Schooling and Civic Engagement in the U.S.

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Abstract

Using two unique data sets, we examine the factors that contribute to civic and political engagement among high school and college students both in and outside of their institutions, focusing on the roles those institutions play in facilitating engagement, and on the connection between these early activities and later engagement among young adults. Our analysis indicates that high schools provide important pathways to early adult participation. Providing opportunities to volunteer, facilitating classroom discussions about politics, reinforcing service work with classroom exchanges, and teaching specific civic skills, all lead to greater levels of engagement both during and after graduation. Involvement with overtly political organizations in high school (not just any organization) also promotes later engagement. Colleges also promote engagement by offering volunteer work, engendering an environment in which students believe they can influence the administration, and, in the curriculum, requiring students to keep up with politics and national affairs.

Introduction

This September, the Bush Administration is expected to sponsor a civic engagement week aimed at raising Americans' awareness of and participation in civic activities. A focus of the White House's attention is the level of engagement among students – a topic that has been gaining ground among policymakers over the past several years.

With civic engagement among America's youth now squarely on the national agenda, it is important that scholars enter the discussion by contributing their knowledge about the civic health of this youngest generation. In this paper we do just that. Using two new data sources, we examine the factors that contribute to civic and political engagement among high school and college students both in and outside of their institutions, focusing on the roles those institutions play in facilitating engagement, and on the connection between these early activities and later engagement among young adults.

Political Socialization: *A Maturing Subfield*

Early research in the field of political socialization focused on elementary school children, rather than teenagers (Greenstein 1965; Hess and Torney 1967; Dawson and Easton 1969; Easton and Dennis 1969). Scholars were guided by their belief in the primacy principle – the notion that the lessons of early childhood continue to shape the attitudes and behavior of an individual as she matures into adulthood (Searing *et al* 1973). Reliance on this principle wavered as the subfield itself matured. Many of the early studies came under methodological attack and additional work brought evidence of change over the lifecourse. (Marsh 1971; Niemi and Sobieszek 1977; Jennings & Niemi 1981; Lindbloom 1982; Cook 1985; Rosenberg 1985; Connell 1987). The focus on childhood political predispositions gave way to a more nuanced approach that attempted to account for both stability and change over the lifecourse (Delli Carpini 1986; Sigel 1989). Later work also shifted the focus from the elementary school years to what Mannheim ([1928] 1952) labeled the "impressionable years" – the period from late adolescence to early adulthood when an individual develops political habits that will continue to influence him throughout the course of his life (Jennings and Niemi 1974; 1981).

In addition to widening the ages considered amenable to socialization (from early childhood to all adulthood), recent work in the field has reinvigorated the examination of schools as socializing agents. Initially, although early studies argued that the family, schools, and peers were all agents of socialization, much of the systematic research focused on the influence of the family, especially parents (for a review, see Niemi 1973 and Niemi and Sobieszek 1977). The decentralized nature of education in the US made generalizations across school systems (even across classrooms) cumbersome and hindered scholars' ability to conduct methodical studies of the impact of schools (Niemi 1973). However, while recent studies have reinforced the importance of the family as a socializer (e.g., Lake Snell Perry 2002) both in shaping orientations to politics and channeling an individual into advanced education, it has also identified the importance of other institutions, such as churches (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995), and reopened the issue of the role of our schools.

Socialization scholars have provided evidence that civic training in adolescence has implications for adulthood. Young people who volunteer in high school and college are more likely than their non-volunteering counterparts to engage in volunteering, community activities, and civic life as adults. Active involvement in after-school activities also plays a role in socializing students into the world of civic and political life. Individuals who were active in school organizations (except athletics) as teenagers are disproportionately more involved as adults, even when the impact of later influences such as marriage, children and advanced education are taken into account (Conway and Damico 2001; Flanagan and Faison 2001; Kirlin 2001; Wilson 2000; Astin, Sax and Avalos 1999; Youniss et al 1997; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995;). The research suggests that of these two routes to civic behavior, participation in high school organizations provides a stronger connection to later civic engagement than does early volunteering or service learning experiences (Perry and Katula 2001; Kirlin 2001). Service learning programs that allow adolescents to develop leadership and decision making skills are much more successful in creating long term civic engagement than are parent-led programs that require less of the teen participants (Kirlin 2001). Finally, scholars have documented that the connection between high school activities and later civic involvement is not linear–activists in high school are more likely than their less active counterparts to be involved as adults, but only after a "sleeper" period in which they are relatively disconnected from civic life (Jennings and Stoker 2001).

