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Cover Page Footnote

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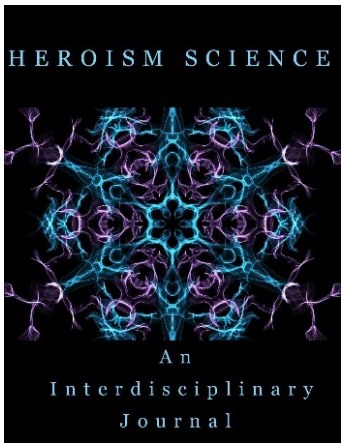

Conceptions of Heroic Leadership in Civil Society

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ABSTRACT: While nations face multiple disruptions to civil society, individuals in late adolescence and early adulthood are overlooked for heroic leadership opportunities in some cultures. An underestimation of individuals' abilities is sometimes fostered by biological definitions of human development that align competence with physical changes in the brain (Blakemore, 2012). Prolonged exposure to such disregard can encourage individuals to restrict the information they notice, fostering distortion in the intentions that support leadership readiness (Pratkanis, 2007). Studies of individuals' conceptions of how the world operates can improve leadership readiness if such evidence is used to verify that individuals notice essential information. Using this logic to explore undergraduates' readiness for heroic leadership, a highly diverse sample of individuals in late adolescence and early adulthood shared their understanding of human rights and civil society. These trait-focused conceptions were then compared with dispositional conceptions of heroism to explore variance in undergraduates' readiness to embrace heroic opportunities.

1 INTRODUCTION

Nations around the world are facing many disturbances that are disrupting civil society. And yet, in some cultures, people in their late teens and early twenties are not given opportunities to demonstrate heroic leadership. This is partly because some biological theories of human development link competence to physical brain maturation, underestimating young people's capabilities (e.g., Casey et al., 2005). When young people are disregarded in this way, they can limit their attention to essential information about society. Such perceptual distortion can inhibit the development of individuals' intentions and readiness to fulfill important leadership roles.

Before exploring individuals' understanding of heroism in civil society, it seemed important to establish their understanding of how civil society functions. Starting with such conceptions acknowledges that intentions to participate in civil discourse include individuals' knowledge or beliefs about civil society, their actions or behavior, and their emotional reactions to such experiences (Thorkildsen, 2017). Knowledge, in other words, is a crucial feature of someone's civil intentions, especially if such intentions are to evolve into a sustained commitment to civil discourse.

Each element in an intentional model is highly complex and can be isolated for deeper interrogation. Psychological research that prioritizes behavior over knowledge or emotions offers an incomplete understanding of individuals' intentions. Beginning with descriptions of undergraduates' conceptions of civil society acknowledges the likelihood of variance in the beliefs that guide behavior across individuals and communities. The assumption that individuals in late adolescence and early adulthood are unprepared to participate in civil discourse can also be challenged with a better understanding of age-related depictions of social knowledge (Alexander, 2006). Thus, the first step in this project focused on undergraduates' conceptions of the dispositions or traits that are salient in civil society.

Dispositions were explored because such information is malleable and easy to detect, unlike the long-term intentions or aspirations that inform individuals' life narratives (McAdams, 2013).

The definition of civil society that guided this investigation included two primary dimensions. First, universal human rights convey the sense of ought that constrains civil discourse. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a well-established depiction of rights that is broad in scope, applies to all of humanity, and was generated via an elaborate consensus-building process after World War II (United Nations, 1948). These rights have also informed the constitutions of many nations. Comparing individuals' descriptions of human rights with those depicted in the ratified United Nations document conveyed which rights undergraduates found important for an ideal society.

Second, specific features of civil society depict the places, roles, and responsibilities that allow nations and communities to enact human rights. Society-focused traits, both constructive and harmful, can be organized around three dimensions (Alexander, 2006). Traits can depict *relational ties* between societal organizations themselves as well as individuals and each organization. Traits can also depict the *institutional structures* that allow organizations to function in society, and the *personal motives* embraced by people who contribute to civil society. Such societal traits can be manipulated to encompass civic, national, and transnational goals, especially when individuals recognize these priorities and imagine how to transform such priorities into action.

