Social Benefits Motivate Young Adult Civic Engagement

William O'Brochta*

Published in *PS: Political Science & Politics*

Civic engagement benefits both participants and society, but what motivates young adults to decide to become civically engaged? A cost-benefit analysis concludes that resume-building is a major motivator for young adult civic engagement participation because it has more visible short-term impacts compared to social or community motivators. Using a pre-registered survey experiment and follow-up focus groups fielded to college students, I demonstrate that respondents exposed to a treatment describing the social benefits of civic engagement are significantly more willing to increase their civic engagement. Counter to expectations, career benefits are, at best, a secondary motivating factor. These results suggest that civic engagement does not sell itself as inherently beneficial to young adults. Non-profit organizations and educators should consider ways to draw attention to the social benefits of civic engagement as a method of attracting additional program interest.

Keywords: civic engagement, political behavior, young adults.

Funding: This project received generous financial support from the Waggonner Center for Civic Engagement and Public Policy.

Acknowledgements: I thank Les Guice, Jeremy Mhire, Dave Anderson, Christobel Asiedu, Nazir Atassi, Jamie Boydstun, Irene Casas, Taylor Mack, Drew McKevitt, Jason Pigg, Brenda Savage, Elaine Thompson, and John Worsencroft for their support. Special thanks to the students in the Civic Engagement Survey Team who assisted with survey and focus group implementation: Jessica Adubato, Logan Arnold, Ana Balestrazzi Mirabal, Emma Bowman, Caroline Clifton, Jaci Cook, Emily Cormier, Julie Cupples, Keara Crowe, Seth Davenport, Ace Ellis, Anthony Franklin, Grant Gillespie, David Griffin, Alexandro Hernandez, John Hill, James Jeane, Ethan Jeffus, Grayson Jones, Miles Kelso, Jenny Little, Mahalie Matassa, Eryn McDonald, Garrett McLain, Tyler McMullan, Keegan McQueen, Isabella Moreno, Jayson Nitz, Tre' Pardue, Victoria Phillips, Priscilla Roshto, Kaitlynn Sweeney, Dalton Templeton, Arabella Touchstone, Victoria Wells, A'Myra Whitby, Bobby Woodruff, and Nay Zapata. Diana Owen, Chapman Rackaway, the audience at the 2024 American Political Science Association annual meeting, the Editor, and the Reviewers provided helpful comments.

* Assistant Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Science, Sociology, and Geography, Texas Lutheran University. 1000 West Court Street, Seguin, Texas 78155. wobbrochta@tlu.edu.

Young adults are increasingly being pushed to take steps to become more "career ready." Internships, volunteer opportunities, and involvement in clubs and organizations are all activities that employers look for when hiring new employees (Finley 2021, 10). But are young adults motivated to participate in these activities because of the potential career benefits or is the prospect of career benefit a bonus, but not the main motivator?

I focus my attempt to answer this question on civically engaged activities --- which I define as knowledge of social and political institutions and processes, skills to participate in civic life, and an interest in taking action to better one's community (Adler and Goggin 2005). Civically engaged activities include making informed voting choices, submitting grievances to local government, holding meaningful discussions on political issues, participating in community events, and regularly volunteering with community organizations, among others. Unlike internships, which are clearly career oriented, the underlying idea behind civic engagement is to become a productive contributor to society. Some of the ways that civic engagement manifests can, however, be used for resume building purposes including volunteer opportunities, leadership experiences, and advocacy or non-profit work. I theorize that young adults adopt a rational choice approach in deciding whether to become civically engaged. This approach calculates the expected benefits --- be they opportunities for career development, social belonging, or community impact --- from civic engagement and compares these benefits to the costs associated with the time and effort involved in participating.

While prior literature has studied the benefits of civic engagement, scholars have not seen whether promoting these features can help motivate young adults to become more civically engaged. Consider a typical flyer advertising get-out-the-vote efforts or a service opportunity. Faculty, student or community organizations, or a college itself may produce such a flyer hoping

that young adults see the flyer and identify some benefit from participating in the activity. I study the kinds of benefits that are more likely to cause a young adult to become motivated to participate, moving from simply noting the existence of a civically engaged activity to being convinced that the benefits to participating outweigh the costs.

Identifying the civic engagement benefits that young adults find motivating is critical for shifting young adult perceptions toward increased involvement. Offering opportunities to be civically engaged is insufficient to attract young adult involvement, especially among young adults with little prior knowledge about or interest in their local community. Many young adults have other obligations like work or family duties such that civically engaged participation requires a significant investment of time or resources. Hence, understanding young adults' willingness to participate in civic engagement and the factors that influence their motivations can help in developing effective ways for them to become more involved. Further, young adult motivations deserve to be investigated because interest in and willingness to participate in civic engagement are habit forming; the attitudes formed now are likely to persist throughout adulthood.

To test whether career benefits do increase young adults' willingness to participate in civic engagement, I field a pre-registered survey experiment to 964 college students at a medium-sized public university in the Deep South. Results from the survey experiment and follow-up focus groups show that highlighting the social benefits of civic engagement is associated with an increased willingness to participate in civic engagement programming, but that emphasizing career benefits did not have the same degree of positive impact. While young adults are frequently encouraged to become involved in career-oriented activities, this study suggests that career benefits alone may not be sufficient to increase civic engagement

participation. I conclude with some specific ways that faculty can apply these results to students on their campus and to young adults more broadly.

Theory

I focus this study on interest in and willingness to participate in civically engaged activities. Interest and willingness are attitudinal, not behavioral measures. Just because a young adult is willing to participate in a civically engaged activity does not mean that actual participation occurs. Yet, as Gastil and Xenos (2010) find, civic attitudes can be predictive of civic behavior. More generally, political attitudes and political behavior are linked (e.g., Hatemi and McDermott 2016). Interest and willingness to participate in civic engagement activities, therefore, serve as important preconditions that may motivate young adults to take the next step to participate.

Willingness to participate in civic engagement activities can be modeled by considering the cost of participation and the benefits derived from participating. This utility maximizing calculation pairs well with employers' focus on civic engagement as monetary value. Since individuals trying to encourage increased civic engagement will frame the benefits of doing so using different potential motivators, I focus on these different approaches to framing. Extensive work in political science has shown the critical importance of framing impacting attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Chong and Druckman 2007; Entman 2007; Pan and Kosicki 1993).

In describing what I term "personal career benefit," I emphasize the resume-building aspect of civic engagement, as young adults are primarily interested in creating and populating a resume at this stage in life. If these benefits are communicated effectively, young adults will logically be interested in becoming civically engaged to give themselves a head start on career development. Indeed, young adults who are civically engaged report choosing to do so because

of the benefits of building their resume and developing career skills (Herman 2018; Morimoto and Friedland 2013; Stringer, Kerpelman, and Skorikov 2011; Sze-Yeung Lai and Chi-leung Hui 2021). Career benefit can be long-term and come through increased promotion potential, larger salaries, and more attractive external job offers. These benefits, while important, are less immediate and top-of-mind for young adults. Skill-building and completing smaller experiences that can go on young adults' resumes provide relatively clear short-term career-related benefits with defined monetary value.

Another possible benefit of civic engagement comes through opportunities to meet new people (Lanero, Vazquez, and Gutierrez 2017) and to combat feelings of social isolation (Stukas, Clary, and Snyder 1999). Stukas, Clary, and Snyder (1999) call these benefits "protection" in that civic engagement offers protection from self-isolation, a phenomenon reminiscent of Tamir's conceptualization of nationalism as offering "redemption from personal oblivion" (Tamir 1995, 433). Social isolation is a challenge for many young adults, and civic engagement can address social pressures to become more involved. I term these benefits "personal social benefits." Protection from social isolation is a benefit without clearly defined monetary value. Meeting new people can and does lead to potential career opportunities. By using civic engagement opportunities to network, young adults can combat social isolation while also improving connections to potential hiring managers. Prior work focuses on meeting new people and combatting social isolation as ends in-and-of themselves. I adopt this framework, arguing that the primary purpose of civic engagement as social benefit is to meet people for the purpose of making friends, developing human connections, and being in community. Therefore, this form of civic engagement framing should be less appealing in a cost-benefit framework compared to career-based framing because it offers less immediately tangible potential financial rewards.

Most political scientists and civics teachers frame civic engagement as part of an obligation to be a beneficial and contributing member of society, what I call "external community benefit." If the primary outcome from participating in civic engagement is that it helps other people, then any one person receives few individual benefits from participating.[2] In other words, framing civic engagement as primarily beneficial for society presents individuals with a classic free rider problem (Mansbridge 2017). Framing designed to solve this free rider problem explicitly mentions individual benefits that come from civic engagement (Oliver 1980). Framing that emphasizes personal career or social benefits, therefore, is more likely to prompt civic engagement participation compared to framing emphasizing external community benefit.

Once people receive a message about the benefits of civic engagement, they need to translate that message into a set of preferences about their willingness to become civically engaged. Apart from the framing literature that has convincingly established the presence of this link, we know that messages designed to increase voter turnout do translate into an increased intention to vote and to altered voter behavior --- the attitudes to behavior connection mentioned earlier (e.g., Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002; Weber and Thornton 2012). Subtle cues like those emphasized here are enough to trigger an association between the message and existing beliefs about the message topic that can shift attitudes and behavior (Nyhuis, Gosselt, and Rosema 2016; Siegel-Stechler 2021). Therefore, I adopt the cost-benefit calculations described above and hypothesize that messages that convey more individual benefit will be more likely to increase young adults' willingness to become civically engaged compared to those that convey community benefit.

[2] Although likely less salient, altruistic benefits may still effectively motivate civic engagement (e.g., Fowler 2006).

Hypothesis 1: Young adults who receive messages about the personal career or social benefits of civic engagement will be more interested in becoming civically engaged compared to young adults who receive messages about external community benefits of civic engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Young adults who receive messages about personal career benefits of civic engagement will be more interested in becoming civically engaged compared to young adults who receive messages about personal social benefits of civic engagement.

Research Design

To test these hypotheses, I field a pre-registered survey experiment to college students at a medium-sized public university in the rural Deep South. The Supplemental Information contains details about the survey design (SI.1), survey questions (SI.2), descriptive statistics (SI.4), and an institutional description (SI.6). SI.12 has the pre-analysis plan, which was registered with the Open Science Foundation.

Most young adults aged 16 to 24 are enrolled in college.[3] Additionally, young adults who choose not to enroll in college are already starting in careers, meaning that there are fewer career motivations for getting civically engaged compared to college students. The university chosen does not have established civic engagement programming. This is an advantage for this study because it ensures that young adults are not likely to have a lot of exposure to different rationales for why they should become civically engaged.

