The Political Participation of College Students, Working Students and Working Youth

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ABSTRACT

Education has long been a powerful predictor in understanding political participation and yet the paths toward earning a college degree have changed considerably in recent years. As tuition costs increase and as schooling option burgeon, today's youth are taking longer to finish their academic programs and are increasingly working as they do so. To learn more about the intersection of education, work and political participation, this paper reports data from a phone survey of over 1,000 19-23 year olds on (1) their schooling and work paths and (2) the political resources, opportunities and participation levels for three categories of young people: college students, working students, and non-college (working) youth. The data show that the most common path for this age group is that of the student worker. The data also show that these student workers report higher levels of political interest, political skills, political mobilization and political participation than their college student and working youth peers. This report suggests that there may be civic correlates to a schooling and work schedule as well as conceptual benefits to examining the education variable in tandem with other measurements that describe the contemporary youth experience.

Education has long been regarded the seminal variable in predicting political participation in the United States. Indeed, individuals with higher levels of schooling are more likely than their less educated peers to report greater attention to and interest in politics, to follow the news, to possess political information and knowledge and to express a sense of civic duty (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). This relationship has rich roots in the field of political behavior dating back to some of the earliest studies on political activity (Woodward & Roper, 1950) and is believed to emerge because schooling provides: the knowledge, motivation, and skills to understand and politic matters (Converse, 1988); practice in seeking information and in thinking conceptually and abstractly (Feldman & Newcomb, 1960; Hyman, Wright & Reed, 1975); and valuable personal relationships and social connections (Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Straits, 1990; Timpone, 1998). Education has been central to classic projects on participation, such as the SES and Civic Volunteerism models (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995, respectively) and has even been coined the "best documented" finding in American political behavior research (Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry, 1996).

While the strength of education is incontestable in understanding participation, a set of developments complicate what is known about this variable and its relationship to today's youth vote. Consider the following patterns:

- The education turnout connection: an emerging puzzle for turnout scholars has been that levels of higher education have steadily increased in the United States at the same time that turnout has steadily decreased (Wattenberg, 2002);
- The "blurring paths" of higher education: although education has been traditionally conceptualized in the academic literature as a linear process through a four year university, paths to higher education are becoming increasingly complicated and diverse (Arnone, 2003; Cooksey & Rindfuss, 2001; Hoover, 2001; Radinelli, 2001);
- The proliferation of "colleges" in the United States: over the past 50 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number and types of post-secondary educational programs, stretching both the meaning of "college" and "student" in American life (Boesel, 2001; Lewis, Snow, Farris & Levin, 1999; Newman, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2002); and
- The proliferation of student workers: as students are taking increasingly diverse routes through burgeoning types of programs (as well as longer amounts of time to complete traditional university degrees), there has been a proliferation in student roles, including the emergence of full and part time students and full and part time student workers (Armour, 2003; Bradburn, Berger, Li, Peter & Rooney, 2003; Cuccaro-Alamin & Choy, 1998).

This report is inspired both by the centrality of education to understanding levels of political participation as well as shifts in the number and types of colleges, student experiences, and student workers in American life. In order to better understand the contemporary role of education as a predictor of political activity for our nation's youth, it makes sense to begin to map out existing education and work paths, to learn more about the resources and opportunities young people are exposed to on campuses and at workplaces, and to trace the connections between these resources and opportunities and their participation levels. This descriptive report attempts to take a first step in this direction by advancing a set of truly basic questions, including: What are some of the paths of schooling and work for the nation's youth? What are the political resources and opportunities of students, student workers and workers? and What are the levels of political participation for students, student workers and workers?

Schooling and Work--Resources and Opportunities

In order to participate in politics, it has been argued that young people must experience positive political socialization (Tarrance Group, 1999; Lake et al., 2002), establish civic competence (Strate, Parrish, Elder & Ford, 1989), build civic skills (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002), be

mobilized through formal and informal networks (Bennett, 1991), and manifest political efficacy and interest (Mann, 1999; Lopez & Kolaczkowski, 2003). Although the lion's share of research has documented the relationship between schooling and turnout, some studies also suggest that occupational experiences can contribute to civic resources and opportunities.

