

Predicting Civic Engagement in Young Adults: The Effects of Celebrity-Endorsed Public Service Announcements

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Fifty-two percent of young citizens cast a ballot in the 2008 elections, marking the highest level of youth voter turnout since 1972, the year that voting rights were extended to those between 18 and 21 years of age. Recent research by Frisco et. al (2004) and Austin et. al (2008) suggests that increased participation in voluntary activities and public service appeals by pop culture figures contributed to increased voting rates by providing the necessary motivation, opportunity, and skills relevant to voting and other forms of political participation. This study assesses whether Public Service Announcements presented by celebrities are more effective than generic appeals at increasing young people's interest in voting, volunteering, and other forms of civic engagement. Ultimately, this study found that there is no significant relationship between popular culture appeals and increased tendencies towards political participation.

An effective democracy requires that citizens understand and engage in civic life, but for decades Americans, especially young adults, have become increasingly disengaged (Braddock, Hua, and Dawkins 2007). Various factors contribute to young people's disengagement from politics. Young adults often view politics as not "for them" because the issues raised in many elections fail to interest them. In addition, citizens in this age group often lack the knowledge, skills, and time needed to become civically engaged (Delli Carpini 2000).

In recent years, the long-term trend of youth political disengagement seems to be in reverse. The percentage of voting among young Americans increased from 47 percent in 2004 to 52 percent in 2008, making 2008 the highest level of young adult turnout since 18-year-olds received the right to vote in 1972. The 2008 election was the third consecutive presidential election in which the percentage of young voter turnout rose (Austin, Van de Vord, Pinkleton and Epstein 2008; McKinney and Rill 2009).

Researchers offer two principal explanations for recent increases in civic engagement: community involvement and popular culture. Both community involvement and popular culture promote political participation by providing young adults the knowledge and skills necessary for civic engagement. A number of studies find that adolescents and young adults who participate in voluntary community activities such as religious groups, non-school sports teams, groups affiliated with a political party, community service groups, and leadership groups have an increased interest in civic engagement (Frisco, Muller and Dodson 2004; McFarland and Thomas 2006). These associations offer young adults the chance to learn how to work in conjunction with others towards a mutually beneficial goal – a skill that can be readily applied to civic engagement activities such as voter registration and voter participation (Putnam 1995). At the same time, popular cultural institutions have also encouraged young adults to become more civically engaged through get-out-the-vote efforts conducted through various forms of mass communication including text messages, e-mail, online advertising and social networks (<http://www.rockthevote.com>). Furthermore, candidates from all levels of government are utilizing the Internet to connect with young adults and earn their votes for future elections.

Clearly, community involvement and popular culture have the potential to increase civic engagement among young adults. This study seeks to assess if civic engagement messages

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featuring pop culture figures are more effective at encouraging civic engagement among young people than generic messages. In contrast to previous studies, which assert popular culture appeals are ineffective (McKinney and Banwart, 2005; McKinney and Rill, 2009), I hypothesize that exposure to popular culture messages will prove more effective at increasing civic engagement than generic appeals for community involvement. This quasi-experimental study compares changes in students' interest in political engagement among two groups of students, one of which viewed PSA messages featuring pop culture figures and one of which viewed generic PSA messages.

A total of 94 students participated in the study, which finds that messages presented by popular culture figures are no more effective at engaging young adults in the political arena. Females, though, did indicate a statistically significant sense of anticipated political involvement after the experiment was performed. Because the data are not statistically significant, further research is needed to determine whether or not the hypotheses are supported.

Literature Review

American civic engagement declined by nearly 25 percent between the early 1960s and 1990, a trend that alarmed many scholars (Putnam 1995; Pasek, Kenski, Romer, and Jamieson 2006). The implications of decreased engagement are twofold. Early civic engagement among young people is a precursor to future electoral involvement; young adults who illustrate a lack of interest in politics are less likely than their active counterparts to become civically engaged in the future. By not utilizing their right to vote, young people contribute to the overall weakening of the democratic system (Glasford 2008). Some attempts to explain the decline in civic engagement focus on the engagement patterns of young people, claiming that young voters' participation has significantly lagged behind their older counterparts (Pasek et al. 2006). Eighteen- to 20-year-olds first received the right to vote in 1972, and that year the voter turnout among 18- to 29-year-olds reached an all-time high of 55 percent of eligible voters. Nonetheless, this number bottomed out during the 2000 election with only 40 percent of eligible voters aged 18 to 29 voting ("Voter Mobilization Tactics" 2009).