While this research provides much insight into the lasting effect of teenage activities, many questions still remain. For example, while scholars have established links between service learning programs in high school and volunteering in adulthood as well as high school organizational involvement and later associational affiliations, there has been much less attention given to the relationship between service learning programs and later *political* (as opposed to civic) behavior (Perry and Katula 2001). Even more critical, perhaps, is the paucity of evidence about what makes individuals involved as adolescents (Galston 2001).[1]

The Research Design

This paper draws on data from a large, multi-phase study of civic engagement in America that explores both the overall state of civic health nationwide, and the distinct ways in which the different generations approach politics and public life. A key component of this study, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, is the development of a set of indicators that will provide a reliable, replicable measurement of civic engagement. To ensure that our measures include an accurate picture of the youngest age cohorts, we began our research with a series of qualitative studies designed to explore the unique political orientations and behavior of today's youth. We next built on the lessons from the qualitative work to develop a series of quantitative indicators,

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[1] One recent study, which does address this question, has documented a positive relationship between open classroom discussions and higher levels of civic knowledge as a teenager and greater propensity to vote as adults (Torney-Purta 2001).

which we tested on various populations through telephone and Internet surveys. Finally, we used the results of these experiments to create a survey instrument designed to measure civic and political engagement among all generations, which was administered by phone last spring.

The analysis in this paper involves two data sets. One is a survey of 1,166 randomly selected people aged 15-25, administered by Knowledge Networks via web-TV in February 2002.[2] The second is a survey of 1001 people, also aged 15-25, which is a sub-component of a random digit dial telephone survey of 3247 respondents ages 15 and older, conducted by Schulman, Ronca and Bucavalas, Inc. (SRBI) in April and May 2002. For clarity, in this paper we refer to the first data set as the "Internet survey" and the second as the "Telephone survey." Both data sets were weighted so that the sample reflects the gender, race, education and regional characteristics of the national population of 15-to-25 year olds.

The telephone survey, specifically designed to capture the broad range of activities in which an individual could be involved, included a total of 19 measures of engagement ranging from traditional political acts such as voting and wearing a campaign button to typical civic work such as volunteering for a nonpolitical organization to more alternative behaviors such as consumer boycotting, protesting and sending email petitions. The Internet survey asked about a subset of these activities (nine of the 19). All respondents were asked if they had ever participated in each activity; if they answered affirmatively they were asked if they had done so in the past 12 months. Both surveys included measures of cognitive engagement (e.g., media attentiveness and political knowledge), and, for high school students, measures of engagement in high school activities. The Internet survey also asked college students about college-specific activities.

Since this study is based on cross-sectional surveys of a particular age group at approximately the same time, we are limited in our ability to draw causal inferences. In trying to infer the impact of past experiences on current behavior, we must rely on respondents' recollection of those experiences, such as their activities in high school. Another limitation is that our focus on the 15-25 year old age group means that we do not address the longer term consequences of family and high school experiences.[3]

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[2] Knowledge Networks is a California-based survey research company founded at Stanford University. It maintains a panel of over 100,000 households in the U.S. Individuals in the households are surveyed using Web-TV via an Internet connection, which is provided free of charge by Knowledge Networks. These households complete a few surveys each month. When a particular individual in a household is selected for a survey, an e-mail message arrives in the Web-TV box indicating that a survey is available. The respondent then has a set period of time (typically a week or thereabouts) to complete the survey.

[3] In designing this survey we faced the difficult tradeoff between asking all adults about their high school experiences and thus having data for the entire adult population and the problem of subjecting individuals who graduated from high school decades ago to provide us with potentially invalid information about experiences. We opted for a smaller data set and more validity over a larger data set with less validity.