Characterizing civil society as the interaction of multiple traits designed to enact human rights offers a rudimentary conception of civil society. Inviting undergraduates to convey their general interest in supporting local and global human rights adds valence into these conceptions that could confirm an informational dedication to societal goals.

2 CONCEPTIONS OF HEROISM

A eudaimonic notion of heroism was adopted in this study to maintain the logic of ideals (Ryff, 2023). Heroism was measured as virtues associated with agency and communion because civil discourse presumes that the pursuit of meaning across the lifespan is essential to happiness. Conceptions and not self-assessments can be captured when individuals assume the role of a lifelong actor, someone who embodies a collection of habits and traits (McAdams, 2013). This third-person lens is especially important for understanding how heroism was measured in this project. Conceptions of heroism that do not conflate knowledge with opinions were extracted by selecting the dispositions of heroes (and of society) from a range of traits that are easily manipulated by situational demands. That is, undergraduates' knowledge of heroism in society was detected without determining if they planned to pursue heroic actions or their feelings about such experiences.

The virtues used to depict heroism were selected from an exploratory depiction of the highly moral person, emerging from a study distinguishing the characteristics of highly moral, spiritual, and religious people (Walker & Pitts, 1998). Later studies that distinguished agency and communion informed the final choice of traits (Walker, 2017). Then, comparing undergraduates' conceptions of heroism with their conceptions of civil society conveyed the availability of rudimentary knowledge about the purpose of civil discourse and heroic forms of civil engagement. Confirming undergraduates' conceptions of civil society offers a foundation for later explorations of an intentional system that includes emotions and behavior.

3 THE CURRENT STUDY

The Intentional Systems Theory that drives this project is grounded in the assumption that human functioning evolves in cycles that wax and wane (Thelen & Smith, 1994).

Developmental cycles progress from simplicity to complexity and back to simplicity as individuals move through the lifecycle. Intentions wax and wane in similar progressions (Thorkildsen, 2013). Therefore, to evaluate undergraduates' conceptions, complex ideas embedded in political science and psychological research were translated into scales that allowed undergraduates to convey complex conceptions of civil society and heroism that could be empirically simplified. Statistical comparisons offer a third-person evaluation of whether such knowledge is simple or complex.

Several models were explored before determining the level of parsimony that best conveyed undergraduates' knowledge. Two models independently conveyed undergraduates' depictions of civil society and heroism. One model shows the alignment of conceptions of human rights and heroism. A second model shows the alignment of the relational ties, institutional structures, and personal motives that foster civil society and heroism. A third mediation model suggested that conceptions of human rights helped to explain how conceptions of civil society influence conceptions of heroic leadership. Together, these findings reveal a high degree of complexity in undergraduates' conceptions, complexity that is similar in scope to that found in public discourse.

4 METHOD

4.1 DESIGN

After confirming that the first two models were not constrained by variance in age group, gender, and status as an underrepresented minority, interest in civil rights and the number of UDHR articles depicted in open-ended descriptions of 5 human rights were compared with conceptions of heroism. Then, trait-focused conceptions of civil society's relational ties, institutional structures, and personal motives were compared with conceptions

of heroism. Posthoc tests of these conceptions revealed which combination of traits were evident in undergraduates' understanding of heroic leadership. Finally, a mediation model was tested to guide educational initiatives.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS

This sample (n=364) of 204 volunteers in late adolescence (ages 17-20) and 160 in early adulthood (ages 21-29) completed surveys about civil society and heroic leadership. The M_{age} = 20.44, *sd* = 2.47. Simpson's Diversity Indices indicated a highly diverse sample; age =.84, gender =.40, family immigrant status = .68, ethnicity = .76, and underrepresented minority status = .50. *(Scores closer to 1 indicate higher levels of diversity.)*

Volunteers were recruited from introductory psychology courses that served seven colleges located in an urban, research-intensive university. The university has continually won awards for academic excellence and the diversity of its student body. Although campus-level information on students' age or immigrant status was unavailable, Simpson's Diversity Indices for gender = .50, first-generation college student status = .47, ethnicity = .76, and underrepresented minority status = .49 represent campus-level distributions.