Robert Putnam (1995) attributes the overall decline in civic engagement to one fundamental change in society: the decline in social capital that results from Americans' declining involvement in voluntary associations and civic groups. Interpersonal communication promotes civic engagement; as interpersonal communication through social organizations declines, measures of civic engagement including voter turnout and party affiliation also decline. Putnam cites the rise of technology as one of the principle factors in the decrease in social organization membership. Utilizing television and the Internet as forms of interaction is especially detrimental to social capital because neither medium promotes interpersonal communication (Putnam 1995). By allowing technology to dominate social organization membership, Americans dissociate from their traditional community. An American's community becomes a multitude of Internet contacts, rather than geographical relationships with people who share similar qualities, causing the continued erosion of social capital.

Civic engagement increases as a person ages, but young people now have lower starting levels of engagement than in previous generations. There are 44 million young voters ages 18 to 29, comprising more than one-fifth of the entire eligible voting population, and yet young adults are continuously the least represented group at the polls ("The 18-30 Voter Issues Paper" 2009). Lower starting levels of civic engagement could be due to young people's preoccupation with education, jobs, and marriage; these preoccupations leave no time for them to become actively engaged in politics (Southwell 2003). Young adults often complain that the key issues raised in political campaigns are not "for them" (Star 1993). Such unfavorable political attitudes have various causes. Many issues raised in presidential elections hold little importance to young voters. Candidates tend to discuss issues such as Social Security and Medicare more often than issues that have an immediate impact on younger voters. However, candidates cannot be faulted for

speaking about issues that appeal to older demographics when in 2000 only 7.8 percent of voters were under 25 years old, while 20 percent were over 65 (Delli Carpini 2000; Magnusson and Drew 2004; Fisher 2008).

Civic engagement requires the motivation of young people. Such motivation can stem from various sources, including a sense of responsibility, the satisfaction derived from civic participation, and increased political efficacy. Motivation alone is not enough, however. Young people need opportunities to become engaged in ways that go beyond voting in elections and participating in campaigns but there are few such opportunities. Candidates do not devote enough resources to reach out to youth voters, perhaps because candidates are hesitant to allocate scarce resources to a population that is less likely to vote than other demographics (Delli Carpini 2000). One study analyzing the content of blog postings on the official campaign sites of George W. Bush and John Kerry during the 2004 elections found that only eight percent of all archived postings were specifically targeted at young adults, while all others ignored or failed to acknowledge young adults as an important audience or source of votes (Trammell 2007). Elected officials are less likely to listen to young people because they feel no real fear of any punishment for their neglect at the polls.

Despite the fact that civic engagement among young adults declined since passage of the 26th Amendment lowered the voting age to 18, the past three federal elections saw continuous increases in young voter turnout. Some researchers believe that social catalysts explain this encouraging trend (Austin et al. 2008; McKinney and Rill 2009). Community involvement is a major contributor to the recent increase in civic engagement amongst young people. Scholars assert political socialization occurs before someone transitions into full adult citizenship. People begin to discover their personal belief systems, which include their civic identities, during adolescence.

Data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health suggest that young adults engaged in voluntary community activities are more likely to become civically engaged in the seven to 12 years following community involvement than their counterparts who do not participate in any sort of voluntary activities (Frisco et al. 2004). Community activities provide young adults with the tools and skills they need to successfully participate in the civic arena because such activities promote and build necessary social capital. On the other hand, young adults who are not involved in community activities are significantly less likely to become civically engaged because they are not involved in any activities that facilitate social capital (Putnam 1995; Frisco et al. 2004; McFarland and Thomas 2006; Pasek et al. 2006; Zaff, Malanchuk, and Eccles 2008).

The general consensus is that community involvement fosters civic engagement among young adults. Nonetheless, scholars have endeavored to determine if certain types of community involvement are more effective than others at engaging young adults in political life. Previous research suggests that memberships in certain organizations such as boy/girl scouts, religious groups, non-school sports teams, and 4-H encourage young adults to become civically engaged via voter registration. Nonetheless, the only community activities that encourage voter participation are boy/girl scouts, religious groups and leadership positions (Frisco et al. 2004). Community activities that are not explicitly civic are often discarded as failing to contribute to civic engagement among young adults. Nonetheless, participation in sports or the arts function as small public spheres in which participants can build the social capital that Putnam asserts is necessary to become civically engaged (Zaff et al. 2008).

