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### Trinity College and Hartford: The Impact of Community Learning Courses and Internships on Student Perceptions of Hartford

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Trinity College, Hartford CT  
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Trinity College and Hartford: The Impact of Community Learning Courses  
and Internships on Student Perceptions of Hartford

**I. Introduction:**

I was seventeen years old and a recent applicant to Trinity College when I was talking to a family friend about my college admissions process, and listing the schools that I had applied to and was still anxiously waiting to hear back from. My mention of Trinity caused the woman I was speaking to to pause and she quickly commented on her impressions of Hartford when she visited the College with her child the year before. “The campus is beautiful, but Hartford is a dangerous city” was not an uncommon assessment for people to make when I told them about my pending application. This types of comments contributed to forming the perception that I held coming into Trinity college with as a first year student.

Despite my early negative perceptions of the city of Hartford I have found that my initial reservations about living in Hartford have given way to an appreciation for its history and story. My views about Hartford changed in part because of two types of academic experiences with the city: Community Learning courses and Career Development internships. Trinity’s Community Learning Initiative couples academic courses with city organizations, and my first experience was having a classroom placement in one of Hartford’s magnet schools. I had the opportunity to learn about education issues including ones specific to Hartford and then spend three hours a week observing in a Hartford classroom. The following year, the opportunity to work part-time through a credit-bearing internship at the Connecticut State Legislature helped me learn so much

about how local and state government have both contributed to, and attempted to address the deep socioeconomic disparities that are present in Connecticut. The opportunity to engage with Hartford through various academic ways while at Trinity College had the effect of encouraging me to be more immersed in the city off of campus and have greatly impacted my perceptions of Hartford and have become an important part of my education.

My positive experience with both CLI and Hartford internships, and the impact they had on my view of the city, caused me to question whether or not other students who have partaken in either CLI courses or Hartford internships have undergone similar transformations. Despite my positive experience, I have often come in contact with rhetoric from peers which leads me to question the attitudes and perceptions they have towards Hartford. As a result, the research question I address in this essay is: how do perceptions of Hartford vary among Trinity juniors and seniors, and are there differences between those who enrolled in Community Learning Courses verses Career Development internships?

Based on fourteen interviews I conducted with Trinity juniors and seniors, both Community Learning and Internship students perceptions of Hartford change as a result of their involvement with the city. Despite this overall similarity, there are differences in the ways in which these perceptions changed which highlight disparities between the Hartford experiences of CLI and internship students, which can be observed through four major themes in the interview transcripts. First, CLI students were more likely than Internship students to express a greater familiarity of the neighborhood surrounding Trinity, and their experiences in Hartford tended to be more diverse in location, rather than being focused in strictly the downtown area. Second, CLI students were more likely to comment on the historical and current issues that have contributed to many of the challenges that Hartford faces today, while Internship students were

more likely to focus on the professional opportunities that they did not previously know Hartford had to offer. Third, my student also found some strong similarities between the two groups. Together, almost all of the CLI and Internship students interviewed expressed skepticism of the opportunities, both professional and personal, that Hartford may hold for them in the future. The final theme highlighted by this research is a shared concern for transportation options as students in Hartford. Though my study does not argue that these perceptions were caused solely by the experiences of CLI or internships, there is an interesting and convincing association of differences between these two groups of students.

### **III. Literature Review:**

Understanding the extent to which Hartford involvement through CLI courses and internships have impacted the way students perceive the city can give both the Trinity College administration and the many academic departments involved in offering CLI courses or internship advisement, a better understanding of the learning that is taking place through these academic offerings. Additionally, beyond the importance that this research has for the Trinity community, understanding the effects that community engagement have on students can contribute to scholarship on civic mindedness and how to best encourage students to leave their colleges with an understanding of how they can impact the lives of others.

The role of community learning in the liberal arts is a topic that Professor of Philosophy Dan Lloyd explores in his 2015 faculty scholarship essay, "Street Rigor: Community Learning in the Liberal Arts." Lloyd explores the reasons behind the College's Community Learning Initiative and states the purpose of his essay is to pose the philosophical question of "Why should community learning be a part of a liberal arts curriculum?" (2015, 2). Professor Lloyd focuses on three main arguments for why community learning is a good thing; first community learning

enhances classroom and college learning, second that it promotes democratic values such as citizenship, and opportunity for community programs, and lastly that community learning fulfills an ethical obligation for knowledgeable educated citizens, like those leaving Trinity College, to contribute back to society (2015, 2-3). Professor Lloyd's essay provides an interesting context for the research I present in my paper, as he explores the importance of community learning to the liberal arts curriculum, and I look to understand through student testimonies how well the experiences of community involvement are measuring up to the ideal, particularly the second two arguments about democratic values and ethical obligations. While Professor Lloyd argues in favor of having community learning as a "core element of the college curriculum," my research has the potential to contribute to the conversation by providing more insight into whether or not CLI courses are achieving the kind of impact on students that Professor Lloyd's argument assumes they are (2015, 13).

The teaching of civic engagement is an important responsibility for colleges and universities. Building upon the ideas of promoting democratic values and fulfilling an obligation to contribute back to society that Professor Lloyd explored in his article, former Harvard University President Derek Bok points to a need for colleges to engage in more citizenship building (2017). Bok argues that colleges and universities have an important role to play in the civic development of Americans, and yet, points to a dearth of requirements of courses that encourage this kind of growth at the undergraduate level (2017). Bok also contends that colleges should bridge the divide between the service opportunities that many college students seek out during their undergraduate years with and the civics learning that happens, or should happen, in the classroom since research is supportive that this combination does the most to encourage students to become actors in civic activities after college (2017). Bok's article supports the idea

that community learning courses like those offered at Trinity are effective in producing changes in students' perceptions of citizenship, and my research will go a step further to find out *what* about these experiences is constituting this change in belief or understanding.