4.3 PROCEDURES

Two methods were used to recruit volunteers, but everyone completed the same online activities using Qualtrics software. One group (n=85) received a link via one or more administrative listservs used to share research opportunities with undergraduates in various colleges. These students read online depictions of their rights as research participants and conveyed their consent by checking "yes" for that question. They then completed the

surveys in their own time using their personal computers. No personal identifiers were tracked for these volunteers.

A second group (n=279) responded to a course-specific software system (Pecolsus) used for introductory psychology courses. This system ensured that investigators could not track personal identifiers but allowed instructors to later assign course credit for participation. Volunteers using this system visited a classroom where twelve computer stations were set up for their use at a scheduled time. Volunteers were greeted by investigators who had no affiliation with the psychology courses and told the purpose of the study, their rights as research participants, and guided to a computer station where they completed the online surveys. These volunteers supplied a personal Pecolsus ID number that was later matched with their online registration to indicate their attendance. While completing the surveys, everyone was invited to ask questions should they need assistance and thanked for their participation in person. Statistical t-tests of possible recruitment differences in all data sources showed no differences attributable to recruitment method.

4.4 INSTRUMENTS

4.4.1 Human Rights Activities

Volunteers were initially introduced to a definition of human rights before evaluating their interest in promoting such rights in (a) their communities and (b) the world at large. They used a scale of 0 to 10 (2 items, $\alpha = .91$). The introduction noted, "Most people know that there are universal rights. These apply to all people, in every country around the world. Societies are not always good at making sure everyone gets these rights, but we do our best to understand human rights and make sure they are protected."

After offering their interest ratings, volunteers supplied up to five human rights in a textbox and place an "*" next to the right they found most important. These responses were coded by depicting which articles in the UDHR were evident in their responses

(https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights). Once coded, the number of articles that were evident in each volunteer's answer was tallied.

Table 1 includes the decisions for aligning volunteers' ideas with Articles 1-30 and short phrases to depict the rights. Claims that individuals should receive services at no cost were sometimes embedded in depictions of various rights, but no-cost entitlements are not features of universal rights. The concept of equal opportunity usually includes modifiers (e.g., of education, protection under the law, to work), and when undergraduates left this undefined, the omnibus opportunities were recorded as Article 22.

Table 1

Alignment of Undergraduates' Depictions of Human Rights with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (n=364)

Article	*Abbreviated definition*	*% of sample*	*# of volunteers*	*M magnitude*	*SEM*
1	*Born free with equal respect and dignity*	*30.8*	*112*	*.40*	*.03*
2	*Freedom from discrimination*	*22.0*	*80*	*.31*	*.03*
3	*Right to life, liberty, and security*	*25.8*	*94*	*.29*	*.03*
4	*Freedom from slavery*	*.5*	*2*	*.01*	*.00*
5	*Freedom from torture and degrading treatment*	*.5*	*2*	*.01*	*.00*
6	*Right to recognition as a person before the law*	*.8*	*3*	*.01*	*.00*
7	*Right to equal protection under law*	*7.1*	*26*	*.08*	*.02*
8	*Right to restitution from a competent tribunal*	*0*	*0*	*.00*	*.00*

