Voting and Volunteering

Attitudinal Gap among the Youth and Its Implications for Policy-Making

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Izumi YAMANAKA, M.A.

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Izumi Yamanaka

Thesis Advisor: Christopher Toppe, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at gaining an accurate understanding of the characteristic attitudes and problems of young people in the United States with special focus on two activities, voting and volunteering. Currently, there is a gap between the number of voters and the number of volunteers, especially among the rising generation. If youths are highly politically conscious but do not vote, and instead, choose to volunteer as a means of political participation, there must be some problem that distances them from voting.

Both of the activities, voting and volunteering, are important factors of a stable democracy. The currently observable gap makes the two activities seem mutually exclusive, but one cannot take over the role of the other. It is important to establish cooperative relationships and strike the balance between their functions.

What current studies on voting and volunteering critically lack is a view which could interrelate youths’ social and political participation. Thus, the central question in my research is to find what makes the youth volunteer but not vote, and also to design public policy capable of encouraging the two forms of participation, and to attempt to find the balance between them. This analysis aims at making a contribution to future policy-making with due consideration for younger generations.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I must thank Dr. Chris Toppe for his continued advice and support in completing this thesis. His expertise and feedback made my study especially rewarding for me. From the point of deciding on my topic and finding datasets, he helped me significantly and this paper could never have been possible without his help. I also want to thank Prof. Jeff Mayer for kindly offering to help me with my English although I asked him for help at the last minutes. My friends from Georgetown University not only supported me with the study but also made my graduate experience happy and productive. My thanks are also due to my parents and my friends from Japan for their continued encouragement.
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I. Introduction: Political Participation in America

Outline of the Issue

The United States is often regarded as having an “advanced” form of democracy with active political participation and civil engagement, as highlighted by voting and volunteering. Enthusiastic public scenes of U.S. presidential elections come as an enviable surprise to citizens in many other democratic countries, and the systematized deployment of volunteer activities in the United States has been a model for developing the third-sector world over.

Yet, such external images of politically active Americans are contradicted by the voting rates of American youth. Despite the fact that young people in the United States show extremely high interests in politics,¹ after the 2000 election, only 32.3 percent of the population between the ages of 18 to 24 said that they had voted. The percentage is noteworthy if one compares it with a reported turnout rate of 54.7 percent for the entire voting-age population. A low turnout rate for young voters is not a problem specific to the United States, it is also a problem for many other countries. On the other hand, young people in recent years have exhibited rising volunteering rates in recent years. How do we explain this difference?

Most surveys suggest a growing volunteer rate among young people in recent years. These surveys also suggest that young people volunteer at higher rates than their older counterparts. According to a finding 2002 survey, the Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A General Portrait, 15 to 25 year-old reported volunteering at the rate of 40.2% over the previous 12-month period, while the national average volunteering rate is 31.7%. Another study conducted by the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Center in the Institute for Social Research shows that among their sample of 50,000 high school students, volunteering rates remained steady at approximately 67% between 1976 and 1990, but have risen to over 76% in the past 15 years. ²

Undeniably, school requirements for volunteer participation are a possible factor for the rise in volunteer participation rate among young people and consequently, one of the factors that widens the participation gap between voting and volunteering. However, if young people are disengaged from the political process because they find it ineffective,³ there is something we need to worry about. It is often said that today’s increasingly varying social needs and issues are making it impossible for the government to deal with them alone so that it is important to involve nongovernmental actors. Yet, although governments are no longer the sole actor in governance, the fact

does not lessen the importance of voting. Rather, it makes it more important to find
and establish the means to balance various sectors’ roles within the system. One way to
look at the statistic gap between the two activities will be to interpret it, for instance as
indicating a general problem, viz. a decline in the expectation and trust in the
government’s ability to deal with social or political issues, as a result of which young
people may be more inclined to do volunteer work than to vote because they see
volunteer organization as more effective than the government in addressing social
problems.

The act of voting is the essence of democracy because it implies willingness to
participate in the process of social governance. According to a study conducted by the
Aspen Institute, voting is not something one would learn to do when a person gets
older. Instead, a pattern is established when one is young and continues into old age,\(^4\)
which makes the low turnout rate of the young people even more problematic for the
future of American democracy. On the other hand, the degree of volunteer participation
can be looked at as an indicator of attitudes towards non-governmental local problem
solving, but with different criterion that the participation does not substitute voting.