Community learning as a responsibility of colleges and universities is another important thing to consider when weighing the importance of these types of experiences for undergraduates. A review compiled by The Chronicle of Higher Education entitled "The Neighborhood University" furthers this discussion on civics teaching and responsibility in colleges and universities (2017). In this review, five scholars on urban university campuses discuss their view of what responsibility their institutions owe to the cities in which they are placed. Some common themes in the short responses offered by these scholars are access and equality (The Chronicle Review, 2017). Not only is this article interesting in going towards understanding the sentiments of some actors involved in community learning and higher education, but it is also an interesting example of how qualitative data can supply a rich understanding of this topic, as well as further understanding towards which community involvement experiences are most meaningful and impactful for undergraduates.

Community learning is arguably particularly important in areas where there could be an observed divide between the college campus and the rest of the city. One can look to the 2010 report of Dr. James J. Hughes to understand the perceptions that prospective Trinity students have of Hartford. Covered in this report were questions including what does it mean to have an urban and/or global identity? Does the extent to which Trinity does or does not have this identity affect the students we attract? Is there evidence that this kind of focus has produced a different kind of student? (Hughes, 2010, 2) These are interesting questions, and they are pertinent to my own research into understanding how, if at all, community engagement impacts any initial

perceptions that Trinity students may come into their college experience with. Despite being from 2010, the data presented in Dr. Hughes report provides a snapshot of how prospective Trinity students view the College's urban identity. Included in this image of how prospective Trinity students view the College's Hartford location is the powerful, but perhaps not altogether startling fact that only one in four prospects of the College have a favorable opinion of the location of Hartford, and that 49% prospects said that they did not like the location (Hughes, 2010, 10). In fact, this report found that Hartford was a discouraging factor for prospective Trinity students at both the application and matriculation level (Hughes 2010, 11). Additionally, this report explored both internships and CLI courses and identified both evidence of their effects, as well as potential weaknesses in the programs (Hughes 2010, 12-16). Yet my study seeks to fill a hole that Hughes' study left unresolved. This data does not give any insight into the reasons for which students reached their conclusions and instead tells us only what their conclusions are. Dr. Hughes' data provides useful background, however my research goes beyond what these numbers can tell us and will explore how these initial perceptions of Hartford have or have not changed during Trinity juniors and seniors tenure at the College. Furthermore, my research will provide more qualitative information about these perceptions as well as the extent to which the undergraduate experiences of CLI courses and Hartford internships have impacted these perceptions.

Hartford has strong motivation for attracting young people to work and live in the city, which makes understanding their perceptions of Hartford increasingly meaningful compared to perhaps other college towns. While Dr. Hughes' report focuses on the perceptions of Trinity students, Hartford Courant columnist Dan Haar looks at the demographics and perceptions of Hartford more broadly, and explores the relationship that exists between millennials and the city

of Hartford in his October 2017 article, which provides an interesting accompaniment to the research I am conducting of Trinity students and their perceptions of Hartford (2017). Contained in this article are a number of interviews with young adults who have settled in Hartford or the surrounding metro area, about the things they value about the city, as well as the changes they would like to see. The importance of Haar's article comes through in his explanation of the population decline the Hartford area has experienced in recent years, largely due to the "exodus of young adults," and making it an outlier in the increasing population trends that other metro areas are experiencing (2017). Haar furthers that these demographics are of interest to employers, which suggests that research into the effects that Hartford centered CLI courses and internship opportunities could have for not only individual students, but also Hartford employers, and the city as a whole (2017). While Haar analyzes what Hartford and city planners and developers can be doing to make the area appeal more to young people, my research looks at whether there are undergraduate opportunities that can encourage college students to see the potential of settling in and working in Hartford, post-graduation.

There is convincing evidence in the current rhetoric on Trinity's campus that more needs to be done to educate and integrate students into the community. An anonymous editorial published in the October 2017 Trinity Tripod, a student run newspaper at the College, suggested that the hesitations about Trinity's location experienced by prospective students of the College uncovered in Dr. Hughes 2010 report, are not only still present now, almost a decade later, but are also experienced by current students. The editorial expressed the belief that Trinity College should implement a closed campus policy. Support for this argument was drawn from statistics about the levels of crime experienced in the city, and coverage of incidents on campus involving Trinity students and residents of the surrounding area. The ideas put forth in this article illustrate



the negative perceptions of Hartford that exist among students at Trinity College, and demonstrates a need to understand whether or not opportunities for community involvement are effective in encouraging more positive perceptions to develop.

#### **IV. Methodology:**

In order to build off of the existing literature and research into community engagement among college students, the data in this study was collected from interviews with Trinity juniors and seniors who had participated in either a CLI course, a Hartford internship, or both of these opportunities during their time at Trinity. Qualitative interviews allowed for students to describe their initial perceptions of Hartford as well as the ways in which their experiences in the community impacted, or did not impact, these perceptions which moves beyond what Hughes was able to conclude in his quantitative report . Interviews provide an important level of understanding to the question of *why* students feel the way that they do about Hartford, rather than just a statement of whether their feelings towards the city are positive or negative.

##### **A) Sample:**

In order to complete these interviews I required a list of juniors and seniors who had participated in CLI or Hartford based internships during their time at Trinity from which to draw my interview sample. For the cohort of CLI students, I decided to preselect the courses that I wanted to pull my sample from. The reason for this selection of certain CLI courses over others was an effort to equalize the experiences of students in Hartford internships and CLI courses in order to offer a better comparison. The courses I chose to pull my sample from were included because, based off of their course descriptions, they seemed to require a large amount of engagement with the city of Hartford, more specifically a physical presence rather than just a classroom component (See Appendix A). Since some CLI courses do not require an actual off

campus presence, they did not seem immersive as internship expectations that required students to go off campus. Here it is important to note that these course descriptions may not be the reality of what the course ended up requiring, but instead served as a guide to differentiating between which CLI courses contained the most Hartford focus and physical engagement. Additionally, different internships have different expectations for going off campus since some take place at a Hartford location while others can be completed from campus, however, this methodology was aimed at addressing at least some of these variances.

Next, I obtained this data from Trinity College's Career Development Center (CDC), the department through which students register their internships if they are receiving academic credit for them. The data I received from the CDC included students from classes other than 2018 and 2019, the current junior and senior classes that I was interested in studying, so I had to sort the data in order to narrow in on the students I wanted as a part of my sample. One limitation of the data I was provided is that it does not include students who have taken part in two of Trinity's part-time internship opportunities through the Legislative Internship Program at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, or the Health Fellows Program at Hartford hospital's since these programs are run separately from the CDC. I also consolidated the data to remove duplicates of students who had completed more than one Hartford internship through the CDC so that these students would only appear on my list for sampling once.

