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Civic and Political Engagement of Young College Graduates: Memberships, Voting,

Social Trust, and Online Participation

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Abstract: American political and civic engagement was examined by life stage and educational attainment levels in 2008 political data. Engaged proportions of older Americans were larger than young Americans for Memberships, Voting, and Social Trust. A larger proportion of Young Adults (23%) than Older Adults (19%), however, was found for Online Participation (x^2=8.25, p=.02). College Degree proportions were larger than No Degree proportions for all measures. Gaps between Older College Graduates and Young College Graduates were smaller than gaps between Older Adults and Young Adults for Memberships and Social Trust. The strong, inverse association between Young Adults and Voting (*b*= -1.11) was weakened with the product predictor Young College Graduates (*b*= -1.07). Online Participation and Young College Graduates (*b*=.605) was the only positive correlation with ages 18-29 years. Evidence to support notions of *new* politics and a *techno-deterministic* transformation of political engagement (Calenda & Meijer, 2009) was found in American data.

Key words: Values, civic involvement, political engagement, life stage, post-secondary attainment, online participation

Civic and Political Engagement of Young College Graduates: Memberships, Voting,

Social Trust, and Online Participation

Declining civic and political engagement is troubling for a thriving democratic society. The tapestry of American community life is bound by the civic and political beliefs and behaviors of citizens. In *The Strange Disappearance of Civic America*, Putnam (1996) observed widespread decreases in trusting and joining. Declines in American civic values and behaviors cut across ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographical boundaries (Putnam, 1996). A 25 to 50 percent decline in group memberships between the 1960's and 1990's, such as drops in those joining Parent Teacher Associations, the American Red Cross, labor unions, and bowling leagues (Putnam, 1996), signaled a fraying of American social connectedness. Another herald of declining civic values was passing of America's grandest civic generation—grandparents born in the 1920's who were nearly twice as likely to vote as their grandchildren born in the 1960's (Putnam, 1996). Distrust reduces interaction and cooperation (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), and a large drop in social trust was further indication of dwindling civic values and unraveling of the fabric of American community life (Putnam, 1996). Civic and political engagement was found lower in younger than in older Americans (Putnam, 1996), and civic and political engagement was found higher in Americans with increased educational attainment (Helliwell & Putnam, 2007). The current study examined a college degree's effect on civic and political engagement in age groups with national 2008 political data. The following research question was addressed: *How does American political and civic engagement vary as functions of educational attainment levels and life stage?*

Similar to Putnam's 1996 study, group memberships, voting, and social trust were measures in the current study. In recognition of the internet's potential for *network*

individualism, which increases opportunities for political participation as individuals engage with topics meaningful to them online (Calenda & Meijer, 2009), an online participation measure was added. Another unique approach was use of a contemporary life stage theory to observe age-related differences. Ages were grouped into categories of young adults (18 through 29 years) and older adults (30 years and older) based on a framework of emerging adulthood theory (Arnett, 2004). Comparisons between the following groups were observed: young Americans and older Americans, Americans with and without a college degree, and young college graduates and older college graduates. Investigating young American political and civic engagement was forethought of tomorrow's American Democracy—a future shaped by the values of young adults today. President Ronald Reagan (1967) reminded America freedom is fragile and "never more than one generation away from extinction" (¶3). Findings inform stakeholders interested in sustaining and amplifying American community and political involvement, especially those interested in higher education's effect on civic values.

Review of Literature

Misanthropy and Emerging Adults

In a study of generational gaps in attitudinal values, Smith (2006) observed, "The young have always been the most misanthropic and have become more so; the decline was almost perfectly inversely related to age, with the largest drops among the young and the smallest among the old" (p.190). Putnam (1996) observed greater voter turnout for older adults and observed, "We have found no evidence that the youngest generation will come to match their grandparents' higher levels of civic engagement" (p.44). Age-related differences were attributed to intergenerational, rather than life stage effects (Putnam, 1996). However, the theory of

emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004) gives a new lens for observing differences in beliefs and behaviors between young and older adults.