[3] https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/61-8-percent-of-recent-high-school-graduates-enrolled-in-college-in-october-2021.htm

The survey experiment was part of a broader survey fielded to 964 respondents, a response rate of 13% of the student body at this institution. Respondents were recruited through student canvassing, during classes, and through clubs and organizations. Respondents were predominately undergraduate students (95.9%) obtaining degrees in engineering (32.4%), liberal arts (22.9%), science (19.7%), business (13.1%), or education (12.0%). Most respondents were male (51.7%) and white (75.1%), with 10.4% Black and 4.1% Hispanic respondents. Respondent age and intended graduation year were relatively well distributed. Demographic characteristics of respondents were representative of the student body as a whole (see SI.5). As is reflected in the sample of respondents, the student body tends to contain more engineering majors than many universities. It may be more challenging to motivate these students to participate in civically engaged activities because civic skills may be perceived as less likely to fit into an engineering curriculum compared to the liberal arts.

After some introductory questions about current levels of civic engagement, the survey defined civic engagement and asked respondents to list examples of what they thought constituted civic engagement to ensure that all respondents had a clear idea of what civic engagement was. I used a generative coding approach to categorize responses into nine primary categories plus an other category and a category for off-topic responses.[4] Table 1 shows the number of times each category was mentioned and the percentage of total mentions.

Table 1: Civic Engagement Examples

Category	Num. (Pct.)
Service	554 (33.4)
Action	362 (21.8)
Groups	78 (4.7)

[4] See Weiss (1994)'s description of the coding, sorting, local integration, and inclusive integration process for what he terms "issue-focused analysis."

Campaigns	33 (2.0)
College	141 (8.5)
Conversations	81 (4.9)
Informed	133 (8.0)
General Involvement	46 (2.8)
Events	146 (8.8)

Note: Civic engagement examples by category (multiple categories could be mentioned).

As expected, respondents described a wide range of activities as civic engagement. Volunteering was the most discussed service-related action, with 466 total mentions. Interestingly, volunteering as civic engagement took on a specific activity in many respondents' minds: trash collection. Trash was mentioned 55 times, far outweighing any other specific examples of volunteer work. In terms of action, respondents overwhelmingly described voting as civic engagement (192 mentions) followed by attending meetings (55 mentions). The college category encapsulated joining specific on-campus organizations (81 mentions) and attending on-campus events (56 mentions). Generally, respondents adopted a broad view of civic engagement activities including things like having conversations with others, even if those conversations were about non-political topics. The focus on volunteering as trash collection likely reflects the local context. Most respondents were not from the city where the university is located and the city is small, so national service organizations have little presence. Further, litter is a major problem in the state.

After describing civic engagement activities, respondents were presented with one of three treatments with equal likelihood. The treatment was displayed in the online survey software for four seconds before the dependent variable questions appeared to ensure that all respondents were exposed to the treatment. Treatments were roughly equal in length and had a similar structure starting with "some people say" and then listing two benefits of civic engagement related to the treatment. I chose to list two benefits to make it less obvious that this was an

experimental treatment, though in each case one benefit is closely related to the other. The wording of each prime aims to emphasize their main motivating factors: meeting people and reducing social isolation for the social prime, providing items suitable for listing on a resume for the career prime, and making the community better for the external community prime.

- Social: "Some people say that civic engagement is important because it makes you feel like an active participant in society and lets you meet others in the community."
- Career: "Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides you with resume-building experiences and skills that are useful for many careers."
- External Community: "Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides benefits to the community and helps other people."

Following the treatment, respondents were presented with two outcome questions, each on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. *MoreEngaged* measures whether the treatment had any impact on attitudes toward civic engagement, while *Participate* measures respondents' intention to change their behavior in response to the treatment.

1. MoreEngaged: "I am interested in becoming more civically engaged."
2. Participate: "I would want to participate in civic engagement programming that [institution] developed, if I were available to do so."

In the main text, I present results from linear regression models with dependent variables normalized between 0 and 1, robust standard errors, and control variables included. Controls include demographic information (graduation year, ethnicity, undergraduate or graduate student,

gender, whether the student had taken a class with a civic engagement component, whether the student works, and their college); respondents' perceived importance of being involved; political knowledge; reported voter registration; the frequency with which the respondent participated in community service, campus events, student organizations, consuming local news, and discussing political events; and attention checks. SI.7 displays balance tests, SI.8 has t-test results, SI.9 has regression results, and SI.10 contains robustness checks using ordered logistic regression and subsetting to only attentive respondents. All results are consistent with those presented here.

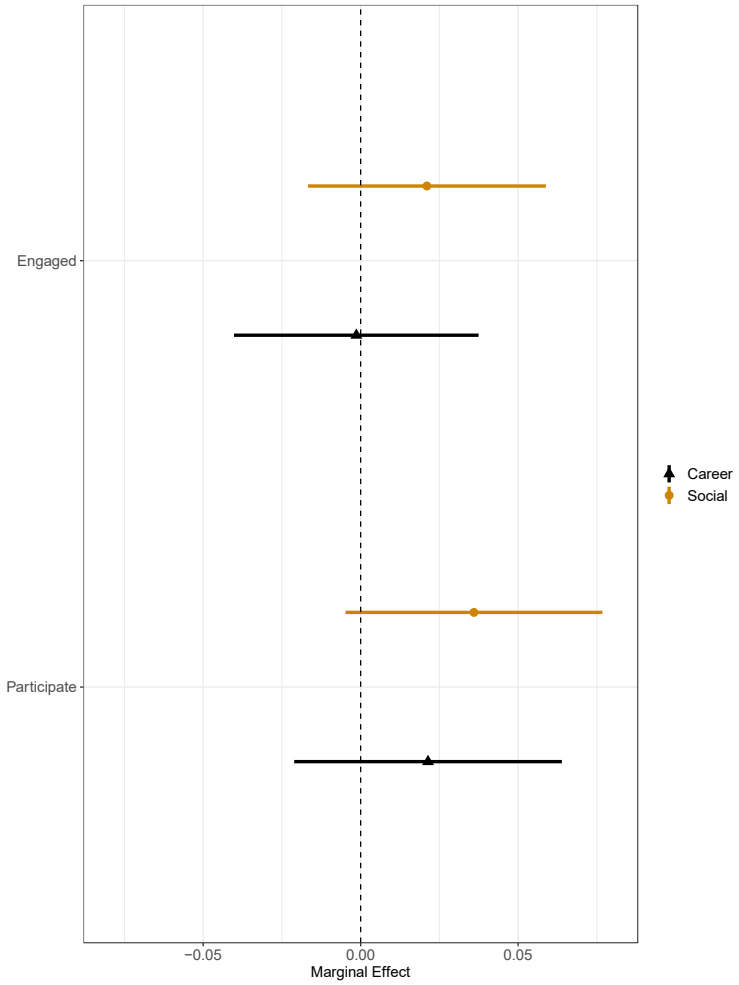
Results

Hypothesis 1 states that respondents exposed to either the personal social or career primes will be more likely to want to be more engaged and to be willing to participate in civic engagement programming compared to respondents exposed to the external community motivation prime. The mean of *MoreEngaged* was 3.75 with respondents exposed to the social prime reporting 3.77, the career prime reporting 3.77, and the external community prime reporting 3.70. The mean of *Participate* was 3.47 with respondents exposed to the social prime reporting 3.53, the career prime reporting 3.52, and the external community prime reporting 3.38. A simple comparison of means shows that respondents receiving the external community prime did report lower interest in engagement and participating in civic engagement activities compared to respondents exposed to the social or career primes.

Figure 1 displays results from linear regression models with dependent variables normalized between 0 and 1. Of the two dependent variables, only the social prime statistically significantly increases respondents' willingness to participate in civic engagement activities over the external community prime. There is no statistically significant relationship between either

prime and interest in becoming more engaged and the career prime and willingness to participate in civic engagement activities. These results provide partial support for Hypothesis 1: the social prime does impact willingness to participate in civic engagement activities.

Figure 1: Coefficient Estimates for Treatments on Civic Engagement Attitudes



Note: Linear regression models with robust standard errors and 95% confidence intervals shown. Dependent variables normalized between 0 and 1.

Hypothesis 2 argues that the career prime should have a statistically significantly larger effect on interest in becoming more civically engaged and willingness to participate in civic engagement activities. Neither the simple comparison of means nor the results shown in Figure 1 provide support for this hypothesis.

Respondents may be considering their interest and willingness to participate in civic engagement based on their own understanding of what civic engagement is and their personal goals and motivations. I add a set of control variables to the initial model capturing the activities that respondents used in their definition of civic engagement (see Table SI.10.3). Since responses to the definition question required hand coding, it was impossible to block randomize the survey experiment based on the definition question. Respondents who mentioned a service or college related activity were statistically significantly more likely to be willing to participate in civic engagement compared to other respondents. Otherwise, defining civic engagement in a certain way had no effect on interest in being more engaged or willingness to participate in civically engaged activities. I also use t-tests to check for potential effects of civic engagement definitions on willingness to participate for each experimental prime and find consistent results. While respondents do define the activities that constitute civic engagement differently, their definitions largely do not impact their interest in or willingness to become more civically engaged.

Like civic engagement definitions, young adults may have pre-determined the utility of civic engagement for their intended careers before completing the survey experiment. Because of the prevalence of majors with relatively few enrolled students on campus, I measure intended careers based on the academic college in which a student was enrolled: science, engineering, liberal arts, education, or business. Balance tests in SI.7 show that assignment to treatment was balanced across these colleges. Interestingly, Table SI.9.1 shows that there are no statistically significant effects of a student's college on their willingness to be more engaged or to participate in civic engagement.

The social prime impacts willingness to participate but not interest in becoming more engaged. This finding suggests that respondents who are affected by the prime already report

being highly engaged. I define already engaged respondents as those who report participating in civic engagement activities at least a few times per month. Among this highly engaged group, 44% of respondents "strongly agree" that they want to be more engaged and 35% "strongly agree" that they want to participate in civic engagement programming. These percentages are 18% and 11%, respectively, for respondents who report participating in civic engagement activities fewer than a few times per month. As such, one reason that the social prime may not significantly increase willingness to become more engaged is because those most likely to be impacted are already engaged --- a ceiling effect.

The substantive effect of the social prime on willingness to participate in civic engagement activities is comparable to the effect of other influences on participation. The social prime increased willingness to *Participate* by 3.6 percentage points, accounting for 14.4% of the 1st to 3rd quartile variation in *Participate*. This is comparable to the influence of the frequency with which a respondent attends campus events. Moving from the 1st to the 3rd quartile of the frequency of attending campus events increases willingness to *Participate* by 2.7 percentage points. Both effects were smaller than the effect of the pre-treatment question about the importance of being involved in the community for which moving from the 1st to the 3rd quartile of importance increased *Participate* by 7.6 percentage points.