Once I had obtained both the list of students who completed CDC registered internships, and the students who had participated in one of the preselected CLI courses, I cross-referenced the two lists in order to identify students who had participated in both opportunities. These students were highlighted so that if they were chose in the sample for one of the opportunities, I they would not be contacted again. Additionally, I removed my peers from EDUC 400 from my

sample since all of them appeared on the CLI list because of their participation in EDUC 200 Analyzing Schools, a required Education Studies course, and many of them had also participated in internships. These students were removed because of the background knowledge they had about my project, as well as the familiarity they had with my research question and findings throughout the semester. I ended up with 199 students in CLI courses, and 75 students in internships. Of these students, 24 had completed both a CLI course and an internship. Once my sample was narrowed down through the processes described above, I assigned each participant a random number and sorted my lists by these numbers. This assigned the random order through which I would contact my participants by email. I tried to maintain a roughly equal number of participants between the internship and CLI cohorts so my contacts were issued accordingly. I emailed the students directly, and by the end of my data collection I had contacted eighteen CLI students and thirty-three internship students. My response rate for CLI students was 33% and about 24% for internship students. These response rates include the students who had participated in both a CLI course and a Hartford internship, and counts them as a part of whichever list they were randomly chosen from. A possible limitation of this study is that it does not consider variables such as gender, race, or hometown that could potentially impact the perceptions of students beyond their CLI or internship experience.

#### B) Interviews:

The interviews I conducted with my research participants consisted of four main concepts that I asked about, and I used follow up questions to explore more deeply into the responses provided by the participants. It is important to note that in my interviews I did not ask students about the specific CLI courses or internships that they participated in but rather asked them to tell me about what they had been enrolled in. This was significant because it means in some

cases, the CLI or Internship experiences that students talked about were not the ones that had necessarily made them apart of my sample. This is a deviation from my original methodology though it still does provide interesting and important insight to the experiences that they felt were most meaningful to them in terms of community involvement, engagement, and learning.

There were four main concepts in my interview guide. First, I asked about what the CLI/internship experience the student participated in was and what prompted them to seek out that experience. Next, I asked what the students initial perceptions of Hartford were when they began their time at Trinity and whether or not they saw those perceptions change as a result of their CLI/internship experience. Then, I asked whether or not they tend to venture into new places in Hartford. Finally, I asked students whether or not they would consider staying in Hartford after their graduation from Trinity. My interview guide (Appendix B) provided a template for the interviews, however since each student had different experiences, the interviews often became more conversational and the questions and follow up questions would change slightly depending on the student. I applied for and received IRB approval for my research. My interviews with participants were recorded and then transcribed for coding. Any identifiable information was removed from the transcripts and then lines of the interview were highlighted to identify frequent themes or ideas that occurred between the interviewed students. The names that appear in my paper are pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of the research participants.

## **V. Key Findings:**

### *Change in the perceptions or Hartford knowledge of CLI and internship students*

Both CLI and internship students identified their perceptions or at least knowledge of the city as being impacted by their academic involvement in the community through either their

course or their Hartford internship. 12 of the 14 students interviewed described that either their perceptions of Hartford changed as a result of their involvement in CLI or internships, or a change in their knowledge or appreciation of the city, especially if their perceptions were positive to begin with. This is a heartening because it suggests that on some level both CLI and Hartford internships are having an impact on Trinity students. Considering the many ways in which students differ, and the varying personal experiences and backgrounds that they come into Trinity with, the fact that most of them did see some kind of change or growth as a result of their experiences with CLI or internship provides convincing evidence that these are important programs for Trinity, and that efforts to understand them better are necessary. The existing variation in these impacts felt by students will be explored in further detail in this essay, and provide some valuable insights into the differences between the CLI and internship experiences.

#### *Familiarity with more of Hartford's neighborhoods*

Students who participated in CLI courses tended to be more familiar than Internship students with the neighborhood surrounding Trinity, and some were more likely to describe opportunities in Hartford as existing outside of the downtown area. An increased interest and familiarity with the neighborhood surrounding Trinity was something that was more common to see among CLI students than it was among students who had only participated in internships. Of the eight students who brought up this theme of familiarity or involvement with the city, beyond the downtown area, seven were students who had completed a CLI course.

Annie, a female CLI student who participated in multiple courses, expressed her early experience of gaining familiarity with Hartford by being present in the surrounding neighborhood as a part of her course. "I was walking to and from my school, which made me feel more comfortable with Hartford, and I had never lived in a city before college so that was

scary to me as a first semester freshman...And my interactions with the local people who live there were limited but once I got to the school some of the kids, I would see them walking around the next day, around Zion Street and they would say hi which was nice. It was cute to have those interactions.” Here Annie is defining her familiarity with Hartford as a exposure to the surrounding neighborhood, and not simply focusing on the attractions downtown. Later on describing her experiences in Hartford, Annie described all of the restaurants she has explored in the neighborhood surrounding Trinity as a result of the exposure her CLI course gave her,

One field trip I went on {as a part of a CLI course took} us to down Park Street, and...the Professor pointed out “oh this is a really good restaurant, this is a really good market,” so I was kind of intrigued by those so I went and explored those on my own time. And I wouldn’t have done that freshman year. Park Street was like a no go, or at least that’s what I had been told. Its nice being able to do that, and it’s super good tacos, like better than Bar Taco and like a quarter of the price and you’re just interacting with people that you would never get the chance to. And people in Hartford have a very interesting history, you know they’re immigrants or they have grown up here not speaking English, and their struggles are very interesting to learn about.

Annie again demonstrated a broader understanding and appreciation of Hartford that included the neighborhood surrounding Trinity, rather than differentiating between these areas and the downtown. Annie describes positive experiences through exploration of the neighborhoods around Trinity’s campus, and also describes the way that her immersion in the city through walking to her CLI placement was part of what encouraged these future independent experiences.

