

INFLUENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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RESEARCH QUESTION & HYPOTHESIS

What influences male and female undergraduate student civic engagement?

No differences between influences of male and female civic engagement were predicted because males and females have the same components comprising their microsystem, thus their influences to be civically engaged are the same according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development

PURPOSE

1. Examine relationship between gender and influences of civic engagement with a sample of undergraduate students
2. Develop a reliable survey instrument to measure influences
3. Results would inform university students, administrators, faculty, staff and fellow researchers to incorporate civic engagement into current course curriculum, and future research

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Ecological Theory of Development would predict that the greatest influences of civic engagement come from the microsystem; interactions between the individual and their immediate surroundings. The microsystem includes parents, siblings, school, friends, and work, all of which directly influence the individual.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Weerts, Cabrera, & Mejias (2014) developed different categories of civically engaged students, 25% of whom were non-engagers

Mahatmya & Lohman (2012) found that females were more civically involved than males, major influences included gender race, family structure, parent education

Stockemer (2012) found that civic engagement starts with political interest and is influenced by a student's major, academic standing, year of study, and how a student pays for tuition

Gallant, Smale, & Arai (2010) found a connection between civic engagement, high quality service, and volunteer experiences

Lopes, Benton, & Cleaver (2009) found that attitude toward engagement was best predictor of participation.

CROSS TABULATIONS

FAM							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	3.2%	9.1%	13.6%	29.9%	33.1%	11.0%	100.0%
Female	2.3%	10.9%	13.3%	33.6%	28.1%	11.7%	100.0%

SCH							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	0.6%	1.9%	9.7%	35.1%	40.9%	11.7%	100.0%
Female	1.6%	7.8%	9.4%	31.3%	35.2%	14.8%	100.0%

REL							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	26.6%	17.5%	16.2%	18.2%	16.9%	4.5%	100.0%
Female	28.1%	15.6%	13.3%	24.2%	10.2%	8.6%	100.0%

FRI							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	3.9%	22.1%	21.4%	26.6%	22.1%	3.9%	100.0%
Female	7.0%	14.8%	14.1%	39.1%	20.3%	4.7%	100.0%

SOC							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	6.5%	9.7%	18.2%	26.0%	24.0%	15.6%	100.0%
Female	3.1%	8.6%	12.5%	23.4%	25.0%	27.3%	100.0%

VOL							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	3.9%	5.8%	13.6%	31.8%	28.6%	16.2%	100.0%
Female	0.8%	1.6%	7.0%	24.2%	38.3%	28.1%	100.0%

MEP							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	4.5%	5.2%	10.4%	28.6%	33.8%	17.5%	100.0%
Female	2.3%	3.9%	6.3%	25.0%	39.8%	22.7%	100.0%

USP							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	2.6%	7.8%	18.8%	31.8%	27.9%	11.0%	100.0%
Female	3.9%	10.9%	22.7%	35.9%	21.1%	5.5%	100.0%

VOT							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	1.9%	3.9%	9.1%	16.9%	26.6%	41.6%	100.0%
Female	0.0%	2.3%	7.0%	14.1%	33.6%	43.0%	100.0%

AMP							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	3.9%	11.0%	12.3%	26.6%	29.2%	16.9%	100.0%
Female	5.5%	10.9%	8.0%	25.8%	20.3%	19.5%	100.0%

CUE							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	2.6%	8.4%	12.3%	30.5%	33.1%	13.0%	100.0%
Female	5.5%	3.1%	18.0%	36.7%	25.8%	10.9%	100.0%

TIM							
GEN	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
Male	3.9%	10.4%	19.5%	27.9%	25.3%	13.0%	100.0%
Female	1.6%	7.8%	17.2%	39.1%	25.0%	9.4%	100.0%



METHODS

Participants included 285 male and female undergraduate students enrolled at a Midwestern university.

Research Design

Non random purposive, cross-sectional study using snowball sampling design.

Data Collection Instrument

IRB approved, informed by literature and theory, with implied consent. Surveys consisted of seven demographic questions, 12 closed-ended statements based on a 6-point Likert scale, and an open ended question for further comments.

Procedure

The survey questionnaire was administered to all students present in each of the 12 classrooms surveyed. Implied consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation were addressed.

Data Analysis Plan

Surveys were cleaned and coded. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data analysis included cross-tabulations, mean comparisons, independent t-tests, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis.

VARIABLES

Dependent Variables

(FAM) My family has influenced me to be civically engaged
 (FRI) My friends have influenced me to be civically engaged
 (SCH) My school provides resources for me to become civically engaged
 (SOC) Participating in student organizations or clubs on my campus is important to me
 (REL) My religious community has influenced me to be civically engaged
 (VOL) I believe volunteering is part of being an engaged citizen
 (MEP) I believe that me, as one person, can make a difference in my community
 (AMP) American politics have a relevant effect on my life
 (USP) I have an understanding of what is happening politically in the US
 (CUE) It is important to me to keep up with current events through news and social medias
 (VOT) Voting is a responsibility of U.S. citizenship
 (TIM) I have the time to be civically engaged

Demographic Variables

(AGE) Age
 (MAJ) Major
 (CLS) Class Status
 (RAE) Race/Ethnicity
 (AHI) Annual Household Income
 (PLE) Parent Level of Education

Independent Variable

(GEN) Gender

RESULTS SUMMARY

We found mixed support for our hypothesis, there were statistically significant gender differences for the variables (SOC, VOL, MEP, USP). For all other survey responses (FAM, FRI, SCH, REL, AMP, CUE, VOT, TIM) both genders had similar responses and supported our hypothesis.
 Cronbach's Alpha reliability measured at 0.760

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Males and females do not always find same topics or actions to be influential; therefore we must frame civic engagement to accommodate those gender differences.
- Higher education institutions and educators can promote volunteering and club participation for female students as a way to encourage further civic engagement.
- Higher education institutions and educators can highlight how the student may make a difference, providing more opportunities for constructive and informative conversations about current events to encourage male civic engagement.

The most important implication is contributing to the awareness that there are different influences of civic engagement between male and female undergraduate students.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- We recommend addressing civic engagement with a nation-wide random sampling.
- Future research may consider gender differences in civic engagement since there are discrepancies across studies.
- Qualitative interviews may be used to discuss lived experiences and further speculate as to why gender differences exist for certain influences.
- Studies may consider developing more in-depth surveys to further address specific influences with known gender differences
- Future research may also consider using a longitudinal model of study to assess formation and development of influences throughout the lifespan.

CONCLUSION

By studying influences of civic engagement for male and female undergraduate students, we hope to shed light on a unique demographic of young adults whose engagement is dwindling. The next step is to address why and how these influences are formed and how future participants can better teach citizens to build on their own civic engagement. Civic engagement is truly essential to our democratic society; without the participation of young adults, failure is seemingly inevitable.