

# **The Civic-Political Divide: Is it worth the hype?**

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Due: December 13, 2007

In December, Professor Robert Devigne squared off against Institute for Global Leadership Director Sherman Teichman to debate the question, “Should active citizenship be an integral part of higher education at Tufts?” At Tufts, active citizenship is a buzzword for community engagement. It is hypothesized that engagement in active citizenship will make our students become good citizens. Yet a traditional definition of citizenship often includes political behaviors like voting and participating in political campaigns. Even the Tisch College has noted a divide between the civic and political spheres on campus. Much of the recent literature on the youth cohort’s political participation habits has been focused on the researching or rejecting the civic-political divide. I hypothesize that civic engagement does not necessarily increase young people’s political engagement. I believe that investment in civic engagement, as a way to remedy **the youth cohort’s declining political participation habits, is well-intentioned but** misguided.

The issue is examined using survey data from the Tisch College’s National Survey of Civic and Political Engagement of Young People. In brief, political and civic behaviors were cross-tabulated. The intention was to find correlative – and ultimately causal – relationships between civic and political behaviors. That data could be used to confirm or deny the “hype” of the active citizenship debate at Tufts and across the country. Does increased civic engagement increase political engagement?

## **Literature Review**

The declining patterns of youth political participation have been well-documented (Zukin 2006, Wattnberg 2007, Longo 2006). However, in terms of civic affairs, one

behavioral pattern has improved. In *Democracy At Risk*, Steven Macedo et al. single out volunteering as the one important positive trend in citizen participation (Wattenberg 177). This “surge in youth voluntarism” has also been well-documented (179). In an October column, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman praised this youth cohort for going abroad to “build homes for the poor in El Salvador in record numbers or volunteering at AIDS clinics in record numbers,” and for “rolling their sleeves and digging in deeper than ever” (Friedman). Times columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote in August of 2005 how, “out of the miasma of horror that is Darfur, something uplifting” has occurred (Kristof). As he wrote, focusing on the student activist coalition STAND, “Ordinary Americans are finding creative ways to respond to the slaughter, so that they personally inject meaning into those traditionally hollow words: Never Again” (Kristof). In David Burstein’s film “18 in ’08,” Harvard professor and genocide activist Samantha Power echoed the same praise for the work of student activists rallying to end the genocide in Darfur (Burstein).

Perhaps this new trend of increased civic participation can play an important role reversing the generally negative trends of citizenship norms. Russell Dalton has expressed optimism: “If feelings of citizen duty are eroding among the young, this may be balanced by new norms of engaged citizenship” (Dalton 5). If Dalton is correct, the surge of youth voluntarism may be a replacement or even an amplifier of political citizenship patterns. From Dalton’s perspective, “America is witnessing a change in the nature of citizenship and political participation leading to a renaissance of democratic participation” – rather than a general decline in participation (Dalton 7). In conjunction

with traditional, electoral political participation, perhaps the youth cohort has engaged in alternative forms of societal improvement.

Is it possible, then, that the increased civic engagement patterns are serving as a replacement for political engagement? Linda Sax expressed belief about the so-called “substitution effect” when she argued that “it is quite possible that students are simply placing their energies where they feel they can make a difference” (HERI 2005, 15). However, the data does not seem to support that. Cliff Zukin argued that very few members of the youth cohort cited that they didn’t vote because they think they can make more of a difference by volunteering in their communities (Zukin 2006, 93). In Zukin’s study, only 21% of civic activists said that they volunteered to address a social or political problem (195). Young people do not see civic activities as “obligations” or citizenship or as explicitly “political” activities (189). Moreover, Zukin’s “civic specialists” are less cognitively engaged than “political specialists.” Most troublingly, after these young people exit the age range in which they are preparing for college, there is “no sign of a great new spirit of voluntarism among this generation” (Wattenberg 182). Thus, it does not appear that civic engagement is a replacement for political engagement nor that civic engagement is altering the trend of declining participation and knowledge about politics.

This research area has notably needed bolstering. In CIRCLE’s 2006 literature review of student political participation, Nicholas Longo contends that “deeper insights into the connections – and lack of connections – between involvement in community service and political engagement” is a research area “in need of future exploration” (Longo 2006, 3). Martin Wattenberg is critical that Zukin et al. do not address the

following question: “Has greater involvement in volunteer activities among young people made them more likely to work on community problems and contact government officials to express their views than previous generations?” (Wattenberg 2006, 185). If Macedo’s study is right that volunteerism is the one positive trend in citizen participation, it especially important to figure out if there is a link between civic and political behaviors. In the wake of declining youth engagement patterns, might patterns of increased civic participation offset the decline in expressly political behaviors and, moreover, might those civic behaviors renew traditional forms of political citizenship?