A positive impression of the greater city of Hartford, and familiarity with the neighborhoods around campus was echoed by Kristin, another CLI student. Kristin described the positive impact that her participation in an elementary school classroom through a CLI course had on her familiarity with the city as well as her impression that a hesitation to leave campus is common among many Trinity students, “These are communities that people live in,

and go to school in, and do everything in that people do everywhere, so I think that it kind of gets a bad reputation but there are definitely great spots and great things about it. I just don't think within Trinity's campus, because it's such a bubble that we actually get to see as many of the good parts as we should." Here Kristin expressed an understanding that Trinity is a part of a community that has things to offer students, and had experienced these communities and developed these appreciations, despite the fact that many of their own peers had not. This is significant because it signals a greater openness to the communities that Trinity is and is a sign of a more genuine connection with the city, and a fuller and more developed definition of Hartford.

CLI student Tucker, who described his CLI experience as being more impactful to expanding his knowledge of the city, rather than changing his already positive perceptions of Hartford, also shared his familiarity and appreciation for a Hartford that is greater than just the downtown area. Describing the sentiments Tucker perceived as being held by many of his classmates he commented, "And it's funny how big the disconnect is like you live inside this bubble that is in the middle of Hartford and you go to West Hartford to get food when there is perfectly, really good restaurants right down the street. Like that Cuban place is amazing." Tucker's level of comfort in Hartford was also evident through the way in which he categorized the neighborhood around Trinity. "I mean the surrounding area is not a bad place to live at all, there are some parts that are poorer than others but overall... it's not one of those things that because it is a bad part you don't go there. There are things there, there's a lot of people there, there's a lot of experiences there." Tucker acknowledges a disconnect between Trinity and the surrounding neighborhoods but shares a personal account of feeling comfortable

in the neighborhood that Trinity is in, as well as seeing the neighborhood as being a place that has a lot to offer students.

Conversely, only one internship student described involvement or familiarity with the neighborhood around Trinity and among some of the other students was a divide between the opportunities of downtown and other Hartford neighborhoods. One example of these sentiments was expressed by male internship student Anthony who described the difference between driving around Trinity's campus and the around the downtown area of the city. "I guess kind of just driving on to campus from the highway, obviously not the best stretch of Hartford. Because this is the thing, when I go downtown it looks like other cities. It's very nice, it's clean, all the people look like they would in another city. But it's definitely very different right around campus." Though Anthony shared that he had never felt unsafe around campus during his interview, this perception of a divide between downtown and the rest of the city does come through in his description of a 'nice' 'clean' downtown and a 'very different' area surrounding campus. Although not strong enough to be constituted as a theme or a perception that can be generalized or characterized as applying to specifically CLI or internship students, the descriptions of Hartford shared by some students do illustrate a realistic impression that only being exposed to the downtown area of Hartford could lead to. This suggests that there is a benefit to engaging students throughout the city of Hartford and teaching them to appreciate an even more encompassing view of the city, which based off this research CLI may be more successful in doing.

An additional consideration to keep in mind when assessing this theme is that although CLI students expressed a greater level of interest and familiarity with the Hartford, beyond the offerings of downtown, it should be noted their appreciation and understanding of the



surrounding neighborhood cannot in all cases be attributed solely to their involvement in CLI. Ben, a CLI student, spoke positively about Hartford provided an interesting description of his experiences of being intrigued by learning about Hartford and wanting to learn more about it, while still not getting to explore parts of the city besides those downtown. Ben expressed the appreciation he has for the history of Hartford and his desire to experience “the full scope...of what the city has to offer.” Ben shared that he participated in a pre-orientation program when first arriving at Trinity, which he attributes to his early exposure to the city “We went around to the immediate surroundings and then also to the Mark Twain House, Park St, Main St, Capitol Building, all of the sites as it were. So that was great, I had positive feelings about the city of Hartford when I came.” Ben acknowledged the issue that existed among Trinity students and their hesitance to explore the areas that surround them and suggested that there were ways in which students could foster their own edification of the city, “Hartford has a lot more to offer than one would anticipate and I’d say the stereotype that it feels like the majority of Trinity students have a very decrepit view of Hartford is gravely misunderstood. And I am under the impression that if Trinity students had the opportunity to be more involved with the Hartford community, through Bantam Beginnings or though traveling around, because there are some really beautiful historic buildings...So while this course didn’t blow my mind as it were, it just extended the view that I have that Hartford is pretty incredible.” Although Ben does not attribute all of his openness and familiarity with the city to his participation in a CLI course he did express that it added to an appreciation that he had already begun to foster.

Tucker’s experience in a CLI course also contributes to this potential for selection bias in the types of students who are drawn the CLI opportunities. Like Ben, Tucker does not attribute CLI as the cause of changing his perceptions of Hartford because he shared that he came in with

a positive idea of Hartford. “Because my perception of Hartford was just that, you know, ‘it’s a place, it’s just like any other place, it’s got good parts, it’s got bad parts’ and one of the things that the class really taught us was how redlining kind of separated communities and how some communities were just kind of like left...I didn’t learn anything that changed my perceptions but I learned a lot that taught me about Hartford.” The experiences of these students suggest that perhaps CLI attracts students who are more open to exploring all that Hartford has to offer, and immersing themselves into the city. However, the experience of Annie, as well as others, suggests that for some CLI is responsible for this involvement in the surrounding neighborhood.

There is also evidence that both CLI and internships have the ability to make some students feel more comfortable and safe in Hartford. Three students described their CLI or internship involvement as positively impacting their feelings of safety in Hartford, and of these students one was from a CLI course, one was from a Hartford internship, and one had participated in both CLI and an internship but attributed this change in his perception to the experience of his internship. Max, who completed an internship downtown, described how the experience of having to walk back to campus some nights after work lead to him feeling safer in Hartford. “There was only one route I would walk down...but I thought but I felt fine doing that, I was aware walking around, but I felt safe doing that. So I guess in a way my perceptions have changed. I still wouldn’t walk down Broad Street like for example... but I feel safe around here.” Though he also participated in a CLI course, Max described this experience as being what impacted his sense of comfort around the neighborhood of Trinity’s campus. CLI student Annie and internship participant Nellie described similar experiences to Max, which suggests that both CLI and internships have the potential to positively impact student’s feelings of safety in Hartford, even if CLI students tend to express more involvement with a greater part of the city.