In addition, as with many studies about the role of schools in the political socialization of teenagers and adults, the decentralized nature of education in America poses particular difficulties. Our measures of institutional support, for example, can document whether or not students are provided an opportunity to discuss their service work in a classroom setting, but it cannot tell us about the nature of that discussion, the skill with which a teacher facilitates talk, or even the number of students enrolled in the class.

Despite these obstacles, a major advantage of these two data sets is their large sample size, which allows us to analyze differences among groups within this age cohort; the surveys were also very extensive, providing a wide range of measures of political, civic and school-level engagement of young people today.

The telephone survey reveals a mixed image of the political and civic activism of today's young adults. While the youngest age cohort is not as active as older Americans in some realms, they are as active or more active in other areas. For example, as other surveys have indicated, youth today are active volunteers, but are not habitual voters. They score lower on tests of political knowledge and are less attentive to news about politics and government, but they are at least as likely as the rest of the population to report boycotting a product or signing an email petition. Full results of the study will be released on September 19, 2002, and will be available via the web site of the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement at http://www.civicyouth.org/.

We begin with a brief discussion of the depth and breadth of activities in which young people are involved, as well as short overview of the types of institutional support for engagement that high schools and colleges provide their students.

School-based Opportunities for Engagement

The high school and college experience provides many opportunities for civic and political engagement. Most of the avenues available to adults are also available to youth (voting is an obvious exception for most high school students), and in addition, school-based organizations provide ready-made vehicles to serve a wide variety of interests and tastes. Schools increasingly facilitate – and in some cases, require – community service or volunteer work; three-fourths of current high schools students said the school arranges opportunities, and 21% said the schools require the activity. Over two-thirds of students said they were aware that their school had a student government organization. And the curriculum typically includes explicit civics and government content, as well as opportunities and incentives to pay attention to public affairs even in non-government courses

High School-based Opportunities for Engagement	
Aware that school has a student government organization	69%
Taking a course the requires attention to government, politics, or national issues	63%
School arranges service or volunteer activities	75%
School requires service or volunteer activity	21%
Source: 2002 Knowledge Networks survey conducted by the authors	

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(63% were currently taking a course where this was required).

Most current high school students are involved in at least one high school-based organization or group. Organized sports is the most popular draw, with almost half of students participating in some way. About one quarter (23%) are involved in band. A large minority are active in groups than range from foreign language clubs (15%) to student council (12%) to cheerleading (10%). Dance, newspaper, yearbook and debate pull in about equal numbers of students. Only 22% of respondents say that are not involved in *any* organized groups.

Group activities outside of high school are also common. Not surprisingly, sports organizations are popular: 44% say they are involved with athletic groups outside of school. Religious groups (with a participation rate of 37%) are a close second. Scouts (14%) the YMCA (8%) are a distant third and fourth. Only small numbers report involvement in Boys and Girls clubs (5%), 4-H (3%), and FFA/FHA (2%). Just 1% are involved in explicitly political groups or Model UN programs.

Participation in High School Organizations (current high school students)

Organized sports	49%
Band	23%
Foreign language club	15%
Other	15%
Student council/student government	12%
Drama club	12%
Cheerleading, drill, flags, or spirit organization	10%
Yearbook committee	9%
Service club	9%
Newspaper	8%
Debate	7%
Dance club	7%

Source: 2002 Knowledge Networks survey conducted by the authors

Among those aware of their student government, 12% report having run for or been involved in a campaign for office, or who have served as a student representative. Student councils operate off the radar of most students, however, as just 23% pay at least some attention to the activities of their school student government.

Most high school students also reported engaging in classroom or group activities that develop important skills for citizenship. Eight-in-ten had given a speech or oral report, while over half had taken part in a debate. Nearly four-in-ten had written a letter to someone they did not know.

College Engagement

College students are less involved in groups and organizations than are high school students. Fraternities and sororities draw the participation of 13%, the same number who

Skill Building Opportunities in High School (percent who've done each)

Given a speech or an oral report	80%
Taken part in a debate in which you had to persuade someone about something	51%
Written a letter to someone you do not know	38%

Source: 2002 Knowledge Networks survey conducted by the authors

belong to honor societies. Just 12% are involved in sports organizations, one-in-ten participate in subject oriented groups and 8% have joined ethnic or religious organizations. Just 3% are involved in political groups. Half (51%) say that they are not involved in *any* group or organization in college.

