% of survey respondents could belong to the LDS Church. Furthermore, as this religion encourages a

significant amount of members' time in volunteer activities, it could be argued that this religious custom could influence the opinions and behavior of its members within and towards the community. In fact, the state of Utah regularly ranks first in volunteerism in the United States, which is largely motivated by the LDS Church membership (United Health Organization, 2021). This argument is supported by the frequency in which "church" appeared in the open-ended questions. In analyzing the contextual response of the use of the word "church" in survey responses, it was noted that respondents used the term both positively and negatively as an influence upon their sense of community.

Positively, community members responded that "church" made them feel connected to their neighbors and provided associations. Negatively, some residents felt their non-membership in the predominant religion limited their association within the community, leading to a feeling of isolation and disconnection with their fellow citizens. This was best summed up in one participant's response stating that "the community is highly connected with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of which I am not a member. It's extremely difficult to feel a part of this community when not being a part of that church's community." Other comments noted similar feelings of "being on the outside looking in" if you were a non-member. The mixed-bag of responses about the role that this, or possibly any, church plays in the development of individual and community social capital supports the previously mentioned research of Ignatius Swart. Religious institutions can provide exceptional bonding opportunities but, unfortunately, can limit their member's need to effectively bridge or link to other groups or associations.

It appears that due to the extensiveness of citizen membership into an organization that both promotes and competes in relationships, activities, and time with public facilities, the proxy variables, intending to show social capital cause and effect, may be unusually influenced by the membership status of this large third-party religious institution, possibly creating a skewing effect upon the results of the study. The uniqueness of this community, as it relates to religion, could explain why the results of this study may vary from similar studies, including the Glover research.

In assessing the influence religiosity may have on the effectiveness of public facilities in generating a sense of community and social capital behavior, future research should include gauging the extent that third-party institutions drive or compete with public institutions. Further research should include the following questions: how do third-party institutions provide similar social interactions among its members to that of the public facility? How often, and to what extent, do citizens participate in third-party institution activities instead of public facilities? How do members of other institutions, particularly religious organizations, define “volunteering?” And to what extent do members of an organization’s internal volunteerism affect their member’s external service to the community as a whole?

#### *Public response*

To provide a more nuanced understanding of the role community center plays in influencing a sense of community, the Washington City Survey asked its citizens a series of open-ended questions. Although difficult to empirically evaluate, the responses

provide rich understanding and meaning to the “white space” that numerical results alone cannot produce.

### *Good Citizen*

A key open-ended question asked citizens what defined a “good citizen.” Beyond the potentially rich definitional insight, such a question poses, the research intent for this question was as a validation measure for both the citizenship attitude domains, as defined by Glover, and the validity of using the SOCI index as a measurement tool.

The Glover research categorized the attitude or opinions of sense of community into three ecological domains: responsible, participatory, and communal. For a responsible citizen, Glover uses terms such as awareness, obligation, and responsibility. For participatory attitude, he uses words such as service delivery, active participation, sense of ownership, and empowerment. And finally, communal attitude is associated with feelings of belonging, relationships, recognition of one’s interdependence to the community, and paying it forward. There does appear to be congruency between these attitudinal traits, as defined by Glover, and the feedback from survey respondents. For example, survey responses on what defines a good citizen included obedience to laws, being a good neighbor, awareness of community needs, voting, showing respect to others, being kind, and participating in community events. These responses can easily be categorized within one or more of Glover’s overall attitudinal domains.

This research used the SOCI in determining the public’s attitude and opinion of a sense of community. This survey asked questions that assessed citizens’ contribution to the community, their place if the community can collectively solve problems, their level

of trust, their ability to interact with other citizens, and how the community makes them feel. Comparing these to the open-ended question regarding what makes a good citizen, there is enough similarity with responses such as laws, voting, community, neighbor, respect, and participation to support the notion that the SOCI adequately represents a good measurement instrument.

Once the questions of reliability and validity were answered, the response to this question was analyzed to identify any differences between those who attended the community center from those who did not on what constituted a good citizen.

Surprisingly, by looking at the top ten words used to describe a good citizen between the two groups, there were few differences, indicating that attendance had little overall effect on their definition. However, a deeper exploration revealed a subtle difference between the two meaningful words. First, for individuals attending the community center, the word “community” ranked much higher in their list, possibly supporting the fact that there is a greater sense that good citizenship includes community by attending the facility. Second, there was noted a slight variation between a similar meaning word. While non-attending citizens used the word “follow” relating to laws and leaders, the attending citizens used “support” within the same context. This subtle word difference may be significant in explaining the lens by which citizens see their role as either “followers” or “supporters” and may merit further examination.

#### *Connection to the community*

An additional open-ended question that had a significant impact upon the insight received in this study was what citizens proactively do to feel a sense of connectedness

with the community. Responses to this question included being active in their neighborhood, attending city events and functions, attending church, using the community center, attending meetings, and volunteering. While the researcher was pleased to see that activity at the community center was considered a significant connection, its overall level of influence on connection was at least equal to or less than “attending church” This input, which was discussed earlier, indicate not only the presence of this influencing variable on the result of this data but also the need for future accommodation of this factor in future research.