Although there has been increase in the latter, therefore, the low rate of the
former never should be overlooked, and it is important to clarify factors which are

\(^4\) Aspen Institute, 2000, “Democracy and Citizenship Program, 30million Missing Voters: A
Candidate’s Toolkit for Reaching Young Americans”, Aspen, CO, Aspen
generating the participation gap. The purpose of this study is to gain an accurate understanding of the characteristic attitudes and problems affecting political participation of young people in the United States, with special focus on voting and volunteering. By analyzing the currently observed gap between these two activities, this study aims at increasing volunteer and political participation of the young people.
Review of Literature

There is abundant literature on the issues related to voting and volunteering. Common focus of such studies is how demographic background or religious beliefs influence the level of participation, and how those activities affect democracy in the United States.

The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) has conducted analyses based on their own survey data, focusing on the participation of young people in volunteer activities and voting. According to a CIRCLE report released in March 2002, one of the most important factors in determining whether young people vote or not is parental political backgrounds. The report also points out the influence of factors such as education level, age, partisanship, and regular church attendance on voting and volunteering engagement. Yet, it fails to clarify whether there is any difference in the levels of influence of these factors in encouraging a young citizen to be a voter, volunteer, or both at the same time.

While voting has been considered as a traditional form of political participation, volunteering has been frequently cited as an indicator of the degree of activeness of civil society, which constitutes important characteristics of a stable democracy. The importance of civil society in democracy can be attested to by the

\[5\text{ CIRCLE, March 2004, Short-Term Impact, Long-Term Opportunities: The Political and Civic Engagement of Young Adult in America, p.4}\]
difficulties faced by most of the countries which have shifted to democracy from authoritarian regimes, commonly characterized by administrative systems that exclude the public from getting involved in political affairs. For them, establishing such a social foundation is often more challenging than implementing democratic regimes in itself. In the United States, by contrast, democracy is already supported by a social culture and civic engagement. For the reason, civic and political engagement in this country are often falsely considered to have the same roots, as if the context of American society functions to encourage the participation to the both activities in the same way.

CIRCLE’s findings on volunteering have clarified how the young people distinguish social or civic participation from political participation, highlighting their divergent perceptions towards the two activities, and accordingly, their different motivation to be engaged. According to the study, “involvement in political activities is much lower than in activities that provide direct service or focus on the community more broadly. As has been seen in other studies, young adults see community activism and political activism as two separate items.” Another CIRCLE study also has revealed that engagement in voting and volunteering might not necessarily be

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7 Ibid.
correlated, but it has not examined or compared the characteristics or demographic factors which influence young people to become voters and/or volunteers separately.

In contrast to these earlier studies, my study uses statistical models to estimate the likelihood of the both types of engagements in a manner which allows me to assess the relative influence of young people’s characteristics and experiences on their participation in volunteering and voting, separately and simultaneously.

*Defining Social Capital*

It is true that the young people have been relatively inactive participants in voting all through history. As I have mentioned already, however, while young people are reluctant to be politically involved, they are willing to serve their local community as volunteers. This participation gap deserves special attention.

For the reasons I mentioned earlier, studies of American democracy from outside of the country have commonly focused on social culture and civic engagement. The United States has been referred to as the prototype of democracy with lively civil engagement supported by rich “social capital.” However, while this view explains the rise in young people’s volunteer participation, it fails to explain their voting behavior. If the so-called “social capital” is so influential in creating civic-minded individuals

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and driving them to support democracy, why are young people detached from voting? My study seeks empirically-based answers to this question.

Before going on to my analysis, though, it is necessary to look further at the idea of social capital. The term received wide recognition when it was first used by Pierre Bourdieu in 1986. Bourdieu defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable networks of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”.\(^{11}\) Authors who follow Bourdieu agree as to the core meaning of the term\(^{12}\) but show a minor difference depending on whether they are more individually or institutionally oriented in their interpretation of the term.\(^{13}\)

Putnam (2000) described social capital as a social network, with more emphasis on the reciprocal relationships among people within a community.\(^{14}\) According to Putnam, social capital is the network which contributes to both collective and individual development, and consequently, of equal benefit to people and society. It


\(^{13}\) Grootaert and Bastelaer (2001), for example, see a stronger correlation between social structure and individuals. According to them, social capital “includes the institutions, the relationship, the attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development”

\(^{14}\) Robert Putnam, 2000, *Bowling Alone*, Touchstone, pp.18-32
“refers to the collective value of all ‘social networks’ and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other.”\textsuperscript{15}

However, many authors, among whom Putnam is a leading figure, have argued that those factors which have widely been considered as the strength of the United States are in the decline. According to Salamon, for example, changes currently under way are threatening U.S. civil society.\textsuperscript{16} Aside from changes in governmental policies which are directly affecting the activities of civic organizations, there have been discussions about the decline of civic engagement on the micro level – e.g. activities based on communities and face-to-face relationship.\textsuperscript{17} The warning that Salamon and Putnam issue in agreement has two implications: first, the situation is worrisome because the affected institutions and behaviors form the very social foundation of democracy in the United States. Second is the possibility that governmental and social changes are undermining social capital.