Attention to student government at the high school level outstrips the interest afforded college student government. Just 11% of current college students in the Internet survey report paying at least some attention to their student government organization. A minority are involved in other activities on campus. One in five college students has attended a speech, informal seminar, or a teach-in about politics or national issues.

What affects engagement among young people?

We turn now to an effort to explain civic and political engagement. We present regression models for three populations: high school graduates aged 25 and under; current high school students; and current college students. We will use both the telephone and Internet surveys, since each brings a unique set of measures to the task.

The central dependent variable in all of the analyses is *engagement*, of which we have identified four relevant dimensions: electoral activity, civic activity, political voice, and cognitive engagement. We created an additive scale of engagement that includes a range of political and civic acts and attentive behaviors. The table on the next page shows the core activities in the scale, sorted into four dimensions from which we will create sub-scales after looking at the summary measure.[4]

After much trial and error, a basic model of potentially relevant influences on our summary measure was identified. Items in the model included attitudes and demographic characteristics, along with experiences reported by the respondent such as having grown up in a household where politics was discussed. Care was taken to exclude predictors that arguably could be considered a part of what we are trying to explain, such as interest in politics, or political knowledge. This is a conservative strategy, since some of these surely serve as facilitators or catalysts of engagement (e.g., knowledge facilitates participation) as well as reflecting the consequences thereof.

Table 1 shows the results (standardized regression coefficients) for all high school graduates under age 26, using the "kitchen sink" measure of engagement (in the column labeled "Summary scale"). The model fits reasonably well with the data, yielding an adjusted r-square of

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[4]For the summary scale, respondents received one point for each type of participation they reported engaging in; in addition, they received points for using the news media (low, medium, high), paying attention to news about government and public affairs, and talking about politics with family or friends. Finally, they were given one point for each correct response to three political knowledge questions. The final scale ranged from 0 to 27, with an average (and modal) score of 11. One quarter of respondents scored 15 or better; slightly more (29%) scored 8 or less.

Indicators of Engagement			
Electoral	**Civic**	**Cognitive**	**Political Voice**
wearing a button	volunteering for two or more non political organizations	awareness that the federal government spends more on Social Security than foreign aid	contacting the media
displaying a bumper sticker,	being an active member of an organization	knowledge of which party is more conservative	contacting a government official
persuading others how to vote	raising money for charity through a run, walk, bike ride, or some other means	knowledge of margin required for veto override	phoning into a radio or television program
volunteering for a political group	working with others to solve a community problem	getting news from newspapers	boycotting
giving money to a candidate, party or group		getting news from radio	buycotting
regular voting		getting news from television	signing a written petition
		getting news from the Internet	signing an e-mail petition
		getting news from magazines	attending a protest
			working as a canvasser

.41. Coefficients significant at the .05 level (or below) are highlighted. Although none of the betas is especially large, the model does have several significant coefficients, indicating that a variety of factors share responsibility for the levels of engagement manifested in the sample.

Table 1 about here

The most powerful predictor of engagement is mobilization, or being contacted by someone personally asking the respondent to work for or contribute to a candidate, party or organization that supports candidates. Close behind was an important attitude, "sense of civic duty," measured as a choice between the statements "It is my responsibility to get involved to make things better for society" (coded "1") versus "It is my choice to get involved to make things better for society" (coded "0").

Family and school socialization are also key factors. The frequency of political discussions in the household and the example of someone in the household volunteering while the respondent was growing up, as well as participation in *political* organizations in high school are positively related to later engagement. The data strongly suggest that involvement in

nonpolitical organizations is much less important than involvement in political organizations. As others have argued, our data suggest (in an analysis not shown here) that not all high school associations have the same long term impact on engagement.

The number of days during the past week in which the respondent has used the Internet is the another significant predictor. Jennings also reports that Internet use was positively related to civic activities, including working with others to solve a community problem, and volunteering (Jennings 2001).

A few other variables warrant special note. Two attitudes, individual efficacy and identification of one's age group as unique and distinct, were significant predictors. Attendance at religious services is positively related to engagement (largely, as we will see, in its relevant to civic engagement indicators rather than the political.) And *negative* views of government and the political process are *positively* associated with engagement, although the weight is relatively low. Having a larger network of friends contributes to greater engagement. Women are slightly less likely than men to be engaged. By contrast, race is unrelated to engagement.