Evolutions of global economies and knowledge societies, fueled by advances in technology, are dynamic social structure antecedents to emerging adulthood theory (Menard, 2010). According to Arnett (2004), the life cycle in developed countries now includes the stage of emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 29). Emerging adults share *intangible* and *psychological* features, and the characteristics of emerging adults are subjectively different from those of adolescents and older adults (Arnett, 2004). According to Arnett (2004), "Generations X, Y, Z, and beyond will experience an extended period of exploration and instability in their late teens and twenties" (p.4). When Putnam identified television as a primary suspect in the decline of civic values in 1996, emerging adulthood theory was not available to ground a debate of generational versus life cycle effects. Television is likely to have been just one aspect of a dynamically changing social structure—the more likely villain in Putnam's narrative—that became pervasive enough to alter the life cycle (Menard, 2011). Those essential features associated with emerging adults are likely to affect political and civic engagement levels.

Educational Attainment

Between the 1970's and 2000's the proportion of Americans with a college degree rose in each decade for young and older adults (Menard, 2010). Growing educational attainment levels are in response to informational and communications technology needs of a knowledge society— requiring skills and expertise at high levels of technical training and skill development (Slater & Menard, 2009). Development of this human capital requires more training and schooling than in traditional post-industrial societies (Bell, 1973). According to Arnett (2004), higher educational

attainment levels for individuals are correlated with "a variety of good things in adulthood, such as higher income and occupational status" (p. 119).

Observing civic and political engagement differences by educational attainment level is underpinned by the prospect that individual educational achievement has positive, cumulative effects for society (Helliwell & Putnam, 2007). When evaluating rationales for equality in public education, Caldas and Bankston (2005) noted:

> A democratic society cannot be successful without an educated citizenry because it takes knowledgeable citizens to choose wise government leaders and participate in the processes of government (Zhou & Logan, 2003). Thomas Jefferson was an ardent proponent of the necessity of a broadly educated citizenry for the survival of the young American republic. (Caldas & Bankston, 2005, p.109)

Educational attainment and political and civic participation are strongly correlated (Helliwell & Putnam, 2007; Putnam, 1996). Helliwell and Putnam (2007) observed, "Rising general levels of education are likely to be accompanied by higher general levels of political and social engagement" (p.14). According to Helliwell and Putnam (2007), "Education is one of the most important predictors—usually, in fact, the most important predictor—of many forms of political and social engagement—from voting to chairing a local committee to hosting a dinner party to trusting others" (p.1). Not only can educated citizens more wisely choose leaders, then, they are also more engaged civically and politically.

Civic Engagement, Social Trust, and Political Engagement

Putnam (1996) defined civic engagement as "people's connection with the life of their communities, not only with politics" (p.34). Interactions between and within groups build connections and depend on social trust (Slater & Menard, 2009). Without trust, interactions are reduced, and the cooperation needed to solve collective problems is diminished. Tyler and Kramer (1996) observed, "As trust declines, people are increasingly unwilling to take risks, demand greater protections against the possibility of betrayal, and increasingly insist on costly

sanctioning mechanisms to defend their interests" (p. 4). Social trust is the "grease that keeps Civil Society going" (Flanagan, Osgood, Briddel, Wray, & Syversten, 2006, p.7). According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), "Trust is fundamental to functioning in our complex and interdependent society" (p.549). The civil societies on which democracies depend require intensive and on-going interaction. Trust is particularly essential to the proper functioning of a free, democratic society (Slater & Menard, 2009).

Engagement of family and community with polity ensures the circulation of interaction necessary for addressing citizenry needs and sustaining the healthy glow of democracy. Coleman (1990) explained a micro to macro shift between individual behaviors and developing the capacity of social structure. Interaction allows the sharing of ideas and information pertaining to common problems. Almond (1989) compared political engagement to a capillary structure of democracy: "The great secondary components of the democratic infrastructure— political parties, interest groups, and the media of communication—are analogous to the veins and arteries of a circulation system" (p.105). The views of Coleman (1990) and Almond (1989) on the importance of ongoing civic interaction support Putnam's (1996) description of dwindling trust levels and slackening civic engagement to a crime against the very core of American community life. The sentiment was expressed concisely by federal appeals court Judge Keith (2002): "Democracies die behind closed doors" (6th U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals in *Detroit Free Press v. Ashcroft 303 F.3d 681).*