Membership in voluntary community organizations does not equally predict future civic engagement among young adults. Minority and young adults of lower socioeconomic status have lower starting levels of civic engagement than their non-minority, higher-class counterparts. In 1992, slightly more than half of white young adults were registered to vote, while only 43 percent of young African Americans and 23 percent of Latinos were registered. One study polled young adults of various races and socioeconomic classes about their community involvement

and voting behavior. The results from this study are congruent with the findings in 1992 because whites and young adults of elevated socioeconomic status who participated in voluntary community organizations were the most likely to register and vote (Frisco et al. 2004).

The various institutions of popular culture also increase young adults' civic engagement. Vast amounts of literature is available on the subject of popular culture and civic engagement due to the diversity of institutions and tools related to popular culture, as well as the numerous disputes within the scholarly community. In 2004, approximately 75 million Americans used the Internet to participate in politics in some form (Tedesco 2007). Social networking Web sites such as Facebook and MySpace offer candidates the ability to create a personal homepage and provide knowledge of their candidacy and platform to users of networking sites. On Facebook, candidates and campaign managers can create and send newsletters about a candidate or an issue and send them out en masse to anyone associated with the candidate's homepage. Candidates also use Internet blogs to communicate with potential supporters, promoting the development of personal relationships with readers over a period of time (Trammell 2007).

Although scholars agree that Internet tools such as networking Web sites and blogs have the potential to increase civic engagement, there are still some problems with the implementation of these tools. For instance, the study of the 2004 election blogs discovered that George W. Bush's blog targeted 15.5 percent of its postings specifically towards young people. Only 27.4 percent of these postings mentioned issues that young people considered important, such as the War on Terror, the economy, education, and health care (Trammell 2007). In order to be as effective as possible in increasing engagement, blog postings and personal homepages must target young people more specifically and discuss issues that are important to youth. Additionally, candidates should discuss issues using language and terms that young adults understand in order to better engage young citizens (Xenos and Bennett 2007).

Perhaps the most influential popular culture institutions in promoting civic engagement are get-out-the-vote efforts such as Rock the Vote, Citizen Change (P. Diddy's Vote or Die), Move on/Vote for Change, Declare Yourself, and World Wrestling Entertainment's Smackdown Your Vote. In an era following the relative death of young adult civic participation, the use of music, popular culture, and technology are attempts to revive young adult political participation (Austin et al. 2008; Cloonan and Street 1998; Declareyourself.org 2009a; Declareyourself.org 2009b; Rockthevote.com 2009; WWE.com 2009). These initiatives showed young adults the various ways they could become involved in politics. Many of these get-out-the-vote initiatives often rely on mass text messaging and e-mail to remind young adults to register or vote, and can be extremely helpful in motivating young adults to make it to the polls on election day.

Perhaps the most important cultural phenomenon these initiatives play upon is the universality of music. Because of music's universal appeal, it has been used to promote civic engagement in young adults through popular culture institutions, particularly through endorsements from particular music artists. Christina Aguilera encouraged young people to register and vote in conjunction with 2004's Declare Yourself, Beyonce and Dr. Dre supported the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, and P. Diddy created Citizen Change, an organization better known by its slogan "Vote or Die," to help educate young people about the importance of voting (Austin et al. 2008; Declareyourself.com 2009a; Hsan.org 2009). These endorsements allow young adults to develop a relationship with celebrities to whom young adults can more easily relate than political candidates.

By directly encouraging young adults to register and vote, celebrities provide the necessary motivation for young adults to become civically engaged and have increased young adults' perceptions of themselves in politics to such a point that many now believe they can make a difference in politics. Some argue, however, that celebrity endorsements are unlikely to result in increased participation because many of the celebrities have actually never voted themselves. Many young people become more interested when political situations are presented by celebrities; however, if young adults discover that the celebrities who encourage voter

participation do not actually vote themselves, young adults might become even more unenthusiastic about voting than in the past (Star 1993).

Music artists and other celebrities often travel across the country visiting college campuses and other locations frequented by young adults to provide the encouragement young adults need. The organizations who arrange these endorsement appearances often provide pledge cards as a means of promoting voter registration. Typically there are two types of pledge cards; one is printed with the prompt "I will vote because" and the other with a preprinted message. Young adults who write their own personal reason for voting are more likely to proceed to vote than those who signed a card with a preprinted message because a verbal commitment to a particular action is a driving force to complete the action, providing the motivation that many young adults need to become more civically engaged (Burgess, Haney, Snyder, Sullivan, and Transue 2000).

In 2004, Rock the Vote partnered with CNN to present a nationally televised debate in which eight Democratic candidates responded to questions posed specifically by young adult viewers. In contrast, various news networks aired debates between presidential candidates that neglected to target young adult voters. Many young adult viewers of the CNN/Rock the Vote debate believed they experienced greater identification with the candidates than those who viewed a traditional debate; the former viewers also perceived higher candidate interest in issues important to young adults (McKinney and Banwart 2005).

