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Stephanie Reinhart '02
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Abstract

Public participation in American politics has long been discussed as deficient at best, falling far short of democracy's goal of an enlightened and participatory citizenry. In no age group is this more apparent than America's young adults, particularly those in their early years of voting eligibility. This segment of the population has been repeatedly criticized for their disinterest and lack of involvement in politics, primarily because only a small number of young adults vote in elections. In fact, several researchers argue that young adults are less likely to participate in politics than ever before (Astin, Parrott, Korn, and Sax 1997; Bennett and Bennett 1990). Many scholars have concluded that there is little hope for any significant increase in participation by this segment of the population.

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Stephanie Reinhart

Introduction

Public participation in American politics has long been discussed as deficient at best, falling far short of democracy's goal of an enlightened and participatory citizenry. In no age group is this more apparent than America's young adults, particularly those in their early years of voting eligibility. This segment of the population has been repeatedly criticized for their disinterest and lack of involvement in politics, primarily because only a small number of young adults vote in elections. In fact, several researchers argue that young adults are less likely to participate in politics than ever before (Astin, Parrott, Korn, and Sax 1997; Bennett and Bennett 1990). Many scholars have concluded that there is little hope for any significant increase in participation by this segment of the population.

Political theorists view political participation as important for a variety of reasons. Some argue that political participation lends a sense of legitimacy to the governmental regime, and this view extends as far back as John Locke and Joseph Schumpeter. Geraint Parry supports an instrumental view that assumes an unequal distribution of benefits and a conflict over these inequalities. In this approach, political power provides a means for achieving leverage during the distribution process. A third view advocated by Rousseau and John Stuart Mill stresses that active citizen participation leads to attainment of the common good and that participation is a learning process (Salisbury 1975). Smith (1999) concludes that low social trust, low participation, and low engagement in civic life threaten the foundations of democratic society. Although not all scholars support mass citizen participation in government and political processes, many unquestionably support it and emphasize the need for more citizen participation.

However, the electoral process provides only one avenue for political participation, even though voting is often taken for granted as the only aspect of participation. A few scholars have

Stephanie Reinhart is a 2002 graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University. She is a Political Science major with a concentration in American Politics. She was the president of Pi Sigma Alpha (Political Science honorary) during 2001-2002. She is also a member of Gamma Upsilon (Media honorary). Following her graduation she will pursue graduate studies in law.

realized that the focus that exists on electoral research should not be the only focus, and they have attempted to research other avenues of political participation. Verba and Nie (1970) tried to define political participation more broadly when they said that it "refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and or/the actions they take." This definition suggests that political participation may assume many forms, although it excludes any type of participation that is not directly aimed at influencing government. Verba, Nie, and Kim (1971) also identified four distinct areas of political participation, including voting, campaign activity, communal activity, and particularized contacts. These areas were not limited to the United States, as they also found support for activity in these areas in cross-national research conducted in several other nations. This suggests that scholars may have unnecessarily limited themselves in their research on political participation, particularly among younger voters who may prefer to participate in political activities other than voting.

Literature Review

It has been stated that, taken as a group, American youth are disconnecting from public life at a faster rate than any other age group. Among other things, these youth are less interested in politics, less likely to register to vote, less likely to participate in politics in ways other than voting, and less likely to participate in community organizations. Delli Carpini (2000) concludes that young adults, along with all other ages, become involved in public life only when they possess the motivation, opportunity, and ability to do so. What is lacking now is the belief among young people that involvement in public life in a manner that involves politics, government, or collective action will be effective or satisfying. If researchers could determine the factors that predict political involvement among young people, work could be done to strengthen those factors in order to increase the number of young people who participate in politics.

Several researchers have found that a sense of community facilitates greater activism in the community, increased political participation, and increased feelings of empowerment (Chavis & Wandersman 1990; Davidson & Cotter 1989; McMillan et al. 1995). Being part of a group also might lead to one's participation in social action if that is part of the group's agenda (Dubow & Podolefsky 1982). This may be due to the feelings of increased efficacy that may develop from this participation and action.