First, spending time on a college campus has been correlated with higher levels of almost all variables that predict voting. As previewed in the introduction of this report, the civic correlates of a college diploma include:

- political resources--such as political sophistication, knowledge about politics, political skills and a broader understanding of political life (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995; Dudley & Gitelson, 2002; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995);
- psychological resources--including the motivation to appreciate democratic governance and to develop democratic values (Converse, 1988; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993);
- social resources--having the opportunity to spend time with other college students (Carbonaro, 1999; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Texeira, 1992; Timpone, 1998) and joining organizations that increase participation in civic life (Banks & Roker, 1994; Hanks, 1981; Kirlin, 2003; Leighley, 1995; Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry, 1996).

Next, occupational experiences have also been associated with resources and opportunities that can increase participation. Consider the following studies. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) observe that political and psychological resources can be "acquired outside of school through accumulated life experiences," a pattern which helps to explain why "voter turnout generally increases with age even though older Americans have less formal education" (pp. 58-60). Others have similarly found that civic skills can be developed at the workplace (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995; Elden, 1981). On this score, Greenberg, Grunberg and Daniel (1996) show that participation in workplace decision making increases the probability of participating in politics in certain situations (especially when the experiences are immediate and have positive outcomes and when the companies are not in economic trouble). Additionally, young people who enter the workforce directly after high school retain a type of social connectedness to their families and neighborhoods that many college students do not. As Kodryzki (2001) observes, young workers are more likely to be residentially stable than their college attending peers, writing:

> high school dropouts and high school graduates were about equally likely to move across state lines. However, education beyond high school was associated with substantially greater mobility. For example, the percentage changing their state of residence between 1979 and 1996 was 19.2 percent for those completing only high school, but 36.6 percent for those completing four years of college and 45.0 percent for those with even higher levels of education (p. 15).

Because the workplace can provide political resources, and because not moving away to college is related to greater residential stability, it stands to reason that young folks in the workplace, too, may interface with political resources and opportunities.

To date, education and work have largely been addressed independently in political science studies (Appendix A features a list of classic constructions of these items, appearing in work by Verba and colleagues and in the NES data sets). Additionally, to date scholars have largely preferred the categories of "college graduate," "attended some college," or "no college" as distinctions in their data--a choice that generates clean distinctions between groups and that sidesteps the debate about the appropriate categorization of associate's and certificate students (Cooksey & Rindfuss, 2001). Yet, as the opening paragraphs of this report preview, the appropriate categorization of associate's and certificate students (as well as nontraditional paths through two and four year

universities) increasingly merit our attention. Because young people are taking a variety of routes through their schooling, because a larger number of young people are working to curb the costs of increasing tuition (Arnone, 2003), and because many of these students are taking longer periods pursuing higher education (Cuccaro-Alamin & Choy, 1998, "Perceived Impact," 2002), it stands to reason that examining (1) a plurality of student roles and (2) "work" alongside of "schooling" might provide a more nuanced understanding of the potential political resources and opportunities for young people in the contemporary environment.

METHOD

The current project reports findings from the Work, Education, and Political Activity of Youth Project (WEPAY), an undertaking completed at The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation at the University of Texas at Austin, supported by a grant from CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement), funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The WEPAY Project is motivated by (1) changes in higher education (both in terms of the increased number of universities and college programs and the proliferation of students attending a variety of post-secondary educational venues), and (2) changes in the routes that young Americans take through higher education (both in terms of the burgeoning paths through secondary educational programs and the increased number of young Americans who simultaneously engage in educational and work activities). Accordingly, WEPAY seeks to better understand the political attitudes and behaviors of a variety of student, student worker and working youth paths. Ultimately, our goal is to locate strategies (that are sensitive to the realities of the lives of young Americans) that mobilization groups can use to (re)engage young citizens in American politics.