During the most recent presidential election cycle of 2007-2008, CNN partnered with another popular culture institution, YouTube, to air separate presidential primary debates for Republican candidates and Democratic candidates in which the candidates answered video questions posted on YouTube by viewers; these debates were specifically designed to incorporate the participation of young people who frequently use the video site. Viewers of both the Democratic and Republican debates reported a significant decrease in political cynicism after watching the debates and a significant increase in their own personal political knowledge (McKinney and Rill 2009).

In addition to media and popular culture sponsored debates, candidates also appear on television shows, beginning with Nixon's appearance on *The Tonight Show*, Clinton's appearances on the *Arsenio Hall Show* and MTV, and Obama's appearance on Saturday Night Live. It is interesting that candidates choose to appear on entertainment talk shows, given that the primary purpose of such shows is entertainment, rather than to provide political information. However, candidates appear on such programs for various reasons. The most obvious reason for candidates' appearing on entertainment shows is to shed a more favorable light on candidate images. Discussions between candidates and hosts of entertainment talk shows typically include fewer references to political parties, partisan themes, and political images than general news shows (Baum 2005). Perhaps by consenting to be guests on talk shows candidates are hoping to develop a relationship with potential voters in a manner more personal than presenting a detailed platform. When candidates or political figures appear on entertainment shows that target young people, they are attempting to engage young people more and more in the political process.

As the literature suggests, civic engagement among young adults is increasing, with young adult participation increasing both in registration and at the polls; both community involvement and popular culture perpetuate this increase to some extent. At this point, additional research is needed to assess whether popular culture messages are more effective at increasing civic engagement than general appeals for community involvement.

Research Design

As popular culture gains popularity in various arenas of life, including political and civic life, it is important to understand how popular culture messages expressed affect citizens. Accordingly, this study will assess whether Public Service Announcements (PSAs) presented by popular culture celebrities are more effective at increasing civic engagement than general calls for involvement.

This quasi-experimental study compares the effectiveness of celebrity and non-celebrity PSAs presented to five introductory Political Science classes at Xavier University. The sample is not representative, as most of the students in these introductory classes are Political Science majors and/or students who selected the class to fulfill the social sciences requirement of the core curriculum. In addition, Xavier University students are not representative of young adults, as students at Xavier tend to be more educated and wealthier than the average young adult. Xavier's minority population is considerably smaller than the true minority population of the generation of 18- to 23-year-olds. Despite these differences, Xavier students are similar to the general population of young adults. As previously mentioned, many young adults are disinterested in politics because the issues do not appeal to them or young adults cannot relate to political candidates. The indifference to civic engagement stems mostly from age, while factors such as self-selection, education, and socio-economic differences are secondary considerations. Xavier students as a whole are likely to reflect the attitude of the young adult generation – disinterest in civic engagement unless the issues are important and the candidates reach out to young adults. Furthermore, Xavier students are definitely in tune with popular culture; this shared characteristic is evidenced by the popular culture influences on Xavier's campus, including concerts and appearances by celebrities.

Testing of all introductory level Political Science classes took place over a period of three class sessions. The five classes were divided into three groups: a treatment group (2 classes), a non-treatment group (2 classes), and a control group (1 class). The treatment group viewed three Public Service Announcements endorsed by celebrities over the following class sessions; the non-treatment group viewed three general Public Service Announcements, while the control group did not watch any Public Service Announcements during the following three class sessions.

On the first day of the experiment – and prior to the presentation of any PSAs – participants completed an anonymous, voluntary pre-test survey. Members of the treatment and non-treatment groups were then presented with the first of three PSAs. During the following class session, both the treatment and non-treatment groups were shown two additional Public Service Announcements. On the third and final class session involved in the experiment, all participants completed a post-test survey.

I chose three PSAs in an effort to ensure variety. The first popular culture message featured Kelly Clarkson, who encouraged viewers to donate their time to the Salvation Army. The second celebrity PSA encouraged voting, as suggested by Adrian Grenier. The third and final celebrity PSA promoted volunteerism in general, as various celebrities endorsed DoSomething.org. Please refer to Appendix A for full descriptions of each PSA, as well as the links to the videos.

More general messages were shown to the non-treatment group, although the content of the messages was similar to the celebrity-endorsed Public Service Announcements. The first message featured a Salvation Army employee asking people to donate their time and ring bells. The second non-celebrity PSA encourages young adults to vote, while the third non-celebrity PSA encourages volunteerism via a group called *Hands On Network*. The links for each of these PSAs, as well as full descriptions, can also be found in Appendix A.