Article	*Abbreviated definition*	*% of sample*	*# of volunteers*	*M magnitude*	*SEM*
9	*Freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile*	*.5*	*2*	*.01*	*.00*
10	*Right to a fair and public hearing*	*2.5*	*9*	*.02*	*.01*
11	*Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty*	*.5*	*2*	*.01*	*.00*
12	*Freedom from interference with privacy (e.g., at home, correspondence)*	*2.7*	*10*	*.03*	*.01*
13	*Right to free movement around the globe.*	*5.8*	*21*	*.06*	*.01*
14	*Right to asylum from persecution in another country*	*1.6*	*6*	*.02*	*.01*
15	*Right to a nationality and freedom to change it*	*1.6*	*6*	*.02*	*.01*
16	*Right to marriage and family*	*10.7*	*39*	*.12*	*.02*
17	*Right to own property*	*2.2*	*8*	*.02*	*.01*
18	*Freedom of belief and religion*	*18.7*	*68*	*.21*	*.02*
19	*Freedom of expression (e.g., speech, press, dress)*	*44.2*	*161*	*.60*	*.04*
20	*Right to peaceful assembly and association*	*4.1*	*15*	*.05*	*.01*
21	*Right to participate in government and free elections*	*11.8*	*43*	*.13*	*.02*
22	*Right to social security*	*3.3*	*12*	*.04*	*.01*

Article	*Abbreviated definition*	*% of sample*	*# of volunteers*	*M magnitude*	*SEM*
23	*Right to desirable work and to join trade unions*	*14.3*	*52*	*.16*	*.02*
24	*Right to rest and leisure*	*.5*	*2*	*.01*	*.00*
25	*Right to an adequate living standard (e.g., food, shelter, healthcare, water)*	*41.5*	*151*	*.98*	*.08*
26	*Right to education*	*31.6*	*115*	*.44*	*.04*
27	*Right to participate cultural life (e.g., arts, science, social media)*	*1.6*	*6*	*.02*	*.01*
28	*Right to the social order that articulates the UDHR*	*1.1*	*4*	*.01*	*.01*
29	*Fulfill community duties essential to free and full development*	*2.2*	*8*	*.03*	*.01*
30	*Freedom from state or personal interference in the sovereignty of all rights*	*2.2*	*8*	*.02*	*.01*
	The right to bear arms (US Constitution)	*2.2*	*8*	*.02*	*.01*
	No rights named	*16.5*	*60*	*.00*	*.00*

Note. Scores for each right consisted of 1 if the right was named, or 2 if the right was also selected as most important. Scores for Articles 19 (0-3) and 25 (0-6) convey a higher magnitude because volunteers named different features of those Articles as independent rights. The number of articles depicted ranged from 0 to 7, M = 2.93, SD = 1.73, SEM = .09.

Two additional categories were established to represent ideas that did not fit within the UDHR classification scheme; 2% (8) volunteers named a right to bear arms, and 1.9%

(7) confused rights with virtues such as compassion, understanding, and humility. The right to bear arms appears in the United States Constitution but was dropped from analyses because the adversarial nature of this privilege has the potential to undermine rather than reinforce civil society. Virtues were treated as an indicator of Article 1, the right to life with respect and dignity. Additionally, when volunteers noted either that universal rights did not exist or named no rights scores of 0 were assigned for all categories.

4.4.2 Conceptions of Civil Society

Using a set of binary traits proposed by Alexander (2006) to depict "pure" and "impure" ethical codes for civil discourse, volunteers were guided through three activities that focus on the qualities of civil society. After each introduction, volunteers read alphabetized lists of relevant civil and anti-civil traits and selected all traits that should be embraced before being invited to add their own ideas. The introduction conveying relational ties read:

> *Human rights can be addressed only when groups and institutions interact with one another. This is possible if people become involved in groups because no single person can ensure that human rights are maintained in the world. Individuals can promote human rights by paying attention to symbols that communicate important values. Individuals can also find ways to participate in conversations across groups, especially when there are serious disagreements that are hard to talk about. Using the following checklist, click the buttons next to the values you think should be promoted by groups when they advocate for human rights. Please add your own ideas in the textbox below.*

Alexander's (2006) binary list of relational ties included: open vs. secretive, trusting vs. suspicious, critical vs. deferential, honorable vs. self-interested, altruistic vs. greedy, truthful vs. deceitful, straightforward vs. calculating, deliberative vs. conspiratorial, and friendly vs. antagonistic.