Davidson and Cotter (1989) stated that individuals who have a strong sense of community attachment could be expected to exhibit higher levels of total involvement. "Their sense of belonging may heighten an obligation to participate in the democratic process" (Davidson and Cotter 1989). This occurs because they perceive themselves as possessing greater influence, which leads to higher levels of efficacy. Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) stated that participation might serve as an important mechanism for the development of feelings of empowerment "because participants can gain experience organizing people, identifying resources, and developing strategies for achieving goals." Bandura (1986) also found that individuals evaluate the degree of efficacy they personally have and the degree of efficacy that a group of people working together have. The more self- and group-efficacy they perceive themselves as having, the more likely they are to work together to solve problems.

Different forms of participation have been linked as reinforcing each other. Involvement in volunteering, voting, and participation in community organizations lead to subsequent participation in other ways (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995). Regarding involvement at the youth level, several studies have shown a relationship between extracurricular participation as a youth and adult participation in political and volunteer activities (Beck and Jennings 1982; Hanks 1981; Ladewig and Thomas 1987; Youniss, McClellan, and Yates 1997). Putnam (1995) emphasized the need for increased youth involvement in community activities. He argued that, "unless America experiences a dramatic upward boost in civic engagement in the next few years, Americans in 2010 will join, trust, and vote even less than we do today."

All of this suggests that undergraduate students who are involved in various campus and community groups might be more likely to participate in political activities. This research seeks to expand on the information obtained thus far relating to possible predictors of young adult participation in political activities. Since research has shown a correlation between increased participation in the community and increased participation in politics (Chavis & Wandersman 1990; Davidson & Cotter 1989; McMillan et al. 1995), this model seeks to incorporate both factors. Also, research has shown a correlation between increased levels of efficacy and increased levels of political involvement (Bandura 1986; Davidson and Cotter 1989). This model also seeks to incorporate these factors. In addition, the relationship between university involvement and political involvement is

examined in this research, and this is relevant because a substantial number of young adults attend college after they graduate from high school.

Theory/Hypotheses

This research identifies four hypotheses that seek to research types of young adult activism and involvement on a university campus, in the community, and in the political arena. As stated before, analysts argue that young eligible voters do not vote in large numbers; however, the extent to which these citizens participate in other varieties of political activities as well as extracurricular and community activities is usually not measured. This segment of the population, particularly undergraduate university students, have a variety of non-voting activities available to them, and involvement in these activities should be observed and measured as it relates to levels of political participation. Students who participate in extracurricular and community activities are likely to feel a higher level of civic engagement, and this should lead them to feel higher levels of efficacy and trust in all institutions, including political institution. Thus, students who are active on campus and in their community should be more willing to engage in both voting and non-voting political activities. Therefore, the four hypotheses are

Hypothesis 1: Undergraduate students who are more likely to participate in extracurricular or community activities will be more likely to feel higher levels of political efficacy and trust than undergraduate students who are less likely to participate in extracurricular or community activities.

Hypothesis 2: Undergraduate students with higher feelings of political efficacy and trust will be more likely to participate in political activities.

Hypothesis 3: Undergraduate students who are more likely to participate in extracurricular or community activities will be more likely to vote than undergraduate students who are less likely to participate in extracurricular or community activities.

Hypothesis 4: Undergraduate students who are more likely to participate in extracurricular or community activities will be more likely to participate in non-voting political activities than undergraduate students who are less likely to participate in

extracurricular or community activities.

Measurement

In order to ascertain the relationship between involvement, trust, and efficacy, a survey was conducted between November 13 and 20, 2001 among undergraduate students at Illinois Wesleyan University, a small liberal arts university in Bloomington, IL. The survey focused on the respondents' types of political involvement, involvement in extracurricular and community activities, feelings of political efficacy and trust, and demographic characteristics (see Appendix A for item wordings). Political activities included registering to vote, voting in the 2000 Presidential election, voting in a 2000 primary election, contacting one's Senators or Representatives, volunteering for a political campaign, making a monetary donation to a political candidate, being a member of a political interest group, and attending a political candidate's speech or campaign event. These variables were combined to form one political involvement variable (See Appendix B).