Understanding Motivations

Results from the survey experiment run counter to expectations: personal social benefit appears to motivate willingness to participate in civic engagement more than career or external community benefit. To better understand how young adults think about civic engagement motivations, I rely on nine focus groups that I conducted with a total of 68 young adult

participants. Participants for two focus groups were recruited through an open call at the end of the survey. Participants in the remaining focus groups were recruited from various campus organizations and groups meant to broadly reflect the state of campus civic engagement. These groups included: political science majors, student government leaders, non-political club, political club, graduate students, minority-serving club, and Greek Life members. Recruitment aimed to obtain a variety of perspectives from members within each group and to reflect the broad demographic makeup of such groups on campus. For example, graduate students, individuals belonging to minority groups, and Greek Life each represented between 5% and 15% of the student body and so were each included as one focus group. Focus group sessions lasted about an hour each, and each focus group recruited participants from a different student constituency or group (see SI.11).

Student constituencies and groups varied in their likelihood of being civically engaged and broadly represented students on campus. The aim of the focus group sessions was to determine what motivated respondents to become civically engaged or why they refrain from participating. Focus groups followed a standard semi-structured interview format with extensive notes taken by a minimum of three student collaborators.

Focus groups covered a wide variety of topics related to civic engagement. Here I report the results that aim to unpack findings from the survey experiment related to civic engagement motivations. To identify common motivating factors, I employed a two-step process. First, student collaborators reviewed their notes searching for discussions relevant to a wide range of research questions. The student collaborators then used a generative approach to identify overarching themes throughout focus group sessions (Krueger and Casey 2014; Weiss 1994). Next, I reviewed these themes to identify a list of potential motivations. As a result of this

process, I added "personal attachment" as a new motivation to the three motivations described above (personal career, personal social, and external community benefits). Finally, I marked specific instances in focus group conversations where motivations were mentioned and categorized the type of motivation discussed.

The prevailing motivation for becoming civically engaged was personal attachment to an issue for which participation was warranted. This motivation was not included in the survey experiment, and exploring it further is an opportunity for future research. One objective in civic engagement work is to explain to young people how issues that they care about are inherently political. Such a translation is important, and it may help to strengthen young adults' personal attachment and to motivate future civic engagement. Describing a recent protest on campus, a respondent said that she was motivated to get more engaged because the protest was organized by "an extremist group that doesn't like women." This example demonstrates that the respondent felt the need to participate in counter-protests because of the way the issue impacted her.

Some respondents, particularly members of minority-serving organizations, described a deeper form of personal attachment where civic engagement is part of their responsibility as a citizen, regardless of the issue. For example, one respondent said, "if you keep waiting on someone else [to get involved in the community], you'll be waiting forever." These respondents described how civic engagement was an obligation, akin to a social contract that citizens make as part of living in a community. Considering the cost-benefit framework I presented to explain civic engagement motivations, young adults motivated by personal attachment gain short-term psychological benefits from participating in activities that align with their values along with the potential for longer-term policy changes.

Some respondents did report being recruited to participate in civic engagement because of their friends choosing to participate --- clearly a social motivation. These responses tended to come from individuals who were members of clubs or organizations, particularly fraternities or sororities, that participate in civic engagement projects. Examples included positive peer pressure from friends to join a club or organization, becoming civically engaged to meet like-minded people, and joining a group to build community with others. Though certainly a potential motivation in some settings, no participants described being motivated to become civically engaged because of networking opportunities that they felt could help with future job applications. Social benefits were described purely as ways to be in community and to meet new friends with similar interests.

Career development was also a motivating factor, but it was a tertiary motivation falling behind personal attachment to an issue and personal social benefit. In other words, career benefit alone was not enough to prompt civic engagement. One respondent captured this interplay by saying, "Yeah, [civic engagement] is a nice resume-booster, but I look at it more as a learning experience and as a way to be involved, it's not just a hangout session." Being involved is a social motivation, but the respondent is saying that being involved in just any activity is insufficient. Instead, involvement must be meaningful and presumably about an issue of personal importance. While career objectives are a bonus, the respondent framed career benefits as an incidental perk instead of a primary motivator. Several respondents agreed with the sentiment that resume-boosting was okay if it is not the primary reason for getting civically engaged. Many of these respondents were involved in the student government association (SGA), and, therefore, could describe their civic engagement work in SGA as part of a section on their resume with other SGA activities.

Focus group respondents spoke relatively little about being motivated by external community benefit. This could be because the benefits civic engagement has to the community are assumed or otherwise the activity is not worth participating in. Alternatively, it could be because respondents defined civic engagement narrowly, focusing on one-time service projects (like trash collection) and voting. One-time service projects are forms of civic engagement, but they are less likely to prompt widespread social and community change compared to sustained volunteering, public policy work, or activism.

Members of fraternities and sororities responded particularly negatively to being motivated to be civically engaged because of career and resume-building opportunities. These young adults stated that personal attachment, social benefits, and (to an extent) external community benefit should be the primary motivating factors. Their rationale centered around how fraternities and sororities are often perceived as an indicator of status and a method of career advancement, so having members with career-oriented motivations reflects poorly on the organization, whose primary purpose should be to put interested young adults together in community and to engage in meaningful partnerships with civic organizations. Though only a small percentage of young adults participate in fraternities and sororities, the idea that being motivated by career benefits goes against the supposedly altruistic concept of civic engagement is worth further exploration. It could be that young adults consider career benefits as part of their motivation to become civically engaged but develop other rationales that they believe align with societal expectations for civic participation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results run counter to expectations. I find that explaining the personal social benefits of civic engagement motivates college young adults to express a willingness to participate in civic engagement activities. While possible, it is unlikely that social desirability bias explains this finding. The experimental set-up reduces the likelihood of socially desirable responses because respondents are exposed to only one experimental prime. Further, the outcome questions are general and do not emphasize why a respondent may be willing to get engaged. Focus group results suggest that career-related considerations may provide a secondary or tertiary motivation for participating in civic engagement when paired with other, stronger motivating factors.

Of course, the emphasis on social benefits may be a result of limiting respondents to college students instead of more broadly sampling all young adults. Future work should examine civic engagement motivations among a representative sample of all young adults and, specifically, young adults who choose not to attend college. State-funded postsecondary tuition assistance means that young adults in this state are less likely to choose not to attend college for financial reasons. Yet, young adults who choose not to attend college still differ from those who choose to attend college in a variety of other ways. Such work will need to carefully conceptualize an experimental set-up that can explain career benefits to young adults who have already started their careers. Career-related calculations are different for young adults at different stages of starting and growing their careers.

The theoretical argument states that career benefits are more tangible and immediate than social benefits, thereby causing respondents to be more motivated by such benefits. But if civic engagement is defined narrowly, then career benefits are limited. An individual who participates in a one-time volunteer activity cannot meaningfully place that experience on their resume and,

therefore, derives few career benefits from attending the event. The focus group results allow civic engagement activities to be classified with more granularity through a conversation with participants. Here career benefits are mentioned specifically with *long-term* civic engagement projects. Indeed, fraternity and sorority members were the most likely to mention participating in civic engagement to help their careers, though they resisted being motivated by civic engagement *exclusively* for career benefit. This makes sense because these members will put membership in the fraternity or sorority on their resume and can include civic engagement work in a bullet. Wrapping discrete civic engagement activities up within the context of organizational membership provides an easy way to characterize the career benefits of civic engagement.

The institutional and community setting is a potential explanation for respondents' definitions of civic engagement and their motivation to participate. Future work should study different institutional types in different regions. However, scholars should be mindful that the experiences of young adults in the rural Deep South are themselves important. Young adults in rural areas and in the South are frequently the least civically engaged, so it is more likely that strategies that effectively motivate these young adults to overcome often significant barriers to express willingness to become more engaged are more likely to generalize to young adults in other locations than the reverse.[5]

Based on these results, I make the following recommendations to faculty looking to motivate young adults to be more civically engaged. First, ask young adults what they think would or does motivate them to be willing to participate in civic engagement. The themes and motivations discussed here are likely present elsewhere but are certainly influenced by different

[5] See https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/lack-civic-support-rural-youth-may-lead-lower-civic-engagement and https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/state-state-youth-voter-turnout-data-and-impact-election-laws-2022

young adult populations. Second, understand the degree to which motivation is sufficient to ensure participation. Motivation is linked to but does not always lead to participation. The linkage is likely stronger among young adults who have previously been civically engaged and who have the time and ability to engage further. Third, help young adults discover and develop personal attachment to civic engagement. Many young adults have connections to make to civically engaged activities and may not have had the space or information to make those connections in the past. Fourth, collaborate with student affairs to develop coherent messaging around civic engagement that emphasizes both social and career benefits. A unified approach is needed to ensure that young adults understand the range of motivations that could prompt civic participation. Finally, teach young adults how to talk about their civic engagement experiences. There is no shame in being motivated by potential career benefits. Rather, many young adults who participate in civically engaged activities are unfamiliar with how to describe the experiences that they have had on a resume or in an interview. Demystifying how civic engagement can benefit young adults in their careers in addition to providing social benefits can contribute to uncovering parts of the hidden curriculum --- what faculty assume students know, but what they may never have been taught.

References

Adler, Richard P., and Judy Goggin. 2005. "What Do We Mean By Civic Engagement?" *Journal of Transformative Education* 3(3): 236–53.

Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2007. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10(1): 103–26.

Entman, Robert M. 2007. "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power." *Journal of Communication* 57(1): 163–73.

Finley, Ashley. 2021. *How College Contributes to Workforce Success*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Fowler, James H. 2006. "Altruism and Turnout." *The Journal of Politics* 68(3): 674–83.

Gastil, John, and Michael Xenos. 2010. "Of Attitudes and Engagement: Clarifying the Reciprocal Relationship Between Civic Attitudes and Political Participation." *Journal of Communication* 60(2): 318–43. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01484.x.

Hatemi, Peter K., and Rose McDermott. 2016. "Give Me Attitudes." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1): 331–50. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-103113-034929.

Herman, Everett. 2018. "Understanding the Initiating Factors of Civic Engagement." Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Pittsburgh.

Krueger, Richard A., and Mary Anne Casey. 2014. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Fifth Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Lanero, Ana, Jose Luis Vazquez, and Pablo Gutierrez. 2017. "Young Adult Propensity to Join Voluntary Associations: The Role of Civic Engagement and Motivations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 46(5): 1006–29.

Mansbridge, Jane. 2017. “Why Do We Need Government? The Role of Civic Education in the Face of the Free-Rider Problem.” In *Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines*, Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 11–20.

Morimoto, Shauna A., and Lewis A. Friedland. 2013. “Cultivating Success: Youth Achievement, Capital and Civic Engagement in the Contemporary United States.” *Sociological Perspectives* 56(4): 523–46.