\textit{Balancing Two Forms of Participation}

Putnam alerted the public to the current situation, indicating the changes in society that have made the traditional perception of American civic communities no longer applicable. According to \textit{Bowling Alone – The Collapse and Revival of}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.\hfill \textsuperscript{16} Lester M. Salamon ed., 2002, \textit{The state of Nonprofit America}, Brookings Institution Press, pp.12-29\hfill \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.}
American Community,\textsuperscript{18} civil society has broken down as Americans have become more detached from their families, local communities, and moreover, from the republic. However, the alert as such is at odds in the current rise in the volunteer participation among the youth and high political/social interest they demonstrate.\textsuperscript{19}

In addition to the alleged decline in social capital, some observers see gradual changes in the ways people locate themselves in communities or societies. Ken Thompson points out that “there is not a clear link between bowling with a local team, to use Putnam’s famous example, and grappling with the issues of democracy that determine how local, state, and national government address policy issues”.\textsuperscript{20} It is possible that activities which constitute the current form of social capital and the new way to generate “connectedness” might have turned into something qualitatively different which cannot be measured by traditional scales. The decline in such traditional activities as membership in a local bowling league or in religious organizations might not be an accurate reflection of shift of the society.

On the other hand, the nature of voting can be contrasted with that of civic engagement. Just like civic engagement and volunteer activities, it also has operated through the historic path of the U.S., as a form of political participation. According to

\textsuperscript{18} Robert Putnam, 2000, pp.18-32  
\textsuperscript{20} Ken Thompson, 2001, Neighborhood to Nation: The Democratic Foundation of Civil Society, University Press of New England, p.2
Furuya, the political trend in this country has remained unchanged over the years, creating a sharp contrast with the social conditions which transform or evolve overtime. In this sense, continuity can be attributed to the traditional way of expressing political opinions – a way based on the institutionalized framework of democracy and kept up through all transitions of the society.

The point mentioned above provides some perspective on my earlier question about how the characteristics of social culture or social capital are reflected differently in voting and volunteering. At the same time, it also points out the importance of both of these activities. Regardless of the presence of other forms of political/social engagement, voting is still a fundamental feature of democracy, which prioritizes the majority’s choices in the decision-making processes. No matter how active the volunteering participation in this country is, the fundamental and legitimate method of democracy must be valued and its prominent function should not be neglected. There is a consensus among political scientists that high voter turnout is desirable for democracy because it is generally seen as evidence of a legitimacy of the system.

As far as we can judge from the low voting turnout rate and high engagement in volunteer works among the youth, politics might have been unable to catch up with social change, and it may have failed to make believe that voting actually can improve social/political situations today as effectively as volunteering. In fact, getting young

\[21\text{ Ibid.}\]
people to vote often requires a special effort. According to the study conducted by Green and Gerber on 2000 election, young Americans “sense that the election is important, but many are detached from the electoral process. They need authentic encouragement of a peer to become participants.”

Incidentally, the above-mentioned study shows that what can be easily numerically measured, such as voter turnout rates and percentage engagement to the local bowling league might not necessarily correctly reflect the youth attitudes towards the two activities—voting and volunteering. There is also a possibility that young people do not participate in the activities although they find it important or effective, which even blurs the cause of observed participation gap, which calls for the need of a different focus of the study.

In view of the current trends among the youth, the first question to be asked is, what makes the youth volunteer but not vote? If we are to encourage youth to be engaged in both activities, how can we motivate them to become voters and volunteers at the same time? Through detailed analysis of the characteristics of voters, volunteers and those who votes and volunteers, I hope to make an effective proposal for practitioners who intend to alter the situation, and make a contribution to establish policies related to the younger generation.

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22 Donald B. Green and Alan S. Gerber, December 2001, “Getting out the Youth Vote: Results from Randomized Field Experiments”, Yale University, pp.26-28
Hypothesis and Research Design

In my study, I will use the National Youth Survey 2004 (NYS), a survey conducted by the Council for Excellence in Government/Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). NYS is a behavior survey of young Americans in the age brackets 15-25 as of November of 2003. The Survey interviewed 1,000 young people on their range of civic engagement activities, policy issues they are concerned, and their attitudes toward various policy issues. It was conducted by telephone, employing professional interviewers, and telephone numbers were drawn from random digit dial samples. The data were weighted by age, gender, and racial group to reflect the actual distribution of young people in the national population.23

In order to clarify the characteristics of voters and volunteers and the correlations between them, I will focus on a series of NYS questions relating to civic engagement, volunteering, and voting/political opinions. Since the survey did not ask about voting directly and not all the sample is over the age of 18, attitudes toward voting are used as a proxy for voting and for how it is perceived by young people. This approach stands to reason since we are more broadly concerned with attitudes toward the political system relative to volunteering, not just voting itself.