### **Hypothesis**

Although I would like to believe that these new norms of citizenship and civic engagement are gateways to traditional norms of political engagement, I am doubtful that they truly can reform the declining patterns of general citizenship. I hypothesize that participation in civic activities does not necessarily lead to increased political engagement. It is reasonable to expect that some community service participants will see a connection between civic and political behaviors. However, I do not believe that the positive perspective reflects the general pattern, thus denying the possibility that civic participation will be the panacea to the decline in political citizenship.

I arrived at this hypothesis in three ways. First, I considered attitudes of youth towards political institutions. Second, I thought of the reasons for civic engagement and was cognizant of the forces that reduce the individual volition for volunteerism. Third, I believe that the relationships students have within community service environments tends to be a palliative but not a structurally modifying role. Therefore, volunteers miss the big

picture that connects the dots between the root causes that necessitated their charitable voluntarism and the actual voluntarism.

Overall trends of negative attitudes towards politics and government are likely to discourage initial entrance into the political sphere. Surveys reveal that young people feel a general negativity towards government. Forty-eight percent of young people feel that government is “boring;” 46% say politics is “confusing;” and many think it is “for white guys in suits” (Zukin 2006, 111). In general, young people feel that government is for others, not for them (111).

Additionally, their sense of positive obligation is very limited. Merely 24% of young people said that they “feel guilty when I don’t get a chance to vote” (Wattenberg, 131). Although 47% feel that participation is their responsibility, 48% feel that it is a choice (Zukin 99). A 2002 CIRCLE study found that 29% of young people say political participation is a responsibility and only 9% felt it was a duty; consequently, less than a third of young Americans “expressed a view of voting as a civic obligation” (Wattenberg 129). Although voluntarism is up, there has been two successive generations in which “half of each cohort needs to be persuaded to follow government and politics and participate in elections” (Zukin 101). Thus, there is clearly inertia of negative feelings towards government and politics that discourage political engagement in the first place. As Longo put it, the youth cohort exhibits moral idealism combined with political cynicism (Longo 2006, 9). This general orientation of negativity might dissuade civic activists from political engagement.

The reasons why voluntarism has increased is certainly additionally an important factor. Two models were particularly salient for my hypothesis. The first was the trend of

provision of community service activities in high schools and colleges. Using the National Youth Survey, Zukin et al. found that 65% of high school students said that their school arranged or offered service activities or volunteer work for students. Twenty-one percent said that their schools required volunteer work (Zukin 144). Service-learning programs, such as those offered by the Tisch College of Citizenship at Tufts, facilitate classroom service learning opportunities. Certain classes, such as Introduction to Peace and Justice Studies, even require it. The requirement of service activities – or aggressive facilitation, which might impose de facto feelings of requirement – certainly have contributed to the increase of civic participation. These findings are important because they have contributed to individuals' involvement and the minimized individual agency for volunteerism than if they had volunteered completely of their own volition.

The second reason, which I find more compelling, is the role of volunteerism in the college admissions process. Friedland and Morimoto found that “the future expectations of young people” shaped the kind of activities that they were involved with – specifically, “the role of college loomed large” (Friedland, 3). Like Friedland, Wattenberg too finds a correlation between likelihood of college attendance and increases in volunteerism (Wattenberg, 180). Although his patterns “do not necessarily prove that many of the brightest high school seniors have been motivated to volunteer for community work in order to bolster their college applications,” he claims that they are “compatible with such an explanation” (180). Although young people are “volunteering at record rates as they prepare for college,” it is clear that after they reach college-preparation age, “there is currently no sign of a great new spirit of voluntarism among

this generation” (182). Consistent with Friedland and Wattenbergs’ findings, volunteer work has been called “resume-padding” by many of my peers informally.