The goal of this study is to determine whether PSAs are able to increase civic engagement, and therefore defining civic engagement is important. Previous studies often measured civic engagement among young adults in terms of voter registration and participation. This presents a “social reliability” problem; because society considers voting to be a “good” act, survey participants will be reluctant to answer negatively about the likelihood that they will register and vote. Measuring civic engagement solely in terms of voter registration and voting would not likely yield conclusive results in this study. Due to the potentially inconclusive results, this study will assess not only voter participation, but also volunteer participation in other venues of civic engagement. Specifically, survey questions will measure participants' likelihood to volunteer and participate in

various other elements of civic engagement in a modified anticipated political involvement index (Andersen, Mariani, and Matthews-Gardner nd; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006)¹.

Political efficacy is another important variable in this study; if a survey participant does not believe their participation in politics will make a difference, that student may totally disregard the message of a Public Service Announcement, whether it is endorsed by a celebrity or not. Also, party affiliation may affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables because young adults who associate themselves with a party already feel some desire towards civic engagement. Party affiliation would inhibit the determination of whether or not celebrity endorsed PSAs effectively increase civic engagement. On the other hand, participants with high levels of television consumption may be predisposed to accept the viewpoint of celebrities because the participants recognize celebrity status. Similarly, participants who already engage in volunteer and political activities are likely to continue to do so without the motivation of celebrity-endorsed PSAs. The previously mentioned variables all have the potential to alter the relationship between viewing a celebrity-endorsed Public Service Announcements and resultant civic engagement tendencies; as such, these intervening variables are all addressed in specific questions in Appendices B and C.

On the last day of the experiment, participants ranked nine elements of good citizenship from most to least important, in an attempt to determine the importance of volunteerism and other aspects of good citizenship are to individual participants. Also, it was important to note whether any participants viewed any other PSAs outside of the classroom during the week of the experiment. A list of survey questions can both be found in Appendix C.

The effect of popular culture on civic engagement is a hotly debated topic. McKinney and Rill (2009) found that presidential debates aired by CNN and YouTube, featuring questions in the form of YouTube videos, did not cause any significant increase in young adults' civic engagement when compared to general presidential debates. Candidates also appeal to young adult voters through their use of popular culture institutions such as *Saturday Night Live*, Facebook, and MySpace in efforts to make the candidates more attractive to the younger populace (Baum 2005).

I hypothesize that viewing Public Service Announcements, both those presented by celebrities and general messages, will cause participants to indicate their future intention of voting and volunteering. Viewing PSAs featuring celebrities will be more effective in stimulating civic engagement among participants. Also, PSAs presented by celebrities will be more memorable to participants than more general messages endorsing community involvement.

Analysis

This study analyzes the effects of celebrity-endorsed Public Service Announcements on civic engagement in order to determine the celebrity-endorsed PSAs are more effective at increasing involvement than more general messages. This study surveyed 87 participants: 20 were in the control group, 30 in the celebrity treatment group, and 37 in the non-celebrity treatment group. Overall, 40 males and 47 females participated. Unfortunately, only 6 males were part of the control group, 19 part of the celebrity treatment, and 15 part of the non-celebrity treatment; this uneven distribution could have implications in the variance of the study. Distribution of factors such as year in school, party affiliation, and television consumption is mostly even among the control, celebrity treatment, and non-treatment groups (See Table 1).

¹ These questions were originally used in the Monitoring for the Future survey and the Civic Education Study (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2006: 238-239).

Table 1: Demographics

	Control	Treatment	Non-Treatment	Total
N	20	30	37	87
Male	6 30%	19 63%	15 41%	40 46%
Female	14 70%	11 37%	22 59%	47 54%
Registered to vote	16 80%	22 73%	23 62%	61 70%
Not Registered, eligible	4 20%	6 20%	11 30%	21 24%
Not Registered, ineligible	0 0%	2 7%	3 8%	5 6%
Freshmen	12 60%	14 47%	24 65%	50 57%
Sophomores	4 20%	9 30%	7 19%	20 23%
Juniors	2 10%	5 17%	2 5%	9 10%
Seniors	2 10%	2 7%	2 5%	6 7%
Other	0 0%	0 0%	2 5%	2 3%

Table 2 (below) describes the Ordinary Least Squares Regression that examines the effect of a participant's group coding (treatment or non-treatment) on change in participants' anticipated political involvement from pre-test to post-test. Because group coding, sex, and television consumption all have positive slopes, they are positively associated with increased anticipated political involvement. On the other hand, participants' year in college and party affiliation both have negative slopes; participants who are upperclassmen or who are more Democratic experienced a decrease in anticipated political involvement during this experiment.