This article reports on data from a telephone survey of over 1,000 young adults between the ages of 19 and 23. The survey was conducted by the Office of Survey Research at the University of Texas at Austin.[1] Calls were placed from November, 2003 through January, 2004 and were conducted in both English and Spanish. The survey contained 85 items that explored a set of concepts connected with political participation and this age group, including: political resources, psychological predispositions, political opportunities, social connections, schooling and work experiences.[2] The calls lasted an average of approximately 11 minutes.

Respondents were selected from recent registered voter lists in Des Moines, Iowa, Fresno, California, and El Paso, Texas.[3] These three locations were chosen because (1) they are comparable in size, but vary by region, mobility, education, and ethnicity; (2) they depart from trends of over-sampling urban youth; and (3) they make voting turnout data accessible to scholars (Paolino, Jarvis & Hart, 2003).[4] Hispanic youth were consciously proportionally over-represented in this analysis.

For the current project, we chose to segment our youth respondents into three categories: students, student workers and workers.[5] Respondents were coded as students if they were not currently employed and if they were currently attending any educational institution (whether it was a two or four year college or a certificate program); as workers if they had not completed a bachelor's degree and if they were not currently enrolled in any type of educational institution; and as student workers if they were currently enrolled in any type of educational institution and were currently employed (see Appendix). There were 240 students (28.4%), 375 student workers (44.4%), and 229 workers (27.1%) in this study.

FINDINGS

A first concern of this project is to describe the paths of schooling and work for this sample, and Table 1 presents a look at their educational and employment data. There it appears that the students overwhelmingly attended school full time (93.3%, with 6.7% attending part time) whereas the student workers were largely attending full time (79.2%, with 20.8% attending part time). Most of the students were pursuing a bachelor's degree (73.8%), with a smaller number pursuing an associate's degree (11.3%), and fewer still working on "another type of program" (10.4%) or a

certificate (3.8%). These patterns were consistent for student workers, although not quite as many were working toward a bachelor's degree (70.4%), more were completing an associate's degree (18.7%), fewer reported working for "another" type of program (5.6%) and just a handful more were working on a certificate (4.5%).

The lower half of Table 1 also presents the occupational status of the sample. There it appears that student workers reported working an average of 26.9 hours a week whereas workers reported an average of 30.7 hours a week. Examining these patterns in greater detail, we see that 36.3% of the student workers are employed full time for pay (with 63.7% reporting that they are employed part time for pay). For their part, workers stated that they were largely working full time for pay (52.4%), with some working part time for pay (18.3%), a portion not working at present (15.3%), some working at home (8.7%), and a few doing "something else" (5.2%).

Table 1

College Students, Student Workers and Working Youth (in percentages)

	College Students	Student Workers	Working Youth
	n=240	n=375	n=229
School attendance			
Full time	93.3	79.2	--
Part time	6.7	20.8	--
Not currently enrolled	--	--	100
Degree pursued			
Certificate	3.8	4.5	--
Associates	11.3	18.7	--
Bachelor's	73.8	70.4	--
Something else	10.4	5.6	
Highest level completed (workers only)			
High School	--	--	75.5
Certificate	--	--	7.0
Associates	--	--	12.2
Something else	--	--	5.2
Work			
Average hours last week	--	26.9	30.7
Occupational Status			
Full time for pay	--	36.3	52.4
Part time for pay	--	63.7	18.3
Homemaker	4.2	--	8.7
Not working for pay	87.5	--	15.3
Something else	7.9	--	5.2

Table 2 presents demographic data for these groups. There were roughly even amounts of young men and women in each of these categories; that is, there was an even split between the sexes for college students, there were slightly more women (54.4%) than men (45.6%) in the student worker group, and there were a few more men (50.2%) than women (49.8%) in the worker category. Overall, there were more Anglos (54.5%) than Latinos (45.5%) in the sample, and as Table 2 shows there were more Anglos than Latinos in each of the categories, although the percentages were closest in the worker column. Concerning partisanship, students were slightly more likely to be Republican (34.2%) than Democratic (30.4%), Independent (20.8%), or to display no partisan preference (10.4%). Student workers were slightly more likely to be Democratic (31.5%) than Independent (28.8%), Republican (28.0%), or display no partisan preference (8.0%). For their part, workers were a bit more likely to be Democratic (27.1%) than Republican (25.8%), Independent (24.5%), or to display no preference (17.5%).