#### *Limitations*

It is recognized and has been noted that there are several limitations associated with this research. Like the Glover study, this research was conducted within one community. Washington City, Utah, is a community of approximately 30,000 people located in Southwest Utah. The population is largely homogeneous, consisting of white, middle to upper income, with an average age of 34 years. The limited scope of this study should be considered within that context. Similar studies in other communities or with a larger database could produce different results.

This research would have benefitted from a more longitudinal look at the community center’s impact on the residents. However, this facility has only existed since 2007, and this study represents the first evaluation of the community center’s impact on the sense of community.

Also previously noted, a large part of the homogeneity of the community includes a majority of the population affiliating with a specific religious institution. Due to this

community characteristic, the generalizability of this research could be challenged. However, it should also be noted that this challenge may not be uncommon to other communities based upon their demographics, history, and location.

The research questions posed by this study and along with their accompanying hypotheses were grounded in the definitional and theoretical framework of the Troy Glover study titled “The “Community Center and the Social Construction of Citizenship” (2004). This intentionality was to identify whether Glover’s findings could be duplicated within a quantitative analysis. This narrow focus eliminated the review of competing or more explanatory frameworks, which could provide a greater understanding of the study results.

Additionally, the researcher chose to operationalize the Glover study by using the Sense of Community Index. This measurement tool most closely represented the questions asked by Dr. Glover in his qualitative research work and was shown to align fairly well with definitions provided by survey respondents. However, it is recognized that the use of this distinct measurement tool could not fully and completely represent his questions of inquiry and methodology. This lack of complete duplication could have potentially provided variations in these results compared to the Glover findings.

And finally, it should also be noted that when the Washington City Survey was conducted, the researcher was serving as the city manager of the community. Although quantitative analysis can reduce the potential for research bias, it should be noted that some research bias may exist due to the researcher’s professional position within the organization.

### *Further Research*

As is common in the study of social capital, this research provides almost as many questions as answers for future research. Among those is the influence that third-party institutions may have on the cause-and-effect nature of social capital research. This study proposed a clear, lineal line of reasoning that participation in a community center will positively influence a sense of community and improved citizenship behavior. Although the results of this study could not confirm this relationship, it did identify other variables that, although possibly unique to this study, may have influenced the results. If future research attempts to provide a comparative analysis with other studies, additional variables should be identified and adequately controlled.

Future research may also include identifying communities with dominant, social third-party organizations, such as religious institutions, to determine their overall social capital impacts compared to other communities that do not meet those specifications.

And finally, future research should continue to find a place for statistical analysis of social capital. This will require the generalization of definitional terms, progress in resolving the tautology of circularity, agreement on analytical techniques, and universal recognition that quantitative and qualitative analysis can provide significant understanding to the principle of social capital.

### *Conclusion*

This research sought to verify the results of the Glover study empirically, that participation in a community center would improve upon an individual's civic sense of community both in their attitude of citizenship and their political and volunteer behavior.



One of the significant conclusions of this research was, that based upon quantitative analysis, a fourth ecological domain ("Recognition") was identified. This discovery refined the statistical model and enhanced the understanding of the influence of the community center on civic attitude or behavior.

It was clearly identifiable, throughout this research, that the same challenges that have plagued social capital research since the beginning, such as agreement on definitional concepts and order to the methodological processes, continue to complicate even locally-contexted instruments of study. By quantitatively duplicating Glover's qualitative study, this study attempted to reduce the "fuzziness" of the universality of social capital research and advance the argument for quantitative rigor in the instrumentality of this research topic. Jacek Tittenburn (2017) claims that quantification of social capital is an "inalienable prerequisite for scientificity." Finding a place to roost between straight economic modeling and the subjective valuation of social networks has always been the social capital challenge. This has existed since the time of Bordieu and Coleman, through the days of neoliberalist economic policy and analysis, into the justifications of public policy and within the confines of communities, social halls, and bowling alleys. It is a concept in a constant state of refinement. The attention given to this concept should not be criticized for its universality but encouraged for its ability to reform and to refine for better understanding and application.

This research intended to quantitatively prove and replicate the findings of a study that concluded that community centers positively influence a citizen's sense of community. And, although the hypotheses could not be statistically proven, this work

adds valuable insight and further refinement to the social capital concept. This study identified the valuable role of factor analysis in the methodological construct. Furthermore, this study highlighted the impact and influence other institutional players can have on the outcome of data results. And, this study continues to provide a reminder of the challenge of putting a human face to data-driven results. The complexity of this challenge encourages and does not discourage continued research into the value that public spaces provide to the strength of our communities.

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APPENDIX A:

IRB APPROVAL







Appendix C  
**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**  
**For the Protection of Human Research Participants**

**PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT**

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Protocol Number: 04042-2020

Responsible Researcher: Mr. Roger Carter

Supervising Faculty: Dr. James LaPlant

Project Title: *Public Space & Sense of Community.*

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**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:**

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2**. Your research study may begin immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator ([irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu)) before continuing your research.