Respondents were also asked about the number of a variety of extracurricular activities in which they participated, including political, honor society, media, athletic, Greek, art, music/music theater, student government, volunteer, environmental, multi-cultural, and minority rights organizations. Examples of each type of organization were provided so that students would know which activities fit in which categories. These variables were combined to form one university involvement variable (See Appendix B). Respondents were then asked about their participation in a variety of community-based activities, including political, volunteer, environmental, athletic, music/music theater, multi-cultural, and minority rights organizations. These variables were combined to form one community involvement variable (See Appendix B).

Political efficacy was measured with questions asking about the respondents' opinions of the extent to which ordinary citizens can influence American politics, the extent to which college students can influence American politics, and the extent to which past political participation had been rewarding. These variables were combined to form one efficacy variable (See Appendix B). Political trust was measured with questions asking about the respondents' opinions of the extent to which the government in Washington could be trusted and the extent to which one's own Senators and Representatives could be trusted. Again, these variables were combined to form one trust variable (See Appendix B).

In addition, general demographic questions explored the respondents' age, gender, political party identification, ideology, major, ethnicity, and involvement in a long-term relationship (See Appendix A).

The survey was sent to one-half of the university's student body, or every other name listed in the university's student phone book. This was done to ensure a random selection, as every student at Illinois Wesleyan University is included in the phone book. They were not selected on the basis of their enrollment in introductory-level psychology or political science classes, and this was done to limit possible biases in the sample. A total of 506 subjects responded to the survey for a 49.03% response rate. Of the respondents, 64.2% were female, and 35.4% were male. This represents an oversampling of females, since the university body is comprised of 56.52% female students and 43.48% male students, according to the university's web page. The respondents represented a wide variety of ages and areas of study. Of the respondents, 27.1% were first-year students, 22.9% were sophomores, 25.1% were juniors, 23.1% were seniors, and 1.8% were completing a fifth year of study. 5.3% had yet to declare a major, 8.7% had a major in the languages, 10.5% had a music or arts major, 3.4% had an education major, 25.3% had a major in the natural sciences, 18.0% had a social sciences major, 8.1% had a major in mathematics or computer science, 4.3% had a nursing or health-related major, and 16.4% had a major in the business, economics, or accounting fields.

The subjects all participated on a volunteer basis, and no tangible incentives were provided to encourage them to participate. They were simply asked to assist with a senior seminar project, and they were told it would only take a few minutes of their time. In addition, the survey was sent to the students via email, a popular means of student communication. This type of survey instrument allowed students to complete the survey at their own pace and at whatever time they wanted. The use of email was possible in this project because all undergraduate students at Illinois Wesleyan are provided with an email account, and all email addresses are listed in the campus phone book. In addition, the administration at Illinois Wesleyan reminds students each year that they are responsible for checking their school email account, and this helps to ensure that students receive emails sent to their school email address. Computers are readily accessible on the college campus, and on this particular campus every computer contains the students' email program.

While broad generalizations may not be drawn from this subject pool, the use of university students was important for this research project because it was designed to explore involvement in political and nonpolitical activities among young eligible voters, not the rest of the population. Undergraduate students may be placed squarely in this category, since the vast majority of them are old enough to vote but still under the age of 24. In addition, undergraduate students at many universities are provided with several options for both political and nonpolitical participation. Since these students have the opportunity to choose to either participate or not participate in the activities available, they provide the perfect subject pool when determining whether or not they take advantage of the opportunities available to them. For example, at Illinois Wesleyan there are over 70 active student-run clubs and organizations covering a vast array of interests and subjects available to a student body consisting of 2064 students. Similar situations exist on most undergraduate university campuses. Studying young adults who have few or no options for participation in extracurricular, community, or political activities would not provide an accurate picture of what young adults would choose to be involved in if provided with the opportunity to become involved.