The dimensions of engagement

Although it is useful, and normatively justifiable, to consider multiple forms of engagement as all deriving from (and contributing to) a common democratic core, there is empirical evidence that many people specialize or focus their activities in one or another aspect of engagement (e.g., Verba and Nie, 1972). And it is expected that different personal qualities, experiences, and resources would contribute to different kinds of activities. Table 1 also shows the results for four subdimensions of the engagement index, which we have termed civic, electoral, cognitive, and political voice. As the number of items differs somewhat from index to index, the reliabilities, r-squares, and the potential for high betas also vary greatly.

These models suggest that the forces that lead to engagement are not universal across domains. The exceptions to this are the continued importance of mobilization and a sense of civic duty, which remain significant in all of the scales. Political discussion in the home is important for cognitive engagement, while the example of a volunteer in the home is significant only for the civic scale. Attendance at religious services is the strongest predictor of civic engagement, but it is much less important for other kinds of engagement. Involvement in political organizations in high school predicts political voice, but does not achieve statistical significance with the other dimensions. A larger network of friendships appears most important in predicting civic activities. Somewhat surprisingly, interpersonal trust was unrelated to civic activities but positively related to voice.

This suggests that while the universal predictors of engagement in young adults are outside forces (mobilization) and personal attitudes (a strong sense of civic duty), the variety of other influences to which high school graduates are exposed do not all lead down the same path. Political discussions in the home appear to shape attentiveness to the media or willingness to express opinions, but do not spur civic duty. Churches, synagogues and places of worship pull

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young adults into the civic realm, but do not necessarily facilitate their political engagement. Political organizations in high school lead to greater levels of political expression (voice), but are weakly related to the other dimensions.[5] Thus, while family and school experiences are significant, their results are somewhat varied.

Predicting engagement among high school students

We turn now from an analysis of *post* high school engagement to a closer look at the factors that predict engagement during the high school years. Engagement in high school organizations, and the habits developed during this period, play a role in later engagement. Thus an understanding of how high school experiences matter may help us understand why citizens turn out as they do. We will look at the summary scale of engagement (except for voting), along with the four subdimensions for current high school students, using the telephone survey and some specific measures of the high school experience. Then we will turn to our Internet survey, which has an even richer set of measures of the high school context and experience.

Table 2 presents, for current high school students, the standardized regression coefficients for an expanded set of predictors regressed on the summary scale of engagement and the four subdimensions. The variables are sorted based on the betas for the summary scale; all significant values are highlighted. Because most members of this cohort are too young to vote, the summary scale and the political scale omit the voting measure; in addition, because of the difficulty in obtaining income data on high school students, we have omitted this measure from the predictor variables.[6] The model of the summary scale fits the data pretty well; with an adjusted r square of .45, we are able to explain almost half of the variance in our summary measure.

Table 2 about here

The school-specific variables offer useful insights. Overall, while mobilization is important, it is relatively less so for current students than it is for high school graduates, perhaps because the younger group is less likely to be the target of such efforts (only 9%, compared with 15% among high school graduates under 26 years of age). Instead, participation in high school political organizations take prominence. In addition, family socialization remains important. More frequent discussion about politics in the home and the example of a parent volunteering both lead to higher levels of engagement. The school setting is also a significant contributing factor. Opportunities to discuss either volunteer work in the classroom or political and social issues in general are both positively related to engagement.

Although the individual subdimensions do not yield models as strong as the summary

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[5]Though bear in mind the finding of Jennings and Stoker that the effects of high school organizations on engagement may be delayed well past the ages we are examining here.

[6]Other work has indicated that scales of political behavior should exclude voting, which is a unique act (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

model (adjusted r-squares between .18 and .30), the differences among the predictors provide evidence for a richer understanding of how people become civic or political animals. Parental example and socialization are very important but slightly different in their consequences: seeing a volunteer in the home is important for all four subdimensions of engagement, including the electoral, while talking politics in the home is apparently irrelevant for civic engagement but very important for electoral and cognitive engagement. The Internet appears less important for electoral activities than for the others. The importance of religion is felt on civic engagement but only weakly in other domains. Attendance at religious services is not significantly related to any of the dimensions, though it nears significance with civic activity. Discussion of issues in class is a significant predictor of cognitive engagement.