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**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

- *Upon completion of this research study all data (email correspondence, survey data, participant name lists, etc.) must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years.*
  
- If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) to ensure an updated record of your exemption.*

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*Elizabeth Ann Olphie*

*06.02.2020*

Thank you for submitting an

**IRB application.**

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Please direct questions to [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) or 229-253-2947.

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Revised: 06.02.16

APPENDIX B:

SENSE OF COMMUNITY SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**SENSE OF COMMUNITY INDEX II**

The following questions about community refer to: [insert community name].

How important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other community members?

|   |                      |                    |                    |           |                |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1                                       | 2                    | 3                  | 4                  | 5         | 6              |
| Prefer Not to be Part of This Community | Not Important at All | Not Very Important | Somewhat Important | Important | Very Important |

**How well do each of the following statements represent how you *feel* about this community?**

|    |   | Not at All            | Somewhat              | Mostly                | Completely            |
|----|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | I get important needs of mine met because I am part of this community.      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. | Community members and I value the same things.                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. | This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. | Being a member of this community makes me feel good.                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. | When I have a problem, I can talk about it with members of this community.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. | People in this community have similar needs, priorities, and goals.         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. | I can trust people in this community.                                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Sense of Community Index

|     |  | Not at All            | Somewhat              | Mostly                | Completely            |
|-----|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 8.  | I can recognize most of the members of this community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9.  | Most community members know me.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. | This community has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. | I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. | Being a member of this community is a part of my identity.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. | Fitting into this community is important to me.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. | This community can influence other communities.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. | I care about what other community members think of me.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. | I have influence over what this community is like.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. | If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. | This community has good leaders.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. | It is very important to me to be a part of this community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. | I am with other community members a lot and enjoy being with them.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 21. | I expect to be a part of this community for a long time.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 22. | Members of this community have shared important events together, such as holidays, celebrations, or disasters.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 23. | I feel hopeful about the future of this community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 24. | Members of this community care about each other.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Appendix C:

WASHINGTON CITY SURVEY



**Default Question Block**

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Public Space & Sense of Community," which is being conducted by Roger Carter, a student at Valdosta State University. This research is a combined study with Washington City and the researcher. The purpose of the study is to identify the role built public space has on citizen's sense of community and citizenship. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This survey is confidential. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records. If you would prefer a non-English copy of this survey please contact brae@washingtoncity.org.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Roger Carter at rrcarter@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

How important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other community members?

|   |                         |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Prefer Not to be<br>a Part of This<br>Community | Not Important al<br>All | Not Very<br>Important | Somewhat<br>Important | Important             | Very Important        |
| <input type="radio"/>                           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How well do each of the following statements represent how you *feel* about this community?

|   | Not at All            | Somewhat              | Mostly                | Completely            |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I get important needs of mine met because I am part of this community.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Community members and I value the same things.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Being a member of this community makes me feel good.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When I have a problem, I can talk about it with members of this community.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| People in this community have similar needs, priorities, and goals.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I can trust people in this community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I can recognize most of the members of this community.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Most community members know me.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The community has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, and architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Being part of this community is a part of my identity.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



|  | Not at All            | Somewhat              | Mostly                | Completely            |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Fitting into this community is important to me.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The community can influence other communities.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I care about what other community members think of me.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have influence over what this community is like.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This community has good leaders.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is very important to me to be a part of this community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am with other community members a lot and enjoy being with them.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I expect to be a part of this community for a long time.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Members of this community have shared important events together, such as holidays, celebrations, or disasters. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel hopeful about the future of this community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Members of this community care about each other.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Over the past year, how often did you participate in the community center?

Daily

- 2-3 times a week
- Several times a month
- Monthly
- Several times a year
- Once a year
- Never

Over the past two years, how have you participated in the community center? (check all that apply)

- Swimming
- Use the exercise room
- Use the weight room
- Use the track
- Participated in a recreation class (spin, power x, zumba, flex, yoga, senior fit, shred, hiit, aqua, trx, kettleball, core, higher fit, pilates, etc.)
- Participated in a sports league (softball, volleyball, basketball, frisbee, etc.)
- Participated in a community class (social club, CPR, financial literacy, parenting, extension services, driving course, healthy eating)
- Watched a sporting event
- Attended another event

In the past two years, how often have you participated in the following within the community?

|  | Often                 | Rarely                | Never                 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Attended a local public meeting            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Voted in the local election                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Contacted a local public official          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Given or received a ride from a neighbor   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lent or borrowed something from a neighbor | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Volunteered                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Attended a neighborhood association meeting

|  |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Often                 | Rarely                | Never                 |
|  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The COVID-19 pandemic has:

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Increased my sense of belonging to my community | Had no influence on my sense of belonging to my community | Decreased my sense of belonging to my community |
| <input type="radio"/>                           | <input type="radio"/>                                     | <input type="radio"/>                           |

In what ways do you participate in the community that make you feel connected with others?

What has this community done to build a sense of community?

In your view what does it mean to be a good citizen?

Do you feel the community center plays an important role in the sense of community and, if so, how?

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