

Civic Pathways toward Economic Opportunity for Low-income Individuals

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Knowledge Advancing Social Justice

The Problem

- The percentage of low-income households in the U.S. has been on the rise, growing from 30% to 34% between 2002 and 2011 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b)
- Economic mobility occurs less frequently for people in the lowest economic quintile than for those in other quintiles (Economic Mobility Project, 2012)
- Policies aimed at self-sufficiency vs. economic mobility

Civic Engagement and Economic Outcomes

- Community-level outcomes
 - Spillover effects (Grisham, 1999; Sampson, 2012)
 - Economic resiliency (CNCS, 2013; NCoC, 2012)
- Individual-level outcomes
 - **Human capital:** Cultivate hard and soft skills, knowledges (Cavendish, 2000; Frumkin & Jastrzab, 2010; Wilson, 2000)
 - **Social capital:** Facilitate connections, relationships, networks (CNCS, 2008; Petersen et al., 2008; U.S. DOL, 2012)

Civic Engagement and Low-income Individuals

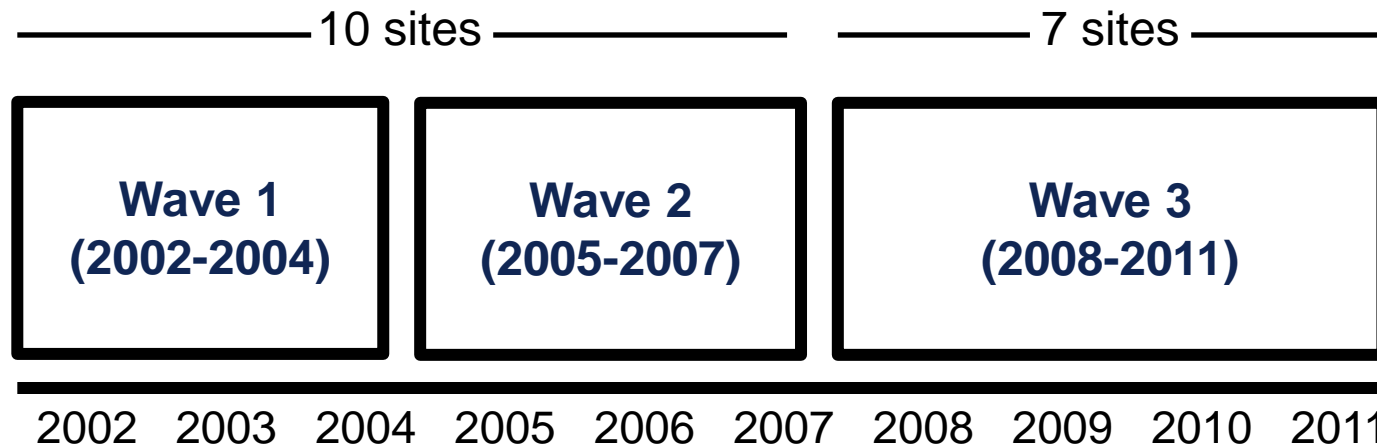
- Dominant approach
 - Determinants of civic engagement (Hodgkinson, 1995; Verba et al., 1995)
 - Civic engagement as an outcome
- Alternative approaches
 - Access and opportunities to civic engagement (CNCS, 2010; McBride et al., 2006; Sundeen et al., 2007)
 - Civic engagement as a determinant (CNCS, 2013)

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between civic engagement and economic outcomes for low-income individuals living in the United States?
 - To what extent does participation in civic engagement affect employment and income over time?
 - In what ways do economic outcomes vary by type of civic engagement?

