

Examining Civic Mobility in the Heartland

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Background and Literature

Background

- **Civic Equity:** Opportunities for young people to observe, participate in, and learn about civic engagement are not equally distributed (de Vries, Kim, & Han, 2023).
- **Democratic Engagement:** Young people engage with and are affected by problems in democracy and the problems of democracy (CIRCLE, 2024).
- **Ecological Systems:** Interactions between developing persons and environmental contexts endure over certain periods of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Civic Mobility

- **Civic** describes the access to and opportunities for young people to observe, participate in, and learn about civic life.
- **Mobility** is measured by the upward or downward movement within a civic ecosystem over time.

Research Questions

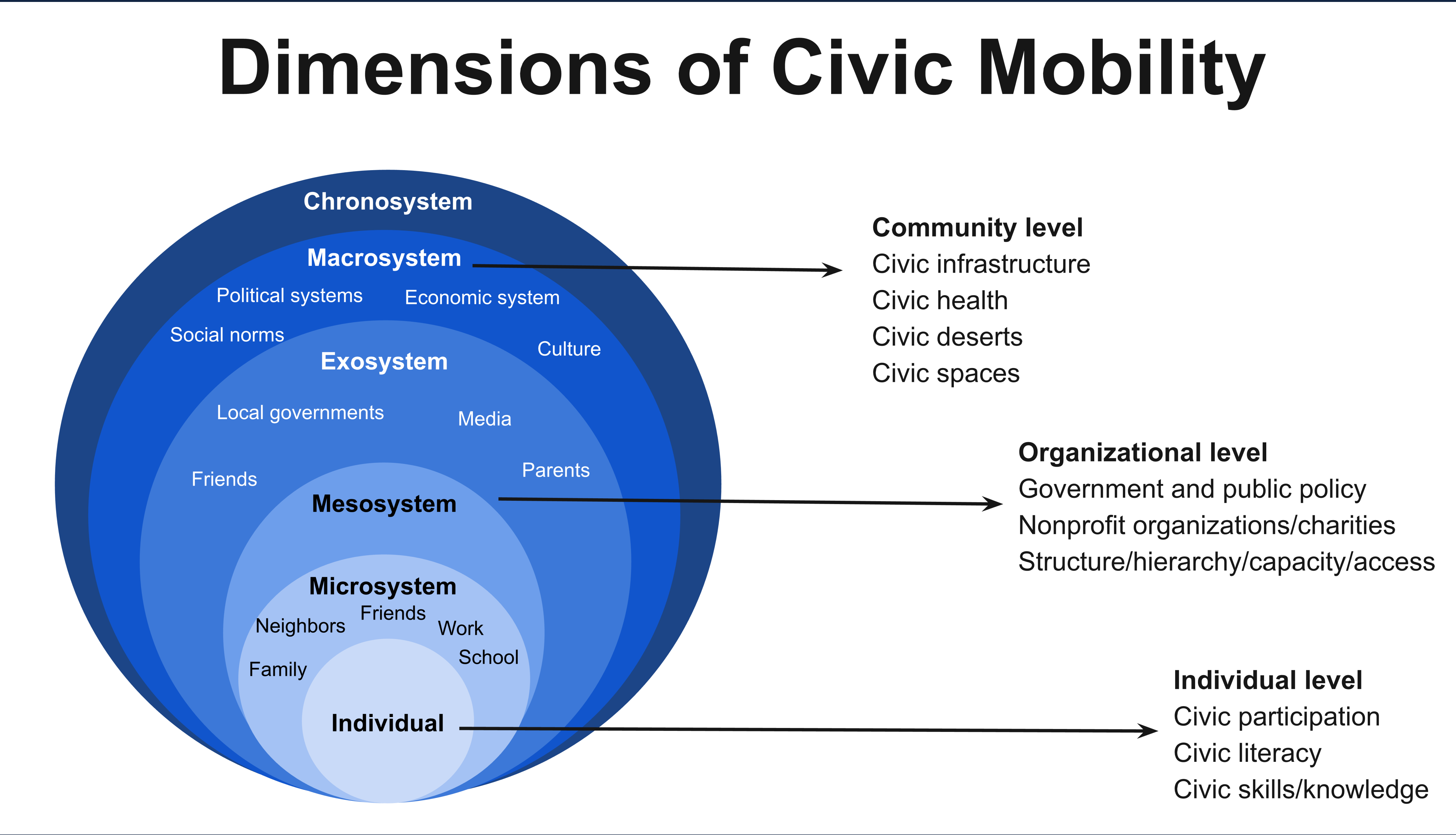
Overarching Research Question: How do young people experience civic mobility?

Additional research questions include:

- How does **access to civic opportunities** influence civic mobility for young people?
- How do young people **observe, participate in, and learn about** civic engagement?
- What types of **institutions, organizations, structures, processes, and networks** make up the **civic ecosystems** of young people?



Civic mobility is the ability of a young person to improve their civic status over time.