A second concern of this project is to assess

Table 2

College Students, Student Workers and Working Youth--Demographics (in percentages)

	College Students n=240	Student Workers n=375	Working Youth n=229
Gender			
Male	50.0	45.6	50.2
Female	50.0	54.4	49.8
Ethnicity			
Anglo/White	66.3	59.5	53.2
Hispanic/Latino	33.7	40.5	46.8
Age (average)	20.4	20.7	21.1
Partisan Affiliation			
Democratic	30.4	31.5	27.1
Republican	34.2	28.0	25.8
Independent	20.8	28.8	24.5
Other/No preference	10.4	8.0	17.5

the political resources and opportunities of these three groups. Table 3 illustrates how students, student workers and workers compare on a set of variables correlated with increased political participation. In examining these data, it is helpful to move group by group. First, as expected, students seem to have the most advantages on the variables that predict political participation; indeed, this group is most likely to (1) have been raised in a home where political discussions were frequent or happened sometimes (82.9% for students, 78.7% for student workers, 69.8% for workers) and where parents were frequently or sometimes active in the community (72.9% for students, 69.9% for student workers, 60.7% for workers); and (2) report having more close friends (10.5) on average than did student workers (9.1) or workers (6.9). Taken together, of the three subgroups in this study, the students appear to have inherited some of the classic blessings of political socialization and to have developed more personal relationships than student workers or workers.

Table 3

College Students, Student Workers and Working Youth--Resources and Opportunities (in percentages)

	College Students n=240	Student Workers n=375	Working Youth n=229
Political socialization			
At the time that you were sixteen years old, how frequent were political discussions in the home?			
Frequent	18.3	20.8	20.5
Sometimes	64.6	57.9	49.3
Never	17.1	21.1	30.1
When you were sixteen, how active were your parents or guardians in politics or in the affairs of the community-very active, somewhat active, or not active at all?			
Frequent	12.9	12.3	12.7
Sometimes	60.0	57.6	48.0
Never	26.3	29.6	36.7
Political Interest			
How many days a week do you read the newspaper?	3.62	3.58	3.26
How interested are you in politics?			
Very	22.1	23.7	14.8
Somewhat	45.8	45.9	46.7
Slightly	24.6	23.7	27.1
Not at all	7.5	6.7	10.9
How often do you talk politics with friends?			
A lot	8.3	9.3	8.3
Some	20.4	32.3	21.8
Very little	36.3	28.0	25.8
Never	35.0	30.4	44.1

	College Students n=240	Student Workers n=375	Working Youth n=229
Political Skills			
Have you written a formal letter?	42.1	44.8	26.2
Have you made decisions in a meeting?	45.0	59.2	41.9
Have you planned or chaired a meeting?	19.2	23.7	15.7
Have you given a speech?	62.1	61.1	21.8
Mobilization			
Have you spoken with someone who encouraged you to vote?	56.3	58.4	43.2
Organizational Memberships			
Do you belong to a social group?	46.7	46.1	24.9
Do you belong to a youth oriented group?	30.4	30.4	20.5
Do you belong to a community betterment group?	39.6	35.2	19.2
Do you belong to a political group?	16.7	17.3	6.6
Social Connectedness			
How many close friends do you have (average)?	10.5	9.1	6.9
Do you live alone?	6.0	5.4	6.4
Do you live with family?	52.6	66.0	78.1
Do you live with roommates?	40.9	28.3	15.0

Although student workers fall a bit behind the students in some of the socialization variables, they surpass traditional students in some intriguing ways. For instance, student workers are more likely to report that they are very or somewhat interested in politics (69.6%) than are students (67.9%) or workers (61.5%). They also profess to be more likely to read the newspaper (3.62 days a week, on average) than students (3.58) or workers (3.26). Student workers claim to talk politics some or a lot with their friends (41.6%) considerably more than workers (30.1%) or students (28.7%). With regard to political skills, student workers were more likely to say that they had written a formal letter (44.8%), made decisions in a meeting (59.2%) or planned or chaired a meeting (23.7%) than either other group, and they were just slightly less likely to have given a speech than students. Student workers are most likely to say that they have spoken with someone who has encouraged