The significance of the root causes for involvement affect the volunteer’s relationship with their service community. If young people are getting involved just to bolster their chances for college acceptance, they will likely engage in short-form service activities that have an expiration date of participation. They likely will not see the long-term structural causes behind the problems that would incite a connection between the political and civic spheres. Rather, their experiences would be limited and palliative – a focus on serving soup, rather than ending homelessness. Boyte contends that service experiences “neglect to teach about root causes and power relationships, fails to stress productive impact, ignores politics, and downplays the strengths and talents of those being served” (Boyte 2004, 12). Volunteers, then, stay in the role of “outside expert.” Similarly, Matthews founds that service learning programs tend to keep careful distance from political education (Matthews 1996, 271). Thus, despite engaging in their communities, civic volunteers are less likely to draw connections between their charity and the bigger, often political picture behind it.

## **Methodology**

In this analysis, I used the 2006 National Survey of Civic and Political Engagement of Young People conducted by the Jonathan M Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, which I will henceforth refer to as the Tufts survey. The survey was designed by students and administered online by professionals from the firm Polimetrix. It sampled 1,000 young people, aged 18-24. Half of the

survey's respondents were enrolled full-time in four year colleges. The other 500 were not full time students.

I was most interested in looking at the relationships between volunteering for community service and political behaviors. To do so, I cross-tabulated a series of political behavior and attitude questions against two measurements of community voluntarism. The control questions, used as both dependent and independent variables, were *How would you describe your level of community involvement?* and an aggregated yes/no response to *How many hours did you participate in community service in the last twelve months?*. These questions are tests of levels of civic engagement, which I am loosely defining as community involvement and community service. This working definition was derived from Zukin, who defined civic engagement as “organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others,” and as participation aimed at achieving public good (Zukin 7, 51). Although the Tufts survey explored a wide array of civic engagement opportunities -- ranging from community-based research to attendance at a civic issue related conference -- my goal was to test a basic proxy for these forms of engagement. Thus, I invoked the two broadest and most basic behavior variables.

The civic variables were then tested against political engagement variables. I tested the question, *Are you currently registered to vote?* as well as *Have you ever voted?* I also created proxy yes/no variable responses for in response to *How many hours were you involved with contacting or visiting a public official (at any level of government) to ask for assistance or to express my opinion?* and *How many hours were you involved in participation in a political campaign?* These two questions were invoked as a progressive demonstration of political voice. If an individual is especially moved by their community

experiences, they would see a policy linkage and contact or work with public officials on that process. At the next level, if they strongly see a connection, they would hypothetically volunteer or work for the political candidate in line with their views to preventively affect policy.

I overviewed attitudes towards government. Individuals that have participated in community service and can see a link to the political sphere are more likely to have positive attitudes towards government. Most importantly, they are more likely to believe that their public officials care about their opinions. To measure this, I used the agreement levels of the following two statements: *Public officials do not care what I think* and *Congresspersons lose touch with the people*. Secondly, individuals that link the civic and political spheres would not likely believe in the substitution effect between the two. As an indicator, I used the agreement levels to the prompt *People are better at solving problems than the federal government*.

Lastly, I examined attitudes towards problem solving of civic issues through politics. Community service participation was cross-tabulated against agreement levels of the following statement: *I am confident that, through political activities, I can make a difference*. This attitude question most explicitly test the positive community efficacy of political activities.

## **RESULTS**

**Voter registration.** The results indicate that people that have registered to vote are more likely to participate in community service than those who are not registered to vote. As indicated in table *vote A*, forty-five percent of those that are registered to vote

have participated in community service, compared to only 35% of young people that are not registered to vote. Unregistered young people have participated in community service at lower rates.

	Registered voter	Unregistered voter	Total
Have participated in community service	45.2%	35.3%	43.9%
Have not participated in community service	54.8%	64.7	56.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Surprisingly, a smaller proportion of those who are registered to vote consider themselves very involved the community than those who are unregistered. On the other hand, the expectation holds true when looking at the relationship between unregistered young people and their identification has not very involved in the community.

		Registered voter	Unregistered voter	Total
How would you describe your level of community involvement?	Not very involved	51.8	63.3	53.2
	Somewhat involved	25.8	18.3	24.9
	Moderately involved	15.2	10.1	14.6
	Very involved	7.3	8.3	7.4
	Total	100	100	100

It seems, then, that the data from table *Vote B* is inconclusive. It is noteworthy that the majority of registered voters (and unregistered potential voters) are not very involved in their communities. There is no trend suggested by the data.

The data also does not suggest that participating in community service makes one substantially more likely to be registered to vote. Young people that are “very involved” in their community are only slightly more likely to be registered to vote than those who are “not very involved.” Moreover, the individuals falling more towards the center of levels of community engagement are somewhat more likely to be registered to vote than either of the extremes.