The introduction conveying institutional structures read:

> *Societies promote human rights by building institutions to uphold those rights (e.g., courts, media). These communicative and regulative institutions govern how we compare and act on important rights. Courts, for example, help people resolve conflicts. The media teaches us about different perspectives on important social issues. The United Nations or the World Trade Organization allow for transnational decisions about how to promote human rights. Schools promote everyone's right to an education. Using the following checklist, click the buttons next to all the values that should be embraced by human rights organizations when they help to build a just world. Include your own ideas in the textbox below.*

Alexander's (2006) binary list for institutional structures included: rule-governed vs. arbitrary, law-governed vs. power-governed, equality-driven vs. hierarchical, inclusive vs. exclusive, impersonal vs. personal, contract-driven vs. loyalty-driven, group-laden vs. faction-laden, office-governed vs. personality-governed. Subsequent discussions of civil society led us to add rights-focused vs. tradition-focused to Alexander's original list.

Checklists for personal motives were introduced with:

> *Human rights are also promoted when people talk about abstract ideas and try to do something to build a better world. Some character traits are better for this goal and others undermine communication and progress. Using the following checklist, click the buttons next to all the character traits that individuals should show when promoting human rights. Please add your own ideas in the textbox below.*

Alexander's (2006) binary motives included: active vs. passive, autonomous vs. dependent, rational vs. irrational, reasonable vs. hysterical, calm vs. excitable, self-controlled vs. zealous, realistic vs. distorted, and sane vs. mad.

Scores for each feature of civil society were calculated by subtracting the corresponding anti-civil trait from the civil trait in each pair. Scores ranged from -1 to 1. Negative scores indicated a preference for anti-civil over civil traits, 0 indicated the selection of both civil and anti-civil options, and 1 indicated the preference of civil over anti-civil traits. Aggregated scores for each aspect of civil society were used in the final model although this use offered an overly simplistic indicator of such complex beliefs.

4.4.3 Conceptions of Heroism

Using findings from Walker & Pitts (1997) and Walker (2017), a scale for measuring virtuous heroism was created by tallying depictions of brave, caring, energetic, ethical, logical, open-minded, principled, and unbiased as ideal personal motives. The number of motives selected was used as the dependent variable in subsequent analyses (8 items, α = .71).

5 RESULTS

Parallel analyses were conducted using volunteers' conceptions of human rights and their conceptions of civil society before testing a simplified mediation model.

5.1 CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Table 1 offers descriptive statistics conveying the breadth and depth of volunteers' depictions of human rights, calculated by comparing their supplied descriptions with the 30 articles of the UDHR. Freedom of expression, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to an education, and the rights to dignity, equality, and security were named by more volunteers than other rights, yet 29 of the 30 UDHR articles were named by at least some volunteers. Many (64%) offered details about a few rights instead of naming five different rights. Other volunteers (16.5%) named no rights or stated that they had no rights.

Mean tallies include volunteers' judgments of the right they found most important. Similar levels of diversity were apparent in which rights were declared most important. Preferences for an adequate standard of living, freedom of expression, the right to education, and details related to the right to life, liberty, and safety remained most salient.

5.2 HEROISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Hierarchical linear regression was used to explore whether the number of articles evident in volunteers' conceptions of human rights explained variance in their conceptions of heroism. Tables 2 and 3 indicate that a small but significant amount of variance was explained by the resulting additive model.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Interest, Number of UDHR Articles Named, and Conceptions of Heroism (n=364)

Scales	Descriptive Statistics			Correlations		
	M	*SD*	*SEM*	0-order	Partial	Part
Interest in human rights	7.82	2.46	.13	.14	.11	.11
Number of UDHR articles	2.93	1.73	.09	.19	.17	.17
Heroism	5.31	2.07	.11			

Note. The correlation between interest in human rights and number of articles was $r = .18$.