Table 4

College Students, Student Workers and Working Youth – Participation (in percentages)

Youth	College Students	Student Workers	Working
	n=240	n=375	n=229
Making Views Known (Index)*	3.10	3.42	2.06
Political Activity (Index)*	1.27	1.36	1.10
Voting			
Always	34.6	36.5	29.3
Sometimes	31.7	37.3	33.2
Rarely	10.4	10.7	10.9
Never	21.7	14.4	25.3
Barriers to Participation			
Work or School Schedule	85.0	85.9	62.9
Child care	9.6	11.2	25.3
Transportation	23.3	13.9	24.5
Feeling unwelcome	19.6	15.7	19.2
Safety	12.9	13.3	21.4
Lack of information	62.1	58.4	55.0
Feel ineffective	20.4	19.7	24.0

***** The *Making Views Known* Index is on a scale of 0-8 (8 is high). The *Political Activity Index* is on a scale of 0-5 (5 is high). See endnote 7 for a discussion of these indexes.

them to vote (58.4%) than are students (56.3%) or workers (43.2%). Moreover, student workers suggest that they join groups at a similar rate to students, and are slightly more likely to join a political group (17.3%) than their college-only peers (16.7%).

For their part, workers seem to fall behind in all of the categories detailed above. They experience fewer positive political socialization experiences, they are least likely to be interested in politics, to read the newspaper, to talk about politics with friends (although they rank slightly ahead of college students, on this score), to practice political skills, to have been asked to vote, or to belong to groups. Workers lead the three groups in just one category: they are most likely to live with their families (78.1%).

A third concern is to assess how these resources and opportunities relate to political activities. To do so, this study relies on two of the indexes found in the "Civic Participation" models of Verba, Schlozman and Brady: making views known and political participation (altered a

bit for this demographic).6 Table 4 presents the results of these models, displaying that student workers reported being more likely to express their political views (3.4 average on an index of 0-8) than students (3.1) or workers (2.1). Student workers were also more likely to engage in political activities (1.4 average on an index of 0 to 5) than students (1.3) or workers (1.1).

Table 4 also presents the output for one of the questions included in the political participation index: voting. The findings here are, again, unexpected. As the data reveal, student workers were more likely to report always or sometimes voting (73.8%), followed by students (66.3%) and workers (62.5%). A related pattern appears lower in the table, as well. There, the data for young people who report never voting are almost as interesting as for those who claim to vote regularly. Notice that only 14.4% of the student workers claim to "never vote," a figure that is considerably lower than that of the students (21.7%) or the workers (25.3%).

In addition to asking questions about political activities, this project asked a series of questions about the barriers to political participation. The primary findings from these items follow expectations from prior studies: in many instances, workers face more barriers to participation, including child care (25.3%), transportation (24.5%), safety (21.4%), and feeling ineffective (24.0%). These specific barriers were not as salient for students or student workers.

The barriers that students reported, however, are somewhat surprising. Consider, first, the response regarding work and school schedules as barriers: 85.9% of student workers voiced concerns about not having enough time, compared to 85% of students and 62.9% of workers. In returning to Table 1, the student workers in this study appear to have demanding schedules. It is compelling that they were only slightly more likely to regard themselves as too busy to vote compared to students (who may be as active as the student workers or may just feel to be as busy). Similarly, students are most likely to state that they feel unwelcome in politics (19.6%) a percentage that is just slightly higher than that of workers (19.2%). Interestingly, student workers are the least likely to state that they feel unwelcome (15.7%). And, possibly the most unforeseen finding here, is that students are most likely to suggest that they do not have the information to participate (62.1%), compared to student workers (58.4%) and workers (55.0%). That college students with the most traditional resources fear that they do not have enough information to participate, and that their colleagues are less concerned about information as a barrier, raises a set of questions surrounding college curricula and cultures. Perhaps future research can focus on why, exactly, the most educated are most troubled by having limited amounts of political information.