Table *Vote C*. Voter registration of civic activists or non-activists.

		How would you describe your level of community involvement?				
		Not Very Involved	Somewhat Involved	Moderately Involved	Very Involved	Total
Are you registered to vote?	Registered to Vote	85.9	91.3	91.8	86.8	88.2
	Not Registered to Vote	14.1	8.7	8.2	13.2	11.8
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

These data may line up with arguments about feelings of efficacy; the less involved extreme tend to feel less externally efficacious in general, whereas the more involved extreme perhaps appreciates the “substitution effect” of community involvement as a replacement for political engagement. However, it doesn’t reinforce the notion that increased involvement in civic engagement increases political behaviors.

**Voting.** Being registered is merely the first step. Following, are people who are active in their communities more likely to vote? The difference is slight but noteworthy.

While 7% of people who have participated in community service have not voted, 11% of those who have not participated in community service have not voted. More community service participants than non-participants have voted. Thus, the expectation that community service participants are more likely to pull levers on Election Day was realized.

	Community service participant	Community service non-participant	Total
Have voted	93.0	88.8	90.7
Have not voted	7	11.2	9.3
Total	100%	100%	100%

However, levels of involvement do not seem to matter that much. A remarkable 93% of people who describe themselves as “very involved” voted. Contrastingly, 91% of those who described themselves as “not very involved” voted as well. Thus, though a correlation between community service and voting appears in table *Vote D*, a causal relationship between increased community engagement and increased voting habits is not present in table *Vote E*.

		How would you describe your level of community involvement?				
		Not Very Involved	Somewhat Involved	Moderately Involved	Very Involved	Total
Have you voted?	Have voted	91.2	89.9	95.0	93.2	91.6
	Have not voted	8.8%	10.1%	5.0	6.8%	8.4%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Conversely, there is a connection with community service participation within the block of overall voters. Of individuals that have voted, 46% have participated in

community service. Contrastingly, 34% of individuals that have not voted have participated in community service. Clearly, people engaged in the political process are more likely to be engaged in the political process.

	Have voted	Have not voted	Total
Have participated in community service	46.4	34.2	45.3
Have not participated in community service	53.6	65.8	54.7
Total	100%	100%	100%

The data that there is a connection between community service and voting – the expression of political choice – would support the idea that community participants are making their voices heard through the most basic form of political engagement, electoral participation

**Contacting a public official.** A connection between politics and service should especially be evident for volunteers who see the relationship between service and public policy. Such connection would suggest that individuals engaged in service to their communities would contact public officials about changing the conditions that cause the community issue or the way in which the issue is treated by government. It would also suggest that people who have contacted their public officials have engaged in service to their communities, for the aforementioned reason. The relationship should be self-reinforcing.

It is clear that there is a relationship between involvement in the community and probability of contacting a public official. Of those who consider themselves not very

involved in the community, only 17% have contacted a public official in the last year while 83% have not. On the other hand, of those who consider themselves very involved in the community, 54% have contacted a public official and 46% have not. More significantly, the trend is such that increasing one's involvement also increases one's likelihood to contact a public official. Table *Contact A* indicates that my hypothesis was incorrect; activists who are very involved in their communities do see the connection to the political sphere and do contact their public officials.

Table <i>Contact A</i> . Public official contacting behaviors of those who describe themselves as involved in the community						
		How would you describe your level of community involvement?				
		Not Very Involved	Somewhat Involved	Moderately Involved	Very Involved	Total
Have you contacted a public official?	Yes	16.9%	38.1%	42.9%	53.6%	28.7%
	No	83.1%	61.9%	57.1%	46.4%	71.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Similarly, of young people that have contacted a public official, the pattern also holds true. Individuals that have contacted a public official almost three times as likely to identify as very involved in the community as those who have not contacted a public official but identify as involved in the community. Furthermore, almost half as many of those who have contacted a public official identify as not very involved than those who have not voiced an opinion to a public official.

Table *Contact B* also suggests the connection between community involvement and contacting a public official. Nearly double (approximately 60%) of those who have contacted a public official describe themselves as involved to varying degrees. For those who have not contacted a public official, 62% define themselves as not very involved in

the community. The trend, thus, is that individuals who contact their public officials are engaged in their communities.