Data Analysis

Bivariate correlations for the political, university and community involvement, efficacy, and trust variables reveals statistically significant correlations for many of the relationships, and these results are presented in Table 1. The correlation for political involvement and university involvement is .254, the correlation for political involvement and community involvement is .233, and the correlation for political involvement and efficacy is .241. Each of these is statistically significant at the .001 level. The correlation for political involvement and trust is .083, which is not statistically significant. This demonstrates that three of the four main variables are correlated to a certain degree, although they could be much stronger correlations. This implies that there are other variables than the ones used in this research which might produce a much stronger correlation with political involvement.

TABLE 1
Bivariate Correlations

	Political Involvement	University Involvement	Community Involvement	Trust	Efficacy
Political Involvement	1	.254**	.233**	.083	.241**

**Significant at the .001 level

The results of the linear regression analysis for the political, university, and community involvement, efficacy, and trust variables are presented in Table 2. The dependent variable is political involvement, and several findings emerge from this particular analysis. Holding the other variables constant, university and community involvement are each statistically significant at the .001 level; however, their beta weights are .193 and .157 respectively. This indicates that they do account for some of the variance in political involvement, but only a small amount. Holding the other variables constant, efficacy has a slightly larger beta weight of .206, which is statistically significant at the .001 level as well, but this still does not account for a large amount of variance in political involvement. Trust is not statistically significant when the other variables are held constant, and the overall R^2 of the model is only .137. This implies that university and community involvement, efficacy, and trust do not explain a large degree of the variance in political involvement among undergraduate students, and other variables outside of those researched in this experiment must explain the remaining variance. This indicates that the hypotheses in this research may not be supported by the data obtained.

TABLE 2
Linear Regression Analysis (Beta Weights)

Variable	Beta Weight
University Involvement	.193**
Community Involvement	.157**
Trust	.029
Efficacy	.206**
R^2	.137
Adjusted R^2	.130
F Value	19.945
N	506

**Significant at the .001 level

a. Dependent Variable: Political Involvement

Using crosstabular analysis to research the first hypothesis, four separate crosstabs were run to examine the effects of university involvement on both political efficacy and trust and the effects of community involvement on both political efficacy and trust. Efficacy and trust were the dependent variables in each of these cases. The only relationship that showed statistical significance was the crosstab between community involvement and political efficacy, and this was significant at the .05 level. This data is shown in Table 3. The largest deviations seen from the total percentages may be found in the cells involving four-six, seven-nine, and ten or more community activities. In these cases, the majority of students answered affirmatively to four or five efficacy measures, not six or seven efficacy measures, as was expected by the first hypothesis. Part of this hypothesis predicted that undergraduate students who were more likely to participate in community activities would be more likely to feel higher levels of political efficacy than undergraduate students who did not participate in community activities. As the data demonstrates, this relationship does not work completely. For those students who are most involved, efficacy seems to find a high end at four or five measures of efficacy out of a possible seven. Since none of the other crosstabs examining the first hypothesis were statistically significant, this finding partially supports the first hypothesis. Higher levels of community activity lead to higher levels of political efficacy, but only to a certain point.

TABLE 3
Crosstabular Analysis (Community Involvement and Political Efficacy)

	0-1 Comm Activities	2-3 Comm Activities	4-6 Comm Activities	7-9 Comm Activities	10+ Comm Activities	Total
0-1 Efficacy Measures	4.1% N=12	1.5% N=2	1.6% N=1	N=0	N=0	3.0% N=15
2-3 Efficacy Measures	14.5% N=42	15.2% N=20	6.3% N=4	16.7% N=2	12.5% N=1	13.6% N=69
4-5 Efficacy Measures	70.0% N=203	67.4% N=89	76.6% N=49	66.7% N=8	75.0% N=6	70.2% N=355
6-7 Efficacy Measures	11.4% N=33	15.9% N=21	15.6% N=10	16.7% N=2	12.5% N=1	13.2% N=67