To examine the relationships between volunteering and voting behavior of young Americans, the likelihood of engaging in each activity should be first estimated by using logistic regression analysis. This process includes, first, preparing some basic descriptive statistics on the variables of interest, and secondly, constructing models capable of defining the statistical significance of the independent variables on voting and volunteering.

The point to be clarified is the respective characteristics of the youths who prefer to volunteer and those who have positive attitudes towards voting, and convergence and divergence among them. The second focus of this analysis is to identify the factors that make young people likely to be engaged in both of the activities at the same time.

CIRCLE’s dataset includes 102 variables, and I do not use all of them as explanatory variables in each instance. Instead, I regenerated new dummy variables using three relevant categories from the original dataset. Those categories are: 1) civic engagement variables, which capture the attitudes towards civic engagement and also measures the actual participation in community-based activities. Data in this category are responses to the questions regarding one’s belief in how much difference one can make in the society, and whether one has ever worked in a group to solve a problem in the community where one lives. The second includes 2) political voice variables. Data
in this category are based on the answers to the questions measuring general attitudes towards the government and politics. The data also cover “political culture” at home – such as degrees of political engagement of parents and whether one talks about politics with parents or not. The last set of variables includes demographic information and some other factors, such as birthplace, parents’ birthplace, and frequency of church attendance.

Three models will be run; one with a dependent variable which measures volunteer participation; a second one which the dependent variable is attitudes towards voting in terms of its importance perceived by the respondent; and a third using a interaction term of the dependent variable from the first two models defined as (voting*volunteering) in which the variable is the likelihood of engaging in voting and volunteering at the same time. Regarding all these models, I will test the statistical significance of the variables in order to identify the determinant factors for the estimations.

Using the result of these regression models, I will attempt to provide an answer to these questions, using an empirical method. First I will examine the characteristics of voters and volunteers, and try to see which of the various explanatory variables are significant in explaining the likelihood of voting. The likelihood of voting will be compared with that of volunteering, and later, with the likelihood of the two activities
together: What are the characteristics of voters and volunteers? Are they very different in their social/political attitudes and background? What are the influential factors in making them engaged in the either one or both of activities? Do their behaviors reflect a “decline” in U.S. social capital? In the next section, I will interpret the results in attempt to answer these questions.

The reason I use the logistic regression model is because it is more suitable than linear probability model for estimating the binary choice behavior between whether you do or you don’t. Odds ratio of each independent variable give the likelihood of respondents to be a voter, volunteer, or both at the same time.
II. Analysis of the Activity Participation

What makes young people more likely to vote?

Before proceeding to logistic regression analysis, I ran general descriptive statistics on voting, which are a dependent variable in the first model, and later I did the same for volunteering and for the interaction of the two. Results are arrayed in the following section.

Table 1: Response to the question: “How important is voting to you personally?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extremely important</strong></td>
<td>158</td>
<td>15.80</td>
<td>15.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very important</strong></td>
<td>364</td>
<td>36.40</td>
<td>52.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somewhat important</strong></td>
<td>267</td>
<td>26.70</td>
<td>78.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A little important</strong></td>
<td>137</td>
<td>13.70</td>
<td>92.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not important at all</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>98.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Don’t know)</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast to the turnout rate of 32.2% in the 2000 election, table 1 shows that the majority expresses positive attitudes towards voting. Those who responded that voting is extremely important or very important account for 52.2% of all the respondents. For the purposes of my paper, these individuals will be referred to as “voters”. Possibly the gap is due to the inclusion of people under age of 18, and at the same time, it implies the attitudinal difference between the perception of the importance of the act and the actual engagement in it.

The following logistic regression model estimates the likelihood of young people participating in voting, controlling for 16 relevant variables which are all converted into binary form.

\[
P(vote = 1 | x) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Trust Government}) + \beta_2(\text{Trust people}) + \beta_3(\text{Talk about politics w/parents}) + \beta_4(\text{Taken class on Gov't/Politics/Civics}) + \beta_5(\text{"I can make difference") + \beta_6(\text{Group solves problems}) + \beta_7(\text{Attend Church regularly}) + \beta_8(\text{Political Party Support}) + \beta_9(\text{Political patron of company}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Boycott of company}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Parent vote}) + \beta_{12}(\text{Parents birthplace}) + \beta_{13}(\text{Birth Place}) + \beta_{14}(\text{Race}) + \beta_{15}(\text{Gender}) + \beta_{16}(\text{volunteer})
\]