Online Political Participation

The internet offers new opportunities to express opinions and participate with politics (Calenda & Meijer, 2009). According to Calenda and Meijer (2009), "The Internet is said to play an important role in new politics" (p. 779). By recognizing changes in social structure as

consequences of technology use, a *techno-deterministic* perspective allows for a supposition of

the internet transforming political and civic engagement (Calenda & Meijer). Political

participation and civic engagement were terms used interchangeably in the current study, but an

important distinction was held for online participation. According to Calenda and Meijer, it is not

simply a case of online behaviors mimicking offline behaviors (e.g., Those who read newspapers

will read news online.), but offline behaviors were influenced by online behaviors (e.g., People

attend a political party meeting because they visited a party website). It follows, the internet has

potential for increasing both political participation and civic engagement (i.e., offline community

involvement).

There are unique dimensions to online political participation. According to Berry, Connor,

Kann, and Zager (2007), technology expands opportunities for meaningful engagement within

today's political arena:

> The Internet has helped revive the concept of the town hall meeting, the public square, and
> public discourse. The Democratic and Republican National Committees have embraced the
> idea of online communities as a means to disseminate their messages, engage citizens in
> dialogue, and expand the universe of potential voters through innovative outreach efforts.
> For example, Republicans' MyGOP facilitates online user efforts to plan a house party,
> conduct surveys, contact elected officials, call talk radio shows, help register voters, draft
> letters to local newspapers, and raise money. (Berry et al., 2007, ¶25)

Additionally, the internet and technology have proven abrupt and explosive factors in American

political campaigns. Consider the mobilization of a participatory youth culture in Howard Dean's

2004 presidential campaign, followed by a crash of the same campaign propelled by internet

virility of the infamous *Dean scream* (Berry et al., 2007). As exemplified by George Allen's

2006 referral to his opponent Jim Webb as a *macaca,* helping tip the balance of power in the

Senate (Berry et al., 2007), technology also fuels *gotcha* and mudsling politics.

Online participation may be a preferred mode of engagement for young adults. Both

political parties seek to attract young American involvement "by joining old political methods

with a new technology that is more familiar to younger citizens than to older ones" (Berry et al., 2007, ¶25). In a study of the online political participation of 18 to 34-year-olds from Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands, researchers observed, "Some claim that young people are not as much involved in politics as their parents were, others argue that young people are interested in politics but in a different way than previous generations… This raises the question whether the Internet triggers new forms of political participation by young people" (Calenda & Meijer, 2009, p. 779). The notion of a young, involved online citizenry is at odds with a characterization of misanthropic, civically disengaged young Americans.

Research Hypotheses and Purpose

Research hypotheses included the following:

H1. Larger proportions of older Americans compared with younger Americans will have memberships, vote, and trust.

H2. Larger proportions of younger Americans compared with older Americans will be politically engaged online.

H3. Larger proportions of Americans with a college degree compared with Americans without a college degree will have memberships, vote, trust, and be politically active online.

H4. Larger proportions of young American college graduates compared with young Americans without a college degree and older Americans with a college degree will be politically active online.

Observing the effects of educational attainment on four measures of civic and political engagement by life stage was a specific line of research inquiry. The main purpose of the current study was to compare American political and civic engagement by life stage and educational attainment levels in recent political data.

Methodology

The current, comparative study utilized survey design with secondary analysis of extant data. Bi-variate and multivariate analytical approaches were employed. Dependent measures, corresponding survey questions, and response or recoded categories are shown on Table 1.

Data Source

Data were obtained from the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2008 Time Series Study (Version 05/2009) conducted by the American Center for Political Studies of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Web-based data access were provided free of charge through the Survey Documentation Analysis (SDA) archive developed by the Computer-assisted Survey Methods Program (CSM) at the University of California, Berkeley. Surveys were administered face-to-face and fresh cross-sectional sampling was utilized. A survey weight for expansion to the United States population was employed. Total sample size was 2,323 for the pre-election survey and 2,102 completions for the post-election survey. Sample sizes differed by analysis according to the number of valid responses for selected variables.