a. Statistically significant at the .05 level

In researching the second hypothesis, two separate crosstabs were run to examine the effects of feelings of efficacy and trust on political involvement. Political involvement served as the dependent variable in each of these cases. The only relationship that showed statistical significance was the crosstab between political efficacy and political involvement, and this was significant at the .001 level. This data is shown in Table 4. The largest deviations seen from the total percentages may be found in the cells involving affirmative responses for six or seven of the efficacy measures. In these cases, the majority of students said they participated in two, three, four, five, or six political activities, not seven or more political activities. Part of the second hypothesis predicted that undergraduate students with higher feelings of political efficacy would be more likely to participate in political activities. The results of this crosstab indicate that this relationship has the same limitations as the relationship discussed above. For those students who express the greatest feelings of political efficacy, political involvement seems to be moderate, with most students reporting involvement in the middle categories of political activity. Since the other crosstab examining the second hypothesis was not statistically significant, this finding partially supports the second hypothesis. While higher levels of trust do not necessarily lead to higher levels of political participation, higher feelings of efficacy do lead to higher levels of political participation. However, this relationship exists only to a certain point.

TABLE 4
Crosstabular Analysis (Political Efficacy and Political Involvement)

	0-1 Efficacy Measures	2-3 Efficacy Measures	4-5 Efficacy Measures	6-7 Efficacy Measures	Total
0-1 Political Activities	66.7% N=10	42.0% N=29	31.8% N=113	14.9% N=10	32.0% N=162
2-3 Political Activities	33.3% N=5	47.8% N=33	39.4% N=140	41.8% N=28	40.7% N=206
4-6 Political Activities		8.7% N=6	25.4% N=90	38.8% N=26	24.1% N=122
7-9 Political Activities		1.4% N=1	3.4% N=12	4.5% N=3	3.2% N=16

a. Statistically significant at the .001 level

In researching the third hypothesis, two crosstabs were run to examine the effects of university and community involvement on participation in the 2000 presidential election. Voting in this election was the dependent variable in both of these crosstabs, and both relationships were statistically significant. The relationship between university involvement and voting in the 2000 presidential election was statistically significant at the .001 level, and this data is shown in Table 5. The relationship between community involvement and voting in the 2000 presidential election was statistically significant at the .05 level, and this data is shown in Table 6.

The relationship between university involvement and voting in the 2000 presidential election shows a clear increase in the percentage of students who voted as the level of university involvement increased. It also shows a decrease in the percentage of students who did not vote in the 2000 presidential election as university activity decreases. Of those students who participated in three or fewer university activities, less than 40% voted in the 2000 presidential election, while over 60% did not vote. Of those students who participated in four, five, or six university activities, 53.4% voted, and 46.6% did not vote. Of those students who participated in seven, eight, or nine university activities, 63.2% voted, and 36.8% did not vote. Of those students who participated in ten or more university activities, 76.9% voted, and 23.1% did not vote. Part of the third hypothesis predicted that undergraduate students who were more likely to participate in university activities would be more likely to vote than students who were less likely to participate in university activities. These results support this hypothesis because they show a clear increase in university activity and voting in the 2000 presidential election.

TABLE 5
Crosstabular Analysis (University Involvement and Vote in the 2000 Presidential Election)

	0-1 Univ. Activities	2-3 Univ. Activities	4-6 Univ. Activities	7-9 Univ. Activities	10+ Univ. Activities	Total
2000 Pres. election vote	61.7% N=66	60.4% N=113	46.6% N=75	36.8% N=14	23.1% N=3	53.6% N=271
No 2000 Pres. Election vote	38.3% N=41	39.6% N=74	53.4% N=86	63.2% N=24	76.9% N=10	46.4% N=235