Engagement among high school students: the Internet survey

Our Internet survey included a broader range of measures about the high school experience. The summary measure of engagement differs from the telephone survey in that it includes both high school political and organizational activity, and the general indicators of engagement. Specifically, we used the following measures:

- working with others to solve a community problem,
- attending a local government or neighborhood meeting,
- participating in a walk, run or bike ride for charity,
- volunteering for groups (coded as 0, 1, 2 or more),
- contacting a government official,
- participating in a boycott,
- signing an email petition,
- following news of politics and government,
- talking about the news,
- talking about political news,
- knowing which party has a majority in the U.S. House,
- serving as an officer or representative or working on a campaign for student government,
- self reported level of attention to student government,
- the number of organizations involved in and out of high school.

The scale ranges from 0 to 23, with a mean value of 9 and a reliability of .65. Table 3 presents the results of this model for current high school students; the adjusted r-square is .44.

Table 3 here

There are some similarities between this model and the earlier model based on the telephone survey. As with the telephone survey, family discussions about politics are very important: it is the second most powerful predictor here. But there are some additional findings made possible by the expanded range of variables. A summary measure of the three key skills (letter writing, oral presentation, and participation in debate) outranks all other predictor

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variables.[7] Attending a high school that facilitates volunteer work is positively associated with engagement. Although the coefficient is not large, its appearance among the significant indicators is somewhat surprising since the indicator is fairly skewed (75% of respondents said their high school did this). Enjoying high school is another key predictor. This may be somewhat similar to our social network measure in the telephone survey: students with more friends or who are happier in school are more likely to be involved. Family income is also a significant predictor. (The Knowledge Networks panel includes an income measure as part of the standard background demographics, which meant that we did not have to depend on young respondents to provide this information.)

Some dogs didn't bark, and it is useful to note these. Having taken a course that entailed paying attention to government and politics was not a significant predictor of engagement (though nearly half of the students taking such a course said their interest in politics had increased as a result of the class). Nor was a school requirement of volunteer or service activity, or having service factored into a grade. Being black or Hispanic was *not* associated with lower levels of engagement, after other variables are taken into account.

In the telephone survey, being contacted to work for or contribute to a political candidate or campaign was a good predictor of engagement, albeit weaker for high school students than for high school graduates. In the Internet survey, the mobilization measures were weak and statistically insignificant.[8]

College Students

Our final analysis addresses engagement among college students. The Internet survey included a series of questions asked of current college students that enabled us to create a summary measure of engagement that incorporates college-specific activities, similar to the high school index above. In this summary scale, we included all the broader measures of participation and media attentiveness, as well as attending a seminar or teach-in, belonging to political organizations in college, and paying attention to the college student government. The scale ranges from 0 to 22, with a mean of 7 and a reliability of .74. The results, which also included college-specific independent variables, are presented in Table 4. The data fit the model about as well as the high school models, with an adjusted r-square of .43.[9]

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[7] The various measures worked individually as well. In addition, when we pulled "writing a letter to a newspaper or government official" out of the dependent variable, in case it was too strongly related to this measure, the skills continued to be the most powerful predictor.

[8] There are some slight differences in question wording, but not enough to account for the differences seen here. The telephone survey asked about contacts from candidates, parties or organizations that supports candidates. The Internet survey asked a slightly longer question aimed at the same result, and an additional question that focused on issue groups, rather than candidates.

[9] To allow comparison to the high school scale, the measure of voting was pulled out of the dependent variable. The results were almost identical to the summary scale here, with the exception of the government relevance and "keep up" variables were not significant in the non-voting scale.

The three leading predictors of involvement represent three distinct kinds of influence: socialization, institutional support, and attitudes, each with comparable impact based on the standardized regression coefficients. Household political discussion while growing up had the greatest weight in the model, closely followed by volunteer opportunities provided by the college, and efficacy. Two other attitudes, efficacy within college (measured by the question "How much influence do you think that students at your college have on how the school is run?") and government relevance (measured by the question "How much of an impact do you think decisions made by the government have on your daily life?") were also positively related to engagement. And taking a course that requires the student to keep up with politics and national affairs was associated with higher levels of engagement.