Results from the logistic regression analysis, with voting as the dependent variable, are included in table 2. The odds ratio shows a respondent’s likelihood of
being a voter if he or she answered yes to each question, with the questions captured as independent variables. For example, if the respondent answered yes to the question “trust government”, the odds ratio for the independent variable shows how many times more likely the person is to be a voter if the one trusts government. For the variables “parents birthplace” and “birthplace”, the odds ratios show likelihood of voting if parents or the respondent are born in the United States. The ratio is 0 if not born in the Untied States. The odds ratios for the race and gender show the likelihoods of being a voter when the respondent is white, or male, with being a non-white and female captured as 0.
Table 2: Results of the first model:
Effects of the variable characterizing young people who are more likely to vote

| Characteristics that make one more likely to vote | Odds Ratio | p>|zl |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------|------|
| Talked about politics w/ parents | 3.465167** | 0.000 |
| Trust government | 2.521497** | 0.000 |
| Parents vote | 2.34597** | 0.000 |
| “I can make a difference” | 1.878383** | 0.000 |
| Party support | 1.80082** | 0.001 |
| Volunteer | 2.051031** | 0.002 |
| Race (white/non-white) | 1.694784** | 0.003 |
| Trust people | 1.594345** | 0.006 |
| Attend church regularly | 1.47666* | 0.013 |
| Political Patron of company | 1.642925* | 0.029 |
| Group solve problem | .640934 | 0.104 |
| Taken class on Gov’t/Politics/Civics | 1.266455 | 0.159 |
| Gender | 1.237061 | 0.169 |
| Birthplace | .6295801 | 0.350 |
| Parent birthplace | .7958835 | 0.547 |
| Boycott | 1.096603 | 0.41 |

Pseudo R² = 0.2477

** Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level

*Statistically significant at the 95% confidence level

There are 10 variables that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level in predicting the likelihood of whether one would vote or not. The variables are...
presented here in decreasing order of statistical significance, and those with the same statistical significance are shown in decreasing order of odds ratio.

“Talk about politics with parents”, which measures whether one have talked about the issue with parents while growing up shows the largest odds ratio of 3.6 – i.e. those who have talked about politics are approximately 3.6 times likelier to vote than those who have not. At the same time, as shown in the table, another variable which measures the political background or political culture at home also has a relatively high odds ratio. Whether parents vote or not, not only for important elections but in general, has a strong influence on children’s behavior by making them 2.4 times likelier to vote. However, contrary to the importance of learning from parents’ behavior, taking classes in politics, government or civic education issues has no effect on voting.

This analysis agrees with other studies, including CIRCLE’s, which shows that parental political involvement is the biggest predictor of youth political involvement. The result can also be related to the study conducted by Aspen Institute (2000) which emphasizes the importance of acquiring the habit of voting while young as a predictor of later voting behavior.

“Trust government” also shows a relatively high odds ratio of 2.52. “I can make difference” and “Support (of either) political party” are highly statistically significant in 99% confidence level and have odds ratio of around 1.8, which shows that the major
variables based on questions that are designed to measure political voice are within the top 5 of the most influential variables.

“Trust people”, with an odds ratio of 1.59, proved to have a smaller influence compared to the major variables reflecting the questions related to the government and politics. “Race”, a variable defined as either white or non-white, is the only statistically significant variable among all demographic information variables, with an odds ratio of 1.69. Regular church attendance has no statistical significance at the 99% confidence level, but has odds ratio of 1.47 at the 95% confidence level.

**What makes young people more likely to volunteer?**

Table 3 below demonstrates percentages of actual engagement in volunteer activities.

Table 3: Response to the question:
“Have you ever spent time participating in any community service or volunteering activity?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in last 12 month</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>25.80</td>
<td>25.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, not last 12 months</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>19.90</td>
<td>45.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>54.20</td>
<td>99.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Don’t know)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25.80% of the respondents answered that they participated in volunteer activities within 12 month period, and 19.90% answered they had volunteered, but not within 12 months. Although I counted both those who answered voting to be “extremely important” or “very important” as voters, which made the category to cover 52% of the respondents, I will refer only to those who volunteered within a year period (25.80%) as “volunteers.” In view of the aim of my paper to capture the political/social attitudes of the young people, this would be more reasonable than including the respondents who volunteered but not within the last 12 months, and by narrowing the definition, I rule out those who are not habitual or continuous volunteers.

