

Spring 5-14-2015

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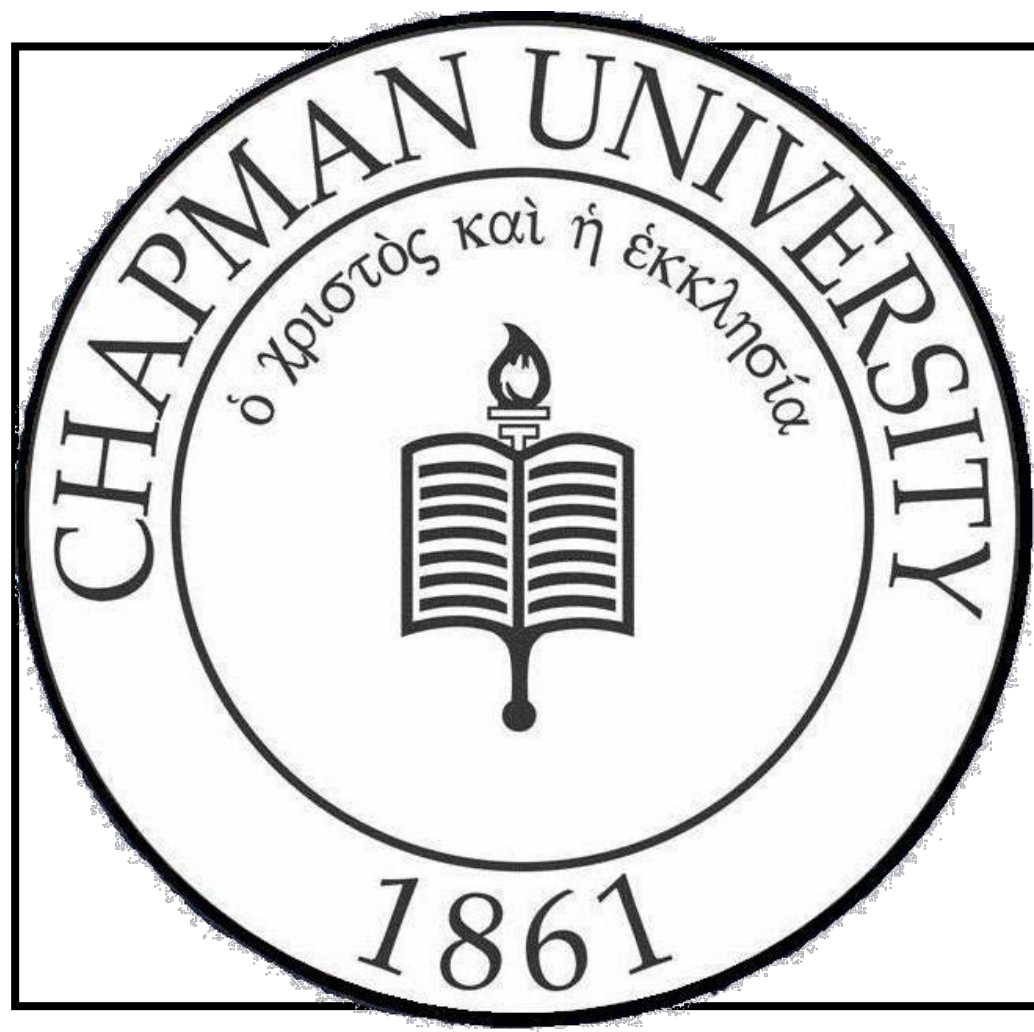


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Recommended Citation

Siaumau, Lauren, "Civics and Politics: Does Civic Education affect Levels of Political Knowledge?" (2015). *Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters*. 160.
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Civics and Politics: Does Civic Education affect Levels of Political Knowledge?

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Introduction to Research

•The political scene in the United States today has seen an absence of the youth vote or participation. There has been long history of debate as to what factors could be contributing to this phenomena. In pursuit of some foundational aspects to this problem, trends were identified in the form of education having an impact on the level of involvement civically and politically of these youth. In an effort to produce plausible results, the following will be discussed:

- Civic Education and its Proposed Effects
- Civic Engagement and Political Outcomes
- Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation

With data from the Youth Post-Election Survey by the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Engagement (2012), these aspects will provide keen insight into the decline in the youth, which is detrimental to the success of any democracy.

Civic Education & Engagement

- The initial analysis begins with an investigation into the question of whether in high school, did students take a course called something like civics American Government, or government?
- There will be follow up questions regarding discussion/research of political issues, and if material learned in the class is useful in the daily life
- Engagement will be measured by asking if in high school, did you participate in an organized group or club both inside and outside of school?
- The frequency of attendance in those organizations as well as looking into whether any of those organizations focused on political or social issues will be examined.

Political Knowledge

- The research into the previously mentioned variables will hopefully yield elevated effects in both issue voting and political knowledge
- There will hopefully be positive effects on informative issue voting.
- There will be a positive increase in political knowledge.

Hypotheses:

- H 1: Having a civic education in high school will lead to higher political knowledge.
- H 2: Participating frequently in civic engagement groups in high school will lead to higher political knowledge.

Data

H 1: "Civic Education and Political Knowledge"

T-Test Results: (P is <.01)

- Tested a political knowledge index against whether an individual had a civic education in high school

Group Statistics					
In high school, did you take a course called something like civics, American government, or government?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Political Knowledge Index	Yes	1729	3.5437	1.25161	0.0301
	No	310	3.3	1.31102	0.07446

Independent Samples Test			
		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Political Knowledge Index	Equal variances assumed	3.133	0.002
	Equal variances not assumed	3.034	0.003



H 2: Participation in civic engagement groups and Political Knowledge

T-Test Results: (P is < .05)

- Tested a political knowledge index against participation in groups

Group Statistics					
Orggroup	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Political Knowledge Index	1.00	417	3.5084	1.28996	0.06317
	3.00	285	3.2702	1.26741	0.07507

Independent Samples Test			
		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Political Knowledge Index	Equal variances assumed	2.420	0.016
	Equal variances not assumed	2.428	0.015



Findings

H1: "Civic Education and Political Knowledge"

While the results showed that there was not a significant difference civics in high school had on political knowledge, the difference found is significant in the fact that the sig. (2-tailed) was close to .01. This is not the only factor that determines political knowledge, however it is an interesting starting point to the investigation of what affects political knowledge.

H 2: "Participation in groups and Political Knowledge"

Similar to the hypothesis about civic education impacting political knowledge, it seems as if being involved in civic engagement groups has very little impact on political knowledge as well. However, the difference in this case is also significant because it provides yet another glimpse into a rationale that could bring back the youth vote.

Conclusions

- Political knowledge could have other outside factors that determine the amount of it an individual has.
- Civic education is a great introduction to what potentially are underlying factors that impact future political knowledge.
- Civic engagement in high school is another entry perspective into what potentially impacts future political knowledge.