CONCLUSION

Education has long been a seminal variable in predicting political participation. Motivated by the reality that education has been increasing in the United States at the same time that turnout (especially for young voters) has been decreasing, and aware that the "meanings" of the terms college and student have been stretched in the recent past, this project asked a set of fundamental questions about the paths of schooling and work for the nation's youth, the political resources and opportunities of students, student workers and workers, and the levels of participation for these three groups.

An analysis of these basic concerns has produced both expected and surprising results. As anticipated, the data show that students seem to have inherited a set of civic resources and opportunities; indeed, this group enjoys better political socialization and has more friends than the other two groups. Another expected result is that young workers seem to inherit the fewest resources and fall behind both students and student workers on almost all of the variables studied here. The data for the student workers, however, depart from expected patterns. These young people experienced positive political socialization in their homes (these percentages fall just behind students), and although they may be empirically

busier than their college student peers, they seem to lead the way on many of the political variables measured here, including: interest in politics, reading the newspaper, talking about politics with friends, engaging or practicing civic skills (except for giving speeches), having been asked to vote, making their views known, political participation, and--notably--voting (see Table 4).

In making sense of the student workers, it is helpful to return to Tables 1 and 2. There, it appears that many of the student workers are pursuing bachelor's degrees, and in many ways may resemble assumptions in the literature about their college student peers. Nevertheless, these student workers report being more engaged, more open to politics, and less likely to feel dissuaded by potential barriers to participation than traditional students. What can explain these patterns?

One conceptual response may be that young people who attend college and participate in some type of job open themselves up to at least two venues for political mobilization. As the data show, student workers are more likely to talk about politics, to join political groups and to be asked to vote. These data are consistent with Leighley's (1995) call to factor notions of mobilization into richer understandings of voting behavior. In her words,

> the discipline broadly accepts as a basic model of participation the "standard socioeconomic model," which emphasizes individuals' socioeconomic status and civic orientations as predictors of participation. Yet a growing body of research emphasizes the importance of mobilization as a major factor influencing participation in U.S. politics. Hence, mobilization factors simply cannot be ignored if we are to develop a complete understanding of who participates and why they do so (p. 181).

It very well could be that mobilization is a variable that works with education--especially for young people. Having political conversations, belonging to political groups and navigating at least two contexts (school and a worksite) may increase the likelihood that young people will be asked to participate, and, possibly, decrease the likelihood that barriers will become salient and suppress participation.

A second explanation may come, in part, from Verba, Burns and Schlozman's (2003) recent discussions of political paths. Although they connect paths with SES, their thinking about inheriting paths is directly germane to the findings. They write:

> We consider as well another mechanism by which parents might influence the participation of their offspring, a political path. Just as parents can enrich their children financially by leaving them money, so can politically active parents leave a legacy of political involvement to their children by exposing them to politics. A politically rich home environment--in which politically active parents act as role models and children as exposed to political discussions and other political stimuli--fosters later political involvement. Because well educated parents are likely also to be politically active, the SES and political paths are connected (p. 47)

In this study, it could very well be the case that busy and involved parents raise busy and involved children. Even though the students had slightly richer political socialization experiences (and thus had an edge on the traditional SES variables), student workers may have received cues from their parents and communities about being involved and working hard. Or, if such cues are not directly gained from their homes, the simple act of multi-tasking may beget the ability to engage in a set of activities. Indeed, as political theorists, activists and observers have long observed, engagement leads to other civic outcomes and dispositions. As John Gardner (1998) has argued, "A fortunate by-product of citizen involvement is that when citizens become involved their morale improves. One cannot emphasize too strongly that a prime ingredient in the citizen's negative mood is a sense of disconnection. Anything that repairs the connection will help alter the mood."