Nyhuis, Martin, Jordy F. Gosselt, and Martin Rosema. 2016. “The Psychology of Electoral Mobilization: A Subtle Priming Experiment.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 26(3): 293–311.

Oliver, Pamela. 1980. “Rewards and Punishments as Selective Incentives for Collective Action: Theoretical Investigations.” *American Journal of Sociology* 85(6): 1356–75.

Pan, Zhongdang, and Gerald Kosicki. 1993. “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse.” *Political Communication* 10(1): 55–75.

Siegel-Stechler, Kelly. 2021. “Parent Encouragement and Young Adult Voting Behavior: A Potential Outcomes Approach.” *Youth & Society* 53(5): 764–83.

Stringer, Kate, Jennifer Kerpelman, and Vladimir Skorikov. 2011. “Career Preparation: A Longitudinal, Process-Oriented Examination.” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79(1): 158–69.

Stukas, Arthur A., E. Gil Clary, and Mark Snyder. 1999. “Service Learning: Who Benefits and Why.” *Social Policy Report* 13(4): 1–23.

Sze-Yeung Lai, Charlotte, and Patrick Chi-leung Hui. 2021. “Service-Learning: Impacts of Learning Motivation and Learning Experience on Extended Social/Civic Engagement.” *Higher Education Research & Development* 40(2): 400–415.

Tamir, Yael. 1995. “The Enigma of Nationalism.” *World Politics* 47(3): 418–40.

Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings, and Ismail K. White. 2002. “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns.” *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 75–90.

Weber, Christopher, and Matthew Thornton. 2012. “Courting Christians: How Political Candidates Prime Religious Considerations in Campaign Ads.” *The Journal of Politics* 74(2): 400–413.

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.

Supplemental Information:
Social Benefits Motivate Young Adult Civic Engagement

Replication data and code is available on the Harvard Dataverse. This study was pre-registered with the Open Science Foundation on October 9, 2022. See pre-analysis plan below.

SI.1: Survey Design and Implementation

This survey was approved by the university Human Use Committee IRB 22-118.

Survey recruitment followed a multi-pronged approach with the goal of maximizing the number of survey respondents and roughly matching university demographic indicators. First, faculty solicited students who were interested in helping to recruit participants. These students were trained and subsequently canvassed for respondents on campus on three recruiting days. Students approached potential respondents, asked them if they had taken the survey, and gave them a small flyer with a QR code on it so that they could access the survey; approximately 3,000 flyers were distributed. Some canvassers were tasked with recruiting students in high traffic areas, while others walked around campus and approached students there. Canvassing in these locations occurred between 10AM and 4PM. During the first two canvassing days, students also went door-to-door in residence halls and apartments canvassing in the evening. Canvassing activities were approved by relevant administrators. Flyers were also posted across campus, and the university president and other leaders sent out the survey in campus-wide e-mails.

In addition to canvassing, students and faculty members made special efforts to reach out to on-campus groups that could help to spread the word about the survey. These groups included the Student Government Association, fraternities and sororities, psychology faculty and students, student organization leaders, first year common course faculty, and athletes.

Finally, individual faculty members encouraged students to complete the survey in various ways including completing it during class, sending out information about the survey, and

offering extra credit for completing the survey. History, sociology, geography, geographic information systems, and political science faculty were particularly involved in this effort. Since those faculty often teach general education courses to students from a range of majors, this helped to ensure good survey coverage.

The survey was open from October 19 to November 17, 2022. During this time, 1,118 individuals began the survey. Non-students, duplicate responses, and respondents who did not answer any survey questions were removed. This left 964 responses from individuals who answered at least one survey question. 736 respondents completed the entire survey. Partial responses were included in the analysis. Fall 2022 combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment was 8,621 for a completion rate of 11.2 percent and a response rate of 13.0 percent.[1]

SI.2: Survey Questions

1. Please indicate how often you: (1= None/Never, 2= Once each school year, 3= Once or twice each quarter, 4= a few times a month, 5= nearly every week)
    a. Freq_CommService: Participate in community service activities
    b. Freq_CampusEvents: Participate in campus events sponsored by the university
    c. Freq_StudentOrgs: Participate in student organizations
    d. Freq_LocalNews: Consume local news
    e. Freq_DiscussPolSocComm: Discuss politics, social, or community issues
2. Likert Scale Items: (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree)
    a. ImportantInvolvement: It is important to be involved in my community.
    b. My experiences at [institution] have prepared me to help solve problems in my community. (Added option: N/A: This is my first quarter at [institution])
        i. [Institution]PreparedCoded: Those who answered N/A were dropped
3. Civic Engagement Participation:
    - Civic engagement is commonly defined as knowledge of social and political institutions and processes, skills to participate in civic life, and an interest in taking action to better one's community.

    a. Based on this definition, what would you say are examples of civic engagement? List whatever comes to mind. This is not a test; there are no right answers. (Text box entry)
        i. D_AllMotivations: Count of number of examples of civic engagement provided. Qualitative, generative coding procedure used with individual types of motivations recorded and coded.
4. [Respondents received one of the prompts with probability 1/3]
    - Social: Some people say that civic engagement is important because it makes you feel like an active participant in society and lets you meet others in the community.
    - Career: Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides you with resume-building experiences and skills that are useful for many careers.
    - Extrinsic: Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides benefits to the community and helps other people.

[1] Excluding high school students in dual enrollment courses.

a. MoreEngaged: I am interested in becoming more civically engaged. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)
b. Participate: I would want to participate in civic engagement programming that [institution] developed, if I were available to do so. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)

5. Voter Participation:
    a. V_Registered: Are you registered to vote in the United States? (Yes, No)
        i. [If yes] In what ZIP Code are you registered? (Number entry)
        ii. V_Voted: [If yes] Have you voted in a local, state, or federal election? (Yes, No, I have not been registered long enough to vote yet)
        iii. [If yes] The last time you voted, did you vote: In person on election day, In person via early voting, absentee, other (please explain)
        iv. [If no] Why not? (Text box entry)
6. Civic Knowledge:
    a. How much of a majority is required in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to override a presidential veto? (4/5 or 80%, 2/3 or 67%, 3/5 or 60%, 1/2 or 50%, Don't know)
        i. K_FederalCorrect: 1 if 2/3, 0 otherwise
    b. [State] has how many Congressional districts? (Number entry)
        i. K_StateCorrect: 1 if answered correctly, 0 otherwise
    c. What is the Mayor of [city] name? (Text box response)
        i. K_LocalCorrect: 1 if answered correctly or with similar spelling, 0 otherwise
        ii. K_NumCorrect: K_FederalCorrect+K_StateCorrect+K_LocalCorrect
7. Demographics:
    a. I am currently an: (undergraduate student, graduate student, other)
        i. [If other] Please describe the degree or program you are enrolled in. (Text box response)
        ii. GradStudent: 1 if graduate student, 0 if undergraduate student. All non-student respondents were removed
    b. My major (or intended major) is in: [liberal arts, business, education, engineering, science]
        i. CollegeCANS: Major in science
        ii. CollegeCOB: Major in business
        iii. CollegeCOE: Major in education
        iv. CollegeCOES: Major in engineering
        v. CollegeCOLA: Major in liberal arts
    c. I plan to graduate in: 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, Other
        i. GradYear: Collapses other respondents to 2026 based on their responses
    d. In what year were you born? (Number entry)
    e. I am: (male, female, non-binary, prefer not to say)
        i. Male: 1 if male, 0 if female or non-binary. Prefer not to say coded as N/A
    f. Which categories best describe your racial or ethnic identity? (Select all: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian, Black or African American; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; White, non-Hispanic; other; prefer not to say)

i. NonWhite: 1 if reporting one or more categories that were not White, non-Hispanic, 0 if reporting White, non-Hispanic. Prefer not to say coded as N/A

g. Have you taken any courses at [institution] that have included engaging with the local [town] community (often called service learning or civic engagement)? (Yes, No, Unsure)
   i. [If yes] About how many courses would you say you have taken that included engaging with the local [town] community? (Number entry)
   ii. EngagedClassYes: 1 if had taken an engaged class, 0 if no or unsure

h. About how many hours do you work for pay per week during the school year? (Number entry)
   i. Work_Yes: 1 if respondent worked more than 0 hours, 0 if not working

8. Survey Attention Variables:
   a. prime_firstclick_l: Logged time until first click on the survey prime page
   b. Duration_l: Logged duration of the survey in seconds

SI.3: Ethical Considerations

This project was approved by the university Human Use Committee IRB-22-118 on September 30, 2022.

- Consent: Both survey and focus group respondents provided informed consent.
- Deception: There was no deception in the survey or the focus groups.
- Confidentiality: Survey responses were stored on a secure Qualtrics server. Respondents completed the survey on their own device. Responses were not disaggregated by demographic data to ensure respondent anonymity. Focus group responses were recorded anonymously, and respondent names were not used as identification.
- Harm and Impact: There was no expected harm from this survey or the focus groups. Respondents could exit the survey at any time and were in no case required to complete it. Focus group respondents also had the option to leave the focus group at any time.
- Compensation: Survey respondent compensation was calculated at the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour, as there is no state minimum wage where the survey took place. The survey expected duration was 5 minutes. This was an accurate estimate, as the median survey time was 5 minutes and 5 seconds. Of course, not all survey respondents completed the entire survey, and some respondents never completed the survey, meaning that their completion time was the maximum response period --- 7 days. Since the survey was anonymous, respondents interested in potentially obtaining compensation had to submit their e-mail address to be eligible; there were 600 eligible respondents. Compensation was in the form of university currency that students commonly use to buy food on campus and other supplies around town. Seven winners were chosen to receive $50 in university currency each, and the money was deposited directly into their account. The expected payoff to each eligible respondent is $0.58, which is approximately equal to the expected 5 minute duration multiplied by the minimum wage for this fraction of an hour of work.

Focus group respondents were not monetarily compensated (there were snacks). This was because the purpose of the focus groups was for respondents to help to design civic engagement experiences and programming on campus. That is, while the main purpose of the survey was also to improve civic engagement on campus, the focus groups were set-up for the primary purpose of getting student input into university-level strategic planning.

SI.4: Descriptive Statistics

Table SI.4.1 displays descriptive statistics for the dependent variables and demographic control variables.