a. Statistically significant at the .001 level

The relationship between community involvement and voting in the 2000 presidential election shows a less clear increase in the percentage of students who voted as the level of community involvement increased, but for those students most involved in the community, voting was at its highest level. However, this finding may be affected by the fact that few cases existed for students who were in the highest levels of community involvement. Of those students who participated in zero or one community activity, 41.4% voted, and 58.6% did not vote. Of those students who participated in two or three community activities, 55.3% voted, and 44.7% did not vote. Of those students who participated in four, five, or six university activities, 48.4% voted, and 51.6% did not vote. Of those students who participated in seven, eight, or nine community activities, 41.7% voted, and 58.3% did not vote. Of those students who participated in ten or more community activities, 75.0% voted, and 25.0% did not vote. Part of the third hypothesis predicted that undergraduate students who were more likely to participate in community activities would be more likely to vote than students who were less likely to participate in community activities. These results partially support this hypothesis. While those students who were most involved in the community were the most likely to vote, there was a drop-off in the percentage of students who voted after the second level of community involvement, which included involvement in two or three community activities. Students involved in four, five, six, seven, eight, or nine community activities were less likely to vote than students involved in two or three activities. It is unclear why this drop-off in voting exists.

TABLE 6
Crosstabular Analysis (Community Involvement and Vote in the 2000 Presidential Election)

	0-1 Comm. Activities	2-3 Comm. Activities	4-6 Comm. Activities	7-9 Comm. Activities	10+ Comm Activities	Total
2000 Pres. election vote	58.6% N=170	44.7% N=59	51.6% N=33	58.3% N=7	25% N=2	53.6% N=271
No 2000 Pres. Election vote	41.4% N=120	55.3% N=73	48.4% N=31	41.7% N=5	75% N=6	46.4% N=235

a. Statistically significant at the .05 level

In researching the fourth hypothesis, two crosstabs were run to examine the effects of university and community involvement on participation in political activities other than voting. Participation in nonvoting political activities was the dependent variable in each of these crosstabs, and both relationships were statistically significant at the .001 level. Results for the relationship between university involvement and involvement in nonvoting political activities are presented in Table 7, while results for the relationship between community involvement and involvement in nonvoting political activities are presented in Table 8.

The relationship between university involvement and nonvoting political activity shows an increase in the percentage of students who participated in nonvoting political activities as the level of university involvement increased. It also showed a decrease in the percentage of students who did not participate in nonvoting political activities as the level of university involvement decreased. Of those students who participated in one or fewer university activities, 57.0% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 38.3% participated in two or three nonvoting political activities. Of those students who participated in two or three university activities, 49.2% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 39.6% participated in two or three and 11.2% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Of those students who participated in four, five, or six university activities, 39.8% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 43.5% participated in two or three and 13.0% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Of those students who participated in seven, eight, or nine university activities, 28.9% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 36.8% participated in two or three and 26.3% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Of those students who participated in ten or more university activities, 7.7% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 46.2% participated in two or three and 46.2% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Part of the fourth hypothesis predicted that undergraduate students who were more likely to participate in university activities would be more likely to participate in nonvoting political activities than students who were less likely to participate in university activities. These results support this hypothesis because they show a clear increase in university activity and participation in nonvoting political activities.

TABLE 7
Crosstabular Analysis (University Involvement and Participation in Nonvoting Political Activities)

	0-1 Univ. Activities	2-3 Univ. Activities	4-6 Univ. Activities	7-9 Univ. Activities	10+ Univ. Activities	Total
0-1 Nonvoting Activities	57.0% N=61	49.2% N=92	39.8% N=64	28.9% N=11	7.7% N=1	45.3% N=229
2-3 Nonvoting Activities	38.3% N=41	39.6% N=74	43.5% N=70	36.8% N=14	46.2% N=6	40.5% N=205
4-6 Nonvoting Activities	4.7% N=5	11.2% N=21	13.0% N=21	26.3% N=10	46.2% N=6	12.5% N=63
7+ Nonvoting Activities	N=0	N=0	3.7% N=6	7.9% N=3	N=0	1.8% N=9