Table 2: Regression, Impact of Treatment on Change in Anticipated Political Involvement

	B	T	Sig.
Treatment Group	.012 (.179)	1.263	.974
Year in College	-.015 (.186)	-.080	.937
Sex (Female)	.736 (.395)	1.856	.067*
Party Affiliation	-.112 (.107)	-1.046	.300
Television Consumption	.226 (.376)	.032	.212
Constant	-.178 (.892)	-.215	.831
R ²	.113		
Adjusted R ²	.037		

Dep. Variable: Change in Anticipated Political Involvement from Pre-to-Post Test.
N = 63; Standard errors in parentheses. * p<.10; ** p<.05; * p<.01

Despite the disparities in slope, the only variable to have any significance is sex. Females experienced a statistically significant increase in anticipated political involvement during this experiment. However, the main independent variable, which was treatment, did not have a significant impact on change in participation, even at the .10 level. Nonetheless, the R-Square value is notably low, at only .113, indicating that factors unaccounted for by this regression affect the dependent variable.

Shown below, Table 3 uses a comparison of means to examine the celebrity and non-celebrity treatment groups and the responses each group gave to several questions about political and civic involvement. For both the celebrity and non-celebrity groups, anticipated political involvement both before and after treatment did not show any statistical significance ($p < .10$). Furthermore, the change in anticipated involvement from pre-test to post-test did not prove statistically significant either. The treatment and non-treatment groups ranked the importance of volunteering similarly; nonetheless, the importance of volunteering was not statistically significant.

Table 3: Comparing Celebrity and Non-Celebrity Treatments

	Celebrity Treatment	Non-celebrity Treatment	Sig.
Anticipated Involvement Pre-Test	13.80	13.51	.653
Anticipated Involvement Post-Test	13.87	13.75	.836
Change in Anticipated Involvement Pre- to Post-test	.07	.22	.678
Importance of Volunteering	4.70	4.38	.513
N	30	37	----

Comparison of Means, Independent T-Test, * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Because this experiment was conducted in a relatively short time period, the ability of survey participants to recall the names of the organizations that sponsored the PSAs is an important consideration. The ability to recall the names of the organizations despite experiencing little change in anticipated political involvement suggests that viewers are paying attention to the advertisements, even if they are not pursuing the recommended activities. Table 4 illustrates that, in this particular study, a vast majority of the celebrity treatment group were unable to recall any of the organizations that sponsored the celebrity-endorsed advertisements. On the other hand, only slightly more than half of the participants were unable to remember the names of the featured organizations.

Table 4: Recall of the Names of PSA Sponsors

	No	Yes
Celebrity Treatment	21 70.0%	9 30.0%
Non-treatment	21 56.8%	16 43.2%

Question: Do you recall the names of any organizations that sponsored the PSAs?

Experiment participants were also asked if they recalled a specific activity that one of the PSAs advocated – the correct answer was voting. Interestingly, a majority of the celebrity treatment group was able to recall that the specifically encouraged activity was voting, while less than half of the non-treatment group was able to recall the same fact. This result stands in stark contrast to the previous data on recollection; one would assume that people would be able to recall both the sponsoring organizations of the PSAs as well as the content.

Table 5: Recall of a Specific Activity

	No	Yes
Celebrity Treatment	11 36.7%	19 63.3%
Non-treatment	20 54.1%	17 45.9%

Question: Do you recall what specific activity the third PSA encouraged?

Conclusion

Previously, I hypothesized that viewing PSAs presented by celebrities, as well as general PSAs, would cause participants to indicate their future intention of voting and volunteering. Based upon the empirical evidence, there are no statistically significant relationships within this data. Though the relationships are not significant, the data are suggestive and more research is warranted to assess whether a statistically significant relationship will be observable in a larger N study. The mean anticipated involvement score for both the treatment group and the non-treatment group increased slightly during the experiment. I also hypothesized that viewing PSAs presented by celebrities would be more effective at increasing civic engagement than general involvement messages. Again, the data dictates further research to support this conclusion because both celebrity-endorsed PSAs and the general PSAs stimulated a minor increase in anticipated involvement. There is no statistical significance suggesting the hypothesis should be rejected, so further research is necessary to truly determine whether this hypothesis is correct.