Variables

Life stage and educational attainment were independent variables. Respondents' ages were collapsed into the two categories of Young Adults (18 to 29 years) and Older Adults (30+ years). (Three respondents were coded as 17-year-olds, and their responses were included with the Young Adults group.) The educational attainment measure asked respondents highest educational degree. Response categories from the highest degree variable were collapsed into one group of no college degree and one group of Bachelor or Master's degree. Descriptive statistics are shown on Table 1.

Memberships, Voting, Social Trust, and Online Participation were dependent measures. See Table 2 for survey questions, response or recoded categories, and dichotomizing procedures. Response categories for Memberships were collapsed into two groups of one or more memberships and no memberships. Categories were collapsed this way because over half of survey respondents did not belong to any organization (Table 1). Categories for Voting included one group of those who were sure they voted and another group of all other responses. In consideration of regression analyses, the voter turnout variable with four categories of Likert responses was selected over a similar survey variable having only yes or no response categories. (However, categories were ultimately dichotomized for logistic regression analysis.) Post-election surveys began the day after the 2008 presidential election, and respondents considered their voting behavior for the 2008 presidential election year when responding to the voting prompt. Categories for Social Trust included one group of those believing people can generally be trusted and another group believing you can't be too careful. Believing others can't be trusted and believing you can't be too careful are not exactly the same, and, therefore, social trust may be found lower in the current study than in other studies investigating American social trust (Table 2). Response categories for Online Participation included one group of those extremely or very likely to sign an internet petition and a group of those a little or not at all likely. The middle category of Likert responses for this prompt (moderately likely) was omitted for analysis.

Analysis

Frequency cross-tabulations and logistic regression analyses investigated research hypotheses. Cross-tabulations were run with independent variables totaling 100. The Pearson chi-square procedure (X_2) and significance levels (p) established statistical significance between groups. Frequencies and percentages were reported in tables. Results were initially observed by

life stage and educational attainment, followed by educational attainment proportions for each

measure displayed (controlled) by life stage. Several logistic regressions were performed to

investigate relationships further. All variables were dichotomized for logistic regressions. For

predictors, 1= having a post-secondary degree, Young or Older Adults, or product term variables,

as noted. (See Table 2 for dependent variable procedures.) In initial logistic regressions, Young

Adults (ages 18 to 29) and College Degree were independent predictors. In the next set of

regressions, product terms for Young College Graduates or Older College Graduates were

predictors. The final set of logistic regressions employed a model with the two predictors of

Young Adults and College Degree. Regressions were repeated for each dependent measure. Logit

coefficients /b/, Standard Errors (SE), and significance levels (p) were reported in the regression

table. Regression coefficients /b/ measured the effect of one unit change in predictors on the

dependent variable logit. Results from single parameter t-tests, p values, and exponential of

regression coefficients (Exp [B]) (odds for observing outcomes) may be noted in discussions. A

95% confidence level was applied throughout, and a threshold of .05 determined statistical

significance.

Results

Life Stage

Of all measures, largest proportions for Young Adults (60%) and Older Adults (82%)

were found for Voting (Table 3, Figure 1). Social Trust for Young Adults (22%) had the smallest

active proportion, and Online Participation was the measure with the lowest active percentage for

Older Adults (19%). In support of H1, proportions civically engaged and politically active were

larger for Older Adults than Young Adults for Memberships, Voting, and Social Trust. In

support of H2, a slightly larger proportion of Young Adults was active online than the Online

Participation proportion for Older Adults. The four percentage point difference for Online Participation was small compared to other differences by life stage, but Online Participation was the only measure with a larger Young Adults proportion (Figure 1).