Table 3

Final Hierarchal Linear Regression Model Depicting the Alignment of Conceptions of Human Rights and Heroism

	Final model contributions		
Human rights focus	ΔR^2	ß	$t(363)$
Constant			10.63***
Step 1: Interest in human rights	.02		
Promote local and global rights		.11	2.15**
Step 2: Conceptions of human rights	.03		
Number of UDHR articles named		.17	3.34***

Note. This model is simplified from that including controls for age group, gender, and ethnicity; demographic variables that explained no variance in the overall model, adj R^2 = .00 when included as a first hierarchical step. The final adjusted R^2 = .05, $F(2, 361) = 9.48$, $p<.001$. ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

5.3 CONCEPTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

As suggested by Alexander (2006), the pairs of traits drew attention to notably different aspects of civil society and were not aggregated in this step. Volunteers' understanding of relational ties showed the highest level of alignment with civil traits (M = .52), and personal motives were also more often positive than negative (M = .44). Institutional structures, however, showed a weak alignment, with three pairs resulting in negative mean scores that convey an average endorsement of anti-civil traits (M = .10).

Such unevenness was also apparent in the correlations within and between relational ties, institutional structures, and personal motives.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Features of Civil Society and Conceptions of Heroism (n=364)

Scales	Descriptive Statistics			Correlations		
	M	*SD*	*SEM*	0-order	Partial	Part
Priorities for relational ties						
open - secret	.77	.42	.02	.42	.13	.08
trusting - suspicious	.78	.43	.02	.32	-.08	-.05
critical - deferential	.28	.51	.03	.20	.05	.03
honorable - self-interested	.57	.55	.03	.30	.13	.08
altruistic - greedy	.11	.37	.02	.21	.10	.07
truthful - deceitful	.81	.44	.02	.43	.00	.00
straightforward - calculating	.50	.56	.03	.34	.12	.07
deliberative - conspiratorial	.08	.37	.02	.11	.01	.01
friendly - antagonistic	.82	.38	.02	.54	.31	.20

Scales	Descriptive Statistics			Correlations		
	M	*SD*	*SEM*	0-order	Partial	Part
Priorities for institutional structures						
rule-governed - arbitrary	.11	.43	.02	.12	.06	.04
law-governed – power-governed	.22	.48	.03	.19	.15	.10
equality-driven - hierarchical	.63	.51	.03	.34	.17	.10
inclusive – exclusive	.34	.53	.03	.26	.11	.07
impersonal - personal	-.40	.57	.03	-.18	-.02	-.01
contract-driven – loyalty-driven	-.34	.53	.03	-.11	.00	.00
group-laden – faction-laden	.09	.34	.02	.05	.00	.00
office-governed – personality-governed	-.15	.46	.02	.03	.00	.00
rights-focused – tradition-focused	.36	.68	.04	.19	-.03	-.02
Personal motives						
active - passive	.67	.50	.03	.31	.09	.06
autonomous - dependent	-.12	.54	.03	-.06	-.05	-.03
rational - irrational	.45	.53	.03	.48	.23	.15
reasonable - hysterical	.69	.48	.03	.47	.16	.10
calm - excitable	.35	.55	.03	.14	.01	.01

Scales	Descriptive Statistics			Correlations		
	M	*SD*	*SEM*	0-order	Partial	Part
self-controlled - zealous	.43	.52	.03	.38	.15	.09
realistic - distorted	.71	.45	.02	.42	.14	.09
sane - mad	.33	.50	.03	.38	.16	.10
Heroism	5.31	2.07	.11			

Note. Correlations between scores for relational ties ranged from .46 to .00, institutional structures ranged from .31 to -.13, and personal motives from 42 to -.11, with negative scores indicating a preference for anti-civil traits.

5.4 HEROISM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

A notable amount of variance in volunteers' conceptions of heroism was explained by their conceptions of civil society, total adjusted $R^2 = .59$. Beliefs that relational ties should be friendly, open, honorable, straightforward, and altruistic added especially strong contributions to the model. Other explanatory contributors included the beliefs that institutional structures should be equality-focused, law-governed, and inclusive as well as that personal motives should be rational, reasonable, sane, realistic, and self-controlled.