The findings presented here are important because they illustrate how popular culture is manipulated in order to promote political awareness and civic engagement. Candidates appeal to young adults through popular culture, for example, and celebrities advocate certain civic behaviors through popular culture. In the short-term, such appeals seem to encourage young adults to become involved, but do young adults truly become involved? Or, more likely, do young adults follow the guidance of popular culture in the immediate moment, but disregard civic involvement in the long term?

The aforementioned questions are the questions that this study, unfortunately, cannot answer. Due to the short time period in which this study was conducted, it is impossible to know if the participants truly intended to become more civically engaged or if their answers reflected their short-term reaction to the experiment. Another limitation is that the sample comes from Political Science classes; it is likely that the students in these classes are those who have selected the class because they are Political Science majors or to fulfill a university core requirement. The sample could be more diverse, which is a condition future research could remedy by expanding the population. Another limitation to this study is that the situation is not natural – showing PSAs in a classroom does not accurately reflect the effect PSAs would normally have on a person. Participants were aware they were part of a study, which may have impacted their survey responses. These, and other limitations, can be resolved simply by modifying the experiment. Perhaps the study would be more effective if conducted over the course of a semester, wherein the pre-test survey was administered at the beginning of the semester, PSAs were shown during the semester, and a post-test was administered at the conclusion of the semester. Ideally, the PSAs should be shown to study participants in a more natural setting to better determine if the effects indicated by the data are due to short-term commitments or long-term anticipated political involvement. Related research could also venture into other aspects of popular cultural effects on political participation, such candidate use of Twitter to connect to young adults. The relationship between popular culture and young adults is not an exclusive relationship – mature adults may also be influenced by popular culture. Investigation into this field could lead to the development

of new ways for candidates to connect with constituents of all ages, thus contributing to the growth of the ever-important social capital.

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Appendix A: Celebrity and Non-Celebrity PSA's Used in this Study

Adrian Grenier: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpX_ZkqoP3k&feature=related

"You know you're looking at four to eight. You don't think you matter? What you do doesn't make a difference? I mean, I gotta tell you, I'm a little scared. I know you can get the information if you want to. Huh? In this environment. Keep sitting there, we all lose. Who's in control? You make a choice. You walk. Who's in control? I know. You didn't ask for this. We inherited this mess. Hmm. So what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm gonna vote."

Celebrity Involvement Montage: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aap6kbsbtk>

"Hey, I'm Rihanna. Hi, I'm Rachel Bilson. I'm Hayden Christensen. I'm Kristen Bell. I'm Rocco. I'm Rachel Leigh Cook. We're the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus. I'm Lennox Lewis. I'm Susie Castillo. I'm Jordin Sparks. I'm Frankie J. We're B5. I'm Jamie Fahey. And we're the Jonas Brothers. Join us, and help make change in your community. There is so much you can do. So then do something. Let's do something about it. Get off the couch and do something. Do something good for your world. Check out dosomething.org. Visit dosomething.org. [Dosomething.org](http://dosomething.org). Do something. Do something. Do something. Visit dosomething.org to find out how."

Kelly Clarkson: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTfTDNTQBM0>

"So maybe you don't have a lot of money to donate. That's alright; you have something that's just as valuable – your time. For thousands of people in desperate need, the sound of a Salvation Army bell is a song of hope. So go ahead, donate your time and your passion. Volunteer to ring a bell for the Salvation Army. You'll be doing the most good. Find out how you can volunteer. Call 1-800-SAL-ARMY or visit salvationarmyusa.org."

General Voting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eukgfVHMalk>

Music plays and images are shown for much of the video.

"Your vote is your voice. And if you don't vote..."

General Involvement: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWtmE2qv-g&feature=related>

"I make a difference. I change lives. Generate growth in my community. My school. My environment. I mentor children. Build a dream. Give hope. For higher literacy. For dynamic neighborhoods. Financial security. Safer communities. Do something. Create change. Take action. Go to handsonnetwork.org. Step out your door and get started."

Salvation Army: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bhl0jc3Gbso&feature=related>

"Hi, I'm Rich Morris for the Salvation Army. And again we are in the holiday season and we're raising money for the Army to use throughout the year. A lot of people feel that this money just goes for the holiday season but it actually supports about fifty percent of our budget for the year. So when you see the kettle, contribute some money, and if you'd like to do more, contribute your time by helping us ring the bell. Just call the Salvation Army and they'll set up an appropriate time for you to serve. Remember, when you put money in our kettle, you can expect change."