One of the mobilization questions (request for help or money on an issue or cause) approached statistical significance, but with a beta of .11 must be considered a very weak predictor.

Summary and Conclusion

Our analysis indicates that high schools provide important pathways to early adult participation. Providing opportunities to volunteer, facilitating classroom discussions about politics, reinforcing service work with classroom exchanges, and teaching specific civic skills, all lead to greater levels of engagement both during and after graduation. Involvement with overtly political organizations in high school (not just any organization) also promotes later engagement. Colleges can promote engagement by offering volunteer work, engendering an environment in which students believe they can influence the administration, and, in the curriculum, requiring students to keep up with politics and national affairs.

Families also set valuable examples. Homes that foster political discussion promote greater engagement before and after high school graduation. Similarly, individuals who grow up in families with the example of volunteering go on to volunteer themselves, and are more likely to be engaged in a range of activities while in high school. Importantly, these examples do not all lead down the same the path to participation. For example, parental volunteering encourages later participation in the civic realm; family discussions about politics leads to greater attention to the political world.

Once a student has left high school, two key attitudes–a sense of civic duty and efficacy-- are strongly associated with engagement. Although we do not test this here, presumably, the roots of these attitudes are laid much earlier either in the home or in the schools, which reinforces the importance of these early lessons.

This work also indicates that mobilization is especially important to post high school youth. Even taking into account earlier school training, parental examples and attitudinal

predispositions, being contacted to participate leads to higher levels of activity.

Finally, the irrelevance of many of our variables provide lessons as well. Importantly, almost every measure of coercion–service work requirements for grades or graduation–failed to meet standards of statistical significance. Instead, acquiring specific skills, discussing volunteer work or issues in an open classroom environment, or simply attending a school that arranged service work all lead to greater involvement.

Our models do relatively well in overall explanatory power – accounting for up to 45% of the variability in engagement. But, notably, no single factor stands out as especially important in predicting engagement. Instead, several characteristics in each model – stemming from the family, the schools, or perhaps even one's peers – collectively provide the explanatory power in the models. This suggests that there is no "silver bullet" to slay apathy and disengagement, but also that widening many narrow pathways can help more young people find their way to active citizenship and public life.

Table 1. Multivariate models predicting engagement among high school graduates (age 25 and under)					
	Summary scale	**Civic scale**	**Electoral scale**	**Cognitive engagement**	**Political voice**
Scale reliability	**0.76**	**0.55**	**0.50**	**0.62**	**0.59**
Adjusted R Square	**0.41**	**0.18**	**0.16**	**0.28**	**0.30**
	Standardized regression coefficients				
Mobilization	**0.23**	**0.17**	**0.13**	**0.13**	**0.25**
Civic duty	**0.18**	**0.11**	**0.10**	**0.17**	**0.09**
Household political discussions	**0.16**	-0.03	0.07	**0.22**	**0.09**
Political organizations in high school	**0.13**	0.09	0.06	0.07	**0.16**
Individual efficacy	**0.13**	0.07	**0.11**	**0.10**	**0.10**
Religious service attendance	**0.12**	**0.20**	0.10	0.07	0.02
Internet usage in past 7 days	**0.11**	0.08	-0.02	**0.10**	**0.12**
Female	**-0.10**	0.01	-0.08	**-0.14**	-0.06
Generational identification	**0.10**	0.05	**0.09**	0.08	**0.08**
Positive view of politics	**-0.08**	-0.03	-0.02	-0.01	**-0.18**
Parent/guardian volunteer	**0.08**	**0.10**	0.08	0.05	0.04
Social network	**0.08**	**0.10**	0.08	0.03	0.05
Interpersonal trust	**0.07**	-0.02	0.04	0.07	**0.09**
Average television usage per day	-0.07	-0.08	-0.04	-0.04	-0.06
Government activism	-0.06	-0.01	**-0.10**	-0.06	-0.01
Mother's education	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.01	0.09
Age	0.05	0.02	-0.03	0.08	0.05
Family income	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.07	-0.04
Importance of religion	0.01	0.00	0.10	-0.06	0.07
White	0.00	0.02	0.01	-0.05	0.05
Number of cases	536	536	536	536	536

Source: 2002 national telephone survey conducted by the authors. Coefficients in bold are significant at the .05 level or below.