Table SI.4.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Freq_CommService	2.39	2.00	1.12	1.00	5.00
Freq_CampusEvents	3.11	3.00	1.14	1.00	5.00
Freq_StudentOrgs	3.28	3.00	1.55	1.00	5.00
Freq_LocalNews	2.64	3.00	1.46	1.00	5.00
Freq_DiscussPolSocComm	3.11	3.00	1.47	1.00	5.00
[Institution]PreparedCoded	3.54	4.00	1.08	1.00	5.00
ImportantInvolvement	4.07	4.00	0.96	1.00	5.00
MoreEngaged	3.75	4.00	0.99	1.00	5.00
Participate	3.48	4.00	1.04	1.00	5.00
GradYear2022	0.03	0.00	0.17	0.00	1.00
GradYear2023	0.17	0.00	0.37	0.00	1.00
GradYear2024	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.00	1.00
GradYear2025	0.25	0.00	0.43	0.00	1.00
GradYear2026	0.35	0.00	0.48	0.00	1.00
NonWhite	0.25	0.00	0.43	0.00	1.00
GradStudent	0.04	0.00	0.20	0.00	1.00
EngagedClassYes	0.16	0.00	0.37	0.00	1.00
Male	0.52	1.00	0.50	0.00	1.00
Female	0.46	0.00	0.50	0.00	1.00
K_NumCorrect	0.95	1.00	0.87	0.00	3.00
V_Registered	0.72	1.00	0.45	0.00	1.00
Work_Yes	0.55	1.00	0.50	0.00	1.00
CollegeScience	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.00	1.00
CollegeBusiness	0.13	0.00	0.34	0.00	1.00
CollegeEngineering	0.12	0.00	0.33	0.00	1.00

CollegeEducation	0.32	0.00	0.47	0.00	1.00
CollegeLiberalArts	0.23	0.00	0.42	0.00	1.00

Note: Five number summary for demographic and dependent variables.

SI.5: Sample and Population Characteristics

Using the university Common Data Set for 2021-2022 and Fall 2022 enrollment statistics, we can compare the student population to the survey sample to assess how representative the survey is of students at this university. Demographic questions were located at the end of the survey and there were options to opt-out of answering. Sample size for demographic questions was greater than 731.

Table SI.5.1 breaks down respondents by undergraduate and graduate status. Compared to the student population, graduate students are underrepresented. Graduate students are a difficult population to reach at this institution because many of them participate in online-only programs and do not often visit campus. While I did engage with graduate student representatives on the Student Government Association, there are not many graduate student exclusive groups on campus. Still, there are enough graduate student respondents to describe any variation present based on student type.

Table SI.5.1: Student Type

	Survey	Population
Undergraduate	95.9	89.1
Graduate	4.1	10.9

Note: Comparison with degree-seeking students.

Table SI.5.2 displays respondents by college. Only business students are meaningfully underrepresented. After initial survey promotion, we targeted recruitment of engineering majors who were underrepresented and successfully boosted the percentage of those majors. Survey results should be generalizable across colleges.

Table SI.5.2: College

	Survey	Population
Science	19.7	19.3
Business	13.1	18.1
Education	12.0	13.9
Engineering	32.4	31.7
Liberal Arts	22.9	17.1

Note: Both undergraduate and graduate students. Comparison with degree-seeking students. Data not disaggregated by student type to protect anonymity.

Table SI.5.3 displays gender demographics. Though respondents who identify as male are slightly underrepresented, population demographics do not include a non-binary gender option, meaning that a direct comparison is not possible. Extra effort was made to increase the proportion of respondents who were male. This meant targeting business and engineering majors who are more likely to be male compared to students in other colleges.

Table SI.5.3: Gender

	Survey	Population
Male	51.7	54.9
Female	45.6	45.2
Non-Binary	2.7	N/A

Note: Both undergraduate and graduate students. Comparison with degree-seeking students. No non-binary option reported in the Common Data Set. Data not disaggregated by student type to protect anonymity.

Table SI.5.4 displays selected racial and ethnic categories. Respondents could select one or more racial or ethnic categories; those who selected two or more categories are captured in the "other categories" measure alongside less represented groups. The survey does a good job of representing racial and ethnic variation.

Table SI.5.4: Race or Ethnicity

	Survey	Population
White, non-Hispanic	75.1	76.2
African American or Black	10.4	11.5
Hispanic/Latino or Spanish Origin	4.1	4.9
Other categories	10.4	7.3

Note: Both undergraduate and graduate students. Comparison with degree-seeking students. Data not disaggregated by student type or other racial or ethnic categories to protect anonymity.

Table SI.5.5 displays different measures of class standing. The Common Data Set uses classification as a measure of class standing. Since many students transfer in credits, this produces more seniors by credits than individuals who are in their final year before graduation. Since students tend not to know their number of earned credits at any given point in time, the survey asked about intended graduation year and birth year (age). Both graduation year and age are relatively well distributed.

Table SI.5.5: Class Standing

Survey				Population	
Graduation Year		Age		Standing By Credits	
2026+	35.3	17-18	21.9	Freshmen	25.2
2025	25.9	19	25.7	Sophomore	22.6
2024	20.0	20	22.0	Junior	21.2
2023	16.8	21	14.8	Senior	30.1
2022	3.0	22+	15.6		

Note: Population includes only undergraduate, degree-seeking students and is based on standing by credit hours. Survey does not have direct credit hours measure.

Sample demographics, therefore, closely matched the student body at the university where the survey was implemented. Results should generalize to all students at the university.

SI.6: Institution Description

Like any survey experiment, generalizing outside of the target population should be done carefully. This survey and the associated focus groups were conducted at a medium-sized public university in the Deep South. The university is selective admission, and it recruits primarily in-state students or students from adjacent states. In comparison to other Southern Regional Education Board states, the system in which the university operates has average tuition and fees, the lowest instructional costs, second lowest state appropriations, and lowest faculty salaries. The university is located in a rural college town and recruits students from both rural and urban areas. Many students are the first in their family to attend college. Public K-12 and higher education in the state has long been underfunded. Traditional strengths of the university include high retention, fast time to degree, and instructional quality. Many students receive statewide higher education assistance funding that pays for the full cost of attendance at the university. High enrollment majors include engineering, biology, computer science, nursing, and aviation.

The university general education requirement requires all students to complete at 9 credit hours of humanities (possibly including history) and at least 6 credit hours of social or behavioral science (economics, geography, political science, psychology, or sociology). The university student body has not benefitted from strong civic engagement programming, and current levels of student civic engagement are low. The university does not have an active civic engagement, service learning, voter engagement, or other similar office or staff assigned to perform these functions.

As such, the results are most likely to generalize to a wide variety of youth in the workforce or attending two- or four-year colleges and universities where those youth are not from wealthy backgrounds and institutions of higher learning are not elite.

SI.7: Balance Tests

Table SI.7.1 displays results from a multinomial logistic regression model that assesses covariate balance, using covariates to predict assignment to one of the experimental conditions. Only one covariate of the 16 tested --- voter registration --- was predictive of treatment assignment. Voter registration is a control variable included in the regression analysis. Therefore, treatment assignment was balanced on covariates.

Table SI.7.1: Multinomial Logistic Regression Balance Tests

	Dependent variable:	
	Social	Career
	(1)	(2)
ImportantInvolvement	0.001	-0.032
	(0.098)	(0.099)
GradYear2023	0.262	0.511
	(0.568)	(0.589)
GradYear2024	-0.072	0.286
	(0.557)	(0.574)

GradYear2025	0.194	0.153
	(0.551)	(0.577)
GradYear2026	0.355	0.535
	(0.550)	(0.573)
NonWhite	-0.073	-0.156
	(0.212)	(0.220)
GradStudent	-0.664	0.113
	(0.521)	(0.437)
EngagedClassYes	-0.085	-0.334
	(0.242)	(0.261)
Male	-0.029	0.070
	(0.203)	(0.207)
K_NumCorrect	-0.053	0.005
	(0.110)	(0.111)
V_Registered	0.403*	0.375*
	(0.216)	(0.223)
Work_Yes	-0.024	0.049
	(0.195)	(0.201)
CollegeCOB	-0.210	-0.211
	(0.343)	(0.335)
CollegeCOE	-0.367	-0.425
	(0.341)	(0.340)
CollegeCOES	0.134	-0.221
	(0.279)	(0.284)
CollegeCOLA	0.171	-0.129
	(0.290)	(0.294)
Constant	-0.368	-0.404
	(0.698)	(0.714)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Note: Multinomial logistic regression model results with demographic controls on experimental prime.

Table SI.8.1 shows the results from two sample t-tests for covariates of interest comparing respondents receiving a given prime to other respondents. Only one p-value of the 57 t-tests conducted, that of voter registration comparing extrinsic motivation recipients to other motivation recipients, was statistically significant. This indicates that respondents were successfully randomly assigned to a treatment.

Table SI.8.1: Individual Covariate Balance

Variable	Extrinsic	Not	t-value	p-value	Social	Not	t-value	p-value	Career	Not	t-value	p-value
ImportantInvolvement	4.07	4.09	-0.25	0.80	4.07	4.09	-0.22	0.83	4.10	4.07	0.47	0.64
[Institution]PreparedCoded	3.51	3.55	-0.39	0.69	3.47	3.57	-1.08	0.28	3.62	3.49	1.47	0.14
GradYear2022	0.03	0.03	0.49	0.62	0.03	0.03	-0.31	0.76	0.03	0.03	-0.19	0.85
GradYear2023	0.15	0.18	-0.74	0.46	0.17	0.17	0.11	0.91	0.18	0.16	0.64	0.52
GradYear2024	0.22	0.19	0.98	0.33	0.17	0.22	-1.63	0.10	0.21	0.19	0.65	0.52
GradYear2025	0.26	0.25	0.37	0.71	0.27	0.24	1.04	0.30	0.22	0.27	-1.42	0.16
GradYear2026	0.33	0.36	-0.75	0.45	0.36	0.35	0.45	0.66	0.36	0.35	0.32	0.75
NonWhite	0.27	0.24	1.05	0.30	0.25	0.25	-0.03	0.98	0.22	0.26	-1.04	0.30
GradStudent	0.05	0.04	0.52	0.60	0.03	0.05	-1.31	0.19	0.05	0.04	0.79	0.43
EngagedClassYes	0.17	0.16	0.50	0.62	0.18	0.16	0.74	0.46	0.14	0.18	-1.25	0.21
Male	0.51	0.52	-0.46	0.65	0.52	0.52	-0.06	0.95	0.53	0.51	0.52	0.60
K_NumCorrect	0.94	0.95	-0.04	0.96	0.94	0.95	-0.18	0.86	0.96	0.94	0.23	0.82
V_Registered	0.68	0.75	-2.09	0.04	0.75	0.71	1.00	0.32	0.75	0.71	1.10	0.27
Work_Yes	0.55	0.54	0.21	0.84	0.53	0.56	-0.72	0.47	0.56	0.54	0.52	0.60
CollegeCANS	0.20	0.20	-0.03	0.97	0.18	0.21	-0.93	0.35	0.22	0.19	0.97	0.33
CollegeCOB	0.14	0.13	0.45	0.65	0.11	0.14	-0.93	0.35	0.14	0.13	0.48	0.63
CollegeCOE	0.15	0.11	1.59	0.11	0.11	0.13	-0.81	0.42	0.11	0.13	-0.80	0.43
CollegeCOES	0.31	0.33	-0.68	0.50	0.35	0.31	1.17	0.24	0.31	0.33	-0.49	0.62
CollegeCOLA	0.21	0.24	-0.80	0.42	0.25	0.22	0.95	0.34	0.23	0.23	-0.14	0.89

Note: Two sample t-tests comparing individual covariates across each experimental prime.