This pattern, particularly when paired with the findings that students were the most likely to feel unwelcome and uninformed, and that there

were considerable numbers in the college group who never talked about politics and never voted, may encourage scholars to think critically about the value of education as it relates to political participation in the present moment. On this score, Dudley and Gitelson (2001) have called attention to the reality that education is something of a black box predictor: it is one of the best variables to use to account for political activities, but it is conceptually unclear as to (1) whether it is the resources of civic skills, political interest and political information that lead to voting, or (2) whether it is a collection of social networks and a civic identity that act as opportunities that position students and graduates in to arenas where they will be mobilized to vote. While spending too much time ferreting out these exact effects may not be fruitful for older Americans (indeed, it is highly likely that they all contribute, in some way, to increased participation), it may behoove scholars to interrogate how these concepts work together for youth. That college students--who traditional thinking would predict enjoy the most resources (information and skills) and opportunities (access to political conversations and mobilization contacts)--report that they do not feel informed and do not feel welcome merits attention. Questions emerge, including: What is happening on college campuses that lead young students to not feel informed? What types of messages and experiences have led college students to not feel welcome? Are these patterns connected to certain curricula? Local cultures? Types of schools? How? When? Why?

On a more practical and positive level, it could simply be the case that school and work are complementary experiences for young people. While it is important to be respectful of prior studies that document the difficulties in time management and role strain for young student workers (Bradburn, Berger, Li, Peter & Rooney, 2003; Cuccaro-Alamin & Choy, 1998), the patterns here may encourage it nonetheless. It may be heuristic to begin to think critically about a variety of experiential and service learning programs (e.g., internships and applied activities for course credit) that may serve to replicate the civic effects seen in the student workers in this sample. Such programs could function to reduce the barriers that students express (feeling uninformed and unwelcome); they may, similarly, provide the venue to practice civic skills--something that student workers report more experience with than their student peers.

The trends here may not be new, but methodologically they may have been hidden in projects that have largely examined education and work as independent measures or simply as ones that do not intersect. As programs proliferate and as different types of students emerge to go back to school, asking new questions may help us advance more thoughtful analyses about the political activity of a plurality of student types and routes through schooling.

On a normative level, it is significant to return attention to the lack of resources and opportunities reported by the workers in this study. In almost all instances, they had fewer positive experiences and engaged in fewer activities than their student and student worker colleagues. It is heartening, though, to compare them to other young Americans on a few of the barriers. These workers did not feel any less welcome than students and they were considerably less likely to be troubled by a lack of information as a barrier to participation than their college attending peers. While it is important to not make too much of these patterns, they do potentially house an optimistic finding: whatever is happening in schools to make college students report feeling uninformed and unwelcome does not seem to be operating on the young workers in this sample. Instead, relative to their peers, they report being less troubled by such factors.

Nothing in this study encourages one to discount the role of education as a predictor for political activity. Rather these findings suggest that the role of education may be mixed with a set of other factors, and--in a sense--such a mixture might mirror the nature of the variable of education in the 21st century. To date, most research has focused on the categories of students and workers. By adding a third category to this analysis--student worker--new patterns have emerged, and the current findings suggest that pairing the education

variable with other ones (in this case "working for pay") allows greater insight into this seminal predictor at a time when young college graduates are not voting at rates similar to their forebears and in which college life is changing dramatically. In other words, thinking creatively about education in our measurement and analyses in youth vote research may help to produce ecologically valid means of learning more about the state of young voters, as well as help scholars to locate means of mobilizing young people who may not be traditional students at four year colleges. All young people are central to the future of democracy. Examining them more closely may be a first step in (re)engaging them politically: a democratic good, truly.

ENDNOTES

[1] The OSR was established at U.T. in 1986, and has a strong reputation for its work with academic, government, non-profit and business clients as well its vast experience in translation and bilingual interviewing.

[2] Specifically, the survey featured items on the following topics (with the number of questions in parentheses): political attention (2), political socialization (2), activity and participation (4), social connectedness (22), mobility (3), mobilization (1) activity/participation (27), schooling and work (8), civic skills (4), barriers (7), political attitudes (3), and demographics (5). These items were drawn from the National Election Studies, the index on civic and political engagement (Andolina, Keeter, Zukin & Jenkins, 2003), the Civic Volunteerism Model (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995, p. 535), and the Berkman-Syme Social Network index (Berkman & Syme, 1979).