Logistic regressions with the single predictor of Young Adults were performed for each dependent measure (Table 4, 1). In support of cross-tabulation findings and H1, Young Adults was inversely associated with Memberships, Voting, and Social Trust. The association between Young Adults and Online Participation was not significant with logistic regression analysis. By measure for life stage, the strongest (inverse) association observed was between Young Adults and Voting (b= -1.113, SE=.166, t-test= -6.708, p≤ .001). This finding translates to a strong, positive association between Older Adults and Voting (because the regression was a logistic). Voting odds were 67% lower for Young Adults (Exp [B] = .329). A strong inverse relationship was also found between Young Adults and Social Trust (b= -.817, SE=.164, t-test= -4.978, p≤ .001). Trusting odds were 56% lower for Young Adults (Exp [B] =.442). A moderate inverse relationship was revealed between Young Adults and Memberships (b= -.441, SE=.110, t-test= -4.005, p≤ .001).

Educational Attainment

In support of H3, proportions politically or civically engaged were larger for College Degree than No Degree for all measures (Table 3, Figure 1). Of all measures, largest engaged proportions were found for Voting. Smallest engaged proportions were found for Online Participation. The largest gap between engaged and disengaged proportions with a college degree was the 22 percentage point difference for Social Trust (Figure 1).

Logistic regressions with the single predictor of having a college degree were performed for each dependent measure (Table 4, 2). In support of cross-tabulation findings and H3,

moderate to very strong associations were found between College Degree and all measures. The association between College Degree and Voting was strongest (*b*= .984, SE=.313, t-test= 3.147, p=.002). Voting odds were 167% greater with College Degree (Exp [B] = 2.674). A strong association was also found between College Degree and Social Trust (*b*= .920, SE=.199, t-test= 4.633, p≤ .001). Social Trust odds were 151% greater with College Degree (Exp [B] = 2.510). A moderately strong association was evident between Memberships and College Degree (*b*= .719, SE=.142, t-test= 5.071, p≤ .001). Membership odds were 105% greater with College Degree (Exp [B] = 2.052). Although weaker than associations between College Degree and other measures, a significant association between College Degree and Online Participation was evident in data (*b*= .495, SE=.163, t-test= 3.036, p=.003). Online Participation odds were 64% greater with College Degree (Exp [B] = 1.641).

Differences in the strength of life stage and educational attainment as independent predictors on measures of civic and political engagement were observed. College Degree was a stronger predictor for Social Trust and Memberships (and the only significant predictor for Online Participation), and life stage was a stronger predictor for Voting (Table 4).

Educational Attainment by Life Stage

Cross-tabulations were performed with educational attainment displayed (controlled) by life stage (Table 5). College Degree proportions were larger than that of No Degree in both life stages for all significant measures. Among all groups, the largest percentage was for Voting in Older Adults with a college degree (96%). However, College Degree did not significantly increase the proportion of Young Adults who voted (Table 5). In support of H4, the largest proportion of those more likely to participate online was found for Young Adults with a college degree (38%). The effects of having a college degree on proportions engaged were compared by

measure in life stages. College Degree increased engaged proportions more greatly in Young

Adults than Older Adults for the measures of Memberships (19 percentage points) and Online

Participation (17 percentage points). Increases in proportions with College Degree were similar

for Young Adults and Older Adults for Social Trust(21 percentage points).

When comparing engaged proportions for Online Participation from bi-variate analyses,

the proportion of Young Adults more willing to engage online was four percentage points larger

than that of Older Adults, and the proportion of College Degree engaged online was nine

percentage points larger than that of No Degree (Table 3). With multivariate analyses, the

strength of effects for College Degree varied by life stage. The proportion of those active online

with a college degree increased 17 percentage points for Young College Graduates (38%), but

only eight percentage points for Older College Graduates (29%) (Table 5).

Product term variables with life stage and educational attainment were created to capture

specific effects (Table 4, 3 and 4). The strongest association was found between Older College

Graduates and Voting (b=1.681, SE=.383, t-test= 4.392, p≤.001). Odds for Voting were 437%

greater for Older College Graduates (Exp [B] = 5.371). The product term predictor changed

previously observed associations differently by measure. With Young College Graduates,

Memberships and Social Trust were insignificant and Voting was slightly more weakly inversely

correlated than with Young Adults. A significant association was observed between Online

Participation and Young College Graduates (b= .605, SE=.242, t-test= 2.506, p=.013)—the only

association not inverse when ages 18 to 29-years were included in the equation in any fashion.