a. Statistically significant at the .001 level

The relationship between community involvement and nonvoting political involvement is very similar to the relationship between university involvement and nonvoting political involvement. These results show an increase in the percentage of students who participated in nonvoting political activities as the level of community involvement increased. It also showed a decrease in the percentage of students who did not participate in nonvoting political activities as the level of community involvement decreased. Of those students who participated in one or fewer community activities, 51.7% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 39.3% participated in two or three and 6.9% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Of those students who participated in two or three community activities, 40.9% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 40.9% participated in two or three and 15.9% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Of those students who participated in four, five, or six community activities, 37.5% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 42.2% participated in two or three and 20.3% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Of those students who participated in seven or more community activities, 5.0% participated in one or fewer nonvoting political activities, while 50.0% participated in two or three and 45.0% participated in four, five, or six nonvoting political activities. Part of the fourth hypothesis predicted that undergraduate students who were more likely to participate in community activities would be more likely to participate in nonvoting political

activities than students who were less likely to participate in community activities. These results support this hypothesis because they show a clear increase in community activity and participation in nonvoting political activities.

TABLE 8
Crosstabular Analysis (Community Involvement and Participation in Nonvoting Political Activities)

	0-1 Comm. Activities	2-3 Comm. Activities	4-6 Comm. Activities	7+ Comm. Activities	Total
0-1 Nonvoting Activities	51.7% N=150	40.9% N=54	37.5% N=24	5.0% N=1	45.3% N=229
2-3 Nonvoting Activities	39.3% N=114	40.9% N=54	42.2% N=27	50.0% N=10	40.5% N=205
4-6 Nonvoting Activities	6.9% N=20	15.9% N=21	20.3% N=13	45.0% N=9	12.5% N=63
7+ Nonvoting Activities	2.1% N=6	2.3% N=3	N=0	N=0	1.8% N=9

a. Statistically significant at the .001 level

Conclusion

The evidence of relationships between political, university, and community involvement, political trust, and political efficacy was mixed. Political involvement was correlated with university involvement, community involvement, and political efficacy. It was not correlated with political trust. However, none of these correlations were large, which suggests that other variables may account for political involvement among undergraduate students. The regression model also failed to explain for a large amount of the variance in undergraduate student political involvement, which also supports this conclusion. Additional research should be conducted to determine what these other variables are.

However, crosstabular analysis partially or fully supported each of the hypotheses. Five general findings emerged. First, only a moderate amount of involvement in the community is needed to increase a student’s likelihood of feeling higher levels of political efficacy. Any more than a moderate amount decreases a student’s levels of efficacy. Second, a high level of political efficacy only leads to a moderate amount of political involvement, not a high amount. Third, as the level of university involvement increases, the likelihood of voting in the 2000 presidential elec-

tion increases. Fourth, an increase in the level of community involvement did not necessarily lead to an increase in the likelihood of voting in the 2000 presidential election. Instead, the likelihood of voting decreased if a student was involved in more than two or three community activities, and it did not increase until a student was involved in ten or more community activities. Fifth, as the level of involvement in both university and community activities increases, the likelihood of participation in nonvoting political activities increases.

These findings indicate that involvement in university or community activities does not necessarily lead to increased levels of political efficacy and trust. It is possible that this increased level of activity leads to increased levels of awareness and possibly some cynicism in the arena of politics, as students who are involved in activities encounter both negative and positive experiences. This may have a moderating effect on increased levels of efficacy and trust. However, these findings also indicate that higher levels of involvement in university or community activities are related to higher levels of both voting and nonvoting political activities. This offers some degree of optimism for those who are concerned about decreasing levels of political participation among America's youth. Encouraging youth to participate in their universities and communities might eventually lead to a reversal in the trend of declining political participation. Future research should include larger samples of university students who may come from more varied backgrounds than do students at Illinois Wesleyan University. In addition, future research should attempt to examine the effect of involvement on young adults who do not attend college. This research could prove to be important, as increased student involvement may help solve the problem of disappearing youth in American politics.