Data: *Making Connections* Survey

- Part of ten-year Annie E. Casey Foundation initiative
- Variation in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of survey neighborhoods



Sample

- Sampling unit: household
- Study Sample
 - N=1,139 low-income households ages 18+
 - Study sites: Denver, CO; Des Moines, IA; Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY; Providence, RI; San Antonio, TX; and Seattle, WA

Method

- Descriptive and bivariate statistics
- Fixed effects model
 - Benefits of panel modeling
 - Aggregate and differential impacts by type of civic engagement

Summary of Key Variables

| Category | Description | Type |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Dependent Variables | | |
| Employment | Employment status | Dichotomous |
| Income | Income level | Continuous/ Categorical |
| Independent Variables | | |
| Civic engagement | Volunteer, serve as an officer or leader of organization, political action, religious action, collective action, give money | Dichotomous |
| Time-variant demographic characteristics | Age, education, marital status, parental status, homeownership status, welfare receipt | Categorical/ Dichotomous |
| Time-invariant demographic characteristics | Gender, race/ethnicity | Categorical |
| Wave of survey interview | Wave 1, Wave 2, Wave 3 | Categorical |

Sample Characteristics

Variable

Age and Gender

| | |
|--------|-----------|
| Age | 40 (mean) |
| Female | 77% |

Race/ethnicity

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Hispanic/Latino | 51% |
| Other Race/Ethnicity | 42% |
| White/Caucasian | 39% |
| Black/African American | 15% |
| Asian, Native American/Alaska Native | 5% |

Education

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| High school graduation/GED or higher | 57% |
|--------------------------------------|-----|

Family structure

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Spouse in housing unit | 48% |
| Children in household | 72% |

Homeownership

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Own house | 30% |
|-----------|-----|

Public Assistance

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Received food stamps | 37% |
| Received TANF/welfare | 42% |

Civic Engagement Variables

| Civic Engagement Variable Name | W1 | W2 | W3 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Volunteered or helped out with activities in community | 25% | 26% | 28% |
| Served as an officer or on a committee of local organization | 10% | 12% | 11% |
| Spoken with a local political official about neighborhood problem or improvement | 15% | 15% | 12% |
| Spoken with a local religious leader about neighborhood problem or improvement | 13% | 11% | 10% |
| Gotten together with neighbors to do something about a neighborhood problem or to organize neighborhood improvement | 22% | 24% | 19% |
| Provided financial help to family or friends | 34% | 33% | 32% |
| Participation in at least one civic engagement activity | 60% | 62% | 58% |

Economic Outcome Variables

| Economic Variable Name | W1 | W2 | W3 |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Employment</u> | | | |
| Employed | 51% | 52% | 50% |
| <u>Income (Categorical)</u> | | | |
| \$0-\$4,999 | 14% | 6% | 5% |
| \$5,000-\$9,999 | 17% | 25% | 19% |
| \$10,000-\$14,999 | 19% | 18% | 15% |
| \$15,000-\$19,999 | 17% | 16% | 12% |
| \$20,000-\$24,999 | 12% | 11% | 11% |
| \$25,000-\$29,999 | 8% | 9% | 10% |
| \$30,000 or more | 14% | 15% | 27% |
| <u>Income (Continuous)</u> | | | |
| Dollar amount | N/A | \$15,000 (median) | \$18,000 (median) |

Civic Engagement and Economic Outcomes

| Civic Engagement Variable | W1 | | W2 | | W3 | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | Emp | Inc | Emp | Inc | Emp | Inc |
| Volunteered or helped out with activities in community | * | N/A | *** | *** | *** | *** |
| Served as an officer or on a committee of local organization | ** | N/A | *** | *** | *** | *** |
| Spoke with a local political official about neighborhood problem or improvement | *** | N/A | | *** | | *** |
| Spoke with a local religious leader about neighborhood problem or improvement | *** | N/A | *** | *** | | *** |
| Got together with neighbors to do something about a neighborhood problem or to organize neighborhood improvement | | N/A | | | * | *** |
| Provided financial help to family or friends | *** | N/A | *** | *** | *** | *** |
| Participation in at least one civic engagement activity | *** | N/A | *** | *** | *** | *** |