Online Participation odds were 83% greater for Young College Graduates (Exp [B] = 1.832).

Life stage and educational attainment were in a model together in final regressions (Table

5). Young Adults became insignificant, and College Degree became a slightly stronger predictor

for Online Participation (*b*= .534, SE=.167, t-test= 3.202, p≤.001). For Voting, College Degree

became a slightly weaker predictor (*b*= .729, SE=.328, t-test= 2.225, p=.027). Young Adults

became more strongly inversely associated with Voting (*b*= -1.521, SE=.325, t-test= -4.679,

p≤.001). College Degree became a slightly weaker predictor for Social Trust in the model with

life stage (*b*= .851, SE=.202, t-test= -4.219, p≤.001), and the inverse association between Social

Trust and Young Adults became weaker in the regression model (*b*= -.576, SE=.234, t-test= -

2.458, p=.014). For Memberships, the strength of College Degree was little changed in the

model, than as a single predictor (*b*= .700, SE=.145, t-test= 4.837, p≤.001), and Young Adults

became insignificant for Memberships in a model with College Degree.

Discussion

The gap of difference in civic and political engagement between young and older

Americans varied by measure, and the effects of a college degree on civic and political

engagement varied by measure and by life stage (Figure 1). Thus, the life stage difference on

civic engagement is not simply a matter of engaged older adults and disengaged young adults. A

larger proportion of young Americans was found for online participation (Table 3). Additionally,

the 16 percentage point gap between older and young Americans for Memberships fell to a six

percentage point difference between Young College Graduates and Older College Graduates

(Figure 1). For significant measures, gaps between Young College Graduates and Older College

Graduates were smaller than either life stage or educational attainment gaps (Figure 1).

Interpretation of findings includes the following: (a) College Degree mediated inverse

associations between Young Adults and Memberships and between Young Adults and Social

Trust, (b) College Degree reduced the inverse association between Young Adults and Voting,

and (c) the insignificant association between Young Adults and Online Participation became

moderately positive with College Degree. Future research may identify other confounding factors that affect established associations. A recommendation for future study is use of a mediation model. Results of the current study identified Voting as a measure of further research interest. A college degree was found to significantly increase the proportion of young adults who trust, have memberships, and participate online, but a college degree did not significantly increase the proportion of young adults who vote (Table 3; Table 5).

The puzzling paradox of the effects of education on voter turnout, as noted by Brody (1978) and examined by Helliwell and Putnam (2007), was likely encountered by the current study. Helliwell and Putnam (2007) observed, "Over the last half century (and more) educational levels in the United States have risen sharply…Yet levels of political and social participation have not risen *pari passu* with this dramatic increase in education" (p.1). Defining educational attainment relative to regional rather than national attainment (Helliwell & Putnam, 2007) may offer some clarity. However, an explanation may lie with the measure itself. Desjardins and Schuller (2006) observed, "There is an interesting ambiguity in one of the most frequently studied forms of engagement, namely voter turnout. It is treated as unique form of engagement, owing to a long line of research that has demonstrated that for analytical purposes, voting should be analyzed on its own" (p. 30).

A striking finding of the current study was support for a hypothesis of online participation being a preferred mode of political engagement for young adults (Table 3; Table 4). Although proportions engaged for Online Participation was smaller than those of other measures, the online political engagement of Young Americans might be compared to a stirring of the digital technology pot with unexpected and explosive possibilities for American campaigns.

Survival of the type of American Republic envisioned by Thomas Jefferson rests on the civic engagement and political participation of citizens (Caldas & Bankston, 2005). Findings from the current study inform stakeholder interested in sustaining American civic and political engagement . Practical implications include the following:

1. Awareness of the extraordinary low trust levels for young adults in 2008 (21%) can guide effective outreach efforts.

2. Appreciation of educational attainment's effect on memberships can motivate a review of opportunities on college campuses holding potential for widespread community involvement.

3. Awareness of the large voting gap between young adults (60%) and older adults (82%) can guide development of targeted voter turnout missions (i.e., dissemination of information regarding voter registration, deadlines, voting booth locations). Local action research may identify voting barriers in specific communities (e.g., transportation, language).