Appendix B: Pre-Test**AMERICAN POLITICS SURVEY**

Thank you for your participation in this anonymous survey on important issues in American politics. Please answer all of the following questions with your best possible answer. This survey is voluntary, and if you do not wish to participate, please feel free to hand back a blank survey. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

1. In the spaces below, please enter the day of your birth and the first two letters of your mother's maiden name. (For example, if your birthday is June 19 and your mother's maiden name is "Smith," your individual code would be "19 S M")

2. Year in College:
 - First-year student/Freshman
 - Second-year student/Sophomore
 - Third-year student/Junior
 - Fourth-year student/Senior
 - Other
3. Sex:
 - Male
 - Female
4. Major: _____
5. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent or what?
 - Strong Republican
 - Republican
 - Independent, Lean Republican
 - Independent
 - Independent, Lean Democrat
 - Democrat
 - Strong Democrat
6. Are you registered to vote?
 - Yes
 - No – Eligible, not registered
 - No – Ineligible due to age, citizenship etc.
7. On average, approximately how many hours of television programming do you watch per week (including television programs watched on a television or online)?
 - Zero, I don't watch any TV programming
 - More than 0, but less than 3 hours per week
 - More than 3, but less than 7 hours per week
 - More than 7, but less than 10 hours per week
 - More than 10 hours per week

For questions 8-10, please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with the following statements:
8. "Politics is too complicated for a person like me to understand."
 - Agree strongly
 - Agree somewhat
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree somewhat
 - Disagree strongly
9. "Public officials don't care much what people like me think."
 - Agree strongly
 - Agree somewhat
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree somewhat
 - Disagree strongly
10. "People don't have a say in what the government does."
 - Agree strongly
 - Agree somewhat
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree somewhat
 - Disagree strongly

11. How closely would you say that you follow current events?

- Not very closely
- Closely
- Somewhat closely
- Very closely

For questions 12-14: About how often have you done each of the following activities since arriving at this institution:

12. Worked for a public official, party, campaign, or government office? (paid or voluntary)

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

13. Tutored/helped teach a student in need?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

14. Volunteered time for a community group, non-profit organization, church or service-related project?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

For questions 15-19: About how often do you plan to do the following activities in the future?

15. Work for a public official, party, campaign, or government office (paid or voluntary)?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

16. Tutor/help teach a student in need?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

17. Volunteer time for a community group, non-profit organization, church, or service-related project?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

18. Vote in national elections?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

19. Give money to a political candidate or cause?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

Appendix C: Post-Test

AMERICAN POLITICS SURVEY

Thank you for participating in this anonymous survey on important issues in American politics. Please answer all questions and give your best possible answer. This survey is voluntary, and if you do not wish to participate, please feel free to hand back a blank survey. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

1. In the spaces below, please enter the day of your birth and the first two letters of your mother's maiden name. (For example, if your birthday is June 19 and your mother's maiden name is "Smith," your individual code would be "19SM")

For questions 2-4, please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with the following statements:

2. "Politics is too complicated for a person like me to understand."
 Agree strongly
 Agree somewhat
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree somewhat
 Disagree strongly
3. "Public officials don't care much what people like me think."
 Agree strongly
 Agree somewhat
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree somewhat
 Disagree strongly
4. "People don't have a say in what the government does."
 Agree strongly
 Agree somewhat
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree somewhat
 Disagree strongly

5. Please rank the following elements of good citizenship in order from 1 to 9, with 1 being the activity that is the most important element of good citizenship and 9 being the activity that is the least important element of good citizenship.

- ___ Obeying laws
- ___ Paying taxes
- ___ Voting
- ___ Volunteering your time
- ___ Keeping up with current events
- ___ Contacting your representatives
- ___ Running for office
- ___ Donating money to a political campaign or issue
- ___ Membership in interest groups and/or social organizations

For questions 6-10: About how often do you plan to do the following activities in the future?

6. Work for a public official, party, campaign, or government office (paid or voluntary)?
- Very often
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Never
7. Tutor/help teach a student in need?
- Very often
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Never
8. Volunteer time for a community group, non-profit organization, church, or service-related project?
- Very often
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Never

9. Vote in national elections?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

10. Give money to a political candidate or cause?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

11. In the two previous meetings of this class your instructor showed three video public service announcements (1 on the first day and 2 on the second day). Were you in class on both of these days to view the public service announcements?

- Yes
- No

12. Two of the public service announcements presented in class encouraged you to volunteer. Do you recall the names of any of the organizations that sponsored the announcements? If so, list the name(s) of the organization(s) here:

13. As noted above, two of the three public service announcements encouraged you to volunteer. What specific activity did the other video encourage?

14. In thinking about television, movies, and other forms of media that you have watched over the past week, do you recall viewing any other public service announcements? If so, do you recall the topic of the announcement?