SI.8: T-Test Results

Table SI.8.1 displays results from two-sample t-tests evaluating Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. The first two rows compare extrinsic and social and career motivations (Hypothesis 1) and show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the combined social and career motivation primes and increased willingness to participate in civic engagement activities. The last two rows compare the social and career primes (Hypothesis 2) and show no statistically significant difference between them. The t-test results demonstrate partial support for Hypothesis 1 and no support for Hypothesis 2.

Table SI.8.1: T-Test Results for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2

Test	Variable	Estimate 1	Estimate 2	t-value	p-value	Lower	Upper
Extrinsic vs. Social & Career	Engaged	3.70	3.77	-0.88	0.38	-0.21	0.08
Extrinsic vs. Social & Career	Participate	3.38	3.53	-1.94	0.05	-0.31	0.00
Social vs. Career	Engaged	3.77	3.77	0.04	0.96	-0.16	0.17
Social vs. Career	Participate	3.53	3.52	0.13	0.90	-0.16	0.18

Note: Two sample t-test results with 95% confidence intervals.

SI.9: Regression Results

Table SI.9.1 displays linear regression models with robust standard errors and control variables included. Extrinsic motivation is the excluded category. The social prime increases willingness to participate in civic engagement activities by 0.144 on a 5-point Likert scale or 3.6 percentage points compared to the extrinsic motivation prime. Linear hypothesis tests demonstrate no statistically significant difference between the social and career primes for either dependent variable.

Table SI.9.1: Regression Results

	Dependent variable:	
	MoreEngaged	Participate
	(1)	(2)
Social	0.084	0.144*
	(0.077)	(0.083)
Career	-0.005	0.086
	(0.079)	(0.087)
Business	-0.136	0.058
	(0.113)	(0.125)
Education	-0.016	0.026
	(0.117)	(0.128)

Engineering	-0.011	0.124
	(0.093)	(0.097)
Liberal Arts	-0.103	-0.060
	(0.095)	(0.108)
Constant	1.078***	0.573*
	(0.334)	(0.334)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Linear Hyp. Test	1.29 (0.26)	0.47 (0.50)
Observations	709	709
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Note: Linear regression models with robust standard errors. Reference category is science.

SI.10: Robustness Checks

Table SI.10.1 displays ordered logistic regression models which are consistent with the linear regression models in Table SI.9.1.

Table SI.10.1: Ordered Logistic Models

	Dependent variable:	
	MoreEngaged	Participate
	(1)	(2)
Social	0.161	0.287*
	(0.178)	(0.173)
Career	0.035	0.187
	(0.180)	(0.177)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	709	709
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Note: Ordered logistic regression models.

Table SI.10.2 subsets the results to only respondents who provided on-topic examples to the civic engagement examples question. All respondents who were exposed to a prime were required to view it for at least four seconds before the dependent variable questions appeared. This ensured that respondents received the treatment. However, some respondents may have been inattentive, and the respondents most likely to be inattentive were those who did not provide an on-topic response to the open text box question asking for examples of civic

engagement. Most of those respondents who did not provide an on-topic response wrote something like "N/A" or "I don't know." The results hold when subsetting out these respondents.

Table SI.10.2: Only On-Topic Examples

	Dependent variable:	
	MoreEngaged	Participate
	(1)	(2)
Social	0.090	0.146*
	(0.079)	(0.085)
Career	0.033	0.107
	(0.080)	(0.089)
Num. Motivations	0.070**	0.086***
	(0.029)	(0.030)
Constant	1.125***	0.557
	(0.364)	(0.375)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	673	673
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Note: Linear regression models with robust standard errors subset to respondents who provided on-topic responses to the civic engagement examples question and controlling for the number of examples provided.

Table SI.10.3 shows models with controls for different definitions of civic engagement. The magnitude and interpretation of coefficients is consistent with the main results.

Table SI.10.3: Models with Controls for Civic Engagement Definition

	Dependent variable:	
	MoreEngaged	Participate
	(1)	(2)
Social	0.080	0.135
	(0.077)	(0.083)
Career	-0.006	0.082
	(0.081)	(0.086)
D_Service01	0.075	0.218***
	(0.066)	(0.071)
D_Action01	0.068	0.036

	(0.068)	(0.073)
D_Groups01	0.109	0.049
	(0.112)	(0.123)
D_Campaigns01	-0.088	-0.180
	(0.167)	(0.215)
D_College01	0.003	0.267***
	(0.102)	(0.096)
D_Conversations01	0.033	0.013
	(0.098)	(0.106)
D_Informed01	0.040	0.073
	(0.093)	(0.096)
D_Events01	-0.001	-0.033
	(0.079)	(0.089)
Constant	1.058***	0.527
	(0.334)	(0.331)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	709	709
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Note: Linear regression models with robust standard errors.

SI.11: Focus Groups

To supplement the survey experiment, I conducted focus groups with students in January 2023. Focus group participants were recruited in two ways. First, survey respondents could enter their e-mail at the end of the survey if they were interested in participating in a focus group. About 120 survey respondents chose to enter their e-mail. Second, focus group respondents were recruited from various campus organizations and groups. Using a list of all student organizations on campus, I identified organizations with a civic engagement-related mission. Members of these organizations were also invited to participate.

I conducted nine focus groups. Two focus groups were with general respondents --- those students who put their e-mail in the survey or other students who were interested in participating. The remaining seven focus groups were themed with the following groups: political science

majors, student government leaders, non-political club, political club, graduate students, minority-serving club, and Greek Life members. Given limited resources, these groups represented different constituencies and interests with different potential motivations for participating in civic engagement.

Focus groups were scheduled for an hour with a target number of participants for each focus group of between 8 and 12 individuals. The focus groups were all located in a convenient conference room on campus where participants could sit around a conference table and engage with one another. Upon arriving to the focus group, I described the purpose of the focus group and obtained written informed consent from participants. The focus group then followed a semi-structured format with pre-prepared, Human Use Committee approved questions being used as a starting point for discussion. These questions were tailored based on the group or organization to which respondents were members and respondent answers to previous questions.

Student collaborators assisted in several parts of administering the focus groups. Student collaborators were split into groups, and each group was charged with working collaboratively with me to identify relevant campus organizations or groups to participate in the focus group sessions. After identifying relevant organizations and groups, collaborators assisted with participant recruitment, ensuring that a good mix of organization or group members attended the focus group sessions. Each collaborator group recruited participants for two focus groups. Once focus group participants were recruited, collaborator groups developed a research question detailing the differences in civic engagement that they expected to identify during focus group sessions. Collaborator groups were required to justify their research questions. For example, one set of collaborators planned focus groups for a political club and a non-political club and, therefore, established a research question asking the extent to which members of the political club were more aware of opportunities for civic engagement through voting and if that would translate into broader civic engagement.

Extensive notes were taken during the focus group by at least three trained collaborators who themselves were not focus group participants. One collaborator was assigned to be the primary notetaker, and a second collaborator was assigned to be the secondary or backup notetaker. A third collaborator was assigned to be an observer: this individual focused on the broader dynamics of the focus group as it proceeded including participant body language, non-verbal reactions, and overall group responses. The collaborators established a consistent system to anonymously label focus group participants so that later notes and observations could be cross-referenced.

Following the conclusion of a focus group, each collaborator group compiled their respective notes for analysis. Using the consistent system previously established to cross-reference notes and observations, collaborator groups reviewed their notes and observations, making sure that respondents were appropriately labeled. The notes taken by the primary notetaker were used as the reference set of notes, with the secondary notetaker and observer's notes used to supplement and fill in the primary notetaker's notes when needed.

Each collaborator group then proceeded to analyze the notes and observations from the focus groups in which they assisted, starting with information relevant to their research question. Next, each collaborator group sought to understand the overall themes that emerged in their set of focus groups using a generative approach. Collaborator groups summarized their findings by drawing conclusions about both their research question and overall themes.

Focus groups covered a wide variety of topics related to civic engagement, only one of which pertained to participants' motivations to become more civically engaged. Civic

engagement motivations were explicitly discussed when participants were asked about past civic engagement experiences and potential future experiences (focus group question 10). Based on these responses, I asked follow-up questions about why participants decided to participate in the experiences they listed or why they decided not to be civically engaged. I was careful not to explicitly ask if participants were motivated by certain factors until after participants themselves raised them.

To identify themes related to civic engagement motivations, I first reviewed the two above steps completed by collaborator groups. Using both the research question discussion and overall themes, I developed a list of potential themes related to civic engagement motivations. What immediately stood out from the work of the collaborators was the presence of personal attachment as a theme generally and specifically related to motivations to be civically engaged. I added to this list the three potential themes related to personal social benefits, personal career benefits, and external community benefits.

I then read the notes from each focus group and marked specific instances where these themes were mentioned explicitly. In doing so, I kept in mind the fact that not all focus group participants answered all questions, nor were all questions phrased in exactly the same manner between focus groups. As such, I ordered the themes based on their prevalence without trying to quantify the precise frequency with which a theme was mentioned. Twenty-eight of the 68 focus group participants (41%) explicitly described a motivation related to participating in civic engagement. Other participants frequently agreed with or commented on the motivations discussed as a group.

SI.12: Pre-Analysis Plan

This study was pre-registered at the Open Science Foundation on October 9, 2022. The full pre-analysis plan follows.

"Kids today just aren't joiners," Robert Putnam famously quoted Tom Kissel saying (Putnam 2000, 1). While it may be true that civic and community engagement are declining because of youth opting not to participate, this phenomenon could also occur because young people think about and assess the benefits of civic engagement differently compared to older generations. Traditional motivations to join community organizations, to get involved in community affairs, and to register and turnout to vote are often focused on a social and moral responsibility to get involved (e.g., Omoto, Snyder, and Hackett 2010; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). These motivations may not resonate with today's youth, meaning that campaigns aimed at increasing youth civic engagement using these motivations as messaging are unlikely to be effective. Does changing the messaging encouraging youth to become civically engaged impact attitudes toward civic engagement?