The model includes the same 16 independent variables as the first model, but has different dependent variables. The model is as follows:

\[ P(\text{volunteer} = 1 | x) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Trust Government}) + \beta_2(\text{Trust people}) + \beta_3(\text{Talk about politics w/parents}) + \beta_4(\text{Taken class on Gov’t/Politics/Civics}) + \beta_5(\text{“I can make difference”}) + \beta_6(\text{Group solves problems}) + \beta_7(\text{Attend Church regularly}) + \beta_8(\text{Political Party Support}) + \beta_9(\text{Political patron of company}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Boycott of company}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Parent vote}) + \beta_{12}(\text{Parents birthplace}) + \beta_{13}(\text{Birth Place}) + \beta_{14}(\text{Race}) + \beta_{15}(\text{Gender}) + \beta_{16}(\text{vote}) \]
Table 4: Results of the first model: 
Effects of the variable characterizing young people who are more likely to volunteer

| Characteristics that make one more likely to volunteer | Odds Ratio | p>|z| |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Group solves problems                                  | 28.7199**  | 0.000 |
| Voting is important                                    | 1.999889** | 0.002 |
| Trust people                                           | 1.767285** | 0.004 |
| Parents birthplace(U.S.=1/0otherwise)                 | .3065083** | 0.005 |
| Attend Church regularly                                | 1.534101*  | 0.028 |
| Gender (men = 1/women = 0)                             | .689718     | 0.052 |
| Taken class on Gov’t/Politics/Civics                  | 1.454609    | 0.057 |
| Birth Place (U.S. = 1/0 otherwise)                    | 3.151408    | 0.062 |
| Parent vote                                           | 1.236166    | 0.364 |
| Boycott of company                                     | 1.246651    | 0.407 |
| “I can make difference”                                | 1.149623    | 0.484 |
| Race (white = 1/0 otherwise)                           | .8983601    | 0.619 |
| Talk about politics w/parents                          | .9405782    | 0.778 |
| Political Party Support                                | .9673998    | 0.882 |
| Political patron of company                            | .9660877    | 0.889 |
| Trust Government                                       | .9836258    | 0.935 |

Pseudo R² = 0.3359

** Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level
* Statistically significant at the 95% confidence level
Compared to the first model, there are fewer variables with statistical significance at conventional levels, and only one variable with z-value of 0.000. However, the result displays interesting things about those who are likely to engage in volunteering activities, and the second model has a stronger explanatory power (pseudo R-square = 0.3359) than the previous one.

Estimated likelihood for the variable “group solves problem”, which captures whether one has engaged in group activities to solve problems in the community where one lives shows a strikingly high odds ratio of 28.7199. The result is not unforeseeable since what is being measured by the variable is participation in informal group activity to solve problems and the variable is similar to that of the dependent variable “volunteer”. On the basis of the original survey questions from CIRCLE’s study which clearly differentiate engagement in unofficial volunteer activities from official ones, however, I treated the two variables differently. In fact, the intention of the question in the original survey for the latter variable is to measure the level of engagement in what is called “unofficial volunteer.” At the same time, it is important to note that in contrast with the first model, “group solve problems” is the only variable in this model with statistical significance at 99% confidence level. According to the result, those who participated in unofficial group activities are 29 times likelier to engage oneself in official volunteering activities as well.
Voting has the second highest statistical significance in the model, with p-value of 0.002. This is similar to the result from the volunteer variable in the first model – those who volunteer are almost twice as likely to vote as those who do not, and vice versa. Another similarity between the two models is regular church attendance; those who attend church regularly are almost 1.5 times likelier to vote or volunteer. Trust in people is more influential in estimating likelihood of volunteer, which is also expectable. As we have seen in the first model, trust in the government is an important estimator for one’s likelihood of having positive attitudes toward voting, and trust in people is more important in determining one’s likelihood to be a volunteer.

Interestingly, parents’ birthplace -- whether it is the United States or another country -- is the only variable with statistical significance in the second model, despite the fact that birthplace of the youths themselves does not seem to influence volunteer engagement. The youth whose parents were born in the United States is far less likely to volunteer (odds ratio = .3065083). Learning at school, i.e. taking classes on the issues related to politics, government, and civic education, has no influence in determining the youth’s likelihood to volunteer, just as it had no effect on voting in the first model.
How do the Young People who Vote and Volunteer Look Like?

As I have discussed already, it is meaningful for the democracy in this country to consider why the youth are estranged from voting while attracted to volunteering, and to look for the means to encourage their participation in both in an well-balanced manner. According to the results from the previous section, there is a sharp contrast between those who are more likely to vote and those who are more likely to volunteer, but there are also the young people who engage in both or neither activity. As shown in table 5, 39.7% of the respondents think voting to be unimportant and do not volunteer either, and only 17.7 % think voting to be important and at the same time volunteer.