*CLI students had a greater sense of the historic and current issues facing Hartford*

Students in CLI courses were more likely than students in Hartford internships to bring up the causes of the some of the economic and social conditions present in Hartford or the history of the city. This was not a question that was directly asked in the interviews, but instead the students considered here brought up either the history of Hartford, or current issues facing the city. This demonstrates a deeper knowledge of the city, beyond experiences in Hartford.

Kristin, a CLI student, shared her belief that Trinity students are not exposed to enough of Hartford's history or story. "I think people tend to only see the negatives, or the negative is what sticks out to them so they don't see that we are also in a capital city, we're also in a very historic city, that has so much more history behind it than I ever realized. Even {this year} I am just starting to learn about the way way back history of all these monuments and the reasoning. But we're really not taught that unless you take certain classes at Trinity, and I think that's definitely a big issue in that a lot of students would leave this campus without knowing the historic meaning behind Hartford and how it came to be." Kristin's sentiments reflect an appreciation for the city on a deeper level than just taking advantage of the opportunities in the city, and instead spoke to the importance of learning about the city. Kristin also shared that her experience of working with kids through her CLI course helped her gain appreciation not only for the fact that they are living their lives every day in these neighborhoods, but also made the issues facing the city "more real because they are living through this." This statement provides commentary on the current issues facing the city of Hartford, which Kristin better appreciated because of her involvement with CLI.

Sydney, a female student, described the way in which the curriculum of the CLI course complimented deeper learning about the history of Hartford. Sydney, who has participated in both a CLI course and a Hartford internship, had the opportunity to complete an additional internship placement in Hartford as a part of her CLI course. “So how to engage the community, how to get people to love where they live, love the people around them, wanna put in time to make their community better, which is so hard to do, so it was like skills how to build that up, specific people you can hire to bring into these organizations and bring up- especially in Hartford because we talked about its history and how it used to be thriving and now it might have dropped off a bit.” Through her CLI course, Sydney learned about the ways in which community organizations respond to the needs of Hartford, contextualized by its history. These experiences highlight the way in which involvement in Hartford, particularly through CLI has the effect of deepening the understanding of Hartford for the students who participated in them.

Only one of the five internship students (excluding those who were in both the CLI and internship groups) brought up understanding of the historical or current issues present in Hartford. Susan, a student who had completed multiple internships, including one that was a part of a CLI course that was not sampled in this study, described the importance she saw in being exposed to the neighborhoods around Trinity, as well as the history of these neighborhoods. Additionally, Susan’s internship experiences were in different parts of the city so her exposure was perhaps more diverse than others.

#### *Limited Personal and Professional Opportunity in Hartford*

Despite the observed differences between students in CLI courses and students in Hartford internships, an important similarity between the two groups was a shared concern about limited future opportunity in Hartford. Students from both CLI and Hartford internships

expressed the belief that Hartford is lacking in either professional opportunities for post-undergraduates or that there will not be enough young people to make Hartford a fun and vibrant enough city to live in once life and Trinity is done. Additionally, another commonality between many of these students was their tendency to compare living in Hartford against living in New York City or Boston, and finding it less desirable. Of the 14 students interviewed, 12 expressed some amount of concern over the opportunities for professional opportunities, personal opportunities or both when considering whether or not they would stay in Hartford after graduating.

Trinity students in both CLI and internships shared a concern for the professional opportunities that would be available, were they to stay in Hartford after graduating from Trinity. CLI student Tucker, described that while he saw Hartford as having opportunity, it did not have the particular field he was looking for. “Um, that really depends, yeah that really depends on what I would be doing. Um I’m a {double major}...and there’s not a lot of {industry relating to major} in Hartford which is one of the things I really want to do. But there is definitely a lot of {opportunities relating to other major}, so if it turned out that there was a great {omitted} job around here that I could kind of partake in, I would be down to stay in Hartford... Yeah, it’s definitely more about opportunities.”

Similarly, CLI student Paul offered an even stronger perception that Hartford did not offer the opportunities for professional growth, “{College graduates} want like options, they want like opportunity and there isn’t too much of that in Hartford. There isn’t none, but there’s not enough probably for me to stay in Hartford I guess.” When asked what he meant by opportunity, Paul responded, “Diversity of jobs I guess, coming out of college. Um yeah I mean like safe affordable housing is another one.”

Susan, a student who has participated in multiple Hartford internships during her time at Trinity expressed a complete openness to staying in Hartford but continued on to share that she was not sure that the professional opportunities she hoped for would be available to her, “I definitely would consider staying here, depends on what I am going to be doing, so for me it isn’t much of... where I prefer to stay, I think it’s more if I can find work.” When asked whether she thought Hartford would have those professional opportunities for her, Susan replied that she did not think the city would in the field she is interested in, citing that Hartford is a “less modernized” and does not seem to have the industries that Susan is hoping to work in.

There were also comparisons made between Hartford and more metropolitan areas such as Boston and New York. Anthony, who participated in a Hartford internship explained, “It’s kind of like, it kind of makes it seem like it’s a dead end, like you would kind of plateau here, there wasn’t too much room for growth. You’d do well, you could do alright but there was a threshold and you could jump way above that threshold if you were in a bigger city.” Anthony saw the opportunity for jobs in Hartford, but not for the growth that Boston or New York would offer him in a given field. The perception of a professional “threshold” described by Anthony reflects the perception of Hartford as a place with limited potential, despite the internship opportunities that were available there during college.

Despite this theme of concern over professional opportunities in Hartford, even more common among students from both CLI and Hartford internships was a concern over the personal opportunities they would have available to them in Hartford, post-graduation from Trinity. Tara, a student who enjoyed participating in a CLI course during her time at Trinity and sees a future in the medical field, shared that while she believes Hartford does have the professional opportunities she is looking for, personal opportunities may be lacking. “I would

{consider staying in Hartford} because that is an opportunity for me there. But if that weren't there, I don't know if I would, just because um I might be more apt to go to a bigger city."