Table 2. Multivariate models predicting engagement among high school students					
	Summary scale	**Civic scale**	**Electoral scale**	**Cognitive engagement**	**Political voice**
Scale reliability	0.71	0.57	0.42	0.63	0.53
Adjusted R Square	0.45	0.24	0.18	0.30	0.22
	Standardized regression coefficients				
Political organizations in high school	**0.23**	**0.15**	**0.19**	**0.12**	**0.18**
Parent/guardian volunteer	**0.19**	**0.15**	**0.13**	**0.12**	**0.14**
Internet usage in past 7 days	**0.18**	**0.12**	0.03	**0.15**	**0.14**
Household political discussions	**0.17**	0.01	**0.23**	**0.17**	0.08
Mobilization	**0.14**	**0.11**	**0.11**	0.07	**0.16**
Class political discussions	**0.13**	0.02	0.09	**0.14**	0.09
Age	**0.12**	0.03	0.01	**0.21**	-0.04
Social network	**0.09**	**0.10**	0.04	0.00	**0.15**
Mother's education	0.08	0.05	-0.07	**0.12**	0.03
Civic duty	0.08	0.00	0.04	**0.09**	0.04
Government activism	-0.07	-0.05	**-0.11**	-0.03	-0.02
Individual efficacy	0.06	**0.12**	-0.04	0.08	-0.03
Average television usage per day	-0.06	**-0.10**	-0.05	0.02	**-0.10**
Positive view of politics	0.05	0.06	0.04	0.09	-0.07
Importance of religion	0.05	**0.14**	0.09	-0.01	-0.01
Encouraged to make up mind about issues	0.04	0.02	-0.09	0.05	0.04
Female	-0.03	0.08	0.08	**-0.14**	0.01
White	-0.03	0.03	-0.07	-0.04	-0.03
Interpersonal trust	0.02	-0.04	0.01	0.05	0.01
Required political course for grade or graduation	0.01	0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.04
Generational identification	0.00	**-0.11**	-0.01	0.01	0.06
Religious service attendance	0.00	0.09	-0.04	-0.04	0.01
Number of cases	317	317	317	317	317
Source: 2002 national telephone survey conducted by the authors. Coefficients in bold are significant at the .05 level or below.					

Table 3: Multivariate model predicting engagement among high school students (Internet survey)	
Scale reliability	.65
Adjusted R Square	.44
	Standardized regression coefficients
High school skills	**.32**
Household political discussions	**.21**
Enjoys high school	**.19**
Income	**.17**
Volunteer work arranged by school	**.14**
Government efficacy	**.10**
White	-.07
Civic responsibility	.07
Political course	.06
Volunteer activity grade contribution	.06
Student influence in high school	.06
Impact of government on daily life	.04
Interpersonal trust	.04
Female	.04
Age	-.04
Hispanic	-.04
Moral certainty	-.03
Request for money or time for issue	.01
Request for money or time for candidate	-.01
Number of cases	282

Source: 2002 Knowledge Networks survey conducted by the author. Coefficients in bold are significant at the .05 level or below.

Table 4: Multivariate model predicting engagement among college students (Internet survey)	
Reliability	**.74**
Adjusted R Square	.43
	Standardized regression coefficients
Household political discussions	**.25**
Government efficacy	**.24**
Volunteer work arranged by college	**.24**
Impact of government on daily life	**.18**
Taking course that requires attention to politics or government	**.17**
Student influence in college	**.17**
Female	-.11
Request for money or time for issue	.11
Age	.08
Income	.07
White	.07
Interpersonal trust	-.04
Moral certainty	.04
Hispanic	-.04
Volunteer activity required	.03
Request for money or time for candidate	.02
Enjoys college	.01
Civic responsibility	.01
Number of cases	192
Source: 2002 Knowledge Networks survey conducted by the authors. Coefficients in bold are significant at the .05 level or below.	

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