Table 5

Final Hierarchical Linear Regression Model Depicting How Conceptions of Civil Society Inform Conceptions of Heroism

	Final model contributions		
Conceptions of civil society	$\Delta R2$	ß	*t*(363)
Constant			7.25***
Step 1: Priorities for relational ties	.44		
open - secret		.10	2.49**
trusting - suspicious		-.06	-1.51
critical - deferential		.03	.87
honorable - self-interested		.09	2.45**
altruistic - greedy		.07	1.92
truthful - deceitful		.00	-.03
straightforward - calculating		.08	2.12*
deliberative - conspiratorial		.01	.19
friendly – antagonistic		.26	5.94***
Step 2: Priorities for institutional structures	.05		
rule-governed - arbitrary		.04	1.14
law-governed – power-governed		.10	2.82**
equality-driven - hierarchical		.12	3.07**

inclusive – exclusive		.08	2.01*
impersonal - personal		-.01	-.27
contract-driven – loyalty-driven		.00	.08
group-laden – faction-laden		.00	.04
office-governed – personality-governed		.00	.06
rights-focused – tradition-focused		-.02	-.51
Step 3: Personal motives	.13		
active - passive		.06	1.66
autonomous - dependent		-.04	-.97
rational - irrational		.18	4.37***
reasonable - hysterical		.12	2.95**
calm - excitable		.01	.19
self-controlled - zealous		.10	2.70**
realistic - distorted		.11	2.67**
sane - mad		.12	3.02**

Note. This model is simplified from that including controls for age group, gender, and ethnicity; demographic variables that explained no variance in the overall model, adj R^2 = .00 when included as a first hierarchical step. The final adjusted R^2 = .59, $F(26, 337)$ = 20.76, $p<.001$. *$p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

A final, simplified model tested whether undergraduates' interest in and knowledge of human rights helped to explain individual differences in how well conceptions of civil society explained conceptions of heroic leadership. Tables 6 and 7 convey how

undergraduates' conceptions of heroism are explained by their aggregated conceptions of the relational ties, institutional structures, and the personal motives that drive civil society after controlling for variance in their interest in and conceptions of human rights.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for a Mediation Model Depicting How Conceptions of Human Rights and Civil Society Explain Variance in Conceptions of Heroism (n=364)

Scales	Descriptive Statistics			Correlations		
	M	*SD*	*SEM*	0-order	Partial	Part
Underrepresented minority status	.46	.50	.03	-.05	-.06	-.04
Gender	.73	.45	.02	.04	.00	.00
Age group	.44	.50	.03	.03	-.11	-.08
Interest in human rights	7.82	2.46	.13	.14	.08	.06
Knowledge of human rights	2.93	1.73	.09	.19	.08	.06
Knowledge of relational ties	4.49	2.10	.11	.58	.35	.26
Knowledge of institutional structures	.87	1.76	.09	.26	.14	.10
Knowledge of personal motives	3.50	1.96	.10	.64	.46	.36
Heroism	5.31	2.07	.11			

Note. Unreported correlations ranged from -.02 to .54, M_{corr} =.10, with negative scores indicating a preference for individuals who are not underrepresented minorities, women, or in young adulthood.

Table 7

Final Mediation Model Depicting How Conceptions of Human Rights and Civil Society Explain Variance in Conceptions of Heroism

	Final model contributions		
Heroism in society	ΔR^2	ß	*t*(363)
Constant			5.53***
Step 1: Demographics	.00		
Underrepresented minority status		-.04	-1.11
Gender status		.00	.04
Age group status		-.08	-2.10*
Step 2: Human rights	.05		
Interest in human rights		.06	1.50
Number of UDHR articles named		.06	1.59
Step 3: Civil society	.46		
Aggregated relational ties		.32	7.11***
Aggregated institutional structures		.10	2.67**
Aggregated personal motives		.44	9.84***

Note. The total adjusted R^2 = .50, $F(8, 355) = 47.01$, $p<.001$ for this model.
*$p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$.