When asked if she meant there was not much of a draw to staying in Hartford save the professional, Tara explained that if it were not for the jobs she believed existed in Hartford she would not be interested in staying, "I think I would rather go to a city like Boston, where there is more nightlife, and more young people, but I would definitely say there is professional opportunity."

These sentiments of Hartford lacking personal opportunity were mirrored by CLI student Kristin who feared that the personal opportunities would be lacking if she were to stay in Hartford because her friends would be drawn to bigger cities,

I really have loved going to school here and seeing the city. And I really do appreciate the history and everything behind it, but I feel like it's kind of like a downward cycle, like no ones staying here currently, so no one wants to stay here, and no one will stay in the future. Um, I remember I was here, I want to say late August or something, and I was going out to dinner and it was like 6 o'clock, beautiful beautiful night, and the roads were empty, no cars, no people. And then I was in Boston... and it would be the complete opposite. So nothing really deters me from Hartford except other than there's not many people here.

Kristin's description of what 'deters' her from Hartford gives further clarity to what she means as a 'downward cycle' in Hartford.

Concern over the personal opportunities that would be available in Hartford after graduating from Trinity were enough to convince one student to forgo a professional opportunity in the city. Max, who participated in both a CLI course and an internship shared that despite being offered a job at the place he interned for during his time at Trinity he turned down the offer in part due to concerns he had about staying in Hartford. "Being in a city where there is not a lot, in my opinion, to do massively without the friends I've been used to would be tough," Max shared, "I think I could easily go to a new Hartford, a similar kind of city, and move there and be

meeting new friends. But I think being in this environment without these people would be tough. So I wouldn't be 100% against it, but it is a reason why I have turned down this thing recently."

The perception that Hartford was lacking in opportunities for young people was not the only issue held by many of these students, and the idea that other young people were not staying, as a part of the "downward cycle" described by Kristin, was a concern that some students voiced.

The concerns over opportunity, both professional and personal, described by Trinity students echoes the sentiments Haar reported on in his article about the experiences of millennials in Hartford (2017). Harr identifies themes he identified Hartford millennials as wanting. "People see needs that align with their interests, whether the lens is arts and entertainment, technology innovation, neighborhood development, fun events, employment or... transit" (2017). Trinity students joined in this desire for more from the city.

#### *Transportation as a common "need" among Trinity CLI and internship students*

Transportation was an issue identified by Haar as a "need" that millennials in Hartford have, and it is one shared by Trinity students from both CLI and internships (2017). Six students, two from CLI and three from Hartford internships and one who participated in both opportunities, identified transportation as something they had struggled with. Ben, a student who participated in a CLI course with a community placement in downtown Hartford, described the problem that transportation posed for him in his first semesters on campus. "Being unable to have my own bike or my own car and just go downtown to check things out for myself meant that I was limited essentially by what my activities allowed me to partake in." Ben went on to explain that in addition to the constraints placed on him by a lack of transportation, he also felt that his peers lack of interest in a Hartford involvement also served as a deterrent to more interaction with Hartford. Ben's combining of these two factors suggests that if there were more



accessible options for students in terms of transportation, more students would be active off of campus, and could perhaps contribute to a chain reaction of sorts where more students were immersed in the Hartford community earlier in their college careers since their friends and peers were as well.

Lack of transportation options is likely to be particularly impactful for lower-year students. Max, who participated in both CLI and a internship described the challenge of not having ways to get off of campus as a first year student. “When I go off campus’ and for me, not having a car here, I felt trapped almost sometimes. I would go two or three weeks, never leaving campus... Being stuck in this closed environment...is interesting because you just couldn’t walk off anywhere unless you were catching a bus.” Max shared that this challenge has been alleviated as an upper-year student when more friends on campus had cars. Max described how his impressions as a first-year student of Hartford as a place he needed “to be careful” in, combined with limited opportunities for transportation off of campus contributed to his feeling of being trapped. The experiences of Ben and Max suggest that Trinity students need more options, or at the very least more instruction and support about accessing transportation to different destinations around the city so that students feel comfortable and empowered to explore early on in their Trinity careers.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Based on fourteen interviews I conducted with Trinity juniors and seniors, both CLI students and students involved in Hartford internships saw their perceptions of Hartford change as a result of their involvement with the city through their class or internship, though there are differences in the ways in which the students described these perceptions which suggests differences between the CLI and internship experiences. Finally, I found that despite these

differences in the way students' perceptions changed both CLI students and students who participated in internships were hesitant about the opportunities that would be available for them in Hartford after their graduation from Trinity. This research builds off of existing scholarship on the goals of civic engagement, and also provides an interesting dimension to the research of Dr. Hughes (2010), as it is evident that most students gained a greater appreciation for Hartford through their time at Trinity, even if it was in different respects, or to different extents.

Understanding the ways in which Trinity's opportunities for academic involvement in the city of Hartford impact Trinity students is a worthwhile venture as the school continues to consider ways to strengthen its relationship with Hartford through different programs and developments. Additionally, this research finds evidence which suggests there are ways in which students are gaining an appreciation for Hartford through involvements outside of CLI and internships. Future research into these additional experiences, and how they can be made more accessible to Trinity students from the moment they step on campus, will be an important future endeavor for the college to undertake.

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## Appendix A: List of CLI Courses

Course Code	Course Name	Semester	Professor	Course Description
AHIS-227-01	Public Art	Spring 2017	Alden Gordon	Art as part of public spaces or incorporated into architecture has been integral to artistic practice and civic patronage from antiquity to the present. This digital humanities course will give students the chance to create written, visual and interactive content while learning the history of art in public places from antiquity to the present. Students will curate tours and other digital features for a web catalog of public art and gain field experience working with Greater Hartford NGOs, Museums and Government.
CLIC-400-01	Community Lrng Research Coll.	Fall 2016	David Reuman	
ECON-331-56	Social Mobility & Immigrnt Exp	Spring 2016	Carol Clark	This course will explore questions of social and economic mobility in historical perspective with special emphasis on the immigrant experience in Hartford, past and present. Topics will include the role of social capital, education, and labor market opportunities in understanding the dynamics of mobility. The course will open with an examination of the 19th century immigration of the Irish and Italians. The second half of the course will turn to more recent research on immigrant mobility, and will include the opportunity to conduct original fieldwork with local immigrant groups. Students will have firsthand experience in developing a research design, conducting interviews, and presenting the results of their own research.
ECON-431-56	Social Mobility & Immigrnt Exp	Spring 2017	Carol Clark	This course will explore questions of social and economic mobility in historical perspective with special emphasis on the immigrant experience in Hartford, past and present. Topics will include the role of social capital, education, and labor market opportunities in understanding the dynamics of mobility. The course will open with an examination of the 19th century immigration of the Irish and Italians. The second half of the course will turn to more recent research on immigrant mobility, and will include the opportunity to conduct original fieldwork with local immigrant groups. Students will have firsthand experience in developing a research