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

Fixed Effects of Civic Engagement on Employment (2002-2011)

| Variables | Volunteer | Officer | Political | Religious | Got Together | Financial help | Overall CE |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Type of CE | 1.173 (.176) | 0.785 (.171) | 0.797 (.146) | 0.952 (.189) | 0.936 (.141) | 1.560** (.214) | 1.313* (.185) |
| Education | 1.856** (.371) | 1.914** (.385) | 1.859** (.371) | 1.828** (.366) | 1.881** (.375) | 1.888** (.376) | 1.825** (.371) |
| Spouse in housing unit | 0.966 (.166) | 0.964 (.166) | 0.959 (.166) | 0.967 (.167) | 0.938 (.162) | 0.908 (.158) | 0.944 (.166) |
| Children in household | 0.985 (.332) | 0.986 (.331) | 1.034 (.346) | 1.014 (.337) | 1.037 (.344) | 1.082 (.363) | 0.991 (.340) |
| Received TANF/welfare | 0.508*** (.074) | 0.500*** (.072) | 0.509*** (.074) | 0.509*** (.074) | 0.507*** (.074) | 0.518*** (.076) | 0.504*** (.074) |
| Wave 2 | 1.057 (.122) | 1.051 (.122) | 1.046 (.121) | 1.065 (.124) | 1.068 (.124) | 1.069 (.125) | 1.074 (.126) |
| Wave 3 | 0.929 (.108) | 0.930 (.109) | 0.910 (.107) | 0.925 (.109) | 0.928 (.109) | 0.957 (.112) | 0.930 (.110) |
| Observations | 1,414 | 1,411 | 1,411 | 1,406 | 1,408 | 1,414 | 1,378 |
| Groups | 479 | 478 | 479 | 477 | 478 | 479 | 472 |

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

Fixed Effects of Civic Engagement on Income (2005-2011)

| Variables | Volunteer | Officer | Political | Religious | Got Together | Financial help | Overall CE |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Type of CE | -811.05 (906.78) | 474.42 (1,238.12) | -776.92 (1,059.12) | 1,215.15 (1,168.64) | 166.40 (883.66) | 2,687.49** (829.091) | 882.26 (834.85) |
| Education | 625.33 (1,221.80) | 600.45 (1,220.68) | 629.93 (1,218.84) | 611.55 (1,222.19) | 610.72 (1,219.40) | 522.85 (1,219.60) | 526.41 (1,232.18) |
| Spouse in housing unit | 7,189.38*** (1,210.36) | 7,214.80*** (1,204.95) | 6,911.95*** (1,215.63) | 7,071.71*** (1,218.33) | 6,973.29*** (1,211.52) | 7,015.67*** (1,204.91) | 7,011.70*** (1,223.94) |
| Children in household | 261.78 (2,360.72) | 275.57 (2,349.15) | 515.76 (2,327.26) | 709.60 (2,329.48) | 571.63 (2,327.50) | 823.06 (2,350.32) | 262.12 (2,423.34) |
| Received TANF/welfare | -3,133.07*** (866.84) | -3,151.73*** (862.33) | -3,132.89*** (863.25) | -3,085.54*** (861.17) | -3,098.88*** (862.67) | -2,790.16** (864.45) | -3,171.31*** (869.65) |
| Wave 3 | 5,596.08*** (473.54) | 5,548.40*** (472.03) | 5,499.78*** (474.88) | 5,613.99*** (473.66) | 5,561.91*** (475.73) | 5,636.42*** (471.20) | 5,627.46*** (479.31) |
| Constant | 14,374.85*** (2,028.28) | 14,108.85*** (2,012.03) | 14,189.22*** (2,001.17) | 13,658.65*** (2,009.07) | 13,943.60*** (2,013.64) | 12,768.09*** (2,037.08) | 13,730.70*** (2,164.22) |
| Observations | 2,119 | 2,117 | 2,119 | 2,118 | 2,117 | 2,119 | 2,093 |
| Groups | 1,133 | 1,133 | 1,134 | 1,134 | 1,133 | 1,132 | 1,129 |
| R-square | .224 | .231 | .228 | .234 | .231 | .251 | .233 |

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Limitations

- Bias
 - Selection
 - Social desirability
- Civic and economic measures
- Time invariant variables not in models

Conclusions and Policy Relevance

- Positive, significant relationship between civic engagement and economic outcomes
- Inform civic engagement and poverty policy arenas
 - Strategic approach to civic access and opportunity

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