For more information, contact Jodi Benenson, Principal Investigator, at jbenenson@unomaha.edu.

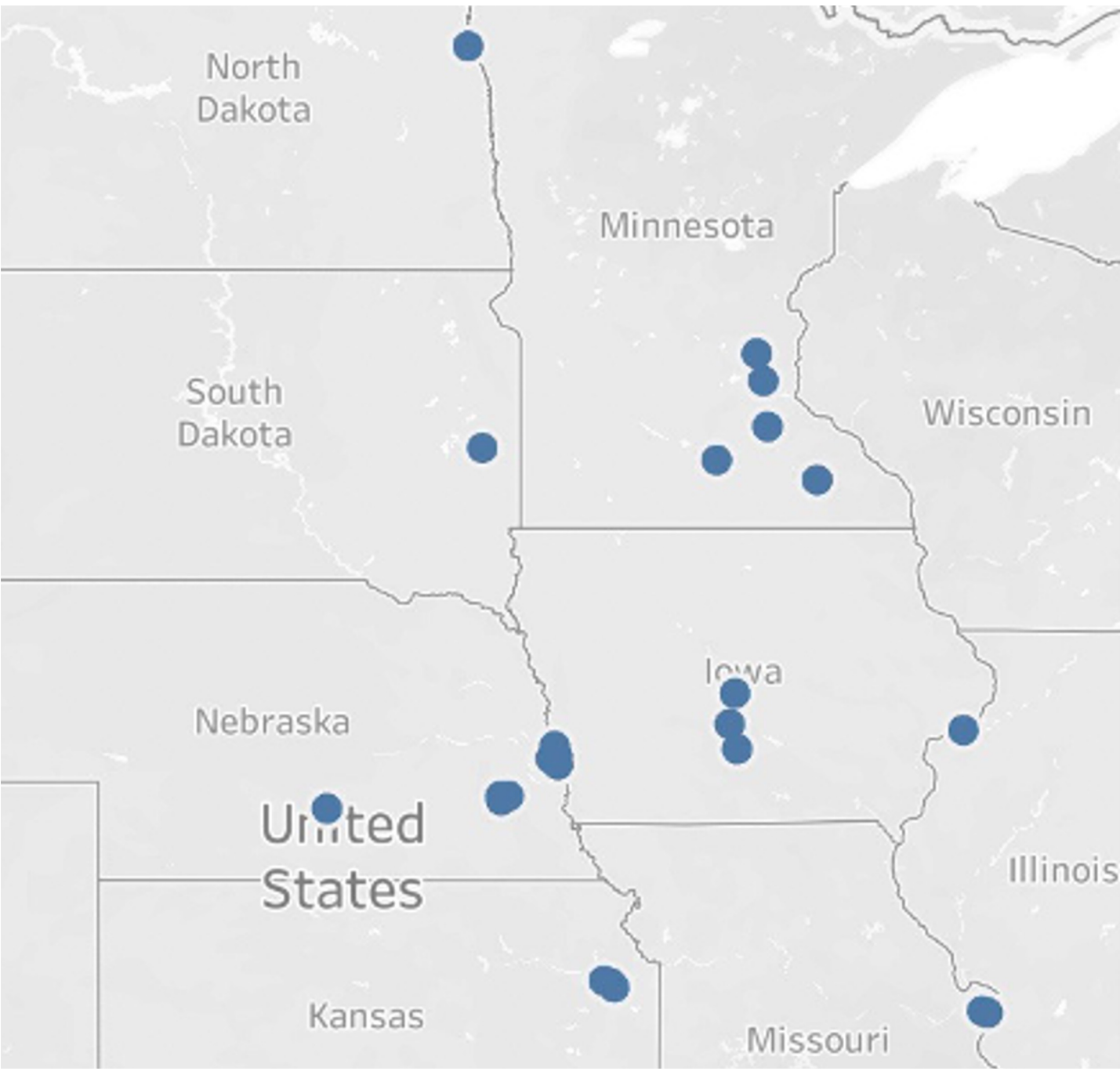
Scan to learn more about this research.



Research Design and Data

- **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR):** Research team members ages 18-25 co-created research questions, designed and piloted a survey and an interview protocol, recruited participants, conducted interviews, and analyzed data.
- **Study Sample:** Includes young people (N=200) ages 18-25 living in the Heartland of the U.S.

Study Region



- **Data Collection:** Conducted surveys and semi-structured Zoom interviews in 2023 and 2024.
- **Data Analysis:** Used Atlas.ti web to conduct thematic analysis.

Implications for Research and Action

- **Implications for Research:** The civic mobility framework can uncover long-term patterns about the ways civic inequities may influence the life chances and civic ecosystems of young people.
- **Implications for Action:** Achieving upward civic mobility encompasses three dimensions: **civic access** (increased access to civic opportunities), **civic value** (feeling the respect, dignity, and sense of belonging that comes from civic engagement), and **civic power** (the ability for young people to influence larger policies and actions that affect their future).