				design, conducting interviews, and presenting the results of their own research.
EDUC-200-01	Analyzing Schools	Spring 2017, Spring 2016, Fall 2014	Andrea Dyrness	This course introduces the study of schooling within an interdisciplinary framework. Drawing upon sociology, we investigate the resources, structures, and social contexts which influence student opportunities and outcomes in the United States and other countries. Drawing upon psychology, we contrast theories of learning, both in the abstract and in practice. Drawing upon philosophy, we examine competing educational goals and their underlying assumptions regarding human nature, justice, and democracy. In addition, a community learning component, where students observe and participate in nearby K-12 classrooms for three hours per week, will be integrated with course readings and written assignments.
EDUC-200-01	Analyzing Schools	Fall 2016, Fall 2015	Jack Dougherty	"
EDUC-200-01	Analyzing Schools	Spring 2015, Fall 2014	Rachel Leventhal-Weiner	"
EDUC-200-02	Analyzing Schools	Fall 2015	Tracey Wilson	"
EDUC-307-01	Latinos in Ed: Local Realities	Spring 2016, Spring 2015	Andrea Dyrness	This course investigates the education of Latinos, the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States. By examining both the domestic and transnational contexts, we explore these central questions: How do cultural constructions of Latinos (as immigrants and natives, citizens and non-citizens) shape educational policy and teaching practices? What views of citizenship and identity underlie school programs such as bilingual education, as well as Latino responses to them? This course fulfills the related field requirement for Hispanic studies majors. It will also include a community learning component involving a qualitative research project in a Hartford school or community organization.

EDUC-308-01	Cities, Schools, and Suburbs	Spring 2016	Jack Dougherty	How did city dwellers' dreams of better schooling, along with public policy decisions in housing and transportation, contribute to the rise of suburbia in the 20th century? How do city-suburban disparities affect teaching and learning in classrooms today? What promise do Sheff v O'Neill remedies for racial isolation, such as magnet schools at the Learning Corridor, hold for the future? Students will investigate these questions while developing their skills in oral history, ethnographic fieldwork, and geographical information system (GIS) software. Community learning experiences will be integrated with seminar readings and research projects.
EDUC-350-01	Teaching and Learning	Spring 2015	Robert Cotto, Jr.	This seminar will explore theoretical, policy, and practical issues of teaching and learning. Who should teach in public schools, and what kind of preparation is necessary? What type of curriculum should be taught, and how do different interest groups shape that decision? How should we assess the quality of student learning? Finally, how do debates on all of these questions influence the nature of teachers' work and classroom life? For the community learning component, students will design, teach, and evaluate curricular units in cooperation with neighborhood schools and after school programs.
ENVS-149-01	Intro to Environmental Science	Spring 2016	Christoph Geiss	An introduction to interrelationships among the natural environment, humans, and the human environment, including the biological, social, economic, technological, and political aspects of current environmental challenges. This course focuses on building the scientific framework necessary to understand environmental issues. It explores the structure, function, and dynamics of ecosystems, interactions between living and physical systems, and how human enterprise affects natural systems. It also examines current issues regarding human impacts on environmental quality, including global warming, air and water pollution, agriculture, overpopulation, energy, and urbanization. The laboratory section, which complements lecture material, incorporates laboratory and field exercises that include a focus on Hartford and a nearby rural area.

HISP-280-01	Hispanic Hartford	Spring 2017/2016, Spring 2015	Aidali Aponte-Aviles, Ingrid Robyn	This course seeks to place Trinity students in active and informed dialogue with the Hartford region's large and diverse set of Spanish-speaking communities. The course will help student recognize and analyze the distinct national histories (e.g. Peruvian, Puerto Rican, Chilean, Honduran, Cuban, Colombian, and Mexican) which have contributed to the Hispanic diaspora in the city and the entire northeastern region of the United States. Students will undertake field projects designed to look at the effects of transnational migration on urban culture, institution-building, and identity formation. (Also offered under the Latin American and Caribbean studies concentration of the International Studies Program.)
HRST-348-01	New Beginnings	Fall 2016	Judy Dworin	In this seminar, we will investigate the application of the arts to populations with a focus on, but not limited to, urban youth at risk; those incarcerated; families affected by incarceration; and victims of crime. We will look at the role the arts and restorative justice play in a healing and rehabilitative process with these populations, analyzing the mission, goals, action steps, and results through research and hands-on experience. In conjunction with two Hartford-based nonprofit organizations, students will do a significant fieldwork project, entitled New Beginnings, that will include research, participation, and analysis.
HRST-348-01	Arts and Special Populations	Fall 2015	Judy Dworin, Sarah Anthony	In this seminar, we will investigate the application of the arts to special populations with a focus on, but not limited to, urban youth at risk; the incarcerated and families affected by incarceration; and victims of crime. We will look at the role the arts play in a healing and rehabilitative process with these populations, analyzing the mission, goals, action steps, and results through research and hands-on experience. Students will do a significant fieldwork project in the city of Hartford in connection and collaboration with a nonprofit organization that will include research, observation, and analysis.
INTS-250-20	Hartford Global Migration Lab	Spring 2017, Fall 2014	Janet Bauer	Optional Community Learning Component integrated with INTS249: Immigrants and Refugees and INTS250: Global Migration to provide field-based, participatory research experience with community partners on the consequences of global migration in the greater Hartford area.