4. Online political participation should be harnessed for a cause of spreading accurate information regarding candidates' positions, rather than sensationalism. Given the significant associations between Online Participation and College Degree ($b=.495$) and Online Participation and Young College Graduates ($b=.605$), a public service message of ethics in online political involvement may be most beneficial on university campuses.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Percentage	n
Life stage		
Young adults	22%	427
Older adults	78%	1,874
Educational attainment		
College degree	60%	485
No degree	40%	460
Memberships		
No organizations	55%	1,254
One to 50 organizations	45%	844
Voting		
Sure they voted	78%	794
Didn't vote-usually vote	22%	249
Social trust		
Can be trusted	35%	351
Can't be too careful	65%	822
Online political participation*		
Extremely and very likely	20%	400
A little and not at all likely	64%	1,367

Source: 2008 ANES 5/09

Note: * Does not equal 100 because the middle category was not included.

Table 2. Dependent Variables

Measure	Survey prompt	Responses
Memberships	*How many organizations are you currently a member of?*	(1) No memberships; (2) One or more memberships. 1= 1-50
Voting	*In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you:*	(1) I did not vote; (2) I thought about voting this time - but didn't; (3) I usually vote, but didn't this time; (4) I am sure I voted. 1, 2, and 3 were collapsed. 1= Voted (4)
Social trust	*Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?*	(1) Most people can be trusted; (2) Can't be too careful.1=Can trust
Online political participation	*In the future, how likely are you to: sign a petition on the internet about a political or social issue?*	(1) Extremely likely; (2) Very likely; (3) Moderately likely; (4) A little likely; (5) Not at all likely. 1 and 2 (More likely), and 4 and 5(Less likely) were collapsed. 3 was not included. 1= More Likely (1,2)

Source: 2008 ANES 5/09

Table 3. Political and Civic Engagement by Life State or Educational Attainment:

Percentages (Frequencies)

Measures	Life stage		Educational level	
	Young adults	Older adults	No degree	College degree
Memberships				
None	64 (265)	53 (981)	52 (239)	35 (161)
One or more	36 (120)	47 (713)	48 (179)	65 (283)
X^2	16.2*		26.0*	
Voting				
Didn't and not sure	40 (76)	18 (171)	18 (37)	8 (15)
Voted	60(118)	82 (667)	82 (161)	92 (200)
X^2	47.5*		10.5*	
Social trust				
Can't be too careful	78 (173)	62 (644)	67 (156)	45 (117)
Trusts	22 (44)	38 (306)	33 (62)	55 (128)
X^2	25.6*		21.9*	
Online participation[+]				
Less likely	58 (218)	65 (1,135)	62 (253)	49 (216)
More likely	23 (85)	19 (314)	21 (93)	30 (142)
X^2	8.3*		14.5*	

Source: 2008 ANES 5/09

Note: +Percents do not equal 100 because the middle response category was not included.

*$p \leq .001$

Table 4. Educational Attainment and Life Stage on Civic and Political Participation

Logit coefficients test that each coefficient = 0

		Political and civic engagement			
		Memberships	Voting	Social trust	Online participation
1	Young adults	-.441(.110)*	-1.113(.166)*	-.817(.164)*	-
2	College degree	.719(.142)*	.984(.313)**	.920(.199)*	.495(.163)**
3	Older college graduates	.695(.141)*	1.681(.383)*	.836(.191)*	-
4	Young college graduates	-	-1.074(.404)**	-	.605(.242)***
5	Model				
	Young adults	-	-1.521(.328)*	-.576(.234)***	-
	College degree	.700(.145)*	.729(.328)***	.851(.202)*	.534 (.167)*

Source: 2008 ANES 5/09;

Note: - = p not significant

*p≤.001

** p≤.008

***p≤ .03

Table 5. Political and Civic Engagement by Life Stage and Educational Attainment:

Percentages (Frequencies)