Appendix A
Item Question Wording

- a. Are you registered to vote (in your home district or your university residence district)?
- b. Did you vote in the 2000 presidential election?
- c. Did you vote in a 2000 primary election for any political party?
- d. Have you ever contacted any of your Senators or Representatives (by mail, email, phone, etc)?
- e. Have you ever served as a campaign volunteer?
- f. Have you ever made a monetary donation to any political candidate?
- g. Are you a member of any political interest group?
- h. Have you ever attended a political candidate's speech or campaign event?
- i. If you have ever participated in politics in any way, do you feel your efforts were worthwhile?
- j. Do you think public participation in politics is important?
- k. Do you think young adult (18-24) participation in politics is important?
- l. Do you think young adults (18-24) participate in politics as much as they should?
- m. What is your gender?
- n. What is your age?
- o. What year are you in school?
- p. How would you describe your ethnicity?
- q. What is your major? (type answer below)

r. What is your minor? (type answer below)

s. How would you rate your interest in politics on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being no interest at all and 10 being extremely interested? (type number below)

t. How would you rate your political knowledge on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being no knowledge at all and 10 being extremely knowledgeable? (type number below)

u. How much influence do you think ordinary citizens have on American politics?

v. How much influence do you think college students have on American politics?

w. Are your parents registered to vote?

x. Did your parents vote in the 2000 presidential election?

y. Are any of your friends registered to vote?

z. Did any of your friends vote in the 2000 presidential elections?

aa. Do you generally consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican, or Independent?

bb. Regardless of how you vote, do you generally consider yourself to be a conservative, liberal, or moderate?

cc. Do you predict you will vote in the future?

dd. Do you predict you will participate in politics in ways other than voting in the future?

ee. What age group do you think is most affected by politics?

ff. Do you think American citizens have a civic responsibility to vote?

gg. Do you feel obligated to vote?

hh. How often do you think the government in Washington can be trusted?

ii. How often do you think your own Senators and Representatives can be trusted?

jj. How many university extracurricular activities are you involved in for each area listed? (for example, 2 honor societies, 1 athletic organization, 0 volunteer organizations; type the number after each option)

1. Religious organization (ex: Catholic Newman Organization, DRL3)
2. Political organization (ex: College Republicans/Democrats)
3. Honor societies (academic)
4. Media organization (ex: the Argus, WESN, Wesleyana, other newsletters)
5. University athletics (ex: varsity sports, intramural sports)
6. Greek organizations (social)
7. Art organizations (ex: art club)
8. Music/Music Theater organizations (ex: Titan Band, choir or cast member)
9. Student government (ex: Student Senate, class officer)
10. Volunteer organization (ex: Alpha Pi Omega, Habitat for Humanity)
11. Environmental organization (ex: ECO)
12. Multi-cultural organization (ex: Black Student Union, SASA, CLASE)
13. Minority rights organization (ex: IWU Pride Alliance)

kk. How many community-based activities are you involved in for each area listed? (type the number after each option)

1. Religious organization
2. Political organization
3. Volunteer organization
4. Environmental organization
5. Athletic organization
6. Music/Music theater
7. Multi-cultural organization
8. Minority rights organization

ll. Do you have a job on-campus?

mm. Do you have a job off-campus?

nn. Are you currently involved in a serious relationship? (ex: long-term boyfriend/girlfriend, engagement)

Appendix B
Additional Variables

Political Involvement: The responses for question items a, b, c, d, e, f, g, and h were summed to form this variable.

University Involvement: The responses for question items jj1, jj2, jj3, jj4, jj5, jj6, jj7, jj8, jj9, jj10, jj11, jj12, and jj13 were summed to form this variable.

Community Involvement: The responses for question items kk1, kk2, kk3, kk4, kk5, kk6, kk7, and kk8 were summed to form this variable.

Political Efficacy: The responses for question items i, u, and v were summed to form this variable.

Political Trust: The responses for question items hh and ii were summed to form this variable.

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