PBPL-351-01	Diversity in the City	Spring 2017	Abigail Williamson	Drawing on literature related to federalism, urban politics, and state and local policy, this course will examine how cities have responded to diverse newcomers, from the early twentieth century's machine politics, through the Great Migration of African-Americans to northern cities, to the dispersion of new immigrant populations since the late 1980s. Using this historical perspective, we will consider how local policies shape processes of social and political incorporation, as well as how the presence of newcomers shapes the on-going development of local policies. The course will incorporate case studies of policy decision-making, devoting particular attention to the city of Hartford.
RHET-225-01	Wrtg "Broad St" Stories	Fall 2015	Robert Peltier	This course combines community learning and writing as a means of discovering how we define others and ourselves through journals, diaries, essays, and stories. Students explore Broad Street as a social and cultural metaphor, with a wide variety of readings depicting "the other" and reflecting the voices of members of underprivileged and privileged classes throughout history. Students perform community service as a part of course activities.
THDN-270-01	Arts in Action: Community	Spring 2017	Jennifer Roberts	In this course we will examine the way the arts in general and movement in particular both engage a community and are engaged in the community. Using Hartford and the region as a field for our inquiry, we will look at the role the arts play in contributing to the overall health of a community with a particular focus on schools for at-risk youth, correctional institutions, homes for the elderly, specialized magnet schools, after-school programming and performance that utilizes the community as a generative resource. In addition to readings, films, guest speakers and discussions, there will be applied observation and study in the city of Hartford and beyond.
URST-206-01	Organizing by Neighborhood	Fall 2016, Fall 2015, Fall 2014	Alta Lash	Have you ever wondered why some neighborhoods thrive and others appear to fail? Are you mystified about what can be done to stem deterioration and provide decent, affordable housing and clean and safe neighborhoods? One way to explore answers to these questions is to intern with a community-based organization dedicated to working with a community as it defines and responds to its problems. In this seminar each student will do a community learning project/ internship at such an organization in



				Hartford. Equally important is a way to understand and interpret your experiences at the organization. The rich theoretical literature that you will read in this seminar on how neighborhoods are organized and function and on models of community responses to neighborhood conditions provides a lens through which to evaluate your experiences with your organization and community.
URST-301-01	Community Developmnt Strategies	Spring 2017, Spring 2016/2015	Emily Cummins, Melvyn Colon	In this course we will explore the causes of neighborhood decline, examine the history, current practice and guiding policies of community development, and see firsthand selected community development strategies at work in the local communities surrounding Trinity College. We will pay close attention to the influence of ideas in good currency in the field of urban development such as smart growth, transit oriented development, land-banking and place-making. The course is organized around four questions: What are the underlying forces behind neighborhood decline? How and why did community development emerge? How has community development practice reconciled itself with current concepts that guide urban development such as new urbanism, smart growth, place-making and land-banking. What does the future hold for disinvested communities and for community development practice?
URST-320-01	Urban Research Practicum	Fall 2016	Garth Meyers	This research seminar is designed to prepare students for conducting urban research, in Hartford or in any city. The course will include an in-depth survey of methods and approaches in the field. Students will develop research proposals and conduct research projects for term papers. The seminar is geared both for seniors working to produce honors theses and urban studies majors and minors planning on conducting independent study projects. The aim is to foster skill development and enhance training in research methodologies and techniques, including projects with applied components, community learning connections, and/or pure research endeavors.
THDN-332-01	Education Through Movement	Spring 2015	Kathy Gersten	In this course, students will examine the philosophical and theoretical foundations of arts education in general and movement education in particular. Students will participate in a semester-long movement/arts residency program in a Hartford elementary school with professional artists from the

				community. This project, which culminates in a large-scale performance piece with the children, gives students an on-site experience of how movement is integrated into an existing public school curriculum. Also listed under educational studies.
FYSM-116-01	Civiliz, Culture & Conservat	Fall 2014	Joan Morrison	Throughout our existence, humans have relied on nature and natural resources to sustain our societies. Yet as the human population continues to expand, our collective ecological footprint is causing changes of unprecedented scope and magnitude to the natural world on which we depend. How can humans live more sustainably with the natural world? This seminar will examine interrelationships among humans and the planet's biodiversity by exploring topics in biology, history, economics, energy, and agriculture. We will also explore aspects of our culture that have influenced ways in which we perceive and interact with our environment. Seminar activities will include readings, group discussions, written assignments, off-campus field trips, community involvement and student presentations.
FYSM-157-01	CyclingSustainabil ity&Hartford	Fall 2014	Dario Del Puppò	In this course, we will examine the history and culture of cycling and its role in creating smart and sustainable cities. Cycling is also an integral part of the modern history of Hartford, the U.S. capital of bicycle production from 1880-1910. Using Hartford as a case in point, we will consider how cycling can positively affect transportation and contribute significantly to our quality of life. Students will explore Greater Hartford by bicycle and undertake an extra .5 credit internship or project dealing with some aspect of cycling culture in the city and/or with area organizations. The aim of the course is to engender creative and critical thinking about these issues, while introducing students to important cultural institutions and the many opportunities that the city of Hartford offers. Students who want to enroll in this seminar must be comfortable riding a bicycle in an urban setting. Also, students must bring their own bicycle or arrange for a bicycle when they arrive on campus. .

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

- *Thank you for making the time to talk to me about your experiences with Hartford during your time at Trinity.*
- *All the questions I am going to ask you are optional and we can stop at any time.*
- *As I mentioned in my email to you this interview will be anonymous but I would like to record it for the purposes of my research. Is it alright with you if I record our interview?*
  - *{If YES,} please verbally consent to being interviewed and recorded for this interview with the knowledge that your name or other identifiable information will not be shared.*
  - *{If NO, end the interview.}*

1) I am sitting down with you today because I understand that you have participated in a Hartford internship or CLI course. Tell me more about that....

- What prompted you to seek out an internship/CLI course?
- Can you tell me about what that experience was like?
- When was the first time you went into Hartford for an internship or CLI course?

2) What were your impressions of Hartford before you did that CLI course or Hartford Internship?

- Did your impressions change since the internship or class?
- If so, why?

3) Do you venture out to new places in Hartford or stay largely in the same areas?

- Why?
- Tell me more about that
- Has that changed as a result of your CLI/Internship experience?

4) Would you consider staying in Hartford after your graduation from Trinity?

- Why or why not?