[3] Though there were initial concerns about the political effects of the January, 2004 primary election, particularly in Des Moines, a close look at the data suggests that variances in responses between cities are statistically insignificant when other demographic data are considered.

[4] As Paolino, Jarvis and Hart (2003) found, the participation rates of registered voters in these three cities mirror those of a representative national sample; moreover, the attitudes and information levels of young registered voters in these cities match those in other areas (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). The 18-24 year-old cohort is among the most expensive to survey (given their mobility, reliance on cell phones, and nontraditional schedules); attempts to collect a random sample via random-digit-dialing methods would be cost-prohibitive.

[5] For this project, we are also focusing exclusively on Anglo and Hispanic young people who fit the three categories of student, student worker and worker. The total number of respondents is 844.

APPENDIX
MEASUREMENT OF SCHOOLING AND WORK
EDUCATION

In the classic studies by Verba and colleagues (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995) education has been measured as an 8-category variable with the following categories: grammar and less, some high school, high school graduate, some college, college graduate, some graduate work, master's degree, and professional degree.

In some instances, other categorizations have been used. Specifically, these authors have asked: "What is the highest grade of regular school that you have completed and gotten credit for? (IF NECESSARY, SAY: By regular school we mean a school which can be counted toward an elementary or high school diploma or a college or university degree.) Did you get a high school diploma or pass a high school equivalency test? Do you have any college degrees--that is, not including degrees from a business college, technical college or vocational school? What is the highest degree that you have earned?" (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995, p. 562).

In the National Elections Studies, education has been measured in two ways. Between 1952-1972, the question was "How many grades of school did you finish?" For surveys conducted in 1974 and later, the question has been edited slightly, becoming "What is highest grade of school or year of college you have completed?"

Employment

The variable of employment has been measured in these ways. First, Verba and colleagues have measured working with three options: not working, working part-time and working full time (employing retired in some studies as a dummy variable). They then measured occupation with an open-ended question, asking: "Last week, were you working full-time for pay, working part-time for pay, going to school, keeping house, or something else? What kind of work (do you/did you) normally do? That is, what (is/was) your job called?" (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995, p. 563).

The National Election Studies have altered their measurement(s) of employment over the years. All phrasings, below, are quoted directly from the NES codebook (see: http://www.umich. edu/~nes/resources/conguide/93cgch1.htm):

1. Between 1952 and 1964, they asked respondents this question (with the noted follow up in 1958-1964, only): What is your occupation. I mean, what kind of work do you do? (IF NOT CLEAR OR OBVIOUS [1958, 1960, 1964 only]:) What exactly do you do on your job? (IF NOT ASCERTAINED:) What kind of business is that? (IF R IS UNEMPLOYED:) What kind of work do you usually do? (IF R IS RETIRED:) What kind of work did you do before you retired? Between 1968 and 1970, the question was changed to: (IF EMPLOYED OR ON STRIKE:) What kind of work do you do? [What exactly do you do on your job?] (IF UNEMPLOYED OR RETIRED:) What kind of work did you do when you were employed? [What exactly did you do on your job?].
2. Between 1972-1982, they asked: (IF R IS WORKING NOW OR IS TEMPORARILY LAID OFF:) What is your main occupation [What sort of work do you do? Tell me a little more about what you do.] (IF R IS UNEMPLOYED:) What kind of work did you do on your last regular job [What was your occupation?] (IF R IS RETIRED OR DISABLED:) What kind of work did you do when you worked [What was your main occupation?]. And,
3. From 1984 to present, NES used this measurement: 1984 and later: (IF R IS WORKING NOW OR IS TEMPORARILY LAID OFF:) What is your main occupation [What sort of work do you do?] What are your most important activities or duties? (IF R IS RETIRED/UNEMPLOYED/DISABLED:) What kind of work did you do on your last regular job [What was your occupation?] What were your most important activities or duties?

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