Table *Contact B*. Levels of community involvement of individuals that contacted a public official

		Have contacted a public official	Have not contacted a public official	Total
How would you describe your level of community involvement?	Not very involved	31.3%	61.9%	53.1%
	Somewhat involved	33.2%	21.7%	25.0%
	Moderately involved	21.5%	11.5%	14.4%
	Very involved	14.0%	4.9%	7.5%
Total		100	100	100

**Participation in a political campaign.** Are these individuals taking their contacting of public officials to the next level by participating in political campaigns? The results to this question are stark.

Table *Campaign A*. Community service participation of political campaign participants

	Have participated in a political campaign	Have not participated in a political campaign	Total
Have participated in community service	71.7%	37.9%	43.8%
Have not participated in community service	28.3%	62.1%	56.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

There is a very strong correlation between participation in community service and participation in a political campaign. Of the young people that have participated in a political campaign, 72% have participated in a community service. Of individuals that have participated in a political campaign, only 28% have not participated in community

service. The opposite relationship holds true for those who have not participated in a campaign. Those young people are far less likely to have participated in community service.

The results are confirmed by table *Campaign B* and *Campaign C*. There is a clear trend between level of community involvement and participation in a political campaign. Merely 6% of those who are not very involved in their communities have worked on a campaign. In contrast, nearly half of those considering themselves very involved have participated in a campaign.

		How would you describe your level of community involvement?				Total
		Not Very Involved	Somewhat Involved	Moderately Involved	Very Involved	
Have you participated in a political campaign?	Yes	6.1%	25.2%	33.6%	49.3%	18%
	No	93.9%	74.8%	66.4%	50.7%	82%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

	Have participated in community service	Have not participated in community service	Total
	Have participated in a political campaign	28.3%	
Have not participated in a political campaign	71.7%	91.3%	17.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

There is also a connection between community service participation and propensity to participate in a political campaign. Individuals that have participated in community service are more than three times more likely to participate in a political campaign than

those who have not participated in community service. These data support the hypothesis that young people who see problems in their communities are invested in shaping the public policies that cause and treat those problems.<sup>1</sup> They are more likely to engage in the overtly political action of supporting candidates.

**Attitudes towards government.** Although the substitution effect of civic engagement as a replacement for political engagement would postulate that activist individuals do not think that government is doing a satisfactory job addressing social problems, the data indicates otherwise. Among individuals who disagree strongly that “people solve problems better than the federal government does,” two-thirds are community service participants. Of strong opponents of the federal government’s approach, less than half have participated in community service. These data suggest that individuals who participate in community service actually do think that the federal government does a better job than individual action.

Table Agreement A. Community service participation of people who agree with statement “People solve problems better than the federal government does”

		Agreement with statement “People solve problems better than the federal government does					Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Have you participated in community service?	Yes	48.4%	43.3%	40.3%	54.7%	66.7%	44.4%
	No	51.6%	56.7%	59.7%	45.3%	33.3%	55.6%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100%

Similarly, people that strongly agreed with the statement “Congresspersons lose touch with the people” tended not to have participated in community service. However,

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that it might be a methodological problem. Individuals might perceive participation in political campaign as a form of community service, contributing to an endogeneity problem.

the most vehement opponents of that statement had 4:1 community service participation ratio. The overall trend indicated that the likelihood of disagreeing with the statement correlated with participation in community service; that people who think that Congresspersons are in touch with the people are the individuals that are civically engaged themselves.

Table *Agreement B*. Community service participation of people who agree with statement “Congresspersons lose touch with the people”

		Agreement with statement “Congresspersons lose touch with the people”					Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Have you participated in community service?	Yes	40.4%	43.8%	44.1%	54.4%	80.0%	44.2%
	No	59.6%	56.3%	55.9%	45.6%	20.0%	55.8%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100%

These findings suggest that civically engaged young people, in contrast to my hypothesis, tend to believe that government works well and responds to them. Rather than feel like they have more individual efficacy, they also possess feelings of external efficacy for which the political sphere serves as an outlet.

These attitudes are confirmed by Table *Agreement C*.

Table *Agreement C*. Responses to “I am confident that, through political activities, I can make a difference” of community service participants

		Community Service Participant	Community Service Non-Participant	Total
Responses to “I am confident that, through	Strongly Agree	17.8%	12.9%	15.1%

political activities, I can make a difference.”	Agree	38.4%	29.8%	33.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	31.5%	42.2%	37.5%
	Disagree	9.2%	10.9%	10.2%
	Strongly Disagree	3.1%	4.1%	3.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100%

Community service participants agree strongly that they can make a difference in their communities through political activities. They do not exhibit strong feelings of cynicism of politics. Rather, they are engaged in politics and their communities. They see politics as a way to make a difference. This data refutes my hypothesis that young people’s initial cynicism would discourage them from entering into the political sphere. The civically engaged youth cohort is making connections between political and civic activities.