	Young adults		Older adults	
	No degree	College	No degree	College
Memberships				
None	59 (68)	40 (23)	50 (171)	34 (135)
One or more	41 (37)	60 (32)	50 (139)	66 (249)
X^2	5.5**		17.9*	
Voting				
Didn't and not sure	-	-	12(22)	4(9)
Voted	-	-	88(122)	96(174)
X^2			6.9**	
Social trust				
Can't be too careful	76(41)	55(18)	63(113)	42 (98)
Trusts	24(15)	45(14)	37 (47)	58 (113)
X^2	4.3***		13.7*	
Online participation[+]				
Less likely	58 (56)	50(25)	64 (195)	49(187)
More likely	21(23)	38(21)	21 (70)	29(121)
X^2	6.5***		14.4*	

Source: 2008 ANES 5/09

Note +Percents do not equal 100 because Category 3 was not included.

 *p≤.001

**p≤.02

***p≤.04

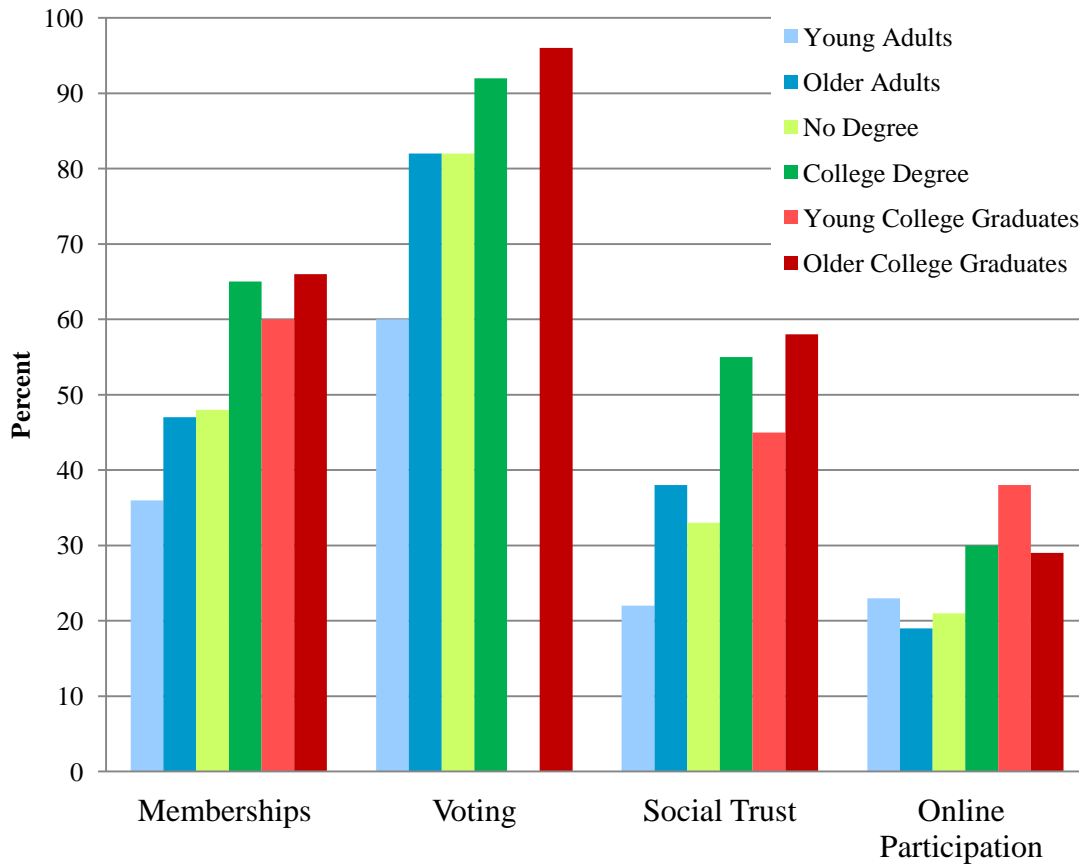## Proportions Civically and Politically Engaged

Figure 1. Percentages from Multivariate Analyses by Measures

Smaller gaps were observed for Memberships and Social Trust when proportions were compared

between Young and Older College Graduates. Voting for Young College Graduates was not

significant. Online Participation was the only measure with larger Young Adult and Young

College Graduates proportions.