Table 5: Attitudes towards Voting and Volunteer Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voting is NOT Important(%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT Volunteered</td>
<td>397 (39.7%)</td>
<td>742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered</td>
<td>81 (81%)</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voting is Important (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT Volunteered</td>
<td>345 (34.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered</td>
<td>177 (17.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the results from logistic regression with interaction term of voting and volunteering as a dependent variable. In this model, “both vote and volunteer” will be excluded since the dependent variable is their interaction term. Therefore, there will be 15 independent variables. The resulting model is as follows:
\[ P(\text{vote} \times \text{volunteer} = 1|x) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Trust Government}) + \beta_2(\text{Trust people}) + \beta_3(\text{Talk about politics w/parents}) + \beta_4(\text{Taken class on Gov't/Politics/Civics}) + \beta_5(\text{"I can make difference"}) + \beta_6(\text{Group solves problems}) + \beta_7(\text{Attend Church regularly}) + \beta_8(\text{Political Party Support}) + \beta_9(\text{Political patron of company}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Boycott of company}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Parent vote}) + \beta_{12}(\text{Parents birthplace}) + \beta_{13}(\text{Birth Place}) + \beta_{14}(\text{Race}) + \beta_{15}(\text{Gender}) \]
Table 6: Young people who both vote and volunteer

| Variable                                | Odds Ratio      | p>|z|     |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Group solves problems                   | 9.390973**      | 0.000  |
| “I can make difference”                 | 2.104691**      | 0.000  |
| Trust people                            | 1.847385**      | 0.004  |
| Taken class on Gov’t/Politics/Civics    | 1.82209**       | 0.004  |
| Attend Church regularly                 | 1.782195**      | 0.006  |
| Participated in boycott                 | 1.981471*       | 0.015  |
| Parent vote                             | 1.677717        | 0.051  |
| Party support                           | 1.582624        | 0.070  |
| Talk about politics w/parents           | 1.533299        | 0.073  |
| Parent birthplace                       | .4304995        | 0.084  |
| Race                                    | 1.490341        | 0.094  |
| Trust government                        | 1.27999         | 0.255  |
| Gender                                  | .7934985        | 0.259  |
| Political patron of company             | .8258018        | 0.510  |
| Birthplace                              | 1.076615        | 0.909  |

Pseudo R² = 0.2985

** Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level
* Statistically significant at the 95% confidence level

The result shown in table 6 seems a combination of the results from the previous two models. “Group solves problem” shows the largest odds ratio and is
highly statistically significant with p-value of 0.000. “I can make difference”
demonstrates a slightly higher odds ratio than the model which estimates the likelihood
of voting. “Trust government”, however, is no longer statistically significant, while
those who “trust people” are approximately 1.8 times likelier to both vote and
volunteer. The odds ratio for “attend church regularly” is roughly 0.2-0.3 points higher
than in the earlier models, while all the variables which reflect parental backgrounds –
talk about politics, parents vote, and parents’ birthplace – lose their statistical
significance.

There are two variables which emerges as statistically significant for the first
time, “Taken class on Gotv’t/Politics/Civics” and “Participated in boycott”. Those who
have taken relevant classes are roughly 1.8 times more likely to participate in both of
the activities, which can be contrasted with the previous models and conventional
understanding towards the significance of parental influence over one’s political
participation.

“Boycott” is defined as whether one has “ever decided NOT to buy something
from a certain company because one disagrees with the social, environmental, worker,
or political policies of the company that distributes an item.” It is contrasted with the
“Political Patron” variable, which indicates if one has ever bought something because
one agrees with the policies of a certain company. As shown in the table above, those
who have ever avoided purchasing something on account of their disagreement with the company’s policy are twice as likely to both vote and volunteer. It is difficult to decide which of the alternative behaviors, deciding to buy or not to buy, reflects stronger political and/or social opinions and attitudes, but it is noteworthy that “political patron” is statistically significant with odds ratio of 1.6429, indicating that a young person was likelier to vote, when neither patron nor boycott was statistically significant in the volunteering likelihood estimation.

All the demographic variables are statistically insignificant in the third model, including “race” and “birthplace of parents.” Together with the likelihood of some other variables, it can be said that what induces a young person to engage in both voting and volunteering is neither parental background, which nurtures political culture at home, nor something one is born with, such as race or parents’ social values.

According to the third model, what influences the likelihood of voting and volunteering can be summarized as follows: 1) most importantly, group engagement in solving problems, but at the same time, 2) it is important to have the belief that individual action can make difference in the society. 3) Trust in people is more important than trust in the government. In addition, 4) learning through the experience of association with social institutions, including school and church, has a considerable influence in making one to engage in both activities.
III. Summary of Key findings and their Implications for Practitioners

How to Encourage Young People to Vote and Volunteer?

Although there are significant findings from the data and the models, actually designing a policy based on them and making it work is a much harder challenge. In this final section, I will list some possible ways that practitioners trying to enhance youth’s civic engagement can put my findings to work.

Differences in the two activity participation rates imply that willing voters and active volunteers diverge in their characteristic attitudes. From one point of view, it is understandable that they have different preferences in taking a part in the social or political framework of the country. However, the results from the first two models evinced a contradictory result. Those who volunteer are almost twice as likely to vote, and voters are twice as likelier to volunteer. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the third model, those who are likely to participate in both activities have different characteristics from those who participate only in one of them or those who don’t participate in either of them.