**Results Overview**

The results, overall, indicate that certain behaviors are affected by community service participation and others are not. The basic electoral engagement behaviors of voter registration and voting seem less significantly affected by community service participation. On the other hand, individuals engaged in civic behaviors are more likely to contact public officials and participate in political campaigns. There also seems to be a reinforcement mechanism in place; individuals that are engaged in contacting public officials and in political campaigns are more likely to be involved in their communities. Furthermore, the self-reinforcement seems to happen on a positive gradation. As individuals become more involved in their communities, their rate of contacting public

officials also increases. Similarly, as individuals become more involved in their communities, they become increasingly involved in political campaigns.

The self-reinforcement demonstrated by contacting and campaign participation is the most promising indicator of a connection between civic and political behaviors. It realizes the hypothesis that individuals that become more engaged in civic behaviors are more likely to be involved in political behaviors -- and that individuals involved in political behaviors are more likely to be engaged in civic behaviors. That linkage suggests that civic engagement has been a positive component of political engagement.

Additionally, civically engaged individuals have positive feelings towards government. They believe that public officials are paying attention to them. They do not doubt that they can make a difference through political activities. They are not turning to civic behaviors because, as suggested by Sax, there is a substitution effect. They seem to be doing both.

Overall, my conclusion is that the data sends mixed messages about the youth cohort. Civically engaged youths are more likely to be involved in political activities than youths that are not civically engaged. However, even civically engaged youths are not very involved in political activities. Although 72% of the youths that participated in a political campaign were civically engaged, only 28% of civically engaged youths have participated in a political campaign in the first place. Overall, though, the data suggests an optimistic outlook about community service's investment in the human capital of American citizens.

### **Room for improvement**

Though the data certainly suggests an overall conclusion, there is still room for improvement. The results are in line with one of the fundamental limitations of this analysis, which is the difficulty of distinguishing between the correlative and causal relationships. For many reasons, the individuals more likely to engage in political behaviors are initially more likely to engage in community behaviors. There is often a correlation between civic engagement and political engagement. However, it is not clear that the individuals engaging in political behaviors did so as a result of their civic engagement. To clarify, perhaps those individuals were more likely to engage in those political behaviors in the first place. The question becomes: Are they exhibiting a political behavior because they were involved in the community or because they're the type of person who would be involved in the community in the first place?

The self-selecting individuals that choose to volunteer or identify as very involved in the community are already more likely, for exogenous factors, to be politically engaged. For example, Friedland demonstrates that young people whose chances of attending college are higher – and especially those competing for acceptance at the most elite institutions – are more likely to be engaged in volunteer work. Thus, Friedland is also testing such variables as household income and education. Individuals with higher income levels or more education are more likely to be politically engaged in the first place (Longo, Zukin). Thus, there is a correlative relationship on the basis of income to both civic engagement and political engagement. Does the data of the Tufts survey reflect this inherent endogeneity or an original finding about voluntarism and political engagement?

Secondly, there was no survey question addressing the exact research question. Although correlative relationships were found between community service and contacting a public official, for example, it cannot be concluded that the individual contacted the public official *because* of their volunteer work. Although I think can be inferred, it is not absolute. A survey question explicitly asking, “Did your community involvement inspire you to contact a public official?” or “Has your community experience made you more likely to contact a public official?” would get at the root of the question more directly.

Additionally, the survey lacked a longitudinal element. I originally hypothesized that the types of involvement engaging the youth cohort, who is invested in resume-padding rather than social improvement, tended not to be a thorough experience. Relationships between civic and political issues may not be so clear during palliative service experiences. On the other hand, I believe that a long-term engagement with a specific community service project would enhance an individual’s ability to make deeper connections about the root causes of the problem. The time and emotional investment would better enable the individual to see the bigger picture behind the problem. That big picture connects the social with the political – connecting poverty with redlining, welfare reform, tax policy, and more policy-oriented political issues. A long-term study might demonstrate more of a directly causal relationship than presently witnessed.

All of the aforementioned would make for good places to expand on the research of the civic-political divide. As previously mentioned, this is a research area in which much study is still needed. I hope, especially as Tufts continues to make hefty

investments in the active citizenship and civic engagement of its students, this research area continues to be pursued.

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