Young adults turnout to vote less frequently and are generally less civically involved compared to older adults (e.g., Gentry 2018). Extensive prior work has sought to explain why some young people are civically engaged whereas others are not. Family socialization is a particularly important predictor of youth civic knowledge (Andolina et al. 2003; Earl, Maher, and Elliott 2017; McIntosh, Hart, and Youniss 2007) and voter turnout (Oskarsson et al. 2022). Parents who have discussions with their children about civic engagement, for example, effectively motivate them to get involved (McIntosh, Hart, and Youniss 2007). Discussions and

civic learning opportunities also build long term political efficacy when integrated into high school classrooms (Andolina et al. 2003; Kahne, College, and Sporte 2009; Pasek et al. 2008). These discussions often uncover social injustices that motivate youth to take their social responsibility as members of a broader community seriously and prompt them to become civically engaged (e.g., Lanero, Vazquez, and Gutierrez 2017; Pearl and Christensen 2017; Suarez-Orozco, Hernandez, and Casanova 2015). Social media, especially when backed by media literacy education (Kahne, Lee, and Feezell 2012), provides a pathway for youth to translate their newfound motivation into civic practice (Lee, Shah, and McLeod 2013; Maher and Earl 2019).

Social responsibility is certainly an important motivator of youth and young adult civic engagement. Yet, we know that young people who participate in civic engagement activities report that they did so for both extrinsic (including social responsibility) and intrinsic reasons (like career preparation). I examine whether intrinsic messaging can be used to motivate young adults' attitudes toward civic engagement and participation by relying on a randomized vignette experiment fielded to young adults enrolled at a Southern university. By doing so, I answer whether subtle shifts in messaging about the value and importance of civic engagement prompt young adults to be more receptive to civic participation.

Theory

I argue that willingness to participate in a civic engagement activity is determined by the cost of participation and the benefits derived from participating. Individuals can perceive these costs and benefits differently for the same activity. For example, a voter whose precinct is in the small snack room in a public housing building may perceive that the wait time to vote is longer than a voter whose precinct is in a school gymnasium with the same number of voters and election workers because people are crammed into a smaller space in the snack room, so it looks more crowded. The written analog of this visual phenomenon is framing. If I want to convey a message that every vote matters, I might frame this message using the Virginia House of Delegates race decided by a coin flip (Cox 2017) instead of the seemingly less salient Philadelphia Election Judge race where Phillip Garcia was elected with the one vote he wrote in for himself (Bowden 2017). Extensive work in political science has shown the critical importance of framing in impacting attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Chong and Druckman 2007; Entman 2007; Pan and Kosicki 1993).

How then can the benefits and costs of civic engagement be framed? I focus here on messages that exclusively convey civic engagement benefits. Costs are constant because the activities for which I solicit respondent's willingness to participate are the same across messages. This is realistic since the goal of civic engagement messaging is to highlight its benefits to get people more engaged.

Extrinsic messages provide relatively low levels of individual benefit. Having altruistic motivations is admirable and beneficial for society, but if the primary outcome from participating in civic engagement is that it helps other people, any one individual receives few individual benefits from participating.[2] In other words, framing civic engagement as primarily beneficial for society presents individuals with a classic free rider problem (Mansbridge 2017). Intrinsic messages are designed to solve this free rider problem by explicitly mentioning the benefits that

[2] Although likely less salient, altruistic benefits may still effectively motivate civic engagement (e.g., Fowler 2006).

individuals will receive by becoming civically engaged (Oliver 1980). Intrinsic messages, therefore, convey more individual benefit than do extrinsic messages.

Naturally, there is variation in the amount of benefit conveyed by different kinds of intrinsic messages. Some civically engaged individuals report social benefits of being around and interacting with others as a result of their engagement (Flanagan 2009; Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss 2002). Civic engagement provides an opportunity to meet new people (Lanero, Vazquez, and Gutierrez 2017) and to combat feelings of social isolation (Stukas, Clary, and Snyder 1999). Stukas, Clary, and Snyder (1999) call these benefits "protection" in that civic engagement offers protection from self-isolation, a phenomenon reminiscent of Tamir's conceptualization of nationalism as offering "redemption from personal oblivion" (Tamir 1995, 433). I argue that framing civic engagement as providing this redemption motivates youth to be more willing to become civically engaged. Social isolation is a challenge for many youth and young adults, and civic engagement can address social pressures to become more involved. Protection from social isolation provides youth with intrinsic benefit, meaning that messaging emphasizing the social benefits of being around others should motivate youth more than extrinsic messages.

Participating in civic engagement builds a wide variety of skills that are important for many careers. If these benefits are communicated effectively, young adults will logically be interested in becoming civically engaged to give themselves a head start on career development. Indeed, young adults who are civically engaged report being motivated to do so because of the benefits of building their resume and developing career skills (Herman 2018; Morimoto and Friedland 2013; Stringer, Kerpelman, and Skorikov 2011; Sze-Yeung Lai and Chi-leung Hui 2021). Civic engagement experiences may also help to gauge youth interest in a career path or to help youth explore new career paths (Stukas, Clary, and Snyder 1999). While career benefit is not immediate, skill-building and completing smaller experiences that can go on young adults' resumes provide relatively clear short-term career-related benefits. On average, therefore, I argue that the career benefit of civic engagement is substantially larger than the social benefits of being around others.

Once people receive a message about the benefits of civic engagement, they need to translate this message into a set of preferences about their willingness to become civically engaged. Apart from the framing literature that has convincingly established the presence of this link, we know that messages designed to increase voter turnout do translate into an increased intention to vote and change voter behavior (e.g., Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002; Weber and Thornton 2012). Subtle cues like those emphasized here are enough to trigger an association between the message and existing beliefs about the message topic that can shift attitudes and behavior (Nyhuis, Gosselt, and Rosema 2016; Siegel-Stechler 2021). Therefore, I hypothesize that messages that convey more individual benefit will be more likely to increase young adults' willingness to become civically engaged.

Hypothesis 1 compares extrinsic and intrinsic messaging about civic engagement benefits. Hypothesis 2 compares the two intrinsic messages, with the expectation that career benefit is the highest and, therefore, motivates young adult civic engagement the most.

Hypothesis 1: Young adults who receive messages about intrinsic benefits of civic engagement will be more interested in becoming civically engaged compared to young adults who receive messages about extrinsic benefits of civic engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Young adults who receive messages about career benefits of civic engagement will be more interested in becoming civically engaged compared to young adults who receive messages about social benefits of civic engagement.

Research Design

I evaluate the relationship between messaging and attitudes toward participating in civic engagement using a randomized vignette experiment fielded to students enrolled at a university in the rural South.

The particular university where the survey experiment was fielded is a selective enrollment public research university with approximately 10,000 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students. The university is known for its affordability, fast time to degree, and teaching quality. Students are primarily traditionally aged young adults, a substantial proportion of whom are first generation college students and who are from traditionally underprivileged backgrounds. Most students are in-state; the state primary and secondary education system is particularly under resourced. Anecdotally, students commonly express how they received no meaningful civics-related education in high school.

The university is committed to a civic and publicly serving mission and is beginning work to encourage student civic engagement. The university does not employ staff that manage civic engagement, service learning, or similar initiatives. This is a methodological advantage of this survey location, as students are substantially less likely to be aware of common arguments in favor of civic engagement compared to students at an institution with greater financial resources and dedicated centers for civic engagement and service learning. That said, the students participating in this experiment are not representative of all youth or young adults, as most young adults do not attend a four-year college. Young adults aged 18 to 24 are the ideal target demographic for this study because they are actively preparing for careers. As such, it is certainly beneficial to conduct similar studies that are representative of all young adults and that focus on young adults at different types of institutions of higher education, especially including community colleges. Studies of youth younger than 18 may also be useful, but those youth likely face different challenges than do young adults aged 18 to 24.

The survey experiment was part of a larger online survey used to collect information about civic and community engagement among students at the university. Students were recruited via e-mail. Additional recruitment occurred through student volunteers recruiting participants all around campus at various times during the day. Since university classes are taught in an almost entirely in-person format, this ensured that students had a roughly equal probability of being asked to participate in the survey. The survey was estimated to take no more than 5 minutes to complete, and participants had the opportunity to enter a raffle for university credit (a common incentive used to buy food or pay for things on campus). The survey was not mandatory, so some students chose not to participate. Since the study uses a randomized experimental design, the results are internally valid, and control variables help to account for factors that might impact students' choice to complete the survey.

The survey began with several Likert scale questions about participation in civic and community activities. Next, the survey provided respondents with a definition of civic engagement. The definition provided is derived from Adler and Goggin (2005) and said, "civic engagement is commonly defined as knowledge of social and political institutions and processes, skills to participate in civic life, and an interest in taking action to better one's community." The

definition frames civic engagement as a series of individual-level activities (knowledge, skills, and interest) that result in communal benefit. Respondents are then asked to provide some examples of what they think constitutes civic engagement. This exercise is important because it mentions the term "civic engagement" for the first time in the survey, it immediately contextualizes the term so that respondents who are unfamiliar with it can answer the subsequent questions, and it provides an opportunity to control for different initial conceptualizations about civic engagement (via the examples that respondents list).

Following this question, respondents are randomly assigned to one of three primes with equal probability. The primes describe some potential motivations for becoming civically engaged. The social prime refers to social involvement as an intrinsic motivator and states that individuals who are civically engaged feel like active participants in society and meet others in the community. The career prime refers to career advancement as an intrinsic motivator and states that individuals who are civically engaged gain career-ready skills. The control condition refers to extrinsic benefits related to social responsibility, the traditional way in which civic engagement benefits are described.

- Intrinsic Social Motivation: "Some people say that civic engagement is important because it makes you feel like an active participant in society and lets you meet others in the community."
- Intrinsic Career Motivation: "Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides you with resume-building experiences and skills that are useful for many careers."
- Control (Extrinsic Motivation): "Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides benefits to the community and helps other people."

Respondents were shown one prime, and the survey "next" button was disabled for 4 seconds to ensure that respondents received the treatment. They then proceeded to answer two dependent variable questions: one about their interest in becoming more civically engaged and one about their willingness to participate in civic engagement programming. These dependent variables capture both interest in and potential participation in civic engagement activities.

- Interest: "I am interested in becoming more civically engaged." (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)
- Programming: "I would want to participate in civic engagement programming that [university] developed, if I were available to do so." (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)

The survey proceeded to ask other questions about civic participation and political knowledge before ending with a series of demographic questions that included major, graduation year, gender, race, and employment.

To test Hypothesis 1, conduct a two-sample t-test comparing the control to the combination of the individual affective benefit and individual career benefit treatments on both interest in civic engagement and willingness to participate in civic engagement. For Hypothesis 2, conduct a two-sample t-test comparing the individual social motivation and the individual career motivation treatments on both interest in civic engagement and willingness to participate in civic engagement.