If the public policy were to be designed to encourage the youth to become more interested in taking a part in the procedures of social and political governance and actively participating in both activities, what are the strategies required in meeting this goal? What are the tangible implications of my research findings? In this section, I will
point out the major findings of my study and then discuss some possible measures that policy makers are advised to follow in their practice in the field.

**Key Findings**

- **Personal Beliefs have Little Importance:**
  Attending a church or other place of worship on a regular basis was a statistically significant factor across all the three models. Contrary to the common view about importance of religion in America, however, the odds ratio of the church attendance was not among the highest in any of the models. The result might be surprising if one were to consider how churches have played or are currently playing a central role in various social movements, such as Civil Rights Movement through 1950s and 1960s, debate over abortion and medical practices such as physician-assisted suicide and death with dignity. However, it is important to note that regular church attendance had more influence in encouraging one to be a voter and volunteer at the same time than being either one of them independently.

- **Attitudes Towards Society are Important:**
  Attending a church or other place of worship on a regular basis has statistically significant influence on making young people to vote,
volunteer, or both at the same time. Yet, the beliefs which appear to matter more are not religious but those nurtured by personal attitudes towards people, society, government, and private corporations. On the other hand, supporting a political party, a proxy that indicates one’s support for political ideas, but does not distinguish Democrats from Republicans, would not make one a participant in both activities, but in voting only. As is testified by the high odds ratio of “group solve problems” in the model, what distinguishes the young people as active participants in both activities is not a personally oriented belief, either religious or political, but attitudes towards collective action.

- **Learning at Home and in Institutions Outside Home Both Matters – but Differently**

Parents play an important part in forming the social and political attitudes of young people. Positive parental attitudes in politics play an important role in increasing youth’s likelihood to engage in volunteer activities. Similarly, what youth learns from parents at home while growing up also matters in inducing him or her to be a regular voter. Parental influence as such, however, had no statistical influence on whether young people were likely to be active in both forms of
participation. Together with the earlier finding which highlights the importance of collective action in inducing young people in both voting and volunteering, it is important to focus on how young people associate with others outside the home.

- **School can play Significant Role**

Social institutions, such as school and church, especially the former, demonstrate significant influence over the likelihood of young people to be engaged in both activities. This fact has an important implication for the practitioners. In the sample collected by CIRCLE, only 34% of the respondents had taken a class on government, politics, and civic educations. Thus, devising a policy to focus more on relevant issues and encouraging students’ enrollment in them might be one of the most direct and effective measures to promote voting and volunteering.

**Suggestions for Further Researches**

In my study, I focused on young people’s voting and volunteering by contrasting those two activities and examining the factors which make young people more likely to get involved in both of them. However, due to the design of the survey by CIRCLE on whose data my study is based, I had to treat “voting” as an attitude – whether or not one are likely to think that voting is important – while volunteering was
construed as the actual incidence of volunteering. There is a considerable gap between the turnout rate and attitudes of potential voters: more than a half of respondents considered voting to be important despite the fact that the actual turnout rates were much lower. Thus, a future study might have to consider voting data examining only those who are 18 years of age and older so as to compare actual voting rates with actual volunteering rates.

Another difficulty is that non-citizens cannot register to vote, but CIRCLE’s data do not contain any information as to citizenship status. This might make the voter turnout numbers seem low.24 At the same time, it may be important to separate young people’s volunteer activities as school-related from those occurring outside of school, because only the latter may be truly voluntary.

**Conclusion**

Since 1980s, civic engagement and empowerment of the public has been the important focus of democracies across the world. In the United States, activities have broadened its varieties and target, and the youth civic engagement has become one of the newest, and at the same time, the most active nonprofit fields.25 Rates of civic engagement have risen together with the fear of the loss of civil society, and the decline in the traditional values which support democracy.

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25 Ibid.
Yet, results from the three logistic regression models show that association with the others has a significant influence on the likelihood that young people will be involved in the social and political life in their community, and that such association can be a key factors in encouraging them to be an active volunteer while being a voter at the same time. Voting and volunteering are not necessarily mutually exclusive as activities but can compliment one another.

My research shows that such factors as the sense of belonging to the community, importance of associational lives and perception towards collective action have a sizeable effect on young people’s social and political behavior. In addition, traditional values regarding the local community and educational experience continue exert an important influence on such behavior.

These are the implications of my study. While they are by no means exhaustive, they will be informative in that they provide an empirical analysis of trends and characteristics, yielding decisive results as to what might have seemed initially obvious or intuitive are well-grounded or not. In particularly, given the relative lack of academic research on this subject, this study and others like it in the future, can be of great value for practitioners.
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