This mediation model revealed practically useful age group differences. Young adults conveyed a better understanding of how relational ties and institutional structures function in civil society than undergraduates in late adolescence (Table 8). There were no demographic differences in undergraduates' attention to human rights, or in their conceptions of the personal motives that drive civil society.

Table 8

Mean Age Group Differences in Conceptions of Human Rights, Civil Society, and Heroism

Scales	Late Adolescence (n=204)			Early Adulthood (n=160)		
	M	*SD*	*SEM*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Interest in human rights	7.53	2.59	.18	8.18	2.24	.18
Number of UDHR articles named	2.85	1.69	.12	3.04	1.78	.14
Relational ties***	4.15	2.06	.14	4.92	2.07	.16
Institutional structures***	.57	1.89	.13	1.23	1.52	.12
Personal motives	3.41	1.89	.13	3.62	2.06	.16
Heroism	5.26	2.04	.14	5.39	2.10	.17

Note. ***Age group differences were significant at p<.001, when Bonferroni correction for the number of tests was applied

6 CONCLUSIONS

Collectively these findings suggest that individuals in late adolescence and early adulthood have a rudimentary understanding of how human rights and civil society might

foster heroism. Variance in conceptions of human rights was aligned with variance in the ideals of heroism. Likewise, variance in conceptions of how civil society ought to function conveyed a purpose for heroic leadership. Furthermore, variance in how undergraduates' conceptions of civil society informed their conceptions of heroism was explained by their relative attention to human rights. Volunteers with a greater interest in and knowledge about human rights were also more likely to understand how heroism is fostered in civil society.

Nuance was apparent when the features in each model were isolated. For example, the wide range of human rights named across volunteers included most of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Breadth in which rights were named aligned almost perfectly with the UDHR, even though volunteers used colloquial speech. The absence of references to Article 8, the right to restitution, revealed an educational opportunity. Additionally, volunteers whose responses showed limited breadth offered elaborate accounts of the rights to (a) a comfortable standard of living, and (b) freedom of expression. The nuance in conceptions of how relational ties, institutional structures, and personal motives function in civil society are also consistent with controversies found in public discourse (Alexander, 2006).

This research began while others were validating claims about the "great eight" traits that are commonly associated with heroism (Goethals & Allison, 2012). Unaware of that line of inquiry, the measure of heroism used in this project consisted of virtues that emerged from an exploratory study of the highly moral person (Walker & Pitts, 1998). Whereas many of the traits noted as the "great eight" require introspection more so than the traits measured in this project, some overlaps exist. For example, both measures included the trait of caring, and the concept of strong noted in the great eight research aligns with the concept of brave that was used in this project. Nevertheless, a clearer depiction of how conceptions

of civil society align with conceptions of heroism could emerge if measures of the great eight virtues were included in future research.

Likewise, more elaborate descriptions of how civil society functions could be ranked in future research to offer a more internally consistent measure of how specific societal features are prioritized within and across samples. We started with a binary trait model because that model was generated with a strong theoretical argument and clear examples from across the globe (Alexander, 2006). Aggregated scores offered less insight into the complexity of undergraduates' knowledge than was possible by leaving the tension between civil and anti-civil traits transparent. Even so, the aggregated model suggests that inspiring educational opportunities might focus on human rights, preparing individuals in late adolescence and early adulthood for greater participation in civil society.

Everyday explorations of heroism are evident when individuals embrace opportunities to strengthen their civil beliefs. Such exploration is more likely in a society that welcomes diversity by including individuals on the cusp of adulthood. This verification of undergraduates' conceptions heroism in civil society conveys a readiness to improve knowledge about heroic action. Questions of whether young people *can* participate in civil society can be expanded to include questions of *how* to participate. Noting where undergraduates are confused about the differences between civil and anti-civil traits, for example, could reveal educational opportunities that support longterm involvement in civil discourse.

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8 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.