I also complete balance tests to ensure that the treatment was successfully randomized. To correct for any differences in the sample across treatment and control groups, I use linear regression models with interest in civic engagement and willingness to participate in civic engagement as the dependent variables and dichotomous indicators indicating treatment assignments for each of the two treatments for the independent variable. Control variables include demographic questions asked during the survey.

Power Analysis: I conducted a power analysis with alpha at 0.05, power at 80%, and a small effect size of d=0.25. The estimated sample size per group is 252 respondents or 756 total respondents for the two treatment and one control group. The target population is approximately 11,000 individuals, so the estimated response rate needed is 6%.

References

Adler, Richard P., and Judy Goggin. 2005. "What Do We Mean By Civic Engagement?" *Journal of Transformative Education* 3(3): 236–53.

Andolina, Molly W., Krista Jenkins, Cliff Zukin, and Scott Keeter. 2003. "Habits from Home, Lessons from School: Influences on Youth Civic Engagement." *Political Science and Politics* 36(2): 275–80.

Bowden, John. 2017. "Philadelphia Write-in Candidate: I Won with One Vote." *The Hill*. https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/362934-philadelphia-write-in-candidate-shocked-by-surprise-victory/.

Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2007. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10(1): 103–26.

Cox, John. 2017. "Settling a Tied Virginia House Race by Drawing a Name? Not That Weird by History's Standards." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/12/27/settling-a-tied-virginia-house-race-the-weird-history-of-breaking-deadlocks/.

Earl, Jennifer, Thomas V. Maher, and Thomas Elliott. 2017. "Youth, Activism, and Social Movements." *Sociology Compass* 11(4): e12465.

Entman, Robert M. 2007. "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power." *Journal of Communication* 57(1): 163–73.

Flanagan, Constance. 2009. "Young People's Civic Engagement and Political Development." In *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, ed. Andy Furlong. New York: Routledge, 309–16.

Fowler, James H. 2006. "Altruism and Turnout." *The Journal of Politics* 68(3): 674–83.

Gentry, Bobbi. 2018. *Why Youth Vote*. Cham: Springer.

Herman, Everett. 2018. "Understanding the Initiating Factors of Civic Engagement." Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Pittsburgh.

Kahne, Joseph E, Mills College, and Susan E Sporte. 2009. "Developing Citizens: The Impact of Civic Learning Opportunities on Students' Commitment to Civic Participation." In *Civic Education and Youth Political Participation*, Rotterdam: Brill, 159–86.

Kahne, Joseph, Nam-Jin Lee, and Jessica Timpany Feezell. 2012. "Digital Media Literacy Education and Online Civic and Political Participation." *International Journal of Communication* 6: 1–24.

Lanero, Ana, Jose Luis Vazquez, and Pablo Gutierrez. 2017. "Young Adult Propensity to Join Voluntary Associations: The Role of Civic Engagement and Motivations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 46(5): 1006–29.

Lee, Nam-Jin, Dhavan V. Shah, and Jack M. McLeod. 2013. "Processes of Political Socialization: A Communication Mediation Approach to Youth Civic Engagement." *Communication Research* 40(5): 669–97.

Maher, Thomas V., and Jennifer Earl. 2019. "Barrier or Booster? Digital Media, Social Networks, and Youth Micromobilization." *Sociological Perspectives* 62(6): 865–83.

Mansbridge, Jane. 2017. "Why Do We Need Government? The Role of Civic Education in the Face of the Free-Rider Problem." In *Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines*, Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 11–20.

McIntosh, Hugh, Daniel Hart, and James Youniss. 2007. “The Influence of Family Political Discussion on Youth Civic Development: Which Parent Qualities Matter?” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40(3): 495–99.
Morimoto, Shauna A., and Lewis A. Friedland. 2013. “Cultivating Success: Youth Achievement, Capital and Civic Engagement in the Contemporary United States.” *Sociological Perspectives* 56(4): 523–46.
Nyhuis, Martin, Jordy F. Gosselt, and Martin Rosema. 2016. “The Psychology of Electoral Mobilization: A Subtle Priming Experiment.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 26(3): 293–311.
Oliver, Pamela. 1980. “Rewards and Punishments as Selective Incentives for Collective Action: Theoretical Investigations.” *American Journal of Sociology* 85(6): 1356–75.
Omoto, Allen M., Mark Snyder, and Justin D. Hackett. 2010. “Personality and Motivational Antecedents of Activism and Civic Engagement: Activism and Civic Engagement.” *Journal of Personality* 78(6): 1703–34.
Oskarsson, Sven, Rafael Ahlskog, Christopher T. Dawes, and Karl-Oskar Lindgren. 2022. “Persistent Inequalities: The Origins of Intergenerational Associations in Voter Turnout.” *The Journal of Politics* 84(3): 1337–52.
Pan, Zhongdang, and Gerald Kosicki. 1993. “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse.” *Political Communication* 10(1): 55–75.
Pasek, Josh, Lauren Feldman, Daniel Romer, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2008. “Schools as Incubators of Democratic Participation: Building Long-Term Political Efficacy with Civic Education.” *Applied Developmental Science* 12(1): 26–37.
Pearl, Andrew J., and Robert K. Christensen. 2017. “First-Year Student Motivations for Service-Learning: An Application of the Volunteer Functions Inventory.” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 23(2): 66–82.
Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
Sherrod, Lonnie, Constance Flanagan, and James Youniss. 2002. “Dimensions of Citizenship and Opportunities for Youth Development: The What, Why, When, Where, and Who of Citizenship Development.” *Applied Developmental Science* 6(4): 264–72.
Siegel-Stechler, Kelly. 2021. “Parent Encouragement and Young Adult Voting Behavior: A Potential Outcomes Approach.” *Youth & Society* 53(5): 764–83.
Stringer, Kate, Jennifer Kerpelman, and Vladimir Skorikov. 2011. “Career Preparation: A Longitudinal, Process-Oriented Examination.” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79(1): 158–69.
Stukas, Arthur A., E. Gil Clary, and Mark Snyder. 1999. “Service Learning: Who Benefits and Why.” *Social Policy Report* 13(4): 1–23.
Suarez-Orozco, Carola, Maria G. Hernandez, and Saskias Casanova. 2015. “It’s Sort of My Calling: The Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility of Latino Immigrant-Origin Young Adults.” *Research in Human Development* 12(1–2): 84–99.
Sze-Yeung Lai, Charlotte, and Patrick Chi-leung Hui. 2021. “Service-Learning: Impacts of Learning Motivation and Learning Experience on Extended Social/Civic Engagement.” *Higher Education Research & Development* 40(2): 400–415.
Tamir, Yael. 1995. “The Enigma of Nationalism.” *World Politics* 47(3): 418–40.
Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings, and Ismail K. White. 2002. “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns.” *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 75–90.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Weber, Christopher, and Matthew Thornton. 2012. "Courting Christians: How Political Candidates Prime Religious Considerations in Campaign Ads." *The Journal of Politics* 74(2): 400–413.

Survey Questions

1. Please indicate how often you: (1= None/Never, 2= Once each school year, 3= Once or twice each quarter, 4= a few times a month, 5= nearly every week)
    a. Participate in community service activities
    b. Participate in campus events sponsored by the university
    c. Participate in student organizations
    d. Consume local news
    e. Discuss politics, social, or community issues
2. Likert Scale Items: (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree)
    a. It is important to be involved in my community.
    b. My experiences at [institution] have prepared me to help solve problems in my community. (Add option: N/A: This is my first quarter at [institution])
3. Civic Engagement Participation:
    - Civic engagement is commonly defined as knowledge of social and political institutions and processes, skills to participate in civic life, and an interest in taking action to better one's community.
    a. Based on this definition, what would you say are examples of civic engagement? List whatever comes to mind. This is not a test; there are no right answers. (Text box entry)
4. [Respondents receive one of the prompts with probability 1/3]
    - Prompt 1: Some people say that civic engagement is important because it makes you feel like an active participant in society and lets you meet others in the community.
    - Prompt 2: Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides you with resume-building experiences and skills that are useful for many careers.
    - Prompt 3: Some people say that civic engagement is important because it provides benefits to the community and helps other people.
    a. I am interested in becoming more civically engaged. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)
    b. I would want to participate in civic engagement programming that [institution] developed, if I were available to do so. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)
5. Voter Participation:
    a. Are you registered to vote in the United States? (Yes, No)
        i. [If yes] In what ZIP Code are you registered? (Number entry)
        ii. [If yes] Have you voted in a local, state, or federal election? (Yes, No, I have not been registered long enough to vote yet)
        iii. [If yes] The last time you voted, did you vote: In person on election day, In person via early voting, absentee, other (please explain)
        iv. [If no] Why not? (Text box entry)
6. Civic Knowledge:
    a. How much of a majority is required in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to override a presidential veto? (4/5 or 80%, 2/3 or 67%, 3/5 or 60%, 1/2 or 50%, Don't know)
    b. [State] has how many Congressional districts? (Number entry)
    c. What is the Mayor of [city] name? (Text box response)
7. Demographics:

a. I am currently an: (undergraduate student, graduate student, other)
    i. [If other] Please describe the degree or program you are enrolled in. (Text box response)
b. My major (or intended major) is in: [liberal arts, business, education, engineering, science]
c. I plan to graduate in: 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, Other
d. In what year were you born? (Number entry)
e. I am: (male, female, non-binary, prefer not to say)
f. Which categories best describe your racial or ethnic identity? (Select all: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian, Black or African American; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; White, non-Hispanic; other; prefer not to say)
g. Have you taken any courses at [institution] that have included engaging with the local [town] community (often called service learning or civic engagement)? (Yes, No, Unsure)
    i. [If yes] About how many courses would you say you have taken that included engaging with the local [town] community? (Number entry)
h. About how many hours do you work for pay per week during the school year? (Number entry)

Semi-structured focus group questions

Note: A focus group is dynamic and responsive to participants. These are prompts that will be used in the focus group. Appropriate follow-up questions in line with these prompts will also be used.

1. What does civic engagement mean to you? Where did this definition or perspective come from?
2. When someone invites you to participate in "civic engagement" how do you feel? Why?
3. Describe some barriers that have prevented you from learning about civic engagement.
4. Have you ever contacted an elected representative? If so, what was the experience like? If not, why not?
5. How confident are you in your understanding of general government processes? What are some processes you feel that you understand and some that you are less sure about?
6. How do you feel when discussing topics related to politics?
7. Have you ever had a civic conversation with someone about a controversial issue? If so, what was that conversation like? If not, how do you think that conversation would go?
8. How did you come to learn about registering to vote and voting in an election?
9. How do you feel when you walk by someone campaigning for an issue or who wants to talk to you about community/political issues? Can you give an example of when this has happened to you?
10. What civic engagement activities have you participated in at [institution]? What activities would you be interested in seeing start at [institution]?